

# Quality Code for Higher Education

## Approval of Programmes

**Reference Code:** 7.1  
**Version:** 4.1  
**Date:** August 2016

**Date of Implementation:** August 2016

**Originator:** Higher Education & Skills Department  
**Approval by:** Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

**Date for Review:** July 2017

**Description:** This Code of Practice (CoP) governs the approval of programmes within the College. It covers development consent and full approval, major amendments and withdrawal of provision.

**NOTE: Where the awarding body has different requirements this will take precedence over the College's Code of Practice (CoP)**

**Responsibilities:** Academic Heads, Student Services, Higher Education & Skills

**Applications for exemptions to:** Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

**Report Exemptions to:** Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

**Links to UK Quality Code for HE:** [Chapter B1](#)

## INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the Code of Practice (CoP) is to ensure that the College's procedures for the approval of new programmes are robust, transparent, streamlined and facilitate the development of programmes of study which fit with the College's strategic direction and offer high quality learning opportunities for students while maintaining the academic standard of the awards. It also addresses any major updates and withdrawal of programmes.
2. The following CoP makes explicit that no programme may be advertised unless the required approvals have been received from the Awarding Body. **Academic Heads** are **Accountable** for ensuring that this requirement is adhered to at all times in respect of programmes within their Departments.

## Support and guidance

3. The Higher Education & Skills Department at the College is committed to supporting Departments in the development and approval of programmes, through providing advice and guidance as required and facilitating links with academic and other staff experienced in relevant areas, such as the writing of intended learning outcomes and the devising of assessment strategies.

## AUTHORITY

The Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee (HELTC) is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this CoP.

## DELEGATION

4. Any action or power designated to an Academic Head under this code of practice may be undertaken by a designated Curriculum Manager.

## SCOPE OF THE CODE

5. This CoP covers all of the College's Higher Education Provision.

## New modes of delivery

6. Where it is proposed to deliver an existing approved programme in a new mode (e.g. part time where approval has previously been granted to deliver it full time), Development Consent **must** be obtained from the College and also the relevant approvals of the Awarding Body obtained.

## New locations

Where it is proposed to deliver an existing approved programme in a new location (whether an additional location or a replacement location), Development Consent **must** be obtained and the requirements of the relevant Awarding Body be met.

## PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

7. Where appropriate, and in consultation with the relevant professional body, the processes of approval set out in this CoP will be conducted in parallel with the relevant professional body.

## PART A: DEVELOPMENT CONSENT

8. Each year Departments are required to provide to Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee, Development Consent Forms for any proposed provision and changes to existing provision. Departments are required to provide a list of:
  - New programmes which they plan to develop
  - Proposed major amendments to existing programmes

- Planned withdrawal of programmes
9. Each proposal for a new programme **must** be accompanied by a completed Development Consent Form.
  10. The lists will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is current and identifies any changes to priorities.
  11. The College recognises that there will be occasions where there are compelling reasons for developing a new programme which was not included in the approved Development list. In this instance requests may be submitted to the chair of Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee.
  12. An application for College approval **must** not be considered unless the programme has previously been granted Development Consent as described in this section of the CoP.

### **PART B: COLLEGE APPROVAL**

13. **College approval** is the process through which the College and associated Awarding Body's confirms that recruitment to, and delivery of, a programme of study may commence.

#### **Deadlines for College approval**

14. For programmes to commence in September the application for College approval must be lodged with the Higher Education & Skills Department by January of that year. This will enable Awarding Body deadlines to be fitted into the approval process.

#### **Submission of the proposal**

15. The Academic Head must seek College approval by submitting the Awarding Bodies completed paperwork and the completed pro-forma attached as Annexe 7D to the Higher Education & Skills Department a minimum of seven days prior to the approval panel.
16. All applications from a Department **should** be considered by a single College Approval Panel.
17. The Higher Education & Skills Department is responsible for determining the process through which proposals will be scrutinised. This process **must** be designed to ensure that the proposal:
  - Is consistent with the Development Consent granted for the programme (including the 'shelf life' of that permission)
  - Contains the information required by this CoP
  - Adheres to College and Awarding Body regulations and external reference points (unless specific exemption is being applied for)

#### **Consideration of the proposal**

18. The Higher Education & Skills Department is responsible for establishing a **College Approval Panel (CAP)** to consider proposals for College approval in accordance with this CoP.
19. To consider a proposal for College approval, the panel should meet with representatives of the Department proposing the programme and the Academic Head. The meeting should involve consideration of all programmes being submitted for approval in the same academic year.

