HE Taught Award Regulations: Part B

Section: 4: Programme Development and Approval
Version: 1.2.1
Author: Scott Smith
Academic Year: 2018/19

REVISION HISTORY

Ver	Date	Author	Description
1.1	July 2016	Scott Smith	Amendment to titles (roles and curriculum)
1.2	October 2016	Scott Smith	Iterative changes relating to feedback from operation of the procedure
1.2.1	January 2018	Scott Smith	Changes to the membership of Stage 2 and 3 validation panels and the addition of criteria linked to predefined curricula that provides a route directly to Stage 2 for some proposals.

APPROVAL

Ver	Committee	Date Approved	Comments
1.0	HEAB		
1.1	ASDC	July 2016	
1.2	ASDC	October 2016	
1.2.1	ASDC	January 2018	

CONTENTS

B4 INTRODUCTION

B4: Course Development and Approval has been produced following consideration of the Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code, Chapter B1- Programme Design_ Development and Approval

B4.1 CONTRIBUTING STAKEHOLDERS

The development of all Blackpool and The Fylde College programmes involves contributions from several different stakeholders.

B4.1.1 EXTERNAL ACADEMIC INVOLVEMENT

The approval of any programme by Blackpool and The Fylde College is dependent upon contributions of individuals not directly involved with the programme; this contribution helps both set and maintain academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The College also considers that the programme approval process must include the involvement of individuals external to the College to offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken. [1]

EXTERNAL ADVISORS

An external advisors role is primarily to provide the programme team with advice in the (re)validation of a programme. Advice would generally be provided around the areas of (although is not limited to) a programme's alignment to subject and educational sector expectations such as QAA Quality Code, alignment to the higher education quality thresholds and frameworks such as the FHEQ.

Where the award is for a programme developed for a partner institution the external advisor(s) will sit as a member of the panel at Stage 2 only. Where the award is for a programme awarded by Blackpool and The Fylde College the external advisor(s) will sit as a member of the panel at Stage 2 and 3.

Higher National awarding bodies, engage closely with external specialists in the development of their provision. External advisors are therefore not included on the membership of Blackpool and The Fylde College Higher National validation panels. This principle is also applicable to apprenticeship and non-prescribed validations where a professional body's programme forms the core academic structure and modular content of a programme.

---

[1] Section guided by, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality - Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval

It should be noted that Stages 1 and 2 are very much developmental processes whereas at Stage 3 the panel, including the external advisor(s), is in place to determine the validity and to approve, reject or set recommendations and conditions for the validation.

External Advisors will be appointed using the criteria provided by the QAA Quality Code, B7: External Examining - Indicator 5 which provides criteria for the appointment of External Examiners.

B4.1.2 STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Students, both past and current, influence the development of programmes at Blackpool and The Fylde College in numerous ways. Students are included on boards, committees and panels at all levels of the institution providing valuable input into the development and review of all programme development across the College.

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Student representatives are included in the Stage 3 Validation Panel where it is anticipated that they will contribute to discussions around, but not limited to, programme structure, marketing and relevance to career aspirations

ANNUAL PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Annual Programme Review (APR) process provides Programme Leaders with the opportunity to reflect on the quality of a programme. One quality measure is the student's experience; all students complete Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) at the end of a module, these provide informative data in both qualitative and quantitative formats that inform the improvements of programmes.

B4.1.3 EMPLOYERS

The role of employers in the (re)development of programmes is to inform on matters relating to industry such as: technical requirements, graduate skills gaps, local, national and where appropriate international demand. Employers will be involved at the initial Stages of development i.e. there is a need to have employer involvement in the Outline Planning Permission Stage of development. Employers are also involved in the Stage 2 and 3 Panels, where they provide support for the programme team and substantiate the significance and relevance to the requirements of industry.

B4.2 PREPARATION

Before starting the formal stages of the process and prior to the production of a Concept Document the author must initiate informal discussions with their Curriculum Manager and Head of Curriculum to determine if the conditions for developing the new programme are favourable.

B4.3 VALIDATION

B4.3.1 PRELIMINARY PHASE

For new validations only, the programme leader may submit a Concept Document to the HE Academic Standards and Development Committee (ASDC), the purpose of which is to outline of the nature of the proposed award, its rationale, intended market, and resourcing and to consult with members of the committee regarding the potential of the proposed programme. The document relates to and provides an indication that the development:

- is in keeping with College curriculum strategy, goals and mission;
- is compatible with strategic academic and resource plans;
- has taken due account of existing College provision;
- represents an academically valid body of knowledge;
- has sufficient evidence of demand to suggest that the programme would recruit and sustain adequate student numbers;
- can be expected to operate economically;
- has a reasonable expectation of having sufficient resources - at an institutional and programme level - to be delivered effectively;
- has identified and considered all critical resource requirements that are not covered by the normal business planning process, and that there is a reasonable expectation that these resources will be made available should the programme be validated.

