

Programme Development, Approval, Amendment and Withdrawal Policy

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# 1 Purpose

The Policy details the University of Dundee (UoD) procedures concerning the development, approval, and amendment of all taught provision, including those leading to a University award, intermediate awards, Micro-Credentials, MOOCs, and Non-Credit Bearing provision. It also encompasses all taught components of Professional Doctorate awards and Research degrees. The approach outlined below has also been informed by benchmarking practice across a range of institutions and it aligns with both the [UK Quality Code](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code) and our own Curriculum Design Principles.

Where there are collaborations with partners the [Collaborative Partnership Code of Practice](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/global-partnerships) applies.

* 1. The University of Dundee as an awarding institution will exercise its responsibility for the academic standards and the quality of the learning opportunities of the qualifications awarded in its name.

It will do this by ensuring:

1.1.1 It has a strategic oversight of course design, development and approval processes, ensuring outcomes remain consistent and transparent;

1.1.2 It has in place effective arrangements to ensure appropriate standards of the awards;

1.1.3 The development of awards that align with the hallmarks of a University of Dundee award as set out in the University’s [Curriculum Design Principles](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/curriculum-design-principles);

1.1.4 It maintains a definitive central record of the programmes and modules, non-credit bearing provision offered;

1.1.5 Course design, development and approval processes result in definitive course documents;

1.1.6 It maintains a definitive central record of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies;

1.1.7 An agile, accessible and flexible process for course design, development and approval that is proportionate to identified risks;

1.1.8 That the process supports Schools in managing the continuous improvement of curriculum in a meaningful and efficient way;

1.1.9 Internal guidance and external reference points are used appropriately to inform course design, development and approval;

1.1.10 That feedback from internal and external stakeholders is used to inform course content, including where appropriate Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies;

1.1.11 Development of staff, students and other participants enables effective engagement with the course design, development and approval processes;

1.1.12 Course design, development and approval processes result in definitive course documents; and

1.1.13 Design, development, and approval processes are reviewed and enhanced annually.

# 2 Aims

The overall responsibility for programme approval process rests with the University Quality Academic and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) acting under delegated authority from Senate and reporting to Senate on all taught provision activity.

2.1 The overall aims of the programme approval process are designed to:

2.1.1 Support the implementation of the [Curriculum Design Principles](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/curriculum-design-principles) and ensure the University in executing its responsibilities in relation to the [UK Quality Code](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code) and the advice to higher education providers from [the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers).

2.1.2 Support colleagues to engage efficiently to address, each stage of the curriculum development, approval, amendment and withdrawal life cycle.

2.1.3 Ensure the process is proportionate, agile and supports innovation. New types and models of programme and/or modules are encouraged and where it is unclear how this new provision might be approved colleagues are encouraged to engage with the QAS Team to identify an appropriate route for consideration and approval.

2.1.4 Colleagues are aware of their responsibilities in addressing the requirements of this policy in an efficient and transparent way to ensure an efficient curriculum approval process.

2.1.5 Ensure the University meets its obligations, as a degree awarding body, to offer programmes that deliver an excellent experience to our students and support students studying on programmes that lead to an award~~[[1]](#footnote-2)~~ from the University of Dundee to have an excellent experience.

2.2 The policy clarifies the need for curriculum proposals to ensure they understand both the external and internal environments.

Externally it is important that proposals reflect the requirements (where appropriate) of:

2.2.1 The [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/interactive-framework/);

2.2.2 The UK Quality Code, [Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/course-design-and-development);

2.2.3 [Characteristics Statements for Doctoral, Master’s and Higher Education Apprenticeships](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/supporting-resources);

2.2.4 [The QAA](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/the-frameworks-for-higher-education-qualifications-of-uk-degree-awarding-bodies-2024.pdf?sfvrsn=3562b281_11);

2.2.5 [Subject Benchmark Statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements); and

2.2.6 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

2.3 Internally proposals should:

2.3.1 Support and align with the strategic objectives of the University and its Schools to generate sustainable student recruitment;

2.3.2 Give consideration to the student experience and the prospects for graduates;

2.3.3 Give consideration to accessibility, equality and diversity;

2.3.4 Ensure appropriate consultation within and beyond the university as appropriate; and

2.3.5 Be clearly presented so they can be understood by internal and external stakeholders including prospective students.

