

PROGRAMME
APPROVAL
GUIDANCE
NOTES

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1. Introduction

These notes provide guidance to Schools and Departments on the procedures for new programme proposals and major programme amendments. The procedure details the different stages of consideration, gives advice on what is needed at each stage, and the support available from the Academic Standards and Quality (ASQ) section of Registry Services throughout the process.

The programme approval procedure has several stages to allow matters for discussion in relation to new programmes to be identified as early as possible. It allows for programme proposals to be presented to the Head of Department/ Executive Dean and School Education Committees for approval in principle where appropriate to ensure strategic matters are considered first before formal quality approval. Further scrutiny of programme detail will involve School Education Committees and College Programmes Committee (CPC). Formal approval is then given by the college level Education Committee and Academic Board.

2. Forms and related documents

The following documents used in the programme approval process are 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 Amendment form** and guidance notes
- **Programme Specification form** and guidance notes
Programme specifications must be submitted and kept up to date for all programmes. If a new programme is proposed, the department will need to provide a programme specification along with the programme proposal form. If an amendment to a programme is submitted, then an updated programme specification also needs to be provided by the department with the amendment form.
- **Timelines for the submission of forms.**

3. The Approval Process

- 3.1. 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 School Education Committee.

Part B – College-Level Approval – approval by CPC, Education Committee and Academic Board.

A flowchart outlining the process is available in Appendix A.

4. PART A – School-Level Approval: *School Executive and School Education Committee*

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

- 4.1.1. Consideration should be given within Schools to the academic development of programmes and modules held by Departments, Institutes or at School level.
- 4.1.2. 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 Quality Code (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Higher Education Credit Framework for England, Subject Benchmark Statements, Programme Specifications), College's Mission, education strategies development of a Memorandum of Agreement (for collaborative programmes) etc.
- 4.1.3. All proposals must have been developed in outline and the subject of consultation, scrutiny and securing of resources required prior to submission to the School Education Committee. 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/registry/for-staff/quality/programme-approval>
- College's Common Awards Scheme
<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/regulations>
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

4.1.4. 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.

4.1.5. 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 HECoS codes, cost centres and price groups
- relevant 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

4.2. Stage 2 – School Approval (School Education Committees)

4.2.1. School Education Committees may recommend for approval new programmes and major programme amendments, so that they can go forward for College formal approval.

4.2.2. School Education Committees may formally approve new modules, new non-credit bearing modules, module amendments and minor programme amendments. These do not need College level approval, but are reported to CPC. School Education Committees must ensure these are in line with the Quality Code, the College's Mission, education strategies and regulations.

4.2.3. In approving any new programme School Education Committees should give consideration to the College's education strategies including identification of key School priorities in learning and teaching and in programme developments.

4.2.4. 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 consultation with Estates (Room Bookings), the Library, ITS and Media Services.

4.2.5. All programmes put forward for consideration by the School Education Committees must be in line with the School Strategic Plans. School Education Committees 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.

4.2.6. Programmes can be submitted to School Education Committees as full proposals or as proposals for approval to proceed.

- A full proposal will include a programme proposal form (including completed external subject specialist form), a programme specification form and any new module forms.
- Proposals considered for approval to proceed by School Education Committees will return to the school committee at a later date with the full paperwork for approval. These initial proposals can be reported by the Chairs of the School Education Committees to the next CPC as programmes under development/discussion in their School reports to CPC.

By presenting initial proposal ideas to the School Education Committee 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. Programme developers can also discuss with ASQ at this stage appropriate timing's for the full paperwork to reach the committees to achieve their planned start dates.

5. PART B – College-Level Approval: *College Programmes Committee (CPC), Education Committee and Academic Board*

5.1. Stage 3 – College Programmes Committee

5.1.1. Schools and departments can discuss with ASQ the most suitable dates for submission to CPC of, full programme proposals and major programme amendments in line with the indicative submission timetable and in light of School activities and commitments.

5.1.2. The paperwork required for each full proposal or major amendment¹ should include:

- programme proposal form (including completed external specialist form and publicity information sections) or programme amendment form for major amendments
- programme specification
- new module forms, relevant module amendment forms and in some case module forms for current modules
- 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, and that any collaborative arrangements for the delivery of teaching are clear
- Details of the work-based learning aspects/potential placements for Foundation Degrees
- Details of progression arrangements to/from other programmes

5.1.3. Consideration of programme proposals should take account of the following:

- 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
- 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 Quality Code, and relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and, where appropriate, Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements

¹ The definition of "major" amendments applies only to amendments constituting a substantially altered programme effectively requiring re-validation. The Chair of each School Education Committee should exercise discretion in judging whether an amendment constitutes a major or minor change to the programme, and can seek advice from ASQ if needed. 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 mentioned above are being made the Chair may consider it a minor amendment. Guidance on whether an amendment should be considered minor or major is given at the top of the programme amendment form. ASQ may make a final decision on which category the amendment is considered under once completed paperwork has been submitted.

