Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy and Procedures

Purpose

This document sets out the AECC University College policy and procedures for the approval of new courses and the periodic review of existing courses, including responsibilities and documentation requirements.

Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   Course approval is the process by which AECC University College ensures that its named awards are relevant to its strategic plan, are financially viable, are of an appropriate academic standard equivalent with comparable courses across the UK HE sector, align with all relevant external reference points and will provide a quality learning experience for the student. Courses are approved for a defined period only (normally a maximum of six years). During the initial stages of approval, there is a focus on the rationale and market for proposed courses, their financial impact on the institution, and their fit with the University College strategic plan and education strategy. Subsequently, the detailed Course Consideration process provides for scrutiny of proposed curricula and learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

1.2   Thereafter Periodic Course Review provides the opportunity to consider and assure the continued strategic relevance, academic standards and currency of existing awards and the quality of the student learning experience. The process takes into account developments in research, professional practice and pedagogy, changes in our strategic mission and the external environment, including the requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). It provides an opportunity to evaluate whether students are attaining the intended learning outcomes and to ensure that the standards of awards are being retained over time. The process highlights where enhancements are possible in order to enhance student learning opportunities. Periodic review normally takes place at least every six years.

1.3   All academic courses leading to an award of the University College must undergo formal

procedures that include approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. Courses may also be subject to modification following processes set out in our Course and Unit Modifications Policy.

1.4 This process should be used in circumstances when it is proposed that a course is closed and replaced with another cognate course; or where a framework review is leading to proposals to close one or more courses within the framework. Proposals to close a stand-alone course or a whole framework without a replacement should follow the separate Course Closure process.

1.5 This policy will apply to courses to be delivered in partnership with an Approved Partner Institution. However, some variation to the detail of these arrangements may be required in these circumstances. For details see the *Policy for the Consideration and Approval of Educational Partnerships.* If there is any doubt about the applicability of policies please consult the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

1.6 For proposals for Continuing Professional Development seminars and stand-alone short courses the *Approval, monitoring and review of short courses (credit-bearing and non credit-bearing)/ Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* policy will apply. However if a full HE course is designed with units which can be taken either as part of a full course of study or as stand-alone credit-bearing short courses which can also build towards an HE award, the arrangements in this policy should be followed.

1.7 PSRB approval or accreditation may be granted through a joint process or it may be completed separately from the University College's academic award. Joint validation is preferred, where this is acceptable to the PSRB concerned.

1.8 An overview of the process is attached as appendix 1.

1.9 Advice regarding the operation of this policy and procedure may be sought from the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

1.10 References in this policy to any University College role or officeholder include his or her properly appointed nominee, appointed by the Line Manager for the relevant role or officeholder. References to job titles include equivalences.

2. Reference Points

2.1 All new and existing courses must be considered and if appropriate approved with reference to:
- Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (Nov 2014)
- Relevant subject benchmark statements
- The Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England (2008)
- QAA Characteristics Statement: Masters Degree September 2015
- The requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (where relevant)
- Competition and Markets Authority : UK higher education providers - advice on consumer protection law Helping you comply with your obligations 12 March 2015 CMA33
- Course Structure and Curriculum Design Policy
- The procedures set out in this document
- Other relevant University College regulations and policies

3. Committee roles and responsibilities

3.1 Senior Management Group (SMG) considers and, if appropriate, approves the business case for proceeding with the development of a new course, or continuing with an existing course at the point of periodic review.

3.2 Thereafter the Academic Development and Quality Committee (ADQC) is responsible for the process of course approval and review, including initial academic approval for development of new course proposals, and the appointment of Course Consideration Panel members.

3.3 Course Consideration Panels give approval of new courses and approve courses under periodic review, on the delegated authority of ADQC. The decision of the Course Consideration Panels

is submitted to ADQC, for note.

4. **Externality**

4.1 The use of appropriate external expertise is built into the policy and procedures for course design, approval and review in a number of ways:

- Initial scrutiny of the strategic/business case and the academic case for proposals for new courses involves expertise from outside the proposing School.

- External subject experts from other institutions, or from relevant professions are members of the Course Consideration Panels that consider the detailed academic case for proposals for new courses/review existing courses (See the External Advisor Policy).

- Members of academic staff on Couse Approval Panels are independent of the proposed course and will normally come from another School.

- Where applicable the requirements of PSRBs are built into course design and the consideration of new course/review of existing courses may take place in conjunction with the formal accreditation process of a PSRB.

- More informal use of external views is also encouraged through the early stages of course development and review, for example, through seeking views of current external examiners, employers, appropriate professional bodies, and (where applicable) patients and the public.

- Comments from serving external examiners on existing programmes form a key element of the annual developmental review process and may lead to the major or minor modification of existing programmes or modules.

