AECC University College
Transforming lives through Health Sciences

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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.

This policy has been drawn up after due consideration of the UK Quality Code, taking into account the associated QAA Advice and Guidance. It aligns with the UK Quality Code Expectations and core and common practices as below

Standards:

- The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.
- The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.
- The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.
- Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.
- The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent
- The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.

Quality:

- Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
- The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
- The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
- The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.
- The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.
- The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience

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1. Introduction

1.1 Course consideration and 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 *Consideration and Approval of Educational Partnerships policy*. If there is any doubt about the applicability of policies please consult the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

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
- The University College's Course Design Framework
- 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 Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) 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 ASQC. The decision of the Course Consideration Panel is submitted to ASQC, 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 Panel Member Policy).

- Members of academic staff on Course 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.

4.2 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, including through Stakeholder meetings and, where applicable, the appointment of an external academic critical friend (see the Course Design Framework).

- 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 include a student member.

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, including initial discussion with Executive	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 ASQC (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 The equivalent timetable will operate for courses with January starts.

5.3 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 ASQC and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) as early as possible. It is important that deadlines established are adhered to.

5.4 Should a School wish to defer a periodic review, the Head of School must submit a request, with a clear rationale, to ASQC for consideration. Evidence to support the continued quality of the course (for example, commentary from external examiner reports, student feedback, etc must be submitted to support the request. Periodic reviews for course with professional accreditation will not be considered unless it can be demonstrated that the relevant PSRB supports the deferral request (i.e. it would not jeopardise the course's accreditation status. Deferrals will not be drafted for more than one academic year.

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 should 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 is a strategic fit has the potential to be financially viable (or otherwise benefit the institution), and should therefore be developed into a formal proposal with a full business case, the Head of School will be advised accordingly.

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..

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor – for advice on financial viability.
- Head of Marketing and Communications Team - for marketing and business intelligence advice
- Head of Finance and Procurement – for advice on course and resource costings
- Chief Operating Officer– 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.
- Academic Registrar for consideration of implications for student and academic

administration
- Assistant Registrar (Statutory Returns and Compliance) for consideration of any implications for returns,

6.9 Following the discussions outlined above the Course Proposer, in consultation with relevant colleagues, should complete the New Course 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 ASQC 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 New Course Proposal 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 Vice-Chancellor's PA for consideration by SMG. The Vice-Chancellor'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, viability of student numbers, 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, the Head of School is responsible for providing feedback 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 approved by SMG the Vice-Chancellor, as Chair, will sign the form and return this to the relevant Head of School.

Initial consideration of academic case

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

7.8 ASQC 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. It is not the role of ASQC to re-visit issues of financial viability (as

this is already approved by SMG), except insofar as issues may also impact on the student experience (for example in terms of cohort size)

7.9 ASQC 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.

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

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

7.12 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 ASQC, 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 ASQC.

For existing courses

7.13 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/Course 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 ASQC 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, in line with the Course Design Framework 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 In line with the Course Design Framework, and on the advice of ASQC, in instances where the institution does not have the specific academic expertise at the level of detail required to design the curriculum for a proposed new course, the design and development process may involve working with an external critical friend

8.3 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.

8.4 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. For new courses at least one Stakeholder meeting must be held, as specified in the Course Design Framework,

8.5 Where applicable feedback from current external examiners should be sought and considered as part of the process.

8.6 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 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 Course and Unit Modifications Policy and Procedures should be followed.

8.7 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/ Leader, Course Administrator, and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

8.8 The Course Proposer/ Leader, in consultation with the Head of School and other relevant colleagues should nominate two External Panel Members (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 Panel Member Policy). For courses delivered solely via distance learning one of the External Panel Members will normally have relevant experience of delivering a course via this mode.

8.9 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 Course Leader (reviews), with support from the Course Administrator, 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.

New course to be delivered solely by distance learning
All documentation above, plus • A structured outline of the course outlining plans for the nature of learning and student engagement. • A sample of the online learning activities that students will undertake, together with examples of study materials which will be made available for them, to give a flavour of the course demonstrating the learning experience. • Examples of methods of collaborative learning, including group work, discussion forums and shared online activities; • Information relating to the conduct of formative and summative assessments and feedback, including considerations of accessibility for disabled students. At the Course Consideration event the Panel is likely to concentrate as much on issues of course delivery as on the academic content.

[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.

