Owner:	Academic Quality
Version number:	5.3
Effective date:	May 2021
Date of last review:	May 2021

This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

4C – Panel Members for Programme Approval, Review and Closure: Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

1.1 This procedure provides panel members with background information to Bournemouth University's (BU) programme approval, review and closure processes. It outlines what the purpose of a programme approval or review is, the composition of the panel, the documentation which will be provided, matters to be considered by the panel and the possible outcomes. A*ide-mémoires* for panel members are also provided.

1.2 BU uses the term 'evaluation' to refer to the formal approval process which all academic programmes are subject to prior to delivery and at periodic stages in the life of a programme. A panel is convened to consider the approval of all new programmes, the periodic review of existing programmes (normally at six-year intervals), the closure of programmes and the approval of existing programmes at alternative delivery location(s).

1.3 The programme approval and review process at BU is overseen by Committee. The final stage of the process, and the stage in which you have been invited to participate, is the consideration of the proposed programme(s) by a panel comprised of independent members drawn from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) at BU, external subject specialists and a representative from the student body. This panel will make recommendations to Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) on the approval and/or continuing approval of the programmes(s) being considered.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 **Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC):** to approve new and revised processes and procedures by exception.

2.2 **Academic Quality:** to ensure an appropriate panel comprising of independent BU members and external subject experts is convened for each approval/review meeting held.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

3.1 All documents can be accessed here

3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are

- 2A - Awards of the University: Policy
- 2B - Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics Policy

- Aide-mémoire for panel meetings
- Aide-mémoire for panel members
- External Panel indicative agenda

4. PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME APPROVAL/REVIEW EXTERNAL PANEL MEETING

4.1 The purpose of the External Panel meeting is to:

- assure the University that the academic standards set for and achieved by students are or continue to be appropriate and secure;
- assure the University that the quality of learning opportunities provided for students are or continue to be appropriate;
- ensure alignment with external frames of reference;
- discuss curriculum design and structure;
- discuss subject content at programme and unit level;
- ensure intended learning outcomes can be achieved by students;
- discuss teaching, learning and assessment strategies;
- ensure the programme(s) are or remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice in the subject area and developments in learning and teaching;
- ensure a high-quality and valuable educational experience for the students;
- discuss student support and guidance;
- ensure appropriate subject level resources for delivery at the proposed location(s);
- consider Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements or involve PSRBs as appropriate.

In addition for programme reviews to:

- consider feedback on the experience of delivering the programme(s) to date and the views of students/graduates;
- evaluate the operation and performance of the programme against its aims and objectives.

4.2 In addition, panels scrutinising Postgraduate Research provision would wish to assure themselves of the following:

- that BU will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree programmes;
- that the Faculty/Doctoral College will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high quality research is occurring;
- that the Faculty has effective and adequate human and physical resources and the University has appropriate systems for quality assurance;
- that the Faculty's/Doctoral College's research activity is of an appropriate quality and standard to support research at doctorate level;
- that systems in place to monitor, support and review student progress and obtain student feedback are appropriate and that appropriate student support is in place;
- that the academic staff who supervise and manage research degree programmes are sufficient in number and quality;
- that the resources available or proposed, including library, IT and research facilities, are adequate in extent and quality.

4.3 The level of scrutiny required by the panel will depend on the scope of each proposal and may also include one or more of the following additional aspects:

- review for closure (including individual programmes and/or delivery location);
- approval of credit bearing short courses.

5. PANEL COMPOSITION AND ROLES

5.1 A programme approval and review panel will normally comprise:

- at least one, but normally two internal and independent panel members from QAEG (one of whom will chair the meeting);
- at least one or more academic subject experts independent of the University;
- an independent panel member from industry or professional practitioner from the relevant field (a requirement for all Foundation degree evaluation events);
- PSRB representative(s) if appropriate;
- an independent representative from the student body;
- a representative from Academic Quality, who co-ordinates the meeting and is the main point of contact between the parties involved.

5.2 Panel roles are broadly as follows:

- **internal panel members** focus on generic issues of academic standards and quality including additional BU requirements;
- **academic independent experts** focus on programme content and generic issues of academic standards and quality;
- **Industry** or **professional practice panel members** focus on vocational/professional aspects of the programme(s);
- **the student panel member** focuses on the student experience;
- the Academic Quality representative co-ordinates the meeting, provides advice on BU policy, procedures, regulations and matters relating to quality assurance and academic standards, and produces a report.

