

**Proposal to pilot a streamlined programme approval process**

**Summary**

This paper sets out a proposal to a pilot of a streamlined programme approval process for a limited number of approvals during 2015/16. This is in response to feedback from School colleagues that the current process requires a long lead in time and for new programme development and also results in some duplication of scrutiny of proposals.

The pilot would consider whether School and University consideration of proposals can be combined at each stage of the approval process, whilst maintaining sufficient scrutiny and University oversight of the approval of new programmes.

**Recommended Action:**

Education & Student Committee is asked to **consider** the proposal

## **Streamlined programme approval process pilot**

### **Context**

The current process for programme approval has operated since 2011-12 and comprises two stages, each with a distinct purpose as set out in the Programme Approval Framework in Appendix 1. At each Stage, the School's Programme Approval and Review Committee (PARC) (with delegated authority from Board of Studies) is responsible for providing initial peer scrutiny of proposals and ensuring their quality and completeness. Following this, the University Programme Approval Committee (UPAC) considers proposals and makes a recommendation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor regarding approval.

The process has been designed to ensure an appropriate balance between local level ownership and scrutiny, external involvement and institutional responsibility for new programme development. The current arrangements are also intended to ensure that City meets the QAA expectations set out in the UK Quality Code and to make explicit the institutional nature of the final decision and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's ultimate responsibility for the approval of programmes.

Academic and professional colleagues involved in programme approval are asked to provide feedback on the operation of the process each year. Their views feed into the annual report to Education and Student Committee on programme development activity in the previous year. Colleagues consistently report that the current number of stages requires a long lead time for new programme development and results in some duplication in the scrutiny of new programme proposals.

Education and Student Committee noted during 2014/15 that a proposal to combine School and University scrutiny at Stage 2 could be submitted to a future meeting for consideration. A formal proposal for a streamlined approval process has been put forward by Cass Business School, which has informed the development of the proposed arrangements for a pilot set out in this paper.

### **Proposed arrangements for the pilot**

It is proposed that School and University level scrutiny at each Stage currently undertaken separately by the PARC and UPAC is combined. The proposed arrangements, which are intended to ensure that sufficient scrutiny of proposals and appropriate institutional oversight of approval decisions is maintained, are set out for each Stage below.

The organisational structure in Cass means that there is more focused support for programme development within that School than in other Schools. The pilot would therefore be limited to Cass to minimise the potential risks of a reduction in the level of scrutiny of proposals included in the pilot. In addition, any proposals involving partnership provision would not be included in light of the additional risks of this type of provision.

### At both Stages

It is currently the responsibility of PARC to ensure the quality of information provided for University-level approval panels. It has been noted in annual reports to Education and Student Committee that paperwork at each University Stage is often incomplete with documents and sign-offs missing.

The combining of the School and University consideration at each Stage in the pilot means that greater weight would need to be attached to the sign-off of the documentation by the Chair of PARC and the Dean. In signing-off the documentation for submission, the PARC Chair and the Dean would be confirming its quality and completeness for consideration by an approval panel. Professional support from within the School and from Student and Academic Services will therefore be important in undertaking appropriate checks prior to submission of documentation. It will also be important for the programme team to engage early and fully with relevant departments in the development of proposals prior to submission.

Proposals submitted to Student and Academic Services that are identified as incomplete would not proceed to consideration by an approval panel until missing documentation and sign-offs were provided.

### At Stage 1

1. Scrutiny and approval by the School Executive Committee of Stage 1 documentation as set out in the Programme Approval Framework (Appendix 1) would continue to be required to ensure appropriate consideration at senior level within the School of the strategic, financial and resource implications of proposals. A statement that the relevant aspects have been considered by the School ExCo would form part of the sign-off of the Stage 1 documentation by the Dean, as this is not currently explicit.
2. A single Stage 1 Approval Panel would fulfil the roles currently undertaken by the School PARC and Stage 1 UPAC. Terms of reference would be as for [Stage 1 UPAC](#).

Proposed membership is as follows:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
- Director of Marketing and Communications
- Director of Learning Enhancement and Development
- A professor or other senior member of academic staff not from the proposing School
- A professor or other senior member of academic staff from the proposing School but external to the proposing department/subject discipline

This is the same as current membership for Stage 1 UPAC, except that one of the School academic members would be from the proposing School.

The Stage 1 Approval Panel would be supported by Student and Academic Services, representatives of which will be in attendance.

3. Stage 1 UPAC currently undertakes its scrutiny based on documentation only on the basis that the documentation should be able to stand alone in articulating the case for approval. It is proposed that during the pilot, relevant School staff are able to attend the meeting to answer questions of the Panel, as this would have previously taken place at the School PARC. This would also address feedback from Schools that concerns of Stage 1 UPAC resulting in conditions or recommendations could have been addressed had School colleagues been present to address queries.

## At Stage 2

1. A single Stage 2 Approval Panel would fulfil the roles currently undertaken by the School PARC and Stage 1 UPAC. Terms of reference would be as for [Stage 2 UPAC](#).

It is proposed that academic members would be drawn from within and outside the School along with student and external representation as follows:

- Associate Dean (Education) or equivalent external to the proposing School (Chair)
- A professor or other senior member of academic staff not from the proposing School
- Two professors or other senior members of academic staff from the proposing School but external to the proposing department/subject discipline
- At least one external panel member with academic expertise in the subject area
- SU President or SU Vice President (Education)
- Representative from Learning Enhancement and Development

The Stage 2 Approval Panel would make a recommendation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on whether or not to approve a proposal and the timescales for completion of any conditions of approval.

