



Brunel
University
London

Programme Approval Protocol

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Programme Approval Protocol

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol provides the operational timeline and requirements for the development and approval (design), marketing and recruitment (launch), and setup (implementation) for new degree programmes, including programme variations (as defined in [Senate Regulations 2 and 3](#)); and all research degree programmes (as defined in [Senate Regulation 5](#)) involving formal taught elements (e.g. professional doctorates).¹
- 1.2 This protocol applies to all staff, academic and operational teams, with a role or formal responsibility in the programme approval process.
- 1.3 The protocol covers the following:
- The overall process for new programme approval, from College consideration to launch
 - The operational timeline and process for new programmes following strategic approval.
 - The role of Recognised Programme Developers (RPDs) in the programme approval process
 - The role of the Programme Approval Panel
 - The process for monitoring and supporting new programme development and approval
 - And appendices providing guidance on:
 - An overview of the design, launch and implementation phases for new programmes.
 - Each specific “event” in the operational timelines
 - Programme technical specifications and operational set up meetings
 - For guidance on the approval of new PhD routes, please see Additional Guidance section.
- 1.4 This Protocol aligns with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education's Advice and Guidance for Course Design and Development](#), and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the [European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG), section 1.2.
- 1.5 For apprenticeship programmes, this Protocol is informed by the Education

¹ The development, scrutiny and approval of short courses (i.e., non-award-bearing provision) are subject to a separate policy.

and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) [Apprenticeship Funding Rules](#); and Ofsted's [Education Inspection Framework](#).

1.6 All documents relating to programme approval are available [here](#).

2 Principles of Programme Approval

2.1 Programmes are designed, developed and scrutinised against a range of reference points, i.e. QAA Quality Code, Subject Benchmark statements, Characteristic statements, FHEQ level descriptors and appropriate PSRB's competency framework to ensure that:

- the academic standard is commensurate with the proposed award(s);
- the student experience will be of appropriate quality to support the achievement of the required standard;
- the requirements of the University's Education Strategy; and the expectations of external bodies such as the OfS; and where relevant, the ESFA and Ofsted, are met.

2.2 This protocol operates on the following expectations:

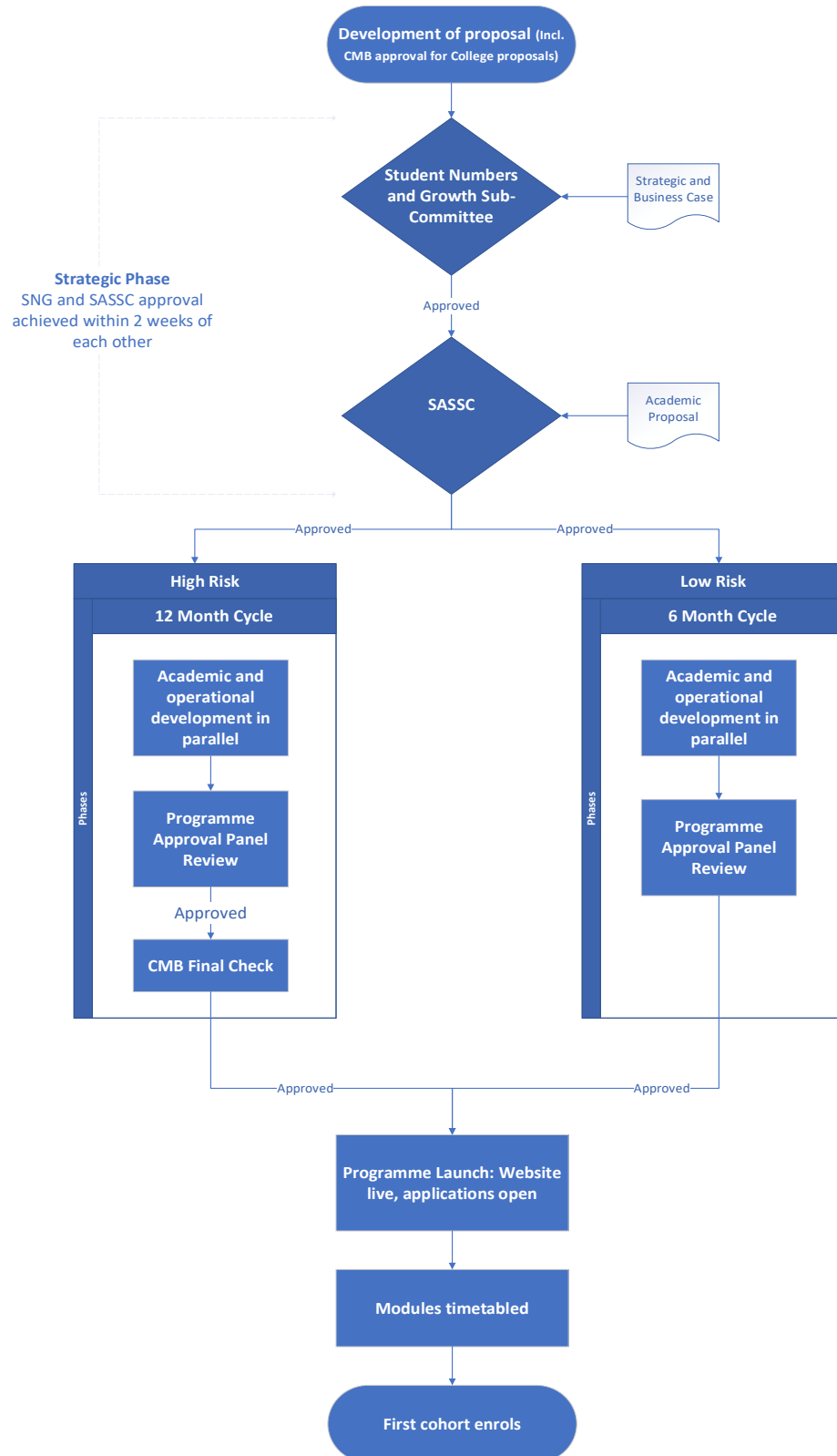
- Deadlines for programme development and academic approval are set by Student Number Group (SNG)
- That SASSC will monitor the progress of new programmes given strategic approval and will intervene and support where required
- That programme development teams will proactively engage with operational teams to ensure efficient and technically sound programme design
- That all teams as identified in Section 6 will adhere to the operational protocol and timelines

3 Deadlines

3.1 A new programme should be live for applications no later than 12 months before the first cohort is expected to enroll. This provides time for marketing and also timely and organised timetabling of the programme.

