

Quality & Standards Handbook

Chapter 6

Approval, monitoring and review of short courses

Process owner: Academic Policy & Quality Office
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1. Scope of this chapter

- 1.1 This chapter complements chapters 2, 3,4 and 5 of the Quality & Standards Handbook, and covers the following procedures in respect of short course provision:
- approval of new CPD/short courses **[sections 3-5]**
 - routine monitoring and periodic review of short courses **[section 6]**
- 1.2 This chapter is primarily focused on credit-bearing short course provision developed and delivered by Brookes staff (either on-campus or at other locations). Additional requirements relating to the approval, monitoring and review of courses delivered, assessed and/or supported through partnership arrangements with one or more other organisations are covered in **Chapter 5** of the Quality & Standards Handbook. The Faculty's link Quality Assurance Officer should be contacted for guidance on the process to be followed.
- 1.3 *Note on non-credit bearing short courses:* the approval of non-credit bearing short courses falls outside the scope of this chapter. However, for transparency and to ensure a good quality student experience, academic departments should follow similar processes to those set out below. It is up to the Faculty managing the provision to document the approval process (through Faculty AESC/QLICs), and the Faculty should maintain their own register of non-credit bearing provision. The Faculty should also ensure that certificates issued to students follow University guidance for a formal record of the achievement of attendance outside of a formal qualification (click on 'certificates' at <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/corporate-identity/word-templates/miscellaneous/#certificates>)

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Short courses (sometimes referred to as CPD courses) are defined at Brookes as courses leading to the award of less than 60 academic credits, at any level from level 4 to level 7, but which do not lead to a formal University qualification as defined in A1.1.2 of the University regulations. Programmes of study of 60 credits or more should be approved through the normal processes for the approval of programmes leading to University awards, as set out in **Chapter 2** of the Quality & Standards Handbook (or, for those delivered through partnership arrangements, **Chapter 5**).
- 2.2 Short courses are most commonly developed in response to a specific market or individual employer demand, but existing modules already approved within a Brookes programme may also be approved for marketing as individual short courses.
- 2.3 Students' access to Brookes learning resources should be equivalent to that of other students studying on an existing module, but, because of the nature of short courses, teams must ensure that access entitlements to other support services for students on these programmes are clear from the start (and factored into business cases). Early discussions with the Student Records & Curriculum

Management Team and the APQO, regarding the enrolment of students and access to learning resources and support services, are strongly recommended.

- 2.4** Short courses may lead to the award of a certificate of credit alongside the transcript, and may be made up of any number of modules totalling less than 60 academic credits. For single-module short courses, the title will be taken from the module title; and for multiple-module short courses, a title will be assigned during the development process and the title for the certificate (if issued) taken from the programme specification. Students should also be able to use credit from short courses towards a substantive award, either specified at the time of approval, or through the Open Award Scheme. Programme Leads should give due consideration to how students might use the credit gained on short courses.
- 2.5** Short courses are categorised on the student records system as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Level of course</i>	<i>Standard module size</i>
Undergraduate	4-6	15 credits
Postgraduate	7	20 credits

- 2.6** Although the University awards all credit, it is the Faculty's responsibility to produce the certificates and transcripts for short course provision if they are to be issued alongside the transcript – advice on format should be sought from the Registry. For short courses being offered in collaboration with a partner organisation, advice should be sought from the Communications Team (<https://www.brookes.ac.uk/marketing-and-communications/communications-team/>) on the design of the certificate, which should be agreed with the partner organisation prior to formal approval of the course.

3. Approval process

- 3.1** The approval process for credit-bearing short courses should enable the University to:
- respond in a timely fashion to the needs of the market a short course is designed for;
 - ensure that short courses are appropriately costed;
 - assure itself that appropriate academic standards are being set for all its credit-bearing provision.
- 3.2** As with proposals for new programmes of study leading to a substantive University qualification, initial development approval must also be sought for new short courses from the Faculty Executive Group - or other Faculty group with appropriate authority - as it is important that such provision is carefully costed in order to set appropriate tuition fees. LPAG approval must be sought for short courses delivered in partnership with another organisation.
- 3.3** The format of submissions will vary according to Faculty (or LPAG) requirements, but they should include the following minimum information:
- rationale for the development of the new programme;
 - the contribution of the new provision to the achievement of Faculty and University strategic objectives;
 - evidence of potential market demand, for all proposed modes of study;
 - business case, including costs of development and delivery; funding and fees (income) information; risk assessment; and
 - proposed staffing for the course.
- 3.4** Responsibility for the approval of short courses (home provision) is devolved to Faculty AESC/QLICs, supported by APQO through the Faculty's link Quality Assurance Officer. The approval process is managed by the Faculty AESC/QLIC (in some cases, via the quality sub-group) and the outcomes reported to University QLIC through the Faculty committee minutes.
- 3.5** The following documentation should be prepared for course approval:
- Part 1 of the approval report template (T6.1). This document provides the FAESC/QLIC, or approval panel sub-group, with information and evidence of:
 - a. the likely demand, course management arrangements, delivery arrangements and schedule, student support arrangements, learning resources (and access to them), staff delivering, mechanisms for student feedback, and information about the introduction of the course.

