Procedure for the Approval, Evaluation and Review of Graduate School Professional Skills Courses

1. Introduction

1.1 The Graduate School’s Course Quality and Strategic Development Committee (CQSD) is responsible for the quality assurance of new Graduate School professional skills courses for both doctoral and Master’s students. The CQSD reports to the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC) which has strategic oversight of the entire professional skills programme, informed by input from Faculty and Support Services staff with experience, knowledge and understanding of the UK’s professional skills agenda. The PPDC reports to the College’s Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) which takes overall responsibility for the quality of research degree programmes provided by the College and reports to the College Senate.

1.2 The development of the Graduate School’s programme of professional skills courses is also informed by the Professional Skills External Advisory Board which meets on an annual basis to review the programme, ensuring external input into the programme.

2. Procedure for establishing new Graduate School professional skills courses

2.1 Students, academic staff, departmental staff and staff within the Graduate School are free to make suggestions for new Graduate School courses. Students in particular are encouraged to do so either by contacting the Graduate School’s Head of Postgraduate Professional Development (j.de-wilde@imperial.ac.uk) or raise suggestions at Staff Student Committees.

2.2 A proposer wishing to establish a new professional skills course should first contact the Graduate School’s Head of Postgraduate Development to discuss the initial concept and how the proposed new course fits within the existing programme. Should the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development support the proposal, the proposer will be asked to develop a full course description (using the standard template) and provide a summary of how the new course fits within the existing programme and any evidence for establishing the course. The Head of Postgraduate Development will then review this, providing feedback to the tutor if necessary. Should the proposer be a student, the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development or his/her nominee will develop this material.

2.3 Once the Head of Postgraduate Development is content, he/she will present the proposal to the Graduate School’s Course Quality and Strategic Development (CQSD) Committee. The CQSD will review the following in its deliberations:

- Evidence for establishing the new course and how it fits within the existing programme of professional skills, how the new course maps against the Imperial College Graduate Attributes and professional body attributes. There may also be further consideration as to how the course compares with industrial graduate training programmes – a template business case is attached as Appendix 1.
- Full course description

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1 This includes doctoral professional skills courses or Master’s professional skills courses known as “MasterClasses”.
2.4 Should the CQSD be content, the proposer will be asked to develop the full course material which must be approved by the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development before a pilot is organised. If the proposer is a student, the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development or his/her nominee will develop the course material instead. Once the course material is ready, a pilot course will be organised by the Postgraduate Development Coordinator.

2.5 Once the pilot course has been delivered, the tutor responsible for the delivery of the new course will be asked to review student feedback on the course and make a response to this. The Postgraduate Development Coordinator will then collate the following material which will be presented to the CQSD by the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development.

- Full course description
- Course material
- Student feedback on the new course
- Tutor response to student feedback and any action taken in response to this.

2.6 The CQSD will review this material and will decide whether to make a recommendation that the PPDC formally approves the new course for inclusion in the professional skills development programme. The CQSD may decide that further work is needed on the course before it is submitted to the PPDC and if that is the case, the tutor will be provided with feedback and the course will need to be re-submitted to the CQSD.

3. **Annual Review of Student Feedback on Existing Graduate School Professional Skills Courses**

3.1 In July or August each year, each tutor will be asked to review all student feedback on their courses and to make a response which addresses any concerns or comments raised by students. If changes are being made to the course as a result of student feedback, then this should be stipulated in the tutor’s report. Tutor reports will be submitted to Head of Postgraduate Professional Development for review.

3.2 As well as ensuring that action is being taken by tutors to address feedback on courses by students, the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development will also review the student percentage ratings for all courses. If courses fall below 70% for the question, “would you recommend this course to other students,” and/or below 50% for the question, “did this course challenge you,” and/or below 50% for the question, “how would you rate the material,” the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development will meet with the tutor concerned to decide a course of action. The Head of Postgraduate Professional Development will report to the CQSD on the outcome of these discussions.

3.3 At the first meeting of the PPDC in the autumn term, a summary report of student evaluation of courses, responses to feedback and any changes made as a result of this feedback will be presented by the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development. Minor amendments to Graduate School courses must be approved by the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development.
4. **Review of Graduate School Courses by the External Advisory Board**

4.1 In January each year, the Professional Skills External Advisory Board reviews the Graduate School’s programme of professional skills for both Master’s and Doctoral students. This is to ensure the programme remains current and up to date, that external input, primarily from employers of Imperial graduates is sought and that students and the academic community have a regular opportunity to comment on the overall provision, not just on individual courses.

4.2 The annual review is also an opportunity for the Graduate School to compare its professional skills provision with that of other Russell Group institutions, to consider external influences which may impact on future provision and to ensure that the Graduate School is proactive in seeking out new and innovative skills training courses. The recommendations of the External Advisory Board will be presented to the PPDC at its February meeting to inform the Graduate School’s Planning Round and to allow sufficient time in which to implement any actions before the start of the following academic session.

4.3 The External Advisory Board will normally comprise an internal independent Chair who has knowledge of the role of the Graduate School and the purpose of professional skills training, one member of academic staff from each Faculty who maybe members of the PPDC, a student representative, Head of Postgraduate Development and the Manager of the Graduate School as Secretary. There will also be external members who may be employers of the College’s graduates, representatives from industry, alumni or members of other Russell Group Graduate Schools. External members of the Board would normally be appointed for a three year period after which point a new set of external members will be sought.

4.4 In order for the External Advisory Board to effectively review the professional skills programmes, the Manager of the Graduate School, in partnership with the Head of Postgraduate Professional Development, will put together the material for the review which will usually have a specific focus each year.

4.5 Three weeks prior to the Board meeting, the material will be circulated to members.

4.6 Members of the External Advisory Board will be invited to formulate their findings and make any recommendations. These will be presented to the February meeting of the PPDC. The PPDC will consider the report and agree any recommendations or changes to the programme of professional skills training.