

Part 5

Approval and Validation of Award-Bearing Courses (non-collaborative)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All proposals for new Courses require Initial approval by the relevant, School and University Committees.
- 1.2 School Quality Committees approve all non-collaborative Courses. Part 11 of this manual outline's procedures for the approval of collaborative Courses.
- 1.3 All non-collaborative Courses are validated, after School approval, via the peer review process.

2 The Initial Approval Process

- 2.1 Before a new Course is developed, Initial Approval must be obtained. The aim is to ensure that time is spent productively on developing proposals that are viable, accord with the UEL vision and strategic plans and are likely to succeed at validation.
- 2.2 Initial Approval should be obtained at least a year before the first intake of students and eighteen months is the suggested lead in time (see *fig 1*). Exceptions with tighter timescales may be approved if an appropriate rationale is received.

UG/PG on Campus or by DL							
Stage / Intake Point	Sep-21	Jan-22	Sep-22	Jan-23	Sep-23	Jan-24	Sep-24
Stage 1 – Marketing Approval to Proceed	Nov 2019	Apr 2020	Oct 2020	Apr 2021	Oct 2021	Apr 2022	Oct 2022
Stage 2 – QA Approval to Proceed	April 2020	June 2020	Nov 2020	June 2021	Nov 2021	June 2022	Nov 2022

SLTQC Validation to take place by	28 th Feb 2021	31 st May 2021	28 th Feb 2022	31 st May 2022	28 th Feb 2023	31 st May 2023	28 th Feb 2024
Confirmation of validation by Peer Review	31 st Mar 2021	31 st Jul 2021	31 st Mar 2022	31 st July 2022	31 st Mar 2023	31 st July 2023	31 st Mar 2024

Fig 1

2.3 As part of the development process, the Course proposer should contact staff in the following services at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss the proposal:

<i>Financial Services</i>	Advice on the financial viability of the proposal and the level of tuition fee that should be set.
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	Advice on external funding.
<i>Student Recruitment and Marketing</i>	Advice on the marketing of the proposed Course.
<i>Quality Assurance and Enhancement</i>	Advice on the validation process and compatibility of Courses with regulations. Completion of due diligence and MoC processes for Collaborative Partnerships.
<i>International Student Recruitment</i>	Advice on demand from international students, English language and IELTS requirements.
<i>Information Technology Services</i>	Advice on IT requirements and to assess the extent to which IT services will be able support the proposed Course.
<i>Library and Learning Services</i>	Advice on the ability of Library and Learning Services to support the proposed Course, including availability of funding to purchase learning resources.
<i>Facilities Services</i>	The availability of standard and specialist accommodation to support the proposed Course.
<i>Centre for Student Success</i>	Advice on structuring the Course to enable students to succeed, during and after their studies.
<i>Graduate School</i>	For proposals for professional doctorate Courses.

2.4 Initial Approval

2.4.1 The Course proposer is required to complete the approval form, in collaboration with the services listed above, to confirm:

- A case for how the proposed Course aligns with School and Institutional strategy. With additional student related information regarding Course set up.
- Detailed staffing strategy, high level facilities/ space/ technology/ IT requirements.
- Confirmation of any funding sources.
- Timeline for approval.
- Module level detail relating to the proposed Course.
- Initial market analysis completed by the proposer
- Detailed market analysis, viability of the proposed Course, the target market and main competitors completed by Student Recruitment and Marketing.
- Text suitable for advertising the Course.
- Detailed financials covering income and expenditure for the first 3 years. Including commentary from Financial Services and relevant finance codes.

