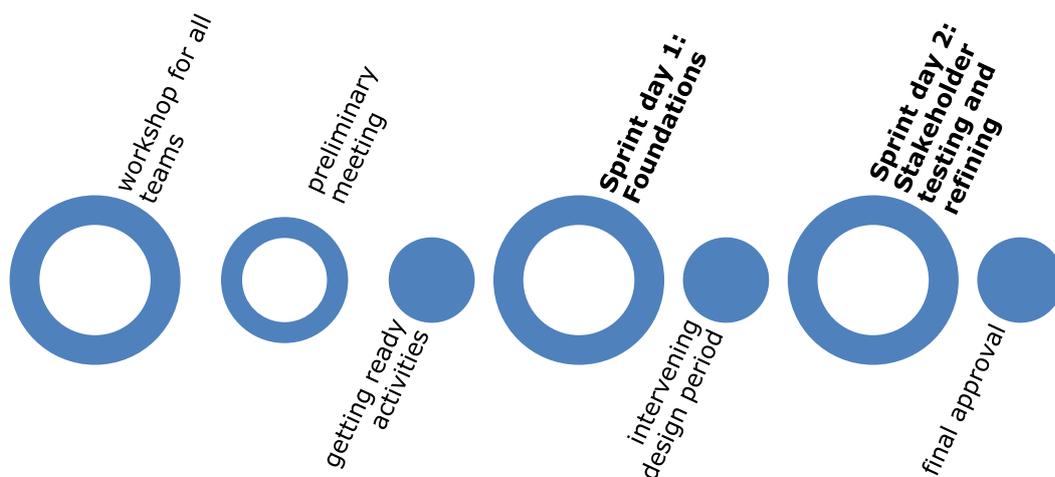# Operation of Design Sprints: Guidance On Process

1. Introduction

The new vision for course design at NTU is of a collaborative and supportive process with the course team firmly at its centre. Time is allocated to the design phase and a number of individuals support that phase with their expertise, rather than providing separate advice and scrutiny. Academic approval is built into the activity with completion of specific tasks, rather than a separate exercise. Business approval takes place alongside academic approval.

Above all, the course team is given capacity to consider innovation, to develop their USP, and to deliver on the strategic aims of an NTU education.

2. Outline of process

There are six key stages to the process which are described in the diagram below:

workshop for all teams

preliminary meeting

getting ready activities

Sprint day 1: Foundations

intervening design period

Sprint day 2: Stakeholder testing and refining

final approval

Throughout the process, the course team is supported by members of CADQ.

Prior to the preparatory work starting there are two important events that at least the course leader (or proposed course leader) should attend. The first is a workshop which is convened for all course leaders who will be taking part in a sprint during the forthcoming academic year. This workshop will introduce the process and explain what we are trying to achieve and how we will do this. The workshop also provides an opportunity for colleagues to ask questions, look at the resources that will be used and start to think about the preparatory work that needs to be completed. The second event is the preliminary meeting between the facilitator and some members of the design team (see below). The purpose of this meeting is twofold: First, it is to confirm timeframes and dates, attendees and other general operational aspects of the process, all of which will ensure things move smoothly and we have the right people in the room at the right time. Second, it is to share some background about the proposal and discuss ways of ensuring the preparatory work gets completed.

An important aspect of the course design process is that information that is agreed during the sprint days gets recorded in the course database (or equivalent, whilst this is still in development) as the days progress. This means that the amount of documentation the course team has to produce is significantly less than has previously been the case. This ongoing submission of information into the database means that by the end of Sprint day 2, a substantial proportion of information required for the University to give final approval to go forward for implementation and delivery will already have been provided. Any outstanding fields will be required to be completed within an agreed timeframe. Final approval will be made on the basis of this completed information.

3. Summary of Activity

The following table provides an overview of the key features of each of the design stages of the model. Details of the specific activities associated with each stage is provided in a later section of this document.

