

Section 7: BIMM Institute Course Approval Procedures (Policy & Process)

Policy objectives:

In line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UK) and the National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland) BIMM Institute will:

- Make clear the criteria against which course proposals are assessed;
- Define processes, roles and responsibilities for course design, development and approval and communicate them to those involved;
- Make use of reference points and external expertise in course design;
- Involve students in course design and in processes for course development and approval.

Course and module approval

All curriculum development is planned at the BIMM Institute Academic Board (AcBd) – with approval development and review activities delegated to its sub-committee the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC) and are aligned with strategic planning and objectives set by the BIMM Institute Board of Directors.

New courses and modules are written by BIMM Institute course development teams, which will include Course Leaders, Module Leaders and external advisors.

The development and approval process will be supported by the Academic Development and Quality Assurance (ADQA) team.

The process for approval has four stages as follows:

1. Outline Stage 1 Course Proposal is submitted for approval to LTEC (signed by College Principal, BIMM Group Finance Director and BIMM Group Managing Director);
2. Outline proposal is then submitted to the awarding body for approval;
3. An internal course approval event is held to scrutinise the proposed course (run by ADQA using staff appointed by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC));
4. The proposal proceeds to an external approval/validation event (awarding institution run).

Stage two and stage four events

Stage two and stage four events are convened by the awarding institutions – stage two is normally a paper based exercise conducted by committee, but stage four involves attendance at an approval event which is conducted by a panel of experts appointed by the awarding institution including the following indicative roles:

- Chair – a senior academic from the institution
- Subject expert(s) – an academic with expertise in the area of the proposed course
- Quality expert – a member of institutional staff with expertise in regulations and quality assurance
- External assessors – often up to two external experts academic and industry based
- A secretary and note taker

Panels will also want to meet with BIMM Institute students and a range of staff from BIMM Institute including teaching and support staff. They may also wish to have a tour of the BIMM Institute College delivering the proposed course.

The BIMM Institute course development team will normally be invited to give a short presentation on the context and proposed provision at the beginning of the meeting.

Validation panels will relay their findings at the end of the meeting and decisions will fall into the following broad categories:

- Course approved (with conditions (which must be addressed by a specific timescale) and recommendations (which BIMM Institute should consider and respond));
- Course to be re-submitted with conditions and recommendations;
- Course not approved (a reason will be given)

Stage three events

Stage three events will be run along the same lines as stage three, a panel will be convened by LTEC, chaired by a senior member of ADQA with one or more internal subject specialists, a learning and teaching/and/or quality specialist and a Student Representative. An external assessor will also be appointed to the panel, proposed by ADQA and approved by LTEC. At least one of the internal panel members must be from a BIMM Institute College other than the one where the new course is being developed.

For each course being approved there will be a half-day meeting between the panel and the course development team (Executive Principal, College Principal and/or Head of Education plus course leader/developer and module leaders).

Roles of Members of the Approval Panel

The Chair

The role of the Chair is to regulate the conduct of the event. The Chair will open proceedings by introducing members of the Panel and explaining the purpose of the event. Throughout the event, the Chair will seek to ensure that different points of view are given a fair hearing whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the schedule is adhered to and that discussions are brought to a close within the time allotted. Towards the end of the event, the Validation Panel will hold a private meeting to consider its conclusions, which the Chair will then present, orally, to the full forum. The secretary will record the outcomes, which will then be approved by the chair and sent to the course development team in a formal letter.

Internal Subject Specialists

The subject specialists pay particular attention to the appropriateness and contemporaneity of the proposed curriculum and the resources available to support it. The subject specialist should also have some awareness of frameworks for quality assurance and academic standards/and or learning and teaching, and be able to comment on these issues and the quality of learning opportunities provided by the proposed course.

The External Subject Specialist

Like the internal subject specialist, the external member of the Validation Panel is an expert from the field in which the course is based. The external assessor has a particular responsibility for ensuring that the quality and standards of the course are comparable with those offered throughout UK and Irish Higher Education, and for this reason they are normally drawn from

another higher education institution.

Student Representative (if available – some events may run outside term time)

A student rep from our existing pool will be a member of the panel with a particular focus on student support and the quality of learning opportunities provided by the proposed course.