2.4.2 The Initial Approval journey is illustrated below:

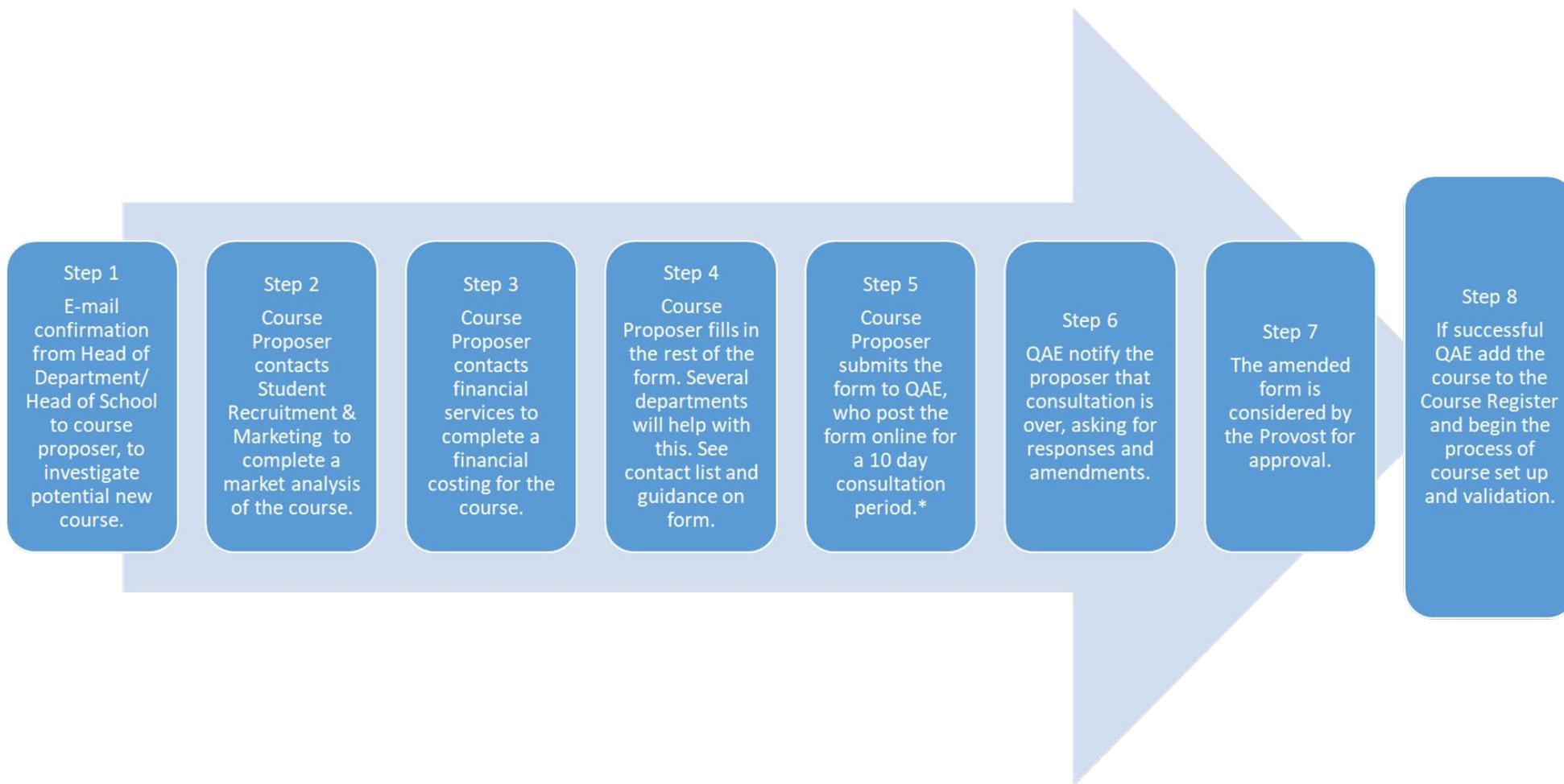


Fig 2

3 Course Validation

3.1.1 No proposal may proceed to validation unless it has been granted Initial Approval.

3.1.2 Once approved, the proposal is added to the validation and review schedule and progress in terms of validation is monitored by the School Quality Committee. The QAE Quality Assurance Officer associated with the School will be available to provide advice and guidance and assist in the development of the proposal.

3.2 Course Development

3.3 Once a proposal has received Initial Approval, the Course proposer establishes a development team to assist with the development of the Course.

3.4 Where a Course that has, or requires, recognition by a professional, regulatory or statutory body is the subject of the approval or re-approval, the professional, regulatory or statutory body should be informed of the proposals at the earliest opportunity, depending on the approval requirements of that body. Where appropriate, a representative of that body will be involved in the approval process.

3.5 Naming of Courses Involving Multiple Subjects

3.5.1 Where a single honours degree combines two subjects within its Course title, the title should contain either the words 'and' or 'with':

- **And** - should be used where there is equal weighting at all levels between the two subjects, so that there are 60 credits per subject area per level.

If some modules contain aspects of both subjects there must be clear indications that there is an equal amount of content from both subject areas.

- **With** - should be used where there are a greater number of credits in one subject compared to the other, typically 90/30. The subject with the greatest credit weighting must appear first in the degree name.

Where the Course contains a dissertation, it would be assumed that the topic of this would reflect both subjects taught where the degree is 'and', with a greater bias on one rather than the other for 'with'.

