APPROVAL AND REVISION OF TAUGHT MODULES AND PROGRAMMES HANDBOOK

Chapter 3 – Business Approval

3.   Business Approval

3.1   The Purpose of Business Approval

3.1.1 **Business Approval**: Is typically required for all new and significantly amended programmes (including non-award programmes). The purpose is to demonstrate a compelling business case for the planned activity and to provide professional services with technical information that they need to set up admissions; market the offering; arrange access to student finance; ensure compliance with legislation (e.g. immigration and consumer protection); and make statutory returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

3.1.2 **Strategic Approval**: Prior to submitting a programme for Business Approval, the strategic fit of the proposed programme **must** be considered by the Faculty. Strategic-level discussions will usually take place at the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee, Faculty Taught Portfolio Group or equivalent. In order to obtain strategic approval, please complete the First Approval Form - See ARTMAP Annex 5.

To support strategic-level decisions about the programme/s that will be submitted for Business Approval, Faculties **must** document as appropriate a preliminary assessment of market and delivery risks.

3.2   The Process of Business Approval

3.2.1 First, the Programme Director/Developer **must** consult the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQF) to check the following:

a.   The proposed award (e.g. BA, MEng) must be listed in the CQF. Where there is an intention to introduce a new type of award(s) type (including a new type of exit award), which is not already documented in the CQF, please contact the Programme Design and Quality Enhancement team (PDQE) who will work with Education Policy to establish the approval requirements for the necessary amendments, for example, to the TQA, University Regulations Governing Academic Programmes and University Ordinances. In such cases, the Programme Director/Developer must liaise with the

PDQE team in conjunction with the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF) process (see ARTMAP Annex 1). The PAAF will need to be fully signed prior to requesting approval for the new type of award/exit award. Recruitment/advertising cannot begin until the new type of award/exit award(s) has been fully approved. See Chapter 1, section 1.8 for more information.

b. In the case of a combined, major/minor, or triple honours programme, the title (e.g. English and Drama; Mathematics with Economics) **must** follow the conventions set out in the CQF.

c. The structure of the proposal **must** comply with the requirements stated in the CQF, with regard to the number of constituent credits and their RQF level.

d. The academic demands of the proposal **must** be consistent with the descriptor for the relevant RQF level, which is provided in the CQF.

e. Where there is a possibility that an exit/interim award might be conferred at a certain juncture (e.g. a Certificate of Higher Education after stage one of a Bachelor's degree), the programme up until that point **must** enable participants to meet the generic learning outcomes for the level of the exit/interim award, as defined in the CQF.

f. Any pre-requisites in the constituent modules of a programme **must not** prevent the student from pursuing a coherent course of study. If in doubt, the Programme Director/Developer **should** contact the relevant module convenors to establish if pre-requisites will be applied within the context of the proposed programme.

3.2.2 Next, the Programme Director/Developer (or nominee) **must** complete the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF), see ARTMAP Annex 1. During this process, the Programme Director/Developer **should** enlist the External Engagement and Global (EEG) Partner to advise on market insight, pricing, marketing and student recruitment. The EEG Partner will commission market insight projects into the Market Insight Team and consult with colleagues across the EEG Division as required to inform Faculty and Department decisions. Further information about the EEG support is available online at Marketing, Student Recruitment and Communications. Faculties may also consult appropriate colleagues, regarding the demand for the proposal and the potential to charge non-standard fees. The EEG **must** sign the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF) (see Annex 1) to confirm their approval.

3.2.3 The proposal will now undergo a bipartite process of scrutiny, as follows:

a.   **Operational Endorsement**: the completed Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF) (see Annex 1) **should** be signed by the Chair of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (or its nominated body). In signing the form they confirm that the proposal has been discussed and approved at a meeting of the Faculty and Student Experience Committee (or its nominated body). Where the proposal is to be jointly delivered by two or more Faculties, the respective figure in each Faculty **should** sign.

b.   **Executive Endorsement**: the completed Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF) (see Annex 1) **should** be signed by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean. In signing the form they confirm that the proposal has been discussed and approved at an executive level within the Faculty. Where the proposal is to be jointly delivered by two or more Faculties, the respective Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean in each Faculty **should** sign.

3.2.4 Signing of the verifies that the following points have been discussed and confirmed at both Executive and Operational level:

a.   The proposal is consistent with Faculty business plans.

b.   The fee level is appropriate.

c.   There is strong and sustainable demand for the proposal.

d.   There are adequate resources, which can and will be used to deliver the proposal to acceptable standards.

e.   The proposal compares favourably with competing offerings (including those within the University).

f.   The proposal is consistent with research activity within the Faculty.

3.2.5 To gain Operational Endorsement the completed Programme Approval or Amendment Form (PAAF) (see Annex 1) **should** be made available to members of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (or its nominated body), together with a finalised Module Descriptor in the case of a non-award programme.

