



UCL Academic Manual 2015-16

Chapter 3: Programme and Module Approval Framework

Chapter 3 is UCL's regulatory framework for the development, approval and amendment of programmes and modules.

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1 Approval of New Programmes and Modules

1. All new course units/ modules and degree programmes proposed by Departments/Divisions and recommended by the Faculty must be submitted for formal approval by UCL.
2. All new degree programmes must be scrutinised by a suitably qualified person external to UCL.
3. UCL approval is granted for new course units/ modules and degree programmes, and amendments to existing course units/ modules and programmes, when the rationale provided meets UCL's academic regulatory, financial and strategic planning requirements.

2 Design and Structure of Programmes and Programme Components

Programme design and approval

1. The Quality Assurance Agency [QAA] has published a suite of documents, which together form a Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education. One of the documents concerns programme design approval, monitoring and review and includes the following precept: Institutions should publish guidance, for use within the institution, on principles to be considered when programmes are designed.

[QAA Code of Practice, Section 7, Precept 5]

2. This Section provides such guidance and takes into account the development of programme specification, now included in the Programme Institution Questionnaire (PIQ) [see para. 5 below].
3. Prior to completing an on-line PIQ members of staff initiating new programmes should consult colleagues in the Centre for the Advancement of Learning for advice on programme design and colleagues in the eLearning Environments for advice on e-learning.

Programme approval

4. Within UCL, the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP, previously known as PMASG) of Academic Committee's (AC's) Education Committee (EdCom) scrutinises all new programme proposals and makes recommendations about their approval. Please note:
 - i) The approval of the Department and Faculty must be obtained before UCL approval is sought; and
 - ii) No programme or course can be offered at UCL until it has been approved by at least one external assessor (often the External Examiner) or, where appropriate, been subject to professional accreditation. For programmes with distinct vocational objectives, the views of prospective employers should also be sought.
5. For each proposed programme, a PIQ should be completed which provides details on the aims and intended outcomes / objectives for the programme, as well as the proposed modes and criteria of assessment and the available resources.

Programme specification

6. A template for the programme specification is included in the PIQ. The specification should provide a summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Guidance on programme design

7. In designing programmes, and prior to the completion of the PIQ, consideration should be given to the following factors.
 - i) the educational aims of the programme, including its intended learning outcomes and how these will be communicated to students, staff and external audiences;

- ii) the viability of offering the proposed programme based on projected student numbers and the resources available, taking into account the extent to which comparable provision in the subject area already exists and the anticipated student demand. In addition, consideration should be given to how the proposed programme complements the Departmental and UCL goals and mission;
- iii) the curriculum structure and the proposed length of the programme, as applicable to both full and part-time students, and the modes and criteria of assessment for each component of the programme and how these fit with UCL regulations;
- iv) the overall coherence and integrity of the programme [in terms of how the components link together to meet its purpose and objectives];
- v) as applicable, the entrance requirements, including both acceptable and unacceptable qualifications and experience;
- vi) the draft regulations for the programme, including whether any courses have pre-requisites, which courses must be passed, assessment rules and Scheme of Award if this is a variation on the UCL Harmonised Scheme;
- vii) the means by which the programme will be reviewed; and
- viii) the programme's position in relation to external reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements, national qualifications frameworks, and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional and statutory bodies and employers.

Statement of aims and learning outcomes

- 8. The aims of a programme of study can be defined most simply and directly as the rationale which motivated the original design of the programme.
- 9. Learning outcomes can be viewed as a statement of the range of knowledge and abilities which a student may be expected to have acquired by the time of completing the programme. Learning outcomes should be clear and explicit and defined, where possible, in terms of key skills.
- 10. In defining a programme's aims and learning outcomes, consideration should be given to the level and the title of the final award. As appropriate, the learning outcomes should also be defined in terms of external reference points (i.e. subject benchmark statements and the qualifications framework).
- 11. The PIQ, by the inclusion of a programme specification template, prompts programme designers to define aims and learning outcomes in relation to the individual programme components and their methods of assessment in a format comprehensible to a range of audiences.

