POLICY ON THE DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

Date approved:	22/11/2024	Date policy will take effect:	22/11/2024	Date of Next Review:	22/11/2027 (unless further changes required before this date)
Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsibility:	VPAA-Registrar, Chair of Academic Quality Sub-Committee				
Consultation undertaken:					
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Awarding Policy DkIT Blended and Online Learning Policy				
Reference(s):	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 and Amendment Act 2019.				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Category:	Design and Approval of Programmes				

1   Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment(s)
-	18/10/2000	Academic Council (AC:DOC:36:00:04)	Approval
-	04/12/2002	Academic Council (AC:DOC 75 :05 :01)	Addition of stage and programme boards.
-	23/11/2004	Academic Council	Amended
-	27/04/2005	Academic Council (AC:DOC 75 :05 :01)	Amended
-	14/12/2005	Academic Council	Amended
-	2 1/02/2007	Academic Council	Amended
-	25/04/2007	Academic Council	Amended
-	19/06/2009	Academic Council	Amended
-	09/12/2011	Academic Council	Amended
1	01/07/2013	Academic Council (AC:DOC 133)	Revised section B3 stage 3
2	19/09/2014	Academic Council (AC:DOC:139:07:01)	Revised section 10
3	20/06/2016	Academic Council (AC:DOC:148:11:01)	Revised to align with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015; the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 and QQI Guidelines: Core policies and criteria for the validation by QQI of programmes of Education and Training (2016)
4	31/01/2018	Academic Council (AC:DOC:155A:03:01)	Procedure for Extension of Programme Validation amended.
5	10/09/2021	Academic Council Meeting No. 176S;	Added curriculum documentation requirements for blended and online learning.

		Document Reference: AC:DOC:176S:01:01	
6	24/02/2023	Academic Council	- Updated stage 1 programme validation requirements (including the completion of a Finance Office template). - Updated Section 2.7, Assessment Strategy. - Removed section "Devolution of Responsibility for Validation Sub-Processes where QQI is the Awarding Body". - Replaced "Leadership Team" with "Executive Board".
7	22/11/2024	Academic Council (Meeting No. 196)	Programme validation process for major awards amended (Stage 2 optional). A Stage 2 Needs Assessment included in Appendix 2.
8	21/02/2024	Academic Council (Meeting No. 197)	Change to programme validation process for non-major awards. Part of a number of policy changes relating to micro-credentials.

Contents

2   Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this procedure is to set out the processes for the approval, modification and periodic review of programmes and awards.

3   Application and Scope - Exclusions or Special Conditions (if any)

This procedure applies to:

- Programme Design and Approval;

- The extension of Validation for existing programmes; Minor modification to existing programme schedules;

- The validation of minor, special purpose and supplemental awards; Periodic review of programmes and awards: Programme and Stage Boards

4   Programme Validation Policy

Following the enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019 (referred to as the Act subsequently) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/act/32/enacted/en/html), Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) has become a Designated Awarding Body or DAB. A Designated Awarding Body is a body with the authority in law to make awards and to whom the 2012 (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html) and subsequent amended 2019 Acts apply. The Institute can make awards at NFQ Levels, 6, 7, 8 and 9 (taught programmes) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in accordance with the policies and criteria set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

The process of Validation is a three-stage process designed to ensure that programmes delivered by the Institute meet the awards standards determined by QQI for Higher Education. The Institute adheres to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) (ESG, 2015) in relation to the Design, Approval, and Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes. In this respect, the Institute's quality assurance provides that:

- Programmes are designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes;

- The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the National Framework of Qualifications;

In accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015, this policy provides that programmes:

- Are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the Institute's strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- Are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;
- Benefit from external expertise and reference points;

- Reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe[1];
- Are designed so that they enable smooth student progression;
- Define the expected student workload, e.g. in ECTS;
- Include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;[2]
- Are subject to a formal institutional approval process.[3]

In addition:

- Careful attention should be paid to curriculum and programme design and content;

- The programme should compare well against benchmarks (where appropriate);

- The information about the programme as well as its procedures for access, transfer and progression should be consistent with the procedures described in national Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners;

- The programme should meet genuine education and training needs;

- The programme should be viable;

- All programmes should have procedures for assessment of learners which should be consistent with QQI's *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013* and the Institute's Assessment Policy as approved by the Academic Council;

- Specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance-learning, e-learning) and types of programmes (academic, professional or vocational);

- Availability of appropriate learning resources;

- Formal programme approval procedures as set out below;

- Monitoring of the progression of students;

- Regular periodic reviews of programmes;

- Regular feedback from employers, graduates, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations or stakeholders;

- Participation of students in quality assurance activities.