3.6 External Advice

3.7 Prior to the School Quality Committee meeting convened to consider the Course for approval, the Course Proposer nominates appropriate external subject advisers to participate in the approval process. Two external advisers are required, but this number can be increased, if appropriate, at the

discretion of the Chair of the School Quality Committee. Where a substantive amount of distance or blended learning is included, at least one of the external advisers should have experience of distance learning provision.

- 3.8** The suitability of the external advisers will be determined by the Chair of the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee subject to the following criteria:
- 3.8.1 The depth of subject knowledge.
 - 3.8.2 The relevance of subject knowledge.
 - 3.8.3 Prior experience of teaching on Courses at the same level or above; and experience of distance or blended learning provision where appropriate.
 - 3.8.4 Impartiality (the nominee should not have any formal links with the UEL during the last five years as a former member of staff or the last three years as an external examiner).
 - 3.8.5 Professional expertise (for vocational Courses, at least one of the advisers should be a 'practitioner' drawn from a relevant business or professional background).
- 3.9** It is unlikely that any single nominee will meet all the above requirements. In making judgments about the suitability of the proposed external subject advisers, the Chair will need to take into account the overall balance of expertise presented by the external advisers. The Chair may reject a nominee or require the Course Proposer to nominate additional external subject advisers in order to ensure a balance of expert advice.
- 3.10** The external adviser should receive a copy of all documentation detailed in section 5 below and be asked to comment on the extent to which the documentation meets the UEL Quality Criteria.
- 3.11** Normally, comments from external advisers will be sought by correspondence and presented to a full meeting of the School Quality Committee. There is no requirement that external advisers attend a committee meeting but, at the discretion of the School Quality Committee, external advisers may be invited to attend a meeting in order to contribute to the discussion. Where an external adviser has not attended the meeting, the Course Proposer will formally notify the external adviser of the outcome of the process.
- 3.12 Documentation**
- 3.13** The Course Proposer is responsible for ensuring that sufficient copies of all the documentation are provided for the School Quality Committee's attention in advance of the meeting. It is recommended that documentation is circulated a minimum of 5 days in advance of the meeting. The following documentation is required for the approval of a new Course.

- 3.13.1 A validation document to include:

- The context of the proposed Course: This will include how the proposal meets the objectives of UEL's Strategic Plan and the School plan; the academic profile of the School and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on that profile; and any relationship of the proposal to Courses run by other Schools within UEL.
- The rationale for the proposal this will include: evidence of the regional and national demand for the proposal; details of consultation with relevant employers and relevant professional bodies; the relationship of the proposal to similar provision offered elsewhere; if the Course replaces one currently offered by the School, an explanation of why this is and details of consultation with students on the existing Course; the target student group/expected student profile; and expected career destinations for graduates/diplomates.
- Details of the means by which learning materials for distance learning delivery have been quality assured for content and learning design (for distance and blended learning proposals only).
- The professional context of the proposal (if relevant): This will include the influence of professional body requirements on the design of the Course. (If necessary, the relevant guidelines of the professional body(s) should be provided as an appendix).
- Course and Cluster structure diagram.
- Arrangements for the supervision and assessment of any placement element.
- School based academic and other counselling/student support arrangements.
- A statement detailing the Course team's evaluation of their proposal with regard to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) (where applicable), the QAA Quality Code, and any professional accreditation requirements (i.e.: how have they been used in the development of the Course).
- A curriculum vitae for each member of staff associated with teaching on the Course.
- Resources: This should include a statement making it clear what physical resources are available to support the Course (e.g. library, computer hardware and software, specialist accommodation, other specialist equipment), and how distance learning students will access the resources.
- The academic and administrative staff support infrastructure for distance learning students (for distance and blended learning proposals only).
- In the case of a Course reapproval, confirmation of student consultation to the proposed changes and evidence of such consultation along with transitional arrangements.

3.13.2 Course Specification (using the standard UEL template, available at <https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx> and from Quality Assurance and Enhancement); a Course specification is required for each Course, including instances where there are a number of similar routes through the Course. This ensures that learning outcomes are aligned with each Course.

3.13.3 Module Specifications (using the standard UEL template, available at <https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx> and from Quality Assurance and Enhancement).

3.13.4 For distance learning proposals and proposals that involve a blend of both distance/online and on-campus learning the proposal must also include a learning strategy (using the standard template available at <https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx> and from Quality Assurance and Enhancement).

3.13.5 For approval of Courses to be delivered as Higher and Degree Apprenticeships additional documentation and approval requirements are outlined in this manual Part 15. It is recommended that course proposers are familiar with the whole of that chapter before proposing an apprenticeship course.

3.13.6 Where a Course incorporates modules 'owned' by another School, the Course leader will obtain written agreement from the School relating to the use of the modules, and this should be presented to the approval meeting. This will facilitate subsequent notifications of changes made to these modules.

