

# Curriculum Design, Approval and Review Procedure

April 2021

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## Version Control History

Version Number	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
1		Procedure introduced as part of the College Quality Manual
1.1	August 2016	Footer updated to reflect new template model
1.2	August 2018	Modified to introduce new coding system for non-degree programme development (NDP) Introduced streamlined approval process for existing provision
1.3	August 2019	Procedure updated to reflect approval by the Curriculum and Student Experience Group (CASE)
2	April 2021	Updated to conform to college procedure template. Amended title from 'Quality Manual: Course Approval' to Curriculum approval and modification procedure
2.1	January 2022	Modification process was reviewed and updated.

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**Version/Status:** V2.1/ Approved  
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**Owner:** Assistant Principal  
**Lead Author:** Quality Manager  
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## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 The procedure is designed to support the initial and ongoing approval of all tertiary curriculum delivered by the College and to ensure all proposals are in line with the College and UHI strategic business objectives.
- 1.2 The purpose of the procedure is not simply to ensure compliance with external body requirements. Properly planned and documented approval mechanisms prior to delivery enhance the experience of both students and staff and will contribute to the maintenance of academic standards throughout the college.
- 1.3 Stage 1 of the procedure is designed to ensure that all proposed curriculum ie new FE courses or HE programmes are properly considered at an early stage to confirm that they are in accordance with the strategic curriculum aims of the College, will be financially viable to deliver, are designed to meet a market need, and that the resources required to support the development are identified and agreed in principle.
- 1.4 Stage 2 of the procedure is designed to ensure that FE courses/ HE programmes leading to an award from an awarding body fully meet any relevant quality criteria prior to delivery.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 The procedure applies to all educational provision delivered by the college, whether public or commercially funded.
- 2.2 Where relevant the College is an approved Centre to deliver awards owned and validated by a national awarding body. The College is responsible for all quality assurance and quality management arrangements with respect to the national awards delivered and the Awarding Body Quality Approval Criteria will be used to determine whether or not the proposed new award should be offered for delivery by the College.
- 2.3 The college chooses to operate the same standards of initial and/or full approval for all education courses regardless of awarding body or whether the course leads to a recognised national qualification. This would include all educational delivery as part of a commercial venture. It does not include approval of leisure courses for delivery.
- 2.4 The college does not have devolved authority for final approval for delivery of regulated awards. However, all regulated award proposals must follow this procedure prior to going forward for final approval by the awarding body.
- 2.5 UHI is an approved SQA Centre relevant to non-regulated HE provision (HN and PDA). Initial approval for a new award to be delivered must follow this procedure prior to being forwarded to UHI for final delivery approval.
- 2.6 The college has authority to design and validate credit rated awards for inclusion on the SCQF database. The College is responsible for all quality assurance and quality management arrangements with respect the credit rated provision approved by them.

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2.7 The college may also choose to deliver non-credit rated courses. The College is responsible for all quality assurance and quality management arrangements with respect to the non-credit rated provision approved for delivery.

### 3 Definitions

3.1 Scottish non-degree awards are either regulated or non-regulated. Regulated awards are usually vocational in nature and have an element of work-based learning, for example a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ), Professional Development Awards (PDA).

3.2 In relation to regulated and non-regulated awards, there is a very clear distinction between the terms validation and approval.

3.2.1 Validation: addresses the nature of the award itself. It focuses on the justification, coherence and content of the new award i.e. it is award-specific. Validation is completed by the awarding body or regulatory body itself. For example, an awarding body such as SQA or C&G designs and validates all Group Award curriculum owned by them. With respect to regulated awards these are validated by the Regulating body ie SQA Accreditation or OfQual but will be offered as awards by an awarding body such as SQA or C&G who will manage the quality assurance arrangements of these awards.

3.2.2 Approval: addresses the capacity of the institution to offer a unit or group award. It focuses on the institution's ability to deliver and manage the award successfully i.e. it is institution-specific.

