Nottingham Trent University

Quality Handbook

Part C: Assuring and enhancing quality

Section 5: Course Design and Approval Requirements

Section **5**

Contents

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1. NTU's course design and approval principles and requirements

1.1   All University taught courses are subject to academic consideration and approval through the University's course design and approval process.

1.2   The process has two routes depending on the nature of the provision and the scale of the change required.

1.3   The process is underpinned by the following principles:

   a.   Collaboration between colleagues,

   b.   Externality, and,

   c.   Due consideration of the student journey.
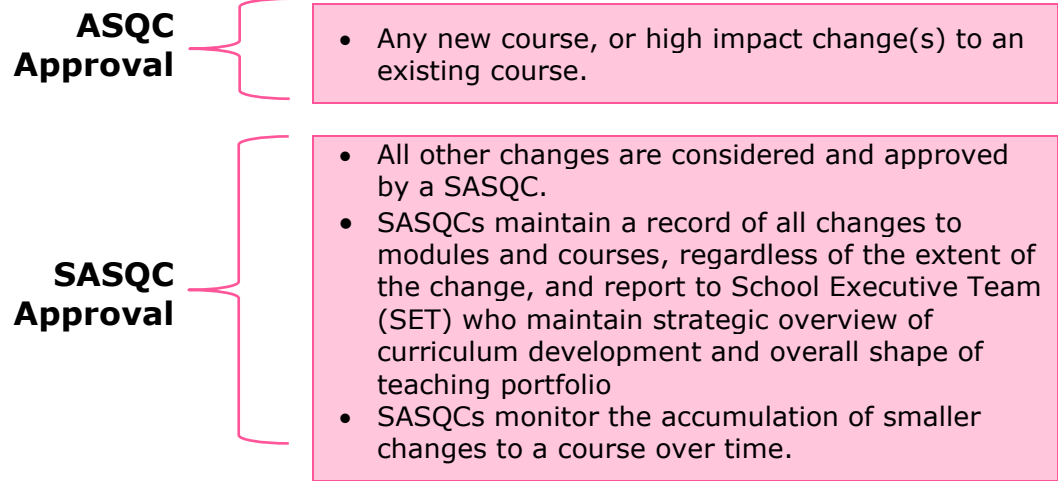
Further information

▪   Details of the University course design requirements can be found in [Quality Handbook Section 12](#).

2. NTU's course design and approval process

There are two routes to approval, through Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) via the Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee, and through School Academic Standards and Quality Committees (SASQCs).

2.1   A new course, or high impact change(s) to an existing course is approved through ASQC via the Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee. All other changes to an existing course are considered and approved by SASQCs.

ASQC Approval
- Any new course, or high impact change(s) to an existing course.

SASQC Approval
- All other changes are considered and approved by a SASQC.
- SASQCs maintain a record of all changes to modules and courses, regardless of the extent of the change, and report to School Executive Team (SET) who maintain strategic overview of curriculum development and overall shape of teaching portfolio
- SASQCs monitor the accumulation of smaller changes to a course over time.

2.2   Quality Handbook Supplement (QHS) 5A: Requirements for approving changes to courses defines the level of impact level including examples of types of change. It specifies the documentary requirements and the specific actions required for consultation and notification for such approval.

Further information

- If the course is non-award bearing or leads to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) recognition, please refer to Quality Handbook Supplement 5J: Guidance on assessment regulations when there are PSRB constraints.
- If the course includes an NTIC progression route, please refer to Quality Handbook Supplement PS5: Requirements for initiation and cessation of progression arrangements between Nottingham Trent International College (NTIC) and NTU.
- If the change is for collaborative provision, please also refer to Quality Handbook Section 10: Working with Others.

3.   ASQC Course Design and Approval

3.1   There are three requirements for course approval for new courses and, courses with high impact changes. These are:

   a. School Executive Team (SET) approves the course proposal for new courses or high impact changes to existing courses. This will generate an Approval to Proceed (ATP).

   b. SET approves the course business viability through the Business Case.

   c. The ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee approve the course as being academically sound and viable.

3.2   The course design and approval process consists of seven stages. Operational detail including post-stage actions, stakeholders involved and timeframes can be found in QH Supplement 5B.

Stage	Purpose	Responsibility
Stage 1: Commencement of Business Evaluation	Ensures that new courses and proposed high impact changes to courses align with the University's strategic goals, are appropriate to market, and will not contravene consumer rights legislation.	School Executive Team (SET) approve the proposal with Approval to Proceed.
Stage 2: Planning for course design and approval	Introduces CADQ to proposal and kick starts the design stages. CADQ and School agree a timeline for course approval.	CADQ manages the process, School co-leads the discussion.