Introductory workshop for all course leaders	
Purpose:	To introduce participants to NTU's approach to course design and approval and to provide an indication of the things that they will need to be thinking about in order to ensure a successful outcome.
Who is involved:	CADQ will facilitate the workshop and there will be representation from both the Quality Management Team and the Educational Development Team. As a minimum, the course leader (or intended course leader) for the new/revised course should attend. Further members from the course team, or the department may also find it useful to attend (depending on total numbers and room constraints).
What happens:	There will be a short presentation about the process and what participants can expect to happen before, during and after the Design Sprint days.

	The rest of the time will be used for a facilitated workshop to discuss the activities that will happen during the Sprint days and explore the best ways of preparing.
Timeframe:	1-2 hours
Outputs:	Course leaders should leave with a good understanding of the process and a clear set of actions in relation to getting the course team ready.

Preliminary meeting	
Purpose:	The preliminary meeting has the following main areas of focus: 1. For the course team to share some background about the proposal. 2. To talk through the expectations regarding the preparatory work and to discuss ways of ensuring that this gets completed. 3. To confirm who will be attending for the Sprint days from the course team.
Who is involved:	The facilitator will lead the meeting. Relevant people from the course team should attend along with the course sponsor. Also, present will be members of the Quality Management Team, the Educational Development Team of CADQ and Flex Team.
What happens:	This is a relatively informal meeting which follows an agenda in line with the purposes indicated above.
Timeframe:	1-1.5 hours
Outputs:	By the end of the meeting, the course team will be clear about what work needs doing next and will have begun to have some thoughts about how this will be achieved.

Getting ready activities: Vision	
Purpose:	The primary purpose of the getting ready activities is to ensure that participants arrive at Sprint day 1 with a shared understanding of what they are planning to achieve. This will help ensure a good outcome of the Sprint. This part of the process is about agreeing a vision for the course and articulating this, so it provides a foundation for the design work which takes place during Sprint day 1.
Who is involved:	The getting ready activities are primarily undertaken by the course team, although the Sprint co-ordinator will be on hand to provide guidance. It is up to the course/department/School to determine who gets involved at this stage. At the very least, all course team members of the design team should play a part.

What happens:	The course team works through a set of activities which prompt discussion about the broad aims of the course. Specifically, course teams are asked to reflect on:
	1. **Why** the course is being proposed. What is its 'USP'?
	2. **Who** the students will be when they start, who they will be when they graduate and what does this mean for course design?
	3. **What** preparatory reading/research will need to be done?
	4. **How** will the course team ensure the Design Sprint is effective?
	How this is achieved is up to the course/department/School, but it is strongly advised that face-to-face discussion within a workshop setting is prioritised.
	It is also expected that attendees familiarise themselves with key readings in advance of undertaking the getting ready activities.
Timeframe:	This will vary according to how early the course team want to get started. The output of this work will need to be recorded at the very least one week in advance of Sprint day 1. Failure to do so will lead to the Sprint day being postponed.
Outputs:	As the course team proceed with the activities, decisions they make will be recorded in the interim database (this will be an online tool which will be incorporated in the Course Database at a later date).

Design Sprint day 1: Foundations

Purpose:	Sprint day 1 is the key design event which results in a broad framework of the course: intended learning, learning, teaching and assessment strategy and contributing modules. This provides a 'blueprint' from which further refinements are made, detailed costings calculated, and initial assumptions tested.
Who is involved:	The Design sprint is a facilitator-led workshop which takes participants through a set of stages designed to support their decision-making. It is important that all the members of the design team are available for the full two days, as dipping in and out is disturbing and disrupts the momentum of the session (with the exception of the academic colleague from another School).
	Members of the design team are as follows:
	• Sprint facilitator: from the School
	• Sprint co-ordinator: from CADQ
	• Educational developer: from CADQ
	• Course leader/sponsor
	• Core module leads (max 6) with expertise in key areas of course design (to include, at least: Learning and Teaching, Assessment, Employability)