3.3 Modification: any changes to the curriculum ie course aims and objectives, mode of study, delivery style, and framework once a course is approved for delivery.

3.4 Review: where a course undergoes a periodic audit to ensure the course remains fit for purpose and delivery.

3.5 Verification: an audit of a whole course, group award, unit or suite of units to ensure they are being delivered according to the quality standards of the awarding body.

There are 2 levels of verification:

3.5.1 Internal verification by experienced staff within the college or UHI partnership

3.5.2 External verification / External Quality Assurance by subject specific experts employed by the awarding body and assuring the college's application of the awarding body quality criteria in its delivery of the award.

3.6 Course: a single unit or combination of units delivered for a specific aim and objective.

3.7 Framework: the selection of units to be delivered in a course.

3.8 Credit: a rating given to the unit based on notional learning hours (ie 10 notional learning hours = 1 credit) as per the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF)

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- 3.9 Level: normally associated with the approved SCQF for the unit/course, or is broadly comparable to.
- 3.10 Unit/Module: the term given to a topic of interest, usually credit rated, within a course of study. The term used is loosely dependant on the level of study ie unit is FE / HN and Module is degree.
- 3.11 Core /Mandatory unit: refers to a unit that must be taken and passed in order to achieve the course/group award and/or progress to the next level. This can include a unit noted as optional on the group award framework but determined as mandatory to study within the College course framework.
- 3.12 Optional unit: refers to a unit within a selection of units that a student can opt to take. It may need to be passed in order to achieve the course/group award.
- 3.13 Short course: normally lasts more than 4 hours but less than 40 hours. It may or may not be credit rated, be for continual professional development, and would only by exception have a formal qualification associated with achievement.
- 3.14 Continual Professional Development course: can vary from being a short course or a formal qualification. It would normally be studied on a part time basis or day release for work-based students.
- 3.15 Leisure course: non-credit rated short course, taken as an interest or hobby rather than for vocational purposes.

#### 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 Curriculum and Student Experience Group (CASE) has responsibility to approve all initial course proposals, at all tertiary levels, to go forward to full development and approval. This includes those to be delivered as commercial business engagement projects/partnerships.
- 4.2 Strategic Development Director (SDD) has responsibility to ensure that all course proposals from their curriculum area are fit for purpose and follow due approval procedure prior to delivery commencing, and for leading on discussions at the relevant approval group (CASE and/or Approval Panel)
- 4.3 Sector Manager/Subject Leader (Manager) is responsible for ensuring that the initial development proposal has been discussed with the SDD, allocating a lead author to develop the course material, that all relevant market research is undertaken to assure the required market need, due process is followed and correct paperwork is completed, that all paperwork is submitted to the Quality Department within good time to meet the relevant approving group (CASE/Approval Panel), that all relevant staff are present at the approval panel where relevant, that all follow actions from approval are completed prior to delivery of the course.
- 4.4 Lead Author once allocated by the Manager is responsible for completing all documentation as per the approval process, submitting it to the Manager for endorsement

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within the given timeframe, where relevant attending an approval event, completing all actions pertaining to the approval by the given date for completion, ensuring accurate information is provided to Marketing and Student Records once approved, ensuring all course material is developed in time for the first delivery of the course.

