

05.4

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR NON-CREDIT BEARING AND CREDIT BEARING SHORT COURSES

Principles

The principles followed for the development of Short Courses are the same as those for the validation of all other University provision.

The University has a duty to ensure that its responsibility for standards and quality are discharged effectively through its procedures for the design and approval of programmes and courses. In doing so, it seeks to ensure that due account is taken of:

- External reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements, national frameworks for Higher Education qualifications and, where appropriate, the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), employers and any relevant national legislation/national commitments to European and international processes
- The QAA Quality Code
- The compatibility of proposals and developments with University goals and mission
- Strategic academic and resource planning
- Existing provision within the University, including any awards that may be offered jointly with other UK institutions
- The level of risk involved in each approval/review and the optimal level of resource necessary to ensure that the required outcomes of the process are achieved

The University will not approve credit bearing short course proposals unless the associated School can identify a 'parent' cognate degree programme to act as a quality assurance anchor. As a condition of approval, the credit bearing short course will be reported on by the parent programme's External Examiner and will undergo annual monitoring and periodic review.

The University recognises the importance of external participation in the approval process for ensuring that short courses are designed, developed and approved in the light of independent advice and for ensuring both transparency of process and confirmation of standards. Such external participation is intended to provide assurance at various levels:

- To the team delivering the short course
- To the University itself in monitoring the independence and objectivity of decisions taken under its procedures
- To its students
- To any reviewers who may carry out reviews that are external to the University's own processes.

By way of the process described below, the University ensures that approval decisions are informed by full consideration of academic standards and of the appropriateness of the learning opportunities which will be offered to students, and that:

- The final decision to approve a programme or short course is taken by the academic authority, or body acting on its behalf (the Academic Quality and Standards Committee receiving recommendations from Portfolio Development Committee and the Quality Enhancement Directorate (QED)) that is independent of the academic department, or other unit that offers the programme or short course.
- There is a confirmation process, which demonstrates that the programme or course has responded to and acted upon all action points identified during the approval process.

The approval process and preparation of short course module specifications provides a stimulus to teaching teams to reflect on, clarify and better integrate the aims and intended outcomes of their course with its design and delivery. These specifications also satisfy a requirement for accountability.

Short course module specifications are a concise description of the intended learning outcomes, and the means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. Intended learning outcomes relate directly to the curriculum, study and assessment methods and criteria used to assess performance.

Definitions of Short Courses

A Short Course is a named programme of study made up of one or more modules that is being specifically marketed as a named Short Course.

Short Course examples:

- One, or a collection of new modules, given a specific title and having programme learning outcomes
- A collection of existing modules put together to form a named Short Course and having programme learning outcomes

Levels and Credit Ratings:

Short Courses may be credit bearing or non-credit bearing. Credit bearing Short Courses will be defined by:

- a specified number of credit points in multiples of 5, but not exceeding 60 credits at undergraduate level and 45 credits at postgraduate level, one credit point being equal to 10 notional learning hours;
- a specified level. This will match one of the levels identified in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ).

Non-credit bearing Short Courses may or may not be specified in this way. If not, they would normally be defined in terms of notional learning hours.

Process

Short Courses

The Short Course should be specified in the University standard format using the following templates and application form.

- Proposal Summary (Proforma 1)
- Module Specification Template (Proforma 2)
- Short Course Application Form (Proforma 3)

These are available in the Academic Handbook, Volume 2 Section 05.1 and can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH2_05_01.doc

Approval Process

The steps in the approval process are:

School Approval

The School Management and Planning Team should approve the Short Course application for submission to the Portfolio Development Committee particularly confirming that resources are available.

Approval of the Business Case

Proformas 1, 2 and 3 should be submitted to the QED for consideration by the Portfolio Development Committee, which critically reviews all proposals for academic development or divestment, including those relating to credit bearing short courses. PDC approval signifies that the full business case covering rationale, strategic fit, fees, market and resources has been agreed and that the outline academic case is sufficiently robust for the proposal to progress to QED scrutiny and AQSC approval.

AQSC Approval

If approved, PDC will refer the application to QED for academic validation.

QED will consider the academic merits of short course proposals referred to it by PDC. In relation to the latter, its remit includes considering the credit level and volume of the proposed short course, its aims and learning outcomes, its learning, teaching and assessment methods and indicative content and making a recommendation for approval to AQSC.

Short Courses require external ratification of the level and volume of credit, and of the coherency of the course. This will normally be done by the existing relevant subject External Examiner.

The minimum documents required for approval are:

- Short Course Application Form
- Module Specification Template
- Confirmation of External Examiner approval (if applicable)
- Confirmation of PSRB approval (if applicable)
- CVs of those delivering the short course where they are not University faculty

The documents noted above should be presented to QED at least 10 days before the PDC meeting date, to allow members time to fully consider the proposal.

Following PDC approval, QED may recommend approval of the proposal to Academic Quality and Standards Committee, reject it or ask for further work to be carried out. Where Short Courses include ethical issues requiring consideration, QED may refer such matters to the University's Ethics Committee prior to approval.

Once approval is given, the Committee Clerk will archive the documents and forward a copy to the Academic Registry for entry onto the Student Information System. Once this has been carried out, students can be registered.

Without full supporting documentation in electronic form, the short course proposal cannot be passed to the Academic Registry for processing.