	• A student (or alumnus) from a cognate discipline, where possible [the school will source and pay for any costs with a student or alumnus participating in the design sprint] • An academic colleague from another School (SL or PL with expertise in learning and teaching, CADQ will source this colleague) • School Employability Manager • FlexNTU learning designer Additional attendees will be invited for specific parts of the day, depending on the particular requirements of the course. These will have been agreed in advance at the planning meeting, and may include: • Quality management team experts • Apprenticeship team member • Employer(s) • Additional student(s) • Representative from PSRB(s)
What happens:	The facilitator takes the participants through a series of activities designed to prompt discussion and decision about the design of the course. Specifically, the focus areas are: 1. Intended learning 2. The learning experience 3. Sequencing learning 4. Assessment strategy 5. Module planning 'Sense checking' points are built in throughout the day to ensure coherent and consistent decision making.
Timeframe:	Sprint day 1 is a full-day: 10.00am – 4.00pm.
Outputs:	By the end of Sprint day 1, the participants will have completed a full map of the student journey through the course. This will include the different ways students will learn and be assessed and will provide an indication of the credit size and structure of the contributing modules. The main output will be a student journey storyboard, which includes the pattern of module delivery. Draft entries into the Course Database (or interim database, prior to Spring 2022) will be focused on: • Confirmed course title • Draft learning outcomes (will be refined during the intervening design period) and a course description • The course's approach to learning, teaching and assessment • The relevant subject benchmark statement
Intervening design period: Course Development and Viability Check	

Purpose:	The intervening period has three purposes:
	1. To check the viability of the proposal
	2. To complete further design of the course
	3. To confirm the Stakeholders who will be invited to Sprint Day 2 to test the proposal.
Who is involved:	It will be up to the course team/department/School to determine who from the School is involved in the intervening design period and how the School will support this.
	The sprint co-ordinator will check in with the course team once a week during this period.
What happens:	**Viability check**
	Prior to Spring 2022, the viability check process will involve reviewing the **completed full business case**. School Executive teams (or equivalent) should have an oversight of the course design and ensure the decisions made are viable and there is sufficient resourcing.
	There is an opportunity to consult with other stakeholders about the viability and practicality of the proposals.
	Other stakeholders include:
	• School Marketing
	• Estates
	• Business Planning Partners
	• Market Research and Insight
	• Student Support Services
	• Library and Learning Resources
	• Registry
	• Subject admin
	• Technical teams
	After Spring 2022, the viability check will take place through CourseLoop. Details to be confirmed.
	Further course design
	Building on the outputs from Sprint day 1, the course team will agree, and enter onto the course database where appropriate:
	1. Course learning outcomes
	2. Initial module design (credit structure, teaching and learning, contact/non-contact time, assessment)
	3. Assessment and feedback plan
	4. A curriculum map
	5. A two minute elevator pitch within a 10-20 minute talk about the course (this should include how we've got to this point, why decisions have been made)

	Student/alumni selection and invitation
	The course team (with guidance from CADQ) will determine which stakeholders from the student body will be invited to Sprint Day 2.
Timeframe:	Between 2-4 weeks, depending on the type of course.

Design Sprint day 2: Stakeholder Testing and Refining

Purpose:	The main aim of Sprint day 2 is to test the design proposal with key stakeholders. Time is also provided to refine some of the decisions made in day 1 in relation to course learning outcomes and the student journey.
Who is involved:	The design team from Sprint day 1 must be present with the exception of the academic colleague from another School. Stakeholders will be invited to 'test' the proposal. These will include: • Academic colleague from another institution, preferably with industry expertise, or an employer from the industry if this is deemed more appropriate as agreed with CADQ [CADQ will pay the costs associated with this stakeholder attending the event] • Student [CADQ will source and pay the costs associated with this stakeholder attending the event] • Representative from PSRB(s) • Representatives from Professional Services (as required) • A senior member of the School (for example, Deputy Dean, School Quality Manager) and Head of Department
What happens:	The course team will present the student journey to the stakeholders. This includes how the course team has got to this point - making clear in advance to stakeholders the outputs of the first Sprint day and the steps and decisions made to get to the course design we have today. The team is encouraged to think about a student's journey through a day of the course and through the lifetime of the course: from the point at which an offer is made, through to post-graduation activity. This will include the additional artefacts created between the Sprint days and will start with a 2 minute elevator pitch within a 10-20 minute talk about the course. After this, there will be an opportunity for the course team to identify areas/questions they would value stakeholders' experience/input/thoughts on. A short reflection period is incorporated in advance of a facilitated walk-through of the student journey with different stakeholder groups. The foci for this testing will be: 1. Alignment to NTU expectations for curriculum design and learning and teaching, including the curriculum refresh framework, flexibility, active learning, employability and innovation.