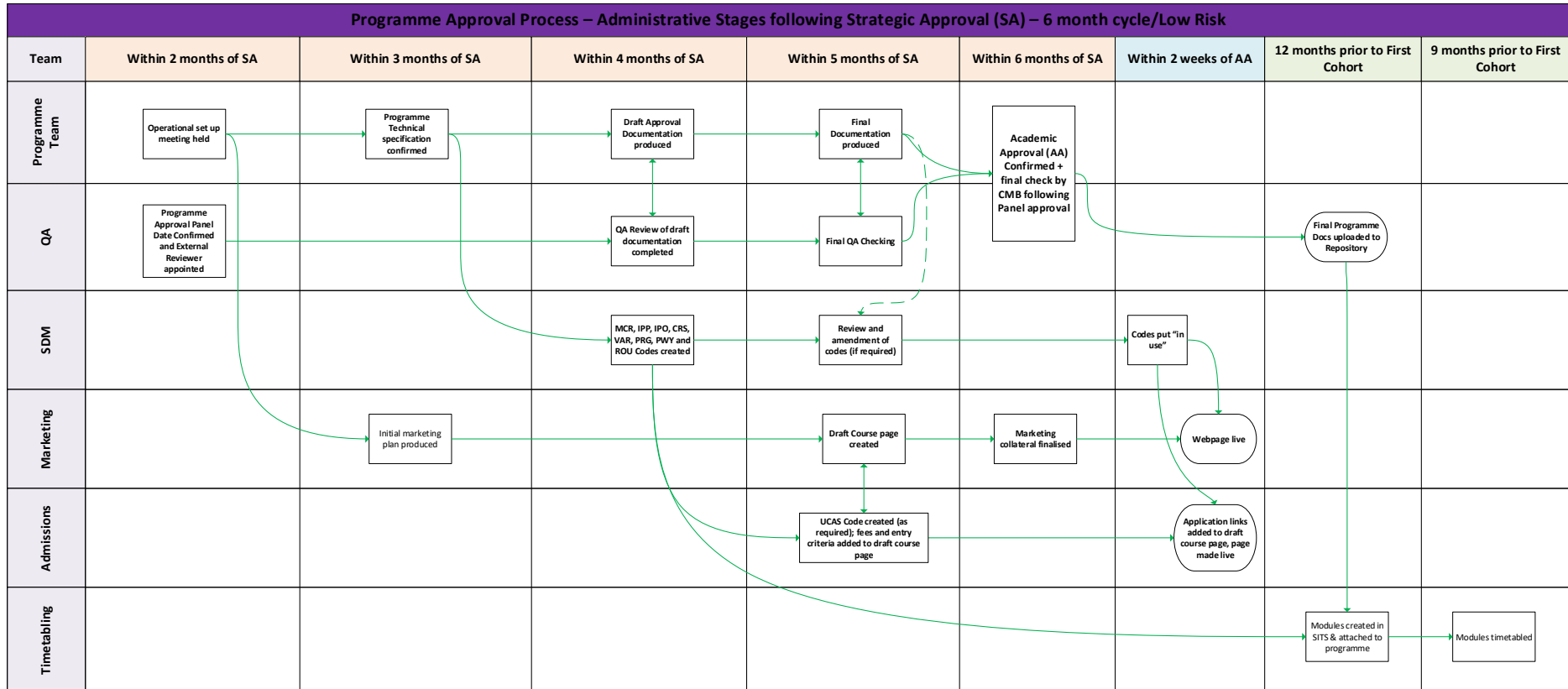
3.2 Undergraduate (UG) programmes should be approved, set up, and open for applications before the UCAS deadline. Any delays will be closely monitored by SASSC.

