



**Academic Quality Framework**

**Section 4: Course & Unit Approval &  
Modification**

**2023-2024**

## Academic Quality Framework

### Section 4: Course & Unit Approval & Modification

**This Section of the Academic Quality Framework should be of particular interest to Course Leaders, Unit Leaders and members of relevant UCO Committees including Student Representatives, and Collaborative Partner staff.**

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Dates produced and approved (include committee)</b>	<b>Reason for production/ revision</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Location(s)</b>	<b>Proposed next review date and approval required</b>
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V2.0	Sept 2016 Academic Council	Reviewed to update staff role and policy titles and to reflect current practice.	Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Intranet	Aug 2017 and on an “as required” basis.
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V7.0	Aug 2021 PRAG Chair	Administrative amendments and clarifications throughout to reflect updated staff roles and current practice including related forms and templates. Correction of typographical errors. Amendments to reflect broader provision that may be PSRB accredited.	Head of Quality	Master Version: J:\ Quality Team \ 0 Quality Team – AQF Published Version: Website	Annually and on an “as required” basis.
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Equality Impact					
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)					X
Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)					
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)					
<p><b>If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this document, please email your comments to: <a href="mailto:quality@uco.ac.uk">quality@uco.ac.uk</a></b></p>					

## Academic Quality Framework

### Section 4: Course and Unit Approval & Modification

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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 This section of the Academic Quality Framework details the processes that the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) uses to design, develop, and approve new taught courses and units, and details how modifications may be made to such courses and units following approval.
- 4.1.2 The course approval and modification processes detailed apply to courses delivered by both the UCO and Collaborative Partners delivering courses that lead to a UCO award.
- 4.1.3 All UCO-approved courses and units are required to be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the UCO's evaluation, reporting and monitoring processes described in AQF Section 5. This provides UCO and Collaborative Partners with the opportunity to evaluate the quality and standards of provision that leads to a UCO award and stimulates curriculum development. The development of new courses and modifications to existing courses that may arise from ongoing and annual reviews of courses involves external expert peer review and consultation, thereby ensuring that practices and experiences of external experts are utilised and considered.
- 4.1.4 All UCO-approved courses and units are required to be reviewed in depth periodically (normally every 5 years) as part of the UCO's Periodic Review processes described in [AQF Section 6](#). This provides UCO and Collaborative Partners with the opportunity to undertake a full and in-depth review of the provision to ensure it remains current and fit for purpose.
- 4.1.5 The overall aims of course and unit approval, review and modification are:
  - a) To assure all stakeholders of the UCO, Collaborative Partners and the public of the quality and standards of UCO awards irrespective of where they are delivered.
  - b) To ensure that the UCO secures a high quality academic and educational experience for its students studying on courses that lead to an award of the UCO irrespective of where they are delivered.

### 4.2 DESIGNING NEW COURSES AND UNITS

- 4.2.1 The design of new courses and units takes a significant amount of research and development, and it is supported by consultation involving both staff and students and through engagement with external experts and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) as appropriate.
- 4.2.2 The design phase culminates in Course or Unit Approval Events which are based on the peer review of documentation and meetings with staff, students and external experts. These events enable the UCO and external approval bodies to evaluate the academic strength, standards, quality, appeal, and viability of the provision in detail.

### 4.3 MODIFYING EXISTING COURSES AND UNITS

- 4.3.1 Modifications to existing courses and units may be made between course approval and periodic review points to enhance provision, being instigated by student feedback or changes to sector or PSRB requirements, for example.
- 4.3.2 The modification process involves consultation and peer review to a depth which is proportionate to the extent (risk level) of the proposed modification(s).

### 4.4 COURSE AND UNIT APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION PROCESSES

- 4.4.1 The UCO's processes for approving and modifying courses and units that lead to a UCO award are agreed by the UCO's Academic Council and are designed to adhere to requirements of external

approval bodies and to the relevant Expectations and Practices regarding Course Design and Development as detailed within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education<sup>1</sup>.

4.4.2 The overall aims of course approval and modification processes are:

- a) To ensure that the UCO maintains strategic oversight of the process for the development and approval of courses that lead to a UCO award.
- b) To ensure that courses are strategically and academically appropriate, and are developed in line with the UCO's Mission, Strategic Plan and Academic Regulations ([AQF Section 7](#)) (or approved Collaborative Partner equivalents).
- c) To assure that the UCO approves courses that meet the appropriate quality and academic standards as defined by the UCO, the Quality Code, and expectations of relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- d) To ensure that learning and other resources are adequate and available to support course delivery and students.
- e) To ensure that the course learning environment is fit for purpose.
- f) To ensure that new course proposals are designed and developed appropriately according to prescribed criteria and decision-making processes.
- g) To ensure that new courses are coherent and provide students with a developmental educational experience.
- h) To ensure that the quality and standards of teaching and assessment of the course are in line with national practice and will be continuously enhanced.
- i) To ensure that the responsibility for academic ownership and quality management of courses by Course Teams, teaching teams and other UCO and Collaborative Partner staff are clearly communicated and acknowledged.
- j) To ensure that, post-graduation, courses have prepared students sufficiently to enable them to meet employer expectations as appropriate.
- k) To ensure that external reference points and expertise are drawn upon to maintain and enhance quality standards regarding current developments and practices outside the UCO's and a Collaborative Partner's environment as appropriate.
- l) To ensure that students, staff, and relevant external experts are appropriately involved in the design, development, and approval of courses.
- m) To ensure that appropriate External Examiner appointments for new courses are considered and recommended for approval by the UCO's Teaching Quality & Standards Committee (TQSC) and are approved by the UCO's Academic Council before the course starts.

## 4.5 RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING COURSE AND UNIT APPROVAL AND MODIFICATION

- 4.5.1 The primary responsibility for course and unit development, approval, and modification rests with relevant Course and Unit Leaders, and is overseen by the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships.
- 4.5.2 The UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships provides process support and monitors the completion of the required approval and modification stages.
- 4.5.3 Academic and institutional management committees also have roles in the review and approval of proposals. Further details about specific responsibilities are contained in the sub-sections below.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>



- 4.5.4 Course approval and modification processes are monitored by the UCO's Policy and Regulations a Group (PRG) to ensure that they are followed appropriately and remain effective.
- 4.5.5 Approval of new courses (including those proposed by Collaborative Partners) is the responsibility of the UCO's TQSC and the Academic Council.
- 4.5.6 Approval of modifications to existing courses is the responsibility of the UCO's Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC) (for courses delivered by Collaborative Partners), the TQSC and the Academic Council as set out in Part 3.

## 4.6 THE LENGTH OF TIME FOR WHICH COURSES AND UNITS ARE APPROVED

- 4.6.1 Courses and units are normally approved for a period of five years unless otherwise specified at the Course Approval / Modification Event, or until the next Periodic Review point, whichever occurs sooner.
- 4.6.2 Courses are normally subject to a Periodic Review every five years, the processes of which are described in [AQF Section 6](#).
- 4.6.3 Where a course is recommended for periodic review on the basis of a substantial proposed modification, an accumulation of a number of modifications over a short period of time or another concern, this will be considered and recorded as an 'approval' event and the course approval process will apply.

## 4.7 ALIGNMENT WITH THE QUALITY CODE

- 4.7.1 Course and unit approval processes are developed and operated at the UCO in-line with external body requirements and aligns to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the UK Quality Code) published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) regarding Course Design and Development<sup>2</sup>.

# PART 2: COURSE APPROVAL

## 4.8 DRIVERS FOR NEW COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.8.1 The UCO's portfolio of taught courses including those delivered by Collaborative Partners is regularly reviewed to maintain and enhance academic quality and standards. Course portfolios evolve over time in response to several drivers including:
  - a) The gradual development of existing courses.
  - b) Securing entry into new subject areas.
  - c) Securing entry into new subject areas through a collaborative partnership.
  - d) Evidence of demand in student markets.
  - e) Developments in academic strategy.
  - f) The identification of new areas through staff research and enterprise.
  - g) Demand from employers or professional bodies.
  - h) Feedback from external examiners.
  - i) Opportunities or threats from competitor institutions.
  - j) Changes in patterns of student progression.
  - k) Changes in government policy.
- 4.8.2 In addition to responding to the above to ensure that course portfolios leading to a UCO award remain current and attractive to prospective students, new courses proposed for development should also meet at least one of the following criteria within the resource capacity of the UCO or Collaborative Partner:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/course-design-and-development>



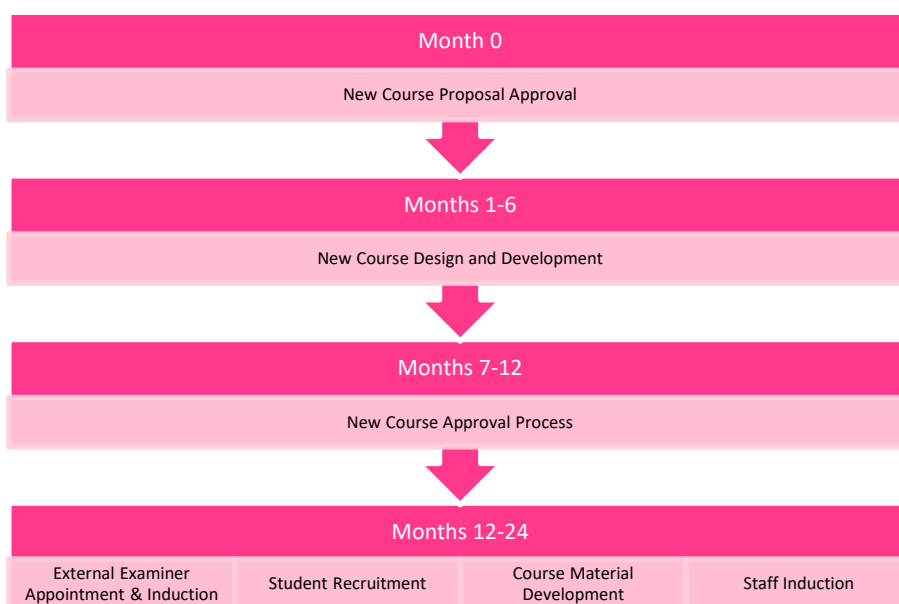
- a) Attract viable new cohorts of students to the course.
- b) Increase the conversion of applicants and prospective applicants to registered students in existing courses.
- c) Increase the progression opportunities for students including progression to Continuing Professional Development and postgraduate courses.
- d) Includes a more effective and sustainable use of staff expertise than on existing courses.

## 4.9 FRAMEWORK FOR NEW COURSE APPROVALS

- 4.9.1 Course design and approval processes are developed and operate in line with external body requirements and the UK Quality Code.
- 4.9.2 Each new course proposal requires significant research and development, and detailed criteria to guide the approval process. The approval process is rigorous to assure the quality of the proposed provision.
- 4.9.3 Development of the course portfolio must be coherent and consistent with the UCO's Strategic Plan (and / or Collaborative Partner's equivalent) and must make business sense in terms of student and market demand, income generated, and the physical and human resources required to run the proposal.
- 4.9.4 All proposals must consider relevant external inputs, including subject benchmark statements and the requirements of professional and statutory bodies where applicable.
- 4.9.5 New course proposals are assessed against criteria in areas including strategic fit and viability, quality and standards, assessment, staffing, and learning resources.

## 4.10 TIMESCALES OF THE COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

- 4.10.1 Each new course proposal will require significant research and development from the Course Development Team, and this is normally accommodated by the schedules of the various approval events and oversight bodies.
- 4.10.2 The expected minimum timeframe for the Course Approval Process is 24 months from initial course proposal to delivery as follows:



- 4.10.3 Where a course is proposed to be accredited by a PSRB, the UCO will normally work to the PSRB's accreditation timelines which should be considered by the Course Development Team and planned for accordingly.

- 4.10.4 All new courses must be formally approved by the UCO's Academic Council prior to delivery which means that course approval must normally take place at the latest before the 30<sup>th</sup> of April (for delivery in the September of the next calendar year).
- 4.10.5 It is recognised, however, that these expected timelines may vary depending on the type and nature of the proposed course, how advanced the proposal is, whether course accreditation by a PSRB is to be considered concurrently, and other similar risk factors. This may result in expediting the course approval process and where this is agreed the process described in [Section 4.16](#) (Accelerated New Course Approval Process) will be followed.
- 4.10.6 In all cases the required Course Approval Documentation should be submitted to the Quality Team at least 10 days prior to the Course Approval Event.

## 4.11 NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

- 4.11.1 The approval process for new courses is divided into two main stages:
- i) **New Course Proposal Approval** during which it is determined whether the proposed course fits with the UCO's / and or Collaborative Partner's strategic objectives and academic and research strategy, whether the appropriate human and physical resource are available, and whether it is likely to meet market demand. If it is deemed to meet each of these criteria, the proposal will normally progress to the Approval of the New Course stage.
  - ii) **New Course Approval** which normally consists of the following phases:
    - a) **Course Design and Development:** during which the Course Development Team develop and produce the required course approval documentation with reference to relevant external reference points and benchmarks, and in consultation with staff, committees, students, external experts and PSRBs as appropriate.
    - b) **Approval in Detail:** during which a Course Approval Event is held and the Course Approval Panel, satisfied with the Course Development Team's responses to course approval conditions, recommends approval of the new course to the UCO's Academic Council by way of the TQSC.
    - c) **Formal Approval:** during which the UCO's Academic Council approves the new course for delivery and the Course Development Team receive formal notification of approval.
    - d) **Post Approval:** during which the approved definitive course documentation for the new course is provided to the Course Development Team and relevant other staff including Academic Registry, Admissions and Recruitment, and Marketing Teams, an appropriate External Examiner is selected and appointed, student recruitment activities are undertaken, course learning material is developed, and induction activities are provided to academic staff.
- 4.11.2 The UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships will normally liaise with the Course Development Team regarding details of timelines and documentation requirements, to provide procedural support, and to monitor the completion of the required approval stages as outlined below.
- 4.11.3 Progress of the new Course Approval process will be reported to the CPSC (for Collaborative Partner courses) and TQSC (for all courses) by the Head of Quality & Partnerships.