- overall philosophy, aims and learning outcomes of the programme
 - admissions policies
 - curriculum content, balance and relevance of the programme including clear evidence of progression
 - teaching and learning strategies including use of research-led teaching
 - assessment criteria and methods and award specific regulations
 - expertise, leadership and development of the teaching team
 - resource provision and facilities for the programme
 - programme management and student feedback and support arrangements
- 5.1.4. 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.
- 5.1.5. CPC considers and recommends to Education Committee, where appropriate, new programmes from the School Education Committees. Full paperwork (programme proposal, programme specification and module proposals) needs to be provided for CPC to be able to make recommendations. Approval will also be given to major programme amendments. 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.
- 5.1.6. CPC also receives reports from School Education Committees (via ASQ) on approval of new modules, non-credit bearing modules, module and minor programme amendments. CPC is responsible for the management of the overall programme approval process and School programme development activity, informing strategy and policy in this area.

5.2. Stage 4 – College Education Committee

- 5.2.1. Following receipt of recommendations from CPC, Education Committee will give consideration and endorsement to ABExCo and Academic Board, where appropriate, to recommendations for new programmes and major programme amendments.
- 5.2.2. 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 College's education strategies.

5.3. Stage 5 – Academic Board Executive Committee and Academic Board

- 5.3.1. All new programmes proposals must be submitted for consideration and approval by the Academic Board Executive Committee. Only at this stage may programmes be flagged in SITS for admissions and enrolment purposes and prospectus entries updated to 'approved' status.
- 5.3.2. ABExCo then reports to Academic Board and Academic Board formally approves programmes and major amendments. At this stage formal notification forms for the full programme approval can be drawn up by ASQ and sent to School Education Committees, Departments, Planning and Business Services, External Relations, Exams, and Library Services.

6. Timetable for Approvals

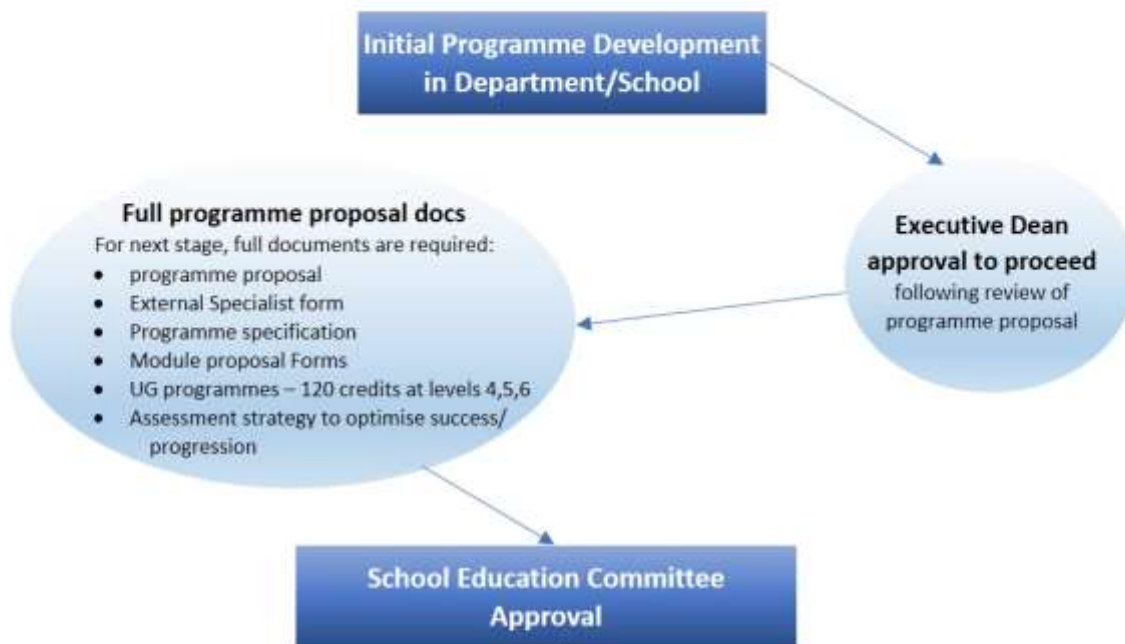
- 6.1. For information on key dates for submission of new programmes and major amendments for approval please see the document on timelines for submission of paperwork which provides information on the possible timings of programme approval, http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/programme-approval/documents/timelines_for_submission_of_paperwork and the table showing the committee approval dates for new programmes in Appendix B of this document.