# 3 Scope

This Policy applies to all levels of the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/interactive-framework/) and encompasses undergraduate, taught postgraduate, and research postgraduate programmes and modules as well as non-credit bearing taught provision that do not formally contribute to an award as described within [the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/the-frameworks-for-higher-education-qualifications-of-uk-degree-awarding-bodies-2024.pdf?sfvrsn=3562b281_11). For research-based programmes or modules, this policy should be consulted alongside the [[Research Degrees Quality Code](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/qf/research-degrees/)](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/research-degrees-quality-code).

This Policy applies to all types of taught provision, including undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes leading to a University of Dundee award. Although the list is not exhaustive, where a new programme or module does not fall within these predefined categories, the Director of Quality and Academic Standards will determine if it is within the scope of the Policy[[2]](#footnote-3):

3.1 Programmes[[3]](#footnote-4) and their pathways

3.2 Modules, core and optional

3.3 Micro-credentials

3.4 Non-credit-bearing programmes or modules[[4]](#footnote-5)

Where the programme or module is to be delivered as part of a collaborative partnership, this Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Collaborative Partnerships Code of Practice](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/international/global-partnerships/collaborationstoolkit/).

It is recognised that opportunities to develop, amend or withdraw programmes and modules may arise from a variety of sources including within Schools, via research collaborations or as a result of market research.

Changes to programmes can be as a result from various sources and must adhere to this Policy, however any exceptions must be agreed in advance with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards.

# 4 Programme Development Framework

The formal assurance process for the approval or modification of programmes and modules is predicated on risk levels identified in advance, and the identification of a Responsible Person.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**Level 1**](#_Level_1_Approval) | Highest risk/more complex activity; new programme approval, approval of new partnerships that include an academic programme where we are awarding credit/awards for provision delivered by ourselves or others in partnership and typically not within our own campus, the development of a new type of award or programme model. | * New programme approval * Programme withdrawal * Partnership approval (academic) * Creation of a new category of award for a programme (e.g. ProfDoc, MBA, BEng) * Development of a new programme model or type (e.g. apprenticeships) |
| [**Level 2**](#_Level_2_Approval) | Higher Risk Activity; new programme pathway approval, amendments to a programme or pathway that involves changes to the Intended Learning Outcomes, module composition or other changes that might materially change curriculum. Withdrawal of programme pathways or modules that contribute to programmes in more than one School. | * Programme pathway approval or non-credit-bearing ‘executive education’ programme * Changes to programme learning outcomes * Change to teaching mode or delivery for a programme or pathway * Withdrawal of a programme pathway * Suspended programme withdrawal * Withdrawal of a module that contributes to more than one School’s programmes * Re-instatement of Programme |
| [**Level 3**](#_Level_3_Approval) | Medium risk activity; where UoD are awarding credit at the module level or considering amendments to approved modules. Minor programme amendments that do not impact the overall programme curriculum. The withdrawal of modules that contribute to programmes in one School only.  Development of Micro-credentials without a partner | * Approval of a new module (core or optional) * Changes to module learning outcomes or assessments weightings * Re-sequencing of previously approved modules within a programme or pathway * Module withdrawal (one School only) * Amendment of entry and exit points where no curriculum change is required * Approval of Micro-credentials * Development of a [MOOC](#_MOOC) |
| [**Level 4**](#_Level_4_Approval) | Low risk activity; where UoD are not awarding credit for a module\*  Development Micro-credentials with a partner | * Approval of micro-credentials * Approval of non-credit-bearing modules * Amendment of non-credit-bearing modules |
| [**Level 5**](#_Level_5_Approval) | Administrative change only | * Update of programme module leader or administrator details * Changes to JACS, HECOS, UCAS codes |

Figure 1: Programme Development Framework

Where a proposal is approved by exception a detailed record of this exception, and the reasons for it, will be maintained by the QAS Team to inform future updates to this Policy.

This Policy is based on the expectation that Programme Teams submit comprehensive proposals that demonstrate alignment with the schools and institution’s strategic priorities and business case, along with a well-designed student learning experience. They are required to evaluate various stages and features related to the design of programmes and modules.