Stage 3: Designing the course (*and continuation of business evaluation process*)	The design of all new courses and high impact changes is undertaken through a collaborative process supported by appropriate internal and external expertise to ensure that the courses provide a high-quality academic experience (OfS B1). Please note that it is not recommended that 'suites' of courses are designed at the same time unless there is strong academic benefit of doing so. Preliminary Registry checks occur alongside course design. *In parallel, School Executive Team approves the Outline Summary to facilitate the business case process.*	School manages the process alongside CADQ. Advice and guidance is provided by CADQ and other professional services as identified during Stages 1 and 2. CADQ provides staff development opportunities on course design.
Stage 4: External input	Consultation about the course proposal which seeks views from a minimum of external colleagues and students to ensure that: - students are involved in the process of course design (OfS B2), - it aligns with sector standards (OfS B5), and, - there is credibility of the awards (OfS B4). The course is refined in light of this consultation.	Schools have two options through which key stakeholders can be consulted: - CADQ-organised stakeholder consultation - School-led consultation activities
Stage 5: Review of course design	SET reviews and approves the business case to confirm that the course can be financially and operationally viable. The course design is reviewed by CADQ in CourseLoop to ensure it meets NTU requirements for course design. Viability checks are coordinated by CADQ to ascertain the business and operational viability of the course (please note that these will only begin later in 2024). The course design is checked by School leadership, to ensure it meets NTU and School priorities, and to ascertain the business, financial and operational viability of the course.	SET CADQ manages the process and liaises with the School. Schools ensure appropriate information is provided in CourseLoop CADQ School Leadership

Stage 6: Final check of course information and completion of report by CADQ	Final information in CourseLoop is checked by CADQ ensuring that course approval requirements are met. Approval report is completed for submission to the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee.	CADQ manages the process.
Stage 7: Course Approval	Academic approval and validation for new courses or high impact changes to existing courses is granted by the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee. This provides University oversight of portfolio and course development and provides assurance that courses have been designed to provide a high quality student experience.	Schools, CADQ and ASQC.

3.3 Integral to these stages is the **Business Evaluation** process. This is completed through the curriculum management system, CourseLoop, and consists of three stages:

    a. An Approval to Proceed (AtP) which begins the process;

    b. An Outline Summary to be completed after the Planning Meeting before the detailed course design commences;

    c. The Business Case which must be completed before the School Leadership Check takes place.

3.4 Schools take the lead in designing the course, utilising the CADQ resources and staff development sessions related to course design. The course team have the option of running School-led consultation activities or opting for a CADQ set-up Stakeholder Consultation.

3.5 Either way, the purpose of the Stakeholder Consultation is to:

    a. Establish a shared understanding of the aims of the course;

    b. Consider the course coherence which should provide 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. This may be demonstrated through a course diagram;

    c. Confirm 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;

    d. Confirm that the curriculum is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the subject;

    e. Confirm that the course prepares students for the world of work, as reflected in the Strategic Plan;

    f. Identify any further refinements or adjustments before the course proceeds to approval.

Further information

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- Please see QH Supplement 5D for more information on running a Stakeholder Consultation.

3.6 **Viability checks** are undertaken and recorded in CourseLoop. They determine the financial viability of the course and the requirements for course build, timetabling and Student Route and Student Loan Company funding eligibility. They also consider whether the final course proposal continues to align with the approved Business Case. Where the design has strayed from the Business Case there may be a requirement to revisit the Business Case, or re-work the design of the course.

3.7 In the case of Apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship team will undertake a compliance check.

3.8 Upon completion of course information in CourseLoop, the designated CADQ Senior Quality and Standards Advisor (SQSA) will review the course design to ascertain that it meets NTU expectations and requirements.

3.9 Deputy Deans (or their equivalent) will decide whether the proposal meets the expectations and requirements of the School during the **School Leadership Check**, including its alignment to NTU priorities and the requirement for proposed resource.

Further information

- Please see QH Supplement 5C for guidance on the School Leadership check.

3.10 When the Deputy Dean is satisfied that that the course design has been completed, this will be confirmed in CourseLoop. The CADQ SQSA will subsequently check the course information on CourseLoop and will prepare a summary report with recommendations to the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee.

Collaborative Courses

3.11 Please note, all collaborative courses will be approved through the Academic Partnerships Sub-Committee. This includes Validation Service courses. The committee will be considering the course only. The sub-group will not approve articulation agreements which will continue to be approved through SASQC.