- Recognising that students are the experts in their own experience, student views are taken into account as part of course development and course review; Course Consideration Panels also have student members.

5. **Timeline**

5.1 It is possible to schedule Course Consideration events at any time of year, according to the needs of the School concerned. However, sufficient time must be allowed between the Course Considerations Panel and the intended start date to enable effective marketing and recruitment activities to take place or – in the case of periodic review, to notify students/applicants of any course changes. Therefore a number of deadlines are in place to help manage these processes. An indicative timeline for the process for developing a new course is as indicated below (see section 10 for a more detailed timeline for Course Consideration):

Process	Expected deadline for completion of activity
Preliminary Planning and consultation	As soon as possible but no later than December in the academic year preceding validation year
Initial committee consideration/approval) – SMG (Business case) followed by ADQC (Academic case)	By end of March in the academic year preceding Course Consideration process At this stage course may be marketed 'subject to validation'
Course Design and completion of course consideration documentation	Completed by beginning of December before course commences in September
Course consideration process	Completed by end of April before course commences in September
Course commences	September

5.2 Where accreditation by a professional body is also be required these timescales may need to be adjusted accordingly, to take into account timelines specified by the body concerned. Therefore the exact timetable to be followed for each new course proposal should be agreed with the Chair of ADQC and the Quality and Enhancement Manager as early as possible. It is important that deadlines established are adhered to.

6. **Identifying new course proposals**

6.1 Sufficient time and resources need to be allocated at each stage of the course design/review and approval process to ensure thorough development and scrutiny of the academic and business case for the proposed new provision, and for subsequent detailed course design and development. This is vital in terms of ensuring that new courses are viable from both an academic and a financial perspective and reflect the principles of good course design.

Preliminary discussions

6.2 Members of staff with suggestions for new courses should raise these with the relevant Head of School in the first instance. The Head of School/may consult other members of staff, including professional support staff, and the Heads of other Schools likely to be affected by the proposal, and if he/she considers that the suggested course is likely to fit with our strategic aims, and has the potential to be financially viable he/she will present an outline case to the Executive that the suggested course be taken forward for further development.

6.3 If the Executive agrees that the suggested course should be developed into a formal proposal with a full business case, the Head of School will be advised accordingly. At this stage the Executive will agree the budget for initial market research, in discussion with the Marketing and Communications Team (see below).

6.4 Agreement to proceed with an initial development is not a guarantee that either the business case or the academic case will be approved at the formal stage.

Developing the initial proposal

6.5 The Head of School will identify a Course Proposer to work with appropriate colleagues to scope and work up the initial proposal, including the business case.

6.6 New and revised courses should be developed by teams of academics and professional support staff with knowledge of the relevant subject area(s), curriculum design, pedagogic practice, professional requirements (where applicable), learning services and technologies, and academic administration.

6.7 At this early stage it is important to be able to demonstrate the likely financial sustainability of the proposal This includes establishing objectively at the outset that there is a viable market for a new course: the need for the course, what will make it unique, who are our competitors (if any), the target audience and what the specific needs of the target group are likely to be, likely employment routes for graduates, etc. Therefore appropriate market research is essential. Market research should be conducted in collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Team and where appropriate, may involve the use of external advisors and agencies within this area.

6.8 A thorough and robust costing process is required, with detailed financial data to demonstrate the financial sustainability of the proposal, and evidence that the resources necessary to support the provision, have been identified and are available. This requires consultation with and input from key colleagues across the institution.

- Head of Marketing and Communications Team - for marketing and business intelligence advice
- Head of Finance – for advice on course and resource costings
- Executive Director of Administration – for space requirements and other specialist equipment
- Admissions Manager - for enquires regarding suitable admissions criteria
- Head of Library and Learning Services–for library and other resources required, including opportunities for usage of electronic study skills resources and the teaching of Digital Capabilities etc. to be built into the course
- E-learning Developer – for consideration of how the use of technology enhanced learning/assessment could be built into the course
- Head of IT – for computing provision, licenses etc.

6.9   Following the discussions outlined above the Course Proposer, in consultation with relevant colleagues, should complete the New Course Initial Proposal Form. This includes ensuring that Heads of relevant Professional Services consulted during the process have completed and signed the relevant sections of the form.

7.   **Initial Consideration and Approval to Proceed**

  For new courses

7.1   Initial consideration and approval to proceed has two purposes – through the Senior Management Group (SMG) the strategic fit and financial viability of a proposed new course is assessed; consideration by ADQC reviews and if appropriate approves the academic proposition. This allows the University College to be assured of the quality and viability of the proposed new course before it proceeds to the full course design and approval process. Both approval of the business case and initial approval of the academic case must be granted before a course proceeds to the development process.

