

PROGRAMME AND CAMPUS DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT & APPROVAL POLICY

Definitions

Programme:	A defined curriculum route containing a collection of specific modules, whether or not this leads to a named award, or award of credit.
Course:	An iteration of a programme of study; a course may be delivered full-time, full-time accelerated, or part-time.
Module:	A unit of study covering a particular or defined curriculum area or skill that, when combined with other units, forms a complete programme.
Mode:	The way in which a student will learn: for example online, or by attending classes face-to-face.
Inclusive Design:	Consideration given to the profile of students with Disability Support Agreements to anticipate their needs and the needs of all students studying at the University of Law to create an equitable learning environment.
Level:	References to “level” relate to The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) document published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
Programme Approval:	<p>The scrutiny and approval of a new programme or variation to an existing programme, which result in a separate award.</p> <p>Where a framework exists for a defined award, for example LLM, the addition of a new programme will follow a separately defined process.</p>
Major Modification:	<p>The process where significant changes to an existing programme are proposed, scrutinised, and approved. This may include: significant changes to the teaching and assessment strategies, learning outcomes or content; a new mode of study; changes in structure; or a new teaching model.</p> <p>NB: Where a programme is changing award type (e.g., an MA to MSc), this will be considered through the Programme Approval process.</p>
Periodic Review:	A scheduled review of the quality of a programme, specifically in relation to academic standards, student and external examiner feedback, student success and destinations, and alignment with external benchmarks and current academic and professional practice.

	<p>A periodic review may incorporate minor modifications to a programme, or a major modification, which will be scrutinised and approved through the periodic review process.</p> <p>The outcome of a periodic review shall represent a re-approval of a programme for five years.</p>
Minor Modification:	<p>An amendment to a programme and/or its constituent modules that does not represent a significant change to the teaching, learning or assessment strategy, and/or learning outcomes and/or aims of the award. This process is defined in a separate protocol.</p>
Validation:	<p>The academic and, where relevant, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) scrutiny applied to a programme proposal having received Strategic Approval by the University's Executive Management Board and Academic Board in accordance with the provisions of the University's Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy.</p>

Introduction

1. The University of Law's Programme And Campus Design, Development & Approval Policy has been informed by the Office for Students Sector-Recognized Standards and the General Ongoing Conditions of Registration and has regard to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. These definitive reference points for all English higher education institutions set out how academic standards are established and maintained and how excellence in the quality of learning opportunities is assured. This policy sits within The University of Law's Quality and Standards Code, which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of The University of Law and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the code..
2. The policy applies to all programmes whether full-time, part-time, online, or short courses which lead to any award or credits from the University or require approval from a PSRB and any relevant funding bodies. This policy also applies to apprenticeship programmes which include elements beyond a degree award. Programmes developed in collaboration with other partners are governed by this policy and the University's policies for partnerships.
3. This policy sets out the principles that apply to the design, development and approval of all programmes and any variations of programmes.

Responsibility for this policy

4. Ultimate responsibility for the development of clear and effective processes and procedures associated with the maintenance of standards and quality assurance of academic provision and overseeing their application lies with the Academic Board.

Expectation

5. The University, in discharging its responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operates effective processes for the design, development, and approval of programmes.

Key Aims and Principles

6. The aim of the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy of the University is to ensure that:

- 6.1 the design, academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of new and revised programmes are appropriate to the awards to which they lead;
- 6.2 the academic standards of those programmes can be safeguarded and maintained and the learning opportunities promised to students can be delivered;
- 6.3 programmes are informed by reference to University's regulations and policies, the Office for Students (OfS) ongoing conditions of registration, the QAA's Quality Code, the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Awarding Bodies (FHEQ), the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (where applicable), the Higher Education Credit Framework for England, and relevant PSRB and employment demands, and apprenticeship funding rules and standards;
- 6.4 programmes meet the strategic and business needs of the University; and
- 6.5 programmes have been designed in line with an inclusive design agenda to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promote success and quality of learning opportunities.

Programme Development Team

7. All proposals, whether for new programmes or for the major modification of existing ones, will be prepared and presented by a Programme Development Team responsible for the proposal, constituted in accordance with the provisions within the University's Protocols for the Approval of New Programmes and Campuses, and Major Modification of Existing Programmes.

Programme Design

8. Oversight of curriculum design and development rests with the University's Academic Executive. This oversight extends from conception to curriculum development and programme approval.

9. All concepts and proposals are initially assessed against the University's overall strategic objectives, the Learning and Teaching Policy and the University's policies and Awards Framework. All formal proposals are then prepared and presented by a Programme Development Team.

