

# Academic Policy and Procedures



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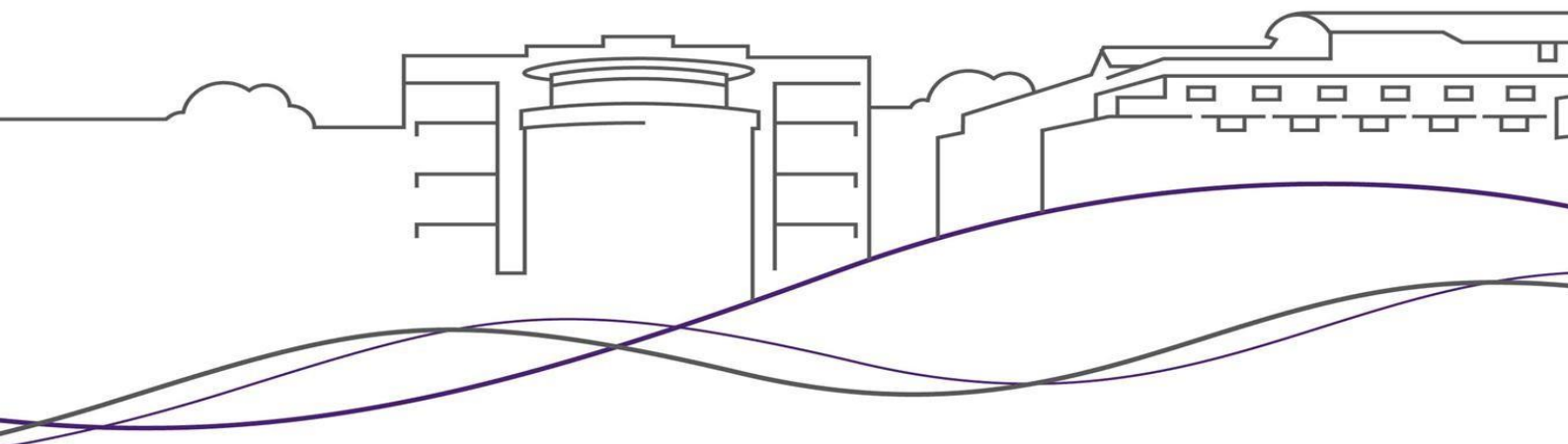
 South Devon College

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCEDURE v 6.0**

For SDC Awards

For UoP Awards follow this [link](#)



# Document Control

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2.0	4 <sup>th</sup> May 2018	A Wilson	Additional of Pearson process and HA/DA process
3.0	14 <sup>th</sup> May 2019	A Wilson	Addition of HA approval process
4.0	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020	A Wilson	Insertion of Definitions of Assessment in annex
5.0	June 21	A Wilson	Updated definitions of assessment and inclusion of LDCS and HECOS on Agenda
6.0	June 23	A Wilson	Changes to role titles

## Approval History

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# Curriculum Development and Approval Procedure

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## **1 Contributing Stakeholders**

The development of all South Devon College programmes involves contributions from several different stakeholders; in addition to the programme team and the HE Faculty there is involvement and support from other parties; their roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

### **EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT**

The approval of any programme by South Devon College is dependent upon contributions of individuals not directly involved with the programme; this contribution helps both set and maintain academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The College also considers that the programme approval process must include the involvement of individuals external to the College to offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken.

#### **a) External Academic Advisors**

An external advisors role is primarily to provide the programme team with scrutiny in the (re)validation of a programme at stage two. This would generally be provided around the areas of (although is not limited to) a programme's alignment to subject and educational sector expectations such as QAA Quality Code, alignment to the higher education quality thresholds and frameworks such as the FHEQ.

The award is for a programme the external advisor(s) will sit as a member of the panel at Stage two only.

It should be noted that Stage one is very much a developmental process whereas at Stage two, the panel, including the external advisor(s), is in place to determine the validity and to approve, reject or set recommendations and conditions for the validation.

External Advisors will be appointed using the criteria provided by the previous QAA Quality Code, B7: External Examining - Indicator 5 which provides criteria for the appointment of External Examiners, which for the purpose of this procedure will continue to be used

#### **b) Student Participation**

Students, both past and current, influence the development of programmes at South Devon College in numerous ways. Students are included on boards, committees and panels at all levels of the institution providing valuable input into the development and review of all curriculum development across the College.

Student representatives are included in the Stage two Validation Panel where it is anticipated that they will contribute to discussions around, but not limited to, programme structure, marketing and relevance to career aspirations

The Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) process provides Programme Leaders with the opportunity to reflect on the quality of a programme. One quality measure is the student's experience; all students complete module reviews at the end of a semester; these provide informative data in both qualitative and quantitative formats that inform the improvements of programmes.