7.2   The Course Proposer should submit the completed form to the Head of the relevant School. The Head of School will consider the 'fit' of the proposed course within the School strategy, in terms of both academic development and financial/budgetary implications. The Head of School will also review the content of the form for completeness and check that all necessary internal discussions, as required to be evidenced in the form, have been completed and the appropriate signatures are included.

  ### Consideration of Business Case

7.3   If the Head of School accepts that the proposal is appropriate and in his/her view is financially viable, he/she should sign the form and submit it to the Principal's PA for consideration by SMG. The Principal's PA should invite the Head of School and the Course Proposer to attend the SMG meeting at which the proposal is considered.

7.4   The role of the SMG is to consider in detail the business case, including detailed financial information, and the institutional strategic fit of the new proposal.

7.5   SMG may:
  - approve the proposal.
  - approve the proposal subject to modifications.
  - require revisions/further consideration and resubmission.
  - reject the proposal.

  Where modification, revisions or further consideration is required, or where the proposal is rejected, feedback will be provided to the Head of School for transmission to the Course Proposer.

7.6   Acceptance of the business case by the SMG constitutes a commitment to funding the required additional resources if the course if formally approved. When the proposal is accepted by SMG the Principal, as Chair, will sign the form and return this to the relevant Head of School.

7.7   Should SMG require modification to the proposal, or further consideration, the proposal should be shared again with Heads of relevant Professional Services who have previously signed the form, to ensure that any changes required do not impact on costings or service provision. Where there are implications these should be discussed and the relevant section of the form re-signed before submission to ADQC.

  ### Initial consideration of academic case

7.8   The Head of School will then submit the signed New Course Initial Proposal Form to ADQC. The Course Proposer and Head of School will be invited to attend the relevant ADQC meeting to present the proposal and answer questions.

7.9   ADQC will consider the academic proposition in relation to our overall strategic objectives and the education strategy, and review the appropriateness of the key features of the academic course structure and design, to ensure that the academic scope of the proposal is clear and

appropriate and that the course is likely to be delivered at the appropriate level and in line with relevant national frameworks.

7.10 ADQC may:
- approve the proposal.
- approve the proposal subject to modifications.
- require revisions/further consideration and resubmission.
- reject the proposal.

Where modification, revisions or further consideration is required, or where the proposal is rejected, feedback will be provided to the Head of School for transmission to the Course Proposer.

7.11 If timing requires, and where ADQC members agree, modified proposals may be considered in circulation/approved on Chair's action and ratified at the next meeting.

7.12 ADQC initial approval signals the formal commencement of the development process and the point at which marketing can begin 'subject to approval' (and to PSRB validation where applicable).

7.13 Initial approval for a new course proposal is normally granted for eighteen months; proposals which have not proceeded to Course Consideration within this period must normally be reconsidered by SMG and ADQC, unless a longer planning period is specifically agreed at the time of initial approval, or an extension is specifically sought and approved by the Chair of ADQC.

For existing courses

7.14 It is equally important to consider for existing courses whether these continue to have a place within the institution's strategic development, and whether they are operating in a way which is financially robust (or that a specific decision is taken that there is value in running the course irrespective of finances). Therefore all courses under periodic review are subject to re-consideration of a business case, as set out in paras 7.3 – 7.7 above. The process is the same as for new courses, except that the Course Review Initial Proposal Form should be completed. Initial responsibility for completing the form rests with the Framework/Programme Leader, in consultation with the Head of School and other relevant colleagues. If the business case is approved by SMG this form need not be submitted to ADQC but will form part of the documentation for the Course Consideration Panel for the Review.

8. Development/Review process

8.1 For new courses, once initial approval to proceed has been given, the Course Proposer, working collaboratively with relevant colleagues (including library and learning services and colleagues in academic administration), should take forward the detailed course design and development work, with reference to the Course Structure and Curriculum Design Policy and relevant external frameworks It is important that there is involvement of/consultation with, key members of staff who will deliver and support the proposed course so they gain ownership of the new provision.

8.2 For reviews of existing courses, key staff teaching on the course(s) and associated professional support staff should have the opportunity to contribute to the review.

8.3 In both cases, development/review should include input from other stakeholders including employer representatives, current students and, where appropriate, patients/clients, the public, graduates and representatives from PSRBs. Where applicable feedback from current external examiners should be sought and considered as part of the process.

8.4 Common units[1] should be reviewed as part of the Periodic Review of the course to which the unit belongs (i.e. the course that initially devised and validated it). If, as part of the

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[1] Common units are units which are taught to students on more than one course, and which have the same unit title, level, credit value, aims, ILOs, learning and teaching methods and formal elements of assessment for all the courses of which they form a part). Each common unit is owned by the course that initially devised and validated it.

approval/review process, changes are proposed to common units this would necessitate a modification to the course(s) not currently under review. If the change is not appropriate for all courses concerned, the modified unit should be approved as a separate unit with a distinct unit title/code and the courses in which it will be used must be clearly specified. Course teams other than the lead course team must ensure that the same consultations occur in relation to the proposed changes, e.g. external examiners, students, applicants. In such cases the Framework/Course and Unit Modifications Policy and Procedures should be followed.