5   Peer Review Panels

Programme development is a three stage process as described below. Formal Validation is at the final stage of this process and is always carried out by an external Validation Panel. External

---

[1] These are: (i) Preparation for the labor market; (ii) Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies; (iii) Personal development & (v) The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base (Bergan 2005), Council of Europe 2007

[2] Placements include traineeships, internships and other periods of the programme that are not spent in the institution but that allow the student to gain experience in an area related to their studies. (ES&G 2015)

[3] The ES&G 2015 are available at: http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

peer reviewers are expected to conduct their responsibilities in a professional, thorough and objective fashion and may only be appointed where it is clear that no conflict of interest exists in relation to their appointment. Each Panel will have a Chairperson, selected for his/her respected status, knowledge of Irish higher education and policy, and experience of programme design and evaluation in the higher education and training sector.

Panel members will be selected to ensure that in addition to discipline specific expertise, the panel encompasses expertise in areas such as: quality assurance, programme Validation/review and issues relating to teaching methodologies, assessment and learner support mechanisms and to include persons who are able to make national and, where appropriate international comparisons.

Panels may also include members who represent industry or the professions and /or broader stakeholders nationally or from within the Institute's region.

The Registrar or his nominee will act as Secretary to the Panel and will be a full panel member and will advise the Panel in relation to Institute policy.

DkIT will publish all validation reports. All documentation associated with programme validation will be held by the Institute for examination during programmatic review or institutional review processes.

6   Guidelines for Panel Members

The evaluation process is based on the review of a written submission and a site visit. During the site visit, the Panel will meet with management and with the team proposing the programme to discuss the proposal in detail. The Panel may examine the facilities and resources required to deliver the programme.

It is the primary responsibility of the Panel to ensure that the programme design is in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) 2015 and meets the appropriate NFQ standards. The Panel should satisfy itself that the Institute can deliver the programme to these standards. Panel members should be given a document which clarifies their role and terms of reference. It is also the duty of the Panel to review and offer advice on programme delivery, including programme objectives and programme and module learning outcomes; curriculum content; teaching and learning workloads (ECTS); assessment strategies; entry requirements; learning and teaching resources and any other matters which ensure that the programme meets NFQ standards and labour market or professional needs. Panels should not discourage innovation or creativity and should recognise and respect Institute strengths, its strategy and its mission.

Any resulting recommendations or conditions must be based on evidence that such changes will affect the performance of graduates and the quality of the education provision throughout the lifetime of the programme.

Panel members review documentation associated with the proposed programme, visit the Institute and participate in meetings and discussions in relation to the Validation process, on behalf of DkIT and will treat all material and its findings as strictly confidential. They will collaborate on a final report, which will be made to DkIT.

7 Programme Design and Approval

NFQ Level 7, 8 and 9 Programmes

Programme Design and Approval at NFQ levels 6, 7, 8 and taught level 9 follows a three-stage process as follows:

Stage 1	Mandatory
Stage 2	Optional, subject to approval by the Executive Board
Stage 3	Mandatory

7.1 Stage 1:

The initial proposal can come from the proposing School, a relevant individual or group within the School or an interdisciplinary Schools group and shall be presented to the Executive Board for review, approval.

The proposal shall contain the following details:

- How the programme fits with Institute Strategy;

- The resources, human and material, which are available and the resources which will be required. The costing template provided by the Finance Office should be completed as appropriate;

- Demand for the programme from employers, students;

- The relevance of the programme within the current academic, economic and social contexts and employment prospects for graduates;

- The aims and objectives of the programme;

- The draft Approve Programme Schedule(s) (in accordance with DkIT's guidelines on sectoral benchmarked programme delivery hours)

Programme Classification	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	2-Stage Total	3-Stage Total	4-Stage Total
Laboratory Intensive (RGAM 1.7)	24	22	20	18	46±1	66±1	84±1
Computing/Building Engineering. Studio/Laboratory/ Fieldwork Element (RGAM 1.3)	24	22	20	18	46±1	66±1	84±1
Studio/Laboratory/ Fieldwork Element (RGAM 1.3)	22	20	19	17	42±1	61±1	78±1

Others (RGAM 1.0)	20	19	18	17	39±1	57±1	74±1

In instances where a new programme is being proposed by a School and has been peer reviewed as part of an external funding process (e.g., Higher Education Authority (HEA) Springboard, HEA Human Capital Initiative (HCI), etc.) the programme documentation submitted to the funder (e.g. Higher Education Authority (HEA) can be submitted to the Executive Board in lieu of a Stage 1 proposal (see above).

