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# **CAP Guidance 7 - School Course Approval / Reapproval and Scrutiny Events**

The purpose of a course approval is to ensure the course meets University requirements and is underpinned by external expectations for high quality courses.

Approvals will usually have an External Adviser (EA1) who advises the course team throughout the period of writing, designing the curriculum and preparing documentation, and a Panel Member (EA2) who reviews final documentation for the approval and attends and engages with the approval event. If a third External Adviser is required, this will be agreed at the preliminary meeting led by the Academic Quality Unit Officer. Before selecting External Advisers, you will need to understand the criteria that is used. This can be accessed in the [Guidance on choosing Academic External Advisers and Panel Members](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/CAPGuidance2ExternalAdvisersAndPanelMembers.docx) .

## **External Regulatory Requirements**

Becoming familiar with the Office for Students regulatory requirements will help you understand the current requirements for Higher Education courses and hence expectations for course design and approval. The OfS Quality and Standards conditions are summarised below but can be found in full [here](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/084f719f-5344-4717-a71b-a7ea00b9f53f/quality-and-standards-conditions.pdf).

## **OfS Conditions of Registration**

## **B1 and B2 are ensuring students receive a high-quality academic experience**

B1: Each higher education course must be:

* **up-to-date**;
* provide **educational challenge**;
* **coherent**;
* **effectively delivered**; and
* require students to **develop relevant skills**.

B2: The provider must ensure:

* **Resources and support** to ensure a student receives a high-quality academic experience and succeed in and beyond higher education;
* **effective engagement with students** to ensure a high-quality academic experience for those students; and those students succeed in and beyond higher education.

## **B4 and B5 are ensuring effective assessment and sector-recognised standards**

B4: The provider must ensure that:

* students are **assessed effectively**;
* each assessment is **valid and reliable**;
* academic regulations are designed to ensure that **relevant awards are credible**;
* effective **assessment of technical proficiency in the English language** in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course;

B5: The provider must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students:

* any standards set appropriately reflect any **applicable sector-recognised standards**; and
* awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any **applicable sector-recognised standards**.

## **Applicable sector recognised standards are:**

* [OfS sector recognised standards](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/53821cbf-5779-4380-bf2a-aa8f5c53ecd4/sector-recognised-standards.pdf) (drawn from FHEQ)
  + Part A: Threshold standards for qualifications at all levels
  + Part B: Classification descriptors for Level 6 bachelors’ degrees
* PSRB standards
* [Subject benchmark statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements)
* [Qualification characteristic statements](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/characteristics-statements#:~:text=Characteristics%20Statements%20describe%20the%20distinctive,not%20include%20subject%20level%20detail.)
* [UK Quality Code](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code)
* [Credit frameworks](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england)

## **Course Approval Internal Scrutiny Events**

The purpose of the School course approval / reapproval scrutiny event is to ensure that the documentation and information for the approval event is complete and of high quality. The following is intended as guidance which sets out good practice related to scrutiny ahead of a course approval / reapproval and should be adapted to the type of course, structure of the School and specific external or internal requirements, as appropriate.

* The course approval scrutiny event should be planned around 8 working weeks ahead of the Course approval. This will be scheduled in the Course approval planner agreed at the preliminary meeting and sent by the Quality Officer overseeing the approval.
* The scrutiny event may need between 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on the volume of documentation being considered.
* Course teams should aim for documentation to be complete and in its final draft for School scrutiny at least one week in advance of the scrutiny date.
* Quality Coordinators with Administrators should facilitate the scrutiny event, hold all documents in a shared folder [OneDrive / SharePoint] and share these with attendees around one week prior to scrutiny.

## **Suggested Members of a School scrutiny event:**

* Quality Coordinator (Chair)
* Quality Administrator (noting actions for circulation and amending documents)

Deputy Head of School (if the course is ‘higher risk’ e.g., where the course is new, complex, involves PSRBs or partners etc. or has had poor outcomes).

* Head of Department
* Course Leader
* Module Leaders (as appropriate)
* College Director LTQE (if the course is ‘higher risk’ or as requested by the Quality Coordinator / course team / SMT)
* Head of Collaborative Programmes (for collaborative provision with partners)
* Relevant Partner HE Manager (for collaborative provision, made aware of the scrutiny event and invited to attend)
* Member of another School. Where appropriate and available, it is suggested that a member from another School with relevant experience is invited to support the course team in their scrutiny event. For example, they may have experience of PSRB’s, placements, online / blended delivery (College Directors can support teams in identifying members from another School)
* In the interests of succession planning and staff development, Schools may wish to include one further member of staff to shadow the scrutiny process and so learn from the experience.