The Aide-mémoire for panel members provides further information on the roles of panel members.

5.3 The membership of a programme closure panel will normally comprise one academic independent panel member from QAEG (who will chair the meeting), with support provided by a representative from Academic Quality.

6. DOCUMENTATION

6.1 The panel will receive electronic copies of the documentation prepared by the programme team at least ten days before the meeting. Panel members are encouraged to provide initial feedback and agenda items in advance to Academic Quality. The documentation will normally comprise of the following:

Briefing and Resources document:

- outlines the scope of the programme(s) and the context;
- demonstrates that the programme(s) have been designed in line with current internal and external frames of reference;
- outlines the resources available to support the programme(s);
- *For new approvals*:
  - provides information on the market research undertaken and the summary of the market findings;
  - provides a rationale for the major features of the proposal;
- *For periodic reviews*:
  - evaluates the delivery of the programme(s) and demonstrates if and why changes are proposed based on the accumulative Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) since the last approval/review and any new market research;
  - provides an overview of the major changes proposed and a rationale for changes being made.

Programme Specification(s): is the defining document for each programme approved by BU and as such defines:

- aims;
- intended learning outcomes (ILOs);
- structure;
- credits;
- regulations;
- institutions participating;
- awards that may be conferred.

Unit Specifications: define a unit of study in terms of:

- aims;
- intended learning outcomes (ILOs);
- content;
- learning, teaching and assessment methods;
- learning resources.

Occasionally, units presented may already be in approval as part of another programme. In such instances 'common' units will be clearly identified for the panel. The panel should scrutinise the coherence and relevance of the 'common' unit within the proposed programme(s), but should note that changes to these units are not normally permitted. If the panel is concerned about the inclusion of a 'common' unit, a discussion will take place during the meeting and a decision made on the action to be taken.

Placement Handbook: for all programmes with a placement component, including professional practice placement to outline the operational details.

Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (AMER) (for periodic reviews)**:** key aspects of the latest AMER including a programme action plan, department summary and external examiner(s) report[1].

7. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY A PANEL

7.1 Prior to meeting with the programme/development team, the panel meets to identify issues for discussion and to set an agenda following the External Panel indicative agenda. The agenda is used to focus on the scrutiny of academic quality and standards, and the professional relevance of the programme. The programme/development team leader and the Head of School are invited to observe the agenda setting meeting, but the panel may request a private meeting if it wishes.

7.2 During the External Panel meeting, the panel will normally:

- have a demonstration of online learning resources and/or a tour of resources;
- meet with current students and graduates for periodic reviews of programme(s) – see Aide-mémoire for Panel meetings;
- meet with employers linked to the delivery of foundation degrees – see Aide-mémoire for Panel meetings;
- meet with members of the programme/development team.

Members of the programme/development team are not normally present during the panel's meetings with students and employers.

[1] *Previously referred to as the Annual Review of Continuous Monitoring (ARCM)*

7.3 In order to assure the University that the academic standards set for and achieved by students are/remain appropriate and secure and the quality of learning opportunities provided for students are/remain appropriate, the panel will ask questions based on scrutiny of the documentation and matters raised during the meetings. The following points may also be helpful prompts for the panel when reading the documents:

- **programme and unit aims:** clear, relevant and coherent;
- **programme and unit intended learning outcomes:** clear, relevant and coherent, appropriately match the aims, aligned with the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part A* and other external frames of reference;
- **entry requirements:** appropriate for the subject area;
- **learning and teaching strategies:** appropriate in the context of the aims and intended learning outcomes;
- **flexible delivery:** incorporated where appropriate;
- **work-based learning:** integrated where appropriate;
- **personal development planning:** appropriate and includes employability;
- **assessment strategy:** appropriate and supports effective and secure assessment practice;
- **student experience:** programme(s) provides a stimulating student experience;
- **subject matter:** programme(s) cover an appropriate range of subject matter at appropriate level(s);
- **current developments in the professional/industrial context:** have been considered;
- **programme delivery:** programme team has the ability, knowledge and experience necessary to deliver and assess the programme(s);
- **staff development strategy:** in place to enhance the staffing expertise;
- **management:** programme will be appropriately managed;
- **monitoring:** adequate arrangements for obtaining student feedback;
- **programme resources:** sufficient and appropriate for effective delivery;
- **progression route(s):** appropriate (mandatory for foundation degrees);
- **PSRB requirements:** have been adhered to.