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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

10. Overview

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

Course documentation circulated to Scrutiny Group. Scrutiny Group reviews and provides feedback	Four weeks from submission of documents for scrutiny
Course Team amends documents in line with Scrutiny Group feedback	Four weeks to amend documentation as required
Revised documents provided to Deputy Vice-Chancellor for review and sign-off.	Eight weeks to complete review and sign-off process
Documents circulated to Panel	Three weeks before Panel meeting

11. Scrutiny Group stage: Internal review of documentation

11.1 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance). 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/Course Leader should submit the completed documentation (see Section 9) electronically to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) for transmission to the Scrutiny Group.

11.3 The role of the Scrutiny Group is to offer constructive feedback to the course team on any aspect of the course and associated documentation, with particular reference to the FHEQ and the institutional principles and norms set out in the Course Design Framework, to support the course team in preparing final documentation Guidance on the role of Scrutiny Panel members is available on the Staff Information Portal (SIP).

11.4 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will provide notes as feedback for the Course Proposer/ Course Leader to identify recommended amendments. The recommendations from the

Scrutiny Group are advisory except where the Group clearly indicates in its notes that amendments are needed to ensure the course aligns with national and institutional frameworks. It is the responsibility of the Course Proposer/Course Leader to ensure that feedback from the Scrutiny Group is taken into account in preparing the final documentation.

11.5 The Course Proposer/Leader must provide a written response to the Scrutiny Group feedback, particularly focussing on any significant areas where feedback has indicated that amendments are needed to ensure the course aligns with national/institutional frameworks. If the Course leader/proposer has specific reasons why the course needs to deviate from the institutional Course Design Framework a clear and explicit rationale must be provided in the response..

11.6 The notes from the Scrutiny Group and the Course Proposer/Leader's response will form part of the documentation for the Course Consideration Panel.

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

11.8 With the exception of amendments made in the light of comments from the Scrutiny Group, there should normally 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 the Course Proposer/ Leader wishes to make such changes, this must be clearly highlighted to the Course Consideration Panel in a separate note.

11.9 The Course Proposer/Leader must also make the unit specifications provided for the Scrutiny Group available to the Head of Library and Student Services, for sight of indicative learning resources.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor sign-off

11.10 The Course Proposer/ Leader, supported by the Course Administrator, should submit the final Course Consideration Panel documentation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor by an agreed date. This will be at least seven weeks before the Course Consideration Panel meeting.

11.11 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will review the final documentation to confirm that the course aligns with the University College's Course Design Framework and is of an appropriate standard to be submitted for external scrutiny. Any queries will be discussed with the Course Proposer/Leader as required.

11.12 Once satisfied, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will sign the documents accordingly. The Head of School should then forward the signed documentation to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) for onward transmission to Panel members. at least three weeks before the date of the Course Consideration Panel meeting.

12. Course Consideration Panel (detailed academic scrutiny)

12.1 The purpose of the Course Consideration Panel is to provide in-depth academic scrutiny of the proposed course or course under review to ensure that the proposed new course is of an appropriate academic standard and quality that befits an AECC University College award, and to provide an opportunity for constructive discussions and debate to enable enhancement of the course and the student learning experience.

12.2 Through this process the Panel will ensure that:

- the course aligns, or continues to align with key external frames of reference, including FHEQ Descriptors and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements) the UK Quality Code, and any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) requirements
- the course is designed in a way that addresses the requirements of the University College Course Design Framework,
- underpinning learning, teaching and assessment strategies, and course structure/content are aligned, academically coherent and intellectually challenging, and enable the provision of a high quality, inclusive learning experience, set at an appropriate level and

providing students with opportunities to gain relevant knowledge, skills and experience within the discipline area,

12.3 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.

Course Consideration Panel membership

12.4 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 internal panel members will have a good working knowledge of the Institution's Course Design Framework, quality assurance policies and of relevant external quality frameworks. In addition the person appointed as Chair will normally be a member of Academic Standards and Quality Committee, the Education Committee or Academic Board. The person appointed as Chair 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
- Two External Panel Members (one academic subject expert and one professional practitioner, or two academic subject experts) (nominated by the Course Proposer/Course Leader.

The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), will 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.

12.5 Internal academic staff members of the Panel will be identified by the Chair of ASQC in discussion with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and other colleagues as required.

12.6 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will submit the names of the proposed external and internal staff Panel members to ASQC for consideration and approval.

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

12.8 Guidance notes for Panel Chairs and Panel members are available on the SIP and are circulated to members with the documentation for scrutiny. Any members requiring further advice or information, or additional training, should consult the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

12.9 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

12.10 All documentation should be submitted electronically and will be made available to Course Consideration Panel members by the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) in the same way, unless there is a requirement for a reasonable adjustment under the 2010 Equality Act.