8.5   The timeline for the remainder of the process, including dates for the Scrutiny Group and Course Consideration Panel, should be agreed at this stage, in discussion between the Head of School, Course Proposer/Programme Leader, Programmes Office, and the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

8.6   The Course Proposer/Programme Leader, in consultation with the Head of School and other relevant colleagues should nominate two External Advisors (one academic subject expert and one professional practitioner, or two academic subject experts) to participate in the approval of the course(s), in line with the External Advisor Policy).

8.7   Work on the design and development of the course will result in the production of the course and supporting documents necessary for the approval process. It is the responsibility of the Course Proposer (new courses) or Programme Leader (reviews), with support from the Programmes Office, to prepare and/or gather together the required documentation.
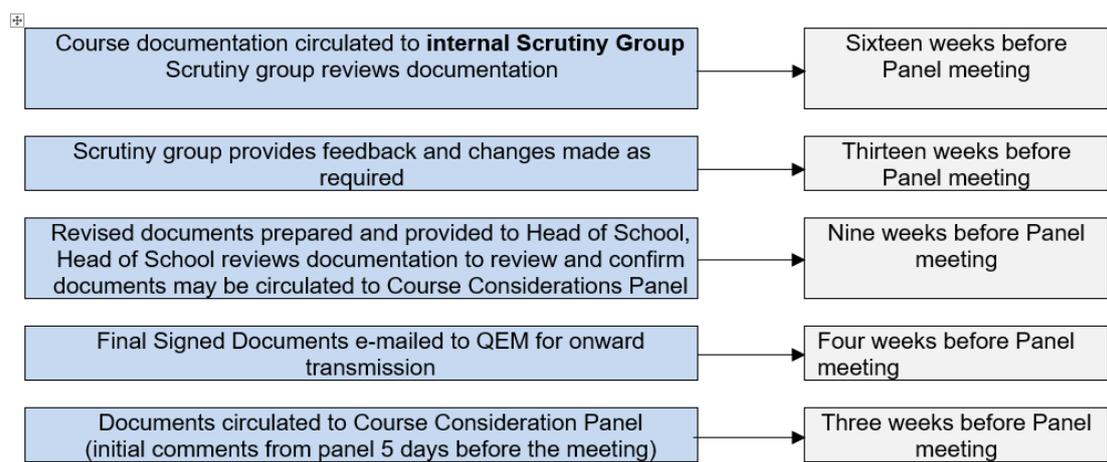
9.   **Required documentation**

9.1   The documentation will consist of:

New course
• Course summary and resources document (new courses) with New Course Initial Approval Form (watermarked as 'original proposal') and staff CVs for the course team • Completed assessment summary grid template • Course specification(s) • Unit profiles • Notes from the Scrutiny Group (see section 11) • CMA significant change and impact form, where required.

Existing course for review
• Course summary and resources document (reviews) with Course Review Initial Proposal Form (watermarked as 'original proposal') and staff CVs for the course team • Completed assessment summary grid template • Updated course specification(s) with previous version for reference and comparison • Unit profiles for all existing and all new units • CMA significant change and impact form (where applicable) • Latest Professional Body accreditation report and course response(where applicable) • Statistics showing longitudinal trends, including degree classification outcomes over time • Evidence from any impact equality assessments • Annual course monitoring reports since the last approval • Notes from the Scrutiny Group (see section 11)

9.2   In both cases brief background information about the University College (history, governance structures etc.) and internal management and quality assurance arrangements will be provided to external panel members by the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

10.   **Overview**

10.1 An overview of the timeline for the internal scrutiny and Course Consideration process is given below:

Course documentation circulated to **internal Scrutiny Group** Scrutiny group reviews documentation	Sixteen weeks before Panel meeting
Scrutiny group provides feedback and changes made as required	Thirteen weeks before Panel meeting
Revised documents prepared and provided to Head of School, Head of School reviews documentation to review and confirm documents may be circulated to Course Considerations Panel	Nine weeks before Panel meeting
Final Signed Documents e-mailed to QEM for onward transmission	Four weeks before Panel meeting
Documents circulated to Course Consideration Panel (initial comments from panel 5 days before the meeting)	Three weeks before Panel meeting

11. Scrutiny Group stage: Internal review of documentation

11.1 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will convene a Scrutiny Group, consisting of two members of academic staff who have not been directly involved in the preparation of the documentation, one of whom shall normally be from another School and shall act as Chair, and the Quality and Enhancement Manager. The person appointed as Chair will have a good working knowledge of the Institution's quality assurance policies and of relevant external quality frameworks, and will normally go on to Chair the subsequent Course Consideration Panel, to provide continuity. Additional members may be appointed to the Scrutiny Group for staff development purposes. Involvement in the Scrutiny Group does not preclude an academic staff member from serving subsequently on the Course Consideration Panel.

