



## Academic Quality Framework

### Chapter 4 Programme and Course Approval and Modification

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the Academic Quality Framework details the procedures that the College uses to design, develop and approve new taught programmes and courses by NCH at Northeastern Limited (NCHNL) (the College). It also details how modifications may be made to such programmes and courses following approval, and aims to meet the following UK Quality Code theme: **Course Design and Development**:

*"Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed."*

Faculty at the College are required to review all programmes and courses on an annual basis as part of the annual monitoring procedures.<sup>1</sup> This provides faculty with the opportunity to evaluate the quality and standards of the College's taught provision and stimulate curriculum development. The development of new programmes and modifications to existing programmes, that may arise from annual monitoring reviews, involves external peer review and consultations, thereby ensuring that practices and experiences of external peers are utilised and considered.

The overall aims of programme and course approval, review and modification are:

- To assure all stakeholders of the College and the public of the quality and standards of the College's taught provision.
- To ensure that the College secures the highest academic standards and educational experience for its students.

## 4.2 DESIGNING NEW PROGRAMMES AND COURSES

The design of new programmes takes a significant amount of research and development, and it is supported by consultation within the College (involving faculty, professional staff, students, and employers) and through engagement with external advisers.

The design phase culminates in College Approval Events which are based on the peer review of documentation and meetings with staff, students and industry experts. These events enable the College to evaluate the academic strength, standards, quality, appeal and viability of the provision in detail.

## 4.3 MODIFYING EXISTING PROGRAMMES AND COURSES

Modifications to existing programmes and courses may be made between programme approval and Periodic Review points to enhance provision. This may be instigated by student, employer or External Examiner feedback, or changes to sector or Professional, Statutory and Professional Body (PSRB) requirements.

The modification procedures involve consultation and peer review to a depth which is proportionate to the level of the proposed modification(s).

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<sup>1</sup> AQF5 Annual Monitoring and Reporting

#### 4.4 PROGRAMME AND COURSE APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION PROCEDURES

The College's procedures for approving and modifying programmes and courses are all ratified by Academic Board and are designed to adhere to the relevant Expectations and Practices as detailed in the UK Quality Code.

The overall aims of programme approval and modification procedures are to ensure that:

- The College maintains strategic oversight of the procedures for the development and approval of programmes.
- Programmes are strategically and academically appropriate, and are developed in line with the College's Mission, Strategic Plan and Academic Regulations.
- The College approves programmes that meet the appropriate quality and academic standards as defined by the College, the UK Quality Code, relevant Degree Apprenticeship standards, and expectations of relevant PSRBs.
- Learning and other resources are adequate and available to support programme delivery and students.
- The programme learning environment is fit for purpose.
- New programme proposals are designed and developed appropriately according to the prescribed criteria and decision-making procedures.
- Programmes are coherent and provide students with a developmental educational experience.
- Quality and standards of teaching and assessment of the programme are in line with national practice and will be continuously enhanced.
- The responsibility for academic ownership and quality management of programmes by the Faculty, teaching teams and other College departments are clearly communicated and acknowledged.
- Post-graduation, programmes have prepared students sufficiently to enable them to meet employer expectations as appropriate
- External reference points and expertise are drawn upon to maintain and enhance quality standards regarding current developments and practices outside the College environment.
- Students, faculty, employers and professional staff are appropriately involved in the design, development and approval of programmes.
- Appropriate External Examiner appointments for new programmes are considered by the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee and recommended for approval by Academic Board.

#### **4.5 RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING PROGRAMME AND COURSE APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION**

Generally, the primary responsibility for programme and course development, approval and modification rests with the Master of the College, Heads of Faculty, Programme Directors, Course Leaders, and faculty.

The Quality Team provides procedural support and monitors the completion of the required approval and modification stages.

Academic and corporate committees also have roles in the review and approval of proposals. Further details about specific responsibilities are contained in this document in the sub-sections below.

Programme approval and modification procedures are monitored by Academic Board, ensuring that they are followed appropriately and remain effective.

#### **4.6 THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR WHICH PROGRAMMES AND COURSES ARE APPROVED**

Programmes and courses are normally approved for five years unless otherwise specified at the Programme Approval Event, or until the next Periodic Review point, whichever occurs sooner.

Programmes are normally subject to a Periodic Review every five years.<sup>2</sup>

Where a single programme is recommended for Periodic Review on the basis of substantial proposed changes or concerns, this will be considered and recorded as an 'approval' event and the programme approval process will apply.

#### **4.7 ALIGNMENT WITH THE UK QUALITY CODE**

Programme and course approval procedures are developed and operated at the College in line with the external body requirements and adhere to the UK Quality Code's theme: **Course Design and Development**, Expectation for Quality that:

*"Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed."*

#### **4.8 ALIGNMENT WITH THE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD**

Programme and course approval procedures are developed and operated at the College in line with the external body requirements and adhere to UK Degree Apprenticeship Standard.

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<sup>2</sup> AQF Chapter 6: Periodic Review

## PART 1: PROGRAMME APPROVAL

### 4.9 DRIVERS FOR NEW PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The College's portfolio of taught programmes is regularly reviewed in order to maintain and enhance academic quality and standards. Programme portfolios evolve over time in response to a number of drivers including:

- Alignment with the Teaching and Learning, and Assessment Strategies
- Intrinsic academic merit and intellectual enhancement
- The gradual development of existing programmes
- Securing entry into new subject areas
- Entry into new subject areas through a collaborative partnership
- Evidence of demand in student markets
- Developments in academic strategies
- The identification of new areas through staff research and enterprise
- Demand from employers or professional bodies
- Feedback from students, faculty, employers and External Examiners
- Opportunities or threats from competitor providers
- Changes in patterns of student progression
- Changes in government policy

In addition to responding to the above, and to ensure that the College's taught provision remains current and attractive to prospective students, new programmes proposed for development should also meet at least one of the following criteria within the resource capacity of the College:

- Attract viable new cohorts of students to the programme.
- Increase the conversion of applicants and prospective applicants to registered students on existing programmes.
- Increase the progression opportunities for students at the College including progression to postgraduate studies.
- Includes a more effective and sustainable use of College expertise on existing programmes.

### 4.10 FRAMEWORK FOR NEW PROGRAMME APPROVALS

Programme design and approval procedures are developed and operate in line with external body requirements, [subject benchmark statements](#) (when relevant), Degree Apprenticeship Standards, and the [UK Quality Code](#).

Each new programme proposal requires significant research and development, as well as detailed criteria to guide the approval procedure. The approval procedure is rigorous to assure the quality of the proposed provision.