### **c) External Industry Advisor**

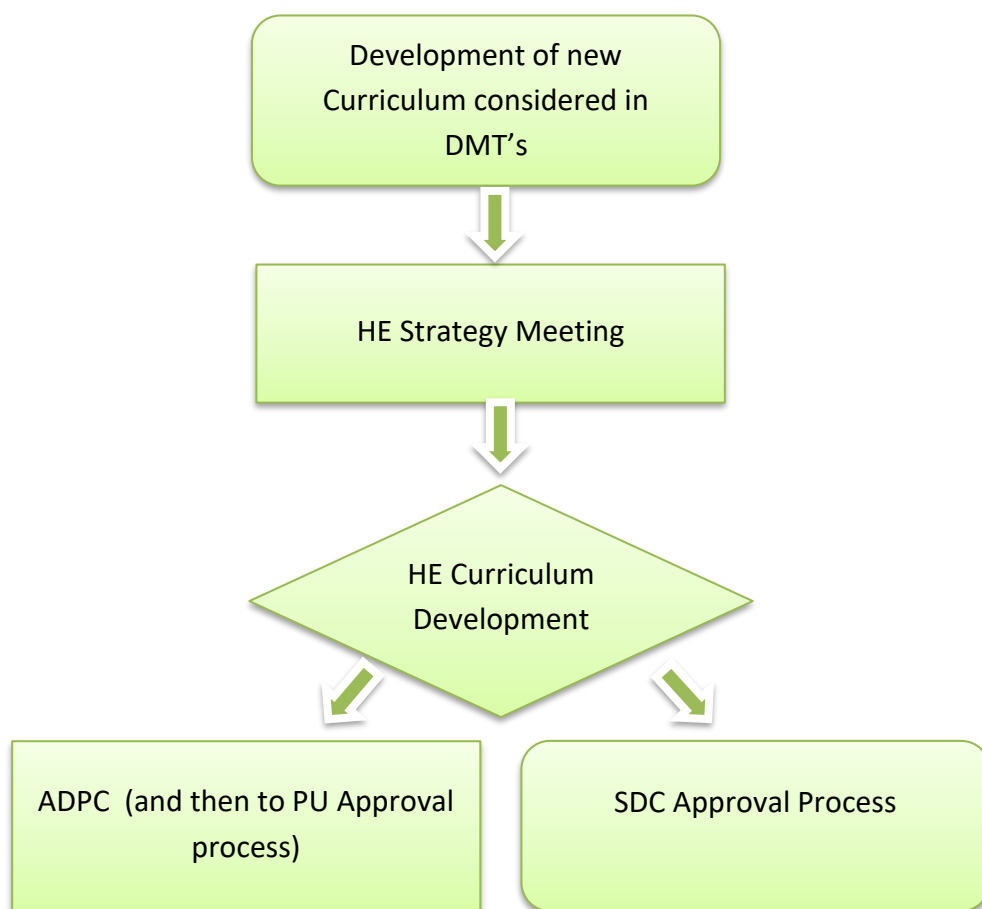
The role of employers in the (re)development of programmes is to inform on matters relating to industry such as: technical requirements, graduate skills gaps, local, national and where appropriate international demand. Employers are involved in the Stage two Panel, where they provide support for the programme team and substantiate the significance and relevance to the requirements of industry.

## **2 Validation**

Before starting the formal stages of the process and prior to the production of an initial Approval Document, the author must initiate informal discussions with their Departmental Team and the HE Faculty to determine if the conditions for developing the new programme are favourable.

### **PRELIMINARY PHASE**

The development of new programmes typically starts in Department Management Team (DMT's). Initial ideas are then discussed at HE Strategy Group. From here, full proposals (submitted on the standard planning form - New Programme Proposal Template) proceed to the HE Curriculum Development Group (SMT) for a formal consideration. If successful here, the proposal then enters either the formal SDC Approval process or to approval process for a Partner HEI.



The decision to proceed is made on the basis that the proposal:

- is in keeping with College curriculum strategy, goals and mission;
- is compatible with strategic academic and resource plans;
- has taken due account of existing College provision;
- represents an academically valid body of knowledge;
- has sufficient evidence of demand to suggest that the programme would recruit and sustain adequate student numbers;
- can be expected to operate economically;
- has a reasonable expectation of having sufficient resources - at an institutional and programme level - to be delivered effectively;
- has identified critical resource requirements that are not covered by the normal business planning process have been identified, and that there is a reasonable expectation that these resources will be made available should the programme be validated.

