

# **Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures**

**2020-21**

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## Committee Approval

Committee	Committee Action	Date
QAEC	Recommended approval	20 December 2017
Academic Committee	Approved	18 January 2018
	<b>Date in force</b>	18 January 2018
QAEC	Recommended approval	26 June 2019
Academic Committee	Approved	31 July 2019
	<b>Date in Force</b>	<b>30 September 2019</b>
QAEC	Recommended approval	19 February 2020
Academic Committee	Approved	10 June 2020
	<b>Date in Force</b>	<b>28 September 2020</b>

This Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures document will be reviewed annually by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Any amendments require the approval of the Academic Committee.

## 1. Introduction

Bloomsbury Institute offers higher education courses accredited by the University of Northampton (UoN) for our validated and franchised degrees. As such, they cannot be unilaterally approved or amended by Bloomsbury Institute.

Prior to being approved to deliver a new course or to amend an existing course, we have to be approved by UoN, which in all cases requires us to comply with their validation policies and procedures. Our courses are additionally subject to annual monitoring and evaluation, periodic review and modification procedures, which are governed by UoN.

To supplement the University of Northampton's policies and procedures, we have developed our own internal procedures for approval of courses and modification of the curriculum. These procedures are contained in this document and our Curriculum Modification Procedures.

## 2. Course approval procedures

These internal course approval procedures must be complied with before UoN's validation event is convened. Progression to UoN's validation event is only permitted after our Academic Committee has approved the new course upon advice from both our Senior Management and Leadership Team (SMLT) and our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). SMLT is responsible for approving any proposal from a business case perspective (having considered also any business risks) and QAEC any proposal from an academic perspective (having considered also any academic risks). Academic Committee is also responsible for approving any Type B or C modifications to existing courses.

These would have to be introduced from the start of the academic year following approval and should not be introduced partway through an academic year.

It should be noted that any proposals regarding new courses should be preceded, where relevant, by consultation with staff, students, UoN, External Examiners and representatives from relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

### 2.1 Role of the Academic Committee and Course Approval Panel

As stipulated in our Corporate and Academic Governance Framework, our Academic Committee (which includes external academic advisors and student representation) is our ultimate academic decision-making body. The Academic Committee is responsible for "approving new courses and amendments to existing courses, and advising on the resources needed to support our academic provision".

Upon consideration of the proposal by both SMLT and QAEC, the Academic Committee may make a final decision with regard to the approval of a course or it may delegate power to a Course Approval Panel (CAP) to make recommendations. In these circumstances, the Panel's report and recommendations would be considered by the Academic Committee which will make the final decision with regard to the approval of a new course. The Academic Committee will either: (i) approve a course without any time limit being imposed; (ii) approve a course with a time limit imposed, or (iii) not approve the course.

If a course is approved, Academic Committee may impose conditions and/or recommendations:

*Conditions:* Approval may be made conditional upon the fulfilment of certain requirements by a specified date. In such circumstances, the Academic Committee should specify where the responsibility lies for confirming that the conditions have been met. Where a condition has not been met by the due date, Academic Committee shall be advised and will take appropriate action which may include a delay to UoN's validation event (and hence a delay to the start of the new course). Alternatively, Academic Committee might take the view that approval should be withdrawn.

*Recommendations:* Recommendations should be good advice which the Course Team is not formally obliged to adopt, but which they would be encouraged to discuss within the relevant Course Committee with a view to implementation. As part of the annual monitoring and evaluation process, we are required to monitor the implementation of any recommendations made by the Academic Committee. If a recommendation is not considered, either partially or fully, by the Course Team then reasons should be provided through the Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports.

Course Approval Panels will be established at the discretion of the Academic Committee. If a Panel is established, its remit will be to consider and make recommendations to the Academic Committee regarding the approval of a course. The Panel must be constituted in such a way as to ensure independent and impartial judgments about the course under consideration.

### **2.1.1 Course Approval Panel membership**

The membership of any Course Approval Panel (CAP) will be approved by the Academic Committee. The Panel will include an external member (normally drawn from the external members of the Academic Committee), a representative from a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (if appropriate and possible), two academics from within Bloomsbury Institute, one of whom will act as Chair, as well as student representation. The Head of Quality and Compliance (or nominee) will act as Secretary. Direct managerial responsibility for a course is a bar to membership of a Panel convened to consider its approval.

It is important to ensure that the Panel functions as a group. All members should have equal status and should reach agreement on the recommendations to be made in the approval report.

If the Panel concludes that a proposal requires further development before it can be approved, as far as possible the same membership should be retained when the Panel is re-convened to consider the revised proposal.

