Nottingham Trent University

QHS 6A

QH Supplement 6A: Course Review and Re-approval guidance

1. Purpose

1.1 The Course Review and Re-approval Policy provides the minimum requirements for assuring that courses consider and capture risks to the quality of their provision. The policy covers a maximum 5-year approval period for undergraduate (including Integrated Foundation Years and apprenticeships) and postgraduate taught courses. In its areas of consideration, the policy ensures that the monitoring of course performance and resultant action aligns with institutional and sector regulations, while supporting the management of quality, student experience and outcomes.

1.2 The policy associated with this guidance can be found here.

1.3 The primary audience of the policy is course leaders, Heads of Department and Deputy Deans. A stakeholder map is provided to clearly outline the responsibilities of each of these groups.

1.4 The policy is designed to reduce the accumulation of change between re-approval periods. Schools are encouraged to use re-approval activity as the principal opportunity for course redesign, reducing unnecessary accumulation of change between approval cycles. Whilst the policy identifies circumstances in which University-level Re-approval is required, Schools will need to exercise judgement in determining whether proposed School-level changes constitute a Re-approval or a smaller revision.

1.5 Please note that Course Review activity should be undertaken with reference to the definitions of the scale of course change set out in Quality Handbook Section 5, and the post-approval timeframes outlined in QHS 5K.

2. The Course Review Plan

Completing the Course Review Plan

2.1 The Course Review Plan is the central mechanism through which course teams evidence the ongoing review of their course, including the identification of risks[1], consideration of performance, and monitoring of interventions over time. A single Course Review Plan should be sufficient to cover all modes and intakes of the course delivery.

2.2 A single institutional template has been mandated for use across all courses in order to ensure a consistent and coherent approach to course review with alignment to common internal measures and external regulatory data. While all Schools must use this template, additional content may be added where this supports local requirements. Any additions must be applied consistently across the School and no fields within the core template may be removed.

2.3 The template has been designed to provide a clear view of course development over time, enabling course teams and Schools to track performance, identify trends and monitor the impact of interventions across multiple years. Course highlights and Leadership comment sections are left to the discretion of the course and School. Examples of course highlights are positive MySay feedback, student feedback or discussion gained at Course Committee or a change in Academic Practice which has yielded more proactive student engagement.

2.4 The Course Review Plan is intended to ensure that significant redesign requirements are identified early enough for Schools to plan and secure any necessary approvals within the relevant timescales (see: QHS5K).

2.5 At Year 3 of the review cycle, the Head of Department (or equivalent) and Deputy Dean determine the proposed re-approval route and identify any known redesign activity requiring approval planning.

2.6 Although the template is structured over a five-year period (including provision for teach out), this is intended to cover the full range of possible course lifecycles. From 2026/27, courses will enter a staggered review cycle but not all courses will operate over a full five-year period prior to Re-approval. Where the cycle is shorter, course teams will only use the relevant years within the template and remove those not applicable.

   a. Variations in cycle length may arise due to factors such as:
   b. the time elapsed since previous review activity,
   c. the risk profile of the course,
   d. or alignment with PSRB requirements.

2.7 Schools are responsible and best placed to make these judgements and for planning review cycles in a way that supports effective oversight and avoids the concentration of Re-approvals within a single academic year.

Course Committees

[1] For the purposes of the Course Review and Re-approval Policy risk refers to evidence of trends in student outcomes or experience which could signify reduced quality of the course if not considered or acted upon.

2.8 Course Committees are responsible for the governance of courses. As noted in the Course Review and Re-approval Policy, at each course committee, the course team must discuss the ongoing implementation of the chosen course development priorities, with discussion outcomes and agreed actions captured in the minutes and reflected in the updated Course Review Plan.

Timing of data availability

2.9 School Insights data for the preceding academic year will begin to become available from late summer. However, course teams should be aware that data may continue to change until the beginning of October as assessment boards conclude and final regulatory datasets are received and processed. While course teams may review and monitor their data at any point during the year, the Course Review Plan should, wherever possible, be informed by the most complete dataset available for the previous academic year. For example, Course Review Plans considering 2025/26 performance should normally draw upon data available in October 2026, together with trends from preceding years.

2.10 For postgraduate taught provision, Course Review Plans should also normally be completed during Term 1. Course teams should note that some metrics may continue to change as late completions and assessment outcomes are recorded, although significant movement in the overall performance profile is not generally expected.

3. School Re-approval: approach and evidence

Purpose of School Re-approval

3.1 School Re-approval is an evidence-led process through which Schools determine whether a course should continue into a new approval cycle. The decision must be based on the extent to which the course is operating effectively and whether identified risks are being appropriately addressed.