	2. The student experience, particularly in terms of personalisation, support and a sense of community 3. Course resilience over the longer term 4. Commitment to student/staff collaboration The role of the student/s who are present will be primarily to test the proposal using a range of different pre-prepared student 'personas' as defined during the preparatory work. The afternoon is spent refining the proposal on the back of this stakeholder feedback and completing key fields in the course database (or equivalent temporary arrangement). This will also include final module design. Participants work in small groups to achieve these ends. Final agreement to approve in principle will be made at the end of the day.
Timeframe:	Sprint day 2 is a full-day: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Stakeholders will only be required for the morning session.
Outputs:	The artefacts that will have been refined and completed by the end of Sprint day 2 will be: 1. An assessment and feedback plan 2. Confirmed details about the course's innovative features (the USP) Required input to the course database during the day will be: 1. Finalised elevator pitch 2. Confirmed learning outcomes
Final approval	
Purpose:	For the University to confirm that the proposed course meets sector standards and NTU requirements and is thus approved for student enrolment.
Who is involved:	A key aspect of the Design Sprint process as a whole, is that aspects of the course are, in effect, approved as the Sprint days progress. This is particularly the case during Sprint Day 2 as this is when the various stakeholders test the proposal. The course leader/sponsor is ultimately responsible for ensuring that (a) the required artefacts have been provided and (b) all the information has been inputted to the Course Database (or temporary equivalent) in order for the proposal to be finally and fully approved. The Sprint co-ordinator may also play a part in this input process.
What happens:	As the two Sprint Days progress, fields of the Course Database will be completed. The activity that takes place during the afternoon of Sprint Day 2 is likely also to result in fields being amended, or finalised. Outstanding fields (likely, in particular, to be some aspects of module information) will be completed after Sprint Day 2.

	A member of the CADQ Quality Management team, in agreement with the facilitator or SQM, will provide final confirmation of approval, based on a set of pre-agreed criteria in relation to the Database fields.
Timeframe:	The timeframe for completing any outstanding fields in the Course Database will be agreed at the end of Sprint Day 2. The Co-ordinator will provide final confirmation within 1 week of completion.
Outputs:	The Course Database fields will provide key information for course set up. Confirmation of approval of the course will be submitted to ASQC for ratification.

4. Indicative schedules for Design Sprint days

Design Sprint day 1: Foundations

Time	Activity
10:00 – 10:20	Welcome refreshments Introduction to the day and to activity 1
10:20 – 11:00	Activity 1: intended learning
11:00 – 11:10	Introduction to activity 2
11:10 – 12.00	Activity 2: the learning experience
12:00 – 12:10	Introduction to activity 3 (with refreshments)
12:10 – 13.00	Activity 3: course features
13.00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14.00	Activity 3: course features (continued)
14.00 – 14.20	Return to activity 1: intended learning at different levels
14.20 – 14:30	Introduction to activity 4
14:30 – 15:10	Activity 4: assessment
15:10 – 15:20	Introduction to activity 5 (with refreshments)
15:20 – 15:50	Activity 5: module planning
15:40 – 16:00	Sum-up and next steps
16:00	Close