Definition of entrance requirements for degree programmes

- 12. The entrance requirements for a programme should be defined in terms of its aims and learning outcomes. They should be drawn up on the basis of what qualifications/experience a student needs to achieve the learning outcomes of a programme without undue difficulty.
- 13. For each taught Masters degree, the entrance requirements should be framed in terms both of acceptable entrance qualifications (including acceptable professional experience/qualifications alternative to the usual second class Honours degree) and of unacceptable entrance qualifications. When professional experience is acceptable as a substitute for a second class

Honours degree, Departments must make clear what type and level of experience is acceptable, and the minimum length of acceptable experience.

Definition of unacceptable entrance requirements for taught Master's degree programmes

14. Unacceptable qualifications in this context are those degree qualifications, which, although they might fulfil the general requirement for entry to a taught Masters degree programme, cannot be allowed for the programme in question. They would include such things as a qualification in Computer Science for a programme designed to introduce the subject to those new to it, or an MEng degree from UCL which was composed of a high proportion of courses also taught in the Master's programme applied for.
15. Criteria for defining unacceptable qualifications are consideration of factors such as the purpose of the degree and the principle that a student should not receive two awards for the same (or substantially the same) work.

Definition of programme component

16. Each component should have a clearly defined syllabus and assessment methodology. All components should normally present an equal workload to the student, and the value of a component should be related to the proposed workload. The notional teaching time allocated to each element of the component should also be defined (number of lectures, number of field course hours, etc.).
17. In general, Departments designing new taught Masters programmes should observe the rule that Masters programmes should have not more than one third of their components (i.e. one third of their taught components, excluding the dissertation) in common with undergraduate programmes.
18. Where the aims and learning objectives for the programme require a greater proportion of components in common with undergraduate programmes, the justification for the requirement must be clearly stated at the time that the programme proposal is submitted.

Illustration of how components link to provide the complete degree

19. For each programme it should be made clear which components are regarded as the mandatory core, the pathways that are permissible through the optional courses on offer, and what pathways are prohibited in order to maintain the overall coherence of the programme. The progression requirements, and consequences of failure in any component, should also be considered.

Assessment

20. Detail should be provided on the PIQ of the weighting and form of assessment for each programme component and when the assessment will take place in the structure of the programme.
21. Programme components should include a component of continuous assessment either as homework problems, essays, associated practicals, or fieldwork, and this should be included as part of the final assessment of performance in the unit. In general, a course unit should not be assessed only on the results of unseen examinations.

22. Discussion sessions, problem-solving classes, oral presentation of work, teamwork, source material searches, etc., are all examples of active learning strategies, which should be included in programme design where appropriate.
23. Any strategy, which involves students furthering their own education by discovery of new facts, methods or skills, should be included as an integral part of the programme where possible.

Scheme of Award

24. There must be a published Scheme of Award for every programme, which must conform to UCL regulations.
25. In the case of undergraduate programmes the UCL Harmonised Scheme of Award should be applied.
26. On Masters programmes, the pass mark at Masters level must be 50% in each element (with the possibility of up to 25% of the taught elements as a condoned pass between 40%-49%) and the dissertation must be passed at 50% in order for a degree to be awarded. A distinction may be awarded with at least an average of 70% overall and at least 70% in the dissertation.

Regular review, internal and external

27. Each programme should be reviewed regularly (annually if possible) within the Department, and must be reviewed every five years through UCL procedures.

Regulations and Information

28. The design and structure of programmes and programme components fall under the general regulations of the Academic Regulations for Students.
29. Pedagogic matters concerning the design and structure of programmes and programme components should be referred to the Departmental and Faculty Teaching Committees.
30. Matters concerning programme or programme component regulations should be referred to the [Academic Model Team](#).

3 Deadlines for New Programme Proposals

New programme proposals should be submitted to Academic Services in good time for their inclusion in the relevant prospectuses. For postgraduate programmes the lead-in time is 18 months and for undergraduate programmes the lead-in time is 20 months. The lead-in times are necessary to ensure that thorough and rigorous consideration of programme proposals can occur whilst giving programme organisers sufficient time to advertise and plan for new programmes knowing that they have been approved. The 20 month lead-in time for undergraduate programmes is also necessary to meet UCAS handbook deadlines.

Any new programme proposals submitted after the deadline for lead-in times has passed will only be considered for the subsequent year.

The programme diet for new programmes should be approved by UCL by the last working day of March in the year of the first intake of students.