There are broadly considered to be seven stages of the life cycle and process;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Identification whether it fits into the institution’s strategic priorities | Short outline submitted to PAG along with Business Case approved by School Executive |
| Initiation to identify the risk level | Discussion with Associate Dean Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| Development and consideration within the School | Development of Academic content and consideration of programme via Engagement |
| Approval School Quality and Academic Standards Committee (SQASC) have the final decision-making and recommendations on quality assurance of programmes and modules prior to implementation or referral to the QAEC | Progress through School and Senate Committees |
| Implementation by Course Operations Group (COG) | COG will operational implementation of a proposal following confirmation of the final approval. |
| Monitor | PAG will monitor performance, particularly recruitment for first three years |
| Review | School continue to review performance |

# 5 Roles & Responsibilities

5.1 Quality and Academic Standards Team

The Quality and Academic Standards (QAS) Team leads, develops, coordinates, monitors and supports the quality assurance activities across the institution.

They will:

5.1.1 Provide advice and training to staff involved in programme and module development throughout the institution and at times within partner organisations.

5.1.2 Play a key role in ensuring the effective coordination of compliance, legal, financial, risk management, due diligence and quality assurances aspects of all programme and module activity within the scope of this Policy.

5.1.3 Keep a record of key contacts for each proposal and subsequently approved programmes and modules.

5.1.4 Maintain, on behalf of the Directorate of Academic and Corporate Governance, the definitive record of programmes and modules on behalf of the University.

5.1.5 Service the Quality Assurance ad Enhancement Committee (QAEC) and ensure outcomes are appropriately reported.

# 5.2 Programme Approval Group (PAG)

The purpose of the Programme Approval Group (PAG), convened by the Vice-Principal (Education) on behalf of the University Executive Group, is to have responsibility for, and provide strategic oversight of, the programme portfolio. The PAG will support the Schools to effectively, and sustainably, manage a forward-looking programme portfolio in the context of the institution’s priorities and the sector’s overall trajectory and market-led opportunities.

# 5.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

The University’s Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) has authority delegated from Senate (agreed at the meeting of Senate October 2015) to formally approve the creation of new provision and changes to existing taught programmes. All new modules, amendment and withdrawals, approved at the School Quality and Academic Standards Committees (SQASC) or equivalent must be reported to the QAEC via the SQASC.

Where programme development proposals focus on research programmes QAEC has delegated responsibility for their consideration to the Doctoral Academy Board. This delegation should be assumed throughout this document where QAEC is named.

# 5.4 School Executive Group (SEG)

The School Executive Group (SEG) will have responsibility for the approval at the relevant level of the [Programme Development Framework](#_Programme_Development_Framework), ensuring that the proposals support the School’s strategic aims and through them the strategic aims of the University.

The SEG will use the Policy and Guidance and the outcome of the School Quality and Academic Standards Committee (or equivalent) to support their decision-making.

# 5.5 Responsible Person

The Responsible Person, as identified by the [SEG](#_School_Executive_Group), will have responsibility for the development of the proposal and submission to the relevant committees in line with this Policy and the [Curriculum Design Principles](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/curriculum-design-principles). They may work with others to do this, but they will remain responsible for the proposal until a final decision is reached within the stage to which they have been appointed.

The Responsible Person may be an academic or professional services staff member. They may also hold other roles within the School related to the proposal including being the lead for the Programme or Module and/or the Associate Dean Education and Student Experience, Research or International, Academic Champion, or other.

The Associate Dean Quality Assurance and Enhancement should not normally be nominated as the Responsible Person, this is to ensure that their role as a decision-maker and Convener of the SQASC does not result in a conflict of interest. Where such a nomination of the Associate Dean Quality and Enhancement as the Responsible Person is unavoidable, the SQASC cannot be convened by the Associate Dean QAS for that item, and the conflict actively managed.

# 5.6 Associate Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The Associate Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement will have responsibility for ensuring that all programmes and modules developed within the School adhere to the relevant policies and guidance, including but not limited to the policy and guidance on programme development, module and programme annual review, periodic programme review and external examination.

The Associate Dean (QAS) convenes the [SQASC](#_School_Quality_&).

# 5.7 Associate Dean for Education and Student Experience

The Associate Dean for Education and Student Experience will have responsibility for ensuring that all programmes and modules developed within the School are developed in line with the University of Dundee [Curriculum Design Principles](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/curriculum-design-principles) and will support colleagues to engage in pedagogical development.