Development of the programme portfolio must be coherent and consistent with the College's strategy and must make business sense in terms of market demand, income generated, and the resources required to run the programme.

All proposals must consider relevant external inputs, including subject benchmark statements and the requirement of PSRB where applicable.

New programmes are assessed against criteria in areas including strategic fit and viability, quality and standards, assessment, staffing, and learning resources.

#### **4.11 TIMESCALES OF THE PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS**

The expected timeframe for the approval of a new programme is 18 months from initial programme development to delivery.

Stage 1: 'Approval in Principle' will normally take place six months prior to Stage 2.

Stage 2: 'Approval of Content' will normally take place 12 months before the programme starts.

The required programme approval documentation should be submitted to the Quality Team at least three weeks prior to each approval event.

#### **4.12 NEW PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS OVERVIEW**

The approval process for new programmes is divided into two main stages:

##### **4.12.1 Stage 1: Approval in Principle**

This procedure determines whether the proposed programme will:

- Align with the College's strategic objectives.
- Demonstrate the academic case.
- Demonstrate market demand and financial viability.
- Demonstrate that resources have been reviewed.

This stage normally consists of the Faculty/Apprenticeship Team identifying a Programme Proposer (the member of faculty who will lead and be responsible for the development of the programme and progressing the programme through the programme approval procedure), and drafting the relevant documentation.<sup>3</sup> The Faculty/Team will be involved in the development of the new programme through consultations at Faculty/Team

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<sup>3</sup> If the proposal is a cross-faculty programme, all Heads of Faculty connected to the programme will need to approve and sign the General Resources Form.



Meetings prior to it being submitted to the Quality Team for Executive Committee (ExCo) and NCHNL Board review.

If it is deemed to meet each of the criteria above, the proposal should progress to the programme development stage.

#### **4.12.2 Stage 2: Approval of Content**

This stage normally consists of the following:

- Programme content development – this process happens within the Faculty/Team (leading on the programme for collaborative programmes). The required documentation is developed, reviewed and revised accordingly. External advisers are recommended throughout this process. A formal scrutiny of the documentation will be held within the Faculty/Team prior to the proposal progressing.
- Approval in detail – This is the College Approval Event where the College Approval Panel is satisfied with the programme and recommends approval of the new programme to Academic Board. If it is deemed that the programme requires further revisions, the College Approval Panel can refer the programme and the Panel can reconvene at a later date.
- Formal Approval – Academic Board has the final approval (ratification) of all new programmes.
- Post approval – The programme documentation for the new programme is submitted to the Quality Team. The Quality Team is then responsible for sharing the documentation with Student and Academic Services and the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Teams. An External Examiner is nominated by the Head of Faculty or Programme Director.

The New Programme Approval procedure can be seen in [Appendix A](#).

#### **4.13 APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMME IN PRINCIPLE**

'Approval in Principle' stage is the scrutiny of the business case for the proposed programme. This is completed in two phases.

The nominated Programme Proposer should complete an Approval in Principle: New Taught Programme Proposal Form 1 (NPP1) in addition to the New Taught Programme Approval: General Resources Form and the Financial Model Form, to ensure that the development of the programme is in line with the College's strategic aims and is financially viable. The proposal must be tabled regularly at Faculty/Apprenticeship Team Meetings. This will enable the Programme Proposer to update the Faculty/Team on the progression of the design of the new programme, and provide meeting members, including students, the opportunity to provide feedback.

The documentation is considered at ExCo, where there is a detailed scrutiny of the proposed programme, focusing on the criteria listed under Stage 1 in section 4.16. ExCo can make the following decisions:

1. Recommend that the proposed programme proceed to NCHNL Board for review/approval. ExCo can impose conditions, such as minor revisions to the document. If such conditions are imposed, these must be completed and approved by the Chair of ExCo before the proposed programme is presented to NCHNL Board.
2. Advise the Programme Proposer that NPP1 and/or associated document requires significant revisions. Detailed feedback will be provided, and the proposed programme can be tabled again at ExCo.
3. Advise the Programme Proposer that the proposal is not viable, and approval is not granted.

When approval to proceed has been awarded by ExCo, the programme proposal will be added to the NCHNL Board agenda. NPP1 and associated documentation will be submitted to the Secretary of NCHNL Board by the Head of Quality Assurance.

NCHNL Board will review all the documentation submitted. This includes financial projections for the viability of the programme, as well as information about resource requirements such as teaching staff costs, programme fees, and projected student numbers. The Programme Proposer is responsible for producing this documentation and ensuring it is included in the submission. The Programme Proposer must work in conjunction with the Financial Controller and HR and Operations Manager to ensure as accurate as possible projections are made.

Table 4.1 identifies tasks and individual/committee responsibilities for each Approval in Principle application.

**Table 4.1**

Approval in Principle of the New Taught Programme Proposal Task	Responsibility
For each programme proposed, an Approval in Principle: New Taught Programme Proposal Form 1 (NPP1); New Taught Programme Approval: General Resources Form and Financial Model Form are completed in liaison with HR and Operations Manager; Financial Controller; Student and Academic Services; and Head of Quality Assurance.	Programme Proposer
Initial scoping of the proposal documentation, prior to submission to NCHNL Board, with the possible outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recommend proposal proceeds to NCHNL, with or without conditions.</li> </ol>	ExCo

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Required revision of documentation for resubmission to ExCo.</li> <li>3. Proposal approval not granted.</li> </ol>	
<p>Consideration of the New Taught Programme Proposal Form 1 to confirm that the programme fits with the College’s strategies, with the following possible outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approval to progress to programme development stage</li> <li>2. Approval to progress to the programme development stage subject to recommended changes/further actions</li> <li>3. Approval of the proposal is not granted (or may be recommended for re-submission at a later date).</li> </ol>	NCHNL Board
<p>Notify the Programme Proposer and Head of Quality Assurance of the outcome of the NCHNL Board’s review of the new programme proposal.</p>	Secretary to NCHNL Board
<p>If Stage 1 successful, notify Academic Board that the new programme proposal has progressed to the programme development stage.</p>	Head of Quality Assurance

#### 4.14 APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMME CONTENT

The following stages of the approval of new programme content are documented below:

- Programme Development
- Development of the new programme proposal documentation
- Nomination of external panel member for College Approval Panel
- Nomination of External Examiner
- Ongoing Faculty review
- College Approval Panel
- Academic Board ratification.

##### 4.14.1 Programme Development

The Programme Development stage of the process will normally involve a range of activities to ensure that all academic areas and issues are addressed. These will include the consideration of internal and external benchmarks, consultation with Marketing, Admissions, Finance, Human

Resources, and Student and Academic Services and other relevant staff, and consultation with students (at Faculty Meetings).