4 New Programme Approval Overall Process

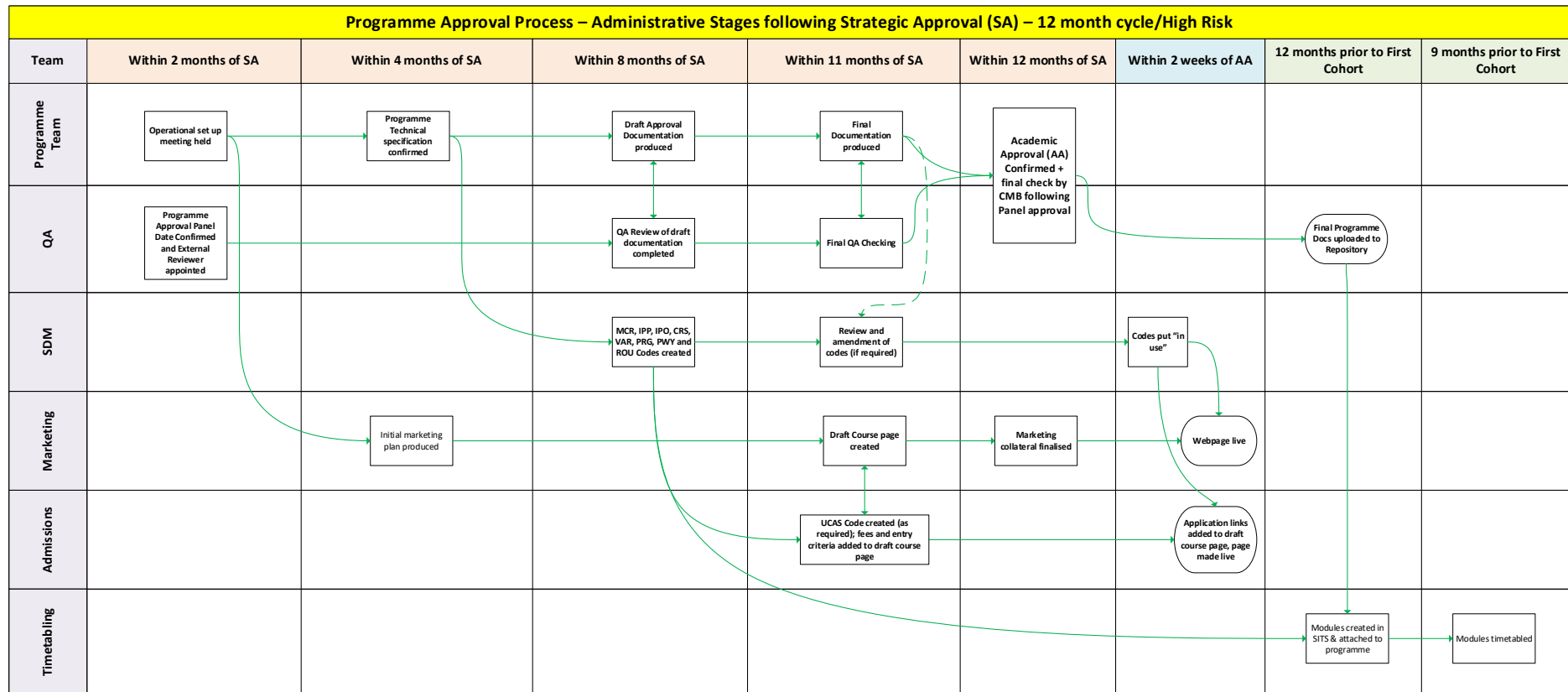


5 New Programme Approval Cycles

6 Month Cycle (low risk)



12 Month Cycle (high risk)



6 Strategic Approval

- 6.1 Strategic approval of new programmes is undertaken by Student Numbers and Growth Group (SNG) and Strategic Approval Scrutiny Sub-Panel (SASSC) according to the process and timeline presented under Section 4.
- 6.2 All new programme proposals must be submitted for strategic approval through a Business Case, supported by a Marketing Report and Financial Costing Analysis. These documents must be reviewed and approved by the SNG before progressing to strategic academic approval by SASSC, using the [New Programme Approval Form](#)
- 6.3 Where a new programme is given strategic approval by SNG, it will also determine and assign a “risk level” to it, which will set the maximum timeline for the programme to undergo academic and operational development and academic approval and be live for applications.
- 6.4 SASSC will regularly review the progress of programme developments, adjust deadlines as necessary, and may withdraw strategic approval for inactive or stalled developments.

Risk Level	Maximum Development Timeline	Indicative Characteristics
High Risk	12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A programme in a new discipline• An entirely new undergraduate programme or those with complex elements• An apprenticeship• A programme with significant regulatory complexity or new resource requirements
Low Risk	6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A master’s programme• Programme Variations - development of a programme which is a variation of an existing programme (includes existing programmes to be delivered through a TNE arrangement).

- 6.5 NB: The timescales listed above are the maximum time within which a new programme is expected to be taken from strategic approval to the programme being open for applications. Therefore, both high and low risk programmes may complete the programme approval process at an accelerated rate, but only on the basis that the quality of design can be maintained, and the operational set up is not put at risk.

7 Academic Development

- 7.1 Academic development refers to the process undertaken by an academic team to design a new degree programme. This includes:
- The early identification of a Recognised Programme Developer to advise on and support the development of a new programme
 - Early identification, nomination and engagement with External Reviewer to obtain subject-specialist advice and guidance
 - Engagement with external/sector academic benchmarks and guidelines
 - Engagement with industry/professional bodies
 - Co-creation/design with students
 - The production of a programme specification and block outlines which meet the University's academic and operational requirements, and reflect the strategic approval
- 7.2 Detailed guidance on academic development is provided under Appendix A

8 Operational Development

- 8.1 Operational development refers to the processes undertaken by different administrative teams to enable new programme approval. Detailed guidance on the teams involved, and their individual tasks and responsibilities, is presented under Appendix B

9 Academic Approval

- 9.1 Academic Approval refers to the formal consideration and approval of a new programme by the University's Programme Approval, through scrutiny of specific documentation.
- 9.2 Detailed guidance on academic approval is provided under Appendix C, with terms of reference for the Programme Approval Panel provided under Appendix D.

10 Committee Responsibilities for Programme Approval

Committee	Responsibility for Programme Approval
Student Numbers and Growth Sub Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SNG ensures that proposals align with Brunel's strategic objectives and financial sustainability. It reviews and approves the business case for new programmes, which is assessed alongside the marketing report and financial costing analysis to determine viability and demand and propose programmes for academic scrutiny to SASSC.
Strategic Approval Scrutiny Sub-Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve new programmes on a strategic basis, allowing for formal academic development. 2. To monitor the progress of programmes given strategic approval and support where necessary 3. To adjust the timeline for programme proposals if delayed. It may withdraw approval for inactive/stalled proposals.
Programme Approval Panel	To approve new programmes on an academic basis (allowing for programme launch).
College Management Board	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutiny and approval of all new programmes to be proposed for strategic approval by the University. NB. the internal College process for scrutiny and development <u>prior</u> to CMB consideration is to be determined at College level. 2. Final review of any high-risk programme approved by the Programme Approval Panel, prior to launch. This is undertaken to ensure that all necessary resources are/will be in place in order to launch the programme
College Education Committee	To note the approval of new programmes via QAM Report to CEC
Senate	To note the approval of new programmes

11 Externality

11.1 Externality is critical to programme development and academic approval, and is undertaken by the University in two forms:

- **Engagement with external stakeholders during the academic development phase** – Programme design teams should seek the advice and critique of external stakeholders as part of the programme design phase, such as academics and representatives from industry or professional bodies.
- **External review and approval of a new programme** – External Reviewers will engage early at the development stage to support the design of a new programme. External Reviewers will submit their feedback report for consideration by the Programme Approval Panel. Programme Design Teams must nominate External Reviewers for this task using the “External Reviewer - Nomination Form” available [here](#). All nominations for External Reviewers are approved by the Head of Quality Assurance. More information is available in Appendix D
- **Role of External Reviewers in Programme Approval Panels:** Until programmes are placed under a full review cycle, External Reviewers may be invited to serve on the Programme Approval Panel if there is insufficient time to engage them during the design and development stage.

11.2 For programme approvals involving significant collaborative activity and/or transnational education, at least one of the External Reviewers must have significant experience in these areas.

12 Student Involvement in Programme Design

12.1 Student involvement in the programme approval process should enable co-creation, meaning that students should be involved in both the design and approval of a new programme.

- **Design** – Programme design teams should actively engage with current and former students on the design of a new programme. This may be through Boards of Studies meetings, surveys, or through student attendance at relevant design meetings.
- **Approval** – the role of students in the formal scrutiny and approval of a new programme is outlined in Appendix D. Opportunities for student involvement in Programme Approval Panel will be advertised via the [Union of Brunel Students](#) and the University’s [Job shop](#). Further information on the involvement of students in Quality Assurance Events can be found in the Policy for Student Participation in Quality Assurance available [here](#).