### **HNC, other Pearson Provision and Higher and Degree Apprenticeships**

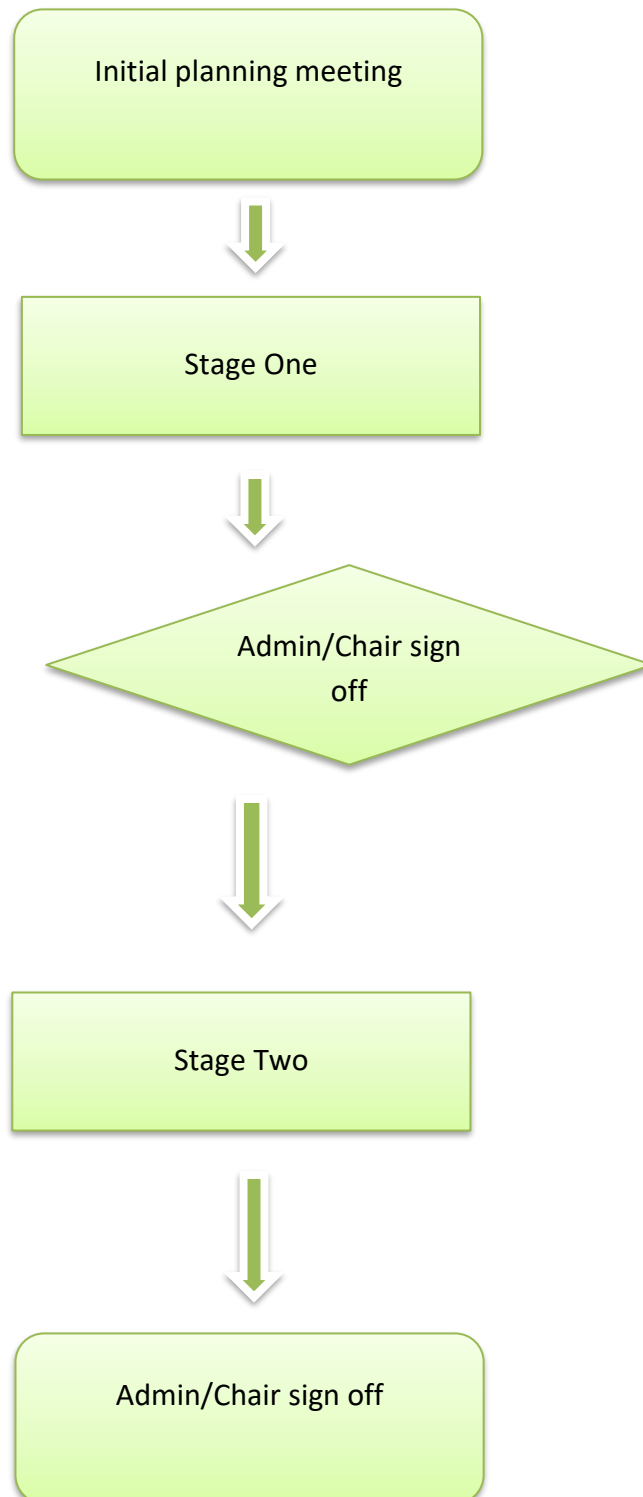
Programmes being considered by SDC which are awarded by another awarding body, or solely are delivered as a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship will follow this procedure in all cases.

However they are not required to have a stage 1 meeting, and no academic advisor is required for the stage two meeting.

### INITIAL PLANNING FOR THE FORMAL APPROVAL PROCESS

The programme approval process will involve three stages:

- Initial planning meeting
- Stage One Approval event
- Stage Two Approval event



The preliminary **Initial Planning meeting** sets the administrative parameters for the approval process, including the schedule of the Stage one and Stage two meetings, membership of each of the panel meetings, and the requirements for external and student representation. Responsibility and deadlines for the production of final approval documents are also allocated. Programme approval will involve appropriate academic staff, external advisers, cognate subject representatives, relevant HE Faculty representatives and a representative from the student body.

## **STAGE ONE APPROVAL PANEL**

Dates for the Stage One approval event will be timetabled at the Initial Planning meeting. For each programme or cluster of related programmes proposed a Stage One approval event will be organised by the HE Faculty. The Stage One meeting will be chaired by the Dean of Higher Education (or nominee). The panel will include the Heads of Department from the relevant curriculum and a Head of Department from a non-related curriculum area, and the Higher Education Coordinator from the Department. At the Stage One approval event the Panel will meet with the Programme Team to consider the programme approval documentation as set out in Section 6 of this document. This meeting will also confirm that external advisors (academic and professional/industrial) nominations have been put forward by the Programme Team to the Dean of Higher Education for approval by the College. If nominations have not been received it will be a condition of progression to Stage Two that they must be received by a date set by the chair of this meeting. In any case, all nominations should be approved at least 3 months prior to the Stage Two approval event. Submission of late nominations could result in the approval being postponed.

One of the following outcomes will be agreed at the Stage One approval event:

- Proceed
- Proceed with amendments
- Not proceed

The outcome will then be communicated to the Programme Team by the HE Faculty.

- Formal minutes of the Stage One Approval Event must be submitted within two weeks of the meeting
- Following the Stage One meeting the approval documentation, amended where required, must be signed off the Dean of Higher Education **at least three weeks** before the scheduled Stage Two approval event. Failure to produce documentation by the deadline could result in the approval event being postponed.