Where areas within a programme are developed, discussions with the Head of Faculty/Apprenticeships should also take place to ensure that efficiency and effectiveness of design and effective internal and external communications and involvement are considered.

Programme approval documentation should also be developed during this stage of the approval procedure, as detailed below.

#### 4.14.2 Development of new programme proposal documentation

Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of programme approval documentation rests with the Programme Proposer. Support is available from the Quality Team.

Version control procedures should be used when completing programme approval documentation. Support is available from the Quality Team.

Programme approval documentation should be produced using the referenced forms and templates provided on the Academic Handbook pages on the College’s website.

Programme approval documentation that is normally required is listed in Table 4.2 (below):

**Table 4.2**

<b>Required Programme approval document</b>	<b>Document description</b>
Application for New Taught Programme Form 2 (NPP2)	This form provides the detail of the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme content, design and delivery</li> <li>• Teaching, Learning and Assessment</li> <li>• Programme Management</li> <li>• Exemption from College Regulations</li> </ul>
New Taught Programme Approval: Marketing and Admissions Information Form	This form is completed once the Approval in Principle has been granted and the programme can be marketed ‘subject to approval’.  The information will be used to promote the new programme on the College’s website.
Programme Specification	One Programme Specification should be produced for each programme.

	<p>The Programme Specification provides essential information about the programme.</p> <p>The Programme Specification should be written with students as the intended audience.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the Programme Specification are accurate and completed in full.</p> <p>The Programme Specification is normally published on the College's website to provide prospective students with information about the programme.</p>
Course Descriptors	<p>One Course Descriptor should be produced for each course of the programme.</p> <p>Course Descriptors provide essential information about specific courses.</p> <p>Course Descriptors should be written with the students as the intended audience.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the Course Descriptors are accurate and completed in full.</p> <p>The Course Descriptor is normally published on the College's website to provide prospective students with information about the programme.</p>
External Examiner Nomination Form	<p>If a new External Examiner is required for the new programme, the Programme Proposer should work with the Faculty to provide the name of an External Examiner.</p> <p>Reference should be made to <a href="#">AQF11 External Examining</a> and the criteria for the nomination of a new External Examiner.</p>

#### 4.14.3 Nomination of External College Approval Panel Member

The Programme Proposer will be required to nominate an External Programme Approval Panel Member, who should not:

- Have been an External Examiner or member of staff at the College within the last three years.
- Have been involved in the development of the programme or courses.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Proposer to ensure that the External Panel Member Nomination Form and their nominee's CV are endorsed and signed off by the Head of Faculty/Director of Apprenticeships and then submitted to the Quality Team no later than three months prior to the College Approval Event.

The Head of Quality Assurance will then confirm acceptance of the nominations to Academic Board and Faculty.

The Quality Team will then be responsible for liaising with the nominated External Panel Member regarding the arrangements and logistics of the College Approval Event.

Any proposed change to an External Panel Member will require approval by the Head of Quality Assurance.

#### **4.14.4 Faculty/Apprenticeship Team Review**

This Review of the new programme is normally held at regular intervals to support the Programme Proposer in the development of the programme and preparation of the documentation. The purpose of this is to assure that all submitted programme approval documentation is of high quality and provides the Programme Proposer with recommendations and opportunities to enhance their programme prior to the College Approval Event.

The Faculty/Apprenticeship Team should:

- Review all the programme approval documentation.
- Contribute to discussions and decision-making as required of its role.
- Consider the new programme in accordance with the stipulated criteria for approval of new programmes.

The Head of Faculty/Director of Apprenticeships should formally support the submission of the new programme documentation and this must be recorded at the Faculty/Team Meeting prior to submission.

#### **4.14.5 College Approval Event**

The College Approval Event is organised by the Quality Team. The Panel's role is to review the programme design and documentation against the criteria set out in section 4.16 and make recommendations to Academic Board.

### **4.15 COLLEGE APPROVAL PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

Each panel will normally consist of at a minimum:

- Master of the College (Chair) or appointed replacement.
- Registrar
- Two Heads of Faculty not related to the new major subject under approval, or the Programme Director and the External Examiner.
- Two Student Panel Members, appropriate to the programme being proposed. Where there is a postgraduate programme in the Faculty of the same subject, a postgraduate student should be included.

- One independent External Panel Member from another higher education institution, appropriate to the programme being proposed.

The remit of the Panel is to review the documentation, question the Programme Proposer and relevant faculty, come to a conclusion, and determine any conditions and/or recommendations.

It is expected that the individual Panel members will review the proposed programme documentation prior to the event. Normally, Panel members will be expected to attend the event, but attendance can be via virtual methods if required.

The Head of Quality Assurance is responsible for the organisation of the event and the circulation of the documentation and may sit in during the panel meeting to assure the process is consistent and fair.

The nomination of the External Panel Member is the responsibility of the Programme Proposer for the new programme. For further information on the external panel member please refer to the [External Panel Member Policy](#).

The Chair is responsible for overseeing the event itself and ensuring a thorough review of the programme materials is conducted, in order to recommend the approval or non-approval of the programme.

## **4.16 CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMMES**

### **4.16.1 Quality of the Learning Experience**

- The proposed programme provides students with a coherent and developmental educational experience.
- The design and organisation of the curriculum are effective in promoting student learning and creating conditions for the learning outcomes to be achieved.
- The programme documentation is clear and conforms with the College's regulations, such that students, faculty and professional staff would know what is expected of them.
- The learning outcomes relate appropriately to the relevant internal and external reference points and aims of the provision.
- The graduate/postgraduate outcomes for students represent a good return on their investment.
- Engagement with relevant employers and/or professional bodies throughout the programme is sufficient to confirm that the student experience is informed by current and contemporary practice.
- The expectations of students, employers and other relevant professional bodies have been considered within the programme development procedures.

- The provision is consistent with the College's **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**, and promotes an inclusive environment for learning by anticipating the varied requirements of learners (for example, because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location or age), and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities.

#### **4.16.2 Quality and Standards of the Programme**

- The aims and objectives of the provision are consistent with the College's educational aims and objectives.
- There is a balance of academic, practical and personal development elements.
- There is a robust logical and intellectual coherence to the programme ensuring a high-level experience for students, which is clearly related to the programme aims and learning outcomes.
- The proposed programme complies with the College's Academic Regulations, unless a variation to these regulations is proposed and detailed within the approval documentation (e.g. on the recognition of prior learning, admissions, etc.).
- The College's policies on the design of programmes and courses have been met.
- The programme has been appropriately aligned with the UK Quality Code, including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- Relevant external reference points, including QAA subject benchmarks, Degree Apprenticeship Standards and appropriate industry/professional standards, have been considered and addressed appropriately within the development procedure.
- The research and scholarly activity of the faculty is sufficient to maintain the standards of provision and enrich the curriculum with contemporary developments in the subject, particularly to underpin work at Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- The learning outcomes for the programme, and the standards that will be achieved, are appropriate to the level of the proposed award and title, and are appropriately distinct from any other award and/or titles offered or already proposed for approval.
- There are opportunities for academic progression to and from the proposed programme, with entry and exit requirements in line with the College's policies and regulations.



