

Course Design and Approval: Considering External Input in Course Design

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following a period of design work by the course team, external input is required. It is an opportunity for course teams to discuss their ideas with a range of individuals who have not been involved in the design of the course. External colleagues will enable the course team to gain valuable insights and a range of new perspectives into the course profile, student journey and possible graduate prospects.
- 1.2 External input can be ensured through either a stakeholder consultation or school-led consultation activities.
- 1.3 At the request of the School at the Planning Meeting, a stakeholder consultation can be set up by colleagues in CADQ.
- 1.4 A range of stakeholders will be invited by CADQ to this event which will be led and facilitated by the School. Guidance on how to maximise the impact of this event can be found in Section 4 below.
- 1.5 The external input will specifically seek views from external colleagues and students, enabling the course team to gain externality and student input in course design. This allows the university to continue to meet Office for Students conditions of registration, ensuring:
 - i. That students receive appropriate resources and support to ensure success during and beyond their course (B2),
 - ii. the credibility of the award (B4), and,
 - iii. alignment with sector standards (B5).
- 1.6 Effective external input events promote lively and creative discussion where stakeholders can, collectively, come together to learn about and discuss the proposed course.
- 1.7 NTU's course design requirements (Section 12), in addition to agreed consultation outputs (referenced from QHS 5D, below), will provide a list of features that course teams are expected to consider in the design of their course(s).

2. The role of stakeholders

- 2.1 With either method of delivery for obtaining external input, a student stakeholder and a subject expert are required.
- 2.2 However, a variety of stakeholders should be invited to input into the design of the course and are selected because of the important perspective they will bring to the table.
- 2.3 Courses designed at NTU reflect the University's expectations for, for example: employability; sustainability; flexible and online learning; active collaborative learning; civic engagement; internationalisation and personalisation. Stakeholders should be encouraged to notice aspects of course design that reflect these and form questions related to these themes.

NB: Section 12 should support stakeholders to ask relevant questions regarding course design requirements. Please continue to use the existing Section 12 until further notice.

- 2.4 Types of stakeholders include:

Students (must be consulted)	Students bring expertise in studying at NTU. They have very current and relevant experience to bring to the discussion. It is likely that students may have questions about the lived experience of teaching, learning and assessment. They may be able to imagine what it would be like to study this course, and those course features that are exciting and those which they might find less attractive to students. They may have questions about support and opportunities for students.
Employers	Employers are arbiters of graduate employability and experts in the current and future direction of their industry sector. The course team will have drawn on advice from the sector to identify skills and attributes which are necessary for a profession or range of professions. As employers reflect on the course design presentation, they may notice course design features that are helpful in the development of students as professionals in their industry and in other related fields. This could relate to any aspect of the course design, from approaches to learning, teaching and assessment; to placements, visits and guest speakers. They may be able to identify ways in which student preparation for employment could be strengthened and opportunities for students and staff to grow their connection with industry.
Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB) representative (where relevant)	As a representative of the professional or accrediting body, a PSRB representative's close work and engagement with leaders in the profession is invaluable. They have a sense of the future direction of the profession and can comment on how the course team is helping to meet current and future needs. They will also identify the ways in which the course has been designed to meet current professional standards and any expectation that needs further development.

Academic colleague from another institution	An external colleague is critical in providing an independent, objective and informed perspective on the quality of the course. They bring an awareness of national standards and of sector expectations. It is likely that, by comparing the course with other similar courses, they will have a view on the effectiveness of the proposed learning, teaching and assessment practices; they will notice the currency of the course content and research that underpins it; and they may identify unique and positive features of the course design.
Non-school NTU academic	An NTU colleague from a different school can provide valuable insight in to learning and teaching and course design separate from the subject discipline. They are encouraged to provide comments on the student experience throughout the course and provide feedback about the coherence and structure of the course.
A senior member of the School and Head of Department	With oversight of the portfolio of courses to which this course belongs, they will have a strategic view of the role of the course and its market. Their awareness of School practices, expectations and priorities is also important as they consider the course design. They may have questions or observations about course fit; collaboration within / across the School; Success for All; and strategic priorities.
Senior Quality and Standards Advisors (SQSAs)	SQSAs attend the stakeholder meeting as representatives of NTU's quality and standards framework. They have knowledge and experience of designing a wide range of courses in addition to general and specialised knowledge of quality features, from effective assessment to review and enhancement.

