Module and programme approval

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**Purpose**
This policy relates to all proposals for new modules and new programmes.

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UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS
POLICY ON MODULE AND PROGRAMME APPROVAL

1. Introduction

All proposals for new modules or new programmes must be in line with the University’s overall strategy for Learning and Teaching, and with the academic plans as presented in the strategic plans of the School or Schools making the proposal.

Proposals must comply with University Regulations relating to module structures, credits, and academic levels, and to the educational strategies for supporting students’ learning outcomes and professional development.

Proposals must be designed so that they meet the academic standards of the University of St Andrews, and of the UK Quality Code. They must also be in accord with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and/or European Qualifications Framework (EQF), with QAA subject benchmarks where they exist, and where relevant, with appropriate professional, statutory, or regulatory accreditation bodies. They should also take account of comments from External Examiners.

The proposal must take account of any identifiable impact on academic resources, administrative services, and estate or IT infrastructure. Proposers must also ensure that the validation processes are in place (e.g., External Examiners and an appropriate module board) so that the programme meets the necessary requirements for quality assurance.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. School Teaching Committees

Responsibility for the initiation of new modules and programmes lies with the School Teaching Committees. Directors of Teaching (or Directors of Postgraduate Studies) on behalf of the School Teaching Committees are responsible for submitting module and programme proposals for consideration by the Deans through the Curriculum Approvals Group (CAG).

2.2. Deans

Responsibility for considering proposals submitted by the School Teaching Committees lies with the Deans. The Deans through the CAG have delegated authority to approve new modules and any significant changes to existing modules and/or programmes. Only Academic Council can authorise the approval of a new programme or withdrawal of an existing programme. The Vice-Principal (Proctor) and Deans are responsible for the formulation of University policy in relation to curriculum development and provide guidance to Schools in these areas.

2.3. Academic Council

Academic Council has ultimate authority for the approval of new programmes and for the withdrawal of existing programmes.

3. Approvals Schedule
Proposals for new programmes and modules, and/or changes to modules and programmes, may be submitted at any time of year. For changes to become effective for the following academic year however, Schools must note the constraints in the lead-times necessary for the programme and/or module to be included in the Prospectus and Course Catalogue (for further advice on timescales, contact Publications).

As a general rule, for modules and programmes to begin in the following academic year, proposals must normally be approved by the appropriate Dean and where appropriate, Academic Council, no later than the end of May. Only in cases where there are exceptional grounds may proposals be considered for approval during the summer vacation (e.g., in the case of the appointment of new staff).

4. Externality in Approvals Process

External Examiners are asked to advise and comment on the development of new modules and programmes. Schools should seek the views of its External Examiners on new module and programme proposals and also where there is a significant change to existing modules and/or programmes.

For new programmes, Schools may seek the views of an External Subject Specialist who is not a current or recent External Examiner. Comments from the External Examiner should be submitted to the Dean.

5. Programme Approval and Withdrawal

5.1. Approval of New Programmes

NB. A new degree programmes simplified flow chart is available at the end of this document for reference to the process outlined below

Proposals must have been tested for viability by appropriate market research, for example through Admissions, taking into account the need to meet (but not to exceed) agreed Home/EU targets and the recruitment strategy of the School and University.

Proposals must define clear and achievable programme specifications, with explicit learning outcomes described in the programme specifications. Programmes must ensure appropriate progression from one level to the next, and ensure that any required exit points (and qualifications) are achievable and defined.

For programmes involving more than one School, it must be ensured that each Head of School is aware of, and has approved, the programme. Where an interdisciplinary programme involves many or all Schools this requirement may be relaxed. New programme proposal forms must be accompanied by a New Module Proposal Form for each new module within the new programme in the same submission to the Dean.

5.1.1. New Programme Development

The development of a new undergraduate or postgraduate programme has wide implications across the University in terms of resources, personnel, and promotional activity. Development of all new programmes must therefore have received initial strategic approval normally via the annual meetings between the Principal’s Office and the School prior to embarking on more detailed preparation of degree programme proposals and detailed business case
documentation. Initial strategic approval does not guarantee subsequent academic approval by the CAG, nor approval of the business case.

In the case of Postgraduate Taught programmes and significantly new undergraduate programmes, initial strategic approval does then trigger the formation of a new programme development board.

5.1.2. New Programme Development Board

The role of the development board is to ensure that the proposal for the developed programme prepared for the CAG meets the required academic standards and that the business case is well developed, founded upon solid market research, and with sufficient consultation and engagement of all the major stakeholders. Individual members of the board should be consulted in preparation of the proposal papers where relevant.

The board should physically meet in its entirety at least twice, once at the initial concept stage and secondly to finally agree the business proposal, the programme proposal, and where relevant, the module proposals prior to these proposal papers being submitted to the CAG and Principal’s Office. Minutes of this meeting should accompany the programme proposal.