### 4.16.3 Programme Structure

- The curriculum and learning outcomes match the rationale for the programme.
- The educational rationale is sound and the curriculum is coherent, with clear progression in the subject matter.
- The increasing demands on the learners as they progress through the levels of the programme are clearly articulated.
- The teaching methods are appropriate to the curriculum, and the learning outcomes reflect the educational aims of the programme.
- The programme is balanced in terms of subject specialism and skill development.
- There is sufficient evidence that the curriculum and programme design have been informed by current thinking within its discipline, by recent developments in learning and teaching, enterprise and advanced professional practice of faculty.
- The programme structure takes into account the entitlements of students with diverse characteristics, including ensuring that the learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, learning environment, and planned assessment methods do not create unnecessary barriers.
- There is evidence that the quality of teaching and standards of assessment in the subject are likely to be consistent with national practice.

### 4.16.4 Assessment

- The Teaching and Learning Strategy, and a variety and balance of assessment methods employed will effectively enable and support student learning, the achievement of the learning outcomes, and will promote inclusive practice.
- The learning outcomes are tested through the assessment process.
- The assessment strategy is clear, with students exposed to appropriate methods of assessment for the subject.
- Individual assessments within courses are clearly identified and provide an effective measurement of performance, with an acceptable and balanced overall student experience.
- College policies and procedures associated with assessment management are recognised and met.
- Assessment practices are inclusive and equitable, and the methods, tasks and procedures do not advantage or disadvantage any group or individual.

#### 4.16.5 Regulatory and Technical Compliance

- The programme does not contain any elements or procedures at variance with the College's Academic Regulations, other than any exceptions for which approval is explicitly sought as part of the approval procedure. You will need to have completed the Variance to Academic Regulations Form and had any variations to College regulations approved before a College Approval Event.
- The College's policies and operational procedures are applied consistently, or identified and justified as variations.
- College expectations in respect of academic provision and its delivery are met in full.
- Any relevant PSRB requirements and Degree Apprenticeship standards are met and aligned appropriately with the College's requirements and expectations.
- External requirements relevant to the provision are met.
- The programme complies with the College's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

#### 4.16.6 Student Support and Guidance (excluding standard College support systems)

- Arrangements are in place for support required by particular groups of students (e.g. overseas), and provision is made for students from diverse backgrounds and/or educational experience, and students with a range of characteristics including protected characteristics.
- Induction arrangements are appropriate to any specific programme features.
- Support is available to students in respect of any critical programme-related choices or decisions (e.g. course options).
- There are appropriate opportunities for, and sound arrangements in place, for the management of work-based learning, mentoring, projects, etc.

#### 4.16.7 Programme Management

- There are procedures in place for the management of Quality Assurance procedures, such as the appointment and reporting of External Examiners, annual monitoring, and programme review.
- The Faculty/Apprenticeship Team understands the responsibilities in respect of the management of student learning opportunities with regard to teaching, learning and assessment procedures and learning resources.
- There are appropriate mechanisms in place for obtaining and responding to student feedback on the programme and the student experience.

#### 4.17 AGENDA FOR COLLEGE APPROVAL EVENTS

The indicative agenda, below, may be adapted as necessary:

Time	Agenda Item and Areas of Discussion	Individuals Involved
10.00	Private meeting of the Panel to discuss the format for the day and lines of enquiry.	Panel
10.30	Meeting with senior staff to discuss how the programme fits with institutional and faculty strategic aims, staffing, resourcing and staff development.	Panel, Head of Faculty/Director of Apprenticeships, and Senior Management Staff (e.g. Financial Controller and HR Manager)
11.30	Private meeting of Panel to consider comments made by senior staff in the light of the next meeting.	Panel
12.00	Meeting with the Faculty to discuss the structure, curriculum, delivery, assessment, pedagogic and operational issues of the proposed programme, and especially the relationship to the QAA Benchmarks and the College's Academic Regulations.  This meeting should include all the staff who will deliver the programme together with Student and Academic Services representatives.	Panel Programme Proposer Head of Faculty/Director of Apprenticeships Course Leaders and other faculty Learning and Assessment Support Officer
13.30	Lunch: private meeting of the Panel, or meeting with students on cognate programmes.	Panel Students
14.30	Tour of the facilities, if required	Panel Head of Faculty/Director of Apprenticeships
15.30	Provisional feedback to the Faculty	Panel Programme Proposer Head of Faculty/Director of

		Apprenticeships Course Leaders and other faculty Learning and Assessment Support Officer
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#### 4.18 OUTCOMES OF COLLEGE APPROVAL EVENT

The College Approval Panel may recommend:

- Approval with no conditions and recommending the programme to Academic Board for final ratification.
- Approval with conditions to be met, to be signed off by the Chair, prior to recommending the programme to Academic Board for final ratification.
- Suspension of the process with conditions or recommendations.
- Non-approval, with feedback.

#### 4.19 PROCESS POST-COLLEGE APPROVAL EVENT

The outcome of the College Approval Event will be recorded at the subsequent Academic Board, and the Chair of the Panel will confirm that the conditions have been met and/or recommendations have been reviewed and modifications have been made.

The Head of Quality Assurance is responsible for informing the departments within the College on the outcome of the programme approval procedure, such as Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions, and Student and Academic Services.

#### 4.20 PUBLICITY FOR AND MARKETING OF NEW PROGRAMMES

In line with the UK Quality Code and the Competition and Markets Authority and all the guidance relating to publicly available information about higher education provision, the College works to ensure the accuracy of the public information.<sup>4</sup>

Information presented through the College’s public website is verified as accurate by the Head of Faculty/Programme Director in conjunction with the Quality Team, following approval of the programme.

Where a new provision is being developed, the programme may only be advertised formally once the programme has been ratified by Academic Board. Prior to this point the programme can only be marketed as ‘subject to approval’ after approval from Stage 1 has been granted. Following confirmation from the Head of Quality

<sup>4</sup> UK Quality Code Theme: Course Design and Development.

Assurance that conditions and/or recommendations have been met and final ratification has been gained, this caveat may be removed.