- 4.4 Quality Manager is responsible for providing advice and guidance to staff on the design and approval process for new curriculum and modifications, ensuring all proposals received are submitted to CASE (C&Q) for consideration, approving low risk course developments, Chairing or appointing a Chair to the course approval panel, reporting to CASE (C&G) on annual course approval activity, and for quality checking and publishing this procedure on the web.
- 4.5 Quality Officer is responsible for providing advice and guidance to staff on the approval process for new courses and modified frameworks, updating the approvals log with new provision, quality checking the documentation prior to submission for approval, alerting relevant professional services departments of the new course and its status of approval, setting up relevant approval panel meetings, allocating panel members, clerking the approval meeting, producing an approval report, and informing relevant staff of the status or outcome of the approval of a new course, gaining approval from the awarding body for delivery of the group award/units, and for registering any credit rated units onto the SCQF database.
- 4.6 Marketing are responsible for promoting the course and ensuring appropriate marketing material is designed and available for prospective applicants.
- 4.7 Student Records are responsible for creating the new course framework onto SITS and amending the details as per any approved modifications to the framework.
- 4.8 Admissions are responsible for setting the course information up on the MCR on SITS and updating the course information database with the course code, weblink and contact details to enable electronic admissions to be received.

## 5 Procedure

### Stage 1

- 5.1 It is the College's responsibility to quality assure the standards of all the education and learning delivered through the college, including that outsourced to third parties to deliver, irrespective of how it is funded. The following procedure outlines the process of approval prior to delivery and modifications to the curriculum thereafter.
- 5.2 A sector manager must initially discuss with the SDD who will determine whether the proposal is valid to go forward for consideration.
- 5.3 If agreed it can proceed for a proposal to go forward then the manager should appoint a lead author to develop the proposal, including undertaking relevant market research and writing up the proposal form and costing sheet.

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- 5.4 If the proposal is for delivery of a new course through partnership working then a business engagement proposal must have been completed and approved by CBP *prior* to the course proposal going to CASE (CQM).
- 5.4 The manager must inform the Quality Department at the time of endorsement by the SDD so that support on the process can be given to the lead author writing the proposal.
- 5.5 The lead author completes all relevant documentation and submits this to the manager for endorsement and signature. The completed documentation is then submitted to Quality Dept by the manager.
- 5.6 Once submitted to the Quality Team the documentation is quality checked to ensure it has all relevant information when presented to CASE (CQM) for consideration. If deemed incomplete, then it will be returned to the author identifying what is still required and must be resubmitted to the Quality Dept.
- 5.7 Completed documentation will be submitted to the next meeting of CASE (CQM) who will review the proposal and either endorse it to go forward to development or not.
- 5.8 If endorsed to proceed CASE (CQM) will determine the risk level of a new proposal and advise on the approval route.
- 5.9 The quality criteria for approval applies to single stand-alone units as well as to Group Awards and NQ's. It is necessary to ensure that adequate resources are in place - equipment, accommodation, learning and reference materials, assessment material as well as qualified staff. This procedure defines a 'light touch' but rigorous approach to the approval of individual units.
- 5.10 What form do I use?

<b>Programme development and approval</b>	
NDP A	If the course is new to the college If the course/award is HE and new to either to the whole university or to Perth College.
NDP B	If NDP Section A has been approved for development by CASE then NDP Section B is completed to give curriculum specific information..  If the scale of change requested in the NDP G is more than 40% (see course review)
NDP C	This provides information on the framework to be delivered.  For HE course: where relevant, the NDP Section C will be academic partner specific. If Perth are leading on a new course development, then a NDP C must be gathered from each AP interested in delivering the course in order to send in one course file to Faculty
Costings Form	To show indicative costings of the delivery over the first 3 years

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<b>Standalone unit approval</b>	
NDP A	Where the unit is a recognised national qualification then NDP A must be completed, along with NDP F.
NDP F (NU)	To be completed when a standalone single unit needs to be approved ie when the unit is not delivered as part of a group award

<b>PDA approval</b>	
NDP H (PDA)	To be completed if the units within the PDA are already delivered as part of another programme with the current academic year or previous two academic years. NB: this is not to be used where a PDA is new delivery in the College/University.

