

**MANUAL OF ACADEMIC REGULATIONS  
AND PROCEDURES 2023-24**

**COURSE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT & APPROVAL**

**(APPLICABLE FROM OCTOBER 2023)**

Academic Quality, Standards and Conduct

Student and Education Services

MARP 2023-24

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**MARP 2023-24**  
**COURSE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL**

**CD 1 COURSE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

**CD 1.1 Overview**

CD 1.1.1 The University takes a strategic approach to programme design, development and approval in order to ensure that its portfolio of provision reflects institutional strategic priorities and goals. The academic planning and resource allocation process requires departments to consider their programme provision in terms of the Strategic Plan and Faculty academic strategies. The Library and Professional Services are then required to ensure that their forward planning and priorities can properly support agreed academic priorities.

CD 1.1.2 Course design and development is primarily undertaken by staff within academic departments (with external input) because it is recognised that this is where expert knowledge about academic provision in specific subject areas resides.

CD 1.1.3 However, staff in academic departments are encouraged to discuss any issues of principle or concern, or any particularly innovative or complex proposals, with Faculty Associate Deans, Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Managers and/or members of the Academic Quality, Standards and Conduct (AQSC) team as early as possible in the design and development process.

CD 1.1.4 If necessary, for example where a proposed degree programme is outwith the award/ programme criteria approved by Senate (see The Portfolio of Degree Awards, PA 3), approval in principle for a programme can be sought from the appropriate committee(s) early in the process, before the proposal is fully worked up for consideration by departmental or the faculty committees responsible for oversight. This will avoid staff spending time developing proposals that might not be granted approval. AQSC will consult the University Academic Dean and/or the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) as appropriate. Proposals may be modified or developed further following such discussions. Advice about seeking approval in principle is available from AQSC.

**CD 1.2 Design and development process**

CD 1.2.1 Where a new degree award (or other academic qualification) is proposed, Senate approval for this must be obtained. AQSC can advise departments on whether Senate approval is needed and also on the process, sequence and timing.

CD 1.2.2 Departments are required to engage with external advisors (such as External Examiners, PSRBs and employers) in the design and development of new and revised programmes and, where appropriate (if significant change is involved), individual modules. Where a proposed new or revised programme is intended for accreditation by a PSRB, early engagement must be made with the relevant body to meet its requirements.

CD 1.2.3 Inputs are also required from a range of other individuals not directly involved with delivering the proposed programme in order to secure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. These include:

- (a) academic staff from other departments in a faculty, including via faculty committees;
  - (b) student representatives;
  - (c) the Library and Information Systems Services;
  - (d) staff in Communications and Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and International Development, AQSC, the Student Registry, the Finance Office, and Facilities.
- CD 1.2.4 Departments are expected to consider proposals for new or revised programmes and modules against the criteria approved by Senate (see The Portfolio of Degree Awards, PA 3). They should also consider the following specific areas at the design and development stage taking account of a potentially diverse student body:
- (a) the timeline for the planned introduction of a new programme and or major revisions to programmes and modules, taking into account the CMA requirements as outlined in the [University's Guidance](#).
  - (b) the viability of the proposed new/revised programme or module;
  - (c) the programme aims, intended learning outcomes and their assessment;
  - (d) appropriate departmental, faculty, institutional and external reference points;
  - (e) requirements around level and naming of awards, credit allocation, use of reference points;
  - (f) whether the proposed structure, content and learning and teaching methods can deliver the educational aims and learning outcomes and are appropriate for the stage and level of the programme;
  - (g) whether the assessment scheme and individual tasks are capable of measuring student achievement against the learning outcomes;
  - (h) for a programme, whether there are any modules where failure should not be condoned because otherwise programme learning outcomes would not be met;
  - (i) how the achievement of learning outcomes can best be facilitated, through for example, learning and teaching methods, student workload, the volume and nature of assessment, progression through the different stages of programme;
  - (j) the coherency of programmes, including assessment and the extent to which any proposed new or revised module(s) is/are complementary to and consistent with other elements of the programme;
  - (k) the content and structure of individual contributory modules to ensure they are appropriate for the place they occupy in the programme structure (i.e. that they are appropriate for Part I, Part II, first term of Masters etc.) and that students are being assessed according to appropriate criteria;