The Executive Board should take the following factors into consideration when reviewing the Stage 1 proposal:

- Relevance to National, European and International policies

- Congruence with DkIT Institute Strategy

- Compatibility with other School or Institute activities, e.g., research

- Probable demand for the programme

- Other relevant academic, social or economic considerations (e.g., employment prospects for graduates, contribution to access agenda, community links, etc.)

- Cost (personnel, fixed assets and running costs; use of existing available resources)

- Other resource issues, e.g., space requirements.

- Requirement for a Stage 2.

A Stage 2 strengthens programme proposals, reduces risks and enhances institutional confidence in the final outcome of the validation process. A Stage 2 is a valuable step in the programme validation process and Departments are strongly recommended to undertake a Stage 2 for all major award.

Undertaking a Stage 2 has the following benefits:

- **Early Identification of Issues:** A Stage 2 can highlight potential weaknesses or omissions in the programme design early on, allowing for timely adjustments.

- **Enhanced Self-Assessment:** The Stage 2 can foster a culture of self-assessment within Departments.

- **Reduced Risk of Negative Recommendation at Stage 3:** A well-prepared programme, robustly tested at Stage 2, reduces the risk of a negative recommendation at the final Stage 3 validation event.

- **Improved Quality Assurance:** The rigorous scrutiny of a mock panel can enhance the overall quality of the programme.

Departments should carefully evaluate the following factors/criteria before deciding to bypass Stage 2 and proceed directly to Stage 3 of the programme validation process: Programme Design and Development Readiness, Familiarity with Validation Processes and Complexity of the Proposed Programme (see Appendix 2: Stage 2 Needs Assessment).

The decision not to undertake a Stage 2 must be justified in writing (i.e., completion of the Stage 2 Needs Assessment) by the School and approved by the Executive Board normally during Stage 1 of the validation process. Such justification should detail how the factors/criteria above have been considered by the School.

7.2 Stage 2

Once the proposed programme has successfully passed Stage 1, the programme may be developed and proceed to either a Stage 2 or a Stage 3.

The following shall be addressed in a written submission document:

Programme Details:

- Programme Title (& Course Code) Proposed Duration

- Specify if Exit Award

- Proposed Level

- Delivery Modes

- Location of Delivery

- Proposed Intake

- Entry Requirements

- Workload (ECTS)

- Progression (Show cognate links)

Background to Proposed Programme - Rationale/Philosophy: Programme Philosophy;

- Outline how programme responds to economic, political, social and/or cultural change, where appropriate;

- Recent reports and publications that support the proposal;

- Demand from employers and students;

- The fit with the existing suite of programmes;

- Link with Institute Strategic Plan and external bodies.

Demand for the Programme:

- Outline of primary research and consultation process to include, where appropriate:

- Student Focus - potential and/or current students as well as graduates

- Guidance Counsellors

- Professional Bodies

- Employer Focus – Consultation and /or survey of potential employers Academic Focus – internet based research and programme literature that critically evaluates competitor (Irish and International) programmes;

- Review of best practice for similar programmes.

Graduate Profile/Career Opportunities.

- To include job titles and positions that graduates could expect to compete for.

Educational Aims of Programme

- These should be benchmarked against each School's definition/identification of the graduate attributes the School seeks to develop at each stage of the Programme.

Programme Learning Outcomes and Standards

- Learning Outcomes in Context of National Qualifications Framework

- Evidence of the link between the programme and module learning outcomes, as developed through module builder software.

Assessment Strategy

- An Assessment Strategy should be produced for each programme and module assessment strategies for each of its constituent modules. See QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2022 and DkIT's Assessment and Learning Policy (https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html).