13 Technical Specifications and Operational Set up Meetings

Technical Specifications

13.1 Within 1 to 3 months of strategic approval (for a 6-month development cycle) or 2 to 4 months (12-month cycle), programme development teams are required to confirm with a very high level of confidence the “Technical Specification” of a new programme, which is contained with sections 1 to 23 of a programme specification template (available [here](#)). Information requirements include, amongst other items:

- Home College, Department and Division and, if applicable, contributing College, Department and Division
- Associated Institution (where teaching, assessment or other aspect of the programme is delivered by another institution)
- Accreditation details (especially important if this is required in order for the programme to be offered)
- Final award(s) and FHEQ Level of Award
- Programme title
- Normal length of programme (in months) for each mode of study
- Programme intakes (September, January etc.)
- Modes of study (full time, part time) and delivery (on campus, online)
- Intermediate awards and titles with FHEQ Level of Award
- HECoS Code
- Admission Requirements
- Other relevant information e.g. study abroad, placements etc.
- Programme regulations not specified in Senate Regulations. It’s very important for operational teams to know as early as possible in the development phase if the programme will require regulations that sit outside of the University’s standard ones.

Operational Set up Meetings

13.2 Under this protocol, Programme development teams are required to organise an “operational setup meeting” to help understand the requirements of a programme technical specification, and discuss specific needs/design principles with the relevant operational teams to ensure that programme set up is possible and can happen in parallel with academic development of the programme.

13.3 The operational teams with whom a programme development team should engage with include, but are not limited to:

Department	Email contact
The College’s Quality Assurance Business Partner	quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk
SITS Data Management	sdm@brunel.ac.uk
The College’s Timetabling Business Partner	timetabling-staff@brunel.ac.uk

College's Marketing Business Partner	
Admissions	UG developments: lucy.kettle@brunel.ac.uk PGT Developments: emily.griffiths@brunel.ac.uk
Awarding	awards-staff@brunel.ac.uk
Professional Development Centre	Mohamed.Rahman@brunel.ac.uk

Appendices

Appendix A: Guidance on Programme Development

Recognised Programme Developers (RPD)

Programme approval at Brunel University London is underpinned by the role of the “Recognised Programme Developer” (RPD). An RPD is an academic member of staff trained in programme design and development methods, sector expectations, university programme structure and assessment regulations, and equality, diversity, and inclusion. Additionally, in-role training is provided for RPDs without significant experience in programme development and review.

RPDs ensure appropriate expertise is brought to the programme design, scrutiny and approval process. Their role is either as a Programme Design Team member or as a member of a Panel scrutinising a programme.

A register of Recognised Programme Developers is maintained by Quality Assurance and is available [here](#).

Programme Design Teams

Every initiative to develop a new programme should include the formation of a “Programme Design Team”, which is identified at the Strategic Approval Stage. The typical composition of the team will be:

- Programme Design Leader, who is also the Lead Academic (typically)
- An RPD, normally from within the College
- At least two academic staff members from the Department/Division
- Appropriate education administration staff from within the College
- Quality Assurance Manager for the College
- External Stakeholders including professionals from practice

- For Apprenticeship programmes:
 - One of the academic members of staff must have experience of delivering apprenticeship programmes
 - Apprenticeship Hub Manager
- For programmes to be delivered online, appropriate involvement should be sought from staff with experience in online pedagogy and programme design, and from the University’s external partner for Brunel Online programmes.
- For the development of Validated Programme Elements, the Design Team should include staff from both BPC and the relevant Brunel Department/s.

Student Involvement in Programme Design

Programme Design Teams should involve current or former students in the design process. This may be through:

- Membership of the Programme Design Team and attendance at meetings
- Focus groups
- Providing feedback on key document

Stakeholder Involvement in Programme Design

Programme Design Teams must seek views and feedback during the design process from stakeholders, including: current students; former students (where relevant); employers; PSRBs; and collaborative partner organisations (where relevant).

Where an Apprenticeship programme is being developed, partnership with employers in the design of the programme is a requirement.

Appendix B: Guidance on Operational Development

Programme Development Team
QA
Marketing
SDM
Admissions
Timetabling

Lead	Event	Explanation of Event	Purpose of Event
Programme Development Team	Operational set-up meeting	<p>Following strategic approval, the Programme Team must arrange a meeting with the following operational teams to discuss the technical aspects of the new programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDM • QA • Awarding • Marketing • Admissions • Timetabling 	<p>The purpose of this event is for operational teams to understand key technical aspects of the new programme, ask questions, and help the programme team in making decisions. Additionally, the meeting may result in actions for one or more parties.</p> <p>Technical aspects of a new programme include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration • Modes of study and modes of delivery • Intake months • Progression and awarding rules • Proposed fee
QA	Programme Approval Panel Date Confirmed and External Reviewer appointed	<p>This stage involves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. QA discusses the expected timeline with the programme team 2. The appointment of an external reviewer to consider the new programme and submit feedback to be considered by the Programme Approval Panel. <p>QA will inform the date for the academic approval event and internal QA review.</p>	<p>The purpose of this event is to ensure that the scrutiny of a new programme on an academic basis is scheduled, and external expertise will feed into the process.</p>
Programme	Programme Technical	<p>Following the Operational set-up meeting and further liaison between the programme and operational teams, a</p>	<p>The purpose of this event is to “lock in” key technical aspects of the new programme, which</p>

Lead	Event	Explanation of Event	Purpose of Event
Development Team	Specification confirmed	technical specification for the new programme is produced and confirmed.	operational teams require so that they may begin programme set-up.
Marketing	The initial marketing plan produced	Following the operational set-up meeting organised by the programme team and ongoing liaison with the programme team, Marketing will create an initial marketing plan.	The purpose of this event is to ensure all stakeholders are informed of marketing actions and to identify where they may be required to provide further information.
Programme Development Team	Draft approval document produced	A draft of the documentation submitted for scrutiny at the academic approval stage will be produced. This will include, at minimum, a draft Design Summary, a draft of the Programme Specification and block outlines.	The purpose of this event is to ensure that programme design and development are on track.
QA	QA Review	This may take the form of an informal meeting organised by QA, where draft documentation produced by the programme team is discussed. The review may include members of the Independent Panel (12-month high-risk only) and/or senior academic staff from within the Programme Team's College.	The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the programme design and development are on track and to discuss and address any issues or questions. If the development is not on track, SASSC may decide to revise the approval timeline or in some cases withdraw strategic approval.
SDM	MCR, IPP, IPO, CRS, VAR, PRG, PWY and ROU Codes created	<p>Following receipt of the draft approval documentation, SDM will draft the relevant course-related records (codes) held in SITS based on the information shown in the draft documentation.</p> <p>These include but are not limited to those needed for application, the course and student records, details of the awards and progression and award rules attached, the timetabling requirements, and fee information.</p> <p>Should the programme specification be changed between the draft approval and the final approval stage, the coding will have to be reviewed and amended where necessary. Codes will not be made 'live' until an opportunity for that</p>	The purpose of this event is to be able to 'draft' the coding needed to fulfil internal and external (including statutory) requirements.

