

# UEL QUALITY MANUAL

## 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 University Growth and Diversification Board.
- 1.2. After Initial Approval, all non-collaborative courses are validated by the School Quality Committees. Part 11 of this manual outlines the procedures for the approval of collaborative courses.
- 1.3. After School approval, validation of all non-collaborative courses is confirmed via the Peer Review process.
- 1.4. Education & Experience Committee and Academic Board formally note the addition of courses to the university portfolio.

#### 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, in accord with the UEL vision and strategic plans and are likely to succeed at validation.
- 2.2. Initial Approval should be obtained eighteen months before the first intake of students. Exceptions with tighter timescales may be approved by Growth and Diversification Board if an appropriate rationale is received.
- 2.3. The portfolio development timelines for undergraduate and postgraduate September 2025 intakes are available on the following pages.

Phase	Stage	2023			2024									2025			Responsibility
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	~	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Phase 1 - Initial insight and course list	Marketing to deliver insight to Schools to inform growth plans aligned to Vision 2028	Kick-off											~				Marketing
	Schools to develop and submit new course list - course titles and one para rationale (linked back to insight)												~				Schools
	Meeting between Marketing and Schools to agree final course list												~				Marketing and Schools
	Proposed new course lists to be approved			Decision									~				G&D Board
Phase 2 - Initial approval forms and detailed insight	Schools to complete initial approval forms												~				Schools and QAE
	Marketing and Finance to input into initial approval forms												~				Marketing and Finance
	Complete initial approval forms submitted												~				Schools and QAE
	Consideration at Dean's Forum												~				QAE
	Initial approval forms out for 2 week consultation												~				All stakeholders consulted then key stakeholders review
Phase 3 - Initial approval decisions	Initial Approval granted / rejected								Decision				~				G&D Board
Phase 4 - Preparation and promotion	New course set up												~				QAE, Courses and Systems, Admissions and Digital Content Team
	New course recruitment and promotion plans												~				Marketing and Recruitment
	UCAS Fairs / HE Fairs and Third Party Listing commences for September 2024												~				Marketing and Recruitment
Phase 5 - Full validation	SQC Validation to take place												~				QAE
	Quality Audit Forum confirmation of validation by												~				QAE

- 2.4. Before initial approval forms are completed, Schools and External Relations Directorate will use market insights to develop a list of potential areas for growth.
- 2.5. 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:
- Careers and Student Enterprise  
Advice on structuring the course to enable students to succeed, during and after their studies.
  - External Relations Directorate  
Advice on the marketing of the proposed Course.
  - Facilities Services  
The availability of standard and specialist accommodation to support the proposed course.
  - Finance  
Advice on the financial viability of the proposal and the level of tuition fee that should be set.
  - IT Services  
Advice on IT requirements and to assess the extent to which IT services will be able to support the proposed course.
  - International Student Recruitment  
Advice on demand from international students, English language and IELTS requirements.
  - Library and Learning Services  
Advice on the ability of Library and Learning Services to support the proposed course, including the availability of funding to purchase learning resources.
  - Quality Assurance and Enhancement  
Advice on the validation process and compatibility of courses with regulations; advice on the alignment of QAE and PSRB processes.
  - Research, Innovation and Enterprise  
For proposals for professional doctorate courses.
  - Strategic Planning  
Advice on external funding.
- 2.6. The course proposer is required to complete the initial 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.
  - Target date for School Quality Committee approval and expected first intake date.
  - Module level detail relating to the proposed course.
  - Initial market analysis completed by the proposer.
  - Detailed market analysis, the viability of the proposed course, the target market and main competitors completed by the External Relations Directorate.
  - Text suitable for advertising the course.
  - Detailed financials covering income and expenditure for the first 3 years (including commentary from Finance and relevant finance codes). All forms must be signed by the Dean/Head of School to confirm support of the proposal before they can be considered for approval by the Board.
- 2.7. Note that initial approvals for apprenticeship courses are required to use the bespoke initial approval form for apprenticeship courses. Where a corresponding non-apprenticeship course is to be approved alongside the apprenticeship version of the course, a second initial approval form will be required (i.e., an apprenticeship and a non-apprenticeship cannot share a single initial approval form).
- 2.8. After Initial Approval has been obtained, the course must be validated within the following two academic years. An extension to the validation may be granted for a further one year, provided the market analysis and financial case still support course viability and the Dean of School confirms that the course still forms part of the school strategic plan.

