UCEM Code of Practice

Programme Development and Validation

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1. Introduction

This chapter sets out the broad principles that guide the design and approval of UCEM programmes and modules that lead to an academic award or the award of credit by UCEM.

The document closely partners the UCEM Code of Practice chapter on Programme Monitoring, Amendment, Review and Discontinuation.

More extensive guidance for those engaged in developing a proposal for approval and subsequent validation is set out in UCEM's Programme Development and Validation Procedure.

2. Key Principles

The following key principles apply to all provision offered by UCEM and must be satisfied by any new programme. All provision must be:

- Designed to link to UCEM institutional strategy, Learning and Teaching Strategy and Widening Participation Strategy and support the object of its Royal Charter;

- Designed to ensure that threshold academic standards are consistently set and maintained;

- Designed to deliver the highest quality learning opportunities for students;

- Sufficiently supported in terms of financial, human and physical resources to ensure effective delivery;

- Provide equal opportunities for students and aim to provide resources that celebrate a diverse student community.

UCEM ensures that student voice is considered as part of the programme development and validation process.

3. Purpose of validation

UCEM is responsible for the quality and standards of all provision leading to award or credits made in its name. The purpose of validation is therefore to ensure that the academic standards of UCEM awards are maintained and also meet relevant national academic standards. The validation process also reviews the quality of learning opportunities to ensure that they are appropriate for students to achieve the academic standard of the required award.

Validation involves the critical evaluation of the proposal to ensure that:

- Academic standards are appropriate to the level of the award.

- Learning resources are appropriate and relevant to the type, level, and volume of learning to be undertaken.

- The aims and learning objectives of the programme are achievable.

- Curriculum reflects the aims and learning outcomes.

- Learning outcomes reflect the level and credit value of the module.

- Assessment methods are appropriate to the learning outcomes and the diversity of UCEM's student cohort.

- Learning and Teaching strategies are appropriate to the level and in line with institutional Learning and Teaching strategy.

- The proposal is in line with UCEM's Widening Participation Strategy.

4. Authority for programme and module validation

The Academic Board retains ultimate authority for the approval of all programmes and modules leading to a UCEM award or credit. It, however, delegates the detailed scrutiny and approval of new programmes and modules to a validation panel. The validation panel will decide whether a programme should be approved and if it should be subject to conditions and recommendations. Validation panels are convened especially for each event with the size and composition of the panel reflecting the scale and complexity of the event. The approval of the composition of validation panels rests with the Director of Academic Quality.

Academic Board also fully delegates the detailed scrutiny and approval of apprenticeship programmes to an apprenticeship approval event.

Where a programme has a condition attached, Academic Board delegates authority to the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee to monitor and approve the resolution of any such conditions.

5. Programme Development

The development of any new programmes must take into account internal and external reference points including:

- UCEM Learning and Teaching Strategy and Widening Participation Strategy.

- UCEM Learning Design Centre resources.

- QAA Qualifications Framework.

- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.

- UK Quality Assurance Agency for High Education Characteristics Statements.

- Credit Frameworks.

- UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Subject Benchmark Statements.

- Relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory competencies and relevant apprenticeship standards.

Development of new programmes and modules will involve a range of UCEM teams. Ownership of the preparation of new academic awards and modules for validation rests with the Dean of School and the Dean of School (Academic) with input from the Digital Learning and Engagement team. At the module development stage, ownership of the process transfers to the Digital Learning and Engagement team in collaboration with the School of the Built Environment.

6. Stages of the validation process

UCEM operates a proportionate approach to programme approval which is based on an assessment of the risk inherent in the nature of a particular proposal. UCEM operates different processes based on the type of provision being proposed. The nature of the event will influence what stages will need to be completed. The Director of Academic Quality is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate approval route is followed. Please refer to Appendix A and the procedure for further detailed information. The validation of UCEM programmes is divided into a number of key stages as follows:

Approval of the business case - All programmes require initial consent by the Executive Team which comprises an evaluation of the business case. The business case approval includes considerations of alignment with UCEM's strategic vision and confidence in the identified market, financial viability, resource implications including their scale and timing.

Approval of the academic case - Academic case approval by Academic Board follows on from business case approval and considers the objectives of the programme or award and its accessibility to a range of potential learners and its strategic fit in terms of the UCEM academic offer including international attractiveness.