11.2 The Course Proposer/Programme Leader should submit the completed documentation (see Section 9) electronically to the Quality and Enhancement Manager for transmission to the Scrutiny Group.

11.3 The role of the Scrutiny Group is to review the documentation, with attention to both structure and content, to assess its readiness for submission to the Course Consideration Panel. Guidance on the role of Scrutiny Panel members is available on the Staff Information Portal (SIP).

11.4 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will provide notes as feedback for the Course Proposer/ Programme Leader to identify recommended amendments. The recommendations from the Scrutiny Group are advisory only. It is the responsibility of the Course Proposer/Programme Leader to ensure that feedback from the Scrutiny Group is taken into account in preparing the final documentation. The notes from the Scrutiny Group will form part of the documentation for the Course Consideration Panel.

11.5 The Scrutiny Group process, including the provision of feedback, should normally take no more than three weeks from the date of submission.

11.6 With the exception of amendments made in the light of comments from the Scrutiny Group, there should be no substantive differences between the documentation submitted to the Course Consideration Panel and that previously considered by the Scrutiny Group which affect the fundamental design and structure of the course(s) under consideration. If, exceptionally, the Course Proposer/Programme Leader wishes to make such changes, this must be clearly highlighted to the Course Consideration Panel in a separate note.

Head of School sign-off

11.7 The Course Proposer/Programme Leader, supported by the Programmes Office, should submit the final Course Consideration Panel documentation to the Head of School by an agreed date. This will be at least seven weeks before the Course Consideration Panel meeting.

11.8 The Head of School will review the final documentation to confirm that he/she is satisfied that it is of an appropriate standard to be submitted for external scrutiny, and will sign the Course

Summary and Resources document accordingly. The Head of School should then forward the signed form, and full documentation for the Course Consideration Panel to the Quality and Enhancement Manager members at least three weeks before the date of the Course Consideration Panel meeting, for onward transmission to Panel members.

12. Course Consideration Panel (detailed academic scrutiny)

12.1 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will, in discussion with relevant colleagues, convene a Course Consideration Panel to meet and undertake detailed academic scrutiny of the proposal.

12.2 The purpose of the Course Consideration Panel is to provide in-depth academic scrutiny of the proposed course or course under review to determine whether this aligns, or continues to align with key external frames of reference, meets, or continues to meet, appropriate academic standards equivalent with comparable courses across the UK HE sector, is professionally relevant, appropriately resourced and provides a high-quality educational experience for students. For existing frameworks/courses undergoing periodic review, the Panel will also consider the experience of delivering the Framework/course to date and the views of students. In both cases the Panel should take into account relevant qualitative and quantitative data, and consider whether the Framework/course is promoting inclusive approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and addressing the entitlements of students with protected characteristics.

Course Consideration Panel membership

12.3 The membership of the Panel should include as a minimum:

- Two members of academic staff not involved in the teaching of the course, and normally from another School, one of whom shall act as Chair. The person appointed as Chair will have a good working knowledge of the Institution's quality assurance policies and of relevant external quality frameworks, and will normally have acted also as Chair of the internal Scrutiny Group, for continuity.
- A student representative, normally from outside the course concerned, but who may be from within the same School. The student representative should be identified through the Student Union, in liaison with the Quality and Enhancement Manager
- Two External Advisors (one academic subject expert and one professional practitioner, or two academic subject experts) (nominated by the Course Proposer/Programme Leader.

The Quality and Enhancement Manager, who will also normally act as Secretary to the Panel.

Other members of staff with relevant expertise may be invited to join the Panel as appropriate.

Where appropriate a patient or layperson representative may also be invited to join the Panel, either as a member or as an observer.

Additional staff may be invited to participate in the Panel as observers, for staff development purposes.

12.4 The Quality and Enhancement Manager shall submit the names of the proposed external and internal staff Panel members to ADQC for consideration and approval (this may be done in circulation).

12.5 If, exceptionally, it is not possible to identify a student member to attend the Panel meeting, student input must be sought by alternative means.

12.6 Guidance notes for Panel chairs and Panel members are available. Any members requiring further advice or information, or additional training, should consult the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

12.7 Where appropriate, and agreeable to both parties, PSRB and AECC University College accreditation/consideration may take place simultaneously. Course Consideration Panel membership may be adjusted accordingly, but must meet the requirements of both parties.