3. Preparation for an external input event

- 3.1 In order to maximise the contributions which external stakeholders can make to the proposed course, the course team should make draft course design documentation available to stakeholders one week ahead of the chosen event.
- 3.2 Early access to course information will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to consider proposed course features from which useful comments, queries, or questions may be identified.
- 3.3 It is recommended that course information is provided, at minimum, through:
 - i. presentation slides;
 - ii. a course curriculum map; and
 - iii. assessment and feedback plan.
- 3.4 Templates for the course team to use in preparation for consultation can be found on Teams [here](#).
- 3.5 The design team may identify other documentation to share that could compliment, and give a more rounded view, of their proposal (e.g. PSRB requirements, employer feedback).

- 3.6 In addition to the course documentation mentioned above, the CourseLoop entry should be completed as appropriate ahead of external input.
- 3.7 If the course team decide to opt for the CADQ set-up Stakeholder Consultation having completed CourseLoop will allow internal stakeholders, specifically the Senior Quality and Standards Advisors and Non-School Academic to consider course information in advance of the consultation.

4. Optionality in delivery method of external input

- 4.1 Course teams have the option of choosing the external input to be considered at a stakeholder consultation set up by CADQ (below), or undertaking School-led activities that engage a range of existing groups or networks.

A) The Stakeholder Consultation

- 4.2 There is the option for the course team to participate in a stakeholder consultation set-up by administrative colleagues in CADQ.
- 4.3 These will be online and between 2- 2.5 hours depending on the complexity of the proposed course and its features.
- 4.4 The consultation process will usually be led and facilitated by the School Standards and Quality Manager, or whomever they allocate in their place within the School.
- 4.5 The most successful stakeholder consultations are semi-structured in nature, allowing them to openly express their thoughts and opinions. It is imperative to facilitate the conversation in a way that all stakeholders get to input their perspectives. The ultimate aims of the discussion are articulated in point 4.9 below.
- 4.6 The course team will present the stakeholders with details of the proposed course, explaining the course structure and content, providing a 'walk-through' of the student journey, identifying how students will be supported to be successful on the course and beyond graduation.
- 4.7 After this presentation, stakeholders should engage in an open dialogue with the design team. As stakeholders reflect on the student journey, they may notice exciting and unique features of the course, may have questions about the rationale of the decisions that have been made, or may identify an aspect of the course that should be improved.
- 4.8 Stakeholders should be encouraged to document what they believe are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and considerations/areas of improvement for the new course. The use of an online tool, such as Padlet, provides the design team with the opportunity to re-visit the feedback at any point in their design process.
- 4.9 By the end of the consultation, the group should have:
 - i. A shared understanding of the aims of the course;
 - ii. Agreed that the course coherence provides a high quality student experience: enabling students to develop skills and knowledge in a systematic way, scaffolding their learning to achieve independence and preparation for success after graduation.

- iii. Confirmed that the course is at the appropriate standard for the level of the award(s) involved and takes account of subject and qualification benchmark statements;
- iv. Confirmed that the curriculum is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the subject;
- v. Confirmed that the course prepares students for the world of work, as reflected in the Strategic Plan;
- vi. Identified any further refinements or adjustments before the course proceeds to approval.

B) School-led consultation activities

- 4.10 Schools may opt to consider externality to the course through existing and established groups and networks.
- 4.11 This may include engaging an existing group of students in a discussion about the proposed student journey, inviting a subject-matter expert to reflect on course coherence or sharing course documentation with relevant employers.
- 4.12 Any external input must include consideration from both a student and a colleague with expertise in a given discipline.

5. Post-external input

- 5.1 After the external input, the course team should spend some time considering the outcomes of the discussion and may decide to amend or refine aspects of the design of the course. They may wish to follow up with specific stakeholders and have individual conversations that inform the module and course information inputted into CourseLoop.
- 5.2 Once the course team have completed their consultation, the School should add the date and method of consultation to the Academic Approval Tracker. This will allow correct information to be included in the final approval report.

Policy owner
CADQ

Change history			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2023	02.11.23	23.11.23	New Supplement

Equality Analysis		
<i>Version:</i>	<i>EIA date:</i>	<i>Completed by:</i>