PROGRAME
APPROVAL
GUIDANCE
NOTES
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1. Introduction

1.1. These notes provide guidance to Schools/Departments and to Programme Development Panels (PDPs) on the procedure by which proposals for new degree programmes and major amendments to existing programmes should be considered across the College. The procedure details the different stages of consideration, gives advice regarding what is needed at each stage, and the support that is available from the Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ) section of Registry Services throughout the process.

1.2. This procedure should be used for development of all programmes. This includes programmes that are; standard, collaborative, flexible and distributed learning (including distance and e-learning), bespoke, cross-school and interdisciplinary. It should be read in conjunction with the approved role and terms of reference of the following committees: College Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC); College Programmes Committee (CPC) and School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees (STQECs).

1.3. The programme approval procedure has several stages to allow matters for discussion of new programmes to be identified as early as possible. It allows for Programme Proposals to be presented to Head of Department/ Executive Dean and STQECs for approval in principle where appropriate to ensure strategic matters are considered first before quality approval. Further scrutiny of programme detail will involve STQECs; Programme Development Panels (PDP) and CPC. Formal approval is given by TQEC and Academic Board.

1.4. In liaison with ASQ, the CPC will manage the approval process and School programme development activity including providing advice at the initial stages.

2. Forms and related documents

2.1. These notes should be read in conjunction with the following documents all available on the ASQ website http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ASQ/programme-approval/:
   - **Guide to Developing Programmes** - which provides advice regarding the entire process of programme design, validation and establishment.
   - **Programme Proposal form** and guidance notes
     
     The Programme Proposal form consists of 3 parts – a) Summary details of programme, b) External subject specialist form and c) Programme Description for publicity.
   - **Programme Specification form** and guidance notes
     
     Programme specifications must be kept up to date. If there are any amendments to a programme following approval then a revised programme specification must be submitted.
   - **Submission Dates** for relevant academic year

3. Timetable for Approvals

3.1. For information on key dates for submission of new programmes and timetables for approval please see the relevant ‘Submission Dates’ document for the academic year which provides indicative schedules for possible timings of programme approval. Details here: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/quality/programme-approval/
3.2. Programmes that are entering UCAS and to be included in print publicity, must have at least the Programme Proposal stage approved by STQEC and reported to CPC by March of the Spring term; 18 months before the planned start of the programme (i.e. Spring 13/14 before programme start in Autumn 15/16).

3.3. To be advertised in the College print prospectus as ‘subject to approval’, programmes must have at least the Programme Proposal stage approved by STQEC and reported to CPC by the end of May in the year preceding the planned start year of the programme (i.e. May 2013 before programme start in Autumn 2014). The Programme Description appendix of the Programme Proposal must be completed in order to provide External Relations with the full details required for listing programmes in printed and online prospectuses.

3.4. A later timetable for approval can be followed but will miss the print prospectus deadline(s). The last date for a standard approval to take place is for the PDP to take place during the Autumn term in the year preceding the start of the programme (if starting in the Autumn term), reported to the CPC at the end of that Autumn term.

3.5. Exceptionally, a “fast-track” procedure may be invoked where it is clearly demonstrated that the proposal is being submitted in response to a new funding opportunity, a new and clearly defined market opportunity or strategic need or an unexpected change in key staffing. All requests for consideration through this procedure must be submitted to the Academic Registrar for consideration and accompanied by the explicit approval of the Executive Dean. The proposal should be considered by the Chair of the STQEC prior to consideration by a Programme Development Panel (PDP). Following PDP consideration, the Chair of the CPC College Programmes Committee should make a recommendation on behalf of the Committee to the Chairs of the TQEC, Academic Board Executive Committee and Academic Board. All such action should be reported in writing subsequently to the relevant membership. The final date by which programmes may be considered through the “fast track” procedure is the end of the spring term prior to commencement of the programme in the autumn. This will ensure that all proposals are approved during the spring to allow for full resourcing, support and advertising for the programme to be in place by the summer term.

4. The Approval Process

4.1. The approval process consists of several stages that can be described as two parts each involving consideration by key School and College committees.

Part A – School Level Approval – approval by School Executive and STQEC

Part B – College Level Approval – approval by PDP, CPC, TQEC and Academic Board.

A flowchart outlining the process is available in Appendix 1

5. PART A – School Level Approval

School Executive and School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (STQEC)

5.1. Stage 1 – Initial Development (Departments, Schools or Institutes)

5.1.1. Consideration should be given within Schools to the academic development of programmes and modules held by Departments, Institutes or at School level.

