Programme and Module Approval and Modification Policy

1. Scope and context

1.1 This policy sets out how the processes by which programmes and modules are approved and modified operate at Walbrook, aligning with Office for Students requirements and good practice across the UK Higher Education sector.

1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

i General and Academic Regulations for Higher Education Programmes (Credit and Award Framework)

ii Programme Suspension and Withdrawal Policy

iii Programme Monitoring and Review Policy

iv Student Protection Plan

2. Principles

2.1 The Policy is informed by the following principles:

i Programmes will have clear and explicit links to the Walbrook Strategy as well as our Access and Participation Plan.

ii Each programme must be financially viable and demonstrate ongoing market need

iii Alignment of programmes with UK Higher Education requirements will be clear

iv There will be sufficient resources for a programme to run effectively

v Programmes will be designed fairly and accessibly

vi Changes and enhancements to programmes are anticipated during a validation period.

vii Student input will be invited in development, approval and modification processes.

viii There will be external input to the development, validation and review processes

ix Students' interests will be our prime consideration where we decide to modify a programme or module.

2.2 These principles will apply to all programmes awarded solely by Walbrook as well as for any programme delivered in partnership with another organisation where Walbrook is jointly responsible for making an award. Specific operational details may vary but will be documented as part of the relevant Memorandum of Agreement.

3. Reference Points

3.1 This Policy is informed by Walbrook and national reference points that underpin the academic quality and standards of our provision. However, colleagues should also consult the following reference points when developing, validating, modifying or reviewing their programmes:

i Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmarks that set out the disciplinary coverage of what would be expected in a Higher Education programme.

ii Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications that sets out the level of outcomes that should be demonstrated in a Higher Education programme

iii Relevant accreditation frameworks of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

4. The Programme Approval Journey

4.1 To ensure a consistent approach to the development and approval of new programmes of study, each proposal follows the same approval route.

Outline Programme Approval

4.2 Where a Subject Area wishes to introduce a new programme of study, they must submit an outline programme proposal, using the appropriate form, to a meeting of the Senior Leadership Committee.

4.3 The Senior Leadership Committee is responsible for determining whether it is strategically appropriate to endorse the programme for further academic development.

4.4 An outline programme proposal will be assessed on:

i The rationale for introducing the programme, and its level of alignment with institutional strategy.

ii Evidence of market demand for the new programme.

iii An outline business case, in terms of indicative student numbers, fee levels, and expected staffing and materials costs.

iv Any variation from regulations or standard operating principles necessitated by professional or regulatory bodies where there is a plan to apply for accreditation.

4.5 Senior Leadership Committee can decide to approve the programme for further development or to reject the proposal. Where a proposal is approved, Senior Leadership Committee can place conditions on their approval.

4.6 Programmes can be advertised as subject to final approval once they have received outline approval from the SLC. Admissions must not open until the programme has received final approval from the Academic Board.

Programme Development

4.7 Following approval from the Senior Leadership Committee, the Subject Area Lead will appoint a team to complete the programme development.

4.8 Using the relevant templates, internal and external reference points, and in conversation with colleagues, students and external subject and profession experts, the programme team will work on developing the following aspects of the programme:

i Programme aims and graduate attributes: What the programme will do, the types of students it is designed to attract, and the types of graduates it will aim to produce in terms of competencies and future career paths.

ii Programme learning outcomes: The success measures for students, the knowledge, skills and competencies they should be able to display at the end of the programme.

iii Outline module design: The route that will prepare students to meet intended learning outcomes. The curriculum that will ensure our students develop the key knowledge and competencies, and how it is sensibly partitioned.

iv Learning resources: The key texts and reference points for each module. Any specialist pieces of software that will need to be procured to facilitate the programme. How this is made available to students.

v Assessment design: How and where to assess that each programme learning outcome has been met. How we will do this in a way that is authentic to the discipline, develops career ready skills and upholds academic integrity.

vi Accessible and inclusive design: Ensuring that the module content, and the assessment strategy is inclusive by design and is representing diverse voices in the discipline.

4.9 During the programme development phase, we would expect programme teams to engage with the following groups:

i Current students and alumni

ii Employer groups and relevant sector bodies

iii External subject experts at other providers of higher education

iv Other members of faculty, particularly those leading existing programmes

v Relevant members of professional services functions

4.10 Where there is a desire to apply for accreditation from a PSRB, the programme team must meet with the Head of Academic Quality so that any additional requirements of the accrediting body can be captured, and a plan drawn up for how these will be met.

4.11 Once a Subject Area Lead is satisfied that their programme team has concluded the development work, they will meet with the Academic Dean to review the documentation and, if they agree, commence preparation for the Programme Approval Panel.

Programme Approval Panel

4.12 Programme Approval Panels operate under the delegated authority of the Academic Board. They are constituted as follows:

i A Chair who is a senior member of academic staff with appropriate experience and knowledge and who is independent of the proposed programme

ii Internal panel members who will be selected from Faculty and who will be independent of the proposed programme. Members will have experience of delivering Walbrook programme/s and/or will have received training from the Quality, Policy and Regulation Team.

iii At least one External member with academic and/or relevant practitioner experience within the proposed programme discipline area.

iv The Head of Academic Quality or their nominee.

v A student representative

vi A member of the Quality, Policy and Regulation Team who will be Secretary to the Panel.