Lead	Event	Explanation of Event	Purpose of Event
		review has taken place. Note that where BPC entry is included, this multiplies the number of different codes required according to how many different Brunel routes BPC students can progress to.	
Programme Development Team	The final approval document produced	Following the QA review (or similar activity), a final version of the documentation submitted for scrutiny at the academic approval stage will be produced and submitted to QA and all operational teams by an agreed deadline. SASSC will continue to monitor the deadlines	The purpose of this event is to ensure that the documentation required for academic approval is completed and available for the Independent Panel for scrutiny.
QA	Final QA checking	This involves a final check by QA of the programme documentation before it is submitted to the Independent Panel for review.	The purpose of this event is to ensure that there are no technical errors or mistakes in the final documentation being submitted to the Independent Panel for Review.
Marketing	Draft Course Page Created	Marketing will use the programme specification and feedback from key stakeholders to create a first draft of the course page	The purpose of this event is to ensure all key information is clear on the course page and any amends requested are captured
Admissions	UCAS Code created (as required); fees and entry criteria added to draft course page	Admissions assign the UCAS code for the course (following a discussion with Marketing). Entry Criteria (both internal and external) is sourced from the Admissions Tutor and added to the draft course page. Once fees are confirmed by the Registrar, Executive Dean of College and Chair of Student Numbers and Growth Group, they will be added to the draft course page.	The purpose of this event is to advertise the UCAS course code, Entry Criteria and Fees.
SDM	Review and amendment of codes (if required)	Where 'draft' codes have to be amended between draft and final approval stages, SDM will need to review and update the proposed coding accordingly.	The purpose of this event is to be able to check draft codes (and amend where necessary) to ensure they comply with internal and external (including statutory) requirements.

Lead	Event	Explanation of Event	Purpose of Event
Programme Development Team	Academic Approval Panel Event	<p>This involves the formal scrutiny and approval of the new programme by an independent Panel organised by QA. The programme team will attend a review meeting organised by QA, which will involve a discussion between the Panel and the programme team. The outcome of this meeting will be academic approval of the new programme or the setting of conditions that must be met by the programme team in order for the new programme to be approved.</p> <p>Academic approval is not confirmed until the Chair of the Panel confirms this and QA formally communicates this to Programme and Operational Teams.</p>	The purpose of this event is to ensure that a programme meets internal and external quality expectations and that stakeholders across the University are informed that the programme can now be formally offered.
QA	Academic Approval Panel Event	This involves the formal scrutiny and approval of the new programme by the Programme Approval Panel. The outcome of this meeting will be academic approval of the new programme or the setting of conditions that the programme team must meet for the new programme to be approved.	The purpose of this event is to ensure that a programme meets internal and external quality expectations and that stakeholders across the University are informed that the programme can now be formally offered.
QA	Academic Approval (AA) Confirmed + final check by CMB following Panel approval	As above, but for high-risk programme developments, the associated College's Management Board must sign off the degree approved by the Programme Approval Panel.	The purpose of this stage is to ensure that the final design of the degree continues to adhere to the expectations and requirements of the College and University.
QA	Final Programme Docs uploaded to Repository	Once a programme has received academic approval, QA will finalise and upload the new programme's programme specification and block outlines to the University's Programme Documentation Repository and send a confirmation email to relevant staff.	The purpose of this event is to provide stakeholders within the University access to the final programme documentation for the new programme.

Lead	Event	Explanation of Event	Purpose of Event
SDM	Codes put "in use"	As and when final approval is confirmed, carry out a final check and make any changes, codes can be made 'in use' (or 'live') as appropriate.	The purpose of this event is to allow relevant applications to be made and the underlying coding structure to be attached to the applicants' (and, subsequently, students') records.
Marketing	Marketing collateral finalised	<p>Web pages will be amended following feedback, and SDM will provide Marketing with all relevant course codes.</p> <p>Admissions will add entry requirements and fees to the course page.</p> <p>All marketing touchpoints will be reviewed and updated, including the CRM (for e-comms and enquiry forms), any printed material (prospectus and subject brochures) and course listings on third party sites</p>	The purpose of this event is to update and approve all web pages and associated marketing material.
Admissions	Application links added to draft course page	The Admissions Systems team will activate the course links, which will then be passed to the Marketing team to be added to the draft course page.	The purpose of this event is to advertise the application link.
Marketing	Webpage live	Final checks are made to ensure all information is included on web pages before making live	The purpose of this event is to ensure the new programme is accurately portrayed and can be promoted effectively, driving traffic to the course page
Admissions	Applications open	Once the course page is made 'live' the course will be able to accept new applications.	Applications can now be received.
Timetabling	Modules created in SITS & attached to programme	Once programme and route codes are created by SDM we are able to create modules for each of the programmes.	To enable the creation of module "diets" for the students in each of the programmes.
Timetabling	Modules timetabled	We would gather all timetabling information for each of the modules. Once the modules have been created, we can then start to add activities and events to them.	This will allow us to produce the timetable for staff and students.

Appendix C: Academic Programme Approval

All new degree programmes are approved by the University's Programme Approval Panel. Full details of the Panel are presented under Appendix D.

For a new programme to be considered by the Programme Approval Panel, the following documents must be presented:

- Strategic Approval- New Programmes Form, SASSC Outcome Report, and any other reports produced for this stage
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (if extant)
- Accrediting body expectations (where appropriate)
- Programme Design Summary (max 20 pages) or Programme Delivery Summary
- Programme Specification(s)
- All Modular/Assessment/Study Block Outlines
- HEAR description for the programme/s (for undergraduate programmes only)
- Programme Design Endorsement Form (for collaborative cross-department or cross-college programmes)
- Where applicable, proposed amendments to Senate Regulations or University polices.

Amendments to Senate Regulations and University Policy

Where the proposed programme is to require an amendment to Senate Regulations or University Policy, this documentation will be developed alongside the programme documentation and will be submitted to the Programme Review Panel, alongside evidence of endorsement by the relevant member of staff or department, for noting.