- (l) employability and any PSRB requirements;
- (m) whether entry standards set are at an appropriate level to ensure applicants have an appropriate academic background (e.g. subject knowledge, language competence, study skills) and will be able to cope with the demands of the degree programme to which they are being admitted;
- (n) whether the learning outcomes and threshold standards set at the end of each stage of a programme define the minimum threshold of achievement to ensure that students will be able to continue onto the next level of study and to identify those students who may be at risk and who may need additional/different support at the next level;
- (o) the need to have positively defined intended learning outcomes for exit qualifications, e.g. PGDip/PGCert in relation to taught Masters programmes.

**CD 1.3 Guidelines on degree titles for combined honours programmes and specialist pathways**

CD 1.3.1 In determining degree titles where more than one subject is being studied, the following convention shall be applied:

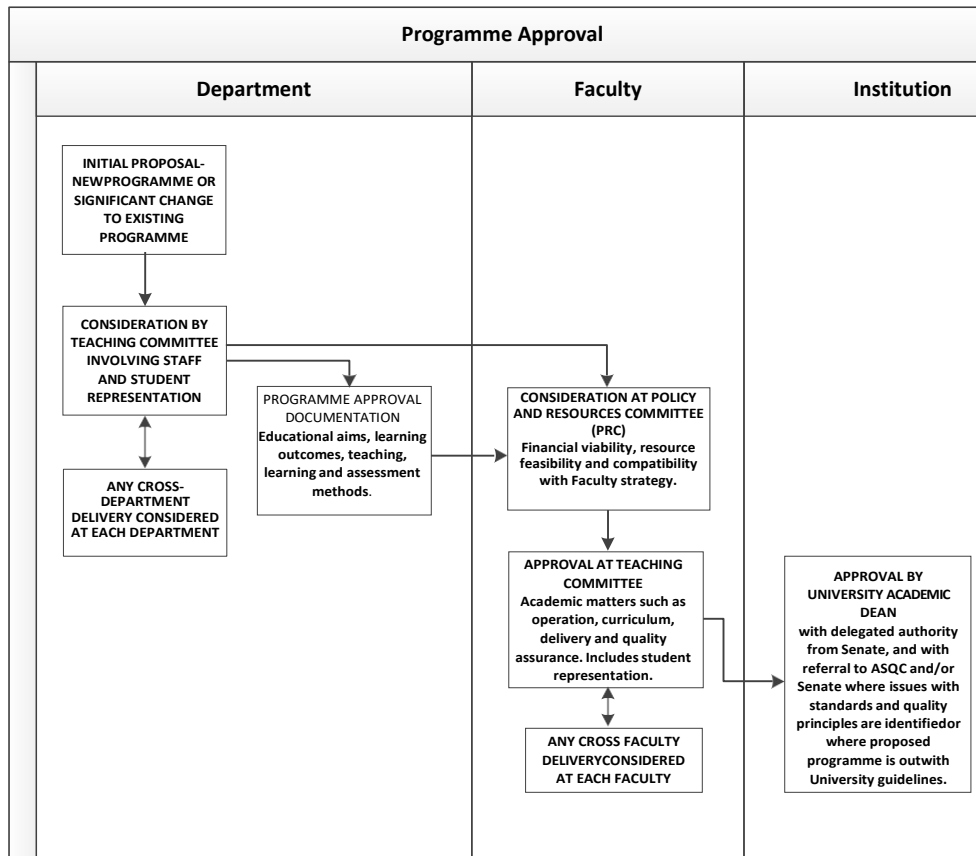
- (a) 'A and B', where there is an approximately equal balance between two subjects;
- (b) 'A, B and C', where there is an approximately equal balance between three subjects;
- (c) 'A with B' for a major/minor combination where the minor component accounts for at least a quarter of the programme.