## **STAGE ONE APPROVAL PANEL MEMBERS**

- Dean of Higher Education (Chair)
- Secretary
- Head of Department (of Curriculum or proxy)
- Higher Education Coordinator from Department in which programme is based



- Head of Department or HE Programme Co-ordinator (non-related curriculum area)
- Research and Scholarly Activity Lead or proxy
- Higher Education Employability and Enterprise Co-ordinator

In attendance

- Programme Team in attendance

## **STAGE TWO APPROVAL PANEL**

- The Stage two approval event will be organised by the HE Quality Office.
- The Chair of the approval panel will be the Vice Principal (Curriculum, Performance and Quality). The membership of the Panel will include: Dean of HE, two external advisors (Academic and Industry/Professional), the Secretary, the Head of Department (or proxy) or the curriculum area where the proposal sits, a Head of Department or HE Lead from a non-related curriculum area, the HE Employability and Enterprise Co-ordinator, the Assistant Principal for the relevant area, a member of the student body, and the relevant programme team.
- A report will be produced following the Stage two event by the HE Quality Office; where approval has been given the report will confirm that academic standards have been met and provide the deadline for receipt of the external examiner nomination and the revised documentation to be forwarded to HE Quality Office. Once confirmed as final an electronic copy of the final documentation will be sent to the Programme Team. Confirmation must be sought from and provided by the Chair of the Approval meeting when all conditions of approval have been met.
- The criteria for approval will be:

Criteria	Stage 2 panel criteria Lead
The proposal complies with South Devon College Academic Regulations;	Dean of HE, Deputy Head of HE
The proposal reflects South Devon College strategies and all relevant policies;	Chair Assistant Principal
The aims of the award are appropriate and reflect the FHEQ;	Dean of HE Academic External Heads of Department
The programme learning outcomes are appropriate to aims of the award, and the award is in keeping with the QAA Quality Code and QAA guidance for the award and subject area;	Assistant Principal Curriculum Head of Department Academic External Industry External
There is clear and evident employability practice within the programme, suitably preparing students for employment and progression routes have been agreed	Industry external Student Dean of HE
The module structure, curriculum content and module learning outcomes will ensure that students completing the programme will have met the programme learning outcomes;	All
The assessment process proposed is appropriately inclusive and rigorous, and allows students to demonstrate the achievement indicated in the learning outcomes;	Academic External Heads of Department Student
The assessment methods are appropriate to the award and target student group;	Academic External Heads of Department Student
The assessment criteria allow different levels of achievement to be clearly distinguished;	Academic External Heads of Department
The staff contributing to the delivery of the award are sufficient in number and suitably qualified;	Chair Dean of HE

	Curriculum Head of Department
Any specific resources required to support the programme have been identified and will be provided;	Assistant Principal Curriculum Head of Department
The requirements of disability legislation and institutional disability policy have been considered and complied with;	Chair Dean of HE
Due consideration has been given to the equality impact of assessment and how the reasonable needs of disabled students can be accommodated	Chair Dean of HE
In cases of revalidation, that the previous period of validation has been evaluated in a forensic manner, and that the proposal responds to identified issues.	Curriculum Head of Department
Confirmation of LDCS and HECOS Codes	Chair

The Stage two panel may recommend one of the following criteria:

- (i) The programme is approved without amendment
- (ii) The programme is approved subject to specific conditions including the dates by which they should be satisfied
- (iii) The programme is approved under either (i) or (ii) above, with a recommendation that the programme team consider certain matters on which they would report back to the meeting
- (iv) Reject the programme with advice to the programme team as to the reasons for doing so.

#### STAGE TWO APPROVAL PANEL MEMBERS

- VP Curriculum, Performance & Quality (Chair)
- Dean of Higher Education
- Externals (Industry & Academic)
- Secretary (Deputy Head of Higher Education)
- Head of Department (of Curriculum or proxy)
- Head of Department or HE Lead (non-related curriculum area)
- AP (of Curriculum area)
- Student Panel Member

In attendance

Programme Team in attendance

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Recommendations will not prevent a validation from either progressing or from being approved. If however a panel has made a recommendation(s) to the development team that is not implemented the team must provide a rationale for their decision.

Conditions are defined as either:

- Academic- these must normally be addressed satisfactorily before the proposal can be approved and students enrolled
- Documentary - these would not normally preclude approval and delivery of the proposal and the deadline set for them would usually reflect this position. There are also specific administrative requirements to be met subsequent to the event.

## FINDING APPROPRIATE EXTERNAL ADVISORS

Programme Teams must identify nominations for appropriate Industry/Professional and External Academic advisors using:

- Members of Industry Liaison Panels for relevant degree cluster
- Employer forums, regional and local business organisations
- Contacts from other institutions with similar programmes
- Contacts from curriculum areas within the College (providing the nominee is not disqualified from nomination because of previous contact with the College)
- UCAS website to identify other institutions offering similar programmes who may provide academic advisors
- Other colleges in the region offering similar programmes

All external adviser nominations should be approved at least 3 months prior to the Stage Two approval event. The College's Industry and Academic Advisor Nomination forms should be used for this.

