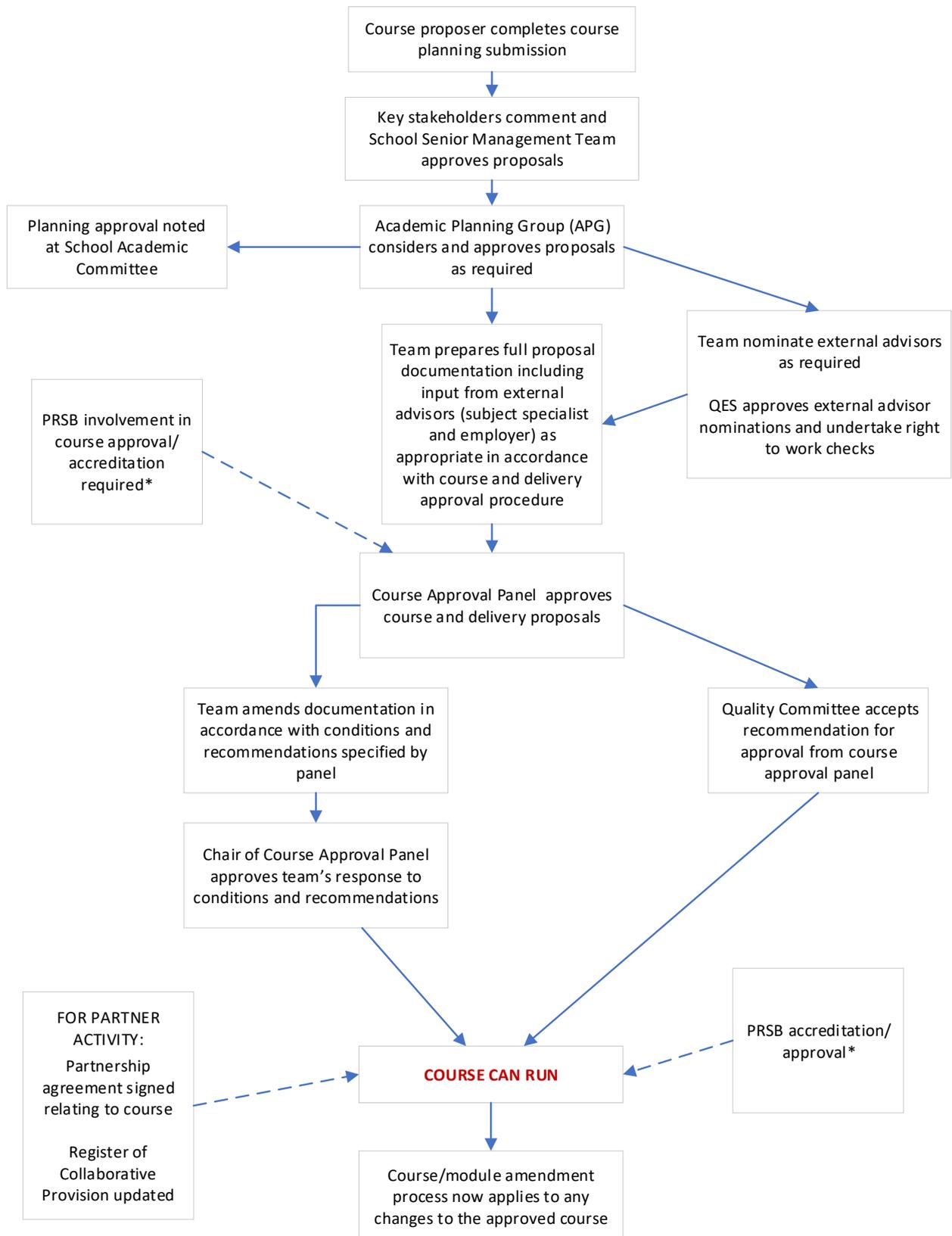


Policy Coversheet

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| Name of Policy: | Course & Delivery Approval Procedure |
| Purpose of Policy: | <p>To ensure that all Staffordshire University courses meet appropriate standards, provide current and coherent curricula and deliver a high-quality student learning experience and positive student outcomes.</p> <p>To assess Collaborative Academic Partners' ability to deliver the course(s) in terms of staffing, processes and learning/support resources as well as physical facilities and the University's ability to support this delivery.</p> |
| Intended audience(s): | Staff/External Parties |
| Approval for this policy given by: | Quality Committee |
| Last Review Date: | <p>11/05/2018</p> <p>25/01/2019 – Minor revisions relating to documentation requirements and clarification of the processes regarding strategic approval and delivery approval.</p> |
| Review Due Date: (3 years from last review) | 10/05/2021 |
| Individual responsible for review: | Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards |
| Authorising department: | Student and Academic Services |

COURSE & DELIVERY APPROVAL PROCEDURE



* PRSB accreditation applies as appropriate. Certain courses will require PRSB accreditation/approval in order to run, for others accreditation is not essential and may be secured after the course has commenced delivery. All course and publicity information must accurately reflect the current status of the course.

Introduction

This procedure applies to the development and consideration of all proposals for new courses and includes the assessment of Collaborative Academic Partners to deliver University awards (or part of) including franchise, validated and dual courses. The delivery approval aspect of this will also assess the School's ability to support the course delivery.

Major amendments to existing courses (comprising more than one third of the total course) also require reapproval in line with this procedure. This could be a one-off major amendment or an accumulation of amendments (made since course approval or the last course review).

1. Strategic Approval - Academic Planning

1.1 Strategic approval for new course proposals must initially be sought before the quality (validation) approval process can commence. The University's Academic Planning Group (APG) is responsible for considering proposals at this stage. APG considers the business case for the proposal including student demand, income generated, and resources required to run the provision.

1.2 Major amendments to existing courses, equating to more than one third of the total course, must also be initially agreed by APG.