### **CAP membership**

20. The College Approval Panel **must** comprise the following:
- The chair shall be the Director of Higher Education & Skills
  - No fewer than two members of the Department (other than a member of the Department(s) submitting the proposal) nominated by the Academic Head
  - A secretary provided by the Higher Education & Skills Department
21. In addition the Panel **should** include the following:
- One or more Department student representatives.
  - One or more members of academic staff drawn from another Department
  - One member of Quality Improvement
  - In cases where a programme proposal involves Departments based in two Departments, a representative of the second Department nominated by the Academic Head
22. The Chair **should** have regard to the benefit of including a representative from one or more of the following service areas:
- Student Services
  - Library
  - Marketing
23. The CAP **may** include such external members as the chair, in consultation with the relevant Academic Head, considers helpful.

### **Approval**

24. Where the Panel recommends approval of the programme it **must** confirm the date (or dates if there is to be more than one intake per year) of commencement of the programme.

### **Approval with conditions (assuring quality/maintaining standards)**

25. The Panel **may** recommend that the programme be approved with **conditions** where it considers that there are actions which **must** be taken to assure the quality of the programme or maintain the standards of the award, but only where these actions are capable of being completed by a date no later than the commencement of the programme, or commencement of the stage of the programme to which they relate. The actions in question **must** be capable of being specified clearly and their completion being evidenced. In deciding whether to grant approval with conditions the Panel **must** have regard to the number of proposed conditions.
26. The Panel must specify the deadline (or deadlines) by which the conditions must be fulfilled and explain the reasons why the conditions are required. The deadline(s) for conditions should be within three weeks of the date of the CAP.

### **Recommendations – Enhancing quality**

27. The Panel **may** make **recommendations** which it considers will enhance the quality of learning opportunities to be provided by the programme.

### **Deferral or rejection**

28. Where the Panel considers that it would be inappropriate to allow recruitment to the programme to take place at this stage, it **must not** approve (whether with conditions or recommendations or not).

29. Where the panel recommends deferral or rejection it **must** specify the reasons for its decision and in the case of deferral, the further information required, and agree with the department a date for a further meeting.

#### Identification of good practice

In making its decision the panel **should** have regard to examples of innovation or good practice worthy of wider consideration.

#### Recording of the Panel's decision

30. The secretary to the panel **must** provide a concise report – using the pro forma set out in Annexe 7D(3) – of the decision, specifying:
- The decision
  - Any conditions and the deadline by which each condition must be satisfied
  - Any recommendations
  - The confirmed date of commencement where approval has been recommended
  - Any examples of innovatory or good practice worthy of wider dissemination
  - Further information required (in the case of deferral)
  - The date of any further meeting of the Panel and department
  - Any advice to the Committee where issues of principle or similar are raised
  - The reasons supporting any of the above
31. The record of the panel's decision **must** be approved by the chair of the panel.
32. Where a further meeting of the panel is held, an additional report **must** be made and added to the first report.

### PART C: MAJOR AMENDMENTS

#### Definition

33. 'Major' is defined as follows - a change:
- to the title or award
  - to the location of delivery
  - to the mode of delivery
  - which means the programme would not now be in accordance with the applicable Awarding Body regulations
34. Proposals to add a *new* location or add a *new* mode of delivery should be treated as new programmes under Part A. (In each case a new programme specification is not required, although for new modes a section **must** be added to show the programme study for new mode - so that students taking either mode are clear about the structure as it applies to them).
35. Change of title includes changes from joint degree to/with degree and *vice versa*. (Any change from single honours to joint/with or *vice versa* would require new programme approval under Part A).

#### Approval route

36. Applications for major amendments require the approval of a **College Approval Panel**.
37. Development Consent College Approval Panels will be conducted as set out in Part B of the CoP.