The board should be constituted with the following required members:

- The relevant Associate Dean (Students)/Pro Dean
- Director(s) of Teaching (of all Schools contributing to the programme)
- Registry representative (who will relay information to relevant Registry members)
- Admissions representative (who will relay information to relevant Admissions members)

Advisory members to the board are to be included where relevant:

- School(s) finance advisor
- Library Academic Liaison Officer (Library)
- Fees and Funding (Registry)
- Timetabling (Planning)
- Space Allocation (Estates)
- Special Collections (where relevant)
- Health and Safety Office (where fieldwork or safety implications are involved)
- Collaborations and Study Abroad Office (Registry; where collaborations, study abroad, internships, or placements are involved)

Consultation required prior and approval needed in writing:

- External Examiner
- Head of School(s)

External documents, research required, and sources to consult:

- QAA subject benchmark statements (where available)
- QAA guidance on degree structure and SCQF levels
- Competitor analysis: review of similar programmes offered at competitor institutions and a review of similar programmes offered within the University of St Andrews

Schools setting up a new Taught Postgraduate Masters Programme or a new Distance Learning Programme must submit two forms:
• Financial business case and accompanying financial analysis for approval by the Master
• New programme approval for approval by the relevant Dean

Prior to submission the proposal must be approved by the relevant School Teaching Committee(s) and reviewed and approved by the External Examiner/Adviser. Approval must be obtained from the External Examiner(s) and Heads of Participating Schools. New programme proposals will not be considered without these approvals.

Heads of Schools are encouraged to take advice from the Academic Registrar, Director of Admissions, and Director of Finance on the completion of the business case. The University Fees Officer should be consulted to ensure that new programmes comply with the University’s tuition fee structure.

All other programme proposals do not require a business case and the programme proposal form should be submitted to CAG for approval.

5.2. Amendments to Existing Programmes

When any changes are to be made to an existing degree programme, the programme amendment form must be completed and submitted to the relevant Dean.

5.3. Withdrawal of Programmes

On occasion, programmes may be withdrawn for strategic reasons such as lack of recruitment or because of changes in the subject discipline which render a specific programme unavailable. Withdrawal of programmes must be approved by the relevant Dean, and must be checked by Registry and Admissions to ensure that no student has been matriculated or accepted a place into that programme. In normal circumstances, a programme must be supported for every student who has matriculated, or accepted a place into that programme.

Only in the most unusual circumstances may a programme on which students have been matriculated be withdrawn. Similarly, in exceptional circumstances, a programme may be withdrawn to which students have been admitted, but who have not yet matriculated. In these circumstances, the student(s) must be informed, and the Dean, Head of School, and Admissions must resolve the situation.

No programme to which students have been admitted or on which they have been matriculated, may be withdrawn until the University’s obligations to those students have been reasonably and fairly fulfilled.

5.4. Distance Learning Programmes

Distance learning poses particular challenges with respect to programme administration, student satisfaction, risk management, and programme reputation. Before undertaking any significant development work, staff should consult with the Deans and their Head of School as to how the proposed programme would integrate with the University and School strategic plans. The University will carefully consider the potential benefits and challenges before introducing new distance learning programmes.

5.5. Collaborative Degrees/Exchanges
Where the new programme involves study abroad placements or collaboration with one or more external partners, Schools must first consult with the Collaborations and Study Abroad Team in Registry.

6. Module Approval and Withdrawal

6.1. New Modules

When any changes are to be made to an existing module, the module amendment form must be completed and submitted to Registry in the first instance. If the proposed new module is intended to replace an existing module however, it is not necessary to complete a separate module amendment form to request the withdrawal of the existing module.

7. Module and Programme Structure (Taught Postgraduate)

All new full-time residential taught postgraduate programmes will be constructed of equally weighted 60 credit semesters. Each of the taught semesters will deliver 60 taught credits constructed from either all 15 or all 30 credit modules, or a combination of 15 and 30 credit modules. The final element is the 60-credit final dissertation or project module. Changes to the credit structure of existing programmes is not required, however the assumption is that such amendments will be put in place where Schools identify opportunities and benefits to changing existing 10, 20, and 40 credit modules to either 15 or 30 credit modules.

Application of this programme structure enables:

- Innovation of new interdisciplinary programmes enabling new programme designers to ‘tile’ modules together to build new programmes from modules offered in different Schools.

- Students to select relevant modules from other Schools, where permissible in their programme, and easily incorporate them into their programme of study.

- Students to exist with a Postgraduate Certificate 60 credits at the end of Semester 1 or a Postgraduate Diploma 120 credits at the end of Semester 2 should personal circumstances prevent continued study.

- Students to receive feedback on 60 credits of modules at the end of first semester with time to respond appropriately in second semester.
New Degree Programmes Simplified Flow Chart

1. **Annual School Strategy meeting** (Outline Approval)
   - Head of School raises outline proposals for new teaching delivery at Annual School Strategy meetings – outline approval does not guarantee final approval.

2. **Programme development Board** (prepares complete proposal)
   - Prepares entire proposal including module and programme proposals the business case (PGT only); financial projections (PGT only) and meetings must include: relevant ProDean, Director(s) of Teaching, Registry and Admissions.

3. **Head of School (School approval)**
   - School forwards entire proposal to curriculum co-ordinator (curriculum@) who circulates it to CAG and PD.

4. **Master and Proctor (Business Case approval)**
   - Master and Proctor review Business Case for PGT Masters programmes only – may go back to Head of School with amendments.

5. **Curriculum Approvals Group (Academic approval)**
   - Curriculum Approvals Group review programme and module proposals – may go back to Programme Development Board with amendments.

6. **Curriculum Coordinator (Implements decision)**
   - Notification of approval: Publications, CAPD, Digital Communications, Admissions, Fees, Registry PGT, Qualifications group, Study abroad.
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