3.14 In addition to the documentation provided by the Course proposer, the School Quality Committee will be provided with a copy of the following information to assist with their deliberations:

- The UEL Quality Criteria.
- The relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s).
- An extract from Part 1 of the Manual of General Regulations, providing the full description of the award to which the proposed Course will lead.
- The external advisers' written comments.
- A copy of the relevant professional body(s) requirements, where appropriate.
- A copy of the Initial Approval form.
- Any other information relevant to the proposal.

3.15 Course Approval

- 3.16** All proposals for new Courses will be considered by a full meeting of the School Quality Committee. Proposals cannot be considered by correspondence. Schools are encouraged to set schedules for approval business and monitor these through their School Quality Committee. Where deadlines shown in fig 1 (second page of this chapter) cannot be met, validation can only proceed with the agreement of the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.
- 3.17** Where a professional, statutory or regulatory body requires it, a joint validation/accreditation event may be held, either by participation of the body in the UEL process as part of the School Quality Committee, or by a separate bespoke event that satisfies both UEL and the accrediting body needs.
- 3.18** In order for new Courses to be approved, the Quality Assurance Officer and a member of staff from another School (normally a School Quality Leader, but may be a Deputy Quality Leader, Dean of School, or Director of Education and Experience), must be present at the meeting, as specified in the standard terms of reference and constitution of the School Quality Committee. For the approval of professional doctorate Courses, a representative of the Graduate School will also be invited to attend.
- 3.19** The School Quality Committee will evaluate the proposal against the Quality Criteria and other external reference points, as appropriate, as set out in section 3.13 above.
- 3.20** In the case of distance and blended learning provision, the approval event will consider additionally the strategy for distance, blended or online delivery which will include. Methods of; delivery; induction; support; implementation of the curriculum; assessment strategy; and a plan for the ongoing development of staff.
- 3.21** For approval of Courses to be delivered as Higher or Degree Apprenticeships there are additional approval requirements, outlined in Chapter 15 of this manual.
- 3.22** A School Quality Committee may not consider a Course for approval unless the comments of all external advisers are available to the meeting.
- 3.23** The School Quality Committee can either: (a) approve the proposal and forward it to Quality Assurance and Enhancement for formal validation after peer review or; (b) reject the proposal and require that it be revised and re-submitted for further consideration at a future meeting. The School Quality Committee may not impose conditions of approval.
- 3.24** The minutes of the School Quality Committee will record details of the discussion about the proposal and the outcome agreed by the Committee. They will also indicate clearly the action taken in respect of recommendations of external advisers. The minutes will be forwarded to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement to be included in the documentation circulated for peer review.

- 3.25** Once a Course has been approved by the School Quality Committee, it can be delivered, subject to formal validation by peer review. The Servicing Officer for peer review will write to each School, following successful confirmation to notify them of formal Course validation.
- 3.26** All Courses are validated for a maximum period of six years, unless a shorter period is determined by the School Quality Committee and / or a professional body(s). Courses may be re-validated at any time during this period or via the periodic Academic Review process for a further six years.
- 3.27 Peer Review**
- 3.28** Peer reviewers will formally validate all Courses, on behalf of The Education and Experience Committee and Academic Board.
- 3.29** A subset of documentation will be circulated to three peer reviewers to judge whether due process has been followed and all relevant actions have been completed.
- 3.30** Peer reviewers complete a standard review form, independent from one another.
- 3.31** Peer reviewers will not 'second guess' the academic judgement of the School Quality Committee nor of the external advisers.
- 3.32** To facilitate their role, peer reviewers will receive: copies of the minutes of the meeting of the School Quality Committee; a copy of the Course specification; the external advisers' comments and school response.
- 3.33** Where peer reviewers have concerns about the completion of the process by the School Quality Committee, they will make those known to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement via the review form. The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement may seek further information or refer the proposal back to the School Quality Committee for further consideration.
- 3.34** The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement will report the status of courses currently being validated (and withdrawn) to Education and Experience Committee, noting when validation is complete and any issues of institutional significance that have emerged from validation activity.



Fig 3 - Example timeline for Validation or Re-Validation of Courses in time for a September 2021 intake

Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 5

<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx>

- Initial Approval Form
- Module Specification Template
- Course Specification Template
- Professional Doctorate Courses Specifications Template
- School Validation Document
- Nomination of an External Adviser for a validation/review event
- Approval pro-forma, for external advisers to complete
- External Advisor's Claim Form
- Standard Template for Staff CVs