3.2 Whilst any proposal considered through the University's course approval process will be treated as a re-approval, Schools will need to exercise judgement in determining whether School-level changes constitute a re-approval or a smaller revision. In making this determination, Schools should consider the significance of the proposed change and its impact on the overall design, structure and student experience of the course. The decision should be informed by the record of cumulative changes to the course and its constituent modules over recent academic years.

3.3 As noted in the Course Review and Re-approval Policy, please note that if a course wishes to retain existing approved deviations from the Course Design Requirements, as per Quality Handbook Section 12, then re-approval for these must be sought from Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) before either School or University-level Re-approval. Information on the University Exceptions Register can be found here.

Documentation and evidence

3.4 The primary source of evidence for School Re-approval is the **Course Review Plan**, which should demonstrate a clear, well-evidenced understanding of the course. This includes:

- A balanced evaluation of course strengths and areas for improvement
- Clear identification of risks, supported by qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Consideration of relevant external reference points, including:
    - Student feedback
    - External Examiner feedback
    - PSRB feedback (where applicable)
    - Subject Benchmark Statements
    - industry or sector trends.

3.5 Particular attention should be given to the quality of the Course Review Plan commentary. This should demonstrate that the Course Leader and Head of Department (or equivalent) have a clear understanding of the course's direction of travel, and that proposed interventions are evidence-informed and likely to have impact.

3.6 For example, where continuation rates give cause for concern, Schools should be assured that proposed changes (such as amendments to curriculum or assessment) are appropriate to address the underlying issue.

3.7 School Re-approval will also consider selected fields within the **Outline Summary** form (CourseLoop), providing:

- the case for continuing the course into a new approval cycle
- the main areas of risks and scrutiny that should inform course re-approval
- the priorities for the course for the next approval cycle
- the rationale for retaining any course design exceptions.

Consideration of course design change

3.8 School Re-approval should take into account the extent and coherence of **course design changes** made over time, giving consideration to whether cumulative changes remain justified and evidence-based and coherent as a whole.

3.9 This is distinct from **academic practice changes**, which do not alter the formally approved design of the course. Please see Section 6 below for more information.

Use of additional evidence through Business Evaluation

3.10 The Head of Department is responsible for determining whether proposed course changes requiring School-level re-approval also necessitate the completion of a Business Case.

3.11 This decision will be informed by several factors, including whether the proposed changes: imply a significant addition to the resources required to teach or support the course(s) which cannot be accommodated through existing resources and workload, and/ or have operational implications or introduce additional infrastructure costs which need to be considered at an institutional level.

3.12 Where a Business Case is deemed necessary, SET approval must be secured prior to academic approval of the course changes by School Academic Standards and Quality Committee (SASQC). Further guidance and details of the Business Evaluation process can be found on the Academic Quality Hub.

School Re-approval groups and outputs

3.13 The conduct of School Re-approval activity will be determined by the School but must meet the minimum membership requirements outlined in the Course Review and Re-approval Policy.

3.14 Schools are responsible for determining the timing of course Re-approvals within the policy framework. They should be scheduled strategically, taking into account milestones for the course lifecycle, School planning and capacity. Schools must take account of course approval lead times, operational deadlines and any anticipated redesign activity when determining the timing of Re-approval (see: QHS5K).

3.15 The outcome of School Re-approval must be formally recorded through SASQC minutes, including the decision and agreed approval period and relevant updates within **CourseLoop.**

3.16 Schools are also required to provide an annual SASQC report to ASQC, including a summary of School Re-approval outcomes and confirmation of courses progressing to University Re-approval.

4. University Re-approval: approach and scrutiny

Purpose of University Re-approval

4.1 University Re-approval is undertaken through the **ASQC University Academic Course Approval sub-committee** and follows the established processes for course approval and re-design as set out in Quality Handbook Section 5.

4.2 As noted in the Course Review and Re-approval Policy, please note that if a course wishes to retain existing approved deviations from the Course Design Requirements, as per Quality Handbook Section 12, then re-approval for these must be sought from Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) before either School or University-level Re-approval. Information on the University Exceptions Register can be found here.

Documentation and evidence

4.3 The sub-committee will consider:

a. the **Course Review Plan**, as the primary source of evidence

b. selected fields within the **Outline Summary** form **(CourseLoop)**, providing:

   i. the case for continuing the course into a new approval cycle

   ii. the main areas of risks and scrutiny that should inform course re-approval

   iii. the priorities for the course for the next approval cycle

   iv. the rationale for retaining any course design exceptions.

   v. the reason(s) for submitting the proposal to the Sub-Committee for re-approval.

4.4 Where course changes are proposed, the sub-committee will also receive the standard **Course Design Summary Report**. Course changes requiring Sub-Committee approval are outlined in QH Section 5.

4.5 **Business Evaluation** is required for all courses undergoing University Re-approval, irrespective of the scale of proposed change.