Additional requirements for Apprenticeship Programmes

Where the programme being proposed is an Apprenticeship, the following documentation must also be submitted:

- Apprenticeship Training Plan Specification
- Completed Ofsted Readiness Assessment
- Completed programme costings
- Apprenticeship Standard
- Tripartite review form template

Programme Design Summary

The Programme Design Summary provides a narrative to support the programme specification and block outlines. This document, to be devised by the Programme Design Team, should be no more than 20 pages and must cover, at minimum, the following areas:

- Rationale for Development of the Programme (including alignment with the College and Brunel's education strategies)
- Overview of programme design phase

- Overview of programme
- Programme Structure (typically in diagrammatic form)
- Assessment strategy
- Teaching and learning strategy
- Resource requirements/impact
- Placement Support (including where students will typically undertake placements)
- For Apprenticeship Programmes:
 - A detailed explanation (with supporting examples) for how learning is to be evidenced, and how the requirement for 20% off the job training is to be monitored and ensured.
 - A detailed explanation for how the programme prepares apprentices for the End-point Assessment.
 - For integrated apprenticeships, a detailed explanation of how the University will deliver this element.
 - A detailed explanation for how the programme will manage tripartite reviews, including frequency, staffing and format.

The Programme Design Summary is to be considered alongside the programme specification and block outlines and thus there should be minimal repetition in the information provided. For Apprenticeship programmes, much of the detail expected to be covered in a Design Summary may be presented in the Training Plan specification.

Programme Delivery Summary

Where the proposal is to deliver an already approved programme through an approved collaborative partner, a Programme Delivery Summary will be produced. In this instance, the focus of the Programme Review is the delivery of the programme at/by the collaborative partner, not the programme itself or the partnership, both of which have received prior approval. Therefore, the Programme Delivery Summary should cover the following:

- Brief overview of the existing programme/award to be delivered and an explanation of any programme or block level modifications that are being proposed as part of this approval
- Detailed breakdown of staffing responsibilities by block
- Overview of physical resources at the partner and how they support/facilitate the achievement of the programme
- Student support and welfare provision to be offered by the partner and the University
- Programme administration arrangements (template provided)
- Governance arrangements
- Processes for complains, appeals and misconduct

Appendix D: Programme Approval Panel Terms of Reference

On behalf of the Senate, the Programme Approval Panel shall be responsible for the academic review, advice and formal approval of all proposed content and structure of new programmes or new pathways proposed for delivery, including significant modifications which fall outside the Programme modification process. The Programme Approval Panels are arranged by the Quality Assurance Team and act as a quality assurance mechanism to confirm that an effective scrutiny process has been conducted in accordance with the University processes and Programme Approval Protocol.

Terms of Reference

The Panel has the responsibility to:

1. Receive, review and, where satisfied, approve on an academic basis any new programme or pathway(s) or suite of programmes proposed for delivery
2. Set conditions for new programmes, which must be addressed prior to executing the Panel's responsibilities under the term of reference 1
3. To monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the University's Programme Approval Policy and related documents, making recommendations to the Student Number Group (SNG) and Senate.

Reporting

Outcomes from the Programme Approval Panel will be reported to the Student Number Group (SNG) and the relevant College Education Committee and the Senate for noting.

Frequency

The Panel will meet six times a year.

Each programme meeting will be scheduled for a maximum of 2 hours.

Composition

The panel is drawn from a selected pool of Recognised Programme Developers, which includes representation from each College, a member of the Quality Assurance Team, an external reviewer² and a student reviewer.

The Chair and a Deputy Chair are nominated on behalf of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education). The Chair will not consider any proposals proposed by their own College; in such cases, the Deputy Chair will typically lead discussions.

- Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor Quality: Education (Chair) or

² Only if not engaged in design and development of programme

- Vice Dean Education from each College (at least one selected to act as Chair or Deputy Chair³).
- At least one experienced recognised programme developer from each College
- Student Quality Advisor
- Head of Quality Assurance
- Quality Assurance Managers (Secretary)
- The Panel may invite additional attendees to meetings to provide expertise and guidance where required.

For each programme being submitted to the Panel for review, the relevant programme development lead will be invited to attend the meeting. Additional staff representing the new programme may also attend.

Programme teams must submit their proposal and all required programme documentation for internal scrutiny by Quality Assurance at least four weeks prior to the approval event. Late proposals are unlikely to be considered.

Where a Panel member is associated with the new programme being submitted for review, they will be excused from the relevant meeting.

Non-members of the Programme Approval Panel may attend a Panel meeting to provide scrutiny and advice, where appropriate.

Operation

Each panel event will review up to three programmes, which may originate from any college. For each programme requiring approval, the following documentation must be submitted to the Secretary for the Programme Approval Panel **four weeks** before the relevant meeting:

- Programme Executive Summary
- Programme Specification
- All block outlines
- External Reviewer Report

Panel members are expected to review the programme documentation in advance of the meeting. Each panel member will receive the documentation four weeks prior to the Programme Approval Panel and must submit their feedback two weeks before the meeting. This timeline ensures that the programme team has sufficient time to review the feedback, address any concerns, and prepare responses ahead of the panel discussion.

For each proposed programme, a first and second reader will be assigned. These individuals will lead in evaluating the proposal and guiding the panel discussions.

Each programme will be allocated up to 2 hours for review, structured as follows:

³ The Chair and Deputy Chair must not be from the same College.

1. **Private Panel Discussion:** The panel will first convene privately to identify key focus areas for discussion.
2. **Meeting with Programme Team:** The panel will engage with the programme team to discuss the programme design, with the intention of either:
 - a) Approving the programme for delivery; or
 - b) Identify conditions that must be addressed in order for the programme to be approved.
3. **Finalising Outcomes:** The panel will review the programme team's responses and draft the final outcomes, including any approval, conditions and recommendations, if applicable.

Outcomes

The Panel will issue an outcome for the review of a programme typically within 48 hours, with a detailed report published in 10 working days. The outcome will be one of the following:

1. Approved (with or without conditions/recommendations regarding the ongoing delivery of the programme)
2. Not approved

Where a programme is not approved, the Panel will identify conditions which must be satisfactorily addressed in order for the programme to be approved. The Panel will be responsible for confirming that a condition has been met.

Where a programme is approved, the Secretary to the Panel will communicate the outcome, alongside confirming the availability of programme documentation, to a distribution list maintained by Quality Assurance, which includes all key academic and operational stakeholders. For high-risk programmes, the Panel outcome and approved programme documentation will be submitted to the relevant College Management Board for final checking, prior to Quality Assurance confirming approval.