## PROGRAMME DOCUMENTATION FOR APPROVAL

The documentation for programme approval will comprise:

1 *Approval Document* produced on the College template including, inter alia:

- History and context of programme
- Key drivers for programme design
- Relevant external and internal regulations/policies/procedures
- Programme delivery (including Equality & Diversity)
- Work-based learning, preparation for employment and personal development
- Currency, scholarship and resourcing to support the programme.
- Staff Curriculum Vitae

2 *Programme Specification* for each award produced on the College template and including, inter alia:

- Programme Details
- Brief Description of the programme
- Details of Accreditation by a Professional/Statutory Body (if appropriate)
- Exceptions to South Devon College Regulations
- Programme Aims
- Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)
- Distinctive Features
- Student Numbers
- Progression routes
- Admissions Criteria
- Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement
- Programme Structure
- Explanation and Mapping of Learning Outcomes, Teaching & Learning and Assessment

3 *Module Records* - which contain further details to support the Programme Specification. These align with recommendations within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

4 *Operational Specification* document - this document is important at the point of approval as it aids to assure that appropriate operational activities, to deliver and further enhance the standards and quality defined within the Programme Specification, are planned for. For programmes which include an HA/DA additional fields are required to demonstrate how the HA/DA is delivered

There is guidance for the completion of these documents in Approval Document Guidance.

## **FURTHER DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS**

Subsequent to Stage two, a review of both the programme handbook and the work placement handbook (if applicable) is undertaken by the programme team. The review as these documents rely on the contextualisation of standard College templates the nature and content of the documents will therefore not alter dramatically.

### **3 Minor and Major Changes**

Any changes to modules and programmes are in normal consequence of the Annual Programme Monitoring and comments from all stakeholders.

The minor and major change features are distinct:

#### **Minor Change**

A Minor change is defined as a minor change to the subject matter, method of delivery, teaching learning or assessment strategy of an existing validated module or programme of

study, that does not affect the programme Learning Outcomes and has no significant resource implications. This may include:

- Minor changes in assessment strategies and weightings for modules; e.g. 100% exam to 50% exam: 50% coursework
- The introduction of a new optional module (i.e. not part of the core modules) of up to 20 credits in size
- The introduction of a new delivery mode for a single module of up to 20 credits in size; e.g. Move from face-to-face to distance learning. NB: the introduction of a new delivery mode greater than 20 credits is classed as a Major Amendment
- A change to the title of an individual module

**Note:**

- A change to the title of a degree programme or award is classed as a Major change
- A change should not be considered in isolation; if a combination of other previous Minor changes impacts greatly on the original philosophy of a programme, a Major change or Revalidation must be considered.
- Significantly changing the Programme Learning Outcomes. A major change can at its maximum change up to one quarter of the credit value of the award.

**Major Change**

A Major change is defined as a major change to the subject matter, method of delivery, teaching learning or assessment strategy of existing validated modules or programme of study. Changes can affect the programme Learning Outcomes to less than one quarter of the credit value of the award and may have resource implications. This may include:

- Changes to the programme structure
- Development of a new pathway
- Change or introduction of a new delivery mode for a programme
- Change to the title of a programme

Within the category of Major change, there are different levels of change and the amount of information required shall depend on this, i.e. change of title would require a rationale but no details or programme structure if it is the same.

**Note:** a change should not be considered in isolation; if a combination of other previous Major changes impacts greatly on the original philosophy of a programme, a revalidation must be considered.

**MINOR CHANGE PROCEDURE**

A Minor Change Form should be completed with guidance from the HE Quality Office. Any change must have the approval of the External Examiner. The proposed change must be cross referenced to the Annual Programme Monitoring or Programme Committee Meeting.

The Minor change will be presented by the Programme Leader. A virtual Committee (which can be virtual) which is chaired by the Quality office along with two members agreed by HE Curriculum Development Group. The committee will assure itself that the proposed amendment

is appropriate, timely, not changing the Programme Learning Outcomes and has the support of the External Examiner.

The Committee will evaluate the impact of the change on the students' experience and where appropriate will assure itself that the students most likely to be affected have been consulted.

Approval may be given subject to conditions and/or recommendations which once met will allow the application to be reported to Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB) for information.

## **MAJOR CHANGE PROCEDURE**

The Major Change form should be completed with guidance from the HE Quality Office and requires proof of consultation with the External Examiner regarding the proposed changes.

The Major Change is presented by the Programme Leader to HEAB. The Programme Leader will attend the meeting to defend the proposed change. The committee will assure itself that the proposed change is appropriate, timely, cross referenced does not change the programme learning outcomes and has the support of the External Examiner. Once the Committee has approved the change in principle, a date will be agreed for Part Two: Major Amendment Validation.