# 5.8 Associate Dean for International

The Associate Dean for International will have responsibility for supporting programme and module development in relation to identifying, establishing and developing opportunities for international students within the School, working alongside Associate Deans for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and Education and Student Experience and will support colleagues to engage with these opportunities.

# 5.9 School Quality and Academic Standards Committee (SQASC)

School Boards are the final decision-making body on academic matters within Schools, with the responsibility for final recommendations on quality assurance matters for both taught and research provision, lies with the School Quality and Academic Standards Committee (SQASC) or equivalent. SQASC has delegated authority to formally approve the creation of new provision and changes to existing taught provision. All new modules, amendments and withdrawals, approved at the School Quality and Academic Standards Committees (SQASC) or equivalent must be communicated to Registry and COG and reported to the QAEC via the SQASC.

Schools and Directorates must report to the QAEC annually on their certificated short courses by providing a list of courses with certificates of attendance and a list of courses with certificates of performance (including Open Badges, MOOCs, Non-Credit Bearing and CPD). The lists should contain the course title, when it is delivered, the duration and the name of the course leader, and, for those with certificates of performance, be accompanied by a brief commentary on quality.

# 5.10 Course Operation Group (COG)

The Course Operations Group (COG) is an informal, self-governing group that comprises of relevant staff from University Directorates who are involved in the implementation of programmes and modules from setting up. Members of COG will provide advice on admissions processes and support writing content for the web.

# 5.11 Globalisation Directorate

The [Global Partnerships](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/global-partnerships) (GP) team are responsible for supporting collaborative partnerships and will provide advice and guidance in the development of proposals that relate to collaborative partnerships.

# 5.12 Legal

The Legal team are responsible for providing advice in relation to legal risk and contract management and will support the due diligence and risk assessment elements of partnership working in particular, this may include programme development.

# 5.13 Critical Friend

The Critical Friend will be a member of UoD Staff with experience in the development of programmes or modules and/or their implementation (as appropriate to the proposal). They may be an academic or professional services staff member. They will provide advice, guidance and be an objective adviser to the Responsible Person and support them to develop a robust proposal and, where necessary, recognise the limits of a proposal.

# 5.14 External Examiner/Expert

The External Examiner, or expert, can be a source of external guidance and support, they may be a useful sounding board as proposals are explored and ‘tested’. Where Schools are developing new programmes (and therefore an External Examiner is not yet in place as would be the case for amendments) they are encouraged to identify External Examiners from other programmes, or other individuals with applicable academic/industrial experience to support the development of the proposal. The use of ‘advisory boards’ or other such groups may also be helpful. Further information about External Examination can be found in the [Policy and Guidance](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/policy-and-code-of-practice-on-external-examining).

# 6 Glossary

# 6.1 Certificate of Attendance

Courses which attract a certificate of attendance will normally be short courses of a vocational nature and will not include any measure of performance or formal assessment procedures.

# 6.2 Certificate of Performance

Courses which attract a certificate of performance will normally be short courses that may be made up of part or all of an approved module. They will include measurement of performance/formal assessment.

# 6.3 Credit

A means of quantifying and recognising the volume of learning, based on academic judgement as to how long it will take the typical learner to achieve the learning outcomes. The estimation of the time required is referred to as ‘notional learning hours’. One credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning.

# 6.4 Programme

The term ‘course’ is often used interchangeably with either programme or module. Course is typically used during the admissions stages to mean a programme of study and aligns with the language used by UCAS and others.

The core and optional modules that must be taken and, where relevant, passed by a student in order to achieve each named award (including any named exit awards) should be specified clearly in the definitive course record and associated programme documentation. Care should be taken to ensure that the coherence of courses with multiple pathways is secured and maintained, and that there is clarity regarding how pathways relate to, and are differentiated from, each other. The award should comprise a unique combination of modules such that students receiving different awards will never have the same module profile.

# 6.5 Pathway

Pathways within a taught programme refer to specialised routes that students can choose to follow within a broader programme. These pathways allow students to focus on a specific area of study or specialisation while still completing the overall requirements of the main programme. It is essential for each programme/pathway to maintain a distinct identity, to ensure that students cannot be awarded different named degree by selecting the same module combinations.