### **2.1.2 Chairing of Course Approval Panels**

The person chairing a Panel shall not have any involvement or proposed involvement in the management or delivery of the course.

The person chairing a Panel shall not be an External Examiner or adviser for the course concerned.

## **2.2 The purpose of the course approval process**

The purpose of the Course Approval process is to ensure that:

- The proposed course is consistent with Bloomsbury Institute's vision, mission, values;
- There is a robust business case for the proposal in terms of both financial viability and projected demand, and that this is based on reliable market intelligence;
- We have the physical, human and learning resources in place to deliver the proposed course, or that we have credible plans to ensure that the necessary resources will be provided before the commencement of the course;
- We are able to fulfil the course management and delivery requirements of UoN;

- The course proposers possess the knowledge, commitment and experience required to achieve a successful outcome in the UoN's approval process, and that the proposed course itself will be of a consistently high standard and that it will provide students with appropriate learning opportunities;
- The proposed course will be able to meet the threshold academic standards and complies with the Subject Benchmark Statement for the relevant discipline.
- The proposed course will comply with any relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
- We have in place any supplementary regulations that might be required in the event of any deviation from the standard UoN's Regulations, or any Bloomsbury Institute policy or procedure;
- An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to ensure the new course does not deter persons with a protected characteristic<sup>1</sup> from applying for the new course or present a non-justifiable disadvantage to students with protected characteristics

## **2.3 Criteria and documentation for the approval of new courses**

The issues to be considered by the Academic Committee or a Course Approval Panel will be governed by the purposes listed in the preceding section.

Applications for course approval should include a brief Course Outline Proposal, accompanied by supporting evidence where necessary and appropriate. A proforma for the Course Outline Proposal is provided at Appendix 1.

### **2.3.1 Panel report**

If the Academic Committee decides that a Panel should be established to approve a new course, that Panel will prepare a report for consideration by the Academic Committee. This report should be agreed by the Panel and by senior representatives of the Course Team. Any differences of opinion that may arise regarding the content of the report should be reported to the Academic Committee.

## **2.4 Provisional approval of new courses**

If a new course requires approval before the Academic Committee next convenes, the Chair of the Academic Committee may grant provisional approval following consultation with the external academic members of the Academic Committee.

Prior to provisional approval being granted, the proforma for the Course Outline Proposal [see Appendix 1] must be completed and provided to the Chair and the external academic members of the Academic Committee.

If provisional agreement is granted, progression to the UoN's validation event may proceed, subject to the final documented decision of the Academic Committee.

## **3. Withdrawal of approval and course closure**

Withdrawal of approval for a course may occur at any time and would involve a block on the recruitment of new students and a Teach-Out Plan for students already registered on the course so as to support them fully in the completion of their studies. Once a course is closed, it will be removed from our portfolio of courses and cannot be reintroduced unless new course approval is sought through the normal course approval procedures set out in this document.

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<sup>1</sup> The 9 Protected Characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Academic Committee shall withdraw approval of a course if there is evidence that the course is no longer viable, if there are serious concerns about the quality of student learning opportunities or if the delivery of the course is not meeting minimum acceptable standards. No decision to withdraw approval will be taken by the Academic Committee without a prior meeting between one or more of the Academic Committee's two external academic representatives (acting on behalf of the Academic Committee), and the Course Team (which shall include the Academic Registrar and Academic Principal). At this meeting the major reservations will be discussed, and the Course Team given the opportunity to respond.

A request to close a course requires the approval of Academic Committee before the course can be closed to new entrants. If a course is closed, or if Academic Committee withdraws approval (see above), the Academic Committee will consider and approve our arrangements for informing applicants and supporting students already registered on the course according to an approved Teach-out Plan. We will subsequently make the necessary arrangements with UoN to close the course.

## **4. Suspension of a course**

Suspension of a course occurs when the decision is taken to stop recruiting new students to a course for a specified period of time. Existing students on the course would not be affected by this decision and would be supported to complete their studies.

At the end of the period of time during which the course is suspended, we would then take a decision as to whether to reinstate the course or close it.

If the course is not reinstated within the maximum period of programme suspension, determined by UoN, it must be formally withdrawn.

A request to suspend a course requires the approval of Academic Committee, on the recommendation of both QAEC and SMLT.

## **5. Related regulations, policies and procedures**

- Corporate and Academic Governance Framework
- Curriculum Modification Procedures

## **6. Review of the Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures**

This Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures document will be reviewed annually by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Any amendments require the approval of the Academic Committee.