CD 1.3.2 PSRB requirements may lead to variations to degree titles – e.g. a 5/8, 3/8 split for an 'and' degree where the accredited subject is more heavily weighted to include compulsory placement elements.

CD 1.3.3 'Pathway programmes' are those in which students take a particular specialism within a given subject (in contrast to 'and' and 'with' programmes where two different subjects are combined). The specialism should be indicated in brackets following the subject, e.g. LLB (Hons) Law (International Law). Specialist modules should normally constitute at least 60 credits across Part II of the programme (i.e. 60/240 = one-quarter).

## CD 2 COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS (NEW OR REVISED PROGRAMMES AND MODULES)

### CD 2.1 Overview



CD 2.1.1 Module approval follows a slightly shorter process than for programme approval. The Departmental process is the same, following which the proposal goes straight to Stage 2 of the faculty process and the module is formally approved at faculty level. However, if there are significant resource issues or design complexities, then the responsible faculty committee may consult the Faculty Policy and Resources Committee (PRC), AQSC and/or the University Academic Dean before taking a decision on approval.

CD 2.1.2 All proposals for new awards, new programmes and modules, and revisions to existing programmes or modules must be considered and formally approved through procedures, agreed by the Senate, that involve appropriately constituted committees or designated officers at departmental, faculty and institutional levels. At all stages of the approval process, committees should consider whether the key areas set out in CD 1.2.4 have been addressed in the design and development process.

CD 2.1.3 If a proposal for a new or revised programme of study will lead to a proposed new academic qualification (i.e. degree, diploma, certificate or other credit-bearing award) not already approved by Senate (see The Portfolio of Degree Awards, PA 3), then Senate approval must be obtained for the new qualification as part of the programme approval process.

CD 2.1.4 All proposed new and amended programmes (and contributory modules) leading to degrees, diplomas, certificates and other awards of the University have to be approved at departmental and faculty level. However, the following must, in addition, be finally approved at institutional level (by the University body or officer with delegated authority from Senate):

- proposals for new programmes;
- the laying down of existing programmes;
- Major changes (as defined in the University's [Guidance](#) on revisions to programmes and modules) to existing programmes.

Proposals for Minor changes to existing programmes, and for new or revised modules, can be finally approved at faculty level (on the recommendation of relevant departmental teaching committees) save that where any proposed change to a module takes it outside the University's standard assessment regulations, this requires institutional-level approval from the University body of officer with delegated authority from Senate in addition.

CD 2.1.5 In order to ensure that proposals can be considered, discussed and approved in a timely and orderly manner an annual timetable of meetings (including deadlines for receipt of agenda papers) for faculty and institutional level committees involved in the course validation process will be agreed, published and observed.

CD 2.1.6 All proposals must be submitted in the approved format using the appropriate template available from AQSC or from the relevant Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager.

## **CD 2.2 Approval process**

### **Departmental approval process**

CD 2.2.1 Departments are expected to have committee(s) (either teaching committees that include student representatives or separate staff-student committees) at which proposals for new and substantially revised programmes/modules are formally discussed. It is expected that students will be encouraged to engage fully in this process and that their views are taken into account. The outcome of departmental meetings will be formally recorded and communicated to the relevant faculty committees when the proposal documentation goes forward for approval.

CD 2.2.2 Where a new programme involves collaboration between more than one department, the proposal must be considered by all relevant departmental committees.

### **Faculty approval**

CD 2.2.3 The membership of faculty committees responsible for approval shall be in accordance with the relevant Faculty constitution but should include student representative(s).

CD 2.2.4 At the initial approval stage for new programmes (i.e. Stage 1) Faculty Policy and Resources Committees or officers designated by the Faculty Dean must assess the

viability of the proposed programme before the proposal moves on to the academic approval stage (i.e. Stage 2) of the process.