Design Sprint day 2: Stakeholder Testing and Refinements

Time	Activity

10:00 – 10:15	Welcome refreshments Introduction to the day and to activity 1
10:15 – 10:50	Activity 1: course team presentation of student journey storyboard to stakeholders followed by invitation to stakeholders to input on specific areas/questions posed
10:50 – 11:10	Opportunity for reflection and preparation for walk through
11:10 – 12:10	Activity 2: walk through of student journey with stakeholder groups, with discussion and feedback from stakeholders
12.10 – 13:00	Activity 3: summarise key points raised ensuring these are captured to feed into refinement of the student journey
13:00 – 13:30	Lunch Stakeholders leave at 13.00
13:30 – 15:45	Activity 4: refine student journey based on stakeholder feedback and complete key fields on course database
15:45 – 16:00	Agreement in principle
16:00	Close

5. Details of activities

Getting Ready

During the Getting Ready period, there are three tasks that need to be completed. These tasks centre primarily around questions of: **Why** is the course being proposed? **Who** will the students be? and **What** research needs to be done? **How** will the Sprint process be effective?

You will consider these questions in the following way:

Question	Aim	Activity
Why?	To establish the unique selling point of the course.	Draft a purpose statement for your course (in one sentence) which defines the main unique selling point *This should be refined from your initial bid and be based on market intelligence.*
	The purpose statement will feed into your elevator pitch later in the design process.	
Who?	1. To understand the main types of students likely to undertake this course in order to build this into designing the student journey.	Using the prompt questions provided, develop student personas for your course. *Personas are developed using market intelligence, competitor provision, industry requirements, etc.*

	2. To develop the main course aims based on the profile of graduates from the course.	Using the prompt questions provided, develop graduate profiles for your course. *Graduate profiles are developed based on industry and employer requirements, known graduate destinations and market intelligence.*
	Your student personas and graduate profiles will inform the development of course intended learning outcomes on Sprint Day 1, and the later development of your course and module learning outcomes.	
What?	1. To establish the core requirements for the course. For apprenticeships, attend Pebble Pad training workshop Read/research (optional): • Competitor provision • Market intelligence report (if available) • Sprint guidance • Principles of learning and teaching at NTU • Principles of assessment at NTU • Relevant QH sections	Undertake research to understand the key external requirements for the course. As a minimum the following **must** be consulted: • The relevant subject benchmark statement; • Qualification characteristics statement (where applicable); • PSRB requirements (where applicable); • The Apprenticeship Standard and End Point Assessment Plan (where applicable). As an output of this reading, you should produce a list of the absolute musts that need to feature in your course.
	This research, in conjunctions with your purpose statement, personas and profiles will shape the design of the course throughout the Sprint Days.	
	2. To gain greater understanding of how the course might be designed	**Optional:** It is recommended that at least one member of the course team researches the following in advance of Sprint Day 1: • Competitor provision: key features of the course
How?	To support the effectiveness of the Design Sprint process	In advance of Sprint Day 1, course team members should familiarise themselves with the following: • Course Design at NTU Guidance • The Principles of Learning and Teaching at NTU • Relevant sections of the NTU Quality Handbook

Design Sprint day 1: Foundations

Activity 1: Intended outcomes

During the getting ready activities, you will have already thought about the mission of your course, who your students are and who you want them to be once they have completed the course. The purpose of this activity is to consider what these mean for what students need to learn during the course (which will then become a set of learning outcomes). We need an idea of this intended learning early on because it helps establish what needs to be happen in the course, and how we should make sure it does. Throughout the day we will continue to come back to this intended learning as the course is designed, such that you should have some draft learning outcomes by the end of the day.

Activity 2: The learning experience

This activity[1] will help you think through the different approaches to the students' learning experience that you will take to ensure your students' progress through the levels of study and achieve the learning outcomes. The activity is framed in a way that supports you in reflecting on the different features of a course which all contribute to the students' experience. This goes beyond just considering the type of pedagogies you will use and encourages you to think about other ways of fostering a community of learners.

Activity 3: Course features

This activity encourages you to think about different features of a course in terms of learning events and significant activity, for example blocks of particular subject content, a placement, a visit, skills practice and so on. You will start to consider these against a course timeline, taking account of which things have to come earlier and which later in the student's journey through the course.

Activity 4: Assessment

You will start by thinking about what type of assessment tasks are going to be most helpful for students to demonstrate the full range of learning outcomes. Once you have done this, you will add these to the storyboard of the course that you are creating.