Part Two requires the amendment of the main validation document and programme specification to include the approved changes. It is vital that the document presents a well-formed programme which clearly integrates the all the approved changes.

HEAB will establish a suitable panel of experienced HE Staff and the Dean of Higher Education.

The panel will assure itself that the major amendment:

- Does not invalidate the programme title
- Does not create an imbalance in the assessment loads
- Does not negatively impact on staff workloads
- Is designed to enhance quality and student experience and does not compromise academic standards

The proposed major amendment must be consistent with any specific conditions from the validation panel and/or accrediting body. The minutes of the validation meeting including the panel decision will be reported HEAB.

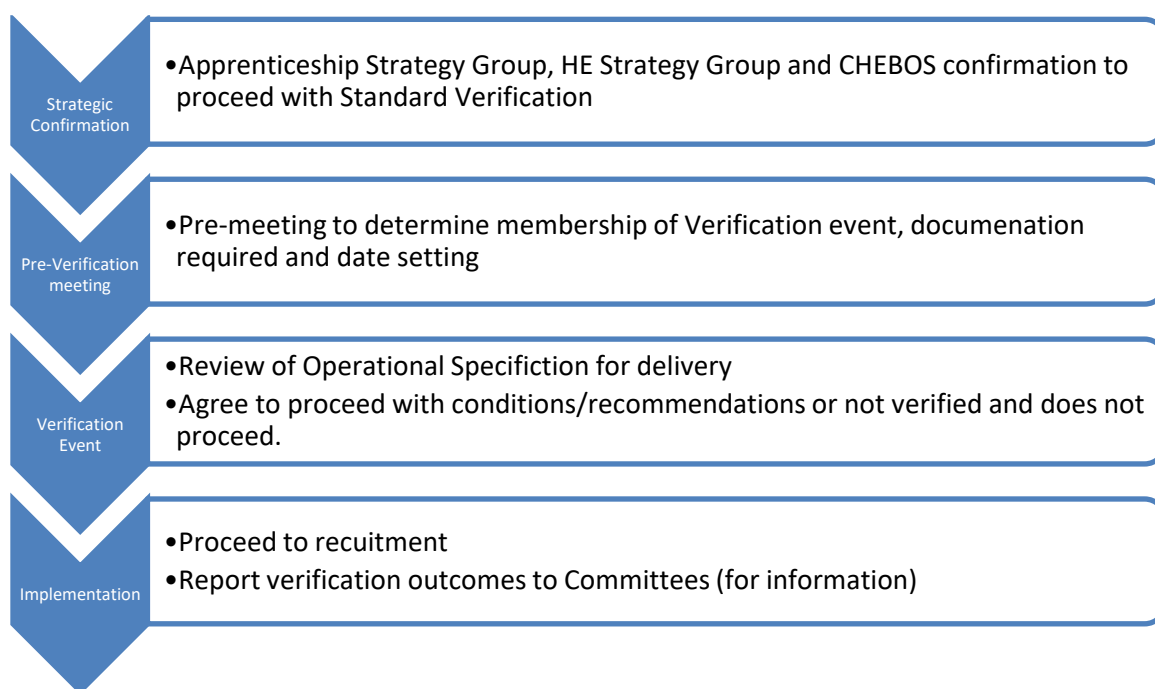
In the case of the approval of a Higher Apprenticeship (including a Degree Apprenticeship)

## Additional areas for Stage 2 overview of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Background

There are a range of models of HA/DA depending on a number of factors, not least: framework of standard; if they were considered at the point of approval or after the approval of the qualification; the arrangements for employers; if they are in fill or bespoke; how recruitment, enrolment and admissions operate.

These models are complex, and programme leads have indicated it would be of benefit for a QA process to be in place to support the process oversight.

The following procedure provides a supportive structure for those involved with the HA/DA prior to commencement of delivery.



The flow chart in Appendix A sets out the decision for which approval route to take.