- CD 2.2.5 Once proposals have been approved by the originating department(s), they should be considered by the relevant faculty committees which will take account of comparable provision in other departments within the faculty, and of faculty strategic priorities and academic development plans as well as ensuring that the proposed programme and/or modules meet University requirements and criteria.
- CD 2.2.6 Where a new programme involves collaboration between departments from more than one faculty, the proposal must be considered by all relevant faculty committees.
- CD 2.2.7 Faculties and departments have the authority to review and make minor revisions to individual modules within programmes, using agreed criteria and institutional procedures.
- CD 2.2.8 Programme reapproval takes place for each department according to an agreed schedule aligned to Strategic Learning and Teaching Reviews, and managed through the relevant faculty committee. For the Regional Teaching Partnerships, programmes are validated for a specific number of years (usually 5-6 years), before they must be formally revalidated.

### **Institutional approval**

- CD 2.2.9 Detailed consideration at institutional level of programme and module proposals already approved at departmental and faculty level is only necessary where there are issues of principle, major concerns about academic standards and quality, or if commendable innovative practice is identified for possible dissemination across the University.
- CD 2.2.10 A report shall be made to Senate of all/new awards, programmes and modules that have been approved.

### **Approval of non-standard programmes**

- CD 2.2.11 Proposals for non-standard programmes that are tailored for individual students must be considered and approved in accordance with agreed procedures. Advice about the procedures is available from the relevant Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager and/or AQSC.

### **CD 2.3 Information specific to the approval process for revisions to existing programmes and modules**

#### **Definitions**

- CD 2.3.1 A revision is defined as a change or changes made to a particular programme or programmes or to a particular module or modules. For procedural purposes, revisions to programmes and modules are categorised as 'minor' or 'major'. Revisions may be made for a variety of reasons, including:
  - (a) in response to student or external examiner feedback;
  - (b) in response to developments in the subject area;



- (c) in response to a non-negotiable requirement of a PSRB;
  - (d) in response to practical issues, such as staff changes or changes to student numbers.
- CD 2.3.2 A **major revision** involves material changes that affect a programme. A major revision may be either a direct change to a programme and/or significant changes to a module or modules which significantly alter a programme and its delivery, for example, substantive revisions to educational aims, intended learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, academic level, changes to programme structure. The University's [Guidance](#) on revisions to programmes and modules contains examples of major revisions.
- CD 2.3.3 A **minor revision** to a programme or module involves a change to the subject matter, method of delivery, or learning, teaching and assessment strategy that: (i) does not affect the programme learning outcomes; (ii) has no significant resources implications; and (iii) is limited to change involving no more than 25% of the programme credits. Some apparently minor revisions may raise broader questions which require further information, fuller discussion or consideration as a major revision. A series of incremental minor revisions should also be considered as a major revision so that consideration is given as to whether or not the volume and nature of these changes significantly alters the programme and its delivery. The University's [Guidance](#) on revisions to programmes and modules contains examples of minor revisions.

### Process

- CD 2.3.4 There are three different groups potentially affected by planned revisions to programmes and modules.
- (a) All year groups of students who have already begun the course and are currently registered – **current cohorts**.
  - (b) Prospective students within the current admissions cycle between the time the offer of a place is made and registration is completed – **current applicants**.
  - (c) Prospective students who may be interested in applying to Lancaster and who may look at public information, in particular publicity material – **potential applicants**.
- CD 2.3.5 In making revisions, the University has a responsibility to take into consideration the impact on the first two of the three groups as defined above, and a responsibility to ensure the accuracy of information provided to the third group. The level of consultation and action required is different for each group.

### Current cohorts

- CD 2.3.6 The University has a responsibility to ensure current cohorts of students are not adversely affected by changes to its programmes and modules. Revisions affecting current cohorts of students require careful consideration and consultation because: (i) it could be seen to compromise the student experience and serve as grounds for a student to complain, appeal or take legal action against the University; and, (ii) by nature of the definition of current cohorts, these revisions could impact more than one individual cohort (year group) of students. For example, a change to a core level 6

module will affect current level 4 and level 5 cohorts; a change to a level 5 optional module made after module enrolment will affect students within the current level 4 cohort who have selected this module.