## **PART 2: APPROVAL OF NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES OR COURSES**

### **4.21 NORTHEASTERN PROGRAMMES AND COURSES**

The College is developing its portfolio of programmes and courses. This includes being a central part of Northeastern University's global university system and student mobility programmes, as the London Campus.

Northeastern has a robust accreditation procedure for the approval of their own programmes and courses. It is therefore deemed acceptable to modify the new programme and course procedure outlined in Part 1 of this AQF chapter (above) when NCHNL is approving established Northeastern programmes and/or courses.

### **4.22 TRANSITION TO UK REGULATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS**

UK approved programmes have to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, and the key expectations are:

- To meet the Framework for High Education Qualifications (FHEQ)<sup>5</sup> and Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS)<sup>6</sup>.
- The value of qualification in-line with UK sector standards.
- The inclusion of external expertise for alignment with UK sector standards.
- Resource qualified faculty, facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality student experience.

### **4.23 PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF NORTHEASTERN PROGRAMMES**

There are two streams of approval that are required, which can be done synchronously:

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<sup>5</sup> The UK frameworks for higher education qualifications use qualification descriptors to exemplify the general nature and outcomes of the main type of qualification at each framework level. The qualification descriptors are generic in nature and can be applied across subjects and modes of learning. They make clear how the qualification differs from other qualifications, both at that level and at other levels. They provide clear points of reference for each level and cover the great majority of existing qualifications.

<sup>6</sup> Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. They show what graduates might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their studies. They are not available for all Level 7 programmes, but there are ones for business and management, computing and engineering.

<b>Resource Planning/Approval</b>	<b>Academic Content Approval</b>
Teaching location	Programme Specification
Recruitment of sufficiently qualified faculty	Course descriptors
Student accommodation	Mapping to FHEQ & SBS
Tier 4 visa allocation	
<b>Approved by NCHNL Board</b>	<b>Approved by Academic Board</b>

#### 4.23.1 Development of Programme Documentation

Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the programme documentation rests with the Programme Director. A designated Quality Team member will be assigned to each Programme Director to support them in the development of the programme documentation.

Programme approval documentation should be produced using the templates provided by the Quality Team.

The programme documentation required for the approval of Northeastern programmes is listed in the table below:

<b>Required Programme approval documents</b>	<b>Document description</b>
Programme Specification	<p>One Programme Specification should be produced for each programme.</p> <p>The Programme Specification provides essential information about the programme.</p> <p>The Programme Specification should be written with students as the intended audience.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the Programme Specification are accurate and completed in full.</p> <p>The Programme Specification is normally published on the College's website to provide prospective students with information about the programme.</p>
Course Descriptors	<p>One Course Descriptor should be produced for each course of the programme.</p> <p>Course Descriptors provide essential information about specific courses.</p>

	<p>Course Descriptors should be written with the students as the intended audience.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the Course Descriptors are accurate and completed in full.</p> <p>The Course Descriptor is normally published on the College's website to provide prospective students with information about the programme.</p>
External Examiner Nomination Form	<p>If a new External Examiner is required for the new programme, the Programme Proposer should work with the Faculty to provide the name of an External Examiner.</p> <p>Reference should be made to <a href="#">AQF11 External Examining</a> and the criteria for the nomination of a new External Examiner.</p>

#### 4.23.2 External Subject Expertise

The Quality Team member will propose a suitable external subject expert as an adviser to provide impartial and independent scrutiny on academic standards and assessment processes.

A record of the External Subject Expert experience and suitability for the post will follow that of the procedure noted above for new programmes. Please see [section 4.14.3](#).

#### 4.23.3 Approval Procedure

- 4.1 As the programmes have been approved by Northeastern, the approval procedure will be desk-based and undertaken by the Head of Quality Assurance, to ensure that the College's regulations and external frameworks are met.
- 4.1 Scrutiny of the programme documentation, mapping the programme and course outcomes to the FHEQ, and if required QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, will be conducted.
- 4.1 The External Subject Expert will also undertake a desk-based analysis of the programme and provide comments to the Head of Quality Assurance. A remote meeting can be held if the External Subject Expert has significant concerns about the programme. The External Subject Expert must approve the programme, with or without recommendations agreed by the Head of Quality Assurance.

#### 4.23.4 Criteria for the Approval of Northeastern Programmes

The criteria for the approval of Northeastern programme under the degree-awarding powers of NCHNL will meet the criteria as set out in [section 4.16](#) of this document.



#### **4.23.5 Outcomes of Programme Approval Procedure**

The External Subject Expert and Head of Quality Assurance may recommend:

- Approval with no conditions and recommending the programme to Academic Board for final ratification.
- Approval with conditions to be met, to be signed off by the Head of Quality Assurance, prior to recommending the programme to Academic Board for final ratification.
- Suspension of the process with conditions or recommendations.
- Non-approval with feedback.

#### **Process Post Programme Approval Procedure**

The outcome of the approval procedure will be recorded at the subsequent Academic Board, and the Head of Quality Assurance will complete the approval procedure outcome report and tracking documents to follow up on any actions.

The Quality Team is responsible for informing the departments within the College and colleagues at Northeastern, on the outcome of the programme approval procedure, such as Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions, and Student and Academic Services.

The Quality Team will finalise the final versions of the programme documentation and ensure that all public information is accurate.

### **4.24 APPROVAL OF NORTHEASTERN COURSES**

The College supports Northeastern's strategy for the global university system and student mobility. Being part of the Northeastern community, London is a very attractive location for Northeastern students to select for their study abroad experience.

Northeastern students will have the opportunity to study on College courses, dependent on the programme that they are registered on at Northeastern. It is also recognised by both institutions that there might be a need for Northeastern courses to be approved under the degree-awarding powers of NCHNL, for example, pre-matriculated students, who require courses that are more aligned to the American delivery style, rather than the England learning approach.

#### **4.24.1 Development of Course Descriptors**

Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the Course Descriptor rests with the Head of Faculty responsible for the delivery of the course at the College. A designated Quality Team member will be assigned to each Programme Director to support them in the drafting of the document and the College's template should be used.

The Course Descriptor:

- Course Descriptors provide essential information about specific courses.
- Course Descriptors should be written with the students as the intended audience.
- It is important that all sections of the Course Descriptors are accurate and completed in full.

#### **4.24.2 Approval Procedure**

The Head of Faculty and/or faculty responsible for the delivery of the course will submit the Course Descriptor to the Head of Quality Assurance for a desk-based approval procedure.

The Head of Quality Assurance will scrutinise the Course Descriptor, to ensure that the aims, learning outcomes and assessment elements are at the required FHEQ level and meet UK standards.