1.3 In order for a proposal to be considered by APG, a course planning form (and associated spreadsheet) must be completed. Through this process a range of information about the proposal is gathered including a full description of the proposed course, the strategic reason for its development, assessment of resource requirements, financial and risk assessments plus market research to evidence both student and employer demand. The proposal should be informed by comment from key stakeholders in the University and approved by the relevant School Senior Management Team (SMT) before the proposal can be presented to APG. A representative from the proposing School will present the proposal to APG, supported by the Collaborative Academic Partnership Manager where appropriate.

1.4 APG will either approve the proposal; approve the proposal subject to further information being provided to APG; defer for additional work before resubmission to the Group; or reject the proposal.

1.5 When APG approves a new course, this approval covers the following full range of modes and models of delivery at all University sites unless explicitly stated otherwise:

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Distance Learning
- With a placement
- With a Foundation Year
- Accelerated delivery

The course planning submission will clearly outline which modes/models are to be pursued in the first instance. Only these will go forward to quality approval/validation. Should a team wish to add additional modes/models at a later stage, a course planning form (and associated spreadsheet) should be completed for approval by the relevant SMT. Such developments approved by the SMT will be reported to APG.

1.6 APG's approval of a new course also includes approval for that course to be franchised to collaborative academic partners unless explicitly stated otherwise. The course planning form will clearly outline whether the course is to be franchised in the first instance. Only these franchise arrangements will go forward to delivery approval. Should a School wish to franchise the course to other collaborative academic partners at a later stage, a course planning form (and associated spreadsheet) for this proposal should be completed for approval by the relevant SMT. The Collaborative Academic Partnership Service must be involved in any decision to franchise the course to additional collaborative academic partners.

1.7 Following APG or SMT approval as required, a course planning spreadsheet must be fully completed in order that the data required for accurate course set-up and marketing is obtained. On receipt of the final spreadsheet the course(s) approved by APG/SMT may set-up in SITS and advertised 'subject to validation'.