5.1.2. The ASQ section of Registry Services can provide advice at the initial stages of programme development in such areas as Common Awards Scheme (CAS)/regulatory queries,
engagement with the QAA Quality Code (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Higher Education Credit Framework for England, Subject Benchmark Statements, Programme Specifications), College’s Mission, Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement, development of a Memorandum of Agreement (for collaborative programmes) etc.

5.1.3. All proposals must have been developed in outline and the subject of consultation, scrutiny and securing of resources required prior to submission to the STQEC. The following documents provide advice regarding the matters that should be considered when developing a new programme:

- Guide to Developing Programmes
  http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ASQ/programme-approval
- College’s Common Awards Scheme
  http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.doc
- QAA – Quality Code
  http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements
  http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.asp

5.1.4. Relevant consultation should take place: across the School and College for joint/interdisciplinary programmes including with all Departments involved in development of a new programme; with relevant partners for collaborative programmes; with relevant employers for Foundation Degrees and bespoke programmes.

5.1.5. In order to assess the likely demand for a proposed programme and to assist in its development internal and external opinion should be sought, wherever possible, from such sources as:
- External Relations e.g. in providing information on developments in the marketplace and trend data on student demand for particular programmes in the London area and across the sector (e.g. availability, volume, nature and quality of applicants for admission)
- ASQ (Registry Services) for collaborative programmes
- Finance and Planning and Business Systems regarding JACS codes, cost centres and price groups
- the Institute of Professional Studies (for Foundation degrees and work-based learning programmes including those focused on Professional Studies)
- colleagues in this and other universities
- existing and planned provision (including rates of fees charged) of other programmes in cognate fields by other universities in the College’s recruitment area or by the College itself
- the views of past and present students and of prospective students attending College Open Evenings
- the views of employers or potential employers of students
- occupational and professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements

5.2. Stage 2 – School Approval (School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committees)

5.2.1. STQECS may recommend for approval new programmes programme and major amendments but these require College formal approval.
5.2.2. STQECs may formally approve new modules, new non-credit bearing modules, module amendments and minor programme amendments. These do not need College level approval, but must be reported to the CPC. STQECs must ensure these are in line with the QAA Quality Code, the College’s Mission, and Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement.

5.2.3. In approving any new programme STQECs should give consideration to the College’s Strategy Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLATE) including identification of key School priorities in learning and teaching and in programme developments.

5.2.4. Programme Proposals must be developed with reference to resource allocation and School strategic plans, with formal sign off by the Executive Dean (in consultation with the School Manager) and Head of Department, and formal consultation with Estates (Room Bookings), the Library, ITS and Media Services.

5.2.5. All programmes put forward for consideration by the STQEC must already have been included in the School Strategic Plans and approved by the College Strategic Planning Committee. Programmes that are put forward that were unable to be included in the Strategic Plan, such as those being considered through the “fast track” process, will be approved subject to presentation at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee. STQECs should play a key role in avoiding potential conflict in terms of programme overlap keeping questions of cross-School and interdisciplinary activity at the heart of the work.

5.2.6. Programmes can be submitted to STQECs as full proposals or as proposals for approval to proceed.

- A proposal for approval to proceed will consist of the programme proposal form only
- A full proposal will include a programme proposal form, a programme specification form and any new module forms.

**Approval to Proceed**

5.2.7. Initial Programme Proposals (Programme Proposal Form) should be approved by STQECs and reported to the Spring CPC, 18 months in advance of commencement of the programme (if an Autumn start programme). This will allow the School/Department to meet the deadlines to advertise the title of the new programme in the next following edition of the College prospectus.

5.2.8. When an initial proposal has received approval to proceed by STQEC and subsequently has been reported to CPC it can be included in the UCAS submission to start the following academic year and can be included in the Birkbeck print prospectus, as ‘subject to approval’. When the proposal has been approved in full by a PDP, CPC and TQEC it can be advertised in full.

5.2.9. When considering initial proposals STQECs will make the decision whether to give approval for these to proceed to development of a full proposal for consideration by PDPs or will return the proposal to the Department for further consideration including, for example, clarification on areas of concern or for further detail.

5.2.10. By presenting initial proposals to the STQEC for approval to proceed, strategic and resourcing matters will be considered at an early stage in a programme’s development thus ensuring the process is as effective and efficient as possible. It also allows programmes to be included in UCAS and the print prospectus.

