

Procedure 2.7 Programme design and approval

1 Programme approval

The Academic and Advisory Board scrutinises all new programme or course proposals and make recommendations to the Board of Governance about their approval. No programme or course can be offered at the Academy until it has been approved by the awarding body. For programmes with distinct vocational objectives, the views of prospective industry partners should also be sought

2 Programme specification

The programme specification is included in the Programme Handbooks. The specification should provide a summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. (See Part A of the *UK Quality Code* for more guidance about programme specifications)

3 Requirements for programme design

In designing programmes, and prior to the completion of the briefing document, consideration should be given to the following factors:

- the educational aims of the programme, including its intended learning outcomes and how these will be communicated to students, staff and external audiences
- the viability of offering the proposed programme based on projected student numbers and the resources available, taking into account the extent to which comparable provision in the subject area already exists and the anticipated student demand. In addition, consideration should be given to how the proposed programme complements the departmental and Academy goals and mission
- the curriculum structure and the proposed length of the programme, as applicable to both full and part-time students, and the modes and criteria of assessment for each component of the programme and how these fit with Academy regulations
- the overall coherence and integrity of the programme [in terms of how the components link together to meet its purpose and objectives]
- as applicable, the entrance requirements, including both acceptable and unacceptable qualifications and experience
- the draft regulations for the programme, including whether any courses have pre-requisites, which courses must be passed, assessment rules and Scheme of Award
- the means by which the programme will be reviewed
- the programme's position in relation to external reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements, qualifications frameworks, and, where appropriate, the

requirements of professional and statutory bodies and employers (see Chapter A1 of the *UK Quality Code*)

4 Statement of aims and learning outcomes

The aims of a programme of study can be defined most simply and directly as the rationale which motivated the original design of the programme. Learning outcomes can be defined as a statement of the range of knowledge and abilities which a student may be expected to have acquired by the time of completing the programme. Learning outcomes should be clear and explicit and defined, where possible, in terms of key skills.

In defining a programme's aims and learning outcomes, consideration should be given to the level and the title of the final award. As appropriate, the learning outcomes should also be defined in terms of external reference points (ie. subject benchmark statements and the appropriate qualifications framework)

5 Definition of entrance requirements at undergraduate and postgraduate level

The entrance requirements for a programme should be defined in terms of its aims and learning outcomes. They should be drawn up on the basis of what qualifications and/or experience a student needs to achieve well on a programme without undue difficulty.

For each taught postgraduate level programme, the entrance requirements should be framed in terms both of acceptable entrance qualifications (including acceptable professional experience/qualifications) and of unacceptable entrance qualifications. The Academy must make clear what type and level of experience is acceptable, and the minimum length of acceptable experience. FHEQ level descriptors may be helpful.

6 Definition of programme component

Each component should have a clearly defined syllabus and assessment methodology. All components should normally present an equal workload to the student, and the value of a component should be related to the proposed workload. The notional teaching time allocated to each element of the component should also be defined (number of lectures, number of field course hours, etc.)

Where the aims and learning objectives for the programme require a greater proportion of components in common with undergraduate level programmes, the justification for the requirement must be clearly stated at the time that the programme proposal is submitted.

For each programme it should be made clear which components are regarded as the mandatory core, the pathways that are permissible through the optional courses on offer, and what pathways are prohibited in order to maintain the overall coherence of the programme. The progression requirements, and consequences of failure in any component, should also be considered.

7 Assessment

Detail should be provided on the briefing document of the weighting and form of assessment for each programme component and when the assessment will take place in the structure of the programme.

Programme components should include a component of continuous assessment either as homework problems, essays, associated practical or fieldwork, and this should be included as part of the final assessment of performance in the unit. In general, a course unit should not be assessed only on the results of unseen examinations.

Discussion sessions, problem-solving classes, oral presentation of work, teamwork, source material searches, etc., are all examples of active learning strategies, which should be included in programme design where appropriate.

Any strategy which involves students furthering their own education by discovery of new facts, methods or skills, thereby developing independent learning skills, should be included as an integral part of the programme where possible.

8 Scheme of award

There must be a published Scheme of Award for every programme, delivered by the Academy.

9 Regular review, internal and external

Undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes should be reviewed annually within the Department as per the Academy Course Quality Review Cycle. There will be one report for undergraduate level and one report for postgraduate level programmes.

10 Regulations and information

The design and structure of programmes and programme components fall under the general regulations of the relevant awarding bodies

Pedagogic matters concerning the design and structure of programmes and programme components should be referred to the Academic Head, Academic and Advisory Board and Quality Committee. Matters concerning programme or programme component regulations should be referred to the Head of Academics, Academic and Advisory Board and Quality Committee.