## 4.12 STAGE 1: NEW COURSE PROPOSAL APPROVAL

- 4.12.1 Initial scoping documentation is considered at the New Course Proposal Approval stage of the New Course Approval Process.
- 4.12.2 The Course Development Team Leader should complete the following forms to provide the academic and business case for the proposal and to ensure that development of a course is appropriate and viable financially.
- AQF04-01 New Course Proposal Form
  - AQF04-02 New Course Costings Form (applicable to courses delivered by the UCO only)
- 4.12.3 These forms should be completed in liaison with a range of staff to discuss, consider and confirm the operational, resource and financial viability of the proposal, including Recruitment and Marketing, Admissions and Registry, Learning Resources and IT, Human Resources, Finance and Estates, and Student Support staff.
- 4.12.4 This initial scoping documentation should provide an outline of the course and identify internal and external reference points which will inform the design of the course and to which the course will be benchmarked. In addition, the market demand for the proposed course should also be undertaken at the new course proposal approval stage to identify and confirm that a sustainable market for the course exists and to identify any potential competitors that may impact on the success of the course. The initial scoping documentation should also identify any risks associated with the new course, how these will be mitigated should the proposal be approved.
- 4.12.5 The scoping documentation will also identify the proposed course approval process and timelines for approval using a risk-based approach, considering the nature and type of course under consideration, the proposed start date, PSRB accreditation requirements, etc.
- 4.12.6 The Course Development Team Leader is responsible for producing these forms in liaison with the Course Development Team, Director of Teaching, Learning & Assessment, Quality Partnerships Manager, Head of Quality & Partnerships, Finance Director (or equivalent Collaborative Partner staff) as appropriate; they must be approved by the UCO's Academic Council and Senior Management Team (SMT) and be updated as required during the Course Development and Approval in Detail phases.
- 4.12.7 As the New Course Costings Form (AQF04-02) may include financially sensitive information it is not normally shared with Course Approval Panel members and should therefore be produced with an internal audience in mind. The New Course Proposal Form (AQF04-01) will normally be shared with Course Approval Panel members.

#### **A) APPROVAL OF THE NEW COURSE PROPOSAL BY THE TQSC & ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

- 4.12.8 The New Course Proposal Form (AQF04-01) is considered by the UCO's TQSC to consider the academic case for the proposed new course and, if successful, recommends approval of the new course proposal to the UCO's Academic Council for formal approval. All new course proposals must be approved by the UCO's Academic Council. The following outcomes of TQSC and Academic Council consideration of the proposal are as follows:
- a) Approval to progress the proposal to the New Course Approval Stage.
  - b) Approval to progress to the New Course Approval Stage subject to recommended changes / further actions.
  - c) Approval of the proposal is not granted (or may be recommended for re-submission at a later date).

#### **B) APPROVAL OF THE NEW COURSE PROPOSAL BY THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM**

4.12.9 The New Course Proposal Form (AQF04-01) is also considered by the UCO's Senior Management Team (SMT) to consider the business case for the proposal and identifies any resource and cost implications. For courses developed by the UCO, the New Course Costings Form (AQF04-02) is considered alongside the New Course Proposal Form and includes information such as teaching staff costs, course fees and projected student numbers. The following outcomes of SMT consideration of the proposal are as follows:

- a) Approval to progress to the New Course Approval Stage.
- b) Approval to progress to the New Course Approval Course Stage subject to recommended changes / further actions.
- c) Approval of the proposal is not granted (or may be recommended for re-submission at a later date).

### C) NEW COURSE PROPOSAL APPROVAL PROCESS FLOWCHART

4.12.10 A flowchart of the New Course Proposal Approval process is shown in [Diagram 4.1](#).

## 4.13 STAGE 2: NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

4.13.1 A flowchart for the approval of a new course (following approval of new course proposal) is shown in [Diagram 4.2](#) and is described in detail below.

4.13.2 The following process phases of the approval of a new course are documented below:

- i. Course Design & Development
- ii. Development of Course Approval Documentation
- iii. Appointment of the Course Approval Panel
- iv. Approval in Detail
- v. Post Approval

### i. COURSE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

4.13.3 The Course Design & Development phase of the New Course Approval Process will normally involve a range of activities to ensure that all academic areas and issues are addressed. These will include the consideration of internal and external benchmarks, consultation with relevant Finance, Human Resources, Student Support, Equalities and Learning Resources Departments and other relevant staff, consultation with students and external experts within the subject discipline and PSRBs.

4.13.4 This phase of the new course approval process is where the Course Development Team will design and develop the course curriculum, the teaching, learning and assessment strategies for the course, and identify the recommended resources for the course, in addition to identifying human and physical resources required for the course in line with appropriate internal and external reference points including the UCO's Strategic Plan (or Collaborative Partner's equivalent), the UCO's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy (or Collaborative Partner's equivalent), recognised national and international frameworks applicable for the course under consideration, and relevant PSRB standards and expectations as appropriate.

4.13.5 The Quality Team are available for procedural advice regarding course design and development requirements.

### ii. DEVELOPMENT OF COURSE APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION

- 4.13.6 Specific course approval documentation is developed during this phase of the New Course Approval process as detailed below.
- 4.13.7 Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the required course approval documentation rests with the Course Development Team and is overseen by the Course Development Team Leader unless otherwise specified; procedural guidance is available from the Quality Team.
- 4.13.8 Version control processes should be used when completing course approval documentation as documented in the UCO's Version Control Policy<sup>3</sup>. This includes the use of footers to show the date and version of each document.
- 4.13.9 The course approval documentation should be produced using the referenced forms and templates.
- 4.13.10 The course approval documentation that is normally required is listed in [Table 4.1](#).
- 4.13.11 The Course Approval Panel will normally receive all documentation listed in [Table 4.1](#) and guidance relating to the event (AQF04-12), providing context for the panel regarding the documentation submitted.
- 4.13.12 The required Course Approval Documentation should be submitted electronically to the Quality Team no later than two weeks (or within the agreed timeline before the Course Approval Event. It is the responsibility of the Course Development Team Leader to ensure that the correct documentation is submitted by the agreed deadline.
- 4.13.13 It is the responsibility of the Quality Team to ensure that the correct Course Approval Documentation is circulated to the Course Approval Panel in good time prior to the Course Approval Event.
- 4.13.14 Normally documentation is provided in electronic format only, however Course Approval Panel members may request hard copies from the Quality Team.

**TABLE 4.1: REQUIRED COURSE APPROVAL DOCUMENTATION**

Document Number	Required Course Approval Document	Document Description
<b>AQF04-03</b>	An Academic Rationale	<p>One Academic Rationale should be produced for each new course proposed using the Academic Rationale Template (AQF04-03).</p> <p>The Academic Rationale should provide evidence about the following regarding the proposed course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic strength and significance.</li> <li>• Course structure and curriculum.</li> <li>• Strategic fit and viability.</li> <li>• Teaching, Learning &amp; Assessment Strategy</li> <li>• Quality of the learning experience including student progression through the course.</li> <li>• Quality and standards of the course.</li> <li>• Regulatory and technical compliance.</li> <li>• Staffing and resources.</li> <li>• Student support and guidance.</li> <li>• Course management.</li> <li>• Quality of flexible delivery arrangements.</li> </ul> <p>The Academic Rationale should be written with the Course Approval Panel as the intended audience.</p>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

		<p>Guidance for writing the Academic Rationale is provided within the Academic Rationale Template.</p> <p>An Academic Rationale using this template must be completed for each course under consideration irrespective of whether the course is being developed for delivery by the UCO or by a Collaborative Partner institution.</p> <p>Additional evidence and supporting documentation should be appended to the Academic Rationale where relevant, e.g., course-specific policies and procedures, proposed student induction schedules, etc., in addition to links to institutional policies and procedures.</p>
<b>AQF-04-04</b>	New Course Proposal Competitor Analysis & Market Research Form	<p>This form should be completed for each course under consideration using the template provided (AQF04-04).</p> <p>Evidence of market research and competitor analysis may be appended to the form.</p>
<b>AQF04-05a</b>	Course Information Form (CIF)	<p>One CIF should be produced for each course under consideration using the CIF Template (AQF04-05a).</p> <p>The CIF should be written with students as the intended audience.</p> <p>The CIF provides essential information about the course and should be published on the UCO's / Partner's websites to provide prospective students with relevant information about the course.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the CIF are accurate and completed in full for consideration by the Course Approval Panel. This is the responsibility of the Course Development Team Leader.</p> <p>Guidance for completing the CIF Template is provided in the CIF Manual (AQF-04-05b).</p> <p>Where a Collaborative Partner institution has an established equivalent CIF template which varies from AQF04-05a, it may be used with prior agreement following its assessment that it contains equivalent material information by the Quality Team. Where this is the case, use of an alternative template shall be recorded as a variance to the UCO's regulations.</p>
<b>AQF04-06a</b>	Unit Information Forms (UIFs)	<p>One UIF should be produced for each unit using the UIF Template (AQF04-06a).</p> <p>UIFs should be written with students as the intended audience.</p> <p>UIFs provide essential information about specific units.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the UIF are accurate and completed in full for consideration by the Course Approval Panel. This is the responsibility of the Course Development Team Leader.</p> <p>Guidance for completing the UIF Template is provided in the UIF Manual (AQF-04-06b).</p> <p>Where a Collaborative Partner institution has an established equivalent UIF template which varies from AQF04-06a, it may be</p>



		used with prior agreement following its assessment that it contains equivalent information by the Quality Team. Where this is the case, use of an alternative template shall be recorded as a variance to the UCO's regulations.
<b>AQF04-07</b>	Course Handbook	<p>One Course Handbook should be produced for each course using the Course Handbook Template (AQF04-07).</p> <p>The Course Handbook should be written with students as the intended audience.</p> <p>The Course Handbook provides students with more detailed information about their course referencing course specific requirements, resources and regulations and signposting to relevant policies and procedures, services, and facilities appropriate for the course under consideration.</p> <p>It is important that the Course Handbook is accurate and reflects UCO Academic Regulations (see AQF Section 7: Academic Regulations) and approved policies and procedures.</p> <p>It is important that all sections of the Course Handbook are accurate and completed in full for consideration by the Course Approval Panel. This is the responsibility of the Course Development Team Leader.</p> <p>Where a Collaborative Partner institution has an established equivalent Course Handbook template which varies from AQF04-07, it may be used with prior agreement following its assessment that it contains equivalent information by the Quality Team. Where this is the case, use of an alternative template shall be recorded as a variance to the UCO's regulations.</p>
<b>AQF04-08a</b>	External Benchmark Mapping	<p>One External Benchmark Mapping spreadsheet should be produced for each course using the External Benchmark Mapping Template (AQF04-08).</p> <p>The External Benchmark Mapping document should demonstrate how the course maps onto or meets appropriate external benchmarks.</p> <p>It is expected that courses will be mapped to the following external benchmarks as a minimum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Office for Students Regulatory Framework - Annex 3 - Sector Recognised Standards in England<sup>4</sup></li> <li>QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education<sup>5</sup>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Qualifications Frameworks</a></li> <li><a href="#">Subject Benchmark Statements</a></li> <li><a href="#">Degree Characteristics Statements</a> (if applicable)</li> <li><a href="#">Credit Frameworks</a></li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>



		<p>c) <a href="#">SEEC Level Descriptors</a><sup>6</sup></p> <p>d) Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) standards / codes of practice (as applicable).</p>
<b>AQF04-08b</b>	Internal Benchmark Mapping	<p>The following UCO Internal Benchmarks should also be considered by Course Development Teams.</p> <p>a) The <a href="#">UCO's Strategic Plan</a> by making reference to this in the Academic Rationale as appropriate.</p> <p>b) The UCO's Teaching, Learning &amp; Assessment (TLA) Strategy whereby Course Development Teams should complete the TLA Strategy Mapping Document (AQF04-08b).</p> <p>If Partner's have their own Strategic Plan and TLA Strategies, these should be referenced within the Academic Rationale and provided as appendices as appropriate.</p>
<b>AQF04-09</b>	Staff CVs / Recruitment Plan	<p>The names of all staff expected to manage and deliver the proposed course should be provided on the Staff CV Coversheet Form (AQF04-09).</p> <p>The CVs of these staff should also be provided in PDF format and should not contain more personal data than is needed for the purpose of Course Approval. CVs should provide details and evidence of relevant qualifications, expertise, and sector engagement pertinent to the course in question.</p> <p>If staff have not yet been recruited, a Recruitment Plan for prospective staffing of the course should be provided using the same form (AQF04-09) with role descriptions provided to demonstrate the required qualifications, experience and knowledge required for each role.</p>
<b>AQF04-10</b>	Schedule of Variance	<p>Where it is proposed that a variance to the UCO's Academic Regulations or Policies and Procedures relates to the delivery and / or management of the course the Schedule of Variance Template (AQF04-10) should be completed as part of the new course approval documentation and be accompanied by the alternative regulations / policies as appropriate.</p>
<b>N/A</b>	Relevant Supporting Documentation	<p>Course Development Teams are encouraged to submit relevant supporting documentation to support claims made in the academic rationale, to demonstrate alignment with relevant policies, procedures, and regulations, and to support the student learning experience. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner strategic documents where these differ from those of the UCO.</li> <li>• Student Induction Schedules</li> <li>• Work-Based Learning / Placement Handbooks</li> <li>• Evidence of placement places secured.</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> <http://seec.org.uk/resources/>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copies of existing or new policies developed required for the new course.</li> <li>SMART Action Plans for the development of learning materials, resources, and VLE, staff recruitment and development, securing of placements, development of facilities and infrastructure.</li> </ul>
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### iii. APPOINTMENT OF THE COURSE APPROVAL PANEL (INCLUDING EXTERNAL PANELLISTS)

4.13.15 For each Course Approval Event a Course Approval Panel is appointed which is collectively responsible for assuring that the proposal meets the Course Approval Criteria sufficiently for effective and successful delivery of the course in line with expected academic standards and quality.