5.2.11. Approval of programmes to proceed will be notified by the Chair or Secretary of the STQEC to the ASQ section of Registry Services for formal notification to Planning and Business Systems, Student Administration (Registry Services) and External Relations. Only
at this stage when agreed in principle by the STQEC may the programme be advertised in the prospectus “subject to approval”, submitted to UCAS (where appropriate) and systems set-up work on BSIS triggered for enquiry purposes.

**Full Programme Proposals**

5.2.12. Following approval to proceed or notification that a full programme proposal is in development, ASQ (Registry Services) will liaise with Schools regarding the most suitable dates for submission of full proposals and major amendments to existing programmes. The agreed dates should allow for consideration and approval to be given during the academic year preceding the session in which the new degree would begin. Full programme proposals require completed Programme Proposal form, Programme Specification and all Module Proposal forms.

6. **PART B – College Level Approval**

*Programme Development Panels, CPC, TQEC and Academic Board*

6.1. **Stage 3 - Programme Development Panels:**

6.1.1. In liaison with ASQ and STQECs, PDPs will establish and operate development schedules to consider all new programme proposals/major programme amendments\(^1\) (approved by the College Programmes Committee to proceed to consideration). The establishment of a panel does not necessarily guarantee a programme will be approved – the final decision remains with the College Programmes Committee on whether to recommend to the TQEC for approval. Depending on the timetable for approval it may be agreed that a PDP is not required and programme approvals may be considered directly at College Programmes Committee.

6.1.2. ASQ will liaise with Schools regarding the most suitable dates for submission of definitive, full proposals in line with the indicative submission timetable and in light of School activities and commitments.

6.1.3. The paperwork required for each full proposal should include: programme proposal form, programme specification, new module forms and in some case module forms for current modules.

6.1.4. The activity of the panel may be actual or virtual – this will enable panels to run at any given point in the year, and not to be constrained by fixed timetables, however it is expected that a PDP will run once a term. This flexibility will allow Schools will be able to respond to the need for programme development without compromising the quality development work, whilst still meeting fixed points in the College cycle (such as prospectus deadlines).

6.1.5. PDPs will consider all new proposals and major programme amendments, considering a number of cognate proposals at the same time, wherever possible, thus ensuring that the approval process is as efficient in terms of time and workload as possible. They will consider all documentation including a draft Memorandum of Agreement for

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\(^1\) The definition of “major” amendments applies only to those amendments constituting a substantially altered programme thus effectively requiring re-validation. The Chair of each School Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (STQEC) should exercise discretion in judging whether an amendment constitutes a major or a minor change to the programme in question. For example, major amendments may include a combination of significant and substantial changes to a number of the following: overarching assessment methods and weightings introducing a substantial number of alterations to the curriculum (defined in terms of the balance of modules at different levels or alterations to core or compulsory modules), or changing the programme and award regulations including substantial changes to the programme aims and learning outcomes, entry requirements, intermediate awards, duration, level of the award etc. Where only one or two of the changes indicated above is being made the STQEC Chair may still consider this to be a minor amendment.
collaborative programmes and will agree further action required by the School before the proposal may be recommended for endorsement by the College Programmes Committee.

6.1.6. ASQ will: convene the PDP and agree the process of consideration either by correspondence or organising a meeting at which the proposal is discussed (to include a tour of facilities for collaborative programmes); send out all documentation to the Panel; service the meeting or collate feedback received by correspondence; and follow up on any further action required by the School.

6.1.7. PDPs and the CPC will play a key role in avoiding potential conflict in terms of programme overlap keeping questions of cross-School and interdisciplinary activity at the heart of the work.

6.1.8. The membership of Programme Development Panels will be agreed between ASQ and the relevant STQEC(s). The following membership is indicative only and its form to be determined, as appropriate, for each development event. This will include whether consideration should take place by correspondence or a meeting and whether all or only a selection of these individuals need to be in attendance at a meeting or may contribute by correspondence.

- Chair to be agreed by ASQ and the relevant programme proposer(s)
- Chair of STQEC or their nominee if they wish to attend
- Head of Department(s) hosting/contributing to the programme
- representatives from any collaborating institutions
- representatives from the Library, ITS and room bookings as appropriate
- ASQ representative
- External Subject Specialist. The role of the External Subject Specialist will be to provide external, subject specialist advice on the proposed programme including: appropriateness to national requirements; overall philosophy, aims and learning outcomes; admissions; curriculum; teaching and learning; assessment; expertise of the programme team; learning resources; programme management and student support.
- Co-opted internal and expert input – e.g. for foundation degrees and bespoke, tailored programmes such as an employer representative or a colleague from the Institute of Professional Studies.