#### **4.24.3 Outcome of the Course Approval Procedure**

The Head of Quality Assurance will approve (with or without recommendations) or reject the course. Once the course has been approved, a Course Code will be allocated by the Quality Team.

#### **4.23.4 Process Post Course Approval Procedure**

The Head of Quality Assurance will confirm at the subsequent Academic Board that the course has been approved and added to the portfolio of approved courses.

The Quality Team is responsible for informing the departments within the College and colleagues at Northeastern, on the outcome of the programme approval procedure, such as Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions, and Student and Academic Services.

The Quality Team will finalise the final versions of the programme documentation and ensure that all public information is accurate.

## **PART 3: PROGRAMME AND COURSE MODIFICATIONS**

### **4.25 MODIFICATIONS TO PROGRAMMES AND COURSES**

Programmes and courses are usually approved for a period of five years. The College acknowledges that modifications may be required before the periodic review to enhance the provision.

Faculty may identify opportunities for enhancing approved programmes as part of routine monitoring and other reflective activity.

As with new programme development, modifications to programmes and courses must be coherent and consistent with the College's strategic plan, must make business sense, and must be approved through the relevant modification approval procedure outlined below. In all cases, a rationale for the proposed modification must be provided by the Head of Faculty, Programme Director, or Course Leader. The modifications to the programmes and/or courses must be identifiable in the core documentation (Programme Specification and Course Descriptor) and consultation with appropriate stakeholders must be evidenced.

### **4.26 CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMME AND COURSE MODIFICATION PROPOSALS**

Programme and course modification proposals are approved by Academic Board. Major changes which have a resource implication are also considered by the Executive Committee. Proposed modifications are then approved through the relevant procedure according to the level of modification.

Proposals for programme and course modifications are subject to peer-review and external and internal consultation to provide assurance of the maintenance of academic quality and standards prior to their final approval.

Consultation may be undertaken at relevant meetings and through electronic communication. Where electronic consultation is undertaken in place of discussion at a meeting, this should be noted at the next available meeting and documented in the minutes.

In the case of student consultation, a 10-day consultation period is recommended as a minimum to enable all affected students/employers to consider and feedback on the proposed modifications.

For all modification proposals, the Quality Team will liaise with the Head of Faculty, Programme Director and/or Course Leader as appropriate regarding details of timelines and documentation, to provide process support, and to monitor the completion of the required approval stages as outlined below.

The Quality Team will monitor that the modification approval stages are followed, and will report this to the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board.

#### **4.27 DRIVERS FOR MODIFICATIONS TO PROGRAMMES AND COURSES**

Programmes and courses are typically approved for a period of five years from the point of approval to the point of periodic programme review. During this period, it may be identified that modifications to a programme or its courses would enhance the provision. Heads of Faculty and Course Leaders may propose in response to a number of sources of information, including:

- External Examiner reports
- Faculty, student, employer and graduate feedback
- Student progression data and other relevant data
- Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements
- Degree Apprenticeship Standard requirements
- Institutional goals and mission
- Strategic academic and resource planning
- Subject sectoral developments
- Changing external environment
- Good practice in other programmes or courses at the College, or other sources of good practice

#### **4.28 FRAMEWORK FOR MODIFICATIONS TO PROGRAMMES AND COURSES**

The approval of programme and course modifications is subject to clear identification of the modifications, the production of sound rationale, and evidence of undertaking appropriate consultation with stakeholders.

As with new programme and course development, modifications to programmes and courses must be coherent and consistent with the College's Strategic Plan, make business sense, and be academically sound and appropriate.

The following areas of the Programme Specification and Course Descriptor may not be changed:

- Programme Code
- UCAS Programme Code
- Course Code

The following programme and course modifications can be approved by this process:

- Changes to the teaching and learning strategy, learning outcomes or assessment of courses
- Changes/additions to the mode of course delivery
- Changes to credit weightings of courses
- Changes to course level

- Removing, replacing or adding courses in the programme structure
- Changes to course aims and programme/level learning outcomes

#### **4.29 TIMESCALES OF PROGRAMME AND COURSE MODIFICATIONS**

There are normally two time points within the year when programme and course modifications may be proposed for approval and implementation in the next academic year:

- November
- April (in response to External Examiner/employers recommendations only)

##### **4.29.1 Categories of Modification**

###### **Category 1: Documentary Updates**

Modifications to programme specifications or course descriptors to provide minor clarifications or to correct typographical/grammatical errors.

These changes can be made at any point during the academic year and must be agreed by the Quality Manager, in consultation with the Course Leader, Programme Director or Head of Faculty.

###### **Category 2: Minor Modifications**

Modifications that have no impact on the overall programme aims, learning outcomes, objectives, structure and balance of the programme, subject benchmarks and PSRB requirements. Modifications should not alter the fundamental character of the programme.

Proposals for minor changes must be endorsed by the Head of Faculty/Programme Director and approved by the Head of Quality Assurance.

###### **Category 3: Major Modifications**

Extensive modifications often across multiple courses where a programme's overall aims, learning outcomes, structure and balance may be affected. Modifications may include those that more significantly affect the programme's award, aims and objectives, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, overall structure or its management.

Proposals for Category 3 modifications must be reviewed by the Programme and Course Modification Review Group (PCMRG), whose membership will be the Registrar (Chair), Head of Quality Assurance and another Head of Faculty/Programme Director. This review can be conducted electronically, and if questions arise a meeting between the Head of Faculty/Programme Director and Course Leader(s) and the PCMRG will be convened.

For further information, please see [Appendix C](#).

#### **4.29.2 Approval of New Credit-bearing Courses**

New credit-bearing courses, credit rated in multiples of 5 (i.e. 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30, with a 30-credit course being the maximum size of a single course), at levels 4-7, can be approved by applying this procedure.

Course Descriptors should be prepared in accordance with the College's template and an appropriate External Examiner should be consulted to ensure that the proposed course will be comparable with other courses in terms of standards and quality of the student learning experience. Student consultation should also be undertaken via Faculty/Team Meetings.

Where new courses will form part of an existing programme structure, this will be dealt with as a programme modification, and will need to also meet the requirements as set out below.

The following criteria will be used in deciding whether to approve the new courses:

- Clear and coherent rationale for the new course.
- Documentation correct and consultation process completed.
- Appropriate learning outcomes, assessment, and content for credit value and level.

#### **4.29.3 Approval of Course and Programme Modifications**

Following the framework, sections 4.23 and 4.24, all proposed Category 2 and 3 programme modifications should be discussed at a Faculty Team meeting which includes student representatives.

Where proposed modifications impact on assessment or the learning outcomes, the External Examiner for that subject should be consulted prior to the submission of the proposal to the Quality Team.