The Schedule of PMAP Meetings for 2016-2017

Please note that in order to be considered by PMAP new programme proposals (PIQs) must be submitted not less than 10 working days in advance of a meeting. Submissions received later than 10 working days in advance of a meeting will be considered at a subsequent meeting of the Panel:

Term	Date	Deadline
One	Monday 12 September 2016, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Wednesday 31 August 2016 at 5.00pm
One	Thursday 17 November 2016, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Monday 7 November 2016 at 5.00pm
Two	Thursday 9 February 2017, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Monday 30 January 2017 at 5.00pm
Two	Monday 3 April 2017, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Wednesday 22 March 2017 at 5.00pm
Three	Monday 22 May 2017, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Wednesday 10 May 2017 at 5.00pm
Three	Monday 3 July 2017, 2.00pm - 4.00pm	Wednesday 21 June 2017 at 5.00pm

4 Annual Academic Review Cycle

The approval of new modules and programmes is managed by Academic Services, Student and Registry Services and directed by the Programme and Module Approval Panel, PMAP (previously known as PMASG). PMAP reports to the Education Committee and to the Research Degrees Committee. The deadlines for the annual academic review in 2016-2017 for the 2017-2018 academic year are available on the [Annual Academic Review 2016-2017 document](#).

Please note that this information is correct at the point of publication but could be subject to change.

5 New Taught Programmes

New programme proposals must be submitted using the Programme Institution Questionnaire (PIQ). From January 2011 new programmes should be submitted using an on-line form accessed via [Portico](#). The form is housed in the Programme Rules and Review container, accessed via the 'Curricular Management' link on the Portico staff screen. Programme initiators should also discuss learning resource requirements with the library prior to submitting a PIQ for Departmental/Divisional approval.

NB. Prior to completing a PIQ members of staff should consult the Academic Manual for curricular design advice, and also the [Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching](#), [E-Learning Environments](#) and [UCL Careers](#).

5.1 Online PIQ Form

The Online PIQ form should be used when:

1. proposing a new programme;
2. introducing a new route or version of an existing programme (e.g. the programme or introducing a distance learning or year abroad version).

NB. When proposing a new programme involves the need for new modules to be set up, please go to the [New Module Proposals](#) section, as a [UPC/GPC](#) form is also needed. A [New Module Outline Form](#) can be submitted if detailed module contents are not fully known at the point of submission for approval.

5.2 Procedures

1. Departmental/Divisional and Faculty Approval and External Scrutineer Review: The proposal for a new programme must be approved at Departmental and Faculty level and by an External Scrutineer, before being put forward for UCL-level approval and the on-line PIQ facilitates this process.
2. New programme initiators must get the business case signed off by the relevant School Finance Director before submitting the PIQ for Departmental/Divisional approval.
3. New programme initiators are advised to consult teaching and learning resources such as the Library, [CALT](#) and [ELE](#) before submitting a PIQ for Departmental/Division approval.
4. New programme initiators are advised to consult [UCL Careers](#) if there is a placement or internship element within the proposal before submitting a PIQ for Departmental/Division approval. UCL Careers can advise what resources may be required and can advise on what you need to consider with regards to logistics and liaison with employers.
5. Advice about providing [market research](#).
6. Access to the PIQ is granted by a Head of Department/Division and up to three people can have access to it at any one time.
7. In order to arrange access for the External Scrutineer, new programme initiators should contact examiners@ucl.ac.uk and provide the following information: Title, Forename, Surname, email address and date of birth (if possible). A username and password will be sent to the External Scrutineer so that they can enter their comments directly and confirm that the proposal

has been reviewed by them. A PIQ will not be granted Faculty approval unless external scrutiny has been confirmed.

8. The on-line PIQ allows comments and queries to be raised at all stages of the approval process.
9. In addition, UCL stakeholders such as estates, admissions and examinations etc., are alerted when a new programme proposal has been approved by a Department/Division and submitted for Faculty approval.

5.3 Submission

1. When the new programme proposal has been approved by the Department/Division and Faculty, and reviewed by the External Scrutineer, the on-line PIQ will be submitted automatically to the [Secretary of PMAP](#).
2. The proposal will then be considered by PMAP which will make a recommendation regarding UCL-approval to the Education Committee and Director of Finance.