6.1.9. The programme proposer should attend the meeting of the Panel (or supply this information in writing) to provide a summary of the discussion that has taken place at the School level regarding the proposal/major amendment. They should also respond to any matters raised regarding academic quality or operational such as resourcing. The PDPs should be regarded as developmental and attendees should stay for the duration of the meeting in order to contribute towards the process.

6.1.10. The following is a list of the types of documentation that should be provided for PDPs. It is indicative and should not be regarded as exhaustive.

**All Programme Development Panels:**

- Programme Proposal form and programme specification including a completed External Subject Specialist’s Form and confirmation that all resources required have been secured; programme amendment and associated module proposal/amendment forms
- For major amendments only: a revised Programme Specification, programme amendment and associated module proposal/amendment forms
- New module proposal/specifications

2 External Subject Specialists should be paid £50 for each proposal considered by correspondence only and £100 (plus travel expenses) for each proposal considered by attendance at a meeting of a Programme Development Panel. This fee may be increased where a number of cognate proposals are considered at the same time.
o Confirmation that the proposal has been fully discussed with all contributing Schools and Departments and meets the needs of specific organizations/employers for bespoke, tailored programmes, for example through minutes of meetings, emails from relevant contributing Schools and Departments/employers etc

o Memorandum of Agreement for programmes run in collaboration with another HE/FE institution or professional organisation confirming that resource and revenue sharing has been finalised

o Details of the work-based learning aspects/potential placements for Foundation Degrees

Possible additional Documentation:

o Overview document detailing the background to development of the programme including its rationale and role in terms of strategic programme developments at Birkbeck, the consultation process, and exploration of the marketplace etc where expansion on Section B, point 1 (‘Rationale’) of the proposal form is needed

o Details of the progression arrangements from and to other awards

6.1.11. Consideration of all programme proposals should take account of the following:

o rationale for the programme and institutional context in light of the College Mission, Corporate Plan and strategies including internal and external factors considered in developing the programme and relationship to existing programmes, avoiding overlaps or clashes between programmes but maximising integration and progression wherever possible

o appropriateness of the proposal in relation to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), Higher Education Credit Framework for England, the College’s Common Awards Scheme (CAS) and all associated policies, relevant sections of the College’s Quality Assurance/Enhancement Code of Practice and relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements including for Foundation Degrees and, where appropriate, Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements

o overall philosophy, aims and learning outcomes of the programme

o admissions policies

o curriculum content, balance and relevance of the programme including clear evidence of progression

o teaching and learning strategies including use of research-led teaching

o assessment criteria and methods and award specific regulations

o expertise, leadership and development of the teaching team

o resource provision and facilities for the programme

o programme management and student feedback and support arrangements

6.1.12. ASQ will work further with any Departments/Schools whose programmes are not recommended by a PDP to the CPC, with a view to the proposal being resubmitted at a later stage following further development.

6.2. Stage 4 – College Programmes Committee:

6.2.1. The CPC will give consideration and endorsement to the TQEC, where appropriate, to recommendations for new programmes from the PDPs. This will include receipt of programme proposal forms and programme specifications plus full details of their consideration by a PDP, highlighting any areas for particular attention/consideration. Approval will also be given to major programme amendments post validation by such Panels. Where programmes are being considered that could potentially represent a conflict of interest for the Chair, these will be considered by an appropriate Co-Chair.
6.2.2. The CPC will receive reports from STQEC (via ASQ) on approval of new modules, non-credit bearing modules, module and minor programme amendments. Only when notified to the CPC may systems set-up work on BSIS be triggered.

6.2.3. The CPC is responsible for the management of the overall programme approval process and School programme development activity, informing strategy and policy in this area.

6.3. Stage 5 – College Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee

6.3.1. Following receipt of recommendations from the CPC, the TQEC will give consideration and endorsement to ABExCo and Academic Board, where appropriate, to recommendations for new programmes and major amendments. Notification of final approval of the programme will be made at this stage by ASQ to the STQEC, Planning and Business Systems, Registry Services (Examinations and Student Administration for Admissions), and External Relations. Only at this stage may programmes be flagged in SITS for admissions and enrolment purposes and prospectus entries updated. At this time Exam Board set up will be triggered by Registry Services.