Internal scrutiny – Internal scrutiny allows for the proposal to be reviewed internally prior to validation. Consideration is given to the logic and content of proposals and to review evidence of engagement with employers.

Validation event – Entails peer scrutiny by a validation panel made up of academic and professional expertise relevant to the subject-matter of the programme.

Apprenticeship programme approval – an apprenticeship programme approval event is required for new 'apprenticeship programmes.' If the 'apprenticeship programme' also contains a new academic award the apprenticeship approval can be combined with the academic validation as long as additional apprenticeship documentation is provided and there is appropriate expertise on the validation panel.

Centre and qualification approval – If the 'apprenticeship programme' has within it an academic qualification that will be delivered via a third-party awarding organisation, UCEM would need to seek centre and qualification approval.

Application for approval to deliver an End Point Assessment (EPA) for a particular Apprenticeship Standard – Where an 'apprenticeship programme' has an integrated EPA where UCEM is delivering, marking, awarding, and claiming the apprenticeship certificate, then UCEM would need to apply to be accepted onto the appropriate ESFA register to deliver the End Point Assessment for any new Apprenticeship Standards.

Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) Accreditation – Accreditation involves the review that the programme provides certain competencies and requirements for practice and membership of a profession as specified by a PSRB. Normally accreditation is a distinct exercise which is undertaken separately following successful validation of a new programme.

7. Conduct of validation events

Members of the validation panel will normally receive the programme validation documentation at least two weeks in advance of the event.

Following the detailed scrutiny of the validation documentation and the subsequent discussion with UCEM staff and students, the panel will come to one of the following conclusions:

i. **Approve the proposals without conditions or recommendations.**
ii. **Approve the proposals with conditions and/or recommendations.**
iii. **Not to approve the proposals in their present form, with reasons.**

The panel should specify the period for validation of the programme, which is normally for 5 years.

Conditions should only be imposed to rectify significant deficiencies in the programme. More minor issues can be dealt with by recommendations.

Where conditions are set these must be satisfied before the programme can be considered validated. The intended start date of the programme should be postponed if necessary.

The outcome of all validation events will be reported to Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board.

Appendix A: Types of approval

UCEM STAGES OF THE APPROVAL PROCESS

#		SLT Approval	Academic Case Approval by Academic Board	Internal Scrutiny Event	Academic Validation Event	Apprenticeship Approval Event	Application for Centre or Qualification Approval or for Approval to Deliver an Apprenticeship
1	**Full Programme Validation** Validation of a new academic award (without apprenticeship provision).	X	X	X	X		
2	**Full Apprenticeship Programme Validation** Validation of an apprenticeship programme that includes a new academic award.	X	X	X	X	X	
3.a	**Framework Validation** Validation of additional modules to be added to an existing programme. This may include the addition of a new route or award.	X	X		X		
3.b	**Apprenticeship Programme Framework** Validation of additional modules to be added to an existing programme and an apprenticeship route. This may include the addition of a new route or award.	X	X		X	X	
4	**Validation of a single module / microcredential** Validation of a single module or micro-credential which carries academic credit but is not associated with a full programme of study or award.	X	X		X		
5.a	**Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to an existing Award with an integrated EPA** To add an apprenticeship route to a UCEM programme with an integrated EPA.	X				X	X
5.b	**Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to an existing Award without an integrated EPA** To add an apprenticeship route to a UCEM programme without an integrated EPA.	X				X	
6	**Approval for apprenticeship programme including delivering another providers** Approval for UCEM to introduce a new apprenticeship programme which includes another provider's content and award.	X				X	
7	**Approval for Apprenticeship Support** Approval for UCEM to provide the apprenticeship support only. The award and delivery are undertaken by another provider(s)	X				X	

*Where approval is sought for both an academic award and apprenticeship programme the processes of Academic Validation and Apprenticeship Approval can be combined.

Appendix B: Related Policies and Procedures

UCEM Programme Development and Validation Procedure (Internal access only opens new window)

Briefing Document for Validation, Periodic Review and Re-validation Panel Members (Internal access only opens new window)

Guidance for Programme Teams preparing for Validation, Periodic Review and Re-validation (Internal access only opens new window)