## Stage 2 Event

### Members

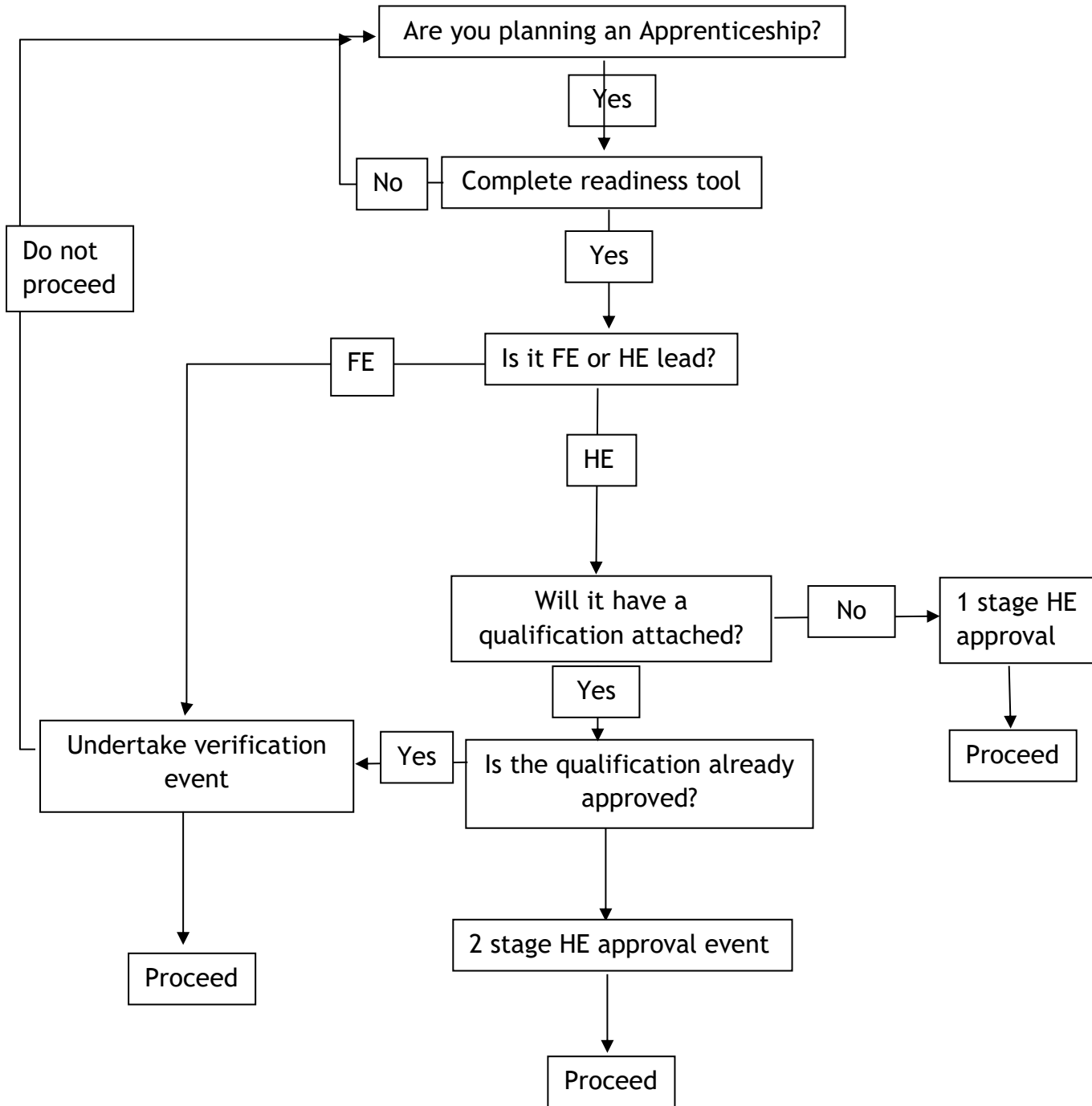
- Programme Manager
- If applicable Training Officer
- Head of Department for Curriculum area
- Assistant Principal
- For HA only - Dean of HE
- Head of Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement
- Head of Department (with experience of HA/DA)

### HA/DA Operational Specification Contents for consideration at Verification Event

- a. Standard Background
- b. Proposed employers
- c. Employer requirements (progress tracking and communication back to employers (data release forms))
- d. 20% off the job and requirements of academic commitment
- e. Confirmation from employers on knowledge and skills opportunities
- f. Delivery model/s available
- g. Application process
  - i. SDC HE
  - ii. APL
  - iii. Apprenticeship Sign up
- h. Enrolment Process inc. CMA requirements
- i. Placement supervision process and team, including CPD requirements for team members if required
- j. Delivery team (inc. EPA Lead)
- k. EPA arrangements
- l. Funding arrangements
- m. Fall-back qualification (if applicable)
- n. Mapping of the Standard - Programme Specification being used - definitive
- o. Any bridging work required, or activity alongside to fulfil the assessment plan
- p. Review Period

## 4 Appendices

### Planning for Apprenticeships Starts



## Definitions of Elements and Components of Assessment

Each module is assessed by one or more elements of assessment. The formally approved Module Record defines the proportion of the module's assessment derived from each element and this cannot be amended without following due process. Each element of assessment may contain more than one component of assessment

The components of assessment are subject to annual review by module and programme teams; the nature and proportion of marks they contribute must be defined in the Module Record before the module is offered for selection by students for study in the following academic year. If the review results in a change, this must be approved by the Department Higher Education Coordinator and the Curriculum Set up within EBS updated by a Business Partner