4.13.16 In all cases the Course Approval Panel will normally consist of the panellists identified in [Table 4.2](#) who shall be appointed in line with the criteria stated.

4.13.17 Where the field of study or subject area of a proposed new course is without of the UCO's normal areas of expertise or provision, additional external panel members or advisors may be appointed to assure that academic standards and quality are upheld.

4.13.18 Where a second course approval event is required as part of the course approval process or is recommended by the Course Approval Panel as an outcome to a Course Approval Event, the same panel shall normally be appointed for both events to assure consistency in approach to the course under consideration.

4.13.19 Where several closely related courses are proposed for approval, for example a suite of courses with shared units, the same Course Approval Panel may also be appointed to assure consistency in approach should more than one Course Approval Event be agreed or required.

4.13.20 Internal panellists will be recruited from the UCO's existing pool of academic and professional services staff, with training and support provided to those who may be new to the process or to a panel role.

4.13.21 External panellists will normally be nominated by the Course Development Team in liaison with the UCO's Head of Quality & Partnerships and the TQSC Chair using the External Panel Member Nomination Form (AQF04-11). The CV of nominated External Panel Members should accompany each nomination form.

4.13.22 At least one academic and one industry external panellist will normally be required.

4.13.23 External panellists should have:

- Relevant knowledge and experience of the subject area of the new course under consideration.
- Be able to fulfil the requirements of the role including reviewing the new course approval documentation prior to the course approval event, attending the Course Approval Event, and being available for post-course approval event requirements, such as reviewing responses to conditions.

4.13.24 External panellists should not have:

- Been an external examiner at the UCO or relevant Collaborative Partner institution within the last three years.
- Been a staff member at the UCO or relevant Collaborative Partner institution within the last three years.
- Been involved with the development of the proposed course.

4.13.25 External Panel member nomination forms and CVs are approved by the UCO's TQSC. Where time does not allow consideration by the TQSC at a committee meeting, these may be approved by the UCO's TQSC Chair.

4.13.26 The Quality Team will thereafter be responsible for liaising with the appointed External Panellists regarding the arrangements, requirements, and logistics of the course approval process and event. This will normally include providing guidance regarding the expectations of their role, their expected time commitment, fees, and expenses and providing an opportunity for a pre-panel meeting and / or support to ensure that they are clear about their role.

4.13.27 Any proposed changes to the appointed Course Approval Panel will require approval by the TQSC Chair.

**TABLE 4.2: COURSE APPROVAL PANEL MEMBERSHIP, CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT & PANEL ROLES**

Panellist	Criteria for Appointment	Panel Role
<b>Chair</b>	The Chair is a senior member of academic staff who has not had direct involvement with the development of the proposal.	<p>The Chair of the panel is expected to ensure that discussions during the event are developmental and enhance the proposal being considered.</p> <p>The Chair should use the initial private meeting of the panel to agree who will lead on which themes, which areas should be highlighted for clarification as well as the order of topics.</p> <p>The Chair will open the event by clarifying the aims and objectives of the event and will close the event by summarising the conclusions and outcomes. Issues which are not fully clarified should be pursued and any areas of concern should be shared with the Course Development Team at an early stage.</p> <p>The Chair approves the Course Development Team's response to any conditions arising from the event.</p>
<b>An Internal Academic Representative</b>	The internal academic representative is a member of UCO academic staff normally within the same subject area as that of the proposed course and should not have been involved in developing or submitting the proposal.	The role of the academic representative is to draw upon his/her experiences within his/her own academic area to provide an objective and independent view of the quality of the proposal.
<b>Two External Panel Members; one academic and one industry</b>	<p>External members of the panel should not have been an External Examiner or former member of staff at the UCO within the last three years nor involved in the development of the proposal.</p> <p>Neither should any of the Course Development Team putting forward the proposal be acting as an External Examiner on a course with which the external nominee is associated.</p>	<p>The role of the external panel members is to draw upon their subject specialism and professional experience to provide an objective and independent judgement of the quality, standards and coherence of the proposal.</p> <p>It is expected that external panel members will undertake the role of "critical friend" and constructively challenge viewpoints or assumptions that are held by the Course Team or institutionally.</p>
<b>A Student Representative</b>	The Student Representative should be a student of the UCO and to have been a student for at least one year or a recent graduate (of not more than two years) within the same subject area as that of the proposed course.	The role of the student panel member is to contribute to the assessment of all areas of the proposal, but with a particular focus on the student experience.

<b>A Quality Assurance Representative</b>	The Quality Assurance Representative should be a member of the UCO's Quality Assurance Team.	The role of this representative is to advise on quality assurance and regulatory issues and to confirm that the proposal adheres to UCO regulations and policies and to raise any variations to UCO requirements or expectations in the proposed course, as conditions of approval.
<b>A Secretary</b>	The Secretary is usually assigned by the Head of Quality.	The Secretary's duties include taking notes at the event and preparing the report of the event in liaison with the Chair of the Panel.

#### iv. APPROVAL IN DETAIL

4.13.28 The Approval in Detail stage of the New Course Approval Process involves a series of activities undertaken in sequential order as follows:

Order	New Course Approval Process Activities
1	Course Development Team submission of the required Course Approval Documentation to the Quality Team within the agreed timeline.
2	Quality Team circulation of the submitted Course Approval Documentation and course approval guidance to the Course Approval Panel.
3	Course Approval Panel independent review of the Course Approval Documentation within a defined time-period prior to the Course Approval Event where panellists confirm whether the proposal meets the specified course approval criteria and generating lines of enquiry to pursue with the Course Development Team at the Course Approval Event, during which clarifications or additional information may be requested via the Quality Team.
4	Course Approval Panel and Course Development Team attendance to a Course Approval Event where the outcomes of the Course Approval Panel's independent reviews of the Course Approval Documentation will be discussed, agreed lines of enquiry pursued and an outcome to the event agreed in line with the defined <a href="#">Possible Course Approval Event Outcomes</a> .
5	Course Development Team consideration of the Course Approval Event outcome, which may include responding to any time-limited approval conditions.
6	Course Approval Panel review of the Course Development Team's response to the Course Approval Event outcome and / or approval conditions to confirm that these have been met to a sufficient standard further to which approval of the new course for delivery can be recommended to the TQSC.
7	TQSC consider the Course Approval Panel's recommendation to approve the course for delivery and recommend their decision to the Academic Council.
8	Academic Council considers the TQSC's recommendation to approve the course for delivery and authorises formal approval.

#### A) COURSE APPROVAL EVENTS

4.13.29 Course Approval Events will normally take place virtually however, where new premises or specialist facilities are involved in the delivery of the proposed new course, the Course Approval Event will either be held at the delivery site to enable the Course Approval Panel to view the premises and facilities.

Where this is not possible, a virtual viewing may be arranged, or a site visit may be set as an approval condition.

- 4.13.30 To assure appropriate scrutiny of new courses, a maximum of the equivalent of 480 credits of learning will constitute a one-day course approval event where those credits are part of the same course proposal, and a maximum of the equivalent of 120 credits of learning will constitute a one-day event where those credits are derived from more than one new course proposal. Where these limits are exceeded, the course approval event will increase by increments of one day as appropriate for the proposal.
- 4.13.31 Course Approval Events will normally be constructed to last for one day only which may operate over one whole day or two half days depending on logistics.
- 4.13.32 Course Approval Events normally follow a set agenda which is provided in [Table 4.4](#). This agenda may be amended in response to identified lines of enquiry by the Course Approval Panel and may be flexible throughout the Course Approval Event depending on the nature and evolving of discussions between the Course Approval Panel and the Course Development Team.

#### **B) POSSIBLE COURSE APPROVAL EVENT OUTCOMES**

4.13.33 The possible outcomes of Course Approval Events are:

- a) Approval without conditions.
- b) Approval with conditions (where the additional work required is related to documentation or to secure academic standards and/or quality as represented by the scrutiny requirements specified above).
- c) Non-approval (either with a recommendation to resubmit at a later date or to withdraw the proposal).

4.13.34 Recommendations to enhance the proposed course may also be identified.

4.13.35 Commendations may also be identified.

4.13.36 The Chair of the Course Approval Panel will normally report outline feedback orally to the Course Development Team at the Course Approval Event's final feedback session. Formal confirmation of the Course Approval Event outcomes is given in writing through the Course Approval Event Conditions and Response Form (AQF04-13) as soon as possible after the event and the more detailed course approval outcome report following the event.

#### **C) COURSE APPROVAL REPORTING & RESPONDING TO OUTCOMES**

4.13.37 The Secretary to the panel drafts a course approval outcome report normally within two weeks of the event.

4.13.38 The report should include the outcome of the event including the reasons for the panel's conclusions. Any course approval conditions should be specified, together with their requisite deadlines and responsibilities, and any recommendations for enhancement should be listed.

4.13.39 The report should specify any proposed / approved variations to UCO regulations and policy, and any transition arrangements in respect of continuing students, as well as the start date confirmed at the course approval event (subject to conditions).

4.13.40 The panel may report on areas of strength in its feedback to the Course Development Team and note these in the report.

4.13.41 The report should also provide a clear indication of the discussions to explain the panel's conclusions.

4.13.42 Where more than one award/title is considered at a single event, outcomes must be reported separately for each award/title.

4.13.43 The Secretary to the panel circulates the report to the members of the Course Approval Panel for confirmation and final approval and authorisation by the Chair of the panel.

- 4.13.44 It is the responsibility of the Course Development Team Leader, in consultation with the Course Development Team and relevant staff as appropriate, to respond to any approval conditions and recommendations detailed in the course approval outcome report by completing the relevant column of the Course Approval Event Conditions and Response Form (AQF04-13) by the requisite deadline/s. All course approval conditions should be responded to by the Course Development Team in the response.
- 4.13.45 Recommendations are not required to be met however it is expected that consideration will be given to recommendations by the Course Development Team, and that action or comment will be given as appropriate in the response. It is advised that this includes consideration of disseminating strengths identified during the approval process.
- 4.13.46 The Course Development Team's response should be submitted to the Quality Team, who will circulate it and any revised or additional documentation to the Course Approval Panel for review and confirmation that the responses meet the conditions sufficiently to recommend approval of the course for delivery.
- 4.13.47 The Chair of the Course Approval Panel will consider the panel's feedback and must also be satisfied with the Course Development Team's responses to the approval conditions and recommendations prior to the commencement of the course. They will confirm that the response is satisfactory by signing the Course Approval Event Conditions and Response Form (AQF04-13) and returning it to the Quality Team.
- 4.13.48 The Quality Team will forward the signed Course Approval Event Conditions and Response Form (AQF04-13) and the course approval outcome report recommending approval of the course for delivery to the TQSC for consideration. The TQSC shall then recommend approval of the course for delivery to the Academic Council.
- 4.13.49 When a course is not recommended for approval by the Course Approval Panel, or there is disagreement regarding the approval / delivery conditions that cannot be reconciled between the Panel Chair and Course Development Team, the Chair of the TQSC shall be advised immediately and, in consultation with the Head of Quality & Partnerships and the Course Approval Panel Chair, shall determine whether it is appropriate for the outcome to be considered by a Course Approval Review Panel or should be presented to another Course Approval Panel at a later date. The composition of a Course Approval Review Panel shall be determined by the TQSC Chair. The Course Approval Review Panel shall produce a report on the outcome of their discussions and present their findings directly to the TQSC.
- 4.13.50 In the case of courses that are accredited, approval for delivery may also be subject to approval from the relevant Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Body (PSRB).

#### **D) FORMAL APPROVAL**

- 4.13.51 The Academic Council considers the course approval outcome report and Course Approval Event Conditions and Response Form (AQF04-13) and the recommendation from the TQSC that the course is approved for delivery.
- 4.13.52 Further to formal approval by the Academic Council a Course Approval Confirmation Form (AQF04-14) is produced and provided to the Course Development Team. The confirmation form details the start date of the new course, the length of time for which the course is approved and the date of the periodic review of the course.
- 4.13.53 The confirmation form serves as confirmation that the Course Approval Process has concluded.
- 4.13.54 Monitoring of ongoing approval conditions is overseen by the CPSC in respect of Collaborative Partner courses, the TQSC in respect of educational matters and the Senior Management Team in respect of institutional matters as appropriate.

#### **E) POST APPROVAL**

- 4.13.55 Following formal approval of the new course for delivery:



- a) The Quality Team will keep a record of the approved definitive course documentation on file and provide a copy of this to the Course Development Team and / or other relevant Collaborative Partner staff (for their records), Registry (to update the student record system and make assessment arrangements) and, for courses developed by the UCO, the Marketing Team (to publish / update as appropriate on the UCO's website).
- b) The Quality Team will ask the Course Leader of the new course to nominate an External Examiner for the course in line with the UCO's External Examiner nomination process described in AQF Section 11: External Examining. The External Examiner should be appointed and attend a training / induction session to their role by the start date of the new course.
- c) The Course Team for the new course prepare for delivery of the new course, will liaise with relevant staff as appropriate (e.g., HR for staff recruitment, the Recruitment & Marketing Team for course publicity, the Admissions Team for Interview Events, the Registry Team for induction and timetabling of the new course, the ICT Department for online learning resources, etc.).
- d) The Registry Team is responsible for updating the UCO's Information Management Systems to reflect the addition of the new course.