<b>Programme reapproval</b>	
NDP I parts A and B	To be completed when an awarding body revalidates an existing framework (Group Award). Part B is academic partner specific

### 5.11 How is the approval route determined?

<b>Risk matrix for approval route</b>	<b>Risk rating</b>	<b>Approval route</b>
New Course (NDPA/B/C/Costings)		
New award and all new units	High	Approval panel
New award using mix of existing and new units	Medium/High	Approval panel
New award using all existing units	Low	CASE (C&Q)

### Stage 2

- 5.12 Following endorsement by CASE (C&Q) to develop the proposal further, the lead author completes all relevant paperwork and submits to the quality team at [quality.perth@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:quality.perth@uhi.ac.uk).
- 5.13 In the case of a course which has previously/currently being delivered in the College but has been revised, an Approval event may not be necessary – see section 7 Modifications.
- 5.14 If an approval event is required, the procedure will continue as described above.
- 5.15 If an approval event is not considered necessary, it is still possible for conditions to be set prior to approval being granted as described in 6.1.
- 5.16 The Quality Officer quality checks the details in the relevant NDP documentation, seeks clarification/further information from the Course Team if necessary
- 5.17 Where a course is required to go to full panel the Quality Officer will arrange an Approval Panel meeting and invite panel members to participate.
- 5.18 If the Quality Manager is unable to Chair on the given date they will appoint an appropriate member of staff to Chair the approval panel in their absence.

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5.19 If a new course meets the low risk criteria then the documentation will be quality checked by the Quality Officer and if it meets the quality criteria will be approved by the Quality Manager, without the need for a fuller approval event.

## 6 Approval Panel Event

- 6.1 In the case of a new course, an Approval Panel will be convened. This would normally comprise the Quality Manager and 2 other panel members, 1 representing a different Curriculum Area from that of the Course Team and 1 member of CMT.
- 6.2 Where the risk is deemed low however then approval may take place through a desk-based exercise comprising the Quality Manager and a member of CMT.
- 6.3 The full Course Team should attend the approval panel meeting to enable discussion relevant to all unit subjects proposed within the course. Where this is not possible then this role will be delegated to another member of the team.
- 6.4 The purpose of the Approval event is to provide support for the course team in preparing for the delivery of the new course and to ensure that all curriculum resources and plans are in place for a successful delivery.
- 6.5 The panel will consider the relevant awarding body quality approval criteria when reaching an approval decision.
- 6.6 The panel will determine one of the following outcomes:
- Approved: a programme is approved to begin delivery from immediate effect.
  - Approved, subject to: a judgement that the course will be appropriate for delivery once conditions have been met. There may be 2 separate sets of conditions to be met on specific dates ie prior to marketing of the course, and/or prior to delivery of the course.
  - Approved with recommendations. The course can begin delivery but the panel have identified further actions that in their opinion would enhance the course and teams should take these into consideration.
  - Not approved: a judgement that in its current state the course is not fit for purpose as presented to the panel and is not approved for delivery.
- 6.7 Discussions and actions from the meeting are reported on Form NDP D, the record of the approval event by the Quality Officer clerking the event.
- 6.8 Where conditions are imposed, these must be met before the award is fully approved and can start delivery.
- 6.9 When all conditions are completed and signed off by the Chair of the approval panel then the award is fully approved. The Quality Department notifies the relevant awarding body and all relevant support departments such as MIS, Admissions, Marketing.
- 6.10 The course team must complete an NDP E prior to delivery to confirm that all relevant supporting resources are in place.

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6.11 All courses require confirmation of approval before they are entered onto the Management Information System. A course code can be created for admissions purposes for new courses/programmes as long as they are promoted as 'subject to approval'.

## **7 Modification to approved course curriculum, including annual framework changes**

7.1 Modifications can be made to agreed curriculum. This includes amendments to or additional modes of delivery, learning, teaching or assessment Strategy, and/or course framework unit choices but they must be approved before delivery.

