University of Essex

NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS
GUIDANCE FOR PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

1. Proposals for New Courses

(a) Completion of Proposal Form

Proposals for new undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) courses are to be submitted to the partnerships team using a 'New Course Approval – Proposal' form. The purpose of the Proposal stage is for the Partner Institution to provide a detailed overview of the newly proposed course, including:

(i) an outline of the proposed new course structure *(i.e. will it be constructed entirely from existing provision, entirely from new modules or a combination of the two)*;

(ii) a case for strategic fit and an analysis of market demand *(including student projections for the first five years of operation)*;

(iii) proposed recruitment strategy *(including proposed academic and English Language requirements)*;

(iv) a detailed business case *(including an indication of any additional staffing resources required and whether any major new resources or capital expenditure is required)*;

(v) a detailed outline of the academic content and coherence of the course including:

- evidence of external consultation;

- evidence of student consultation *(where relevant – for example undergraduate students' feedback on a proposed new Masters progression route)*;

- reference to how the course has been designed to meet relevant Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements;

- reference to how the course has been designed to meet any relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements or other country-specific regulatory requirements;

- confirmation of whether the course will require a variation to the University's standard Rules of Assessment.

(b) Supplementary Forms

If the course will include work-based learning, a supplementary 'Work-Based Learning form' will also need to be completed *(available from the Partnerships Team)*.

If the course is a degree apprenticeship, a supplementary 'Degree Apprenticeship form' will also need to be completed *(available from the Partnerships Team)*.

(c) Advertising New Courses

It is possible to request to advertise / make offers to applicants at the Proposal stage and if accepted all references to the proposed new course, including any information given to prospective students (whether verbally or in writing), must clearly state that ***the proposal is still subject to final approval***. Confirmation of approval by the Dean of Partnerships to advertise allows for all undergraduate and postgraduate courses to be advertised, including in the partner institution's Higher Education prospectus, with a statement advising that the course is subject to final approval.

2. Approval to Proceed to Course Validation

Upon receipt of a 'New Course Approval – Proposal' form, the Partnerships Team will:

(a) review the form to ensure that all required sections and supplementary forms, where relevant *(see Section 1(b)),* have been completed;

(b) share the Proposal form with an internal academic expert from the University in a related subject area for their feedback on the proposed course. If the internal academic has any specific questions, these will be directed to the partner institution for their response before proceeding any further;

(c) submit the Proposal form to the Dean of Partnerships (Education) or Deputy Dean of Partnerships for their consideration to proceed to Validation.

3. Course Validation

Once Dean approval has been granted to proceed to Validation by the Dean of Partnerships (Education) or Deputy Dean of Partnerships:

(a) approval that the newly proposed course can proceed to Validation will be reported to the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), for information;

(b) the Partnerships Team will confirm the route for seeking final stage approval, which broadly fall into 3 categories, as follows.

Validation Category	Description	Approval Route	Validation Event Required
Category 1	A new course constructed entirely from existing provision.	Dean of Partnerships (DoP) (Education) *(DoP approval recorded on the Proposal form, including any Conditions or Recommendations, where relevant; the Proposal form is then submitted to AQSC for information.)*	No
Category 2	A new course constructed from all existing provision plus a small number of new modules at established partners.	AQSC approval *(Paper-based new course approval process - a full report is written by the relevant Partnerships Manager following this process, confirming any Conditions or Recommendations, where relevant. The report is then submitted to AQSC for approval.)*	No Paper-based review by the comprising the Dean of Partnerships (Education) or Deputy Dean of Partnerships and the relevant Partnerships Manager.
Category 3	A new course with higher levels of new content or courses in a new curriculum area and all courses for new partners.	AQSC approval *(New Course Approval Validation Event – a full report is written by the relevant Partnerships Manager following the Validation Event, confirming any Conditions or Recommendations, where relevant. The report is then submitted to AQSC for approval.)*	Yes *(See Section 4 for information regarding the New Course Validation Event.)*

4. New Course Approval Validation Documentation
(Category 2 and Category 3 Validations)

The New Course Approval Validation Documentation should provide the information needed to understand the course or courses being proposed, including how they will be taught, assessed and resourced.

In preparation for New Course Approval the course team is required to submit all relevant documentation to the partnerships team in an agreed electronic format at least four weeks in advance of the Category 2 Validation Process or Category 3 Validation Event. For international partnerships, all documentation should be submitted in English. A longer timescale may be required where professional or accrediting bodies are involved.

A 'New Course Approval - Documentation Checklist' outlines the requirements of what information and documents need to be submitted by the course team.

For professional doctorate or postgraduate research degree provision, additional will need to be provided, as outlined in the 'New Course Approval - Supplementary Documentation Checklist for PGR.' This documentation should also cover how the course team's arrangements comply with the University's Code of Practice on Professional Doctorates and/or the University's Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees.

For Category 3 Validations, the Partnerships Team will normally share full documentation to members of the New Course Approval Validation Panel, via an online Box folder, at least two weeks in advance of the event.

5. New Course Approval Validation Event
(Category 3 Validations Only)

The New Course Approval Validation Event allows for a new or significantly revised course to be examined by an acknowledged group of experienced peers including University and external academics and employer representatives. Approval policies and procedures follow the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education[1].

The New Course Approval Validation Event enables a Validation Panel to evaluate the academic content, quality and fitness for purpose of the proposed course(s). The New Course Approval Validation Panel comprises members who can judge the academic integrity of the course in relation to the University's regulations and the national standards expected of the type of award and evaluate the course in terms of its structure and content.

The purpose of the approval process for a new course is to ensure the:

- equivalence in academic standards with comparable courses across the higher education sector and within the University;

- compatibility with the existing curriculum portfolio;

- alignment with any relevant external reference points (including the QAA Quality Code and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies);

- compliance with University academic regulations and alignment with the University's strategic plan and its supporting Education Strategy;[2]

- provision of a high-quality higher education experience to students;

- appropriate staffing and resourcing;

- appropriateness of course documentation including handbooks.

---

[1] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance-and-strategy/university-strategy

For full details of the Membership and operation of the New Course Approval Validation Event, please refer to the 'New Course Approval – Guidance for Panel Members and Course Teams' document.

6. New Course Proposal – Final Approval
(Category 2 and Category 3 Validations)

Following the Category 2 Validation Process or the Category 3 Validation Event, a recommendation is made to the University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee that the course(s) be validated for delivery at the partner institution for a given period of time (usually for five years), subject to any Conditions or Recommendations, where relevant, contained in the Validation Report being met.

The Partnerships Team subsequently reports to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee when the Conditions or Recommendations of Validation, where relevant, have been met.

Document review information

Document owner	Partnerships Team
Document author	Charlotte Strohm, Partnerships Manager (Development and Oversight)
Document last reviewed by	Charlotte Strohm, Partnerships Manager (Development and Oversight)
Date last reviewed	March 2023
Review frequency	Annually