There may be requirements for additional documentation and/or engagement with the course team to ensure that the requirements of both processes are met.

Submission and circulation of documentation

12.8 All documentation should be submitted electronically and will be made available to Course Consideration Panel members by the Quality and Enhancement Manager in the same way, unless there is a requirement for a reasonable adjustment under the 2010 Equality Act.

12.9 Documentation will be circulated to Panel members at least three weeks before the date of the Course consideration Panel meeting.

12.10 Members of the Course Consideration Panel will be invited to complete and submit a short form to provide initial feedback on the proposed course or framework/course under review and the documentation, to help to structure the initial meeting and subsequent discussions. Forms should be submitted and circulated to other panel members normally five working days before the Course Consideration Panel meeting. This is not intended to limit in any way the issues which a Panel might choose to raise or explore during the Panel meeting.

The Course Consideration Panel meeting

12.11 A formal meeting of the Course Consideration Panel is normally required. The exact arrangements for the scrutiny will depend on the scope and scale of each individual proposal and the perceived or actual risk associated with the provision. The Quality and Enhancement Manager in consultation with the Chair will agree with the Framework/Programme Proposer/Leader the nature of the engagement with the Course Consideration Panel and the length of meeting required.

12.12 The meeting will normally take place over one day (occasionally more). Longer meetings may be required when AECC University College approval and review processes are taking place alongside those of a professional body and/or when more than one course is being considered.

12.13 A standard Course Consideration Panel event schedule and agenda is normally used. The event schedule may be varied as required to facilitate attendance by relevant staff and students; the Course Proposer/Programme Leader should agree this with the Quality and Enhancement Manager, who will liaise with the Panel Chair.

12.14 The Programmes Office should make the logistical arrangements for the Panel meeting (room bookings, catering, parking etc.) and for travel/accommodation for External Advisors.

12.15 The Programmes Office, working with the Course Proposer/Programme Leader should make arrangements for staff and students to attend the meetings with the Panel as required, and arrangements for any tours of facilities requested by the Panel.

12.16 The Course Consideration Panel will meet with members of the Course Team, including learning services and Professional Services staff as appropriate. The composition of the team to meet with the Panel should be such as ensures there is suitable representation from subjects included in the framework/course and across all units, and that those present are able to respond fully to the areas for exploration set out in the indicative agenda for the meeting (see paragraph 12.13 above).

12.17 For periodic reviews or proposals for new courses in closely related cognate areas, the Course Consideration Panel will also meet with students. This should normally include students representing all courses (and levels) under review, student representatives and ideally graduates. For courses in areas new for the institution a short meeting with students able to talk generally with the Panel about their experiences of studying at the institution may be arranged but is not a requirement. Guidance for students invited to meet with the Panel is provided.

12.18 The Panel meeting will normally include a tour of facilities and resources available to support the provision. Evaluation of Frameworks/courses with a substantial e-learning or distance/ blended learning element will normally include a demonstration of the online resources.

12.19 Immediately before the meeting with the Course Team the Course Consideration Panel will meet to identify key issues/priority areas for discussion.

13. Course Consideration Panel outcomes and reporting process

13.1 Following the series of meetings, the Panel will agree its conclusions and formulate a set of outcomes. During the final part of the meeting the Panel will report the outcomes to the Framework/Course Team. The outcomes should include aspects of good practice and strengths of the provision as well as a judgment on approval as outlined below.

13.2 The outcome from the Course Consideration Panel will take any one of the following forms:

i	to recommend unconditional approval, subject to normal periodic review;
ii	to recommend approval subject to conditions and/or recommendations and subject to normal periodic review;
iii	to recommend approval for a limited period only with or without conditions and/or recommendations, after which a review will be held;
iv	to recommend that approval be withheld.

13.3 The maximum, and normal, period of approval is six years. The Panel may agree a shorter approval period – for example where a course is in a new area for the institution and it is considered that an early periodic review would be appropriate. Approval for a shorter period should not be taken as any comment on the standards and quality of the course.

13.4 Where conditions of approval and/or recommendations are set, the Panel will state the timescale for the team to respond. The timescale will normally be agreed in discussion with the Course Proposer/Programme Leader.

13.5 At the end of the meeting, the Panel will consider and agree which members wish to be involved in reviewing any revised documentation and confirm that they are satisfied that any conditions have been satisfactorily met, or whether this may done by the Chair on behalf of the Panel.

13.6 The written report of the Course Consideration Panel meeting, which will record the process, debate and outcomes, will be compiled by the Quality and Enhancement Manager and circulated to the Panel and the Course Proposer/Programme for comment on matters of fact and accuracy. This will normally be done within five working days. Once agreed, the final version will be circulated to the Panel, the Course Proposer/Programme Leader and the relevant Head of School, normally within 10 working days.