### **3. Course Validation**

- 3.1. No proposal may proceed to validation unless it has been granted Initial Approval.
- 3.2. Once Initial Approval has been granted, the proposal is added to the validation schedule and progress in terms of validation is monitored by the School Quality Committee. The QAE Officer associated with the School will be available to provide advice and guidance throughout the validation process.
- 3.3. Once Initial Approval has been granted, the Course Proposer establishes a development team to develop the course. For Apprenticeship courses a member of Employer Partnerships Office and the Quality Manager (Apprenticeships) should be part of the development team.
- 3.4. Where a course has, or requires, recognition by a professional, regulatory or statutory body (PSRB), the body should be informed at the earliest

opportunity. Depending on the approval requirements of the PSRB, a representative of that body can be involved in the approval process. QAE can advise on possible arrangements.

#### 4. Naming of Courses Involving Multiple Subjects

- 4.1. Where a single honours degree combines two subjects within its course title, the title should contain either the words 'and' or 'with':
- 4.2. **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.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. **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.
- 4.5. 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'.

#### 5. External Advice

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. The suitability of the external advisers will be determined by the Chair of the School Quality Committee subject to the following criteria:
  - The depth of subject knowledge.
  - The relevance of subject knowledge.
  - Prior experience of teaching on courses at the same level or above; and experience of different modes of provision (distance learning, blended learning, apprenticeships) where appropriate.
  - Impartiality (the nominee should not have any formal links with UEL during the last five years as a former member of staff or the last three years as an external examiner).
  - Professional expertise (for vocational courses, at least one of the advisers should be a 'practitioner' drawn from a relevant business or professional background).
  - External Advisors should be drawn from a variety of contexts. While it is permissible to use the same advisor for several approvals, efforts should be made to periodically seek fresh perspectives by appointing advisors that have not been used before.

- 5.3. 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 consider 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.
- 5.4. The external adviser should receive a copy of all documentation detailed below and be asked to comment on the extent to which the documentation meets the UEL Quality Criteria.
- 5.5. 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 (remotely or in person) 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.

## **6. Documentation**

- 6.1. The Course Proposer is responsible for ensuring that documentation is provided for the School Quality Committee's attention in advance of the meeting. It is required 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.
  - 6.1.1. Validation Document, which includes:
    - The context of the proposed course.
    - The rationale for the proposal.
    - The professional context of the proposal.
    - The course structure.
    - 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.
    - The resources available.
    - Details of student and employer consultations.
    - Transitional Arrangements (if relevant)
  - 6.1.2. Course Specification, using the standard UEL template

- 6.1.3. Module Specifications, using the standard UEL template
  - 6.1.4. Course technical details and Module information, using the standard UEL template
  - 6.1.5. Apprenticeship Mapping Document (for apprenticeship courses only)
  - 6.1.6. 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 UEL template.
- 6.2. Where a course incorporates modules 'owned' by another School, the course leader will obtain a written agreement from the School relating to the use of the modules, and this should be presented to the approval meeting.
  - 6.3. Apprenticeship courses may share module specifications with a non-apprenticeship counterpart; however, the module specifications should be addressed to ensure the terminology is still applicable for those on an apprenticeship.
  - 6.4. 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 (Part 4 of the Quality Manual);
    - The relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s);
    - The latest version of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (for apprenticeships courses only);
    - 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, and the course team's response;
    - A copy of the relevant professional body(s) requirements, where appropriate;
    - A copy of the Initial Approval form; and
    - Any other information relevant to the proposal.

## **7. Course Approval**

- 7.1. All proposals for new courses will be considered for approval by a full meeting of the School Quality Committee (held in person or remotely). Proposals cannot be considered by correspondence. Schools Quality Committees are encouraged to set schedules for approval business and monitor these. Where deadlines shown above cannot be met, validation can only proceed with the agreement of the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.
- 7.2. 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.

- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. The School Quality Committee will evaluate the proposal against the Quality Criteria and other external reference points, as appropriate, as set out in section 6.4 above.
- 7.5. 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 the following: methods of; delivery; induction; support; implementation of the curriculum; assessment strategy; and a plan for the ongoing development of staff.
- 7.6. A School Quality Committee may not consider a course for approval unless the comments of all external advisers are available to the meeting.
- 7.7. 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.
- 7.8. The School Quality Committee can ask for minor amendments to the documentation as a result of discussions at the approval meeting, to be completed before the documents are circulated for Peer Review. As a guide, these should take no longer than two weeks to resolve (deadline to be set at the event) and might include things like wording of learning outcomes, or clarification of student facing documentation. This would not include things like the submission of missing documentation, which would require the proposal to be resubmitted to a future meeting.
- 7.9. 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 Quality Assurance and Enhancement to be included in the documentation circulated for Peer Review.
- 7.10. 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.
- 7.11. All courses are validated indefinitely; the Academic Review process provides assurances that the course remains current. A shorter period may be



determined by the School Quality Committee and/or a professional body(s) if necessary.