Academic Approval

The Quality Assurance Team will oversee the following processes:

1. **Approval Event Report & Panel Decision:** A formal report summarising the Panel's decisions will be sent to the programme team, outlining any required actions. Once the programme team has provided an appropriate response, the Panel Chair will sign off the programme, allowing high-risk programmes to proceed for CMB approval.
2. **Strategic and Financial Viability Check:** confirms that the programme aligns with Brunel's strategic priorities and financial sustainability. If the proposal demonstrates strong strategic alignment, financial feasibility, and manageable risk, it is approved for implementation. If concerns arise, conditional approval may

be granted, requiring further evidence or modifications before proceeding. In cases where significant financial, strategic, or operational risks are identified, the proposal may be referred back to the College. A decision not to approve is rare and typically occurs only when fundamental misalignment or insurmountable financial risks are identified.

3. Academic Approval: This marks the formal approval by the University for the programme to be included in its academic portfolio. The Quality Assurance Manager will report the approval to the CEC, and the final approval will be formally noted at the Senate.

Additional requirements for Apprenticeship Programmes

Where a Panel is to consider an Apprenticeship programme, the following are requirements:

- One of the academic members of staff from the University must have experience of delivering Apprenticeship programmes (unless this is covered by the Chair).
- One of the External Reviewers must have significant experience of delivering Apprenticeships.

Review Considerations

Through its scrutiny of documentation and meeting with Programme Design Teams (where required), the Programme Approval Panel will consider a new programme in the context of the following:

- The FHEQ and relevant Benchmark Statements
- Intended intake cohorts and how the curriculum is designed in consideration of them
- Intended destinations and how the curriculum facilitates progression to employment or further study
the programme is appropriate in terms of its level and content and in light of current practice and development in the discipline;
- Resource requirements
Appropriateness of academic standards at each Level and pedagogically sound
- Appropriateness of learning outcomes in the context of the academic level and the planned assessment
- Consistency with all University regulations and policies, including equality, diversity and inclusion
- Programme management and student support

For Apprenticeship programmes, the following additional items should be considered:

- The Apprenticeship standard and the knowledge, behaviours and skills that are to be developed.

- The readiness of the Department and programme in the context of Ofsted inspection.
- The role of employers in the design and delivery of the Apprenticeship.
- The approach to pastoral care and personal tutoring.
- How the programme embeds British Values; equality, diversity and inclusion; and the development of literacy and numeracy.
- How the programme prepares apprentices for the next steps.

Programme Review Panels should also consider the impact of the programme on Brunel University London Pathway College provision.

External involvement in the Programme Approval Panel

During the Programme design and development process, the programme structure, content, learning, teaching and assessment methods of the proposed new programme will be scrutinised by independent subject specialists, known as external reviewers. External reviewers are approved by the Head of Quality Assurance or nominee following the submission of an external reviewer nomination from the Programme team.

External reviewers would advise and guide on the appropriateness of the curriculum, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the level of the proposed programme in relation to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and how the programme prepares graduates for employability. External reviewers consider the response from the proposing programme team.

External reviewers must not be either current or recent (i.e. within the previous five years) members of staff, students or members of the College. Any other connections with the University or programme teams are expected to be declared on the nomination form.

Direct reciprocation must always be avoided; the general principle that academics, senior administrators and practicing professionals are prepared to give their time to contribute constructive criticism to programme provision is central to the quality assurance processes in HE. The nominating programme representative attests to this independence in nominating and signing the nomination form.

External reviewers are expected to complete a summary report and submit it to the secretary by the prescribed deadline for onward consideration by the Programme approval panel. The programme teams are encouraged to include professionals from industry, commerce or practice who can explicitly consider the programme in terms of its employability, graduate attributes, links with industry and specific/transferrable skills, in addition to colleagues with appropriate academic experience

Appendix E: Quality Assurance Review

As part of the academic development phase, all new programmes are required to undergo a quality assurance review by the relevant to ensure that their design meets institutional and sector-wide standards. This process consists of three key stages, culminating in the Programme Approval Panel and final scrutiny of documentation.

Stage 1: Initial QA Review and Programme Approval Planning

- Relevant Quality Assurance Manager liaises with the programme team to establish the expected timeline and programme documentation requirements and ensure the team remains on track to meet the Programme Approval Panel deadline for review.
- An External Reviewer is appointed to independently evaluate the programme and provide written feedback for consideration by the Programme Approval Panel.
- Panel dates are set at the beginning of the academic year, and QA will monitor programme development progress in line with the SNG-defined Programme Approval event date and internal QA review.

Stage 2: Interim QA Review (Informal)

- QA may organise an informal review meeting where the draft documentation is discussed.
- This review may include:
 - Independent Panel members (for high-risk 12-month reviews only).
 - Senior academic staff from within the Programme Team.
- The purpose of this meeting is to:
 - Ensure that programme design and development are progressing as planned.
 - Identify and address any issues, inconsistencies, or gaps.
 - Provide guidance on areas requiring further refinement before formal submission.

If the programme is deemed off track, SASSC/SNG will be consulted to assess the implications of the delay, and revised timelines may be proposed.

Stage 3: Final QA Review and Documentation Check

- The relevant Quality Assurance Manager conducts a final review of the programme documentation before submission to the Programme Approval Panel.
- This final check ensures that:
 - There are no technical errors or inconsistencies.
 - The final documentation and other supporting materials meet the required standards.

This step provides quality assurance that the programme is fully prepared for formal scrutiny, ensuring a smooth approval process at the Programme Approval Panel.

Appendix F: Additional Guidance

Programme Approvals Involving Collaborative Partners

Approval of a programme to be delivered through a new partnership will be independent of the process for agreeing on the partnership, but both will be required in order for the partnership to commence and the associated programmes offered.

Approval of new PhD Routes

New PhD routes should be approved at the PGR directors' meeting(s) of the Colleges involved and reported to the relevant College Education Committee(s). Following approval of the route, the relevant member of the College staff should contact SDM via SDM@brunel.ac.uk and provide the following information for set-up:

- Route name;
- Modes of study;
- Any partnership information, and
- Confirmation if MPhil route is to be offered.

Timescales and Marketing

Following the Operational setup Meeting, organised by the Programme Team, and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders, Marketing will develop an initial marketing plan. This plan will outline key promotional strategies, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are informed of the marketing approach and any required contributions from them. The objective is to create a structured, coordinated effort to support the successful launch and promotion of the programme.

As part of this process, Marketing will draft the course page, using information from the programme specification and input from key stakeholders. The aim is to ensure that all critical details are clearly presented, aligned with institutional standards, and optimised for prospective student engagement. This draft version will be circulated for feedback, capturing any necessary amendments before final publication.