Design Criteria

10. In the design and development of programmes the following criteria are taken into account:

Standards

10.1 the standards of the proposed programme are compatible with the FHEQ, the Higher Education Credit Framework for England, relevant national subject benchmarks, and, where appropriate, with the requirements of PSRBs and funding bodies;

Academic content

10.2 the overall relevance and intellectual integrity of the programme is appropriate;

10.3 the programme is coherent in terms of design, delivery and structure, and up-to-date in terms of content;

10.4 the content and level of the curriculum is designed to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and to be able to acquire relevant graduate attributes;

10.5 the curriculum promotes progression so that the demands on the learner in intellectual challenge, skills, knowledge, conceptualisation and learning autonomy increase during the course of the programme;

10.6 the curriculum is informed by scholarship, research or professional practice;

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

10.7 the learning and teaching methods are designed to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes;

10.8 the assessment methods are designed to measure student achievement of the intended learning using a range of relevant assessment instruments to give opportunities for success and progression;

- 10.9 the assessment criterion are clear and designed to differentiate between different levels of achievement relative to intended learning outcomes;
- 10.10 assessment and feedback are coherently designed across the programme, not only at module level; and
- 10.11 the learning, teaching and assessment aligns with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework.
11. The following principles underpin the aims of University policy on proposals for programme approval:

Student engagement

- 11.1 The University works in partnership with its students to shape the student learning experience and to enhance the quality and standards of the programmes. Proposals for new and revised programmes therefore embrace the University's policies under Student Engagement. Student input is incorporated into all stages of programme design, development, and approval.

Academic rigour

- 11.2 Through this process the University ensures, by constructive and challenging discussion of matters related to academic provision and the quality of the student learning experience, that its programmes are well-designed, academically coherent, intellectually challenging, and that they are informed by the current requirements of professional practice and capable of enriching the student experience.

Alignment with internal and external reference points

- 11.3 Proposals for new and revised programmes accord with the following reference points where applicable:

Internal:

- the University's Quality and Standards Code; and
- the University's Strategic Plan;
- the University's approach to Widening Participation and facilitating student success;
- the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework.

External:

- Office for Students (OfS) ongoing conditions of registration;
- the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education;

- the FHEQ and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area;
- the Higher Education Credit Framework for England;
- relevant subject benchmark statements, and apprenticeships standards; and
- the requirements of PSRBs and funding bodies, where relevant.

11.4 Where the University offers programmes which fulfil the requirements of a PSRB, the relevant PSRB will influence the design of academic programmes, and may influence the approval, monitoring, and review of programmes. However, the responsibility for the academic standards remains with the University which is awarding the academic qualification.

Peer Review

11.5 Approval is underpinned by academic and professional peer review (external expertise) by internal colleagues and external subject specialists, representatives from professional bodies and potential employers. This promotes confidence in the quality and standards of the University's programmes.

Enhancement

11.6 The primary focus of the programme approval process is on assuring the University that appropriate academic standards are being set, consideration has been given to creating an inclusive learning environment, and that mechanisms are in place to ensure appropriate learning opportunities will be provided to students. The process also allows for the enhancement of proposals drawing on internal and external innovation and good practice. Through discussions with Programme Development Teams, Panels are able to form a judgment of confidence in the future management of the programme to ensure the continuing quality and standards of, and to take steps to enhance, the provision.

Evidence-based

11.7 Proposals for new and revised programmes are evidence-based, drawing on well-developed resource plans, market research and employer, student, and external feedback.

Outline process of approval

12. The Programme Approval process consists of three stages which are fully detailed in the Protocols for the Approval of New Programmes and Campuses, and Major Modification of Existing Programmes:

- Stage 1 – Strategic Approval
- Stage 2 – Programme Approval
- Stage 3 – Operational Set Up

Strategic Approval

13. Strategic Approval requires programme proposals to be submitted to the University's Executive Management Board for initial consideration in order to establish if there is a prima facie academic and business case to support the development of a full proposal. The aim is to ensure that time is spent productively on developing proposals that are viable, accord with the University's strategic and academic objectives and are likely to succeed at the programme approval stage.

Programme Approval

14. Programme Approval requires the development and scrutiny of a programme proposal as per the University's protocols. Each programme approval will result in an outcome and the approval of a programme or the setting of recommendations and (pre-approval) conditions.

Operational set-up

15. This relates to all aspects of setting-up a new programme within the University, such as the setting up of a new programme within the University's IT systems; the finalisation and publication of all programme documentation including the programme specification and module outlines; confirming admissions processes; setting up of the new programme's assessments, and the setting up of web pages for recruitment and marketing purposes.