3.12 The partner and/or the collaborative arrangements will be approved through a separate process outlined in Quality Handbook Section 10B. Criteria will include responsibilities for delivery, staffing, adequate resource and agreed levels of support. This approval will take place prior to course approval.

4. ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee

ASQC, through the Sub-Committee, retains University oversight of course design and approval and will receive reports detailing approval outcomes.

4.1 The CADQ SQSA summary report and recommendation to the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee will identify:

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a. Whether relevant course design requirements have been met;

b. The student experience has been adequately considered and articulated in the course learning and teaching strategy and the assessment strategy;

c. All course and module information has been completed;

d. Consultation has taken place with external colleagues and students;

e. Where there are implications for other courses or NTIC, this has been considered and discussed with those parties;

f. The outcomes of checks on the viability of the course.

4.2 The two possible outcomes of the Sub-Committee are:

a. Approve with implementation dates;

b. Not approve (with reasons given for this decision).

4.3 Notification of the approval will be sent to key stakeholders including the Deputy Dean; the Course Leader; Academic Registry and Finance.

4.4 Students can only be enrolled onto the course after these confirmations have taken place.

Further information

▪ The terms of reference of the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee is set out in [Quality Handbook Section 1: Academic Quality Governance](#).

5. Timeline

5.1 Schools should allocate a minimum of five working days (equivalent) for the design of a course, or a major re-design of a current course. Additional time may be needed for more complex courses.

5.2 Schools must ensure that there is sufficient time allocated for the completion and approval of the Approval to Proceed, Outline Summary and the Business Case.

5.3 It is particularly important to consider the impact of the change on any 'material information' that has already been provided to current students or to students who have accepted an offer (including from NTIC progression routes). This may affect the decision about when the change should be implemented.

5.4 Schools must determine the appropriate timeline for approval by the ASQC Academic Course Approval Sub-Committee to meet its agreed portfolio development and marketing framework.

6. University oversight

ASQC is responsible for oversight of the decisions about the design of new courses and changes to current courses. ASQC also oversees the efficacy of the University's processes for course design and approval.

6.1   ASQC receives a termly report, prepared by CADQ, which summarises all high impact changes to courses and all new course approvals.

6.2   ASQC may withdraw academic approval from a course at any time if it has evidence that the course is no longer meeting the minimum acceptable standards for that award.

6.3   CADQ will periodically review the course design and approval process to ensure that it remains efficient, fit-for-purpose and rigorous.

7.   Teach-out

The learning experience of students on courses in teach-out will be maintained.

7.1   When a course ceases to recruit students following a School's course discontinuation process, a SASQC must ensure that adequate standards are maintained for any remaining students or those such students are enabled to transfer to a suitable alternative course elsewhere.

Further information

- A full description of the teach-out process is contained in QH Supplement 5G.

Section 5

Policy owner
CADQ

Change history			
Version:	*Approval date:*	*Implementation date:*	*Nature of significant revisions:*
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	New 'routes' for approval of different kinds of changes Additional requirements in order to meet CMA guidance Reference to new documentary requirements for new courses and course changes
Dec 2016	15.11.16	15.11.16	Inclusion of Success for All Educational Developer in membership of DAGs and as part of course development for undergraduate courses
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Extended requirement for Course Operational Document to making changes to existing courses and made explicit the requirement to include curriculum mapping, assessment schedules and assessment and feedback plans as part of documentary requirements.
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	Inclusion of requirements for NTIC progression routes Removal of requirement for a Curriculum Refresh course road-map as part of documentation requirements Explanatory note added regarding requirement for UET agreement of proposed changes for approvals scheduled after 15 January 2019 (UG) and mid-July 2019 (PGT)
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	Updated explanatory note regarding approval of late course changes and consequent impact on material information Removed reference to Success for All Educational Developer in membership of DAGs and as part of course development for undergraduate courses
Nov 2020	2.12.20	9.12.20	Removal of thematic changes route for approval Introduction of impact level approach to determining academic approval required Introduction of sprint development approach to academic approval
Oct 2021	21.10.21	21.10.21	Full re-write to accommodate the change in process for design and approval of courses.
Sept 2022	22.09.22	01.10.22	Further refinements to the Design Sprint process in line with recommendations agreed at ASQC May 2022. Approved by ASQC Chairs Action 07.07.22 Updates to reflect transition of the business evaluation process to CourseLoop during 2022/23
Nov 2023	02.11.23	23.11.23	Full re-write.
Sept 2024	19.09.24	01.10.24	None

Equality Impact Analysis		
Version:	*EIA date:*	*Completed by:*
Oct 2015	08.12.15	CADQ

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