2. Quality Approval

2.1 Once the plan to develop a new course or franchise an existing course has received strategic approval by the University, a full course proposal will be developed for consideration by a panel appointed by Quality Committee. All panels will be coordinated by the Quality Enhancement Service (QES).

2.2 QES will propose a panel meeting date to the relevant School and request details of external academic and employer representatives (please see section 3.1 below) immediately following confirmation of strategic approval. For approval of courses to be delivered by a Collaborative Academic Partner, the relevant Collaborative Academic Partnership Manager(s) will also be consulted. A QES Officer will be assigned to each proposal at this stage; that Officer will be available to provide advice on all aspects of the process and comment on draft documentation as required.¹

2.3 Approval Panels

2.3.1 University Course Approval Panels will usually meet on at least a monthly basis to consider course proposals and delivery approvals for courses to be franchised to Collaborative Academic Partners. The dates of panel meetings will be circulated by QES at the beginning of the academic year. Additional panel meetings may be arranged as required. Meetings will normally be held over a day and may include consideration of more than one course proposal or delivery approval.

2.3.2 Each panel will normally comprise at least:

- A senior member of the University (normally a member of Executive, Dean, or an Associate Dean) as Chair. The Chair for a given panel must be independent of the proposals under consideration.
- One member of academic staff from outside the School in which the provision under consideration sits with experience in course design and management (for example a Dean, Associate Dean, Head of Department or Course Leader)

¹This may not be the Officer present at the CAP meeting considering the final proposal

- An external panel member with experience of course design, approval, quality assurance and learning and teaching in higher education
- A current student (normally a sabbatical officer or student representative acting on their behalf) from outside the School in which the provision under consideration sits
- An officer from QES (who will also act as secretary)

2.3.3 The external standing panel member will be selected from a 'pool' of approved externals [[criteria for CAP external member appointment](#)]. The University will normally appoint such externals annually. Although this external panel member does not need to have experience in the subject(s) under consideration, where new course proposals are to be considered written comments from an external subject specialist(s) and employer/professional body representative must also be obtained prior to submission of the proposal to the University panel [[Criteria for external subject specialist/employer representative appointment](#)]. Please see section 3.1 below.

2.3.4 Final selection of all panel members will be undertaken by QES (on behalf of Quality Committee). The number of internal panel members required for a given meeting will be determined based on the complexity of the proposals to be presented. Where specialist delivery modes (for example accelerated delivery) are proposed internal staff with experience in the relevant area(s) will, where possible, be selected. Where a proposal for a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship is being presented, the Director of Employer Partnerships (or nominee) will also be invited to attend to advise the panel. Where a proposal involves a collaborative academic partner, the Director of Collaborative Academic Partnerships (or nominee) will be invited to attend in an advisory capacity.

2.3.5 Where necessary, the course approval requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) will be considered in order to avoid duplication between PSRB and internal approval processes. This may involve the inclusion of PSRB representatives on an approval panel and a variation to the usual process, eg. the appointment of a co-Chair from the PSRB. QES will advise appropriately.

3. New Course Proposals

The approval process comprises consideration of a document submission by the individual members of the Course Approval Panel followed by a panel meeting to discuss the proposal with the course developers and proposed teaching staff and view specialist facilities where appropriate.

3.1 External Academic and Employer/Professional Body Input (External Advisors)

- 3.1.1 Where a new course is being proposed, written comments from an external subject specialist(s) and a relevant employer or professional body representative (external advisors) must be obtained prior to submission of the proposal to the University panel.
- 3.1.2 Where courses are to be delivered through Collaborative Academic Partnerships, the Academic Link Tutor(s) should also discuss the proposal with colleagues at the relevant partnerships and the relevant Collaborative Academic Partnership Manager(s).
- 3.1.3 Course teams are encouraged to share draft course documentation with their appointed external advisors (and Collaborative Academic Partners) in order to obtain early feedback on the proposals under development. For this reason, nominations for external advisors must be

submitted to QES as soon as possible following strategic approval for a course.

