

Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures

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Committee Approval

Committee	Committee Action	Date
QAEC	Recommended approval	17 May 2023
Academic Committee	Approved	26 May 2023
QAEC	Recommended approval	13 March 2024
Academic Committee	Approved	27 March 2024
Reviewed by the Head of Quality	N/A	5 February 2025
QAEC	N/A	N/A
Academic Committee	N/A	N/A
	Date in Force	27 March 2024

The Document Lead will review this Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures with minor updates for accuracy and clarity annually. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee will conduct a comprehensive review of the document every three years. Any amendments require the approval of the Academic Committee.

1. Introduction

Bloomsbury Institute offers higher education courses accredited and validated by our awarding partners. 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 must be approved by the awarding partner, 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 the awarding partner.

To supplement the awarding partner's policies and procedures, we have developed our own internal procedures for the approval of courses and modification of the curriculum. These procedures are contained in this document which is available in our Quality and Enhancement Manual (QEM) at www.bil.ac.uk

2. Course approval procedures

These internal course approval procedures must be complied with before the awarding partner's validation event is convened. Progression to awarding partner's validation event is only permitted after our Academic Committee has approved the new course upon advice from both our Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). SLT 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).

The Academic Committee is also responsible for approving any Type B or C modifications to existing courses. Types of changes are further articulated in the "Classification of Modification" section of the Curriculum Modification Procedures. These would have to be introduced from the start of the academic year following approval and should not be introduced part way through an academic year. The Curriculum Modification Procedures can be accessed in the policies section of our QEM via www.bil.ac.uk.

It should be noted that any proposals regarding new courses should be preceded, where relevant, by consultation with staff (confirmation of the proposed delivery of modules by the Academic Administration, review of the proposed assessments by the Assessment team, etc.), students, 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 Framework¹, 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 SLT and QAEC, the Academic Committee may make a final decision on the approval of a course, or it may delegate power to a Course Approval Panel (CAP)

¹ www.bil.ac.uk

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 about 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, the Chair of the Academic Committee will be advised by the Secretary to the Committee and will take appropriate action. This may result in a delay to the partner'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 take the form of advice that 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, Bloomsbury Institute is 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 which covers the discipline area.

Normally one student representative is required unless there are multiple pathways or specialisations, where more students should be engaged to cover the specialisations.

The Quality Department provides secretariat services to the Panel.

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 on the Panel 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, for example, an external who has been involved in advising the course team, or has been consulted with, in the development of the new course.

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 purpose and 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 the awarding partner;
- The course proposers possess the knowledge, commitment and experience required to achieve a successful outcome in the awarding partner's approval process, and the proposed course itself will be of a consistently high standard as well as 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 discipline²;
- 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 awarding partner'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 characteristic³ 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 in 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 Accounting: Subject Benchmark Statement:

[Accounting and Finance: Subject Benchmark Statement: Finance \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

[Law: Subject Benchmark Statement: Law \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

[Business and Management: Subject Benchmark Statement: Business and Management \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

³ The 9 Protected Characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

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 awarding partner's validation event may proceed, subject to the final documented decision of the Academic Committee.

3. Withdrawal of approval and course closure

3.1 Approval for 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 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.

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 the 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 advisors (acting on behalf of the Academic Committee), and the Course Team (which shall include the Deputy Principal and Deputy COO). 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 the Academic Committee before the course can be closed to new entrants. If a course is closed, or if the 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 which would be articulated in a Teach-out Plan. We will subsequently make the necessary arrangements with our awarding partner to close the course.

3.1.1 Managing Course Closure

The Deputy Principal (or nominee) must ensure that a Teach-out Plan is developed for managing the closure process for approval by the Academic Committee, and that arrangements are in place for managing and monitoring the course closure.

The action plan must cover:

- notification and communications to students and to applicants
- notification and communications to other stakeholders, e.g. awarding partners, PSRBs, external examiners, etc.
- communications with internal departments
- implications for course management and delivery
- implications for progressing and completing students, including those required to repeat modules
- Teach-out Plan implementation monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

When implementing the Teach-out Plan, Bloomsbury Institute must take full account of the needs of existing students (including those who are on a study break and those repeating modules), and applicants to the course (including those who have deferred offers), ensuring that quality and academic standards, and PSRB requirements, where relevant, are maintained.

3.1.2 Communication

The Deputy Principal (or nominee) will meet with current students to inform them of the course closure and arrangements for teaching out the course. Students should be informed of how the Institute intends to ensure the quality of the student experience, how matters such as reassessment, study breaks, etc. will be handled. Students must be provided with opportunities to raise queries and concerns.

The Admissions team in liaison with the relevant School is responsible for communicating with all applicants and Academic Administration is responsible for communicating with students on study break. The relevant School is responsible for informing PSRBs about course closure.

The Manager of Marketing Department will ensure that the course is removed from the UCAS database and will ensure liaison with the School regarding applicants. UCAS regulations mean that specific procedures need to be followed in respect of any student who has applied for or is holding an offer of a place on the course concerned. All communications with applicants will be via the Admissions team.

The Manager of Marketing Department will ensure that the Bloomsbury Institute website and promotional material reflect the status of the course closure.

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. There are generally two reasons for suspending a course: if the market demand has significantly reduced and it is affecting the viability of cohort size, or, if there are significant concerns with regards to the quality of course. There could also be other factors leading to the decision of suspension of a course. If the course is suspended then the Quality Department must inform the awarding partner about the decision of, and the reasons for, suspension.

A suspension of course can last for a maximum period of 2 years. If the suspension is not lifted within 2 years to reinstate the course, it needs to go through a full approval process. If the course is not reinstated within the maximum period of programme suspension determined by the awarding partner, it must be formally withdrawn.

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.

The decision to lift the suspension is made using a similar approach to that of new course approval, including approval of the business case by SLT and a review of the academic case by QAEC. The business case consideration may be limited to the market test report by the Manager of Marketing Department (or the Head of International where applicable), confirming market needs and viability. From an academic perspective, an academic confirmation statement articulating that we have the capacity to fulfil the academic needs of the course or that we will gain the capacity before the delivery of the course would be required.

Finally, a recommendation is made to the Academic Committee to lift the suspension in light of the above findings.

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

5. Related regulations, policies and procedures

- Corporate and Academic Governance Framework

- Curriculum Modification Procedures
- Student Protection Plan

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

The Document Lead will review this Course Approval, Withdrawal and Suspension Procedures with minor updates for accuracy and clarity annually. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee will conduct a comprehensive review of the document every three years. 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 0
		Level 4
		Level 5
		Level 6
		Level 7

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?

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.	
4.4	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?	
4.5	Demonstrate the consistency of the proposed course with Bloomsbury Institute's purpose and values, and Strategic Framework.	
4.6	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				

5.4	Professional Services staff (Academic Administration, Assessments, etc)	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	Awarding partner	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 awarding partner? If so, what are the measures that will be taken to ensure that the proposal does not compete with the 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?	
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, what is the name of the relevant
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		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?

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 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. teaching space, 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 awarding partner.

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?

9.4	Confirm that the Professional Services staff were consulted on the proposed delivery and the assessment strategy, and commented on any resource implications in their respective areas.

Part 10: Approval

10.1	SLT	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				

10.2	QAEC	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				

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

If 10.3 is completed by CAP, then 10.4 is used for final approval by AC

10.4	Academic Committee	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				

10.5	A=Awarding Partner	Yes	No	N/A	Date:
	Comments				