Minor and Significant Changes to courses and modules

Minor modifications to modules and courses can be dealt with through drafting a short document detailing the changes to the module or course (including a statement on the academic rationale for the change) and including the relevant documentation marked up with the proposed changes using the ‘track changes’ function in Microsoft Word. After changes have been formulated they are passed on for approval (see appendix 1).

New courses (and any significant changes to existing provision) must be presented for consideration and approval by LTEC, and then the relevant senior academic committee at the awarding institution. If changes are very substantial the awarding institution may insist on revalidation of the course.

The criteria for judging whether a change to a course or module is significant is simple: any change that effects the aims, learning outcomes and/or assessment of those outcomes is significant. Changes to content and delivery of teaching and learning are generally not considered as significant. If in doubt, please consult the ADQA team for advice.

Please note that this process can take longer than you might expect- changes proposed at the beginning of an academic year may not be approved until the summer term and changes to published regulations, policies and assessment dates are not generally allowed in year (they need to be approved for the next academic year so as not to disadvantage current students).

New Course approval process

Our awarding institutions have strict rules on the timelines for new course development, therefore any proposal needs to be made at least 6 months in advance of the final external validation event. The ADQA team hold records of all validation and revalidation schedules and can advise on appropriate timelines for new course development in order to avoid scheduling clashes.

Please also bear in mind that the outline proposal sets in stone the key attributes of a new course or module including course and module names, fees, admission tariffs and financial costings. Any changes (however minor to the specification) may require a re-submission of the specification to the awarding institution, which is likely to delay the process significantly.

Stage 1 Course Proposal Document (Internal and external phases – for new courses only)

For the Stage 1 Course Proposal Document please use the pro-forma available via ADQA. The outline includes the following key sections (as awarding institution requirements do have some small differences it is important that the form is completed in full and this will be edited before submission):

- The proposing college
- Title and award of course
- Proposed start date
- Name of Course Leader(s)
- Proposed entry requirements

- Academic rationale for proposed course
- Relationship with BIMM Institute Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Market demand for the course
- Proposed structure of course (by term including module types, credit weighting and whether modules are new or existing)
- Resources required to deliver course in first three years
- Projected student numbers for the first three years
- Signatories and comments from ADQA

Date for submission for awarding body approval: this will depend on the awarding institution – please contact the ADQA team for confirmation of possible dates.

Stage 2: Internal approval (see template)

For the internal approval event two documents are required: the approved and signed Stage 1 Course Approval Document as detailed above (with confirmation of approval from the awarding institution) and a course validation document (pro-forma(s) available from ADQA) including the following key sections:

1. Background information and course development

- Background to the proposal: the rationale and reasons for introducing the course, the relationship to the institution's plans, how it differs from and complements existing or related courses.
- A statement of the target market, details of market research and consultation with employers, prospective students and relevant professional bodies: all of which contribute to ascertain demand for the course and competition by other providers.
- Target and minimum and maximum student numbers for recruitment in each year and pathway for the period of proposed validation.
- If the proposed course is replacing an existing course, include details of consultations with students over the change.
- Details of course management arrangements.
- BIMM Institute colleges where the course is to be delivered.

2. Curriculum

- An explanation of the curriculum framework where this leads to a number of exit point and awards.
- A discussion of the curriculum content, its coherence, breadth, depth and progression. The relationship between the compulsory and optional elements and the balance of teaching, learning and assessment needs.

3. Course specification (see templates)

- The awards and FHEQ level.
- The aims and learning outcomes of the course(s), stating how the outcomes meet the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications descriptors for the relevant awards.
- Core structure diagram, showing the order of modules, when they will be taken and a rationale for the order.
- Core and optional units and the credit volume and level of each component.
- A 'curriculum map' showing the outcomes of modules and assessment against the

intended learning outcomes of the course as a whole.

- An explanation as to how the course design and development has taken account of any relevant subject benchmark statements. It is suggested that core benchmark statements are listed together with reflective statements on how the course or its outcomes are aligned to these.
- Details of all the elements assessed, the assessment mode and timing including resit modes
- Minimum and maximum periods within which a student must complete the course and associated assessment, including re-sits.
- Any provision for deferment.
- Relationship or articulation of the course with existing internal or external courses
- Details of any bridging units or special induction arrangements.
- Arrangements for practical experience and work placements.