Once feedback is incorporated, Marketing will update the web pages accordingly, with the SDM team providing all relevant programme codes. Admissions will then add entry requirements and fee details to the course page, ensuring completeness and accuracy.

To maintain consistency across all communication channels, all marketing touchpoints will be reviewed and updated. This includes:

- CRM systems (for e-communications and enquiry forms),
- Printed materials (such as prospectuses and subject brochures), and
- Course listings on third-party websites.

The final stage ensures that all marketing materials are fully updated and approved, providing a clear, cohesive, and engaging representation of the programme. The process enhances visibility, streamlines student recruitment efforts, and ensures the programme is effectively positioned within the market.

Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) Coding

The University's programme specification and block outline templates require the listing of Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes. HECoS codes are external codes to define the subject area of the course or module, for external reporting purposes. Brunel's statutory data returns to bodies like HESA and the OfS are required to put HECoS codes against our courses. This in turn affects things like external funding eligibility, inclusion in league tables, other national data such as the NSS or Graduate Outcomes, and much more. Using an inappropriate or incorrect HECoS code can lead to a significant loss of funding, failure to appear in league tables or NSS results, the programme not being easily findable in UCAS searches or websites like DiscoverUni, and so on.

Appropriate HECoS codes should be identified during the design and development phase for all Brunel courses and modules, specified in Programme Specifications or Module/Block Outlines, and then confirmed at the point of approval (including for major modifications) and set up in SITS. Setting the right HECoS codes is an academic decision, for which the relevant Programme Director or Module/Block Leader should normally be responsible. The Quality Assurance and/or Strategic Planning teams can give further expert advice.

There are two key lists to look at on the HESA website at

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos:>

- The "View the HECoS vocabulary" button will bring up a spreadsheet of all available six-digit HECoS codes with their associated name and definition. There will be multiple codes for any given subject area, with varying definitions. For example HECoS codes for 'Business' as a subject include generalist codes like '100078 business and management' or '100079 business studies', as well as more specialist codes like '100738 e-business' or '100808 European business studies'.
- The "View a list of CAH groups" button will take you to a page where you can download the latest version of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) spreadsheet. This shows how each individual HECoS code fits into the national CAH groupings used for things like the NSS and league tables. For example, while '100078 business and management' falls into 'business and management' CAH groups, '100738 e-business' falls into 'computing' CAH groups and would attract a different level of OfS funding, contribute to different league tables and NSS subject groupings, etc.

To identify the right codes to use, the following is recommended:

- (i) Click the Filter button on the HECoS vocabulary spreadsheet, then click the arrow next to 'Term' at the top and enter keywords to bring up different options that may be relevant. Look at these carefully to select the most applicable based on the full definition shown.

- (ii) Having identified or shortlisted the most appropriate codes, check which CAH groups they fall into on the Common Aggregation Hierarchy spreadsheet. Consider whether these matches where the programme or module should appear in, for example, course finder websites or league tables or the NSS. Generally, all courses in a specific Department or Division will fall into a very short list of CAH groups.

It is important to note that a programme or module may be given multiple HECoS codes covering different subjects, each being given an appropriate percentage weighting (to add up to 100%). Joint programmes might typically be coded 50% - 50% to their respective subjects, e.g. as is the case for BA Politics & History at Brunel (coded half to '100491 politics' and half to '100310 modern history'). Multi- or trans-disciplinary programmes might cover more than two subjects, e.g. the Division of Digital Media at Brunel has courses which cover Engineering, Design and Computer Science in varying mixes. However, individual modules/blocks should be coded to a single HECoS code wherever possible, unless it is clear that a single code cannot encompass the scope of what is taught in the module/block.

All existing block outlines submitted as part of a significant modification must have the relevant HECoS code/s listed.

Appendix G: New Programme Approval Monitoring

To monitor the development of new programmes following strategic approval, SASSC and other senior staff within the University and Colleges are able to access the “New Programmes University Tracker” available [insert link once available]. The deadlines set within these trackers align with the New Programme Approval Timeline and Process (see section 4 of this protocol).

Key: **Achieved by the deadline** / **Achieved but not by the deadline** / **Not been achieved and the deadline has been passed**

Low Risk - 6 Month Cycle

PROGRAMME DETAILS (programmes in active development following strategic Approval)						Programme Development Deadlines (green cells - Deadline met; Orange - achieved but deadline missed; red - deadline missed/not achieved)						Programme Launch (green cells - Deadline met; Orange - achieved but deadline missed; red - deadline missed/not achieved)							
College	Department	Programme Title	Strategic Approval Date	First intake	Lead	Technical Specification Deadline (+3 months)	Technical Specification Confirmed Date	Programme Codes Deadline (+4 months)	Programme Codes Created Date	QA Review Deadline (+4 months)	QA Review Completed Date	Academic Approval Deadline (+6 months)	Actual Academic Approval Date	Website Live Deadline (+2 weeks)	Website Live Date	Applications Live Deadline (+2 weeks)	Applications Live Date	Development Completed Deadline (-11 months from first intake)	Development Completed Date
College of...	Department of...	MSc...	02/11/2024	01/09/2026		31/01/2025	29/01/2025	02/03/2025	01/03/2025	02/03/2025	28/02/2025	01/05/2025	28/04/2025	12/05/2025	10/05/2025	12/05/2025	10/05/2025	06/10/2025	28/04/2025

High Risk - 12 Month Cycle

PROGRAMME DETAILS (programmes in active development following strategic Approval)						Programme Development Deadlines (green cells - Deadline met; Orange - achieved but deadline missed; red - deadline missed/not achieved)						Programme Launch (green cells - Deadline met; Orange - achieved but deadline missed; red - deadline missed/not achieved)							
College	Department	Programme Title	Strategic Approval Date	First intake	Lead	Technical Specification Deadline (+4 months)	Technical Specification Confirmed Date	Programme Codes Deadline (+6 months)	Programme Codes Created Date	QA Review Deadline (+8 months)	QA Review Completed Date	Academic Approval Deadline (+12 months)	Actual Academic Approval Date	Website Live Deadline (+2 weeks)	Website Live Date	Applications Live Deadline (+2 weeks)	Applications Live Date	Development Completed Deadline (-11 months from first intake)	Development Completed Date
College of...	Department of...	BSc...	02/11/2024	01/09/2026		02/03/2025	01/03/2025	30/06/2025	09/04/2025	30/06/2025	15/06/2025	28/10/2025	15/09/2025	29/09/2025	25/09/2025	29/09/2025	25/09/2025	06/10/2025	15/09/2025

Updating the spreadsheet will be the responsibility of SNG and SASSC