13.7 The Course Proposer/Programme Leader should coordinate and provide a full response to the conditions and an initial response to the recommendations, together with revised versions of the course and unit specifications (if required), normally within three weeks. Depending on the nature of the conditions the Panel may agree a longer timescale for the response to be submitted. All conditions must be satisfactorily met before the framework/course can be delivered. Recommendations can be addressed before the start of the framework/course or considered over a longer time period. An updated response to recommendations should be formally incorporated into the framework/course monitoring process through the Continuous Action Plan. Responses to the conditions/recommendations should be sent to the Quality and Enhancement Manager by the specified deadline. Where necessary, extensions may be sought through the Quality and Enhancement Manager in consultation with the Panel Chair.

13.8 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will send the response to the relevant Panel members, or to the Chair, as agreed under para 13.5. The Panel/Chair will normally be asked to respond within a working week. In the event of query about the response, those undertaking the final sign-off may choose to consult other Panel members as appropriate.

13.9 Once it has been confirmed that the conditions have been satisfactorily met, approval is confirmed by the Chair and communicated to the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

13.10 Once formal approval is given the Quality and Enhancement Manager will notify the Course Proposer/Programme Leader, relevant Head of School, the Programmes Office, Registry,

Library and Learning Services, Finance and Marketing and Communications Team. The Quality and Enhancement Manager will make clear whether an approved course remains subject to accreditation by a professional body.

13.11 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will ensure that the final Course Consideration Panel report is presented to ADQC for note. As part of this reporting process the Quality and Enhancement Manager will also highlight to ADQC any issues of common interest or good practice which may be applicable institution-wide.

13.12 For activity carried out in partnership with another institution, under the Policy for the Consideration and Approval of Educational Partnerships, initial approval of a new Partner will be confirmed when any conditions associated with the associated course have been completed and signed off and final approval of the course is given in accordance with para 13.9 above.

13.13 Following the ADQC meeting the Panel report will be made available for staff via the SIP.

14. Definitive documentation

14.1 The approved Course Specification becomes the definitive document for the course, and changes to it are subject to consideration through formal processes reporting to ADQC.

14.2 The Programmes Office holds the definitive Word version of the course and unit specifications. The Programmes Office in consultation with the relevant Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring that the definitive document is appropriately maintained. On receipt of notification of formal approval, final versions of the Course Specification(s) and Unit Specifications should be submitted to the Quality and Enhancement Manager within two weeks, for publication through the VLE, the SIP and the University College website.

14.3 Together with the above documentation the Programmes Office (working with the Programme/ Framework Leader) should also submit a definitive statement of additional costs the student will be required/recommended to meet to complete the course. This will be provided to Registry, to update any information already made available via the 'Important information' document, the Prospectus and University College website.

15. Consumer Protection Law requirements

15.1 Course reviews are considered to be a significant change according to consumer legislation. Care needs to be exercised to ensure that consultation evidencing current student consent takes place when appropriate. In addition, Programme Leaders, working with the Programmes Office and Registry need to ensure that communication of the changes to students, applicants and potential applicants takes place. Any change that affects course information that has been provided to students, applicants or potential applicants is likely to be a significant change if it:

- is a change to one of the items of material or pre-contractual information specified by consumer protection law and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA);
- potentially has a negative impact on a group of students; or
- could influence (or could have already influenced) decisions that a potential applicant, applicant, offer holder or student would make.

15.2 The Course team also need to consider whether the change is fair and whether mitigation should be offered if it may have an adverse effect on students in general or a particular group of students. If the changes will affect those who have already applied but not yet enrolled at the University College Registry will be required to communicate significant changes made to the course to current applicants as soon as the review is complete. At enrolment, applicants agree to the current version of the course and will be provided with a student handbook and material via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that is based on the course specification.

15.3 Guidance notes are available to help the Course Team decide whether a change is significant and further advice can be sought from the Quality and Enhancement Manager.

Consultation with existing students about changes relating to the course approval/review

15.4 A new version of a framework/course will normally come into effect for the next new intake of students. However, in some instances, the team may wish to implement the revised version for existing students. In such instances, the Framework/Programme Leader, with the support of the relevant Programmes Office should obtain consent from affected students as set out below, before this can occur. In considering whether to implement the revised version in this way Course Teams should consider the arrangements from the point of view of affected students, as well as from an academic perspective.

15.5 If it is planned that significant changes (see section 3) will apply to current students the Programme Leader must inform all affected students of the proposed change and the written agreement of at least 75% of all affected students must be obtained (75% of affected students per level, per course). All reasonable efforts must be made to obtain student support for the proposed changes. This includes making repeated attempts to contact students. When outlining the changes to students it is suggested that the following text is included: "*Please confirm that you are happy with these changes. If you do have concerns or are not willing to consent to them, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can consider your concerns.*" Students must be informed that the changes remain subject to formal approval.