Following the submission and endorsement of the Concept Document (new validations) the programme leader must submit to ASDC an Outline Planning Permission Document (OPP). Some programmes may also enter the process directly at this stage. The purpose of the OPP is to consider:

- Any professional qualifications linked to the programme
- Proposed location(s) and modes of delivery
- Academic regulations
- Proposed award(s) and title(s)
- Recruitment targets
- Entry requirements and progression
- The rationale for offering the programme
  Including the following topics:
    o brief overview of the programme
    o benefits for the College
    o anticipated market (with reference to students and employers)
    o alignment with College strategy
    o market research carried out (brief summary)
    o external consultation (e.g. employers, Sector Skills Councils, professional bodies etc.)
- The programme aims
- The programme learning outcomes
- Programme design and structure
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment

To accompany the required documentation, programme leaders must also complete a Business Case (pre-approved through the Executive) which will be brought to ASDC for information.

ASDC will examine the documentation produced by the programme team in order to ensure that the proposed programme meets the prerequisite requirements and aligns to Blackpool and The Fylde College's HE Strategy and HE Taught Award Regulations.

In considering the OPP, ASDC will identify the most appropriate validation pathway for the programme, taking into consideration the work required in defining the curriculum structure and modular specifications. The vast majority of programmes will be approved by ASDC for progression through each of the three stages of the validation process detailed in subsequent sections.

Where the curriculum structure and/or modular specifications are clearly defined by a professional or awarding body, ASDC may choose to accelerate the validation by entering the programme directly at stage 2 of the process, thus allowing one formative meeting followed by a final summative approval meeting.

B4.3.2 STAGE 1: INITIAL DEVELOPMENT

Stage one is a developmental process that is to:

- Ensure that the expectations of the sector are fully met through engagement of external academic advisors and employers.
- Confirm that quality assurance mechanisms have been considered and meet the requirements of the QAA and other professional bodies.

This stage requires the completion of;

- a Validation Document
- Programme Specification

These must be submitted five working days prior to the Stage One validation meeting. If approved the validation with commence onto Stage Two.

B4.3.3 STAGE 2: DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

The purpose of the Development Review panel is:

- To secure the academic standards of those awards and qualifications awarded by the College
- To assure the quality of the proposed learning opportunities available to students

Stage 2 requires the completion of a Module Specifications document. Documents must be submitted 10 working days prior to the Stage 2 validation meeting. If approved the validation with proceed onto Stage 3.

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Members
- Director of Higher Education or nominee (chair)
- Independent head of curriculum or curriculum manager
- HE Learning, and Scholarship Manager
- H.E. Academic Registrar
- Learning Resources Manager (desk based reviewer)
- External Advisor*

In Attendance
- Programme Team
- Student representatives

*for programmes awarded by Blackpool and The Fylde College or Lancaster University only

B4.3.4 STAGE 3: FINAL APPROVAL

The responsibility of the Final Approval Stage is to scrutinise the work of the approval stage and in addition to investigate and provide a written report to confirm that:

- The obligations of the approval stage were satisfactorily discharged;
  And
- Any amendments, additions or deletions required following approval have been carried out.

All documents must be submitted 15 working days prior to the Stage Three validation meeting

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Where the event is for the award of a Blackpool and The Fylde College programme the Stage 3 event is an internal event unlike the external event provided for validating partners, as such the membership of the panel changes to meet the requirements of the awarding body.

Members
- Vice Principal Higher Education and Student Enhancement or nominee (chair)
- Director of Higher Education
- HE Academic Registrar
- HE Learning and Scholarship Manager

- External Advisor*

In Attendance
- Programme Team
- Employer representative(s) (as appropriate)
- The Head of, the relevant curriculum area.
- Student representatives (for existing Lancaster University programmes only)

*for programmes awarded by Blackpool and The Fylde College only

B4.3.5 CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

Panels shall investigate and provide a written report to confirm that:

- The proposal complies with Blackpool and The Fylde College Academic Regulations;
- The proposal reflects Blackpool and The Fylde College strategies and all relevant Blackpool and The Fylde College and College policies;
- The aims of the award are appropriate and realistic;
- The programme learning outcomes are appropriate to aims of the award the award and in keeping with the QAA Quality Code and QAA guidance for the award and subject area;
- The module structure, curriculum content and module learning outcomes will ensure that students completing the programme will have met the programme learning outcomes;
- The assessment process proposed is appropriately inclusive and rigorous, and allows students to demonstrate the achievement indicated in the learning outcomes;
- The assessment methods are appropriate to the award and target student group;
- The assessment criteria allow different levels of achievement to be clearly distinguished;
- The staff contributing to the delivery of the award are sufficient in number and suitably qualified;
- Any specific resources required to support the programme have been identified and will be provided;
- The requirements of disability legislation and institutional disability policy have been considered and complied with;
- Due consideration has been given to the equality impact of assessment and how the reasonable needs of disabled students can be accommodated
- In cases of revalidation, that the previous period of validation has been evaluated in a forensic manner, and that the proposal responds to identified issues.