You will also strategically plan when students are going to get feedback on the assessments you are requiring, and which assessments will be formative, and which will be summative.

Activity 5: Module planning

Now is the time to think about actual modules. You will probably already find yourselves most of the way there by this time, as you will have considered blocks of learning in activity 2. This is the opportunity to consider what all this planning means for the actual modules that students will be studying. What will their credit size be? Which modules will be taught in which way? Which modules will be assessed in which way?

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[2] Based on Open University Learning and Design Initiative (open.ac.uk/blogs/OULDI/)

Design Sprint day 2: Stakeholder Testing and Refinement

Activity 1: Course team presentation of student journey storyboard to stakeholders

Sprint day 2 starts with the course team presenting their student journey to the stakeholders. This is your opportunity to share your thinking with people who can offer an objective view of what the likely experience will be for students on the course and how well-prepared students will be on completion of the course. It is also an opportunity for you to invite stakeholders to provide their expertise and thoughts on specific areas you may feel could be of benefit.

As the stakeholders won't have been part of sprint day 1 it is important to provide clarity on how you've got to where you are today (e.g. here are the personas we based on, and the graduate outcomes we hope for them, therefore we've taken these decisions about learning and teaching types/pedagogies in relation to their needs and who we anticipate joining this course).

The team is encouraged to think about a student's journey through a day of the course and through the lifetime of the course: from the point at which an offer is made, through to post-graduation activity. This will include the additional artefacts created between the Sprint days and will start with a 2 minute elevator pitch within the 10-20 minute talk about the course.

Activities 2 & 3: *Walk through of student journey with stakeholder groups, with discussion and feedback from stakeholders and summarise key points raised ensuring these are captured to feed into refinement of the student journey*

The main task of the morning of Sprint day 2 is the engagement with stakeholders. Building on the presentation, we will walk through the student journey. This is your opportunity to engage in open dialogue with the stakeholders, discusses areas such as course structure, curriculum content and student experience to gain feedback from stakeholders. The stakeholders will in turn be using this as their opportunity to gain insight and understanding of your course design and 'testing' this plan.

Activity 4: The afternoon is set aside to refine your student journey plan based on stakeholder feedback, to do some more work on module design and complete key fields on course database.

6. Reading and resource list

A starting list of general and specific reading to support the design of the course will be provided at the first workshop. You will be able to add to this as the design sprints progress.

7. What happens next? Final approval of the course.

By the end of Sprint day 2, you will have achieved a blueprint of your course, and much of the specification of this blueprint will have already been described through the entries you have made onto the Course Database (or equivalent until such time that the course database is in operation). There will be some work to do to complete the required information in order for the course to be finally approved to enrol students by the University. This stage of approval does not require a face-to-face meeting, but you must ensure that remaining database fields are completed. The timeframe for completing any outstanding fields in the Course Database will be agreed at the end of Sprint Day 2. The Co-ordinator will provide final confirmation within 1 week of completion.

8. COVID contingency planning 2021/22

In the event of a/several members of the design sprint team either testing positive for COVID or declaring a close contact has COVID then:

1. We will prioritise achieving a face-to-face event that takes place on the agreed date. CADQ and Schools will have already in place 'back-up' colleagues who can step in at the last minute to mitigate against having to move online, or to delay the event.
2. We will *not* support a hybrid event. An alternative fully online event will take place only in the following circumstances:
   a. the facilitator/facilitator back-up cannot attend in person
   b. more than one member of the design sprint team (or their back-up) other than the facilitator cannot attend in person
3. If only one member of the design sprint team cannot attend face-to-face that team member can attend virtually. It will be the facilitator's responsibility to support full participation of this colleague. Where three or more colleagues (and their back-ups) cannot attend either in person or online because of medical reasons, the sprint event will have to be rescheduled.

Policy owner
CADQ

Change history			
Version:	Approval date:	Implementation date:	Nature of significant revisions:

Equality Analysis		
Version:	*EA date:*	*Completed by:*