Note: course specifications are the minimum level of information that prospective and registered students should have in relation to a course and therefore must be approved for publication to students.

4. *Teaching and learning strategies*

- Details of strategies for delivering the course, achieving the intended outcomes and facilitating or supporting the students' learning and progression.
- Details of any placements, trips or visits, including specific aims and learning outcomes, criteria and approval processes for suitable placements, responsibility for finding and arranging placement, and supervision arrangements.
- Arrangements for preparing and supervising students undertaking dissertations or projects.
- Responsibilities of students.

5. *Assessment*

- Details of the assessment strategy, including how the methods will assess the outcomes of the course and the philosophy guiding the selection of methods.
- Assessment criteria and their relationship to learning outcomes
- The pass mark for all units.
- Progression requirements for students to proceed to subsequent stages of the course.
- Assessment weightings for the overall scheme and within specific units.
- Deadlines for submission of work.
- Specification of which elements must be passed to obtain the award and specification of any elements, which cannot be the subject of compensation or condonement.
- Any course specific criteria for the award.
- Use of formative and diagnostic assessment.
- Mechanisms for provision of feedback to students on assessed work including format, standards and timescale.

6. *Module specifications (see template)*

Each Module Specification should contain details of:

- Proposed title and code
- Owing BIMM Institute
- Academic year of introduction
- Name of Module Leader

- Credits
- FHEQ/QCF level
- Description of module
- Course that will use the module
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment (including mode, subcomponents, learning outcomes assessed, duration/length, week of submission, submission point and weighting)
- Teaching and learning methods and contact hours
- Module specific resources required List of core texts and recommended reading (appended)

7. Admissions

- Entry requirements including admissions criteria for the course, taking account of the abilities, aptitudes, skills, qualifications and experiences which would indicate potential to succeed on the course and how these might be demonstrated.
- Any requirements of statutory or regulatory bodies, such as medical or criminal record checks.
- Admission by AP(E)L.
- Course fees.

8. Staffing

- A discussion of the human resources required to deliver the course.
- List of the proposed staff who will manage or teach on the course, including details of vacant posts. The list should note the proposed responsibilities for each staff member (for example: course leader) and whether full or part time, permanent or sessional staff. Where staff have commitments to other courses, these should be specified and quantified.
- Curriculum vitae for each of the teaching staff.
- Projected staff development needs.

9. Learning and other resources

A discussion of the resource requirements for the course, including:

- Details of library resources necessary to support the course.
- Details of relevant multimedia, information technology and computing resources necessary for the course.
- Teaching accommodation.
- Workshop, laboratory or studio space and any other specialist teaching resources or accommodation available to support the course.
- Equipment needs.

The discussion should indicate whether existing resources are expected to be adequate or whether new resources will be required to run the course and how these are to be secured.

Appendix 1: University of Sussex and Bath Spa University Validated Course and Module Modifications Procedure

Context

At BIMM Institute Higher Education (HE) courses we run are validated by one of our university partners. This procedure is designed for validated provision.

Validated provision is contracted with our university partners and as part of this contract we submit our course proposals to a formal validation or approval process with the relevant university. Courses are then periodically reviewed and re-approved on a cycle of anywhere between 2 and 6 years. This means that any significant changes to validated provision must be approved by the validating university (to ensure we do not breach our contractual agreement) as well as having been consulted on and approved at BIMM Institute to ensure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are maintained for our students.

Types of modification

There are two modification types covered by this process as follows:

1. **Minor Modifications:** Revising curriculum content to ensure currency; updating reading lists, staffing information and assessment guidance (briefs); revising module learning and teaching strategy.
2. **Major Modifications:** changes to module title; changes to module learning outcomes; changes to module assessment weightings; changes to module assessment strategy (this has implications for the Key Information Set (KIS) return); change of course title; exit award/s available; professional accreditation requirements (this has implications for the KIS return); changes to course learning outcomes; significant changes to the overall approach to teaching, learning and assessment strategy across the course (especially where the KIS return may be affected); changes to mode of delivery (this has implications for the KIS return); changes to curriculum structure (this may affect the KIS return); changes to the criteria for admission; extending the use of an existing module to another course as a core module; approval of new modules for inclusion in an existing course; deletion of a module from a course; variation from the relevant BIMM Institute and/or university regulations.