## 4.14 CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW COURSES

- 4.14.1 Course Approval Panels are required to consider the following criteria when reviewing and approving a new course. The course approval outcome report will typically be structured on these criteria, noting practice that is innovative and/or likely to be of interest to other Course Teams.
- 4.14.2 These criteria should also inform the development of the course and its documentation throughout the course design and approval process. Course Development Teams are therefore recommended to consider and structure the Academic Rationale on these criteria listed in [Table 4.3](#).

**TABLE 4.3: COURSE APPROVAL CRITERIA**

Area	Course Approval Criteria	Relevant Course Approval Document
<b>Academic Strength &amp; Significance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The proposed course constitutes a significant and sector-benchmarked academic offering in the subject area(s) it represents.</li> <li>ii. The course is accurately understood and evidenced by the Course Development Team as distinctive, developmental, or comparable with others within the Higher Education sector.</li> <li>iii. The expectations of students, employers and other relevant professional bodies have been considered within the course design and development process.</li> </ol>	<p>AQF04-01: New Course Proposal Form</p> <p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-04: New Course Proposal Competitor Analysis &amp; Market Research Form</p>
<b>Strategic Fit &amp; Viability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The proposed course supports the UCO's mission and strategic direction.</li> <li>ii. There is market research and/or quantitative evidence to support the viability of the proposed provision.</li> </ol>	<p>UCO / Partner Strategic Documents</p> <p>AQF04-04: New Course Proposal Competitor Analysis &amp; Market Research Form</p>



	<p>iii. The proposed course constitutes a worthwhile extension of the UCO's existing provision in terms of its curriculum and proposed market(s).</p>	
<p><b>Quality &amp; Standards of the Course</b></p>	<p>i. The aims and objectives of the proposed course are consistent with the UCO's (or partner's) strategic educational aims and objectives.</p> <p>ii. The proposed course complies with the UCO's Academic Regulations (AQF Section 7) unless a variation to these regulations is proposed and detailed within the approval documentation.</p> <p>iii. The course demonstrates constructive alignment between aims, learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, level of learning, credit weighting and recommended resources.</p> <p>iv. Relevant internal and external benchmarks, including the QAA FHEQ, credit framework, subject benchmarks and qualification characteristics documents, and appropriate industry/professional standards, have been considered and addressed appropriately within the course design and development process.</p> <p>v. The intended learning outcomes for the course, and the standards that will be achieved, are appropriate to the level of the proposed award and title and are appropriately distinct from any other awards and/or titles offered or already proposed for approval.</p> <p>vi. There are opportunities for academic progression to (e.g., Recognition of Prior Learning opportunities) and from the proposed course (e.g., Exit Qualifications), with appropriate entry and exit requirements in line with UCO regulations (see <a href="#">AQF Section 7</a>).</p>	<p>UCO / Partner Strategic Documents</p> <p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-05a: CIFs</p> <p>AQF04-06a: UIFs</p> <p>AQF04-07: Course Handbook</p> <p>AQF04-08: External Benchmark Mapping</p> <p>AQF04-10: Schedule of Variance to UCO Academic Regulations</p>
<p><b>Quality of the Learning Experience</b></p>	<p>i. The proposed course provides students with a coherent and developmental educational experience.</p> <p>ii. The graduate / postgraduate outcomes for students, including those who achieve</p>	<p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-05a: CIFs</p> <p>AQF04-06a: UIFs</p> <p>AQF04-07: Course Handbook</p>

	<p>specified exit awards, represent a good return on their investment.</p> <p>iii. Engagement with relevant employers and/or professional bodies throughout the course is sufficient to confirm that the student experience is informed by current and contemporary practice, e.g., guest lecturers, placement or work experience opportunities, field trips or visits, etc.</p> <p>iv. The proposed course is consistent with the UCO's (or approved partner's) equal opportunities and diversity policies and promotes an inclusive environment for learning by anticipating the varied requirements of learners (for example, because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location, or age), and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities.</p> <p>v. The experience of students studying in part-time, distance, flexible modes and/or partnership can be confirmed as equivalent to those of students studying full-time on the same/similar provision.</p>	<p>Equal Opportunities, Diversity &amp; Inclusivity Policies</p> <p>Evidence of planned guest lecturers, placement or work experience opportunities, field trips or visits, e.g., Placement Handbook.</p>
<b>Course Structure &amp; Curriculum</b>	<p>i. The course structure, curriculum and intended learning outcomes match the rationale for the proposed course.</p> <p>ii. The academic rationale for the proposed course is sound, and the curriculum is coherent, with clear progression in the subject matter.</p> <p>iii. The intended learning outcomes and aims of the course and those of its component units align.</p> <p>iv. The teaching and learning strategies of the course and its component units are appropriate to the curriculum.</p> <p>v. There is evidence that the quality of teaching and standards of assessment in the subject are likely to be consistent with national practice.</p> <p>vi. The course is balanced in terms of subject specialism, skills development, and professional standards.</p> <p>vii. The course structure considers students with diverse characteristics, including ensuring that intended learning outcomes,</p>	<p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-05a: CIFs</p> <p>AQF04-06a: UIFs</p> <p>AQF04-07: Course Handbook</p> <p>AQF04-09: Staff CVs / Staff Resource Plan</p> <p>Equal Opportunities, Diversity &amp; Inclusivity Policies</p>

	learning, and teaching activities, learning environments, and planned assessment methods do not create any unnecessary barriers.	
<b>Assessment &amp; Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The intended learning outcomes of the course and its component units are tested through the assessment process.</li> <li>ii. The assessment strategy is clear, with students exposed to a range of assessment types.</li> <li>iii. Individual assessments within units are clearly identified and provide an effective measurement of performance, with an acceptable and balanced overall student workload.</li> <li>iv. The assessment strategy and individual assessments are designed to support student performance.</li> <li>v. Formative Assessments enable students to gauge their progress and align to summative assessments supporting and enabling students to enhance their performance.</li> <li>vi. Assessment practices are inclusive and equitable, and the methods, tasks and processes do not advantage or disadvantage any group or individual.</li> <li>vii. Assessment feedback processes are appropriate and consistent with UCO (or partner equivalent) feedback regulations.</li> </ul>	AQF04-03: Academic Rationale AQF04-05a: CIFs AQF04-06a: UIFs Equal Opportunities, Diversity & Inclusivity Policies
<b>Regulatory &amp; Technical Compliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The course does not contain any elements or processes at variance with UCO Academic Regulations (AQF Section 7), other than any exceptions for which approval is explicitly sought as part of the approval process (or those already approved at Partner Approval).</li> <li>ii. The UCO's policies, regulations and operational processes are applied consistently or identified and justified as variations<sup>7</sup>.</li> <li>iii. UCO expectations in respect of academic provision and its delivery are met in full.</li> </ul>	AQF04-01: New Course Proposal Form AQF04-03: Academic Rationale AQF04-05a: CIFs AQF04-06a: UIFs AQF04-07: Course Handbook AQF04-10: Schedule of Variance to UCO Academic Regulations

<sup>7</sup>Any proposal to vary, for example, the standard language entry requirements, or assessment policies, must be identified explicitly in the academic rationale.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Any relevant PSRB requirements are met and align appropriately with UCO requirements and expectations.</li> <li>v. External requirements relevant to the provision are met, e.g., Student Visas, DBS Checks.</li> <li>vi. The course complies with the UCO's (or approved partner equivalent) policies on equality and diversity.</li> </ul>	
<b>Human, Physical &amp; Learning Resources</b>	<p>The human, physical and learning resources available (or the plans that are in place to provide them), including the environment within which the course will be offered, are satisfactory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Regarding human resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The delivery team are suitably qualified in their area(s) of expertise and have a postgraduate teaching qualification.</li> <li>b) There is a staff development policy in place that values and encourages academic and professional development activity by staff.</li> <li>c) The Course Team is externally engaged with relevant subject and professional communities.</li> <li>d) There is confidence that the Course Team can deliver and develop the course.</li> <li>e) The quality of provision and its further enhancement are fully supported by research, scholarship, and academic enterprise within the Course Team.</li> <li>f) The research and scholarly activity of the delivery team is sufficient to maintain the standards of provision and enrich the curriculum with contemporary developments in the subject, particularly to underpin work at Frameworks for Higher Education</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>AQF04-01: New Course Proposal Form</p> <p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-05a: CIFs</p> <p>AQF04-06a: UIFs</p> <p>AQF04-09: Staff CVs / Staff Resource Plan</p> <p>Staff Development Policy</p> <p>Staff Induction Procedure</p> <p>Actual / Virtual Tour of Facilities</p> <p>Site Plans</p>

	<p>Qualifications (FHEQ) Level 6 and FHEQ Level 7<sup>8</sup>.</p> <p>ii. Regarding physical resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The site of delivery is appropriate for the proposed course.</li> <li>b) Any specialist facilities are in place (or the plans that are in place to provide them) are appropriate for the proposed course.</li> <li>c) Any specialist equipment is in place (or the plans that are in place to provide them) are appropriate for the proposed course.</li> </ul> <p>iii. Regarding learning resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Text and web-based recommended resources for the proposed course are appropriate, contemporary, inclusive and easily available and accessible to students.</li> <li>b) The virtual learning environment (or equivalent) (or the plans that are in place to provide one) are appropriate for the proposed course.</li> <li>c) Any specialist learning resources (or the plans that are in place to provide them) are appropriate for the proposed course and easily available and accessible to students.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Learner Support &amp; Guidance</b></p> <p><b>(Excluding Standard Institutional Student Support Services)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Course induction arrangements are appropriate to introduce students to any specific course features.</li> <li>ii. Arrangements are in place for any language or other support required by particular groups of students (overseas, direct entry with advanced standing etc.), and provision is made for students from diverse backgrounds and/or prior educational experience, and students with a range of characteristics including protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	<p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale</p> <p>AQF04-05a: CIFs</p> <p>AQF04-06a: UIFs</p> <p>AQF04-07: Course Handbook</p> <p>Course Induction Schedule</p> <p>Equal Opportunities, Diversity &amp; Inclusivity Policies</p> <p>Work-Based Learning / Mentor / Project Handbooks</p>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Support is available to students in respect of any critical course-related choices or decisions (e.g. electives, placements).</li> <li>iv. There are sound arrangements and support mechanisms in place for the management of work-based learning, mentoring, projects, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Course Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Course Team understands its responsibilities in respect of the management of the course, including student learning opportunities regarding teaching, learning and assessment processes and learning resources.</li> <li>ii. There are appropriate mechanisms in place for obtaining and responding to student feedback on the course and the student experience.</li> <li>iii. Arrangements for any cross-course and / or cross-institutional co-ordination are described and adequate.</li> </ul>	<p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale Course Team Terms of Reference</p> <p>Examples of Student Feedback Surveys</p>
<p><b>Quality of Flexible Delivery Arrangements</b></p> <p>(These criteria are for use in respect of courses that are identified for flexible / distance delivery at the time of proposal. It is expected that during the process of approving such courses, all areas relating to the criteria above will be addressed. The criteria in this final section must also be addressed in respect of any units in which the learning experience depends substantially on flexible / distance delivery. Any change from the approved mode in the transition to or from the flexible / distance delivery of a course or unit must be re-approved through the course modification process.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The nature, outcomes and progress of the learning experience are clearly and accurately conveyed to applicants and students.</li> <li>ii. The expectations of students are clearly identified, scheduled and supported, through the provision of appropriate information and criteria, study plans and contact points.</li> <li>iii. Arrangements for induction appropriate to the learning environment and delivery systems have been made.</li> <li>iv. Teaching, learning and assessment strategies are equivalent in quality to those provided in other learning contexts and are appropriate for the learning experience they will support.</li> <li>v. Assessment and feedback, including opportunities for formative assessment appropriate to contexts of independent study, can be managed securely in terms of quality, standards, and operational effectiveness, with verification and contingency arrangements in place.</li> <li>vi. The proposed distance / flexible delivery systems are accessible by the intended student population, are appropriately</li> </ul>	<p>AQF04-03: Academic Rationale AQF04-05a: CIFs AQF04-06a: UIFs AQF04-07: Course Handbook</p> <p>Examples of Study Plans Course Induction Schedule</p> <p>Description or tour of proposed delivery systems (e.g. VLE).</p>

	<p>reliable and secure, and are consistent with UCO policies on equality and diversity.</p> <p>vii. The proposed delivery systems have been tested for reliability, and appropriate contingency plans are in place.</p> <p>viii. The longevity of delivery systems and materials has been considered, and appropriate plans are in place for development, updating and replacement.</p> <p>ix. The Course Team has appropriate experience and knowledge to support students and maintain quality and standards within distance learning / flexible delivery.</p>	
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## 4.15 AGENDA FOR COURSE APPROVAL EVENTS

4.15.1 The indicative agenda in [Table 4.4](#) below would typically apply for Course Approval Events. This agenda may be adapted as necessary.