The proposal for a programme/course modification, including the proposals for new courses, will be reviewed by the PCMRG. If the modification is approved, the PCMRG will recommend the modification to Academic Board.

In assessing the change request, feedback received from the External Examiner(s) and students will be taken into account.

The following criteria will be used in deciding whether to approve proposed modifications:

- The reason for proposing the modification meets one or more of the drivers outlined in section 4.23.
- Correct documentation.
- Consultation procedure completed - confirmation and evidence of consultation with students must be specifically provided.
- Clear and coherent rationale.

- Maintenance of academic standards.
- Enhancement of the integrity of the course and/or programme.
- Enhancement of the students' learning experience and/or performance, enabling them to more clearly demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.
- Improvement of the overall quality of the provision.
- Improvement of the operational effectiveness of the course and/or programme.
- Volume and impact of modifications made and/or proposed to the programme since it was approved.

#### **4.29.4 Within-session Modifications**

Exceptionally, there may be a need to change a course/programme within the academic session it is running. In such circumstances, and where appropriate internal and external consultation has been demonstrated and agreement of the students been obtained, Academic Board's Chair's action may be taken.

### **4.30 INFORMING THE COLLEGE OF MODIFICATION APPROVAL**

Once the proposed modification has been approved by Academic Board, the Quality Team will inform the relevant departments, which can include:

- Head of Faculty/ Programme Director (responsible for informing the students, Course Leader, faculty and employers).
- Student and Academic Services Team (responsible for preparing for the modifications in the following academic year).
- Director of Marketing (responsible for updating the website).
- Student Recruitment and Admissions Team.

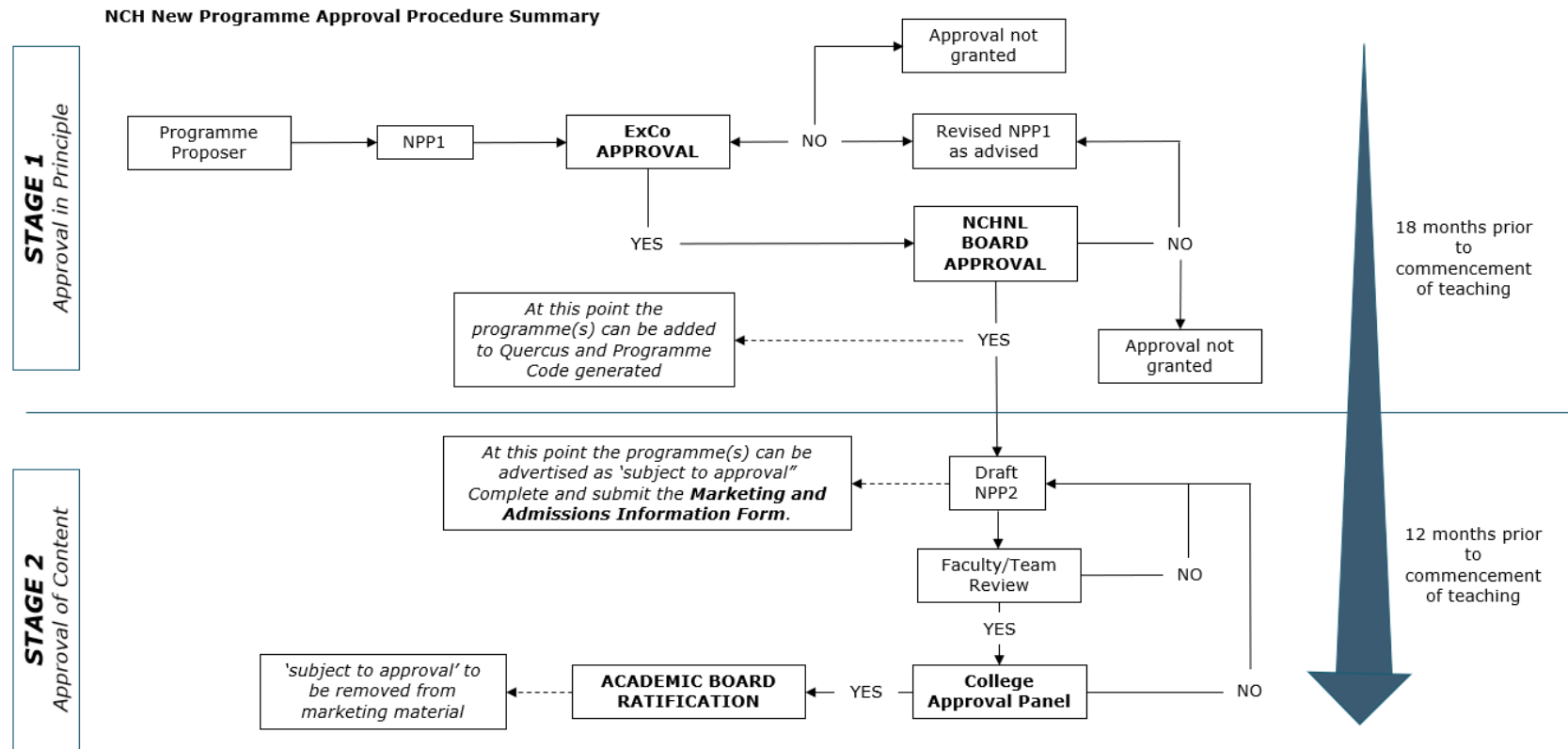
### **4.31 VERSION CONTROL OF CORE DOCUMENTATION**

The Quality Team is responsible for updating the following core documentation, where appropriate:

- Course Descriptors
- Programme Specifications
- Programme Handbooks

The Course Leader is responsible for updating or producing the Course Guide, using the College's course guide template.