In accordance with QQI requirements, this strategy should have a number of features and should:

- Link a programme's assessment instruments (summative and formative, including continuous assessment and repeat assessment to the minimum (and any other) intended programme learning outcomes as well as intended module and stage learning outcomes;

- Describe and provide a rationale for the choice of assessment tasks, criteria and procedures. It should also address their fairness and consistency, specifically their validity, reliability and authenticity;

- Describe any special regulations;

- Regulate, build upon and integrate the module assessment strategies, and (where used) stage assessment strategies;

- Provide contingent strategy for cases where learners claim exemption from modules, including recognition of prior learning;

- Match the programme's assessment instruments to the requirements of the institutional grading system, particularly concerning the recording and combination of modules grades/marks (i.e. provide clear criteria for grading/marking).

- Ensure that the programme's continuous assessment workload is appropriately balanced;

- Relate to the programme's teaching and learning strategy.

Learning Strategies/Teaching Methodologies

- A learning and teaching strategy should be produced for each programme and each of its constituent modules. In preparing the submission it is recommended that advice and guidance be taken from the Centre of Learning and Teaching in relation to these strategies and the appropriate learning methodologies to be employed, how they develop over the stages of the programme and how they assist in achieving the learning outcomes.

Programme Structure

- Description of programme strands/themes; Progression rules and award calculation if non-standard; Programme Schedules presented by module builder software.

Programme Schedule

Module Descriptors

- Module descriptors should be developed using module builder software.

Quality Assurance and Programme Management

- Academic Council
- External Examiners
- Head of School
- Head of Department
- The Programme Board
- Annual Report to the Academic Council Student Feedback
    - o   Staff and Physical Resources
    - o   Library Resources
    - o   Staff CVs:

Blended and Online Delivery

The curriculum documentation for a programme seeking approval for delivery in blended or online mode should include the following:

- The rationale for delivering the programme in blended or online mode.
- A brief outline of the design process for the programme and, in particular, the learning design model or framework used to guide the process.
- Evidence of the extent to which the programme design and delivery is informed by the Blended and Online policy principles.
- A Programme Delivery Outline document which provides an overview of the delivery modes used in each module on the programme (see *Appendix 1* for template).
- Outline of Continuing Professional Development and/or engagement with the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) undertaken by the programme development team in relation to the design and delivery of the programme.

If a Stage 2 submission document is prepared, the proposing School sets up a Validation Panel to assess the proposal. This Panel shall be chaired by an internal Head of School from another discipline or his/her nominee and shall be comprised of at least two external experts and the Registrar or his/her Deputy. It is recommended that at least one panel member should have an understanding of contemporary issues and strategies pertaining to the development of effective learning and teaching, including e-learning. This Panel should review the programme submission to establish that it adheres to Institute policy and to evaluate the programme as set out in 6. above. The Panel may make recommendations to improve the proposal. While, these recommendations are not binding, the report from the Stage 2 Panel shall be made available to the Stage 3 Panel.

7.3 Stage 3

If a Stage 2 has been completed for a programme the programme development team

should consider the recommendations of the Stage 2 Validation Panel and amend their proposal accordingly. If a Stage 2 was not undertaken programme documentation should be prepared as detailed in 7.2 above.

The Registrar shall, on behalf of the Academic Council, appoint a Validation Panel to review and evaluate the programme submission

- **The Stage 3 Validation Panel**

The Validation Panel shall comprise of a Chairman, two or more external academics, who are acknowledged nationally and/or internationally as academic experts in the field of study, a practitioner or industry representative and the Registrar or his/her Deputy.. In the case of level 9 submissions, at least one of the academic experts must come from outside the State.

- **Meeting with the Validation Panel**

This Validation Panel shall study the written submission and meet the Proposing Team during a site visit to evaluate the proposed programme.

At the beginning of the meeting with the Validation Panel, the Proposing Team may make a short presentation introducing the programme and outlining its development process and may illustrate how the team has responded to the recommendations and advice arising from Stage 2 of the validation process. The Validation Panel will engage in discussion with the Proposing Team and review facilities where appropriate.

- **Validation Panel Reports**

The Validation Panel shall, based on the evidence gathered at the evaluation, prepare a draft report with the conclusions being based on judgements made against the validation criteria outlined above. The Validation Panel may make one of the following findings:

- that the programme be accredited;
- that the programme be accredited subject to a number of recommendations and /or conditions;
- that the programme be redesigned and resubmitted to the same Panel after further developmental work;
- that the programme should not be accredited at this time.