- 7.12. Courses that are validated but do not have an intake of students for a period of three academic years are required to be revalidated or withdrawn.

## 8. Peer Review

- 8.1. Peer Reviewers will formally recognise all new courses, on behalf of the Education and Experience Committee and Academic Board.
- 8.2. A subset of documentation will be circulated by QAE to a Peer Reviewer to judge whether due process has been followed and all relevant actions have been completed.
- 8.3. Peer Reviewers complete a standard review form.
- 8.4. Peer Reviewers will not 'second guess' the academic judgement of the School Quality Committee nor of the external advisers.
- 8.5. 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; a copy of the Validation Document; the external advisers' comments and School response.
- 8.6. 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, or their nominee, via the review form. The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, or their nominee, may seek further information or refer the proposal back to the School Quality Committee for further consideration.
- 8.7. The Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, or their nominee, will report the status of courses currently being validated (and withdrawn) to Education and Experience Committee and Academic Board, noting when validation is complete and any issues of institutional significance that have emerged from validation activity.

## 9. Example timeline for Validation of Courses in time for a September 2025 intake

Stage	Notes	Window / Deadline
Prep Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm courses</li> <li>• Identify authors and key stakeholders</li> <li>• Agree timelines</li> <li>• Share templates</li> <li>• Discuss document control</li> <li>• Discuss External Advisor process</li> </ul>	31 <sup>st</sup> May to 18 <sup>th</sup> June (ideally by 11 <sup>th</sup> June)

Stage	Notes	Window / Deadline
Submit first draft of course and module specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial review of specs will commence from QAE Officer and Quality Lead upon receipt so that checks can be made, and feedback given prior to submission of first draft of validation document</li> </ul>	21 <sup>st</sup> June
CELT input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss approach and shape of learning and teaching experience</li> <li>Discuss learning outcomes and how these can be approached</li> </ul>	Ideally before first draft of validation documents are submitted on 30 <sup>th</sup> July (but can happen anytime up until documents are sent out to External Advisors and SQC members for review on 4 <sup>th</sup> October)
Student & Employer feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain feedback that can be used to shape the course(s) being proposed</li> </ul>	Ideally before first draft of validation documents are submitted on 30 <sup>th</sup> July (but can happen anytime up until documents are sent out to External Advisors and SQC members for review on 4 <sup>th</sup> October)
Submit first draft of validation document		30 <sup>th</sup> July
Key QA reviewers to review first draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likely to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality Lead</li> <li>Quality Officer</li> <li>Head of Department</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> August – 6 <sup>th</sup> August
Planning meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To discuss issues picked up in first draft of validation documents, share good practice</li> </ul>	9 <sup>th</sup> August – 3 <sup>rd</sup> September
Work on final draft		6 <sup>th</sup> September – 17 <sup>th</sup> September
Submit External Advisor nomination forms		15 <sup>th</sup> September
External Advisors approved by SQC and Schools to carry out Right to Work Checks		17 <sup>th</sup> September
Submit Final draft		20 <sup>th</sup> September
Quality Lead and Quality Officers to review final draft		20 <sup>th</sup> September – 1 <sup>st</sup> October

Stage	Notes	Window / Deadline
Circulating of documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QAE officers to collate and send packs for External Advisors and SQC members</li> </ul>	4 <sup>th</sup> October – 8 <sup>th</sup> October
Internal review (SQC) and External Review (External Advisors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Checking that validation documentation meets quality criteria and completing pro-formas</li> </ul>	11 <sup>th</sup> October – 29 <sup>th</sup> October
Clusters to respond to pro-formas and carry out amendments/actions		1 <sup>st</sup> November – 19 <sup>th</sup> November
Close the loop		22 <sup>nd</sup> November – 7 <sup>th</sup> January
SQC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Validate course(s)</li> </ul>	10 <sup>th</sup> January – 28 <sup>th</sup> January
2 <sup>nd</sup> SQC meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For any course(s) not validated at 1<sup>st</sup> SQC meeting</li> </ul>	31 <sup>st</sup> January – 25 <sup>th</sup> February

## 10. Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 5

Available to download here:

<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx>

- Initial Approval Form / Initial Approval Form for Apprenticeship Courses
- Module Specification Template
- Course Specification Template
- Professional Doctorate Courses Specifications Template
- School Validation Document Template/ Appendix Items
- Apprenticeship Mapping Document
- Validation Annex - Strategy for Distance Blended and Online Learning
- 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