

Procedure for the approval of new undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure outlines Imperial's approach to programme development and approval of new undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. It details the process for designing, developing and approving undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes in accordance with the Office of Students (OfS) B conditions.
- 1.2 This document should be used to assist and guide Programme Directors (or equivalent) through the approval process for new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- 1.3 Postgraduate taught programmes refers to the following awards: MSc, MRes, MEd, MPH, MBA, PG Cert and PG Dip.
- 1.4 Undergraduate programmes refers to the following awards: BSc, MSci, BEng, MEng and MBBS

2. Principles

- 2.1 All programme proposals must have approval from their Department Teaching Committees and Faculty Education Committees before they can proceed for consideration for approval by Programmes Committee, QAEC and Senate.
- 2.2 All programmes must conform to the [university's Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study](#).
- 2.3 All qualifications must be positioned at the appropriate level and each programme must have programme learning outcomes aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor in the [Framework for Higher Educations Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland \(FHEQ\)](#).
- 2.4 All programmes must be affiliated to an academic department within the university. In cases where a programme crosses departmental or faculty boundaries a 'lead' department must be identified.

3. Process

- 3.1 Proposals for a programme in a new discipline or subject not currently taught at the university and/or which is distinct in format or structure from existing programmes at the university should seek strategic approval from the Programmes Committee before developing the proposal further. In all cases, this approval is distinct from the full programme approval which is also carried out by the Programmes Committee. Please contact the QA&E Team for advice on the strategic approval process.
- 3.2 All proposals for new programmes should be submitted using the following New Programme Proposal forms and templates and include any relevant appendices. All forms and templates are available [here](#).

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- Form A - General Programme Information
- Form B - Planning and Resources
- Form C - Quality Assurance and Standards
- Form D - External Reviewer Nominations, and
- Form E - Distance/Blended & E-Learning Programmes (if applicable)
- Programme specification template
- Module specification template
- ECTS spreadsheet

The QA&E Team can advise on the completion of the forms and templates. Please contact them at an early stage for guidance.

A new programme proposal requires the completion of a Course Viability Report and approval by the Admissions Sub-Committee before it can be tabled for Programmes Committee.

- 3.3 Once approved by department and faculty committees, all forms and templates must be submitted to the QA&E team for internal and external review.
- 3.4 The new programme proposal documentation is circulated to key university level staff for internal review. This is to ensure the suitability of the proposal and compliance with university regulations and guidelines.
- 3.5 The new programme proposal documentation is also circulated to four external reviewers. The chair of the Programme Committee (or deputy chair, in cases of conflict of interest) must select two academic referees and two referees from industry or the health service from the list of referees provided in the programme proposal (See Form D – External Reviewer Nominations).
- 3.6 A minimum of two external reviews from academic referees and two external reviews from referees in industry or the health service must be received before the proposal can be considered by the Programmes Committee.
- 3.7 External reviewers will be asked to complete the New Programme Proposal (External Review) Form F.
- 3.8 Once the internal feedback and completed external review forms have been received by the QA&E Team, the Programme Director will be asked to write a response to the reviews. The Programme Director may also choose to make further amendments to the proposal at this stage.
- 3.9 The final proposal including the external reviews and the Programme Director's response are submitted to the Programmes Committee where the Programme Director is invited to present the proposal.
- 3.10 The Programmes Committee may recommend the proposal for endorsement by QAEC, with or without amendments, or reject the proposal. In some cases where the Programmes Committee has requested substantial amendments, a revised proposal should be submitted to the next meeting of the Programmes Committee before it can be submitted to QAEC.

- 3.11 Following a recommendation for approval by the Programmes Committee, the programme may be advertised to potential applicants but this must include the caveat 'subject to university approval'.
- 3.12 QAEC has delegated authority to approve new programmes on behalf of Senate. A summary of the proposal is submitted to QAEC via the Programmes Committee Report. QAEC may approve with or without amendments, or reject the proposal. In some cases where the QAEC has requested substantial amendments a revised proposal should be submitted to the next meeting of QAEC. In exceptional circumstances, QAEC may refer new programmes to Senate for final approval.
- 3.13 If approved by QAEC (with any recommendations having been addressed) the 'subject to university approval' caveat can be removed, the programme code(s) will be set-up, and applications for admission to the programme can be accepted. The programme will also be reported to Senate via QAEC.

4. Timeframe

- 4.1 The minimum time required for a proposal to be approved by QAEC from the date at which it is formally received by the QA&E Team is 26 weeks (6 months). However, the timeframe can vary significantly depending on the time of year, the dates of the various committee meetings, and whether significant amendments to the proposal are required. Programmes which are in a new discipline, otherwise distinct from existing university provision or online may also require longer.
- 4.2 Ideally, proposals should be submitted approved by the Faculty Education Committee and submitted to the QA&E Team 78 weeks (18 months) in advance of the proposed start date in order for an approved programme to meet recruitment deadlines for UCAS (undergraduate programmes only) and the printed prospectus.
- 4.3 The steps in the process for standard programmes are as follows:
- I. The programme proposal paperwork is considered and approved by the relevant Department Teaching Committee and Faculty Education Committee.
 - II. The draft proposal is submitted to the QA&E Team.
 - III. The proposal is circulated for internal and external review (6 weeks).
 - IV. The Programme Director 'responds' to the external reviewers' comments and may make amendments to the proposal (1-2 weeks).
 - V. The proposal, including the external reviews and the Programme Director's response, are submitted to the Programmes Committee. The Programmes Committee can recommend the programme for QAEC endorsement with or without amendments or reject the proposal.

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- VI. The proposal is considered by QAEC. QAEC can approve with or without amendments or reject it.
- VII. Where the programme is approved, the programme code(s) is created and applications can be accepted. The programme is reported to Senate.

Approved by Senate
October 2014
Revised October 2024

Document title:	Procedure for the approval of new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes		
Version:	6	Date	October 2024
Location and filename:	R:\7.Quality Assurance\3. Policy Framework\1. Programme Design & Modification\Procedure for the Approval of New UG and Master's Programmes		
Approved:	Senate October 2014 / Revised July 2015 / Revised December 2015 / Revised Feb 2016 / Revised Sept 2017		
Effective from:	2024-25		
Originator:	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)		
Contact for queries:	Assistant Registrar (Programme Development)		
Cross References:	New Programme Approval Forms & Templates		
Notes and latest changes:	<p>Feb 2016 – updates following changes to the College Committee structure by Senate.</p> <p>Formatting changes made on 16 March 2016</p> <p>Sept 2017 – added references to OLIG for new online programme and modular structure</p> <p>October 2024 – removed reference to OLIG, updated process for internal and external review, added reference to requirement of Course Viability Report and approval by Admissions Sub-Committee; updated wording for DTC, FEC and QAEC approval; formatted and rebranded in alignment with brand guidelines.</p>		