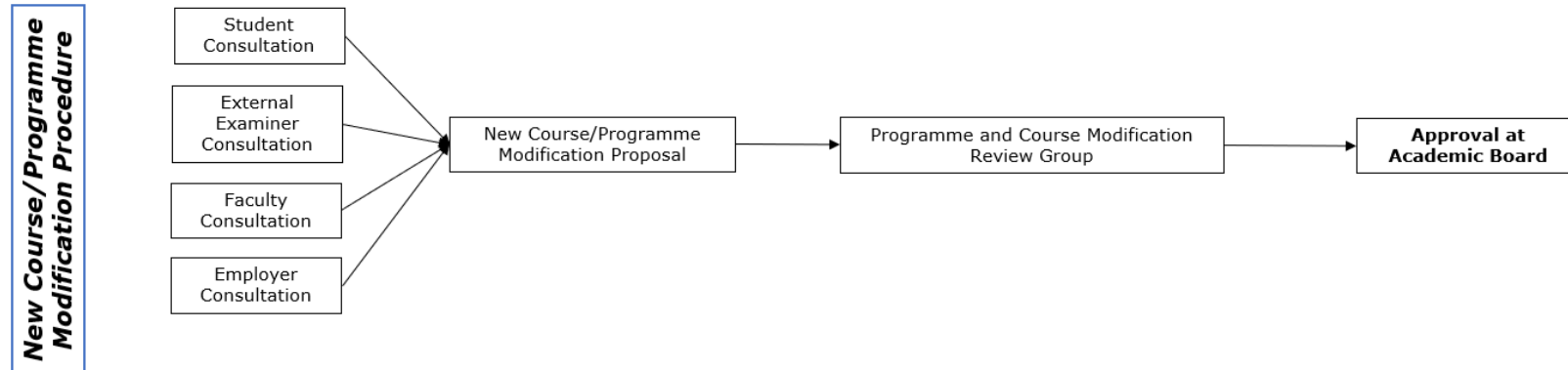
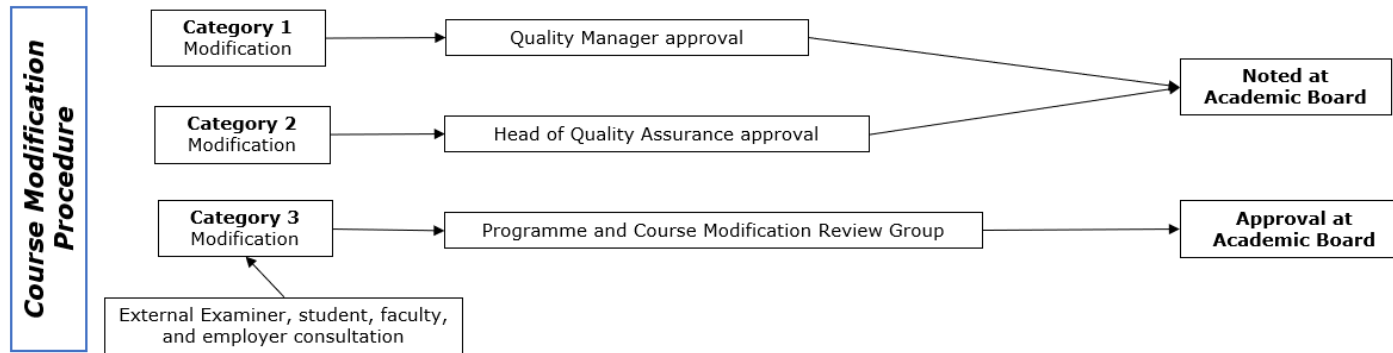
APPENDIX A





**APPENDIX B**

**Programme and Course Modification Procedure Summary**



**APPENDIX C****MODIFICATIONS AND INDICATIVE CATEGORY**

CD – Course Descriptor; PS – Programme Specification

**Category 1 – Documentary Updates**

<b>Modification Type</b>	<b>Modification Impact</b>
Corrections/clarifications to documents which do not change approved content or learning outcomes	Document changes (CD and/or PS)
Change of Course Leader	Document changes (CD)
Change in term of delivery	Document changes (CD)
“Course Description” section of the CD	Document changes (CD)
Course’s areas of study	Document changes (CD)
Course’s additional assessment information (online submission, grade marking, anonymous marking)	Document changes (CD) (Grade marking exemptions are subject to separate scrutiny and approval)

**Category 2 – Minor Modifications**

<b>Modification Type</b>	<b>Modification Impact</b>
Course title change	Document change (CD & PS)
Changes to pre/co-requisite details on CD	Document changes (CD)
Course Learning and Teaching Strategy	Subject to scale and scope – may be treated as major following consideration by the College. Document changes (CD & PS). Possible impact on learning outcomes.
Course assessment type	Subject to scale and scope – may be treated as major following consideration by the College. Document changes (CD & PS). Possible impact on learning outcomes.
Course length/duration of assessment	Documentation changes (CD & PS)
Course assessment weighting	Documentation changes (CD & PS)
Course aggregation of assessment	Documentation changes (CD & PS) (Separate approval arrangements cover requests to exempt from aggregation or cessation of exemption)

Course re-assessment	Documentation changes (CD & PS)
Programme structure changes involving option courses <40UG, including course closure	Documentation changes (CD & PS)

### Category 3 – Major Modifications

Modification Type	Modification Impact
Course credits	Likely to require a programme structure modification
Course level	Documentation change (CD & PS) May require a programme structure modification
Course designation	Documentation change (CD & PS). Should only occur where existing course becomes a non-credit bearing course.
Changes/addition to course delivery mode	Document change (CD & PS). Rationale for new mode – impact on programme and student learning experience.
Changes to the Course Learning Outcomes	Document change (CD & PS). Rationale for modification – impact on programme learning outcomes.
Programme learning outcomes	Documentation change (PS). Possible impact on programme learning outcomes.
Programme structure changes involving core courses	Document changes (PS). Possible impact on student learning and experience
Programme structure changes involving option courses >30 UG, including course closure	Document changes (PS). Possible change to balance of programme.
Programme aims/programme learning outcomes	Document changes (PS), but change likely to arise out of other modifications (not likely as a separate occurrence).

<b>Title: AQF4 Programme and Course Approval and Modification</b>					
<b>Approved by: Academic Board</b>					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Location	Proposed next review date
3.0	January 2021	January 2021	Head of Quality Assurance	Academic Handbook; Academic Quality Framework	September 2021
2.2	November 2020	November 2020	Head of Quality Assurance	Academic Handbook; Academic Quality Framework	September 2021
2.1	September 2020	September 2020	Head of Quality Assurance	Academic Handbook; Academic Quality Framework	September 2021
2.0	May 2019	June 2019	Head of Quality Assurance	Moodle (Staff access only)	December 2021
1.0	December 2017	-	Head of Quality Assurance	-	December 2018
Referenced documents	AQF5 Annual Monitoring; AQF6 Periodic Review; AQF11 External Examining; Approval in Principle: New Taught Programme Proposal Form 1 (NPP1); New Taught Programme Approval: General Resources Form; Financial Model Form; Application for New Taught Programme Content Form 2 (NPP2); New Taught Programmes Approval: Marketing and Admissions Information Form; Programme Specification; Course Descriptor; External Examiner Nomination Form; External Adviser Nomination Form; External Panel Member Policy; External Panel Member Nomination Form; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; Variance to Academic Regulations Form; Faculty Review Outcomes Report; Assessment Strategy; and Teaching and Learning Strategy.				
External Reference Point(s)	UK Quality Code Theme: Course Design and Development; QAA Subject Benchmark Statements; Degree Apprenticeship Standards; Competition and Markets Authority;				