3.1.4 The relevant School is responsible for nominating appropriate individuals using the Application for Approval of an External Advisor Form. The criteria that such advisors should meet is provided by QES, see 2.3.3 above

3.1.5 Final selection of such external advisors will be undertaken by QES (on behalf of Quality Committee).

3.1.6 It is not normally appropriate to appoint existing external examiners as advisors, unless the development is a change to an existing course to which the examiner is appointed as award examiner or the introduction of a course closely linked to the provision to which the examiner is appointed. In such instances the examiner's knowledge of the existing provision may be valuable. An example of such an instance would include the mapping of a course already in approval to an apprenticeship standard (see section 7 below).

3.1.7 QES will formally appoint each external advisor, ensuring that all pre-employment checks are undertaken. Thereafter communication will be undertaken directly between the course team and their advisors.

3.1.8 The final course proposal documentation must be sent to each external advisor by the course team with a request to complete the University's [external advisor comments sheet](#). Completed forms must be submitted with the course documentation.

3.2 Document Submission

3.2.1 The following documentation should be submitted electronically to QES for circulation to panel members at least two weeks before the date of the panel meeting. The documentation/information provided should be approved by the Dean of School (or their nominee) prior to submission to QES:

- a) A completed [Approval Support Document](#)
- b) Proposed Programme Specification(s) [[Undergraduate Template](#), [Postgraduate Template](#)]
- c) Module Descriptors
- d) Completed comment forms from external advisors (please see section 3.1.8 above)
- e) For Higher and Degree Apprenticeships – (i) [Apprenticeship Handbook](#); (ii) [Apprenticeship Summary Sheet](#); (iii) [Sample Job Description for an Apprentice](#); and (iv) a [Mentor Handbook](#) (Please also see section 7 below).

All module descriptors should have been agreed by the relevant School prior to their submission. However, final approval of any new or amended modules developed specifically for the new or redesigned course(s) rests with the approval panel.

3.3 Panel Meeting and Outcomes

3.3.1 The panel's consideration will be informed by the submission of documentation (see 3.2) which will be presented by the Course Team (the presenting team) at the panel meeting. The presenting team should include the Course Leader(s) and any other key members of the delivery team.

3.3.2 The University has developed Course Approval Guidance (available from QES) which

provides a list of questions about which an approval panel must satisfy itself when considering a new course for approval. This will be used to inform the agenda of the meeting. The meeting is also an opportunity for the panel to explore with the team potential opportunities for further enhancement.

3.3.3 The options available to the panel are:

- a) The course proposal should be approved (panels may also set conditions, requirements or recommendations – please see 3.3.4 below); or
- b) The course proposal should be referred for additional work and resubmitted to a panel within 12 months for further consideration (the panel should determine whether it should reconvene to consider the resubmission; whether such consideration could be undertaken by correspondence by all members; or whether the proposal could be reconsidered by an alternative panel); or
- c) The course proposal should be rejected.

All CAP outcomes are subject to final approval at Quality Committee.

3.3.4 In approving a course (please see 3.3.3 above) the panel may do so subject to conditions and/or requirements. The panel may also make recommendations. Conditions, requirements and recommendations are defined as follows:

- a) Conditions – must be met before students can be enrolled onto the course. The panel will set a date by which conditions must be met.
- b) Requirements – must be met by a date determined by the panel, which can be after commencement of the course.
- c) Recommendations – are suggestions, which the panel feels will enhance or improve the provision but are not essential to the delivery.

4. Delivery Approval for courses offered by Collaborative Academic Partners

Delivery Approval considers a partner's ability to deliver provision and the host School's capacity to manage its responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. Delivery Approval is necessary prior to partners running any new provision (validated, franchised and dual awards) and applies to current partners extending their provision as well as to new partners. The process should assess the partner's ability to deliver the courses in terms of staffing, processes and learning/support resources as well as physical facilities.