7.2 There are two types of modification process, with relevant documentation.

7.2.1 The first type is the annual framework confirmation process facilitated by MIS. In February each year MIS issue to the Sector Manager a course framework (NDP C), in an Excel spreadsheet, for all current courses. This enables modifications to the course framework to be made for delivery of the course the following academic year. Changes to be made to the framework should be annotated on the spreadsheet, a reason for the modification given and a review of the impact of the modification on the course as a whole. If modifications will change the course title, qualification aim, mode of delivery etc, then this is also to noted.

7.2.2 Once completed and signed off by the Sector Manager, the framework changes will be checked by the Quality Manager, or delegate, and approved providing the changes are low risk (See risk rating in 7.10 below). Any changes that are deemed medium or medium/high risk may require further documentation and additional College approval (see section 5). If the changes are for HN or PDA provision then the modifications may require further documentation and once complete will be forwarded onto Faculty for approval by Quality. Once approval has been confirmed for the FE provision, MIS password protect certain key cells on the spreadsheet and progress the changes in SITS. The spreadsheet will be available for staff to view only after this point.

7.2.3 Any additional modifications that require to be made once the spreadsheet has been protected must be communicated through the completion of the template NDP G form held on Quality Matters (Quality Department Sharepoint communications site). This should identify clearly what the proposed change is, and what impact this will have on the existing approved curriculum. All modification to curriculum must be submitted for approval to the Quality dept prior to delivery.

7.2.4 Once submitted the framework changes will be checked by the Quality Manager, or delegate, and approved providing the changes are low risk (See risk rating in 7.10 below). Any changes that are deemed medium or medium/high risk may require further documentation and additional College approval (see section 5). If the

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changes are for HN or PDA provision then the modifications may require further documentation and once complete will be forwarded onto Faculty for approval by Quality. Once approval has been confirmed by Quality, they will update the NDP C course framework excel spreadsheet noting it as a new version and MIS will progress the changes in SITS.

7.3 For new units to a framework for HN or PDA an NDP F must also be submitted. Any College FE courses are required only to submit a reading list, where relevant, to the Library.

7.4 What forms do I complete?

Programme modification	
NDP C	Course Framework
NDP G (PA)	To be completed when any change to an existing programme is proposed after the excel spreadsheet is closed down.
NDP F (NU)	All new HN/PDA unit require a full NDP F
Reading List	FE units require only a reading List to be completed

7.5 Risk rating to determine approval route of modification.

	Risk	Approval route
Course title change (rebadging existing award/unit)	Medium	CASE (C&Q)
Course title change, change to framework greater than 40% and introducing new units	Medium/High	Approval Panel
Course title change, and change to framework greater than 40% but using existing units	Medium	CASE (C&Q)
Course title unchanged, change to framework greater than 40% and introducing new units	Medium/High	Approval panel
Course title unchanged, change to framework greater than 40% but using existing units	Low	Quality Manager
Course title unchanged, change to framework less than 40% and introducing new units	Low/Medium	Quality Manager
Course title unchanged, change to framework less than 40% and using all existing units	Low	Quality Manager
Change to or additional mode of delivery	Medium	CASE (C&Q)

7.6 What forms do I complete if the changes are more than 40%?

Please speak with the Quality Department who will guide you as to the documentation relevant to complete, but normally if a programme is deemed Medium/High the full approval documentation may be required. See section 5

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## 8 Approval of Regulated Awards

- 8.1 Approval of regulated awards are non-devolvable and require an application for approval to the awarding body. This is due to type of award they are, normally this is a regulated award. This applies to most SVQ's, Professional Development Awards (PDAs), and some National Progression Awards (NPAs) as well as a handful of other bespoke awards. If in doubt it is best to check with Quality.
- 8.2 An NDP A is required to be submitted to Quality for approval to proceed by CASE, along with a costing sheet.
- 8.3 Full college approval will be required ie Stages 1 and 2 of internal college approval route as described above is to be followed. However, as there is also a stage 3: approval by the awarding body, it may be more relevant to utilise the awarding body approval documentation than that full NDP documentation. Please check with Quality first prior to completing any other documentation.
- 8.4 Quality Dept staff will support the team in the completion of the documentation and check that the forms have been completed appropriately before submitting to the awarding body. It is normal for the awarding body to have approval panel members visit the College to discuss the application with the course team. However, where the subject discipline is delivered already by the college then this may be completed as a desk based exercise.