3.2.6 Records **must** be collected, confirming all decisions made by the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (or its nominated body). These **must** be retained in Faculty for future reference.

3.2.7 Where the proposal involves an academic partnership, a senior officer from each partner institution must also sign the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1) to indicate approval.

3.2.8 At this point, the following documents must be submitted to the PDQE team for review and approval:

a.   A completed and signed Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1).

b.   A finalised Module Descriptor in the case of a non-award programme.

3.2.9 Where submissions have incomplete fields or missing signatures they will be returned to the lead Faculty for remedial action, prior to further processing.

3.3   Timings

3.3.1 In most instances, maximal exposure of the programme in University publicity materials will be important for recruitment. Therefore, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the PDQE team, documentation should be submitted in accordance with the following deadlines:

a.   Undergraduate: 25 November for offerings commencing 22 months hence, e.g. 25 November 2023 for an offering commencing in Autumn 2025.

b.   Postgraduate: 15 June for offerings commencing 15 months hence, e.g. 15 June 2024 for an offering commencing in Autumn 2025.

3.3.2 These dates ensure that the programme can be included in the appropriate printed prospectus and, for undergraduate offerings, the UCAS directory, which is finalised in early January for programmes commencing 21 months hence. It should be noted that in order to obtain all of the information required, work on some aspects of the Business Approval phase **should** be initiated well in advance of these deadlines (e.g. discussions between Faculty Marketing Managers and their colleagues in Marketing and Finance to establish the appropriate level of any non-standard fees).

3.3.3 Postgraduate programmes, which miss the 15 June deadline, will be included in the more frequently updated online prospectus, once Business Approval is completed.

3.3.4 In appropriate circumstances, the process of approving a new programme can depart from the timelines stated above and as outlined in the Chapter 4 Academic Approval within section 4.4.3, and be completed more quickly. For instance, where a programme has identified a ready-made market (e.g. National Health Service professionals), inclusion in the University prospectus and/or UCAS listings may not be

critical to successful recruitment. Where Faculties are handling a programme of this nature, they **should** seek guidance from the PDQE team at the earliest opportunity. In addition, they **should** use the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1) to articulate what alternative means will be used to ensure successful recruitment.

3.3.5 In all instances, Faculties **should** seek to finalise the start date of a programme by the following deadline:

Undergraduate and Postgraduate: 25 November in the preceding academic year.

3.3.6 Where the finalised start date differs from that specified on the original Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1), the lead Faculty should contact Student Records immediately. Amending the start date after the 25 November deadline can create problems for students, in terms of accessing student loans and gaining visas.

3.4   Actions Following Submission of Business Approval

3.4.1 Once the PDQE team receives the Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1) they will liaise with Planning, Admissions, Student Records and Finance Services, for further processing. The University Education Board / PGR Board for Professional Doctorates will also be informed that the programme is scheduled for delivery.

3.4.2 At this point, Business Approval is considered complete. Faculties and professional services may proceed with detailed academic planning, advertising and recruitment. Partner institutions may proceed similarly, although any publicity materials **should** be approved by the University of Exeter prior to advertisement and/or recruitment. (Please also see section 3.2 regarding an exception for programmes where a new award type is required – full Business Approval is not secured until the award type has also been approved).

3.4.3 Completion of Business Approval signifies that the University is committed to offering the programme from the date indicated.

3.4.4 The process of recruitment normally places a contractual obligation on the Faculty/Faculties and University to run the programme. It is important to note, however, that until Academic Approval is complete applicants cannot register for the programme and **should not**, therefore, attend scheduled sessions or any placement.

3.4.5 Faculties **should** avoid altering the name of the programme between Business Approval and subsequent phases. This could negatively impact upon recruitment as the initial name may have been used in marketing activities.

3.4.6 Once complete, Business Approval is valid for 24 months. During this time the Full Approval Process **should** be completed. After 24 months fresh Business Approval **may** be requested, in recognition that the prevailing market and resources could have changed.

3.4.7 Where a Programme Approval or Amendment Form (see Annex 1) has already been submitted to the PDQE team and the lead Faculty becomes aware that corrections are needed, a new version **should not** be submitted. Rather, a summary of the deviations **must** be sent to the PDQE team, along with documentary evidence (e.g. an email) showing the approval of the Chair of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (or its nominated body) along with any other useful supporting documentation (this may include revised programme specifications, module descriptors etc. Please contact the PQDE team for further guidance). Where the changes are deemed to constitute a fundamental departure from the original proposal the PDQE team **may** request that a new Programme Approval or Amendment Form be prepared.

3.4.8 On occasions, Faculties may need to change the title or status (interruption/withdrawal) of a programme that has been granted Business Approval but which is yet to receive Faculty and/or Academic Approval, or has not welcomed a first cohort of participants. In these instances, Faculties **should** follow the standard procedures laid down in Chapter 6 Faculty Management of Programme and Module Information. Failure to do so could mean that the programme continues to be advertised and to accept applications on an inaccurate basis.