## **Documentation for School Scrutiny event:**

The [course approval process](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/CourseApprovalProcess.pdf) identifies documentation required for approval events, these may vary depending on the course and will be listed in the Course approval planner agreed at the preliminary meeting. The Quality Coordinator, with administrator, should confirm documents for scrutiny one week in advance.

Typically, for scrutiny these would include those **in bold** below:

* **Course Approval Briefing Paper** (see CAP Form 2 - Briefing Paper for Course Approval)
* Completed Provision of Information for Prospective Students template as supplied to APPG (Academic Planning and Portfolio Group), updated if necessary.
* Evidence of discussion and agreement of Variations to Standard Regulations (where relevant)
* **Programme Specification/Award Map**
* **Module Specifications**
* **Draft Course Handbook**
* Staff CVs (for all staff who will be teaching on the course)
* Registered Lecturer application forms for all partner staff teaching on the course
* Resource statement completed by Head of School (or Principal/Chief Executive for collaborative courses)
* **Report from External Adviser 1**, plus any reports or comments from employer external advisers, placement providers, students/graduates, etc., regarding the proposal.
* **Where WBL or placements: WBL/Placement Audit, guidance for students, guidance for mentors/employers**
* Other – as identified in the course preliminary approval meeting (e.g., management of course, cross-moderation arrangements for multiple partner/franchise courses, online materials, operational handbooks for International provision).

## **Scrutiny process**

* To prevent scrutiny being overburdensome and to ensure all documentation has an appropriate level of scrutiny each item should be allocated to a member of the school scrutiny event.
* Scrutineers should be briefed ahead of the event, and it is recommended that they add comments or use track changes on the documents provided in the shared folder.

## **Suggested allocation of documentation**

\*Note that the member from another School should be allocated according to their areas of expertise and not to all documents identified.

\*\*Quality Coordinators to be allocated depending on allocation for other members and in their areas of expertise.

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| Document | Scrutineer |
| **Quality Administrators** should check documentation in advance to ensure they are on the most recent templates and formatting is consistent | |
| **Course Approval Briefing Paper** | - Head of Department |
| **Programme Specification/Award Map** | - Head of Department  - College Director / Deputy Head of School  - Head of Collaborative Programmes for collaborative courses  [For new approvals or high-risk courses Director of Quality and Education Development should view the Programme Specification and Award Map ahead of the approval event] |
| **Module Specifications** | - Member from another School\*  - Other Module Leaders from the course  - Quality Coordinator\*\*  - College Director (if appropriate) |
| **Draft Course Handbook** | - Member from another School\*  - Quality Coordinator\*\*  Head of Collaborative Programmes for collaborative courses |
| **Report from External Adviser 1** | All |
| **Where WBL or placements: WBL/Placement Audit, guidance for students, guidance for mentors/employers** | - Member from another School\*  - Head of Department / Deputy Head of School |

## **Example lines of questioning based on consideration of documents**

* Are the [learning outcomes](https://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/LearningOutcomesGuide-PrinciplesforCourseDesign.pdf) for the programme and modules, and the assessment tasks at the right level, AND do they assess appropriate knowledge, attribute and skill development?
* Does the course reflect the [University curriculum design principles](http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/CurriculumDesignPolicy.pdf), and how is the team developing the University Graduate Attributes?
* Is the course coherent and up to date?
* Is there clarity on how the course will be taught, and what is expected of students in terms of weekly contact time, directed and independent learning?
* Is the assessment strategy aligned with the learning outcomes, balanced and progressive across modules and levels?
* Are assessments designed as [low-stakes authentic assessment that promotes academic integrity](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/how-design-lowstakes-authentic-assessment-promotes-academic-integrity)?
* Are the assessment regulations standard or are there any additional/different requirements and if so, what is the rationale and have they been agreed?
* Are there questions arising from the Resource Statement, particularly around staffing and learning resources for collaborative provision?
* Are the placement/WBL arrangements appropriate, how will they be managed and is the guidance for students and employers clear about relative roles and responsibilities? Where practice is assessed, exploration of how and by whom, and how mentors/assessors in practice settings are prepared for their role [questions arising from the completed Placement/WBL Audit].