### What forms do I complete?

Programme modification	
NDP A	To be completed when any unit completion leads to a national qualification
Costings Form	To show indicative costings of the delivery over the first 3 years

### Risk rating to determine approval route of modification.

	Risk	Approval route
Unit leads to a national qualification	Medium	CASE (C&Q)
Unit is a stand alone with no recognised qualification	Low	Quality Manager

## 9 Risk of loss of Approved Centre status

- 9.1 As outlined in the Risk Management Policy, the Board of Management ensures that risk management is integrated in strategic planning processes. The Board satisfies itself that the less significant risks are none the less being actively managed, with the appropriate controls in place and working effectively, as Managers and Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring good risk management practice within their area of responsibility. The Board annually reviews the College approach to risk management.

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9.2 The risk to the College of losing Approved Centre status is deemed to be high impact but low probability and thus is not reported on the loss register due to:

- Any awarding body would have to have a justifiable reason to withdraw such approval quickly.
- Any awarding body would give us sufficient time to correct any wrong doings to ensure we maintain approval.
- The College would provide reassurance to awarding bodies through verification activity that we do follow their rules and regulations.

9.3 In the event of a serious breach of conduct occurring that risks the College's Approved Centre status by an Awarding Body the following process is put into practice.

- a. Any serious breach of conduct by a Perth College staff member or student that is deemed to risk the Approved Centre status is reported to the relevant Head of Department/Sector Development Director and Quality Manager as soon as it is discovered.
- b. The Quality Manager reports it to College Principal, Senior Management Team and to the Awarding Body.
- c. The Quality Manager and Head of Department/Sector Development Manager investigate the circumstances and determine actions to be taken to mitigate the risk.
- d. The Head of Department/Sector Development Director oversees the implementation of actions and reports back to SMT and the Quality Manager.
- e. The Quality Manager reports the outcome of actions taken to the Awarding Body.

9.4 In the event of actions taken not satisfying the Awarding Body and thus resulting in a temporary suspension of\* or loss of Approved Centre Status then the following actions will be taken. Where a course is mid-delivery or scheduled to start delivery a member of the Senior Management Team will:

9.4.1 Identify where the College is an approved Centre for another awarding body which has a similar/equivalent award; gain student consent to transfer; make arrangements to transfer the students to that course in order for them to complete or undertake their award.

9.4.2 Or, where 9.4.1 above is not an option:

- Identify an alternative Approved Centre that is within a reasonable distance for students to travel to or to continue studying via distance learning;
- Inform the students and gain their consent to transfer;
- Liaise and make agreement for the transferring of students to that Approved Centre;
- Make arrangements for any costs incurred by the students in moving to another approved Centre or the approved Centre itself to be paid.
- Should an alternative approved Centre not be forthcoming, compensate the students accordingly for the inconvenience caused.

9.4.3 Liaise with Marketing and other relevant departments to stop any further marketing or promotion of the course(s) for future delivery.

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9.4.4 Where relevant, inform any stakeholders of the loss of Approved Centre Status.

*\*this is not relevant to a hold on certification of an award*

## 10 Linked Policies/Related Documents

10.1 QUAL120 Evaluation, Monitoring, and Planning Process

10.2 QUAL139 Business Engagement Policy

10.3 QUAL140 Business Engagement Procedure

10.4 Perth College UHI Strategic Plan

10.5 Regional Outcome Agreement

10.6 Validation procedure for UHI Degree programmes [SECTION 7 - PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT](#)  
[uhi.ac.uk](http://uhi.ac.uk)

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