College course teams should be mindful of the cumulative effect of a significant number of individual changes to a course, and must ensure that all changes are approved through the appropriate process, and clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. Revalidation or re-approval of an existing course outside of the standard cycle should be initiated where substantial curriculum change is required covering several major modifications at once. This may occur, for example, in the case of changing professional or industry requirements, or where the addition of a significant number of core modules results in a change to the course learning outcomes. The BIMM ADQA team can advise teams on whether changes proposed may trigger re-approval/re-validation.

Process

It is important that staff and students are consulted regarding all modifications. Therefore, for all three modification types, changes should be brought to the relevant Board of Studies (BoS) for consultation before seeking approval internally or externally.

The approval process is outlined in the table below:*

Outline of the modifications approval process:

Process	Minor Change	Major Change	Revalidation
<i>Consultation</i>	External examiner; Course Team; Students (via BoS); ADQA	External examiner; Students (BoS); Other relevant stakeholders (Industry Advisory Panel or IAP); Course Team; ADQA	See BIMM Institute policy on approval: http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/ See also relevant university policies
<i>Documentation Required</i>	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner	
<i>Approval by</i>	Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC) and then final approval from relevant university committee	LTEC and then final approval from relevant university committee	
<i>Reported to</i>	Academic Board and relevant university committee	Academic Board and relevant university committee	

To make deadlines for the appropriate university partner committee, changes may be approved by Chair's Action on behalf of LTEC and/or Academic Board.

*Please note that course teams need to consult with ADQA on the timing of proposals for modification as there are strict rules set by our university partners on when modifications can be proposed and considered.

Appendix 2: University of West London Validated Course and Module Modifications Procedure

Context

At BIMM Institute Higher Education (HE) courses we run are validated by one of our university partners. This procedure is designed for validated provision.

Validated provision is contracted with our university partners and, as part of this contract, we submit our course proposals to a formal validation or approval process with the relevant university. UWL validated courses are periodically reviewed and re-approved on a 5-year cycle. This means that any significant changes to validated provision must be approved by UWL (to ensure we do not breach our contractual agreement), as well as having been consulted on and approved at BIMM Institute to ensure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are maintained for our students.

Types of modification

There are four modification types covered by this process as follows:

1. **Annual Updating:** revising curriculum content to ensure currency; updating reading lists, staffing information and assessment guidance, etc.
2. **Name change:** change of module title only.
3. **Minor Modifications:** significant changes to curriculum content; other changes having no impact on course or module learning outcomes or assessment specification.
4. **Major Modifications:** changes to module aims and learning outcomes; changes to module assessment strategy; changes to pre- or co-requisite modules; extending the use of an existing module to another existing course; approval of new modules for inclusion in or removal of existing modules from an existing course; change of course title or exit award/s available; course learning outcomes; changes to teaching, learning and assessment across the course; curriculum structure; criteria for admission; variation from the relevant BIMM and/or university regulations.
Please note that many of the major modifications listed above will have implications for the Key Information Set (KIS) return.

College course teams should be mindful of the cumulative effect of a significant number of individual changes to a course, and must ensure that all changes are approved through the appropriate process, and clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. Revalidation or re-approval of an existing course outside of the standard cycle should be initiated where substantial curriculum change is required covering several major modifications at once. This may occur, for example, in the case of changing professional or industry requirements, or where the addition of a significant number of core modules results in a change to the course learning outcomes.

The BIMM Academic Development and Quality Assurance (ADQA) team can advise on whether proposed changes may trigger re-approval/re-validation.

Process

It is important that staff and students are consulted regarding all modifications. Therefore, for all three modification types, changes should be brought to the relevant Board of Studies (BoS) for consultation before seeking approval internally and/or externally.