The Proposing Team will have an opportunity to comment on this draft report and, if necessary, will prepare a revised submission to address the findings of the Validation Panel. The Chair of the Validation Panel will examine the revised submission and if satisfied that the findings of the Panel have been addressed, shall sign a final report to this effect.

The report(s) of the Validation Panel and the response of the Proposing Team shall be formally submitted for consideration by the Academic Council.

Normally the Academic Council will accept and abide by the clearly-expressed findings in a report of a Validation Panel. However, where the Academic Council is concerned that:

- The validation report does not address the validation criteria; or

- The validation report reflects a perversity of judgement; or

- The credibility of the validation process is compromised in any way;

It shall request the President to appoint a Review Panel, on its behalf, that shall report within a prescribed timeframe. This Review Panel will consist of two external experts and will be chaired by a member of the Academic Council. This Chair must be external to the School to which the validation report applies and have had no involvement in the validation process under review. The Review Panel will examine the validation process and the validation report and shall submit its findings in writing to the Academic Council for consideration.

The Academic Council may then decide to ratify the Validation Panel report or set-aside the report (or part thereof). In the latter case, normally a fresh validation process will be launched.

Once the final report has been ratified by the Academic Council, the President will sign a certificate of programme approval and the Registrar will amend the Intitute's programme register. Validation reports shall be published on the Institute website.

When changes to an existing award are recommended the new programme schedule will be sent to the Awards Office.

Summary of Validation Process for Programmes at NFQ Levels 7, 8 and 9 (Master's Degree (Taught), Master's Degree (Structured)

Stages	Chairperson	Panel Member	Total number on Panel	Process
Stage 1 (Mandatory)	President	Executive Board		Written submission to Executive Board from Proposers
Stage 2 (Optional; Needs Assessment to be Completed; See Appendix 2)	Head of School from other discipline	At least Two External Experts The Registrar or his/her nominee	5+	Proposing School submits written submission document. Site visit by panel. Organised by proposing School.
Stage 3 (Mandatory)	External Chairperson	At least Two External Academics, who are acknowledged nationally and/or internationally as academic experts in the field of study. One practitioner or industry representative. The Registrar or his/her Deputy. For level 9 programmes, there must be one academic from outside the State.	5+	Proposing School submits written submission document. Site visit by panel. Organised by the Registrar's office.

8. Validation of Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards (comprising more than one module)

The Institute adheres to QQI's Policy and Criteria and Guidelines for Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental awards. Any additional resources occasioned by a proposed minor, special purpose or supplemental award must be agreed by the Executive Board of the Institute before the programme is developed. Once this is agreed, a written programme submission shall be prepared by the development team for the consideration of the Validation Panel.

- **The Validation Panel.**

The Validation Panel for Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards is comprised of:

- External Chair
- 2 External discipline experts
- Representative of the Registrar's Office

The Validation Panel shall study the written programme submission document and during a site visit, engage in discussion with the programme development team in relation to the programme, review facilities where appropriate and finally submit a written report to the Institute. Based on the evidence gathered at this evaluation, the Validation Panel can make one of the following recommendations:

- that the programme be accredited;
- that the programme be accredited subject to a number of recommendations and /or conditions;
- That the programme be redesigned and resubmitted to the same Panel after further developmental work
- that the programme should not be accredited at this time.

The decision of this Validation Panel is binding.

The Design Team will prepare a final document to address the findings of the Validation Panel. The Chair of the Validation Panel shall examine the revised submission and if satisfied that the amendments required by the Panel are addressed, shall sign a final report to this effect.

The President will sign a certificate of programme approval on receipt of this final report and the Registrar shall advise QQI that the programme has been approved. The Programme Evaluation Sub-Committee of the Academic Council shall be informed about the Validation. Validation reports shall be published on the Institute website.

When changes to an existing award are recommended the new programme schedule will be sent to the Awards Office.

- **Extension of Validation**

In exceptional circumstances, academic departments may apply for an extension of Validation of an existing programme for one year beyond the normal period in order to provide for one further intake.

Applications for extension of Validation should be made through the Office of the Registrar and approved by Academic Council.