**TABLE 4.4: INDICATIVE AGENDA FOR A COURSE APPROVAL EVENT**

Time	Agenda Item Please note – Session times may vary dependent on Lines of Enquiry & Discussions	Attendance
9:30am – 11:00am	Private meeting of the Panel to consider the outcomes of their individual reviews of the Course Approval Criteria and documentation and to identify Lines of Enquiry to pursue with the Course Development Team.	Panel
11:00am – 1:00pm	Discussions with the Course Development Team to pursue identified Lines of Enquiry and discuss any related matters. Actual / Virtual Tour of the Location where the Course will be Delivered as appropriate.	Panel Course Development Team
1:00pm – 1:30pm	Lunch Break	All
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Private meeting of the Panel to consider the responses of the Course Development Team from the morning sessions and identify further Lines of Enquiry to pursue with the Course Development Team.	Panel
2:30pm – 3:45pm	Discussions with the Course Development Team to pursue identified Lines of Enquiry.	Panel Course Development Team
3:45pm – 4:15pm	Private meeting of the Panel to consider the recommended outcome for approval of the course as validated provision.	Panel



4:15pm – 4:30pm	Feedback is given to the Course Development Team including the meeting outcome, recommendations, and conditions.	<b>Panel</b>  <b>Course Development Team</b>
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## 4.16 ACCELERATED NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

- 4.16.1 In some cases, for example due to market or employer needs, an ‘accelerated’ process of course approval may be appropriate. Possible reasons include:
- The proposal is a subset of a recently successfully approved / revalidated course (for example, it is a short course for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) purposes).
  - The proposal shares a large number of units with a recently successfully approved / revalidated course.
  - The proposal is one of a portfolio of closely linked courses of which one has been recently successfully approved / revalidated.
- 4.16.2 In cases where it is thought this would be appropriate, the Vice-Chancellor should be contacted for advice in the first instance. The Vice-Chancellor and Head of Quality & Partnerships will then decide whether this is appropriate, and if so, will agree a timescale for the accelerated new course approval process.
- 4.16.3 The same process as outlined in [Section 4.13](#) will normally be undertaken but using an accelerated timescale.
- 4.16.4 Where an accelerated timescale is approved, it shall be recorded on the Variation to Course Approval Process Form (AQF04-15).

## 4.17 PUBLICITY FOR AND MARKETING OF NEW COURSES

- 4.17.1 In line with the guidance and advice published by the Competitions & Marketing Authority<sup>9</sup>, the UCO works to ensure the accuracy of public information related to courses that lead to a UCO award.
- 4.17.2 Information presented through the UCO’s public website<sup>10</sup> is verified as accurate by the Course Leader in conjunction with the Head of Quality & Partnerships and the UCO’s Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Teams following approval of the course, and is thereafter monitored on an annual basis by the UCO’s and CMA Working Group.
- 4.17.3 Information presented through the websites of Collaborative Partners is verified by the relevant Course Leader and will be monitored for CMA compliance purposes by the UCO’s Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC) and CMA Working Group.
- 4.17.4 Where new provision is being considered the course may only be advertised formally once a Course Approval Event has been scheduled. At this point the course must clearly be marketed as “subject to approval”. Following receipt of the Course Approval Confirmation Form confirming formal approval of the course, this caveat may be removed.
- 4.17.5 Published materials should always include the UCO logo in the approved format, refer to the UCO by its correct title, state that the course leads to an award of the UCO, and state the entry requirements for the course, including any English-language requirements. For courses delivered by Collaborative Partners, the nature of the partnership with the UCO should also be clearly stated.

## 4.18 APPROVAL OF NEW AWARDS

- 4.18.1 A new award is one not currently offered by the UCO.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-advises-universities-and-students-on-consumer-law>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uco.ac.uk/>

- 4.18.2 Proposals for new awards must be submitted using the New Course Proposal Form (AQF04-01) and will be approved concurrently with the associated new course through the New Course Approval Process detailed above.
- 4.18.3 Proposals for new awards will be considered by the TQSC (along with any variances to the UCO's Academic Regulations (AQF Section 7) that the proposed new award may require) and the Senior Management Team. If approved by these committees the new award will be recommended for approval by the Academic Council.
- 4.18.4 All new awards must be formally approved by the Academic Council.

## **PART 3: COURSE & UNIT MODIFICATIONS**

### **4.19 MODIFICATIONS TO COURSES & UNITS**

- 4.19.1 Courses and units are typically approved for a period of five years, but it is acknowledged that modifications may be made following approval to enhance provision.
- 4.19.2 Staff may identify opportunities for enhancing approved courses and units as part of routine monitoring and other reflective activity.
- 4.19.3 As with new course design and development, modifications to courses and units must be coherent and consistent with the UCO's Strategic Plan (and / or the Collaborative Partner's equivalent), must make business sense, and must be approved through the relevant modification process set out below. In all cases, a rationale for the proposed modification must be provided by the Course or Unit Leader as appropriate. They must also identify the modifications to the approved definitive course documentation and undertake appropriate consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.19.4 Modifications to courses and units are reflected through new versions of the following definitive course documentation which include:
  - a) Course Information Forms
  - b) Unit Information Forms
  - c) Course Handbooks

### **4.20 CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF COURSE AND UNIT MODIFICATION PROPOSALS**

- 4.20.1 Course and unit modification proposals are considered by committees with educational oversight of the provision in question as appropriate; for courses delivered by the UCO, major changes which have a resource implication are also considered by the Senior Management Team. Proposed modifications are then approved through the relevant process according to the level of modification.
- 4.20.2 Proposals for course and unit modifications are subject to peer-review and external and internal consultation to provide assurance of the maintenance of academic quality and standards prior to their final approval.
- 4.20.3 Course and unit modifications may only be considered for approval further to the completion and submission of the appropriate approval documentation as detailed in the sections below.
- 4.20.4 Consultation may be undertaken at relevant committee meetings and through electronic communication. Where electronic consultation is undertaken in place of discussion at a committee meeting, this should be noted at the next available meeting and documented in meeting minutes.
- 4.20.5 In the case of consultation with students, a 10-day consultation period is recommended as a minimum to enable all affected students to consider and feedback on the proposed modifications.

- 4.20.6 For all modification proposals the Head of Quality & Partnerships shall liaise with the Course Leader and Unit Leader as appropriate regarding details of timelines and documentation needs, to provide procedural support and to monitor the completion of the required approval stages as outlined below. The Head of Quality & Partnerships will monitor that the minor and major modification approval stages are followed and will report this to the TQSC.

## 4.21 ALIGNMENT WITH THE QUALITY CODE

- 4.21.1 Course and unit modification processes are developed and operated at the UCO in line with external body requirements, including the UK Quality Code of Higher Education regarding Course Design & Development<sup>11</sup>.

## 4.22 ALIGNMENT WITH THE COMPETITION & MARKETS AUTHORITY (CMA)

- 4.22.1 A key consideration when proposing and approving a course modification is to ensure that prospective and existing students are provided with adequate notice of forthcoming changes to material information about their course and that they are consulted about this appropriately. This is in line with guidance published by the [Competition & Markets Authority \(CMA\)](https://www.cma.gov.uk/) for Higher Education Providers which helps providers fulfil their obligations under consumer protection law, in particular the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 (CCRs).

- 4.22.2 CMA guidance defines 'material information' as:

- a) Course title.
- b) Entry requirements / criteria (both academic and non-academic), and an indication of the standard / typical offer level criteria, including particular criteria for English language proficiency and visa and immigration requirements for international students.
- c) Core units of the course, and an indication of likely optional units, including whether there are any optional modules that are generally provided each year.
- d) Information about the composition of the course and how it will be delivered.
- e) The balance between the various elements, such as the number and type of contact hours that students can expect (for example, lectures, seminars, work placements, feedback on assignments).
- f) The expected workload of students (for example the expected self-study time).
- g) Details about the general level of experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the different elements of the course (for example, general information about the experience or status of the staff involved in delivering the course, for example professor, senior lecturer, or postgraduate student).
- h) The overall method(s) of assessment for the course, for example by exams, coursework, or practical assessments, etc (or a combination of these).
- i) The award to be received on successful completion of the course and, if relevant, the awarding body or institution.
- j) Location of study or possible locations, which should also include the likely or possible location of any work placements to be undertaken (where known), and accessibility to and opening times of facilities and learning resources.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/course-design-and-development>

- k) Length of the course.
- l) Whether the course and provider are regulated and by whom, for example, where an institution is regulated by the Office for Students or has a specific course designation.
- m) Whether the course is accredited, for example by a professional, statutory, or regulatory body, and by whom.
- n) Any particular terms, such as rules and regulations, that apply to the course that students may find particularly surprising (such as, for example, a term explaining that the body awarding the degree is different to the HE provider running the course) or are otherwise important (such as, for example, any rules or regulations whose contravention might prevent a student from completing their course).
- o) Course fees and any additional course costs.

4.22.3 Modifications that may affect any of the above material information should be submitted for approval six months prior to the expected course start date to ensure that students, applicants, and other relevant stakeholders are provided with sufficient notice regarding planned modifications.

## **4.23 DRIVERS FOR MODIFICATIONS TO COURSES AND UNITS**

4.23.1 Courses and units are typically approved for a period of five years from the point of approval to the point of periodic course review. During this period, it may be identified that modifications to a course or its units would enhance the provision. Course and Unit Leaders may propose in response to several sources of information, including:

- a) External Examiners' reports.
- b) Reports from accrediting or other external bodies.
- c) Staff, student, and graduate feedback.
- d) Student progress and other relevant data.
- e) Institutional goals and mission.
- f) Strategic academic and resource planning.
- g) Subject sectoral developments.
- h) Changing external environment.
- i) Typographical errors or clarifications.
- j) Good practice in other courses or units at the UCO, or other sources of good practice.

## **4.24 FRAMEWORK FOR MODIFICATIONS TO COURSES AND UNITS**

4.24.1 The approval of course and unit modifications is subject to clear identification of the modifications, the production of a sound rationale, and evidence of undertaking appropriate consultation with stakeholders.

4.24.2 As with new course and unit design and development, modifications to courses and units must be coherent and consistent with the UCO's Strategic Plan (and / or partner's equivalent), make business sense, and be academically sound and appropriate.

4.24.3 The following areas of the approved CIF and UIF may not be changed:

- a) HECoS Code
- b) UCAS Course Code

- c) Unit Code

## 4.25 TIMESCALES OF COURSE & UNIT MODIFICATIONS

### A) PLANNED MODIFICATIONS

- 4.25.1 A planned modification is one that is approved before the final Academic Council meeting of the academic year preceding implementation.
- 4.25.2 Modifications that may impact on material information define in [CMA guidance](#) will normally be required to be approved by the penultimate Academic Council of the academic year (or 6 months preceding the course start date) to ensure that students, applicants, and other relevant stakeholders are provided with sufficient notice regarding planned modifications to meet CMA obligations.

### B) IMMEDIATE MODIFICATIONS

- 4.25.3 An immediate modification is one approved outside of the planned modification timeframe.
- 4.25.4 Immediate modifications required, for example in response to External Examiner recommendations or operational issues arising or identified at a time that does not permit the proposal of a Planned Modification, must in all cases be presented to the Chair of TQSC and Chair of Academic Council for approval.
- 4.25.5 Actions to approve modifications by the Academic Council Chair will be recognised by the Academic Council at its next meeting.

## 4.26 RISK-BASED APPROACH TO COURSE & UNIT MODIFICATIONS

- 4.26.1 A risk-based approach is taken to course and unit modifications depending on the nature, timing and extent of modification(s) proposed. The level of scrutiny and the modification approval process is designed to be proportionate to the risk level of the modification(s) being proposed.
- 4.26.2 The risk level of a modification is broadly identified by several factors which include but are not limited to:
- a) The section(s) of the Course or Unit Information or Course Handbook affected by the proposed modification.
  - b) The nature and extent of the proposed modification.
  - c) The cumulative effect of a high volume of small modifications.
  - d) Whether a modification is planned or immediate.
  - e) Whether the course is accredited by a PSRB.
- 4.26.3 The risk level of a modification determines whether the modification is processed through the administrative (low risk), minor (medium risk) or major (high risk) modification process.
- 4.26.4 The risk-level of a proposed modification will normally be initially assessed and determined by the Head of Quality & Partnerships in liaison with other relevant staff as appropriate.
- 4.26.5 In all cases the risk-based modification process will ensure that:
- a) The aims of courses and their component units will continue to align.
  - b) The learning outcomes of courses and their component units will continue to align.
  - c) The course and its component units will continue to align with the UCO's strategy and mission (and / or that of a partner's equivalent).
  - d) The criteria for course and unit design, development and approval are always met.

- 4.26.6 Where a cumulative effect of medium risk modifications is considered substantial, the 'major' modification process may be initiated; where a cumulative effect of high-risk modifications is considered substantial, a periodic course review event may be initiated.

## 4.27 LOW-RISK MODIFICATIONS

- 4.27.1 Low-risk course and unit modifications are typically administrative or factual in nature and will normally include those listed in [Table 4.5](#).
- 4.27.2 Low-risk modifications will typically be processed through the [Administrative Modification Approval Process](#).

**TABLE 4.5: MODIFICATIONS THAT NORMALLY QUALIFY AS LOW-RISK**

<b>Course Modifications affecting CIFs / Course Handbooks</b>	<p>Corrections to typographical errors.</p> <p>Corrections to staff role or committee titles.</p> <p>Corrections to names or titles of external organisations.</p> <p>Names of Course or Unit Leaders and current staff to reflect those currently in post.</p> <p>Clarifications to wording that does not materially change meaning.</p>
<b>Unit Modifications affecting UIFs / Course Handbooks</b>	<p>Corrections to typographical errors.</p> <p>Corrections to staff role or committee titles.</p> <p>Corrections to names or titles of external organisations.</p> <p>Names of Course or Unit Leaders and current staff to reflect those currently in post.</p> <p>Updates to editions of Recommended Resources.</p> <p>Clarifications to wording that does not materially change meaning.</p>
<b>Other Modifications</b>	<p>Corrections to typographical errors.</p> <p>Corrections to staff role or committee titles.</p> <p>Corrections to names or titles of external organisations.</p> <p>Names of Course or Unit Leaders and current staff to reflect those currently in post.</p> <p>Clarifications to wording that does not materially change meaning.</p>

## 4.28 ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATION PROCESS

- 4.28.1 The Administrative Modification Approval Process set out in [Diagram 4.3](#) should be used to approve course and unit modifications that have been determined as low-risk modifications.
- 4.28.2 The Head of Quality & Partnerships will confirm the risk level of the proposed modification and advise on and confirm the modification approval process and required documentation.
- 4.28.3 Low-risk modifications may normally be made by Unit and Course Leaders at any point in the academic year.
- 4.28.4 Due to the nature of low-risk modifications, peer-review and external and internal consultation is not normally required.