The approval process is outlined in the table below:*

Outline of the modifications approval process:

Process	Annual Updating	Name Change / Minor Change	Major Change	Revalidation
<i>Consultation</i>	Staff and students	External Examiner; Course Team; Students (via BoS); ADQA	External Examiner; Students (via BoS); Other relevant stakeholders (e.g. Industry Advisory Panel); Course Team; ADQA	See BIMM Institute policy on approval: http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/ See also relevant university policies
<i>Documentation Required</i>	Revised module guide marked up in track changes	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner	
<i>Approval by</i>	Board of Studies	LTEC and then final approval from relevant university committee	LTEC; External Examiner; Final approval from relevant university committee	
<i>Reported to</i>	Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee LTEC	Academic Board and relevant university committee	Academic Board: Relevant university committee	

To make deadlines for the appropriate university partner committee, changes may be approved by Chair's Action on behalf of LTEC and/or Academic Board.

*Please note that course teams need to consult with ADQA on the timing of proposals for modification as there are strict rules set by our university partners on when modifications can be proposed and considered.

Appendix 3: Dublin Institute of Technology Validated Course & Module Modifications Procedure

Context

At BIMM Institute the majority of Higher Education (HE) courses we run are validated by one of our university partners, with the exception of a small amount of franchised provision. This procedure is designed for validated provision and staff should refer to the relevant awarding universities own procedures for policy and process in regard to franchised awards.

Validated provision is contracted with our university partners and, as part of this contract, we submit our course proposals to a formal validation or approval process with the relevant university. DIT validated courses are periodically reviewed and re-approved on a 5-year cycle. This means that any significant changes to validated provision must be approved by DIT (to ensure we do not breach our contractual agreement), as well as having been consulted on and approved at BIMM Institute to ensure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are maintained for our students.

Types of modification

There are three modification types covered by this process as follows:

1. **Annual Updating:** revising curriculum content to ensure currency; updating reading lists, course-notes, staffing information and assessment overview and content, etc.; other changes having no impact on module learning outcomes or assessment specification.
2. **Module Modifications:** changes to Module title (requires new Module code): Module aims and learning outcomes; Module assessment structure and weighting; Module ECTS credits.
3. **Programme Modifications** changes to pre- or co-requisite modules; extending the use of an existing module to another existing course; approval of new modules for inclusion in or removal of existing modules from an existing course; change of course title or exit award/s available; course learning outcomes; changes to teaching, learning and assessment across the course; curriculum structure; criteria for admission; variation from the relevant BIMM and/or university regulations.

College course teams should be mindful of the cumulative effect of a significant number of individual changes to a course, and must ensure that all changes are approved through the appropriate process, and clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. Revalidation or re-approval of an existing course outside of the standard cycle should be initiated where substantial curriculum change is required covering several major modifications at once. This may occur, for example, in the case of changing professional or industry requirements, or where the addition of a significant number of compulsory modules results in a change to the course learning outcomes.

The BIMM Academic Development and Quality Assurance (ADQA) team can advise on whether proposed changes may trigger re-approval/re-validation.

Process

It is important that staff and students are consulted regarding all modifications. Therefore, for all three modification types, changes should be brought to the relevant Board of Studies (BoS) for consultation before seeking approval internally and/or externally.

The approval process is outlined in the table below:*

Outline of the modifications approval process:

Process	Annual Updating	Module Change	Program Change	Revalidation
<i>Consultation</i>	Staff and students	External Examiner; Course Team; Students (via Programme Committee); ADQA	External Examiner; Students (via Programme Committee); Other relevant stakeholders (e.g. Industry Advisory Panel); Course Team; ADQA	See BIMM Institute policy on approval: http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/ See also relevant university policies
<i>Documentation Required</i>	Revised module guide marked up in track changes	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner (M2 doc)	Revised course documentation plus documents required by university partner (M1&M2 docs)	
<i>Approval by</i>	Programme Committee	LTEC and then final approval from relevant university committee	LTEC; External Examiner; Final approval from relevant university committee	
<i>Reported to</i>	Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC)	Academic Board, Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC)	Academic Board; Relevant university committee	

*Please note that course teams need to consult with ADQA on the timing of proposals for modification as there are strict rules set by our university partners on when modifications can be proposed and considered.