Triggers and basis for scrutiny

4.6 University Re-approval will be required where substantial course design changes are proposed, requiring formal scrutiny through the approval process, or course performance, trends or risk profile indicate the need for additional scrutiny, including circumstances set out in the Course Review and Re-approval Policy.

4.7 University Re-approval is not solely determined by the scale of proposed change. A course may be referred due to its risk profile alone, regardless of whether significant design changes are proposed.

Decision-making and outcomes

4.8 The sub-committee will determine whether:

a. the evidence provides a comprehensive understanding of the course

b. identified risks have been appropriately evaluated

c. the proposed response is justified and likely to be effective.

4.9 Membership follows standard arrangements for the University Academic Course Approval sub-committee. Following successful University Re-approval, the course will enter a new approval cycle, in line with the Course Review and Re-approval Policy.

5. Using the Course Review/TEF Dashboard

5.1 The School Insights Course Review / TEF dashboard is the University's primary source of quantitative evidence for annual Course Review. It provides access to Office for Students (OfS) student outcomes data, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics and additional institutional performance indicators to support the evaluation of course performance.

5.2 Course teams should use the dashboard to:

a. review performance in relation to Continuation, Completion and Progression measures

b. consider performance against OfS thresholds and TEF benchmarks where applicable

c. identify trends over time

d. explore differences in outcomes between student groups

e. consider additional indicators, including National Student Survey outcomes, degree attainment and module performance (available on the School Insights page of the dashboard).

5.3 The dashboard should be used to inform the Summary Findings and Development Priorities sections of the Course Review Plan. Particular attention should be given to areas where performance falls below threshold, is below benchmark, or indicates a sustained negative trend.

5.4 Quantitative data should not be considered in isolation. Course teams are expected to supplement dashboard data with qualitative evidence and contextual information, including student feedback, External Examiner reports, PSRB feedback, staff reflections and other relevant sources.

5.5 Detailed guidance on accessing and interpreting School Insights data, including explanations of OfS and TEF measures, is available separately on the Academic Quality Hub (see: Academic Review Resources).

6. Making alterations to academic practice

6.1 There are four types of course and module change at NTU. Three are formally recorded in CourseLoop.

6.2 The most common is **Course Design change**, which typically includes amendments to assessment and/or learning outcomes and requires academic approval (see QH Section 5 for approval requirements).

6.3 **Editorial changes** relate to administrative updates or corrections (e.g. course or module leadership, typographical corrections), and **Operational changes** cover actions such as suspension, discontinuation, reinstatement, or changes to start dates. Neither editorial nor operational changes require academic approval.

6.4 The fourth category is **Academic Practice change**, which refers to adjustments to how a course or module is delivered without altering its approved design. This may include enhancing active learning, introducing group discussion, or incorporating new technologies. Some Academic Practice changes require approval (see QH5), and some may need to be recorded in CourseLoop, but most can be implemented within the academic year without formal approval. Evidence for such changes may come from sources such as module evaluation, External Examiner feedback, course team reflections or staff development and School Insights data.

6.5 Course teams are strongly encouraged to consider changes to academic practice in the first instance. These are often overlooked, with multiple small Course Design changes made instead, which may have limited impact on student experience or outcomes.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Suggested Course Re-approval Questions and prompts

The focus of the group or sub-committees discussions will be informed by the Course Review Plan and any changes proposed by the course team as part of re-approval.

1. How convincing is the Course Review Plan as an explanation of course performance and direction of travel?

- *Does it present a balanced evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement? Do we have confidence in the narrative, not just the metrics?*

2. What are the most significant risks to student outcomes and how well are they understood?

- *Are risks clearly identified using both quantitative and qualitative evidence? Is there a convincing diagnosis of underlying causes, not just symptoms? Are any risks underplayed or insufficiently evidenced?*

3. To what extent are the proposed interventions evidence-informed and likely to have impact?

- *Are actions clearly linked to identified risks and root causes? What evidence suggests these interventions will improve continuation, completion or progression? Where similar actions have been tried, what has been learned? Where impact is unclear or limited, is this recognised and addressed?*

4. Does the current course design remain coherent and fit for purpose?

- *Do cumulative changes over time remain justified, evidence-based and coherent as a whole? Are there signs that issues require fundamental redesign rather than incremental change? Is there a clear rationale where no design change is proposed?*

5. Based on the evidence should the course be re-approved and at what level of scrutiny?

- *Do we have confidence the course can secure positive student outcomes in the next cycle? Does the risk profile justify School re-approval or escalation to University re-approval? What follow-up (for example monitoring or re-design expectations) is necessary?*

Policy owner
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Change history			
Version:	*Approval date:*	*Implementation date:*	*Nature of significant revisions:*
Sept 2026		01.09.26	New supplement