4.1 Document Submission

The following documentation should be submitted by the Collaborative Academic Partnership Manager and Academic Link Tutor electronically to QES for circulation to panel members at least two weeks before the date of the panel meeting. The documentation/information provided should be approved by the Dean of School (or their nominee) prior to submission to QES:-

- a) Approval Support Document 03 – Approval of Delivery by a Partner (including draft collaborative delivery plan)
- b) New Site Approval document (if required)
- c) Partner Library & Learning Resource Review
- d) Programme specification(s). An addendum must be provided to note the delivery by specific partners and any delivery differences.

4.1.2 The Partner Library & Learning Resource Review will include recommendations from the

University Library staff regarding the level of resources required at the Collaborative Academic Partner to deliver the course.

4.2 Panel Meeting and Outcomes

The panel's consideration will be informed by the submission of documentation (see 4.1) which will be presented by the following at the panel meeting:

- Collaborative Academic Partnerships Manager
- Academic Link tutor
- From the partner to include:
 - Senior Member of relevant faculty/department.
 - HE Manager or equivalent
 - Teaching staff

Where possible the proposing team from the partner should attend in person but other arrangements may be made where this is not possible.

4.2.1 The panel will need to confirm that they consider that the partner is adequately resourced and has appropriate physical facilities to deliver the course. In addition, the panel will need to confirm that they consider that the university and the partner have agreed processes to ensure effective oversight of academic standards and a positive student experience.

4.2.2 The options available to the panel are:

- a) The proposal should be approved (panels may also set conditions, requirements or recommendations – please see 4.2.3 below); or
- b) The proposal should be referred for additional work and resubmitted to a panel within 12 months for further consideration (the panel should determine whether it should reconvene to consider the resubmission; whether such consideration could be undertaken by correspondence by all members; or whether the proposal could be reconsidered by an alternative panel); or
- c) The proposal should be rejected.

All outcomes are subject to final approval at Quality Committee.

4.2.3 In approving a collaborative academic partner to deliver a course (please see 4.2.2 above) the panel may do so subject to conditions and/or requirements. The panel may also make recommendations. Conditions, requirements and recommendations are defined as follows:

- a) Conditions – must be met before students can be enrolled onto the course. The panel will set a date by which conditions must be met.
- b) Requirements – must be met by a date determined by the panel, which can be after commencement of the course.
- c) Recommendations – are suggestions, which the panel feels will enhance or improve the provision but are not essential to the delivery.

5. Standing Panel Reports

- 5.1 Following a panel meeting, a report of the discussions will be produced by the QES officer and agreed by the panel. This will provide a summary of the panel's considerations and its decision. The course and/or the delivery team will have the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the record. Once any resulting queries are addressed the report/minutes will be approved by the panel Chair.
- 5.2 The University uses its quality processes as a means of highlighting and sharing examples of exemplary or innovative practice. The panel will therefore also highlight any such practice identified as part of its considerations and make commendations as appropriate.
- 5.3 Should a course or delivery proposal be approved by the panel subject to conditions and/or requirements, responsibility for approving the team's response to these will rest with the panel Chair in consultation with the relevant QES officer. A course or delivery of a course by a Collaborative Academic Partner is not fully approved until all conditions have been met.
- 5.4 On approval a new course should be assigned a periodic review grouping. Consideration of a team's response to approval recommendations will form part of the next periodic review.
- 5.5 It is acknowledged that condition and requirement deadlines at times need to be adjusted. Teams wishing to request a revised date must provide reasons for this to the relevant panel Chair and QES officer who may provide an extension of up to 12 months. Any such extensions will be reported to Quality Committee. Proposals with outstanding conditions beyond this period will be closed; teams wishing to pursue a proposal which has been closed in these circumstances would need to start the approval process again (including obtaining new strategic approval for the proposal).
- 5.6 Once a course has been approved for delivery by a Collaborative Academic Partner the Partnership Agreement must be signed and/or updated to include any new provision. The agreement must be signed before students can be enrolled on the course(s).
- 5.7 The Collaborative Academic Partnership Register must also be updated as appropriate to include any new provision following the approval process.