CD 2.3.7 It may be necessary to amend assessment regulations, modules or programmes over the course of a student's registration in order to meet the requirements of a PSRB for professional accreditation or registration. Such changes will be notified in advance to current cohorts of students.

CD 2.3.8 **Note: applicable to students who registered before the 2022-23 academic year**  
**Major revisions** should not normally apply to current cohorts of students. In exceptional circumstances, they may be made where the revisions are considered to be beneficial to students or are due to circumstances outside the University's control that it could not plan for. They should be dealt with as outlined below. Major revisions require consultation with all current cohorts (year groups) potentially affected by the revision, and should be agreed by a departmental meeting or other suitable discussion forum involving student representatives. If 10% or more of all the students submit in writing, within agreed timescales, reasonable objections then the revision can only apply to the next intake of students. The date of planned implementation and therefore the current cohorts (year groups) affected should be made clear in the proposal documentation.

**Note: CD 2.3.8A – CD2.3.8H only applies to students registered from the 2022-23 academic year onwards**

CD 2.3.8A Major revisions should not normally apply to current cohorts of students. In exceptional circumstances, they may be made where the revisions are considered to be beneficial to students or are necessary due to circumstances outside the University's control.

CD 2.3.8B Where a department proposes to make a major revision that will apply to current cohorts, it shall discuss this matter in a departmental meeting at which student representation is present. This meeting shall decide whether, in principle, to make this change.

CD 2.3.8C Where the relevant department meeting approves in principle the change, the department shall send a written communication to all current students affected by this change. This communication shall set out the rationale for the change and detail expressly what the change proposed is.

CD 2.3.8D After sending the written communication, departments should organise a consultation exercise whereby affected students can raise questions about this proposal (e.g. a departmental open' meeting, or appointments with relevant academic staff).

CD 2.3.8E If, after that consultation exercise, the department still wishes to proceed with the change they shall write to students indicating that students who disagree with the proposal have no less than seven calendar days to raise a reasoned objection by writing to a nominated person.

CD 2.3.8F The department shall give due consideration to these objections, taking advice from the University Academic Dean (or nominee) and/or the Head of Academic Quality, Standards and Conduct where appropriate.

- CD 2.3.8G If the department still wishes to proceed, the process set out in CD 2.3.13 shall be followed, with the relevant Faculty and Institutional bodies being given a summary of any objections raised.
- CD 2.3.8H Where the change is approved, a student who continues to object to the change shall be given the following options:
- (a) to study the module as changed;
  - (b) where the module change is for only the coming academic year, to intercalate for that year and resume studies the following year;
  - (c) to change to an alternative module (although this may not be possible where the change is to a core);
  - (d) to change to an alternative programme (where possible); or
  - (e) to withdraw from Lancaster University and continue their studies at another Higher Educational Institution, where that institution agrees to the transfer.
- CD 2.3.9 **Minor revisions** affecting current cohorts of students may only be made where they are: (i) non-material; or (ii) beneficial to students; or (iii) necessary due to circumstances outside the University's control that it could not plan for. They should be dealt with as outlined below. Minor revisions should be considered and agreed by a departmental meeting or other suitable discussion forum involving student representatives. Regardless of their nature all such changes should be reported to faculty committees. The date of planned implementation and therefore the current cohorts (year groups) affected should be made clear in the proposal documentation.

#### Current applicants

- CD 2.3.10 When making **major revisions** once the admissions cycle has begun, applicants must also be carefully considered. Individuals apply to the University on the basis of the information available to them at the time of application e.g. in prospectus and website entries, on the UCAS website, and during visits to the University. Current applicants must be informed, at the earliest opportunity, of certain specified major revisions to a programme and/or its modules made after the point of application (including changes made in order to meet the requirements of a PSRB for professional accreditation or registration which are the equivalent of a major revision). For information on the types of revisions which applicants must be informed of, see the [separate guidance](#) on definitions and processes for programme and module revisions. Where applicable, applicants should be advised of the options available in the circumstances (including the chance for individuals to change their minds about a place on the programme). Once the admissions cycle is underway admissions should be consulted about planned revisions to programmes as part of the approval process (e.g. re-naming a programme mid-recruitment cycle is problematic).