- b. whether the credit gained through the proposed short course can contribute to a higher award, together with any progression requirements.
 - c. evidence of externality, including (as a minimum) consultation with an external examiner on a cognate programme within the department or an independent external adviser, as appropriate.
 - d. student/stakeholder consultation (including with Directorates), as applicable.
- short course programme specification (T6.2) and module descriptors (using the standard University module descriptor template T2.8, available via Chapter 2 of the Quality & Standards Handbook) For single-module short courses, the single-module short course specification (T6.3) acts as both the programme specification and module descriptor;
 - handbook to be provided to students;
 - a sample of the certificate to be issued to successful students (see 2.6 above);
 - for collaborative provision, an operations manual governing the delivery arrangements.
- 3.6** The panel should also be provided electronically with relevant reference material, to provide context for the proposal (e.g. any PSRB standards that apply to the programme), plus guidance note G6.1, which sets out the approval criteria.
- 3.7** The documentation should be presented by the team for approval by the Faculty AESC/QLIC, or by a sub-group of the Faculty AESC/QLIC, as agreed between the course leader and the ADSE. Where a sub-group is convened, this must include the Chair and/or Faculty PL for Quality Assurance and Validation, the link QAO, and at least one academic representative from outside the proposing Department.
- 3.8** Where a cross-Faculty course or module is proposed, a “home” Faculty must be agreed to oversee the development, approval and ongoing management, monitoring and review processes. The meeting approving the proposal, be it the FAESC/QLIC or a sub-group, must include appropriate panel representation from each Faculty involved in the proposal.
- 3.9** Where a course is delivered substantially or wholly by distance learning, the FAESC/QLIC or sub-group panel will require a demonstration of the VLE for the course and of the learning materials.
- 4. Course approval criteria**
- 4.1** Before the FAESC/QLIC or its sub-group confers an approval decision, programme approval panels must gain evidence - from the documentation submitted and during discussions with the programme team - that the criteria set out in **guidance note G6.1** have been met, or may be met within a reasonable period from the panel event, such that conditional approval may be given.
- 5. Outcomes of approval**
- 5.1** The Faculty AESC/QLIC Secretary will prepare a short report, using the template for short course approval reports (T6.1). The report, once confirmed by the Chair (and members of the sub-group, if convened), will be considered by the Faculty AESC/QLIC (if approved by a sub-group) and by University QLIC.
- 5.2** Once any conditions of approval have been met to the satisfaction of the Chair of the Faculty AESC/QLIC, the completed report template and approved programme documentation must also be submitted to the APQO. The report and course documentation will also be provided to the Student Records & Curriculum Management Team, and Admissions.
- 6. Monitoring and review**
- 6.1** Teams will need to consider processes and arrangements for the continuing monitoring and review of courses, and information about these should be included on part 1 of the approval report template (T6.1).
- 6.2** *Feedback from students*
Arrangements must be in place for delivery teams to collect and respond to feedback from students as part of the continuous improvement of courses.

- 6.3** *Subject Committees*
Short courses must be overseen by an appropriate Subject Committee, normally as part of a group of cognate programmes.
- 6.4** *Annual Review*
Short courses are subject to the normal annual review process as described in **Chapter 3** of the Quality & Standards Handbook, and where possible should be reviewed as part of a group of cognate programmes.
- 6.5** *Internal moderation*
Arrangements should be in place for internal moderation, in line with the Faculty policy, and should be described in the student handbook.
- 6.6** *Examination Committees*
Short courses must be considered at an appropriate examination committee, normally as part of a group of cognate programmes.
- 6.7** *External examining*
Credit bearing short courses are subject to external moderation and should have an external examiner assigned, in order to assure the University of the standards of the award of credit being made. It would be normal for an external examiner to cover a number of short courses, or for the duties of an existing programme external examiner to be extended to include a new short course, as appropriate.
- 6.8** *Modifications*
Modifications to short course provision subsequent to approval should be processed through the normal procedures described in **Chapter 2** of the Quality & Standards Handbook. Modifications will normally be considered using the minor change process.
- 6.9** *Periodic review*
Short courses are subject to the normal periodic review process described in **Chapter 4** of the Quality & Standards Handbook, and should, where possible, be reviewed alongside a group of cognate programmes within the Department. The documentation required for periodic review is:
- a section in the evaluative statement for the provision under review on the operation and quality of the short course programme/s, drawing on evidence such as external examiner reports, student feedback, recruitment and achievement data, etc, and outlining any plans for changes to enhance the provision;
 - programme and/or module specifications.