- 4.28.5 The documentation requirements for the Administrative Modification Approval Process are set out in [Table 4.6](#).
- 4.28.6 Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the required modification approval documentation rests with the Course Team and is overseen by the Course or Unit Leader as appropriate unless otherwise specified.
- 4.28.7 The relevant Course or Unit Leader is responsible for ensuring that the required modification approval documentation is completed in full prior to submitting the proposed low-risk modification for approval.
- 4.28.8 Version control processes should be used when completing course and unit modification approval documentation as documented in the UCO's Version Control Policy<sup>12</sup>. This includes the use of footers to show the date and version of the document.
- 4.28.9 The relevant Unit or Course Leader should submit the required completed modification approval documentation to the Quality Team electronically ([Quality@uco.ac.uk](mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk)).
- 4.28.10 Low-risk modifications may only be considered for approved further to the completion and submission of the required major modification approval process documentation.
- 4.28.11 All low-risk modifications should be considered and formally approved by the Head of Quality & Partnerships.
- 4.28.12 Following formal approval of a low-risk modification by the Head of Quality & Partnerships:
- The Quality Team will be responsible for providing the approved modified documentation to the Recruitment, Marketing, Admissions and Registry Teams for their records and publication as appropriate, and for publishing the modified course documents on the VLE.
  - The Course / Unit Leader will be responsible for informing relevant students and staff of the modification, ensuring that any associated documents, website and VLE information are updated to reflect the modification, and ensuring that marketing documentation is updated and published as appropriate.
  - The Quality Team will be responsible for storing the approved modified documentation and noting the modification on the relevant Course Modification Register.

TABLE 4.6: ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Document Required	Guidance
<b>A Word version of the CIF / UIF / Course Handbook highlighting the proposed modifications using 'Track Changes'.</b>	Word versions of these documents are available from the Quality Team ( <a href="mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk">Quality@uco.ac.uk</a> ).

## 4.29 MEDIUM-RISK MODIFICATIONS

- 4.29.1 Medium-risk course and unit modifications normally include those that are of a more substantial nature than low-risk modifications and are likely to have some impact on existing or prospective students
- 4.29.2 Typical medium-risk modifications are provided in [Table 4.7](#).
- 4.29.3 Medium-risk modifications will typically be processed through the [Minor Modification Approval Process](#).
- 4.29.4 The Head of Quality & Partnerships should be consulted at an early stage to confirm the risk level of the proposed modification.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>



- 4.29.5 Medium-risk modifications should be planned for implementation in the following academic year, and normally require consultation with students and External Examiners.
- 4.29.6 A significant number of proposed medium-risk modifications in combination may be determined as a high-risk and subsequently be considered through the 'major' modification process. In such instances advice should be sought from the Head of Quality & Partnerships at an early stage.

**TABLE 4.7: MODIFICATIONS THAT NORMALLY QUALIFY AS MEDIUM-RISK**

<b>Course Modifications affecting CIFs / Course Handbooks</b>	Course Summary Key Features Unit Information Moderate modifications to the Teaching & Learning Strategy Moderate modifications to the Assessment Strategy Moderate modifications to Student Learning Hours Further Study & Employability
<b>Unit Modifications affecting UIFs / Course Handbooks</b>	Unit Summary Learning Outcomes & Assessment Criteria Moderate modifications to the Teaching & Learning Strategy Moderate modifications to the Assessment Strategy Moderate modifications to Student Learning Hours Unit Content Recommended Resources
<b>Other Modifications</b>	More substantial re-wording documentation.

### 4.30 MINOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS

- 4.29.1 The Minor Modification Approval Process set out in [Diagram 4.4](#) should be used to approve course and unit modifications that have been determined as medium-risk modifications.
- 4.29.2 The Head of Quality & Partnerships will confirm the risk level of the proposed modification and advise on and confirm the required modification approval process and documentation.
- 4.29.3 Medium-risk modifications may normally be made by Unit and Course Leaders at several points in the academic year to coincide with TQSC and CPSC meetings where such modifications will be considered and approved. Course Teams should therefore plan medium-risk modifications to align to the meeting dates of these committees. Committee meeting dates are made available here: [UCO Committee Meeting Dates](#).
- 4.29.4 Medium-risk modifications should be planned rather than immediate. Immediate high-risk modifications will normally only be considered exceptionally where there is a genuine need, for example in response to operational issues, or where academic standards and quality are at risk.
- 4.29.5 Medium-risk modifications normally require peer-review and external and internal consultation to provide assurance of the maintenance of academic quality and standards prior to their final approval.
- 4.29.6 The documentation requirements for the Minor Modification Approval Process are set out in [Table 4.8](#).

- 4.29.7 Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the required modification approval documentation rests with the Course Team and is overseen by the Course or Unit Leader as appropriate unless otherwise specified.
- 4.29.8 The relevant Course or Unit Leader is responsible for ensuring that the required modification approval documentation is completed in full prior to submitting the proposed medium-risk modification for approval.
- 4.29.9 Version control processes should be used when completing course and unit modification approval documentation as documented in the UCO's Version Control Policy<sup>13</sup>. This includes the use of footers to show the date and version of the document.
- 4.29.10 The relevant Unit or Course Leader should submit the required completed modification approval documentation to the Quality Team electronically ([Quality@uco.ac.uk](mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk)).
- 4.29.11 Medium-risk modifications may only be considered for approved further to the completion and submission of the required major modification approval process documentation.
- 4.29.12 All medium-risk modifications should be considered and recommended for approval by the relevant Course Team following their review of the required modification documentation ([Table 4.8](#)) and prior to submitting the modification proposal to the TQSC / CPSC should:
- a) Consider whether the proposed modification impacts on other aspects or the course or its component units and address these impacts as appropriate.
  - b) Consider the impact of previous modifications and confirm that the proposed modification and associated modifications to date (since initial approval or re-approval) is appropriate and feasible, and do not warrant further action, e.g., Periodic Course Review.
  - c) Consider and, if necessary, consult with the Finance, Student Support, Registry, Human Resources, and other teams as appropriate to consider resource implications of the proposed modification, and seek approval of any resource costs with the Finance Director (or partner equivalent).
  - d) Confirm that appropriate Student and External Examiner consultation has been undertaken and considered.
  - e) Confirm that appropriate PSRB consultation has been undertaken and considered (if applicable).
- 4.29.13 Following Course Team approval, all medium-risk modifications must next be considered and formally approved by the TQSC (for courses delivered by the UCO) or the CPSC (for courses leading to a UCO award delivered by Partners). These committees should also consider the impact and appropriateness of the proposed modification and assure that appropriate consultation has been undertaken prior to approving the proposed medium-risk modification.
- 4.29.14 Where a medium-risk modification is required to be implemented immediately, approval of the modification may be made by Chair's Action of the above committees if and as appropriate. The outcome of high-risk modifications approved by Chairs' Actions shall normally be noted at the next available committee meeting.
- 4.29.15 Following formal approval of a medium-risk modification by the TQSC / CPSC:
- a) The Quality Team will be responsible for providing the approved modified documentation to the Recruitment, Marketing, Admissions and Registry Teams for their records and publication as appropriate, and for publishing the modified course documents on the VLE.
  - b) The Course / Unit Leader will be responsible for informing relevant students and staff of the modification, ensuring that any associated documents, website and VLE information are updated

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

to reflect the modification, and ensuring that marketing documentation is updated and published as appropriate.

- c) The Quality Team will be responsible for storing the approved modified documentation and noting the modification on the relevant Course Modification Register.

**TABLE 4.8: MINOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
<b>A Word version of the CIF / UIF / Course Handbook highlighting the proposed modifications using 'Track Changes'.</b>	Word versions of these documents are available from the Quality Team ( <a href="mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk">Quality@uco.ac.uk</a> ).
<b>Course Modification Form (AQF04-16) summarizing and providing a rationale for the proposed modification.</b>	Available here: <a href="#">AQF Documents</a>
<b>Course Team Minutes / Email Correspondence agreeing the proposed modification.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>SSLCG Minutes / Email Correspondence providing evidence of student consultation.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>Email Correspondence providing evidence of External Examiner consultation.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>Email Correspondence providing evidence of staff consultation regarding resources, as appropriate.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.

## 4.31 HIGH-RISK MODIFICATIONS

- 4.31.1 High-risk course and unit modifications normally include those that are of a more substantial nature than medium-risk modifications and are likely to have a significant impact on existing or prospective students or provision.
- 4.31.2 Typical high-risk modifications are identified in [Table 4.9](#).
- 4.31.3 High-risk modifications will typically be processed through the [Major Modification Approval Process](#).
- 4.31.4 The Head of Quality & Partnerships should be consulted at an early stage to confirm the risk level of the proposed modification.
- 4.31.5 High-risk modifications should be planned for implementation in the following academic year, and require consultation with internal staff, students, and External Examiners.
- 4.31.6 High-risk modifications must be agreed by the relevant Course Team and subsequently be considered and formally recommended for approval by the TQSC (for courses delivered by the UCO) or the CPSC (for courses delivered by Partners) to the Academic Council before they are implemented.
- 4.31.7 High-risk modifications may normally be made at three points in the year (normally December, March, and June) to coincide with when the Academic Council meets.
- 4.31.8 A significant number of proposed high-risk modifications in combination may need to be considered through the periodic course review process contained in AQF Section 6. In such instances advice should be sought from the Head of Quality & Partnerships at an early stage.

TABLE 4.9: MODIFICATIONS THAT NORMALLY QUALIFY AS HIGH-RISK

Course Modifications	<p>Qualification (Award).</p> <p>Course Title.</p> <p>Course Outcomes.</p> <p>Course Aims.</p> <p>Course Structure.</p> <p>External Benchmark mapping.</p> <p>Substantial modifications to the Teaching &amp; Learning Strategy.</p> <p>Substantial modifications to the Assessment Strategy.</p> <p>Substantial modifications to Student Learning Hours.</p> <p>Length of course.</p> <p>Adding or changing accreditation by a PSRB.</p> <p>Course Entry Criteria.</p> <p>Course Progression Criteria or Regulations.</p> <p>Degree Classification.</p> <p>Adding or changing the mode of delivery of a course.</p> <p>Adding or changing the location of delivery of a course.</p> <p>Adding or changing an exit qualification of the course.</p>
Unit Modifications	<p>Unit Title.</p> <p>Unit Aims.</p> <p>Unit Credits.</p> <p>Unit Level.</p> <p>Unit Pre-requisites or regulations.</p> <p>Substantial modifications to the Teaching &amp; Learning Strategy</p> <p>Substantial modifications to the Assessment Strategy</p> <p>Substantial modifications to Student Learning Hours</p> <p>Changing whether a unit is mandatory or optional.</p>
Other	<p>An immediate modification.</p> <p>An accumulation of medium-risk modifications.</p> <p>Adding, removing, or replacing a unit.</p> <p>Modifying a course to reflect a specialization.</p> <p>Suspending a course.</p> <p>Closing a course.</p> <p>Adding, removing, or changing a placement.</p> <p>Modifications that impact on PSRB standards or requirements.</p> <p>Modifications that impact on alignment to <a href="#">CMA guidance</a>.</p>

## 4.32 MAJOR MODIFICATION PROCESS

- 4.32.1 The Major Modification Approval Process set out in [Diagram 4.5](#) should be used to approve course and unit modifications that have been determined as high-risk modifications.
- 4.32.2 The Head of Quality & Partnerships will confirm the risk level of the proposed modification and advise on and confirm the required modification approval process and documentation.
- 4.32.3 High-risk modifications may normally be made by Unit and Course Leaders at several points in the academic year to coincide with TQSC and CPSC meetings where such modifications will be considered and recommended for approval by the Academic Council. The Academic Council typically meets three times per year (normally December, March, and June) at which all high-risk modifications must be formally approved before they are implemented. Course Teams should therefore plan high-risk modifications to align to the meeting dates of these committees. Committee meeting dates are made available here: [UCO Committee Meeting Dates](#).
- 4.32.4 High-risk modifications should be planned rather than immediate. Immediate high-risk modifications will normally only be considered exceptionally where there is a genuine need, for example in response to operational issues, or where academic standards and quality are at risk.
- 4.32.5 All high-risk modifications require peer-review and external and internal consultation to provide assurance of the maintenance of academic quality and standards prior to their final approval.
- 4.32.6 The documentation requirements for the Major Modification Approval Process are set out in [Table 4.10](#).
- 4.32.7 Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the required modification approval documentation rests with the Course Team and is overseen by the Course or Unit Leader as appropriate unless otherwise specified.
- 4.32.8 The relevant Course or Unit Leader is responsible for ensuring that the required modification approval documentation is completed in full prior to submitting the proposed high-risk modification for approval.
- 4.32.9 Version control processes should be used when completing course and unit modification approval documentation as documented in the UCO's Version Control Policy<sup>14</sup>. This includes the use of footers to show the date and version of the document.
- 4.32.10 The relevant Unit or Course Leader should submit the required completed modification approval documentation to the Quality Team electronically ([Quality@uco.ac.uk](mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk)).
- 4.32.11 High-risk modifications may only be considered for approved further to the completion and submission of the required major modification approval process documentation.
- 4.32.12 All high-risk modifications should be considered and recommended for approval by the relevant Course Team following their review of the required modification documentation ([Table 4.10](#)) and prior to submitting the modification proposal to the TQSC / CPSC should:
- Consider whether the proposed modification impacts on other aspects or the course or its component units and address these impacts as appropriate.
  - Consider the impact of previous modifications and confirm that the proposed modification and associated modifications to date (since initial approval or re-approval) is appropriate and feasible, and do not warrant further action, e.g., Periodic Course Review.
  - Consider and, if necessary, consult with the Finance, Student Support, Registry, Human Resources, and other teams as appropriate to consider resource implications of the proposed modification, and seek approval of any resource costs with the Finance Director (or partner equivalent).
  - Confirm that Student and External Examiner consultation has been undertaken and considered.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

e) Confirm that PSRB consultation has been undertaken and considered (if applicable).