4.13 Programme Approval Panels are responsible for considering new programme proposals and for assuring the Academic Board of the following:

i That the proposed curriculum is current, appropriate for the level of study and is in line with sector recognised standards in the specific discipline.

ii The constituent modules are suitable for the programme, the assessment is appropriately balanced across the modules, and any new modules have been designed in line with regulation and standard operating models

iii That the overall programme presents a coherent student journey that enables each student to succeed.

iv The through the programme, students are required to develop skills relevant to the discipline that will prepare them for future employment in relevant sectors.

v The proposed programme of study is in line with relevant strategies, in particular the teaching and learning strategy.

vi Proposals to make use of existing modules from other programmes of study have been discussed and agreed with the relevant Programme Leader and Subject Area Lead.

vii That there are sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff in place to deliver the programme both at the point of launch and evidenced in any future plans for growth.

viii That the programme will be sufficiently resourced, in terms of learning and additional supporting resources, both at the point of launch and evidenced in any future plans for growth.

ix That the requirements of any accrediting PSRB have been accounted for and met.

4.14 Based on its review, a Programme Approval Panel can make the following recommendations to the Academic Board:

i Approval without conditions

ii Approval with conditions that need to be met, normally before the programme is delivered. Conditions will often relate to substantive issues such as academic content or matters relating to the student experience.

iii Not approved, for reasons that will be provided and stating specific actions that would need to take place for the programme to be reconsidered at a future date

4.15 The report of the approval event will contain a summary of what was discussed and the conditions. It may also include:

i Commendations, where sector good practice is identified

ii Recommendations, for further action where they believe the programme and / or student learning experience may be enhanced. Recommendations are not requirements; however, the Programme Team will be asked to show that each recommendation has been given consideration.

iii Affirmations, which is an endorsement of actions already identified by the Programme Team

4.16 Where any conditions need to be met, the Programme Team will be required to submit their actions which will be considered by circulation by the Programme Approval Panel membership.

Academic Board

4.17 Panel meeting reports, along with the Panel's endorsed responses to any conditions, are considered by Academic Board for a final decision. Where Academic Board approves the

programme, it is formally validated and ready for delivery. The approved programme and module specifications are held by the Quality, Policy and Regulation Team.

4.18 Academic Board will also consider Programme Approval Panel reports and recommendations not to proceed with validation. In those instances, the Board will also consider the reasons not to proceed and what action that could be taken into the future to minimise programmes coming forward for validation that are not ready.

4.19 Exceptionally, the Academic Board may disagree with the outcome of a Panel review and choose to either approve or reject a proposal. In such cases, the reasons for doing so will be clearly documented, and fed back to the Quality, Policy and Regulation team to inform review of policy and procedure.

5. Programme Monitoring

5.1 Following the approval of a new programme, its ongoing suitability, and the performance and experience of students following it, will be monitored in line with the Programme Monitoring and Review Policy.

5.2 Any actions taken in response to recommendations made at the point of approval will be picked up in the first round of monitoring.

6. Module Approval

6.1 A module must belong to at least one programme of study. To that end, a new module can only be created as part of a wider programme modification request.

6.2 A new module must be submitted to an external scrutineer (normally the programme external examiner) for comment on its appropriateness, the currency of its content, and its fit with the wider programme curriculum.

6.3 A new module must be reviewed and approved by the Faculty Board.

7. Programme and Module Modifications

7.1 A programme is unlikely to stay static during a five-year validation period, and changes will be made to ensure that it remains current, valid and responds to the changing nature of the professions or the student experience.

7.2 All modification requests must be submitted to the Quality, Policy and Regulation team who will conduct an initial review of the proposed changes, advise on any regulatory constraints, and submit the changes to the relevant approving body. Submitting all changes to the team ensures that they always hold the approved current version of module and programme documentation.

7.3 Major modifications must be reviewed and endorsed by the Faculty Board prior to their submission to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.

7.4 Modifications are categorised as follows:

Categorisation	Examples of modifications	Approving Body
Discretionary	i. Changes to recommended readings/updates to book editions (in consultation with the librarian). ii. Syllabus updates that do not impact on learning outcomes. iii. Correction of typographical errors. iv. Formatting adjustments. v. Changes to assessment tasks.	Module or Programme Leader
Minor	i. Change of assessment type within a module (for example from coursework to examination). ii. Changes to the weighting of assessments within a module. iii. Change of module title. iv. Changes to the learning outcomes of a module. v. Changing up to one third of the programme learning outcomes. vi. Addition, deletion or substitution of modules impacting up to one third of the programme learning outcomes (including approval of new modules). vii. Changes to entry criteria within benchmark.	Faculty Board
Major	i. Change of programme or award title. ii. Changing more than one third of the programme learning outcomes. iii. Addition, deletion or substitution of modules impacting more than one third of the programme learning outcomes. iv. Addition or change of the programme mode of delivery (on-campus or online). v. Addition, removal or change of pathways within a programme suite.	Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

	vi. Addition, removal or change of mode of study (full-time or part-time), vii. Changes that affect the length of the programme. viii. Changes to entry criteria outside of benchmark.	

7.5 Minor and major modifications must be scrutinised by an appropriately qualified external scrutineer (normally the programme external examiner) prior to being submitted to the Quality, Policy and Regulation team.

7.6 The Quality, Policy and Regulation team may recommend to the Chair of LTQC that a proposal is upgraded from discretionary to minor, or from minor to major where they believe the cumulative effect of changes warrants it.

7.7 The Quality, Policy and Regulation team may also recommend to the Chair of LTQC that a modification proposal is rejected and re-routed as a new programme proposal where the cumulative effect of the change is significant.

7.8 Where a modification may impact on students currently registered or individuals who have accepted an offer, the Walbrook Terms and Conditions set out actions that will be required including where it will be necessary to consult on the proposal.

i The Quality, Policy and Regulation team is responsible for advising programme leaders on the actions they should take.

ii Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is ultimately responsible for ensuring that necessary actions are taken.

7.9 Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that approved changes are updated in the relevant programme and module specifications and returned to the Quality, Policy and Regulation Team.

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