#### Potential applicants

- CD 2.3.11 When preparing any public information, the University's responsibility towards potential applicants should be borne in mind, in particular for publicity material such as the prospectus and website entries. Attention should be paid to the accuracy of this

information, particularly where related to: (i) module choice (for example, it is advised to focus on the range and likely areas of option modules, rather than on specific offerings, especially those dependent on a single member of staff); and (ii) methods of assessment (e.g. the balance between open and closed assessments). Appropriate disclaimers can be used in publicity material however, the use of disclaimers does not, in itself, provide protection against complaints, appeals or legal action.

- CD 2.3.12 Following any revisions to programmes or modules and in particular following major revisions, public information, including all publicity material, should be reviewed by departments, in liaison where necessary with Communications and Marketing.

### **Approval procedures for major and minor revisions**

- CD 2.3.13 All **major revisions** to programmes must be considered and approved by departmental and faculty committees. In addition, some major revisions must be approved at institutional level by the officer or body with delegated authority from the Senate. The University's [Guidance](#) on revisions to programmes and modules indicates those revisions which must be approved at institutional level.
- CD 2.3.14 All **minor revisions** to programmes and modules must be approved by departmental committees. Some minor revisions should be reported to faculty committees. The University's [Guidance](#) on revisions to programmes and modules indicates those revisions which must be reported to faculty committees.
- CD 2.3.15 The process for the annual monitoring of teaching (Annual Programme Review) provides an opportunity for departments to systematically review the overall coherence of past and planned revisions to modules and programmes.
- CD 2.3.16 Where a Part I module is to be made dormant or closed, this should be redirected to the University Academic Dean for confirmation following faculty approval. This additional step is in recognition of the possible unintended impact to other provision across the University at Part I.

### **CD 2.4 Outcome of the approval process**

- CD 2.4.1 After each stage of the approval process it is expected that committee decisions will be recorded in the relevant committee minutes and communicated to staff and students. It will be the responsibility of the appropriate committee secretary for ensuring that this happens. Committee minutes should, wherever possible, be posted on appropriate web pages.
- CD 2.4.2 Once the approval process for new or revised programmes or modules has been completed, details must be recorded in the LUSI course database and become part of the University's definitive programme record. This record is then used for a variety of academic and student administration purposes. The Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Managers have formal responsibility for keeping the programme record up to date in LUSI as new and revised programmes and modules are approved. AQSC is responsible for monitoring the accuracy of the record in LUSI. The programme information in LUSI can then be accessed via a variety of reports and views, one of which is the up-to-date Programme Specification which must incorporate all approved revisions.

CD 2.4.3 The LUSI course database is the University's definitive programme record and includes key information about every approved qualification, programme and module (and details of any subsequent changes). It must be kept up to date given that all students registered with Lancaster are assigned to a programme of study in LUSI, and all programmes recorded in LUSI are assigned to a "home" academic department, and this record underpins programme delivery and many associated administrative processes.

## **CD 2.5 Programme closure and suspension**

CD 2.5.1 Departments may propose the closure of programmes for a variety of different reasons. Programme closure requires formal faculty and institutional approval (from the body or officer with delegated authority from Senate to approve the laying down of programmes). Where programme closure is agreed, appropriate arrangements must be put in place to protect the needs of any students who remain registered on the programme as it is taught out, to ensure that they can complete their programme with minimum possible disruption or adverse impact. Consideration must also be given to any applicants to whom an offer of admission has been made before closure was proposed.

CD 2.5.2 Departments considering the closure or temporary suspension of programmes should consult the guidance provided in the [Course Approval Process for the Discontinuation of Existing Programmes](#) and complete the [templates provided](#).

CD 2.5.3 For collaborative programmes at the International Teaching Partnerships and Regional Teaching Partnerships, the Memoranda of Agreements include sections on closure and arrangements for the teaching out of programmes.