B4.3.6 PANEL DECISIONS

The decision of all panels will be arrived at by consensus amongst the membership

STAGE 1 AND 2 PANEL DECISIONS

The Stage 1 and 2 panels may recommend one of the following criteria:

(i)   The programme is permitted to proceed to the next stage.

(ii)   The programme is permitted to proceed to the next stage subject to specific conditions including the dates by which they should be satisfied

(iii)   The programme is permitted to proceed to the next stage under either (i) or (ii) above, with a recommendation that the programme team consider certain matters on which they would reported to the next stage meeting

(iv)   Reject the programme with advice to the programme team as to the reasons for doing so.

STAGE 3 PANEL DECISIONS

The final decision to approve a programme is taken the Stage 3 panel acting by academic authority on behalf of the HE Academic Board. The panel is always independent of the department offering the programme and ensures that the programme is sound and fit for purpose.

Stage 3 panel must also be satisfied that any amendments made in respect of the comments of the panel at Stage 2 have been completely fulfilled and that the Stage 3 external advisor(s) is assured in respect to the thoroughness of the process and the rigour of the proposed programme.

The Stage 3 panel may recommend one of the following criteria:

(i)   The programme is approved without amendment

(ii)   The programme is approved subject to specific conditions including the dates by which they should be satisfied

(iii)   The programme is approved under either (i) or (ii) above, with a recommendation that the programme team consider certain matters on which they would report back to the meeting

(iv)   Reject the programme with advice to the programme team as to the reasons for doing so.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Recommendations will not prevent a validation from either progressing or from being approved. If however a panel has made a recommendation(s) to the development team that is not implemented the team must provide a rationale for their decision.

Conditions are defined as either:

- Academic- these must normally be addressed satisfactorily before the proposal can be approved and students enrolled
- Documentary - these would not normally preclude approval and delivery of the proposal and the deadline set for them would usually reflect this position. There are also specific administrative requirements to be met subsequent to the event.

B4.3.7 FURTHER DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Subsequent to Stage 3 a review of both the programme handbook and the work placement handbook (if applicable) is undertaken. The review as these documents rely on the contextualisation of standard College templates the nature and content of the documents will therefore not alter dramatically.

B4.4 MAJOR AND MINOR AMENDMENTS

B4.4.1   DEFINITIONS

Amendments are categorised as either major or minor. Where clarification is required the programme team should consult with the HE Directorate to ascertain the level of an amendment and the amount of information required to support a proposed change.

B4.4.2 MAJOR AMENDMENT

The category of Major Amendment consists of different levels of change. The following board principles however stand for each appropriate amendment.

- The amount of supporting information required on an amendment proposal will depend on its level
- Both current and proposed module specifications should always be included where module changes are proposed
- A new pathway will require the provision of module specifications, learning outcomes, and programme structure
- A proposal to change a programme title will require the provision of information on the programme structure and curriculum
- The programme team should be confident that an amendment is a genuinely major one which does not itself or in combination with other previous Major Amendments constitute what is in effect a revalidation of the programme
- All amendments must be considered and approved at the Academic Standards and Development Committee

B4.4.3 MAJOR AMENDMENT TO A MODULE

Consideration should always be given as to the effect of the revision on the overall programme, with programme level documentation being considered alongside the module documentation as appropriate.

A Major Amendment to a module involves changes including:

Amendments requiring that current applicants **should** be informed of changes include:

- module laydown or dormancy
- merging of two existing modules
- split of an existing module into two or more modules
- a change to delivery including:
    - mode of delivery
    - location of delivery
    - number of contact hours
    - delivery period

which affect overall module and/or programme approach to learning and teaching, educational aims and/or learning outcomes and which may or may not affect programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes

Amendments requiring that current applicants do **not** need to be informed of changes including:

- a change to educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes which may or may not affect programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes
- a change to syllabus content which affect educational aims and/or learning outcomes and which may or may not affect programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes
- a change to syllabus content which affect educational aims and/or learning outcomes and which may or may not affect programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes
- a change to assessment including:
    - weighting of different elements
    - coursework method
    - volume of assessment

which affect overall module and/or programme approach to assessment, educational aims and/or learning outcomes and which may or may not affect programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes

- a change of level
- a change of credit weighting

- the designation of module as pass/fail, non-reassessable, non-condonable
- any series of incremental minor revisions to an individual module – consideration to be given as to whether the volume and nature of these changes significantly affects the individual module(s) and its delivery and/or the programme and its delivery
- any change which takes a module outside of the College's standard assessment regulations including:
  - changes to student progression arrangements
  - non-negotiable requirement from PSRB

B4.4.4 MAJOR AMENDMENT TO A PROGRAMME

Amendments requiring that current applicants **should** be informed of changes include:

- the suspension of a programme e.g. where a programme failed to recruit sufficient numbers of students
- a change of programme title and/or the type of the award
- the systematic restructuring of a programme including:
  - reorganisation of a level
  - changes to credits
- a change to module diet including introduction and withdrawal of core modules or the withdrawal of option modules
- a change to educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes either directly or as a result of revisions to modules
- a change to approaches to learning and teaching either directly or as a result of revisions to modules
- a change to approaches to assessment either directly or as a result of revisions to modules
- a change to mode of delivery
- a change to location of delivery

Amendments requiring that current applicants **do not** need to be informed of changes include:

- the introduction of named routes/pathways
- the addition, or substantive revision, of a work-based placement
- any series of incremental minor revisions to several modules contributing to a programme or a series of changes to the overall programme – consideration to be given as to whether the volume and nature of these changes significantly affects the programme and its delivery
- any change which takes a programme outside of the College's standard assessment regulations including:
  - changes to student progression arrangements
  - classification of the award
  - non-negotiable requirement from PSRB

B4.4.5 MINOR AMENDMENTS

Routine Updating

Programme teams are expected to carry out routine updating of modules as part of the annual review cycle. Such changes, which would not constitute a Minor Amendment, include:

- updating bibliographies with new editions, new texts, websites etc.
- minor changes to topics taught within a module
- a change of module leader

Advice on routine updating can be sought from the HE Directorate if necessary.

Any change made to a programme is categorised as major, minor changes therefore are only made at a module level.

A Minor Amendment to a module include:

- a change of module title
- a change to the syllabus content which does not affect module or programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes
- a change to assessment including:
  - coursework method
  - number of exam questions to be answered
  - examination length
  - assessment timing

which does not affect the module and/or programme approach to assessment, module or programme level educational aims and/or intended learning outcomes.

- a change to delivery including:
  - mode of delivery
  - number of contact hours
  - delivery period

which does not affect the module and/or programme or approach to learning and teaching strategy, module or programme level aims and /or intended learning outcomes.

- a change to methods of student feedback
- the introduction of option module

Appendix B4 – A HE Programme Validation Process Overview

Validation Process Overview

B&FC
BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE

Planning Permission	Stage 1 Initial Proposal	Stage 2 Formative Development	Stage 3 Summative Approval

Accelerated

Standard

Planning Permission

Programme Validation / Re-validation

Validation / Re-validation Approval

ASDC Not Approved

Potentially close programme / withdraw proposal

End

Stage 1

Stage 1 Development

Initial Documentation
To be submitted 1 week before the event

Validation Document

Programme Specification

Stage 1 Validation Event

Not Approved

Stage 1 Approval

Approved

Conditions & Recommendations

Stage 2

Stage 2 Development

Formative Documentation
To be submitted 2 week before the event

Validation Document

Programme Specification

Module Specifications

Stage 2 Validation Event

Not Approved

Stage 2 Approval

Approved

Conditions & Recommendations

Stage 3

Stage 3 Development

Summative Documentation
To be submitted 3 weeks before the event

Validation Document

Programme Specification

Module Specifications

Stage 3 Validation Event

Not Approved

Stage 3 Approval

Approved

Conditions & Recommendations

Programme Validated

HE Programme Amendment

B&FC
BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE

Minor Amendment

Minor Amendment

↓

Amendment Form

- - - Partner Validations Only - - -

Consult External Examiner

Consult Programme Consultant

↓

Evidence of EE Approval

Evidence of PC Approval

↓

All documents submitted for ASDC appvoal

↓

ASDC Approved? → Not Approved

Approved ↓

Amendment Approved

Amendment Rejected

Major Amendment

Major Amendment

↓

Amendment Form

- - - 'Partner Validations Only - - -

Consult External Examiner

Consult Programme Consultant

↓

Evidence of EE Approval

Evidence of PC Approval

↓

All documents submitted for ASDC appvoal

↓

ASDC Approved?

Amendment Rejected

Major Amendment Development

↓

Major Amendment Documentation
To be submitted 1 week before the event

Validation Document

Programme Specification

Module Specifications

↓

Major Amendment Validation Panel (Stage 2)

↓

MA Approval → Approved

Not Approved

Conditions & Recommendations

↓

Documentation updated to reflect conditions & recommendations

↓

Submitted for Awarding Body Approval (Stage 3)

↓

Approved? ← Not Approved

Approved ↓

Amendment Approved