6. Approval of a New Flexible Learning Course (FLC)

6.1 The University offers a range of short courses and recognised qualifications, which it categorises as flexible learning courses. The following courses are included in this category:

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| University Foundation Certificate | 30 credits at level 3 |
| University Foundation Diploma | 60 credits at level 3 |
| University Certificate | 60 credits at level 4 |
| University Diploma | 60 credits at level 5 |
| Advanced University Diploma | 60 credits at level 6 |
| Graduate Certificate | 60 credits of which a minimum of 45 credits must be at Level 6 and a maximum of 15 credits may be at Level 7 |
| University Learning Award | 60 credits at any level or any combination of levels |
| Certificate in Lifelong Learning and/or Certificate in Continuous Professional Development | 30 credits or 45 credits from any one of levels 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 or combination of adjacent levels |
| Certificate of Credit | 15 credits at any level |
| Certificate of Competence | Not credit rated Any one of Levels 3-7 |

6.2 All flexible learning course proposals must be considered by a Course Approval Panel. Such proposals will be presented through academic planning. Any collaborating organisation staff will be invited to the meeting to discuss the proposal. This meeting will be held at the university.

6.3 An academic external advisor should be appointed in accordance with section 2.3.3 above. However, in recognition that flexible learning courses comprise no more than 60 credits, an existing external examiner with appropriate subject specialism may be appointed as the advisor. An employer/professional body external advisor is not required.

6.4 The documentation required is the same as that required by a full approval panel (please see section 3.2 above) with the following exceptions:

- An employer / professional body representative comment form is not required
- The course and module handbook may be combined

6.5 The process for considering the proposal and the possible outcomes are as in section 3.3 above.

6.6 Should an FLC proposal be approved subject to conditions and/or requirements, responsibility for approving the course team's response to these will rest with the Chair in

consultation with the QES officer. A course is not fully approved until all conditions have been met and the Chair has signed it off as approved.

- 6.7 On approval a new flexible learning course should be assigned a periodic review grouping. Consideration of a team's response to approval recommendations will form part of the next periodic review.
- 6.8 It is acknowledged that condition and requirement deadlines at times need to be adjusted. Teams wishing to request a revised date must provide reasons for this to the CAP Chair and Committee officer who may provide an extension of up to six months. Any such extensions will be reported to Quality Committee. Flexible learning course proposals with outstanding conditions beyond this period will be closed; teams wishing to pursue a proposal which has been closed in these circumstances would need to start the approval process again by resubmitting a course proposal to Academic Planning Group.
- 6.9 Where a flexible learning course involves collaboration with an external organisation, an agreement covering the collaboration must be signed. The agreement must be signed before students can be enrolled on the course(s).

7. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

- 7.1 Approval of new higher and degree apprenticeships either incorporating the introduction of a new course or the mapping of an existing course(s) to an apprenticeship standard will be considered in line with this procedure.
- 7.2 When considering an apprenticeship, the Panel will expect the proposal to show clearly how the proposed course maps to the relevant apprenticeship standards and to demonstrate how any gaps which may have been identified in the mapping will be filled. Full details of how the apprenticeship is to be managed and quality assured must be provided, including how the apprentices will be prepared for their final external end point assessment where required.
- 7.3 Where a course(s) already in approval is to be mapped to an apprenticeship standard, external academic advisor input is not necessary unless existing module descriptors require amendment for the proposed apprenticeship or new modules are required. The existing external examiner should approve the subject mapping. Comments from an employer/professional body external advisor will not be required as employer input is an integral part of apprenticeships design (the apprenticeship standards will already have been approved by employers). An external must, however, be appointed to the Course Approval Panel in line with the procedures in 2.3.3.

8. Reporting to Quality Committee

- 8.1 Course Approval Panel meeting reports will be submitted to Quality Committee for authorisation. QES will provide an annual report with an overview of Course Approval Panel activity to Quality Committee. ²

²This report may be combined with an annual report on course review and re-approval activity.