4.32.13 Following Course Team approval, all high-risk modifications must next be considered by the TQSC (for courses delivered by the UCO) and the CPSC (for courses leading to a UCO award delivered by Collaborative Partners). These committees should also consider the impact and appropriateness of the proposed modification and assure that appropriate consultation has been undertaken prior to recommending approval of the proposed high-risk modification to the Academic Council for formal approval.

4.32.14 Following consideration by the TQSC / CPSC approval, the proposed high-risk modification must next be considered by the Academic Council for formal approval.

4.32.15 Where a high-risk modification is required to be implemented immediately, approval of the modification may be made by Chair's Action of the above committees if and as appropriate. The outcome of high-risk modifications approved by Chairs' Actions shall normally be noted at the next available committee meeting.

4.32.16 Following formal approval of a high-risk modification by the Academic Council:

- d) The Quality Team will be responsible for providing the approved modified documentation to the Recruitment, Marketing, Admissions and Registry Teams for their records and publication as appropriate, and for publishing the modified course documents on the VLE.
- e) The Course / Unit Leader will be responsible for informing relevant students and staff of the modification, ensuring that any associated documents, website and VLE information are updated to reflect the modification, and ensuring that marketing documentation is updated and published as appropriate.
- f) The Quality Team will be responsible for storing the approved modified documentation and noting the modification on the relevant Course Modification Register.

**TABLE 4.10: MAJOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>Guidance</b>
<b>A Word version of the CIF / UIF / Course Handbook highlighting the proposed modifications using 'Track Changes'.</b>	Word versions of these documents are available from the Quality Team ( <a href="mailto:Quality@uco.ac.uk">Quality@uco.ac.uk</a> ).
<b>Course Modification Form (AQF04-16) summarizing and providing a rationale for the proposed modification.</b>	Available here: <a href="#">AQF Documents</a>
<b>Course Team Minutes / Email Correspondence agreeing the proposed modification.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>SSLCG Minutes / Email Correspondence providing evidence of student consultation.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>Email Correspondence providing evidence of External Examiner consultation.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>Email Correspondence providing evidence of PSRB consultation, as appropriate.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.
<b>Email Correspondence providing evidence of staff consultation regarding resources, as appropriate.</b>	Extracts of meeting minutes / notes or PDF files of email correspondence may be submitted.



## 4.33 COURSE MODIFICATION CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

### A) STUDENTS

- 4.33.1 Where a low-risk course modification is proposed, consultation with students affected by the modification will not normally be required.
- 4.33.2 Where a medium- or high-risk course modification is proposed, consultation with students affected by the modification will normally be required.
- 4.33.3 Affected students includes those who will ultimately experience the modification as part of their course; all affected cohorts of students should be consulted.
- 4.33.4 It may also be beneficial to consult with students who may not be affected by the modification but who are on the non-modified iteration of the course to gather their feedback on the proposal based on their experience.
- 4.33.5 To ensure that all affected students have the opportunity to provide comment on a proposed course modification, students should be emailed the proposed modification clearly setting out the rationale and be provided with a 10-day consultation period in which to reply.
- 4.33.6 Student consultation may additionally be undertaken through Student Representatives, Student-Staff Liaison Consultation Groups, and student focus groups.
- 4.33.7 Evidence of student consultation should be provided in the form of meeting minutes / notes and email correspondence.

### B) EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

- 4.33.8 Where a low-risk course modification is proposed, consultation with relevant External Examiners will not normally be required.
- 4.33.9 Where a medium- or high-risk course modification is proposed, consultation with relevant External Examiners will normally be required.
- 4.33.10 This may be in the form of a meeting with the External Examiner or through email correspondence.
- 4.33.11 Evidence of External Examiner consultation should be provided in the form of meeting minutes / notes and email correspondence.

### C) PSRB's

- 4.33.12 Where a course is accredited by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) the PSRB should be consulted or notified if the proposed modification will impact on PSRB accreditation requirements.
- 4.33.13 It is the responsibility of the Course Leader to determine whether a modification requires PSRB consultation or notification and should be undertaken in line within the terms of PSRB accreditation.
- 4.33.14 Evidence of PSRB consultation should be provided in the form of meeting minutes / notes and email correspondence.

### D) RELEVANT STAFF

- 4.33.15 Course and Unit Leaders should consult with relevant institutional staff if the proposed modification will have an impact on institutional, human, or learning resources or require new resources.

4.33.16 Where a financial impact is identified, the Finance Director (or partner equivalent) must be consulted.

4.33.17 Evidence of staff consultation should be provided in the form of meeting minutes / notes and email correspondence.

## PART 4: CLOSING A COURSE OR PARTNERSHIP

### 4.34 CLOSING A COURSE

4.34.1 The UCO and / or a Collaborative Partner may decide to withdraw a course from its portfolio of provision for several reasons, including:

- a) An outcome of course monitoring or review.
- b) Changes in patterns of demand from prospective students.
- c) Changes in staffing.
- d) Strategic realignment of the UCO's portfolio of provision.
- e) A major organisational change.
- f) Circumstances beyond the UCO's control.

4.34.2 The process for closing a course follows that for a high-risk modification.

4.34.3 When considering the closure of a course, due consideration will be given to students currently enrolled on the course, and the protection of their student experience in line with the [UCO's Student Protection Plan](#) (or partner equivalent). Wherever possible, students will normally be given the opportunity to complete their course within the standard time frame, with access to all learning opportunities and resources available.

4.34.4 Students will normally be informed at the earliest opportunity if their course is to be withdrawn from the UCO's portfolio of provision, and discussions will be held with students to consider the implications.

4.34.5 The effect on partners, delivery organisations, and support providers with whom they work to offer the course, and on the students studying with them, must be considered, and these stakeholders should be informed and consulted about the closure.

4.34.6 As with other major changes, students who would be affected by the modification(s) must be consulted.

4.34.7 Approval for the closure of a course ultimately rests with the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Academic Council and Senior Management Team.

4.34.8 The Head of Quality & Partnerships in liaison with admissions and marketing teams is responsible for ensuring that course information is updated appropriately on records systems, promotional material, and websites by appropriate staff.

### 4.35 CLOSING A PARTNERSHIP

4.35.1 Should a decision be made to terminate a partnership between the UCO and a Collaborative Partner institution, the Principal of that institution must be notified at the earliest opportunity by the UCO's Vice-Chancellor.

4.35.2 An exit strategy will be developed (normally led by the Vice-Chancellor) following the contract clause regarding termination and the reasons for the termination. This will aim to ensure a smooth departure from the relationship, whilst preserving the integrity and continuation of students' education.

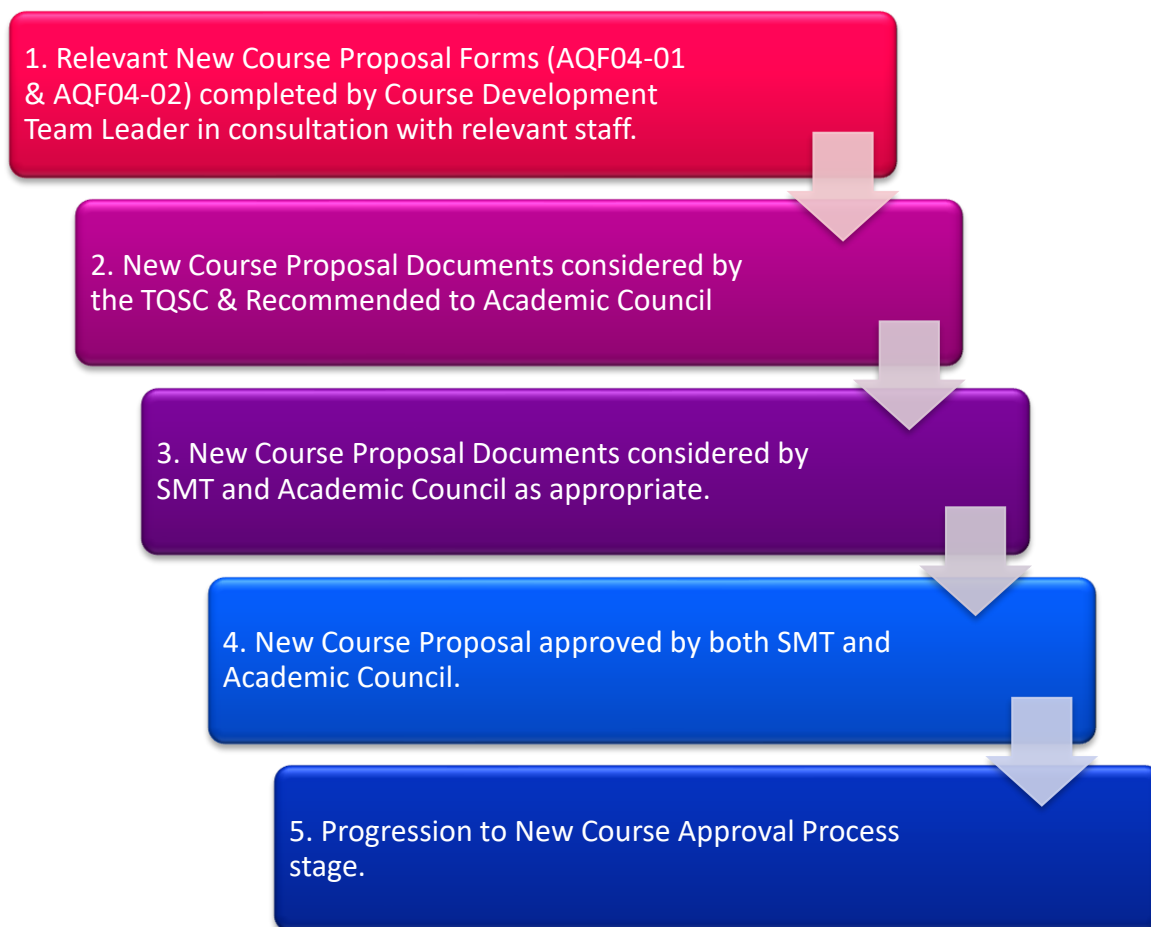
4.35.3 This should also be agreed by the UCO's Academic Council, Senior Management Team, UCO's Board of Directors and by the main decision-making committee of the partner institution.

4.35.4 See AQF Section 16: Collaborative Activity for further details.

## AQF04: APPENDICES

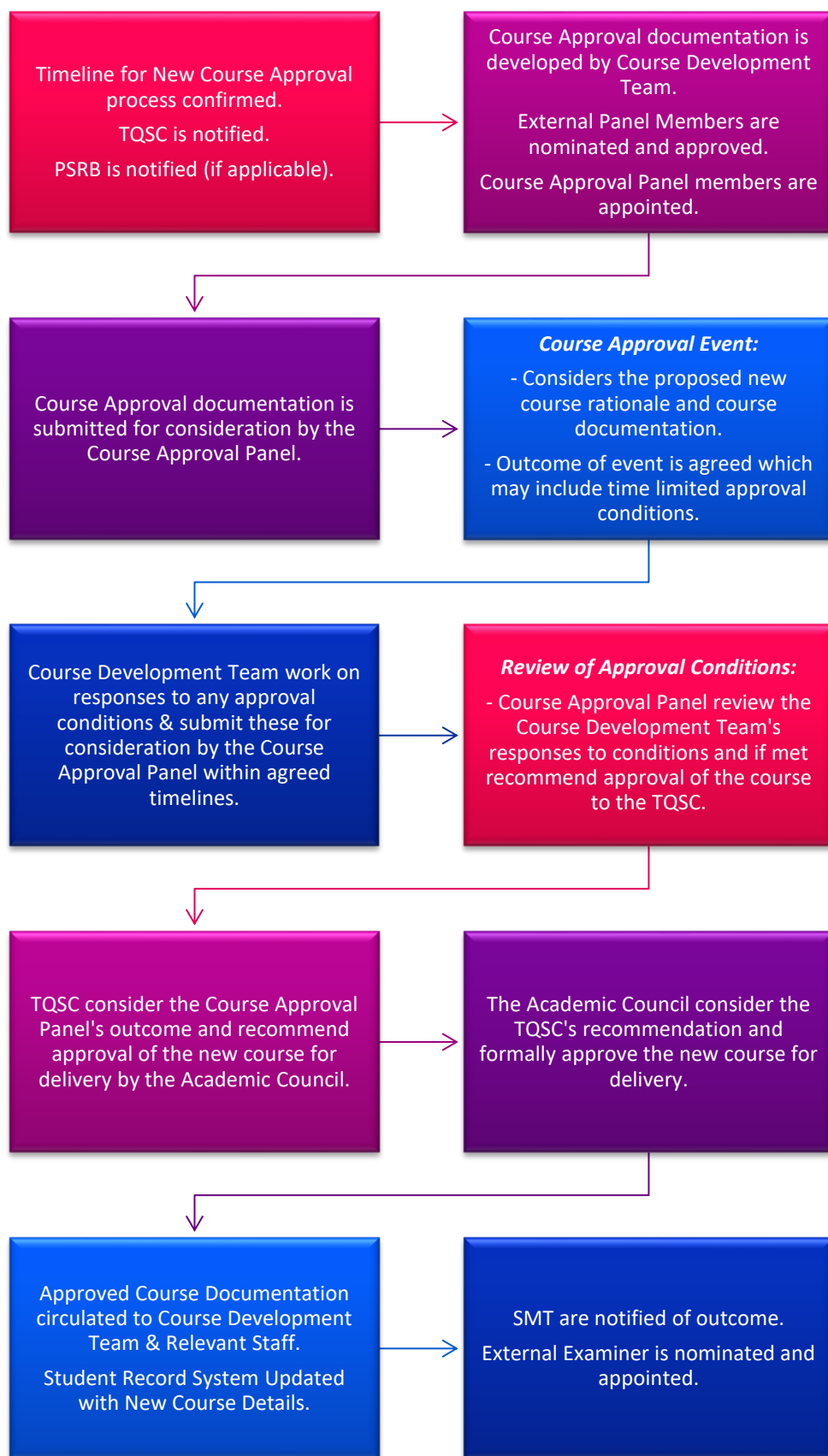
<b>Appendix Reference Number</b>	<b>Appendix Title</b>
AQF04-01	New Course Proposal Form
AQF04-02	New Course Costings Form
AQF04-03	Academic Rationale Template
AQF04-04	New Course Competitor Analysis & Market Research Form
AQF04-05a	Course Information Form Template
AQF04-05b	Course Information Form Template Manual
AQF04-06a	Unit Information Form Template
AQF04-06b	Unit Information Form Template Manual
AQF04-07	Course Handbook Template
AQF04-08a	External Benchmark Mapping Template
AQF04-08b	Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy Mapping Template
AQF04-09	Staff CV's Coversheet / Recruitment Plan
AQF04-10	Schedule of Variance to UCO Regulations Form
AQF04-11	External Panel Member Nomination Form
AQF04-12a	Course Approval Panel Guidance Template
AQF04-12b	Course Approval Panel Feedback Form
AQF04-13	Course Approval Event Conditions & Response Form
AQF04-14	Course Approval Confirmation Form
AQF04-15	Variation to Course Approval Process Form
AQF04-16	Course Modification Form