# 6.6 Core Module

A module that must be successfully passed in pursuit of a programme of study.

# 6.7 Option Module

A module that can be chosen by a student to contribute to their programme of study, typically students are provided with a range of option modules to choose from. The number of option modules available will be dependent on the credit and discipline requirements of the programme.

# 6.8 MOOC

MOOCs are freely available open online courses provided by the University through platforms including FutureLearn[[5]](#footnote-6).

# 6.9 Micro-credentials

A micro-credential [[6]](#footnote-7)is the record of assessed knowledge, skills and/or achievements within a focused area of outcome-based learning. They offer an opportunity to formally recognise professional development and are typically offered on a credit-bearing basis. They are subject to standard quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms. There are currently no upper, or lower, limits to the amount of credit that can be awarded for a micro-credential however it is generally accepted to be a small, discrete credit-bearing course ranging from 10 – 30 credits.

In Scotland, credit-rated micro-credentials are awarded by a body authorised to award SCQF credit. While designed as standalone qualifications, micro-credentials may be combined into larger credentials or provide entry into a larger award it will not normally constitute an award in its own right.

# 6.10 Non-credit-bearing

The University provides a variety of courses and training opportunities that are not credit-bearing (i.e. they have not been benchmarked against the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and do not formally contribute to an award as described within [The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/the-frameworks-for-higher-education-qualifications-of-uk-degree-awarding-bodies-2024.pdf?sfvrsn=3562b281_11&trk=public_post_comment-text)).

# 6.11 Non-credit-bearing certificates

‘Certificates’ in this context means certificates of successful academic performance or certificates of attendance for any course provided by the University which has not been credit-rated in accordance with the SCQF and is not included within the University regulations for a specific award as described in [Ordinance 39](https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/ordinances). A ‘Certificate’ may also be an Open (Digital) Badge[[7]](#footnote-8). Certificates for the successful completion of MOOCs are provided which bear the University crest, and it is important that there is appropriate Institutional oversight of activities in this area.

# 6.12 Open Badges

Open Badges are considered as ‘[non-credit-bearing certificates](#_Non-credit_bearing_certificates) of performance’ for the purpose of this Policy.

# 6.13 Programme

An approved programme of study that provides a defined, distinct, learning and/or research experience. A programme should have a clear educational vision, and which leads to an academic award. Programmes should comprise a coherent set of core modules and/or options that collectively address programme-level learning outcomes which demonstrate the development of knowledge and skills and/or original research, as students’ progress through the programme. Programmes can be defined as taught or research.

The Curriculum Design Principles provide detailed information to support the development of new programmes.

# 6.14 Programme pathway

A programme pathway should align to a ‘parent programme’ typically through shared learning outcomes and core modules, and will have unique features, i.e. option module combinations, with a difference of a minim of one third credits of the programme. It is important for each pathway to demonstrate a clear identity to ensure that different degree awards cannot be achieved by choosing the same module combinations. The title of a programme pathway would typically be formulated as follows: Designation, Parent Programme (Pathway) e.g. MSc Basket Weaving (design), MSc Basket Weaving (marketing).

# 6.15 Access Summer School

Full-time, credit bearing (Partners or University of Dundee), non-credit bearing, face-to-face/online normally focussing on widening access to university for those who have the ability and potential irrespective of background, with an emphasis on university readiness and academic preparation.

# 6.16 Summer Experience

Full-time programme that Is designed to offers a broad, enriching experience that combines academic, training, cultural, and social activities, targeting a diverse audience. These tend to be shorter versions.

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1. This may include the award of credit as well as the award of a qualification [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See the [Glossary](#_Glossary) for definitions of these terms [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The term ‘course’ is often used interchangeably with either programme or module. Course is typically used during the admissions stages to mean a programme and aligns with the language used by UCAS and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The University will maintain centrally held registers of certificated courses including MOOCs. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. FutureLearn is a company owned by The Open University, providing free online courses from universities and other organisations. See <https://www.futurelearn.com/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary (enhancementthemes.ac.uk)](https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/resilient-learning-communities/scottish-tertiary-education-micro-credentials-glossary.pdf?sfvrsn=c620a381_18) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. 7 See <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/training/digital-credentials> for more information on Open Badges. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)