5.4 Programme Specification

1. A Programme Specification must also be completed with the PIQ. Please see our [advice and guidance pages](#) for further information on completing a Programme Specification.
2. A Programme Specification is a QAA template and should provide a concise summary of the main features of a programme. The specification should set out the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if they take full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. The accuracy of the information contained in this document is reviewed by UCL and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

5.5 Documents for information or for inclusion for with an on-line PIQ

[Notional Programme Diet Template PIQ](#)

[Programme Diet Template](#)

[AR-Collaborative and Joint Provision Appendix](#)

[Programme Costing Model - Undergraduate Programme](#)

[Programme Costing Model - Taught Postgraduate Programme](#)

[UCL Global Engagement Strategy](#)

[Programme Specification Template](#)

[New Module Outline Form](#)

[MRes PIQ Appendix](#)

[Professional Doctorate PIQ Appendix](#)

[Template for use by an External Scrutineer for a New Programme](#)

6 New Doctoral Programmes

1. Please complete the New Doctoral Programme [PIQ](#)

7 Withdrawing Programmes (PWQ)

Programmes that will not be offered to students from a known date should be formally withdrawn using an on-line Programme Withdrawal Questionnaire (PWQ) form accessed via Portico.

Procedures

1. The proposal to withdraw a programme must be approved by the relevant Department/Divisions and Faculty before being put forward for UCL-level approval and the on-line PWQ facilitates this process. Access to the PWQ is granted by a Head of Department/Division and up to two people can have access to it at any one time.

Submission

1. When a proposal to withdraw a programme has been approved by the Department/Division and Faculty the on-line PWQ will be submitted automatically to the Secretary of PMAP (previously known as PMASG).

Deadline

1. In order for a programme to be withdrawn or suspended from the appropriate UCAS handbook and undergraduate/graduate prospectus in time, notice will be given to the Admissions Office and UCL Publications, via the on-line PWQ process.

8 Programme Amendments (PAQ)

Programme Amendments must be submitted using a Programme Amendment Form ([PAQ](#)).

A [PAQ](#) form should be used when:

1. Making an amendment to a programme (undergraduate and graduate) which affects the entire programme, e.g.: - entails changes to the published regulations; - alters mandatory or core courses; - substantially alters the programme diets; - alters the balance of workload over the whole programme of study; - alters the proportion of research project work; - alters the entry requirements (except where prerequisites for individual programme components are concerned).
2. The proposal for programme amendments must be approved at Departmental/Divisional and Faculty level and by an External Scrutineer, before being put forward for UCL-level approval. Please note: Confirmation of the approval and External Scrutiny can be alternatively submitted by email or letter.

Submission

1. When the proposal to amend a programme has been approved at Department/Division and Faculty level, and by the External Scrutineer, the form, with relevant signatures, should be sent in electronic format to the [Academic Model Team](#), together with evidence of Department/Division, Faculty and External approval.
2. When introducing new module as a part of the programme amendments, please go to the section 'New Module Proposal', as a [UPC/GPC](#) form is also needed. When making a change to the title or credit value of a module, please go to section 'Module Amendments', as a [UPCam/GPCam](#) form is also needed.

Procedures

1. The principle regarding amendments to any part of a programme, including its Scheme of Award, is that changes should only apply to students registered for the first time in the following year after the change has been approved. The only exception is for minor changes when all students (including re-entries) sign a statement agreeing to the changes. If one student does not sign his/her agreement, then the change cannot be implemented for existing students.

Deadlines

1. Please refer to the [Annual Academic Review](#).
2. When the amendment has been approved by UCL, the programme regulations affected by the amendment should be updated by the Department/Division.

9 Module Proposals, Amendments and Withdrawals (UPC/GPC)

9.1 New Module Proposals

1. [UPC/GPC](#) forms should be used when introducing a new module.
2. If the new module is mandatory/core to the programme or changes the published regulations for a programme, please see Programme Amendments as a [PAQ](#) form is also needed.

Submission

1. When UPC/GPC has been completed and approved at Department/Division and Faculty level, and by the External Scrutineer, the form, with relevant signatures, should be sent in electronic format to the [Academic Model Team](#), together with evidence of Department/Division, Faculty and External approval.

Deadlines

1. Please refer to the [Annual Academic Review](#).

9.2 Module Amendments

1. Modules amendments should be submitted to [Academic Model Team](#) using [UPCam/GPCam](#) and [CAF](#) forms.
2. The [UPCam/GPCam form](#) should be used when altering:
 - the module title;
 - the module code;
 - credit value/learning hours/ECTS value of the module;
 - the Parent Department/Faculty of the module.
3. The [CAF form](#) should be used when altering:
 - the weighting of assessment;
 - the assessment criteria.
4. If the module amendments affect the core structure of a programme, please go to [Programme Amendments](#) as a [PAQ](#) form is also needed.

Departmental and Faculty Approval and External Scrutineer

1. Approval and External Scrutineer Proposals for module amendments must be approved at Departmental and Faculty level, and by an External Scrutineer, before being put forward for UCL-level approval.

Submission

1. When the proposal has been approved at Departmental/Divisional and Faculty level, and by the External Scrutineer, the form, with relevant signatures, should be sent in electronic format to the [Academic Model Team](#), together with evidence of Department/Division, Faculty and External approval.
2. Changes in the weighting of assessment up to and including 10% may be notified by letter, signed by the Dean, and do not need to be signed by the External Scrutineer (not more than two such alterations may be made in a five-year period without external approval). Nor do changes in the distribution of the workload unless these involve a significant (more than 15%) increase or reduction in the hours allocated to any one item.
3. Changes to the title or code of a module which do not involve any other changes to the module (e.g. credit value, learning hours etc) may be requested by letter signed off at Faculty level and sent to the Academic Model Team, Academic Services, Student and Registry Services (Floor 9, 1-19 Torrington Place).

Deadlines

1. Please refer to the [Annual Academic Review](#).
2. Any module or diet, creation or amendment submitted after the 31st March 2016 deadline must be accompanied with the [Late Request Form](#).

9.3 Module Withdrawals

1. Modules are formally taken out of use as part of the annual academic review process. Modules that are not being delivered in a specific academic session can be made non-active and flagged as active in the next maintenance cycle.

10 Overlap and Common Examining of Undergraduate and Taught Masters Programmes

Permissible Degree of Overlap

1. The purpose of each taught Masters degree programme, existing or proposed, must be clearly defined. The definition should make clear such points as the distinction in purpose between degrees entirely for non-specialists and those primarily for applicants with a measure of expertise in the subject, and between four-year undergraduate degrees (MEng and MSci) and Masters programmes in the same subject.
2. The entrance requirements for each taught Masters degree must be clearly specified and must be related to its defined purpose. They should be framed in terms of both acceptable entrance qualifications (including acceptable professional experience/qualifications alternative to the usual second class Honours degree) and of unacceptable entrance qualifications and should be formally approved by the appropriate Faculty Teaching Committee.
3. When professional experience is an acceptable alternative to the Second Class Honours degree specified, Departments must make clear:
 - what type and level of experience is acceptable
 - the minimum length of acceptable experience
 - what alternative qualifications are acceptable.
4. The criterion for defining acceptable qualifications should be the qualifications/experience which a student needs in order to achieve an acceptable result, without undue difficulty, on the programme in question.
5. Unacceptable qualifications in this context are those degree qualifications which, although they might fulfil the general requirement for entry to a taught Masters degree programme, cannot be allowed for the programme in question. They would include such things as a qualification in Computer Science for a programme designed to introduce the subject to those new to it, or an MEng degree from UCL which contained a high proportion of courses also taught in the Master's programme applied for.
6. The criteria for defining unacceptable qualifications are:
 - consideration of the purpose of the degree;
 - the principle that a student should not receive two awards for the same (or substantially the same) work.
7. For new taught Masters degree programmes a definition of purpose and set of agreed entrance requirements must be presented with the programme proposal.
8. For all taught Masters programmes, the defined purpose of the programme will determine the degree of overlap in teaching with the corresponding undergraduate degree programme(s) and the degree of overlap will affect the entrance requirements.
9. Departments designing new programmes should observe the recommendation that Masters programmes should have not more than one third of their components (i.e. one third of their taught components, excluding the dissertation) in common with undergraduate programmes and that there MUST be NO common examining or assessment.

10. In the exceptional cases where the degree of overlap is more than one third of the taught components, excluding the dissertation, the undergraduate degree with which components are shared may not be accepted as an entrance qualification for the Masters. The entrance requirements must make this clear.
11. For existing taught Masters degree programmes with a degree of overlap with undergraduate degree programmes at variance with their defined purpose, steps should be taken to reduce the number of components common with undergraduate degree programmes at the next due date of review or within three years, whichever is the sooner.

Examining of Common Components

12. Components common to undergraduate degree programmes and taught Masters degree programmes should normally be examined separately - i.e. by the setting of separate examination papers.