## DIAGRAM 4.1: STAGE 1 NEW COURSE PROPOSAL APPROVAL PROCESS



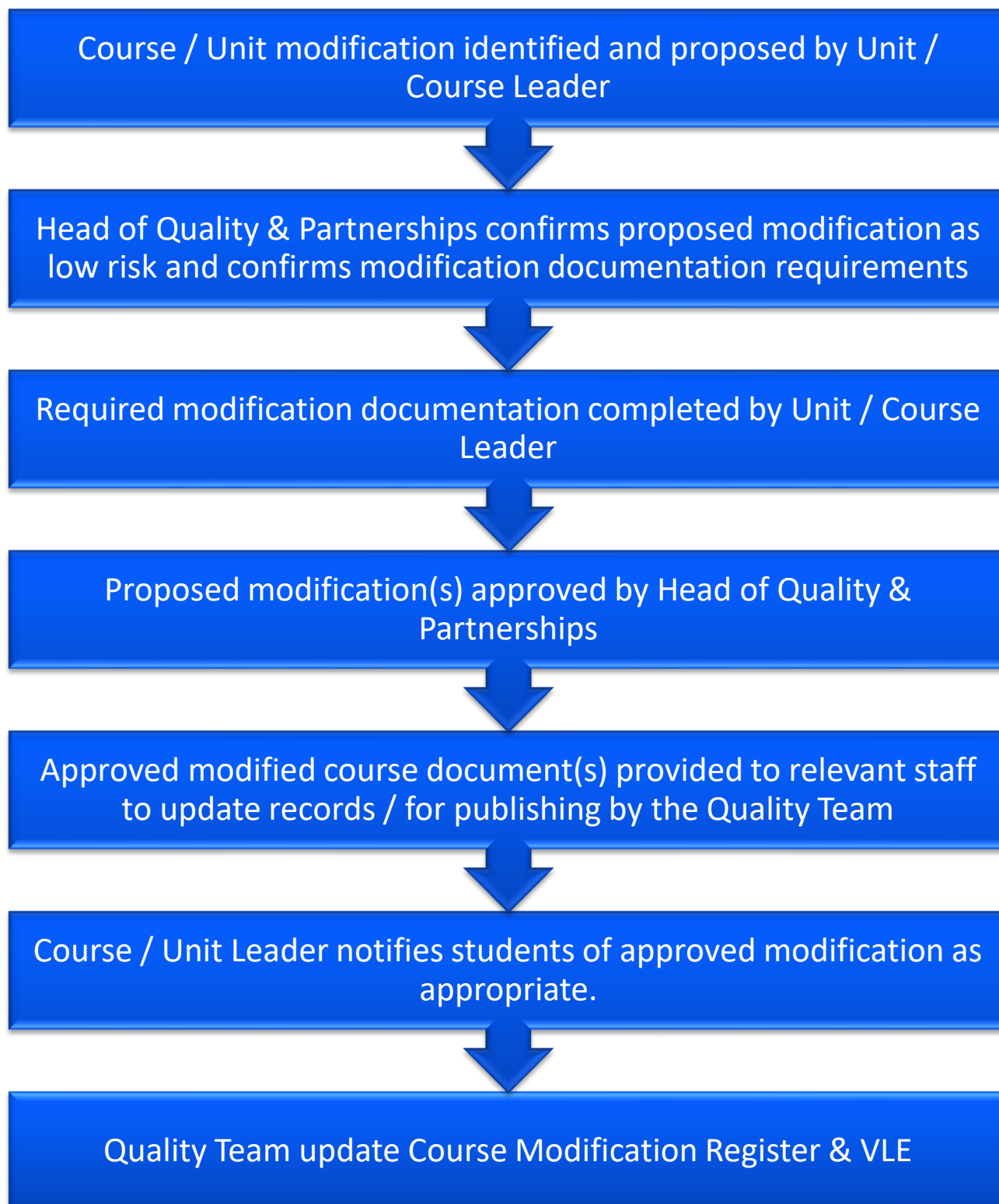
[\(RETURN TO STAGE 1: NEW COURSE PROPOSAL APPROVAL\)](#)

## DIAGRAM 4.2: STAGE 2: NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS



[\(Return to STAGE 2: New Course Approval Process\)](#)

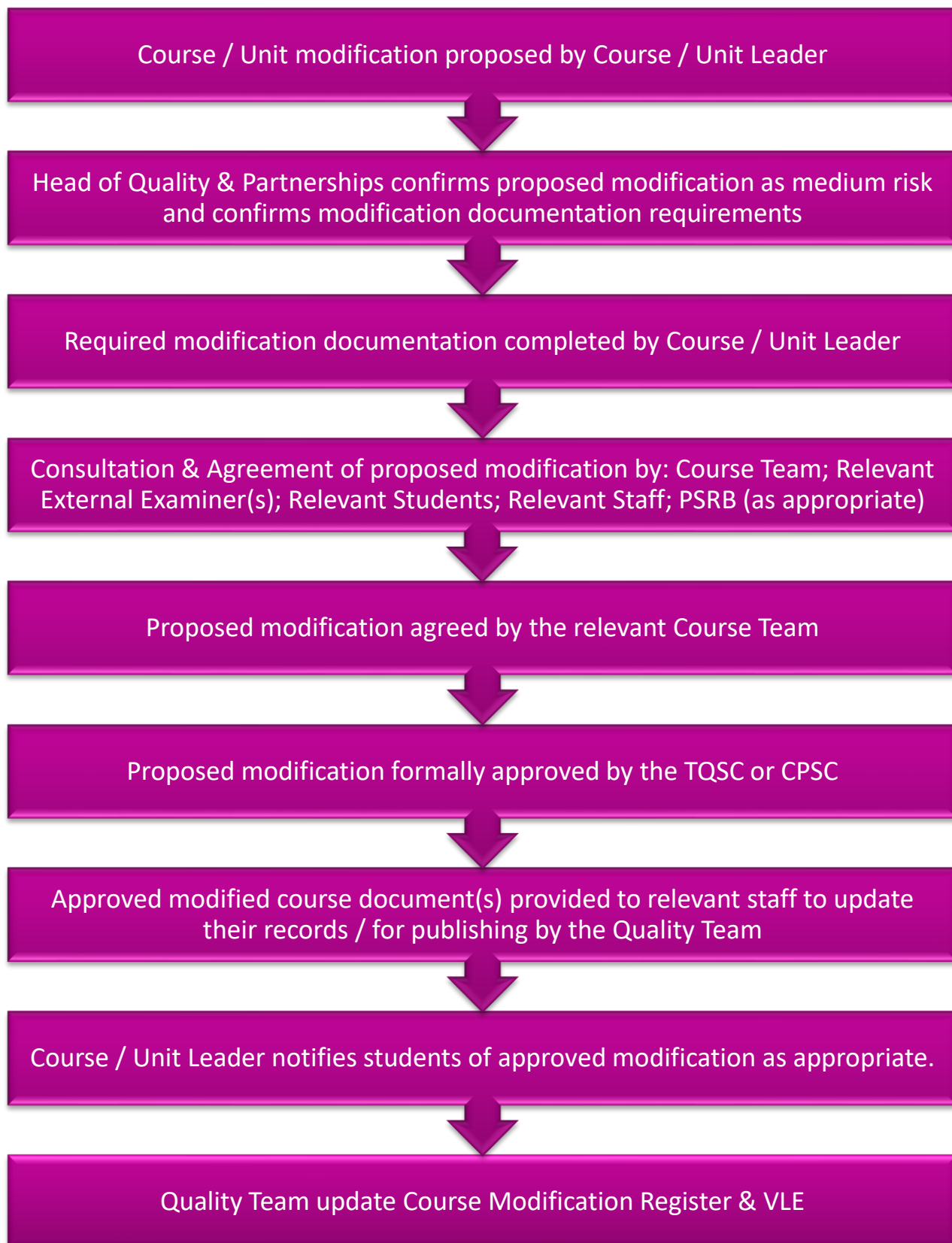
DIAGRAM 4.3: ADMINISTRATIVE MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS



[\*\(Return to Section 4.28: Administrative Modification Approval Process\)\*](#)

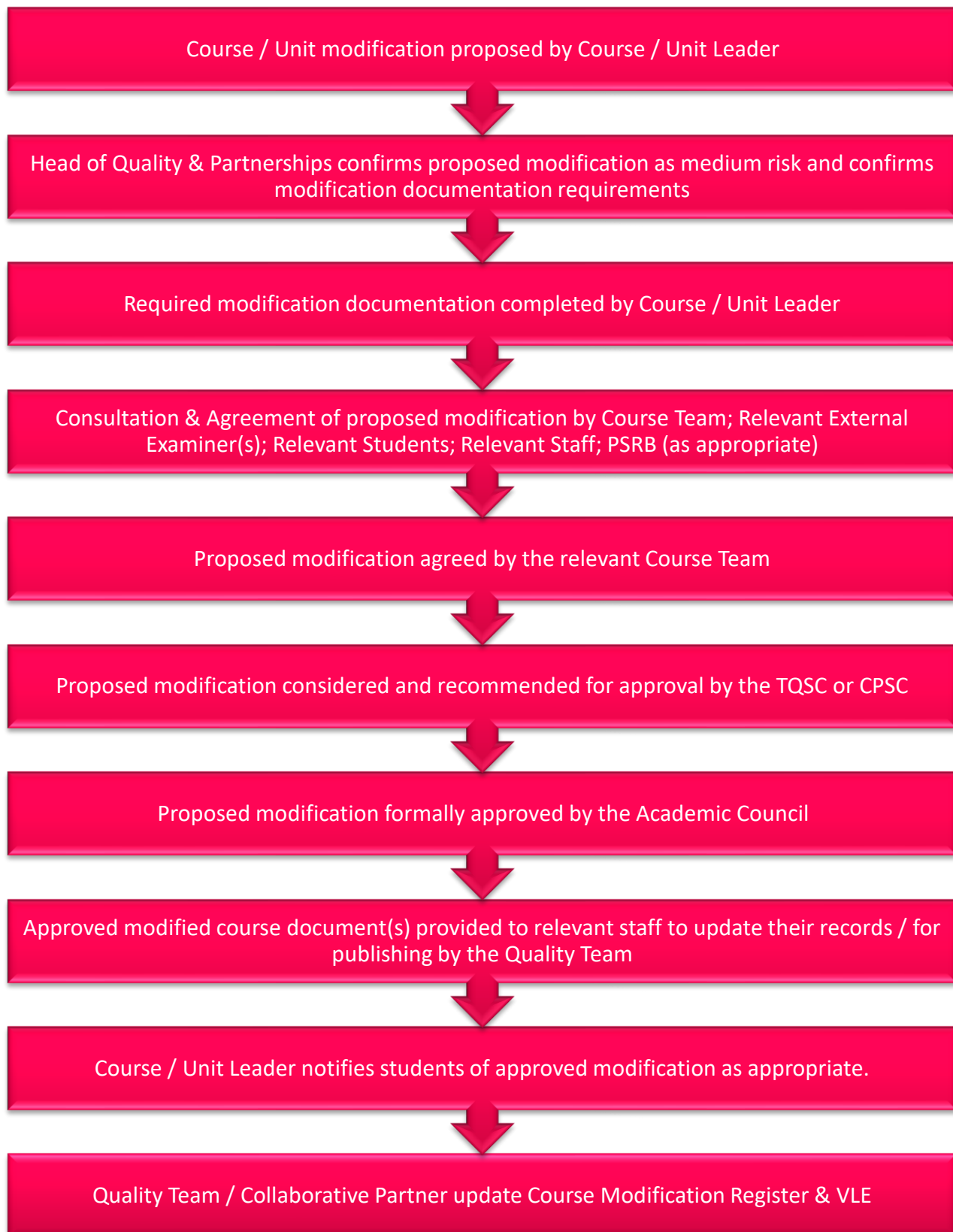


DIAGRAM 4.4: MINOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS



[\(Return to Section 4.30: Minor Modification Process\)](#)

DIAGRAM 4.5: MAJOR MODIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS



[\*\(Return to Section 4.32: Major Modification Process\)\*](#)