- 6.2. Undergraduate programmes that are entering UCAS and are going to be included in the print prospectus, must have been through the School Education Committee and had CPC approval by the February meeting of the year preceding the planned start of the programme (so by February 2020, for a new programme or major amendment starting in Autumn 2021).
- 6.3. Postgraduate programmes will need to have been through the School Education Committee and had CPC approval by the Summer Term of the year preceding the planned start of the programme (so by June 2020, for a new programme or major amendment starting in Autumn 2021).
- 6.4. 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 Head of Academic Services for consideration, as the nominated representative of the Academic Registrar, and accompanied by the explicit approval of the Executive Dean. The proposal should be considered by the Chair of the School Education Committee prior to consideration by CPC. In the event that the timing does not make consideration at a CPC meeting possible, the Chair of the CPC can make a recommendation on behalf of the Committee to the Chairs of the Education Committee, Academic Board Executive Committee (ABExCo) 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.
- 6.5. Programmes which have been approved by CPC, but have still to receive Education Committee and ABExCo approval can be advertised as ‘subject to approval’. Application links for proposed new programmes are not opened, however, until Education Committee and ABExCo committee approval has been given (or the Chairs of these committees have taken Chair’s action if approval is needed prior to a meeting).

Updated Oct 2019

Programme Approval Flowchart

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT STAGE



COLLEGE STAGE



APPENDIX B - PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPECTUS DEADLINES

- The Birkbeck prospectus is available online and in print, with separate printed publications and deadlines for the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The undergraduate print prospectus deadline, which takes into account UCAS opening deadlines, is normally March of the calendar year before the academic year of the start of a programme. i.e. for programmes starting in Autumn 2021, the print prospectus deadline is at the start of March 2020. It is therefore necessary to plan development of new programmes well in advance of their start to ensure all recruitment opportunities are utilised.
- Programmes that have been through CPC by the prospectus deadlines can be advertised as 'subject to approval' and programmes that have been through all the committee approval stages up to ABExCo are advertised as fully approved.
- 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 been recommended for approval by CPC by **the Spring Meeting** in the calendar year before the academic year start of the programme. For programmes starting in October 2021, the relevant CPC meeting is on 12 February 2020.
- For details of the programme submission timelines please see the document on the Academic Standards and Quality website: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/programme-approval/documents/timelines_for_submission_of_paperwork

Submission deadlines for programmes with a **2021/22** start are shown below:

	School Education Committee	College Programmes Committee	Education Committee	ABExCo	Academic Board	Programme Starts	Notes
AUTUMN APPROVAL	Autumn 2019	18 November 2019	29 January 2020	27 February 2020	12 March 2020	Oct 2021	<i>Advertised in print prospectus as approved. Applications open September 2020 for 2021/22</i>
SPRING APPROVAL	Spring 2020	12 February 2020	30 April 2020	27 May 2020	10 June 2020	Oct 2021	<i>UG programmes advertised in print prospectus as 'subject to approval'; PG programmes advertised as approved. Applications open September 2020 for 2021/22</i>
SUMMER APPROVAL	Summer 2020	17 June 2020	October 2020	October 2020	November 2020	Oct 2021	<i>UG not advertised in print prospectus. PG advertised in print prospectus as 'subject to approval'. Applications open September 2020 for UG (following Summer Chair's actions) and November 2020 for PG for 2021/22</i>

Note: In exceptional circumstances only, a 'fast track procedure' may be followed involving chair's actions to obtain a faster approval (see para 6.5). All requests for consideration through this procedure must be submitted, with a case for why an exception should be made, to the Head of Academic Services, as the nominated representative of the Academic Registrar, and accompanied by the explicit approval of the Executive Dean.

APPENDIX C – USEFUL LINKS

Birkbeck Regulations – <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/regulations>

Common Awards Scheme (CAS) - <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/policies/regulations>

Academic Standards and Quality - <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/about-us/operations-and-quality>

ASQ – Programme Approval - <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/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

College Programme Specifications - <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/quality/programme-specifications>

QAA

Quality Code - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

QAA Subject benchmark statements for related subjects - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

QAA qualification and credit frameworks - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks>