UCL Academic Manual 2016-17

Chapter 3: Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework

Chapter 3 is UCL's regulatory framework for the approval, amendment, and suspension/withdrawal of taught academic programmes and modules including taught elements of research degrees. Approval of research degrees is covered in part 8.

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1 Introduction

1. University College London must operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of courses of study in order to discharge fully its responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.
2. Queries about any part of this chapter should be directed to Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

1.1 Purposes

1. The main purposes of this chapter are to ensure that:
   i) Threshold academic standards are met through the approval and amendment processes;
   ii) The appropriate quality of student learning opportunities are available for all taught provision;
   iii) The information provided to students about their studies is complete with regard to programme structure and learning outcomes;
   iv) Due account is taken of internal and external reference points in the approval and amendment processes;
   v) Robust procedures are followed when modules or programmes are suspended or withdrawn;
   vi) All new taught provision is viable financially, and in terms of student recruitment.

1.2 Reference Points

1. This chapter is drafted with reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and in particular:
   i) Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards
   ii) The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ)
   iii) Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval

2. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the rest of the Academic Manual, in particular:
   i) Chapter 1: Admissions, Registration & Student Conduct Framework
   ii) Chapter 2: Qualifications and Credit Framework
   iii) Chapter 4: Assessment Framework: Taught Programmes
   iv) Chapter 7: Academic Partnerships Framework

3. The strategic context for taught provision can be found in the following documents:
   i) UCL 2034
   ii) Education Strategy 2016-21
   iii) Connected Curriculum

1.3 Terminology

1. Key to abbreviations

FHEQ	The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies
PAQ	Programme Amendment Questionnaire
PIQ	Programme Initiation Questionnaire
PMAP	Programme and Module Approval Panel

PWQ	Programme Withdrawal Questionnaire
PSRB	Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
UPC/GPC	New module approval form
UPCam/GPCam	Module amendment form

2. Throughout this chapter, the term 'Department' is used to refer to relevant units below the Faculty level (e.g. Institute or Division).
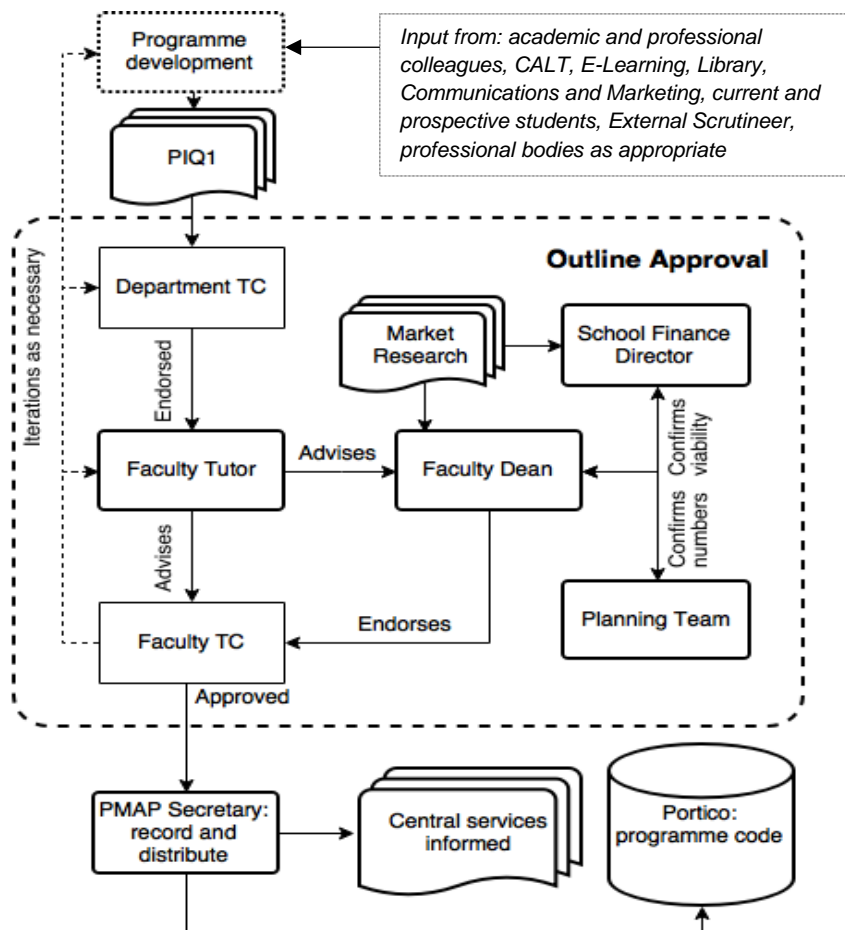
2 Programme Approval

1. New taught programmes are approved by the Education Committee under powers delegated from the Academic Board. The Education Committee is advised by the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP).
2. PMAP also advises the Research Degrees Committee on the approval of taught components of new research programmes.
3. Programme approval takes place in two stages: Outline Approval, which is granted by the relevant Faculty Teaching Committees; Final Approval, which is granted by the Education Committee or Research Degrees Committee.
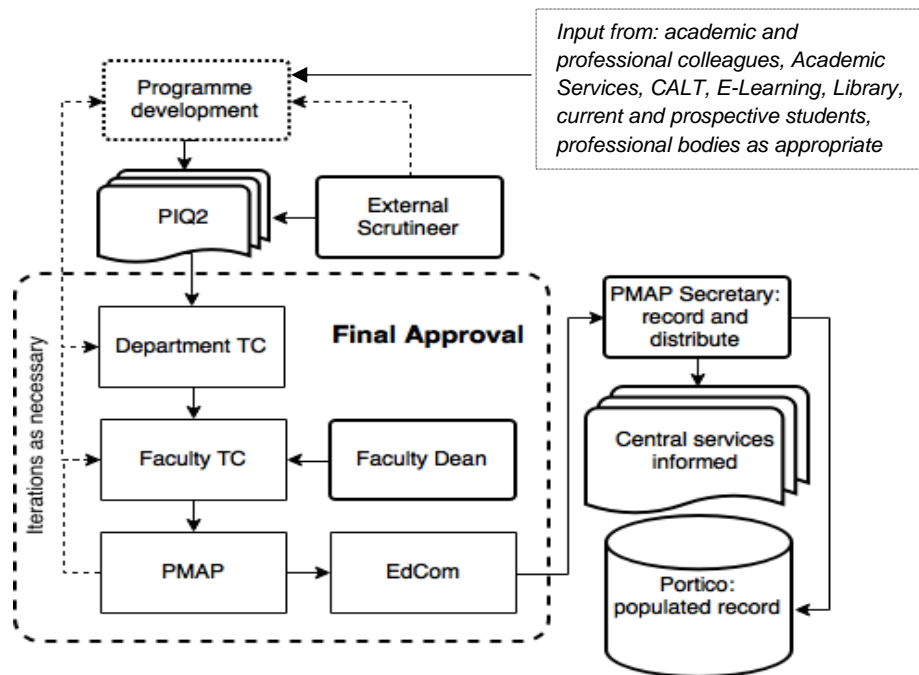
2.1 Approval Process

1. The Programme Approval diagram below describes the approval path for a new taught programme.

Outline Approval

Programmes *may* be advertised in limited way 'subject to approval' following Outline Approval and additional development work is undertaken to provide the documentation for the PIQ2, and new modules are developed.

Final Approval

Input from: academic and professional colleagues, Academic Services, CALT, E-Learning, Library, current and prospective students, professional bodies as appropriate

In the case of taught elements of research degrees, PMAP's recommendation is forwarded to Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for approval.

2.2 Information Required

1. The forms PIQ1, for Outline Approval, and PIQ2, for Final Approval, show the information required for programme approval. A summary of the requirements at each stage is provided below:

	PIQ1	PIQ2
Named Roles	Initiator, programme director, External Scrutineer (if known), other nominees	Initiator, programme director, External Scrutineer, other nominees
Structure	Proposed start date Location(s), level(s), mode(s) of study Award title(s) and interim award(s), including proposed routes/pathways Any programme specific entry requirements New modules proposed (indicative titles, 50 words max description per module) Existing modules (indicative list)	Programme Definition (in format for inclusion in student handbook) Programme Diet New modules (UPC/GPC form)

	PIQ1	PIQ2
Description	Programme Description (c. 500 words) Strategic fit (with UCL 2034, Education Strategy, Faculty and Department strategies, Connected Curriculum; c. 250 words)	Confirmation of enclosures and processes completed with note on changes made following PIQ1 (including responses to recommendations) Programme Description (c. 1,000 words) Strategic fit (with UCL 2034, Education Strategy, Faculty and Department strategies, Connected Curriculum; c. 500 words)
Internal Partnerships	Description of intent to make use of existing modules, and other internal partnerships with evidence of approaches made to module owners	Documented confirmation of approval to make use of existing modules, and other internal partnerships
External Partnerships (essential if any partnership activity envisaged)	Description of any proposed Academic Partnership	Academic Partnership Proposal form Checklists: risks and responsibilities; due diligence; site visit checklist APRG approval (to be granted in advance of programme approval) Draft Memorandum of Agreement with partner
Business case	Market research Programme income and expenditure, including fee levels Student number projections	Note on updates following Outline Approval, if appropriate Additional details in cases of variation from Outline Approval stage for Dean's consideration
Externality	Statement on externality to date, and proposed externality in future development	Statement on externality used in development External Scrutineer's report PSRB report, if appropriate Note on engagement with Subject Benchmark Statements, Qualification Characteristics
Sign-off	Department TC; Head of Department; Faculty Dean; Faculty TC *With recommendations as appropriate*	Department TC; Head of Department; Faculty Dean; Faculty TC; PMAP; EdCom

2. MRes proposals require a completed PIQ supplement form in addition to the PIQ.

2.3   Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Roles and Responsibilities chart describes the actions required by the relevant parties at Outline and Full Approval.

Role	Outline Approval	Final Approval
Programme initiator	Produce PIQ1; liaise with Faculty Tutor on process	Produce PIQ2 taking into account feedback from Outline Approval stage and External Scrutineer; attend PMAP
External Scrutineer	Advise programme developer (optional, though recommended)	Provide critical commentary on the proposal
Faculty Dean	Sign-off (with/without recommendations) or reject PIQ1 on basis of: 1, proposal's fit with Faculty strategy; 2, financial viability; 3, if proposal is in Faculty plan (confirmation required from Planning in cases where student numbers not agreed in advance)	Advise the Faculty Teaching Committee to sign-off or reject PIQ2 on the basis that proposal still valid and (as appropriate) recommendations have been acted upon
Faculty Tutor	Advise programme initiator, Dean and FTC	Advise programme initiator, Dean, FTC; attend PMAP
Department Teaching Committee	Review proposal and confirm endorsement before forwarding to Faculty Tutor for FTC	Review proposal and confirm endorsement before forwarding to Faculty Tutor for FTC
Faculty Teaching Committee	Review proposal and confirm *approval* before forwarding to PMAP Secretary	Review proposal and confirm *endorsement* before forwarding to PMAP Secretary
School Finance Director	Advise the Dean to sign-off (with/without recommendations) or reject PIQ1 on basis of proposal's financial viability	Advise the Dean on the basis of updated information following Outline Approval stage (if necessary)
Planning Team	Advise Dean in cases where proposal is not already within Faculty plan	*No role at this stage*
PMAP Members	*No role at this stage*	Scrutinise PIQ2 and confirm that the programme approval regulations have been followed and that the programme is fit for the UCL portfolio

Role	Outline Approval	Final Approval
PMAP Secretary	Record proposals receiving Outline Approval and initiate actions with central services	Record proposals receiving Final Approval on basis of PMAP recommendation and initiate actions with central services
Central services	Receive Outline Approval-confirmed proposals and initiate local actions (e.g. marketing)	Receive Final Approval-confirmed proposals and initiate local actions (e.g. admissions)

2. Faculties and Departments may adopt local practices such as the involvement of additional committees or the Vice-Dean(s) Education. However, PMAP will continue to require sign-off from the named individuals and groups as listed in the PIQ forms.
3. Queries regarding roles and responsibilities should be directed to Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

2.4   Timelines

1. For marketing of programmes to be given the best opportunity to attract the highest quality students, and for UCL to uphold its responsibilities with respect to the Competition and Markets Authority guidance and relevant legislation, the following deadlines are essential:
    i)   For undergraduate programmes:
        Outline Approval must be achieved not later than November of the calendar year two years prior to the intended start of a programme (22 months in advance of a September start).
    ii)   For postgraduate programmes:
        Outline Approval must be achieved not later than the end of June in the year prior to the intended start of a programme (15 months in advance of a September start).
    iii)   For all programmes:
        Final Approval must be secured not later than the end of February preceding the first admission of students.
2. While these are the very latest deadlines, programme initiators should be encouraged to begin work on Outline Approval much earlier to give sufficient time for: effective competition/market appraisal (both within, to avoid cannibalisation, and outside of UCL); development and approval of the business case; obtaining Faculty approval.
3. Undergraduate programmes can only be advertised effectively through UCAS if Final Approval is obtained 22 months prior to the intended programme start.
4. Programme initiators should also note the Annual Academic Review deadlines when developing new programmes.
5. Programme initiators should not that in order to be considered by PMAP new programme proposals at Final Approval Stage (PIQ 2) 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 of meeting	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

2.5   Good practice in programme design

1. There is extensive advice and guidance available to initiators of programmes and those involved in development and approval. The key resources are:
   - the good practice guide for programme development;
   - the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching, E-Learning and Careers.
2. Programme initiators are also expected to engage with the good practice guide for market research.
3. Further advice and support can also be obtained from Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

3 Programme Amendment

1. The principle regarding amendments to any part of a programme 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 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.

3.1 Amendment classification

1. UCL's programme amendment process is differentiated so that changes deemed 'major' are subject to additional scrutiny. This system is in place to safeguard the academic standards of awards and to ensure that programmes cannot drift from their original approved state without appropriate institution-level consideration and external validation.
2. Amendments to individual modules are covered elsewhere in this chapter (Section 6: Module Amendment). In the case of compulsory modules, amendments will trigger a PAQ where individually, or in combination with changes to other modules, they represent a programme amendment as defined below.
3. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that any or conditions of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies are satisfied upon amendment.
4. Amendments may not be made to programme codes assigned by Academic Services.
5. The addition or removal of optional/elective modules can be undertaken through the Annual Academic Review process where programme diets are updated.

Major amendments

6. Major amendments require the completion of a PAQ form. They must also have external scrutiny and be submitted to PMAP for approval following Department and Faculty endorsement. The following changes are classified as Major:
   ▪ Revision to one third or more of the programme's intended learning outcomes;
   ▪ The level, award or title of the programme;
   ▪ The programme's credit value;
   ▪ Addition, removal or restructuring of routes within a programme;
   ▪ Programme duration, including the addition of a placement year;
   ▪ Delivery location (i.e. campus);
   ▪ Mode of delivery (e.g. introducing distance learning mode);
   ▪ Entry requirements, outside of UCL's standard requirements.

Minor amendments

7. Minor amendments require the completion of a PAQ form submitted for Department and Faculty approval. The following changes are classified as Minor:
   ▪ Revision of up to one third of the programme's intended learning outcomes;
   ▪ Addition of an interim award;
   ▪ Addition of a study abroad or work/industrial placement which does not affect programme duration;
   ▪ Introduction of a part-time version of a full-time programme (and vice versa);
   ▪ Introduction of, or changes to, external accreditation of the programme;
   ▪ Entry requirements, if within UCL's standard requirements;
   ▪ Other changes to the Programme Specification/Definition;
   ▪ Other changes at the discretion of the Faculty Tutor.
8. Further advice and support on the classification of amendments can be obtained from Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

4   Programme Suspension/Withdrawal

1. Any suspension or withdrawal of a programme must be undertaken in such a manner that the interests of current students, and students who have applied to the programme, are fully protected. Advice should be sought from the relevant Faculty Tutor as early as possible to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed.
2. Further advice and support can be obtained from Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

4.1   Process

1. Programmes that will not be offered to students from a known date should be formally withdrawn using a Programme Withdrawal Questionnaire (PWQ) on Portico.
2. The proposal to withdraw a programme must be approved by the relevant Department and Faculty before being put forward for approval by PMAP.
3. In order for a programme to be withdrawn or suspended from the appropriate publicity materials, the relevant central services will be advised by Academic Services.
4. Where a programme is delivered in collaboration with an external partner, the appropriate Termination of Academic Partnership form should also be completed (Chapter 7: Academic Partnerships Framework).

5   Module Approval

1. New modules require approval by PMAP following endorsement by the Department and Faculty.
2. New module proposals must use a UPC/GPC form.
3. Introducing a new module may also mean a change to a programme requiring a PAQ should any of the criteria set out in Section 3, paragraph 6 of this Chapter also be met.

6 Module Amendment

1. Formal processes for module amendment are required to ensure that proposed changes are subject to scrutiny, and that where changes to modules have a significant impact upon the programmes to which they contribute, the appropriate programme amendment process is triggered.

6.1 Amendments to compulsory modules

1. If the module is, or is intended to become, a compulsory part of one or more programmes, then that *could* trigger programme amendment and require a PAQ. In this case, consideration must be given to whether the change of one or more modules represents a major or minor programme-level amendment as defined, and the associated action taken.

6.2 Amendment classification

1. UCL's module amendment process is differentiated so that changes deemed 'major' are subject to additional scrutiny: this system is in place to safeguard the academic standards of awards and to ensure that modules cannot drift incrementally from their original approved state without appropriate external validation.
2. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that any conditions of relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies are satisfied upon amendment.
3. Amendments may not be made to module codes assigned by Academic Services.

Major amendments

4. Major amendments require the completion of a UPCam/GPCam form. They must also have external scrutiny and Department and Faculty approval. The following changes are classified as Major:
   - Changes to the credit value of the module;
   - Changes which affect one third or more of the intended learning outcomes;
   - Every second minor amendment following the last major amendment;
   - A change of parent Department/Faculty
   - Entry requirements which are outside of UCL's standard requirements.

Minor amendments

5. Minor amendments require the completion of a UPCam/GPCam form and Department and Faculty approval. The following changes are classified as Minor:
   - Changes to the weighting of assessment;
   - Changes of assessment methods/criteria;
   - Changes which affect under one third of the intended learning outcomes;
   - Balance of learning activities;
   - Change of module title;
   - Other changes at the discretion of the Faculty Tutor.
6. Changes must be made in line with the deadlines of the Annual Academic Review cycle.
7. Further advice and support on the classification of amendments can be obtained from Academic Services (academicservices@ucl.ac.uk).

7 Module Suspension/Withdrawal

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.
2. Adherence to the deadlines in the Annual Academic Review process is essential for ensuring that the correct information is provided to students in line with the Competition and Markets Authority expectations and relevant legislation.

8   Research Degrees

1. The processes detailed elsewhere in this chapter relate to taught programmes, and the taught elements of research degrees.
2. Research-only degrees (e.g. MPhil, PhD) must be approved by the Lead Department/Division and the Lead Faculty before submission for final approval by Research Degrees Committee.
3. Initiators of new research degree programmes should contact the RDC Secretary in the first instance.
4. A PIQ (Doctoral Programmes) form must be completed for all proposed new doctorates and the taught programme PIQ should be used for MRes degrees with the addition of the MRes PIQ Appendix.

9   Annual Academic Review

1. The deadlines for the annual academic review in 2016-2017 for the 2017-2018 academic year are available in the Annual Academic Review 2016-2017 document.
2. Further advice and support on the Annual Academic Review can be obtained from Academic Services (academicmodel@ucl.ac.uk).

10   Forms

1. Use of the following forms is described within the chapter:

   - Programme Initiation Questionnaire (PIQ) – PIQ1, PIQ2
   - Notional Programme Diet Template
   - New Module Outline Form
   - Programme Costing Template (UG/PG)
   - Programme Definition (formerly Programme Specification)
   - External Scrutineer Report
   - Programme Diet Template
   - MRes PIQ Appendix
   - Programme Amendment Questionnaire (PAQ)
   - PIQ (Doctoral programmes)
   - UPC/GPC
   - UPCam/GPCam