In addition for programme(s) delivered at a Partner:

- **management and quality assurance of the partnership model:** ensure the programme meets BU requirements;
- **student learning experience:** equivalent (though not necessarily identical) learning experience to campus-based students;
- **recruitment, assessment and the determination of awards:** mechanisms in place to assure the comparability of academic standards;
- **appropriately qualified staff:** Partner can provide, on a sustainable basis, a team of qualified staff with appropriate workloads, support mechanisms and development strategies in place;
- **for the approval of Level 6 and 7 programmes:** staff must demonstrate knowledge and expertise of the subject at least one level higher than they are teaching; hold or studying for appropriate teaching qualifications; peer observation of HE teaching should be in place; sufficient staff capacity for supervision should be in place; staff should be actively engaged in scholarly activity; Partner should be committed to ongoing staff development for staff teaching on HE programmes.

7.4 **Existing programmes at a new Partner or new site of delivery:** panel members should be aware that in these instances, the curriculum and structure has already been approved and this purpose of this panel is to consider matters surrounding **delivery** and **resources**. The following points may be helpful prompts for the panel when reading the documents:

- **programme delivery:** programme team has the ability, knowledge and experience necessary to deliver and assess the programme(s);
- **staff development strategy:** in place to enhance the staffing expertise;
- **management:** programme will be appropriately managed;
- **monitoring:** adequate arrangements for obtaining student feedback;

- **programme resources:** sufficient and appropriate for effective delivery.

8. EXTERNAL PANEL MEETING OUTCOMES

8.1 The panel will hold a private meeting to agree conclusions and formulate a set of outcomes. A member of the team may observe this meeting at the discretion of the panel.

8.2 The outcomes will include aspects of good practice and strengths of the provision as well as a judgment on approval. The outcome will take one of the following forms:

- recommend unconditional approval, subject to normal periodic review;
- recommend approval subject to conditions and/or recommendations and subject to normal periodic review;
- recommend approval for a limited period only with or without conditions and/or recommendations, after which a review will be held;
- recommend that approval be withheld. Although this is a possible outcome, such a decision would normally have been reached at an earlier stage.

8.3 When agreeing the outcomes the panel should consider the following:

For all programmes:

- the provision is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice in the subject area, and developments in learning and teaching;
- the provision will provide a valuable learning experience for students;

For reviews of existing programmes:

- the learning outcomes are being achieved by students;
- quality and standards are being maintained;
- delivery of the programme is appropriate.

8.4 **Approval periods:**

- maximum period of approval for new and current programmes is six years;
- maximum period of approval for programmes delivered by a new Partner is three years;
- a shorter period of approval may be specified in some instances, such as:
  - limited confidence in aspects of the provision;
  - to co-ordinate with the period of approval of the PSRB or other related provision in the Faculty;
  - to prompt a review of innovative provision to enable good practice to be shared.

8.5 The panel's conclusions will be reported to the team for information and action at the end of the External Panel meeting. Areas of good practice will be highlighted for wider dissemination across the Faculty. Academic Quality will circulate the written outcomes following the meeting and a written report of the meeting, normally within two weeks, which will record the process, debate and outcomes. The report will be circulated to the panel and the Faculty/Partner for comment on matters of fact and accuracy.

8.6 Where conditions of approval are set, the panel will state the timescale for a response from the team. This is usually two weeks from the date of the meeting. The team will be required to provide a written submission to the panel, via Academic Quality, detailing their response to both conditions and recommendations. All conditions must be satisfactorily met before the programme can be delivered and advertised. Recommendations can be adopted before the start of the programme or considered over a longer time period. Responses to recommendations will be formally incorporated into the annual monitoring process through the continuous action plan so that programme teams can continue to consider the points raised and action or close them off as appropriate. PSRB approval or accreditation may be granted

through a joint conditions process or it may be completed separately from the University's academic award.

8.7 The outcomes and confirmation of completion of the programme approval or review, once any conditions have been met, will be reported to Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC)

8.8 Once approved, all University programmes are subject to regular monitoring, reported annually in the AMER, and subject to periodic review.

General

9. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

9.1 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018).

9.2 This policy was reviewed according to the University's *Equality Analysis Procedure* in June 2019.