The Panel would be supported by Student and Academic Services, representative(s) of which will be in attendance, and who will act as Secretary to the Panel. This will enable consistency of support for Panels, consistency of reporting and outcomes, and support the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in discharging his institutional responsibility for the approval of programmes.

2. External input to the approval process is currently through attendance by an External Advisor at the School PARC Stage 2 meeting enabling external input to be reflected in the final submission to UPAC Stage 2. In addition, the External Advisor submits a report following the PARC meeting, which is included in the University Stage 2 submission along with the response from the School to matters that the External Advisor has raised.

In light of attendance of the External Panel member at the final stage of approval, it is proposed that the requirement for the External to submit a formal report is removed. All members of the Panel would be invited to submit their views on the documentation in advance. This accords with the approach taken at Periodic Review and that taken for validated provision.

### Institutional Oversight

Approval of new programmes would continue to be overseen by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised by Education and Student Committee, which would receive reports on programme development activity on at least an annual basis.

### **Review of pilot arrangements**

It is proposed that the pilot arrangements would run during the remainder 2015/16 and that a report evaluating the operation of the pilot would be received by Education and Student Committee at the end of the year.

Alison Edridge and Laura Tull  
Student and Academic Services

November 2015

## Appendix 1: Stages for the Approval of Provision

(Approved at APPSC on 21 April 2010; updated in August 2011; updated to reflect changes to partnership approval in March 2012)

This table is provided as a guide. New styles of provision and certain types of partnership activity may require the framework to be adapted to ensure that the mechanisms for approval are appropriate – this might involve fewer stages or additional consideration at University-level. In such cases, the emphasis will be on the judgement and expertise of the Programme Director, the School's Associate Dean (Education) and Student and Academic Services at the early stages of programme development. Any adjustments will require the approval of the DVC.

Detailed guidance for the development of proposals and the operation of each stage of the process are provided on the Academic Policies and Regulation website.

Process	New Provision (internal)	New Provision (partnership)	Articulation Agreements and off-site delivery (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>1</sup> )	Franchised and franchised access/feeder provision (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>2</sup> )	Consideration and sign-off
<b>Off plan</b> • Broad outline of financial and educational rationale	If not in School Plan	N/A	N/A	N/A	University approval: VC and DVC
<b>Stage 0</b> • Institutional consideration of a <b>new</b> partner • Compatibility of organisation, strategic and educational fit of proposals • Requirements for site visit, where necessary • Consideration of the specific responsibilities of partner institution and School for the programme	N/A	Yes (if new partner is proposed)	Yes (if new partner is proposed)	Yes (if new partner is proposed)	School approval: Dean of School  University approval: DVC and PVC (International)
<b>Stage 1: School</b> • Programme title, outline proposal and structure • Continued fit with School and University Plan • Market opportunities and risks*	Yes	Yes  Also consider:	Yes  Also consider:	Yes  Also consider:	Consideration: School Ex-Co (consideration of starred documentation only)

<sup>1</sup> Where proposals involve significant amendment to pre-approved provision a full approval will be required.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

Process	New Provision (internal)	New Provision (partnership)	Articulation Agreements and off-site delivery (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>1</sup> )	Franchised and franchised access/feeder provision (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>2</sup> )	Consideration and sign-off
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential level of demand</li> <li>• School resources, budget, other financial matters*</li> <li>• For partnership programmes – site-visit report*</li> <li>• For partnership programmes – due diligence*</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	Programme Approval & Review Committee  Approval: Dean of School
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stage 1: University</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per Terms of Reference (see <a href="http://webapps.city.ac.uk/adu/university_governance/new/pac/pac.html">http://webapps.city.ac.uk/adu/university_governance/new/pac/pac.html</a>)</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit report</li> <li>• Due diligence</li> </ul>	Consideration: University Programme Approval Committee (Chaired by DVC)  Approval: DVC
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stage 2: School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer review of detailed proposal: curriculum, structure, credit values and exit points, learning and teaching, assessment, student support and overall student experience</li> <li>• External consideration of proposal, including quality and relevance of provision, learning experience and academic standards</li> <li>• Academic standards and quality</li> <li>• Programme management and staffing</li> <li>• Employability and destinations</li> <li>• Student numbers and marketing</li> <li>• Enhancement of the proposal drawing on internal and external comment and good practice</li> <li>• Endorsement of proposal</li> <li>• Consideration of the specific responsibilities of partner institution and School for the programme</li> </ul>	Yes  Additional consideration of research culture for research degree provision	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional information as per template provided</li> </ul>	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional information as per template provided</li> </ul>	Yes  Also consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional information as per template provided</li> </ul>	Consideration: Programme Approval & Review Committee  Recommendation for approval: Dean of School  Approval: DVC

Process	New Provision (internal)	New Provision (partnership)	Articulation Agreements and off-site delivery (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>1</sup> )	Franchised and franchised access/feeder provision (based on pre- approved programmes <sup>2</sup> )	Consideration and sign-off
<p><b>Stage 2: University</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As per Terms of Reference (see <a href="http://webapps.city.ac.uk/adu/university_governance/new/pac/pac.html">http://webapps.city.ac.uk/adu/university_governance/new/pac/pac.html</a>)</li> <li>Consideration of the specific responsibilities of partner institution and School for the programme</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>Yes</p> <p>Also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional information as per template provided</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A	<p>Consideration: University Programme Approval Committee</p> <p>Recommendation for approval: Committee Chair</p> <p>Approval: DVC</p>