- **Differential Validation**

A differential validation involves a validation of a programme that is based on, or a modification or extension of, a validated programme. The validation of the original programme can inform the validation of the derived programme and this can simplify the validation process for the derived programme. Validation of a derived programme that relies on the validation of the original programme is referred to as differential validation.

The process for differential validation shall be as for the validation of minor, special purpose or supplemental awards as described in 4. above. The original approved programme documentation should be submitted to the Panel and the proposed changes highlighted. The original validation panel's report should also be made available to the differential validation panel.

9 Validation of Individual Modules

9.1 Validation of a New Module

Where Validation of an individual new module is required, the module descriptor should be sent to an External Expert for review. The External Expert should provide a written report on the module to indicate approval or rejection of validation. Where a module is not approved, reasons should be given and where possible, advice offered as to the amendments necessary to attain approval.

Consideration of the module should include:

- the level of the outcomes

- the number of credits assigned

- the assessment schedule

- the resources necessary to deliver the module

- the appropriateness of the module and its outcomes to the target programme

Where a new module has been validated and included in a programme schedule, this constitutes a change to the approved schedule and should be approved by the Programme Evaluation Sub-Committee through the Registrar's Office.

9.2 Validation of a New Module as an Award

In cases where a new module is being validated as a non-major award (minor, special purpose, supplemental), the following will be considered in addition to the above:

- the alignment of award learning outcomes to an appropriate award standard

- the suitability of the module as a non-major award, i.e. evidence of learner demand and/or employment opportunities for graduates

- entry requirements, student support and quality assurance arrangements

- whether the award is being designated as a micro-credential

.

Validated non-major awards consisting of one new module should be approved by the Programme Evaluation Sub-Committee. Such awards can be designated as micro-credentials for communication and marketing purposes.

9.3 Validation of an Existing Module as a Non-Major Award (minor, special purpose, supplemental)

Where an existing, validated module is to be designated as a non-major award, this must be submitted to the Registrar's Office and approved by the Programme Evaluation Sub-committee. Consideration of the award should include:

- the alignment of award learning outcomes to an appropriate award standard

- the suitability of the module as a non-major award, i.e. evidence of learner demand and/or employment opportunities for graduates

- entry requirements, student support and quality assurance arrangements

- whether the award is being designated as a micro-credential.

10. Policy on Changes to Programmes and Programme Schedules

1. Any changes to a programme or programme schedule for a new academic year must be approved by Academic Council by the June meeting of the previous academic year.

2. Proposed changes must be submitted in the first instance to the Programme Evaluation Sub-Committee (PEC) for discussion no later than at the March/April sub-committee meeting in order to be forwarded to Academic Council for approval.

3. Proposed changes must be discussed by the relevant programme board no later than two weeks before the March/April PEC meeting in order to be submitted to the Chair and included on the Agenda.

4. Programme boards must show evidence of discussion of the impact of changes to the intended learning outcomes, (if any) and to the teaching and learning and assessment strategies of the programme in question.

5. Changes fall under three categories:

- **Minor changes** do not affect the programme learning outcomes of a programme. They ensure continued consistency with the recommendations and conditions of the original validation report and do not compromise the programme's stated aims, objectives, and intended learning outcomes. Such changes may include changes to the balance between continuous assessment and examination in a specific module; changes in module titles; minor changes in contact hours; changes to the balance between practical and examined modules in an overall programme; inclusion or exclusion of core modules and the rebalancing of credits for particular modules,

- **Structural Changes** to a programme include changes in delivery modes (full-time to part-time provision or vice versa; change to the delivery format to include blended or on-line provision where not foreseen in the original validation); inclusion of a new elective strand consistent with the programme learning outcomes; inclusion or exclusion of of work placement or dissertation; significant re-distribution and re-

sequencing of content without altering the fundamentals of the programme and the intended learning outcomes; changes to the programme title to better reflect the programme learning outcomes or to align the title to changes in national policy. Where such changes do not compromise the programme's stated aims, objectives, and intended learning outcomes, the programme may undergo a differential validation process rather than a full re-validation.

- **Major changes** which require revalidation by an external panel change the programme's intended learning outcomes. All programmes offered through collaborative provision require full validation in line with the Institute's Policy on Collaborative Provision, Transnational Provision and Joint Awards.