Element Code and Title	Definition
E1 Examination	<p>A task or set of tasks relating to a particular area of study. Written exams usually occur at the end of a period of learning and assess whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. They may be 'seen', where the student is aware in advance of the task(s) they are expected to complete, or 'unseen', where the tasks are only revealed 'on the day'. In an 'open-book' exam, a student is allowed to use a selection of reference materials during the assessment. The tasks set as part of a written exam may be essay, short answer, problem, multiple-choice or computer-based. Examinations take place under timed conditions.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Most assessments under this category will be formal (normally end-of-module) examinations, arranged centrally via Quality Office</li><li>2. Examinations are always percentage marked.</li></ol>
E2 Clinical Examination	<p>A clinical examination taken under timed conditions. A clinical examination can be either percentage marked or pass/fail. Examples include: OSCE - Observed Structured Clinical Examination, OSPA - Observed Simulated Practice Assessment, ISPE - Individual Structured Practical Examination, ISCE - Individual Structured Clinical Examination. AT - Aptitude Tests</p>

T1 Test	<p>A task or set of tasks relating to a particular area of study taken in a similar way to a formal examination (see E1 for definition), but normally held in a timetabled slot and room for the module. They may be 'seen', where the student is aware in advance of the task(s) they are expected to complete, or 'unseen', where the tasks are only revealed 'on the day'. In an 'open-book' test, a student is allowed to use a selection of reference materials during the assessment. The tasks set as part of a written test may be essay, short answer, problem solving, multiple-choice or computer-based. Tests can also be undertaken as 'Take home' allowed for a time constrained period of normally no longer than 24hrs to complete.</p> <p>Tests can produce a percentage mark, or a pass/fail, or both</p> <p>Notes:</p> <p>1. Most assessments in this category will be arranged through normal timetabling in the programme team and not by HE Faculty Office</p>
C1 Coursework	<p>Assignments set during the module, to assess one or more of the learning outcomes. These are classified as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Written assignment, including essay.</li> <li>b. Report. A description, summary or other account of an experience or activity.</li> <li>c. Dissertation. An extended piece of written work, often the write-up of a final-year project.</li> <li>d. Portfolio. A collection of work that relates to a given topic or theme, which has been produced over a period of time. Typically, a portfolio contains a number of pieces of work, usually connected by a topic or theme. Students are usually required to organise the collection of examples and the portfolio often includes some reflective accounts (diaries/logs). Examples of work that students may collect in a portfolio in education include essays around particular teaching methods, lesson plans, teaching materials that they have developed and a report about the teaching experience itself. Examples also include a creative arts portfolio which may contain a strong practical element. This does not include a portfolio which documents clinical competencies normally assessed through practice.</li> <li>e. Project output. Output from project work, often of a practical nature, other than a dissertation or written</li> </ol>

	<p>report. Students are assessed on the output of a period of project work (other than in the form of a dissertation or written report). Examples are diverse and include the staging of a play or other performance, a piece of artwork, a new product or a poster.</p> <p>f. Set exercise. Questions or tasks designed to assess the application of knowledge, analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills. This includes tests (written or computer-based) of knowledge or interpretation that are not conducted under examination conditions.</p>
P1 Practical	<p>Assignments set during the module, to assess one or more of the learning outcomes by practical skills assessment, oral assessment or presentation.</p> <p>a. Oral assessment and presentation. Examples of oral assessments and presentations include conversations, discussions, debates, presentations and individual contributions to seminars or a viva voce exam.</p> <p>b. Practical skills assessment. Practical skills assessment focuses on whether, and/or how well, a student performs a specific practical skill or technique (or competency). Examples include clinical skills, laboratory techniques, identification of or commentary on artwork, surveying skills, language translation or listening comprehension.</p> <p>Practical can produce a percentage mark, or a pass/fail, or both</p>
A1 Assessment	<p>A generic element of assessment that enables a student to demonstrate some of the learning outcomes of a module by, for example, satisfactory attendance at seminars, performances, laboratory or practical sessions or field courses, achievement of specified competencies or attitudes, behaviour and engagement in group work. This element of assessment is always assessed as pass/fail only. This element of assessment does not need to be included on every professionally accredited programme.</p>

O Assessment (Open)	<p>An 'open book' assessment which is time-limited to 48 hours. The assessment is accessible for a 48 hour period, but the task(s) should be judged to require no longer than a maximum of 6 hours to complete. Marking criteria should be clear and there should be no other educational activity scheduled for that 48 hours. Students may access additional reference information (e.g. using their notes, books or the internet) throughout the 48 hour period, but use of enablers or provision of additional time are precluded</p> <p>Notes;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To maximise inclusivity, the time required to complete the 'open-book' assessment is very much less than the total duration for which the assessment is available.</li><li>2. For PSRB regulated programmes an 'open-book' assessment time-limited to 24 hours is permitted.</li><li>3. This is neither an 'open-book' examination nor coursework in lieu of examination.</li></ol>
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