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

12.12 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 normally five working days before the Course Consideration Panel meeting, and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will collate responses for circulation to panel members.. 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

12.13 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) in consultation with the Chair will agree with the Framework/Course Proposer/Leader the nature of the engagement with the Course Consideration Panel and the length of meeting required.

12.14 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.

12.15 A standard Course Consideration Panel event schedule and agenda is normally used. The event schedule may be varied as required to facilitate participation by relevant staff and students; the Course Proposer/Course Leader should agree this with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), who will liaise with the Panel Chair.

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 ensure there is suitable representation from subjects included in the 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. Consideration of courses with a substantial distance learning element will normally include a demonstration of the online resources.

12.19 If required, the Course Administrator should make the logistical arrangements for the Panel meeting (room bookings, catering, parking etc.), travel/accommodation for External Panel Members.

12.20 The Course Administrator, working with the Course Proposer/Course Leader should make arrangements for staff and students to participate in the meetings with the Panel as required, and arrangements for any tours of facilities requested by the Panel.

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/Course 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and circulated to the Panel and the Course Proposer/Course 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/Course Leader and the relevant Head of School, normally within 10 working days.

13.7 The Course Proposer/Course 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) by the specified deadline. Where necessary, extensions may be sought through the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) in consultation with the Panel Chair.

13.8 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance).

13.10 Once formal approval is given the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will notify the Course Proposer/Course Leader, relevant Head of School, the Courses Office, Registry, Library and Learning Services, Finance and Marketing and Communications Team. The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will make clear whether an approved course remains subject to accreditation by a professional body.

13.11 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will ensure that the final Course Consideration Panel report is presented to ASQC for note. As part of this reporting process the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will also highlight to ASQC 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 ASQC 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 as set out in the Course and Unit Modification policy and procedures.

14.2 On receipt of notification of formal approval, final versions of the Course Specification(s) and Unit Specifications should be submitted to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) within two weeks. The definitive Word versions of the course and unit specifications are held in Registry.

14.3 The Course Leader/Proposer must provide a copy of the approved unit specifications still including the reading lists to the Library for reference (see the Reading list policy). Reading lists are provided to students in accordance with that policy.

14.4 Course Leaders must ensure that reading lists and links to resources to be published on the VLE are checked for currency and accuracy by the Library team before being made available to students.

14.5 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) is responsible for publication of the course specification on the University College website, the SIP (for staff) and the VLE (for students), and for saving unit specifications to the SIP.

14.6 The relevant Course Leader is responsible for publishing unit specifications to students through the VLE. Unit specifications for new and revised courses are made available to students one academic year at a time.

14.7 Together with the finalised course and unit specifications the above documentation the Course/ Framework Leader should submit to the Admissions Manager a definitive statement of additional costs the student will be required/recommended to meet to complete the course. This will be used to update any information already made available via the ‘ Prospectus and University College website.

Maintaining the definitive documents

14.8 The relevant Course Leader is responsible for ensuring that the definitive documents are appropriately maintained and for seeking consideration through the appropriate route (see 14.1 above) for any amendments required. Advice may be sought from the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)

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, Course Leaders, working with 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) or Academic Registrar.

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/Course Leader, with the support of Registry, 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 Course 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 Course Leader should discuss with the relevant Head of School appropriate mitigation in respect of those students who have not accepted the change. The Course Leader should then complete the CMA significant change form. The Course 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 Course 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, Registry 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 Course Leader should consult the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and the Chair of ASQC 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) will seek feedback from participants as an aid to evaluation and process improvement.

Version:	2.2
Approved by:	Academic Audit and Policy Committee/Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
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	30 June 2021
Effective from	September 2021
Review date	Spring 2023
Target	Framework/Course Leaders, Heads of Schools, Registry, members of Academic Standards 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, feeds back to HoS.

If Executive supports, HoS identifies Course Proposer (CP) to lead development and prepare documentation

CP undertakes planning/costings, in consultation. Completes New Course Proposal Form – strategic consideration/approval (NCPF)

CP submits NCPF 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 Vice-Chancellor signs form as Chair, returns to HoS

Signed NCPF Form submitted to ASQC

ASQC considers academic case for initial approval

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

Course Consideration Panel appointed and approved by ASQC.

CP designs and develops full course and associated documentation, in consultation, i**n line with the provisions of the Course Design Framework**

Course documentation circulated to **internal Scrutiny Group**

Scrutiny Group reviews documentation and feeds back

CP reviews and responds to Scrutiny Group feedback. Prepares revised documents and provides to Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Deputy Vice-Chancellor reviews, confirms documents may be circulated to Course Consideration Panel

Signed Documents e-mailed to Assistant Registrar (QA) 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

ASQC notes

Definitive documents finalised and published