6.3.2. At this stage verification will be given that the correct procedures have been followed and examination made of the wider, more strategic implications of the proposals/major amendments in light of the College’s Mission, Corporate Plan and all relevant College-wide codes of practice and strategies including the Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement.

6.4. Stage 6 – Academic Board Executive Committee and Academic Board

6.4.1. All new programmes proposals must finally be submitted for consideration and approval by both the Academic Board Executive Committee and Academic Board following recommendation by the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee.

*Updated: Jan 2014*
APPENDIX B – UCAS

Full time undergraduate programmes are recruited to via UCAS. The recruitment cycle for UCAS programmes is traditionally longer than for part-time programmes and there are earlier deadlines and requirements be met for UCAS programmes.

Below are specific points to note regarding developing programmes for UCAS entry:

- Programmes to be advertised for autumn term entry in a particular academic year, must be set up for UCAS entry 18 months in advance of commencement of the programme (by March of the preceding year).

- UG programmes that are exist as part-time mode of study require a minor programme amendment to add full time as a mode of study.

- UG programmes that are NEW and do not have an existing part-time mode require full programme approval. If full programme approval is not possible before March of the preceding year, it is advised that a the Approval to Proceed stage is completed by completion of a programme proposal form that can be approved by College Programmes Committee to ensure it is advertised in UCAS as subject to approval. The Full Programme approval process can be carried out subsequently.

- When a programme has been approved for UCAS entry, the ASQ team will forward the details to the BSIS and External Relations teams. BSIS will make the necessary updates to our database records while External Relations will add the programme to UCAS and obtain a UCAS code. Once this has been completed External Relations will notify the department and ASQ, BSIS teams.
APPENDIX C - PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPECTUS DEADLINES

The Birkbeck prospectus is available online and in print. The print prospectus deadline is normally May in the calendar year before the academic year of the start of a programme. i.e. for programmes starting in Autumn 2015, the print prospectus deadline is around May 2014. It is therefore necessary to plan development of new programmes well in advance of stating to ensure all recruitment opportunities are utilized.

- Programmes that have ‘Approval to Proceed’ by the prospectus deadlines are able to be advertised as ‘subject to approval’ and programmes that have full approval are advertised in full.
- Programme developments that miss the print prospectus deadlines will be published on the on-line prospectus only.
- Please note the UCAS recruitment cycle is early and also has specific deadlines. UCAS programmes must normally at least have ‘approval to proceed’ by March in the calendar year before the academic year start of the programme to accept applications. For programmes starting in October 2015 the deadline is 6th March 2014.
- For details of the programme submission deadlines please see details on the Academic Standards and Quality website here: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/quality/programme-approval/

Submission deadlines for 2015/16 start programmes is as below:

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<th></th>
<th>STQEC Approval</th>
<th>CPC</th>
<th>TQEC</th>
<th>Programme Starts</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPRING APPROVAL</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>6th March 2014</td>
<td>20th May 2014</td>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Advertised in print prospectus as ‘subject to approval’ Applications open September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMER APPROVAL</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
<td>3rd July 2014</td>
<td>Chair’s Action</td>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Not advertised in print prospectus. Advertised in online prospectus as ‘subject to approval’ Applications open September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE APPROVAL</td>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Not advertised in print prospectus. Applications open when approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAST TRACK</td>
<td>Spring 2015</td>
<td>Chair’s Action</td>
<td>Chair’s Action</td>
<td>Oct 2015</td>
<td>Exceptional Circumstances Only- Approval to proceed required from Academic Registrar Not advertised in print prospectus</td>
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APPENDIX D – USEFUL LINKS

Birkbeck Regulations – www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs
Common Awards Scheme (CAS) - http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules/casregs.pdf
Academic Standards and Quality - http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ASQ
ASQ – Programme Approval - http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ASQ/programme-approval/
  • Programme Approval Guidance Notes
  • Guide to Developing Programmes
  • Programme Proposal Form
  • Programme Specification Form
  • Programme Amendment Form
  • Module proposal and amendment forms
  • Non-Credit Bearing Module Form
All completed Programme Specifications http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ASQ/programme/schools

QAA
QAA Subject benchmark statements for related subjects http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/subject-guidance/Pages/Subject-benchmark-statements.aspx