The PEC shall determine whether proposed changes represents minor, major or structural change or major change to the programme and shall advise the Academic Council as to whether the changes may be approved without recourse to either re-validation or differential validation, or whether in fact, re-validation or differential validation is required.

Differential Validation The process for differential validation shall be as for the validation of minor, special purpose or supplemental awards as described under B.3.1 above. The original approved programme documentation should be submitted to the Panel and the proposed changes highlighted. The original validation panel's report should also be made available to the differential validation panel.

11 Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the President, the Registrar, the Academic Council and the Schools and Departments to ensure that these processes operate in accordance with Academic Council policy as agreed on the dates outlined above.

12 Appendix 1: Programme Delivery Outline

Programme Delivery Outline

This template should be completed for every stage of the programme to provide an overview of the delivery modes used for each module.

Programme title	
Programme delivery mode (Face-to-face (F), Blended (B), Online (O))	
Learning design approach (Please provide a brief outline of the design model or framework which has guided the design of the programme)	

Overview of modules				
Stage			**Semester**	
Module title	**Mode (F, B, O)**	**Face-to-face hours**	**Synchronous online hours**	**Asynchronous online hours**
Module 1	B	3 (1 L, 2 P)	1 (L)	1
Module 2	O		2 (L)	1
Module 3	F	3 (2 L, 1 T)		
Module 4	B	2 (F)		1
Module 5	B	2 (1 L, 1 T)	1 (L)	
	Totals			

Stage			**Semester**	
Module title	**Mode (F, B, O)**	**Face-to-Face hours**	**Synchronous online hours**	**Asynchronous online hours**
	Totals			

Stage			**Semester**	
Module title	**Mode (F, B, O)**	**Face-to-Face hours**	**Synchronous online hours**	**Asynchronous online hours**
	Totals			

13 Appendix 2: Stage 2 Needs Assessment

Programme Details

School:	
Department(s):	
Head of Department:	
Programme Title (provisional):	

Introduction

This needs assessment should be used by Departments to determine whether to proceed directly to Stage 3 of the programme validation process or undertake the optional Stage 2. The purpose is to ensure programmes are adequately prepared for external validation, maintaining the highest quality and minimizing risks. It ensures a structured approach to decision-making while maintaining accountability and quality assurance.

Departments should use the needs assessment/self-assessment to evaluate programme readiness for external validation. Each item is scored from **0 (Not Addressed)** to **2 (Fully Addressed)**, with higher scores indicating greater readiness. The output of the self-assessment exercise is normally submitted to the Executive Board during Stage 1 of the validation process for final approval.

Criteria	Score: 0 (Not Addressed)	Score: 1 (Partially Addressed)	Score: 2 (Fully Addressed)	Score
Programme Design and Development Readiness				
Will all programme documentation requirements be met through a robust internal review process?	Programme documentation requirements are incomplete.	Programme documentation requirements partially complete, needs further work.	Programme documentation requirements complete.	
Familiarity with Validation Processes				
Does the Department have a strong record of successfully developing and validating similar programmes?	Poor or no prior success in validations.	Some experience with prior validations	Strong record of successful validations.	
Is the programme development team experienced with validation processes and confident in addressing external panel queries?	Team lacks experience or confidence.	Partially experienced team.	Experienced team, well-prepared.	
Complexity of the Proposed Programme				
Does the programme involve innovative approaches (e.g., new	High level of innovation,	Some innovation, partially considered.	Innovation well-addressed and justified.	

Criteria	Score: 0 (Not Addressed)	Score: 1 (Partially Addressed)	Score: 2 (Fully Addressed)	Score
pedagogy, delivery methods) that may benefit from additional scrutiny?	insufficiently addressed.			
Does the programme include collaborative arrangements (including External Accreditation) with external partners or other institutions/organisations that require careful review?	Key collaboration risks not addressed.	Some risks reviewed, but gaps remain.	Collaboration fully planned and reviewed.	
			Total:	

Scoring Interpretation

Score Range	Recommendation
9-10	Proceed directly to Stage 3. The programme is well-prepared and poses minimal risks for external validation.
6-8	Consider Stage 2. Some areas require further development or review, and a Stage 2 may strengthen the proposal.
0–5	Stage 2 is strongly recommended. Significant gaps or risks need to be addressed before external validation.