# Appendix 1: Course Outline Proposal

The *Course Outline Proposal* provides the evidence for an initial assessment of the business and academic risks that are likely to be incurred in the development and delivery of a course.

## Part 1: Course details

1.1	Proposed title	Course:			
		Award:			
1.3	Proposed routes on offer (e.g. 3 Year and 2 Year)				
1.4	Proposed effective date of delivery				
1.5	Specify the credit values	Level 1		Level 5	
		Level 2		Level 6	
		Level 3		Level 7	
		Level 4		Level 8	

## Part 2: Target intakes

Maximum intake numbers	
Minimum intake numbers	

	FTE	FT	PT
Intake 1			
Intake 2 (if relevant)			
Intake 3 (if relevant)			

## Part 3: Course development team details

3.1	Name of Development Team Leader

3.2	Give brief details of the composition (including names) of the development team, including an indication of the experience that members will bring to the development of the proposal.

3.3	To what extent does the delivery team possess the capacity and experience to develop and deliver these arrangements?

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**Part 4: Rationale**

4.1	Outline of the proposed course	
4.2	Rationale for the proposed course	
4.3	Drawing upon annual monitoring, external examiner reports, student evaluations and other evidence, briefly identify any issues (positive or negative) that have emerged in the subject area(s) that is (are) developing the proposal and which might have a bearing on the proposal. Indicate any remedial action that has been taken.	
4.3	Is there similar or related provision within Bloomsbury Institute? If yes, specify both the courses and their relationship with the proposal. (This might include the replacement of extant provision by the proposal, module sharing, progression and articulation relationships etc.). How (if at all) will the proposed changes affect the related provision?	
4.4	Demonstrate the consistency of the proposed course with Bloomsbury Institute's vision, mission and values, and Strategic Framework	
4.5	Proposed date for the introduction of the change	

**Part 5: Internal Consultation**

5.1	Student Focus Group	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				
5.2	Course Committee	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				
5.3	QAEC	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				

**Part 6: External Consultation**

[Sections to be completed as appropriate]

6.1	PSRB	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				
6.2	External Examiner	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				
6.3	Employers	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				
6.4	UoN	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				

### **Part 7: Market Research**

7.1	Will the proposed course result in 'competition' with markets currently served by other provision within Bloomsbury Institute or by UoN? If so, what are the measures that will be taken to ensure that the proposal does not compete with existing provision?	
7.2	What is the proposer's assessment of the current market for the course?	
7.3	Are there any anticipated developments within the market that could affect the competitive position and financial viability of the course?	
7.4	What are the key features of the supporting business case should also be included	
7.5	Are there any actions, circumstances or developments within Bloomsbury Institute or its wider environment which could – now or in the future – impact on the quality, standards and viability of the proposal?	

### **Part 8: Impact of the proposed course**

8.1		Does the proposed course require Professional Body Recognition and, if so, the name of the relevant Professional Body, and what action will be required to achieve professional body recognition?
	Yes	
	No	
	If yes	Are there any anticipated changes to these requirements and how will they be addressed by the proposed course?

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8.3		Are there any features of the proposal that may have implications for student access and/or consequences for students with additional needs?
	Yes	
	No	
	If yes	What are these implications, and how will they be addressed?

8.4		Will there be any impact on a student's learning experience? e.g. timetables
	Yes	
	No	
	Comments	

8.5		Will the proposed course entail new 'flexible learning' arrangements? In responding to this question, you should recognise that the term 'flexibility' encompasses: (i) the recognition of prior learning (RPL); (ii) curriculum design (student negotiated programmes of study); (iii) modes of delivery (distance, blended and eLearning); and (iv) accelerated programmes.
	Yes	
	No	
	If yes	Provide details of the new flexible learning arrangements.

**Part 9: Resources**

9.1	Provide details of the capacity of the subject area(s) to support the proposed course. These should include an assessment of the 'critical mass' (staffing resources, experience, expertise etc.) and relevant research and scholarly activity within the discipline area.

9.2	Provide a brief evaluation of the Bloomsbury Institute's <u>current</u> capacity (in terms of non-staff resources - e.g. accommodation, library, IT etc.) to deliver the proposed course. This should include an indication of any issues that should be addressed by the Academic Committee and/or the UoN.

9.3	What additional resources or support will be required for the development and/or delivery of the proposal; when will these additional resources need to be in place?

**Part 10: Approval**

10.1	SMLT	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
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	Comments	
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10.2	QAEC	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Date:</b>
	Comments				

10.3	Academic Committee or Programme Approval Panel	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Date:</b>
	Comments				

10.4	UoN	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Date:</b>
	Comments				