### **Approval documentation**

38. A revised programme specification (with changes highlighted) **must** be submitted with a covering memorandum from the Academic Head (both heads if two Departments are involved) explaining the reasons for the proposed change, including the benefits/costs involved.
39. The submission **must** make clear the date from which the change(s) will take effect, including making clear the extent to which it applies to current students.
40. Submission **must** be **electronic** to the Higher Education & Skills Department (HEAdmin@rotherham.ac.uk).

### **Consultation with students**

41. Where it is intended that the proposed major amendments will apply to current students, the students directly affected by the changes **must** be consulted and their written agreement to the changes be obtained. Evidence of this consent **must** be provided with the submitted programme specification.
42. Any prospective students, including those who may have already applied, **must** be informed in writing of the changes once approval has been granted.

## **PART D: MINOR AMENDMENTS**

### **Definition**

43. 'Minor' is defined as any change to an existing programme which is not a major change.

### **Approval route**

44. Applications for minor amendments require the approval of the Department through the Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee.

### **Approval documentation**

45. A revised programme specification (with changes highlighted) **must** be submitted with a covering memorandum from the Academic Head (both heads if two Departments are involved) explaining the reasons for the proposed change.
46. Submission **must** be **electronic** to the Higher Education & Skills Department (HEAdmin@rotherham.ac.uk).

### **Consultation with students**

47. Where it is intended that the proposed minor amendments will apply to current students, the students **must** be consulted where it is intended that the proposed minor amendments will apply to current students, the students **must** be consulted and informed of any change.

## **PART E: WITHDRAWAL OR SUSPENSION OF AN ON CAMPUS PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

### **SUSPENSION OF RECRUITMENT**

Where it is proposed to suspend recruitment, whether temporarily or permanently, to an existing programme of study, or to modules which do not form part of a programme, application for suspension **must** be made to the chair of the Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee. The chair **must** not approve the application unless it is supported by evidence that no current students or prospective students to whom an offer has been made and accepted will be affected by the suspension.

48. Current students (unaffected by the suspension) **should** be informed that recruitment to the programme on which they are studying is being suspended, for example through the staff/student committee.
49. The Awarding Body must be informed of the decision.

#### **Resumption of recruitment**

50. Where temporary suspension has been granted in accordance with the above paragraphs, an application to resume recruitment **must** be made to the chair of the Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee and be supported by evidence that:
  - the quality of the learning opportunities and academic standards of the programme remain appropriate, taking into account changes (e.g. to learning resources, currency of the curricula) since recruitment was suspended
  - the Awarding Body remains willing to approve the programme, or that another Awarding Body is willing to undertake the role

#### **Reporting decisions**

51. A copy of the chair's decision to suspend or resume recruitment **must** be provided to Student Services.

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF A PROGRAMME**

52. Applications to withdraw a programme being delivered to students currently registered or having accepted an offer of a place on the programme **must** be made by the Academic Head to the Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee.
53. Programmes involving two (or more) Departments **must** be supported by the Academic Heads of both (or all) Departments (signified in writing).
54. Where the programme is tied to another programme (for example by providing the articulation route for a Foundation Degree) evidence of the impact on the other programme, and consultation with the programme provider, **must** be provided.
55. Applications to withdraw **must** be supported by the following documentation:
  - Summary of HE Developments
56. Where the programme is accredited by a professional/statutory body, evidence of consultation with the relevant body **must** be provided.

#### **Resumption of delivery**

57. Withdrawal of a programme in accordance with the above paragraphs is deemed to be a permanent withdrawal. Any proposal to resurrect such a programme **must** be addressed as a new programme in accordance with Part A of this CoP.

#### **Action following approval to Withdraw**

#### **Informing students**

58. Where a request to withdraw a programme is approved, the students affected must be informed in writing of the decision by the Academic Head, with confirmation of the way in which they will be supported to complete the programme.

### **Internal communications**

59. If approval to withdraw a programme is recommended the following must be informed of the decision:
- the Academic Head
  - the Head of Student Services
  - the Head of Marketing
60. The Head of Student Services **must** ensure that relevant internal and external bodies (other than any professional accrediting body) are informed of the decision, including UCAS (if applicable), applicants (in consultation with the department).
61. The Academic Head **must** ensure that Departmental web sites and other publicity information are updated.