Outcomes from Programme Approval Panels

16. At the conclusion of its scrutiny, a Programme Approval Panel may decide as follows:

- To recommend **approval** of the programme, with or without recommendations to the Programme Approval Committee.
- To set **pre-approval conditions** on the programme which must be addressed in order for the Panel to recommend the programme to the Programme Approval Committee for final approval.
- To **refer** the proposal back to the Programme Development Team for further work where there are a number of significant issues to be addressed. This will allow time for the programme development team to consult more widely and fully revise the documentation, which should be considered by a re-convened panel.

- To **reject** the proposal because of a range of substantive issues which need to be addressed. This decision requires the proposal to be re-submitted for Strategic Approval from the start of the process as set out in the University's protocols.

17. **Pre-Approval Conditions** must be set where essential action is required to address an issue/s that puts academic standards at risk, or where immediate action or response is required in order to meet the University's procedural or documentary requirements. Pre-Approval Conditions should be measurable, with a clear outcome, and achievable within a short time frame. Pre-Approval Conditions must be met in order for the Panel to recommend the programme for approval by the Programme Approval Committee.

18. **Recommendations** are advisory in nature and refer to action that the Panel feel would enhance the learning experience but where no threat is posed to academic standards. The programme development team must consider and respond to recommendations by the first annual programme review at the latest.

19. **Commendations** for good practice may be made where the Panel considers that the proposal and documentation represent either a high standard of work or demonstrate an innovative approach to programme design.

Period of approval

20. The standard period of approval for programmes within the University is five years, at the end of which, a periodic review will be conducted. In some instances, it may be appropriate for a shorter or longer period of approval to be granted, including:

- adherence to PSRB validation requirements; or
- where the programme introduces new or innovatory provision to the University.

Programme Variation

21. The University makes changes to its programmes from time to time, in light of experience and with a view to enhancing the quality of its provision. This may be during the currency of the existing approval and therefore in advance of a periodic review.

22. It should be noted that the cumulative effect of successive approvals for minor change might have the effect of a material change to the educational experience of the students when viewed against the originally approved programme. In this eventuality, a programme may be subject to the major modification process. However, all modifications will be considered holistically, not least for the initial implementation and delivery of new programmes/suites of programmes.

23. Further to the above, the cumulative effect of successive minor modifications would typically be modification to (greater than or equal to) $\geq 25\%$ of a programme within a calendar year. Particularly, the wider impact on the learning outcomes and the

student experience may also be considered as determining factors.

24. Minor modifications submitted within a month of this period may bring further applications for minor modifications into scope for a major modification of the programme.

Recording of approvals, conditions, and recommendations

25. A full electronic copy of the approval documentation, including any amendments arising as a result of the approval process, is maintained by the Academic Registry. The Academic Registry ensures that approval of the programme is reported at the next meeting of the Academic Board and that any conditions and recommendations imposed by the validation panel are actioned within the specified timescales.

Responsibility for the provision

26. Responsibility for the effective implementation of the Programme Design Development and Approval policy lies with the Academic Board.

Monitoring and evaluation of provision

27. Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Programme Design Development and Approval policy lies with the Academic Board.

Version history:

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.0	Director of Education & Quality	Initial drafting	22/07/14
V1.1	Quality Assurance Group	QA review	24/07/14
V1.2	External Consultant	External review	31/07/14
V1.3	Review group: Vice-President (Academic Governance, Quality & Standards) Academic Registrar Head of Quality Assurance	Internal review	05/08/14
V1.4	Executive Management Board	Approval	13/08/14
V1.5	Proof Reader	Proofing	29/08/14
V1.6	Academic Board	Approval	19/09/14

V1.7	Working group chaired by the Director of Validation	Updating following management re-structure	26/4/2016
V1.8	Academic Board	Approval	10/10/2016

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.9	Director of Validation	Routine update following management changes	28/4/2017
V1.10	Disability Service Support Manager	Update to include reference to inclusive design of learning curriculum.	16/08/18
V2.0	Head of Quality Assurance / Deputy Academic Registrar	Reviewed due to updated publication of QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance, and updated to reflect arrangements for additional centre approval, mention of administrative set up and removal of content which has been included and elaborated within the accompanying protocols.	01/06/19
V2.1	Senior Quality Officer	Change to the document coding convention	30/03/20
V2.2	Quality Assurance Manager	Review, inclusion of reference to OfS and non-award programmes	November 2022
V2.3	Quality Assurance Manager	Inclusion of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework, and paragraphs 23-24 relating to the threshold of cumulative minor modifications	May 2023