15.6 This consent must normally be obtained before the Course Consideration Panel meeting. The Programme Leader must ensure that an audit trail of the correspondence with the students is kept, including any potential issues that are raised. The outcome of the consent process must be reported to the Course Consideration Panel to consider when reviewing the change.

15.7 Where 75% (or more) sign up is achieved during the consultation process, and where the proposed change may be categorised as a significant change the Programme Leader should discuss with the relevant Head of School appropriate mitigation in respect of those students who have not accepted the change. The Programme Leader should then complete the CMA significant change form. The Programme Leader should submit the completed template with the documentation for consideration by the Course Consideration Panel. Matters relating to fairness; both the impact of any changes and the fairness of the process followed in considering and communicating the change, must be considered as part of these discussions.

15.8 On occasions the Course Consideration Panel may consider that changes not previously regarded as such by the Programme Team would fall into the category of a significant change. Should this occur the Course Consideration Panel may require the completion of the CMA significant change form as a condition of approval.

15.9 If the change is confirmed at the completion of the review process, the Programmes Office must inform existing students of the change, including any differences between the change that they were consulted about and the one that is finally made, and the response to any important issues raised by students during the consultation.

16. **Changes to approved site of delivery as part of a course review**

16.1 If a change to an existing site of delivery is proposed as part of a course review the Programme Leader should consult the Quality and Enhancement Manager and the Chair of ADQC in the first instance, to determine what information will be required and whether a visit to the site to review the physical resources should take place before a formal proposal is submitted.

17. **Evaluation**

17.1 The Quality and Enhancement Manager will seek feedback from participants as an aid to evaluation and process improvement.

18. **Associated forms and documentation**

   − Course Structure and Curriculum Design Policy
   − New Course Initial Proposal Form (for new courses)

- Course Review Initial Proposal Form (for periodic review of existing courses)
- Course Summary and Resources document template
- Assessment Overview template
- Guidance and template for Course Specifications
- Guidance and template for unit specification
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) significant change form (for course reviews and/or modifications)
- Framework/Course and Unit Modifications Policy and Procedures.
- Guidance for Scrutiny group members
- Guidance for Course Considerations Panel members
- Policy for the Consideration and Approval of Educational Partnerships.
- Approval, monitoring and review of short courses (credit-bearing and non credit-bearing)/ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy

Version:	2.0
Ratified by:	Academic Audit and Policy Committee/Academic Board
Originator/Author	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Owner	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Reference source	UK Quality Code. UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development; External Expertise, Student Engagement Competition Marketing Authority : UK higher education providers - advice on consumer protection law Helping you comply with your obligations 12 March 2015 CMA33 Examples from other institutions used as source material
Date approved	26 June 2019
Effective from	For new courses/reviews starting the process from 1 September 2019
Review date	Spring 2022
Target	Framework/Programme Leaders, Heads of Schools, Programmes Office, Registry, members of Academic Development and Quality Committee, members of Course Consideration Panels
Policy location	SIP
Equality analysis	The policy itself has no direct impact; however, the policy has been framed to ensure that equality issues are considered and explored as part of the process of developing or reviewing, and approving a course, through the use of relevant prompts in templates and agendas for meetings

Appendix 1: Overview

Course design and approval basic process

Staff member raises idea for new course with Head of School (HoS)

If initial view favourable within School, HoS takes to Executive

Executive considers overarching idea in principle. If agreed agrees arrangements/budget for market research

HoS identifies Course Proposer (CP) to lead development and prepare documentation

CP undertakes planning/costings, in consultation. Completes New Course Initial Proposal Form (NCIP)

CP submits NCIP form to HoS for review/sign off as consistent with school strategy/ budget.

HoS submits to SMG for consideration of strategic fit/business case

SMG considers business case. If accepted Principal signs form as Chair, returns to HoS

Signed NCIP Form submitted to ADQC

ADQC considers academic case for initial approval

Initial approval – marketing may begin 'subject to approval/PSRB validation'

Course Consideration Panel appointed and approved by ADQC.

CP designs and develops full course and associated documentation, in consultation.

Course documentation circulated to **internal Scrutiny Group**

Scrutiny Group reviews documentation and feeds back

Revised documents prepared and provided to HoS

HoS confirms documents may be circulated to Course Consideration Panel

Signed Documents e-mailed to QEM for onward transmission

Documents circulated to Course Consideration Panel (initial comments from Panel 5 days before the meeting)

Course Consideration Panel

Panel report prepared, checked, approved by panel and circulated

CP prepares response /revised versions of course/ unit specs,

Course Consideration Panel members (or Chair only, as agreed by Panel) accept response

Panel Chair confirms formal approval

ADQC notes

Definitive documents finalised and published