

Proposed Revisions to Senate Policies: Aligning City's Quality and Standards Framework to Internal and External Drivers

Summary

A review of City's quality and standards framework is being undertaken to build on and strengthen existing practice whilst focusing on the student experience and outcomes in the context of *City's Vision and Strategy 2026*, as well as significant external regulatory change.

Four policies were identified to be simultaneously reviewed during 2017/18: Programme Approval, Programme Amendments, Periodic Review and Programme Suspension/Termination.

Consultation with Schools and the Students' Union has been undertaken and this paper outlines the proposed revised policies and plans for their implementation.

Educational Quality Committee reviewed the updated policies and associated guidance in April 2018. The Committee approved the policies subject to a revision to the Programme Amendment Policy and Guidance which has now been implemented.

Educational Quality Committee now recommends that Senate approves the policies and the actions below.

Recommended Actions

Senate is asked to:

- **approve** the updated policies
- **note** the associated guidance which has been approved by Educational Quality Committee
- **note** the proposed reporting arrangements
- **note** that revisions will be made Annual Programme Evaluation Policy and Guidance to align them with the updated policies following Senate approval

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1) Context

The launch of City's *Vision and Strategy 2026* with a new set of strategic ambitions focusing on progression, student satisfaction and employability necessitated a review of the *Education and Student Strategy* to ensure appropriate alignment. Concurrently, the passing of the *Higher Education and Research Act (2017)* included initiatives designed to encourage the enhancement of quality in teaching, learning and research across the sector. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has oversight of consumer protection law and its application to the higher education sector, and the Office for Students has been introduced, taking up its role as the higher education regulator in April 2018.

Work is being undertaken to align City's quality and standards framework with our *Vision and Strategy 2026*, the refresh of the *Education and Student Strategy* and the recent rapid change in the external regulatory landscape.

2) Policy Review Process

Four closely related policies (Programme Approval, Programme Amendment, Periodic Review and Programme Termination/Suspension) were prioritised for review.

In September 2017, Education and Student Committee approved the scope of the review and a Board of Studies consultation paper. Consultation was then undertaken with Boards of Studies, School Programme Approval and Review Committees (PARCs), the Students' Union and School quality teams. This work has been coordinated by Student and Academic Services.

3) Policy Review – proposed changes

Detailed responses were received from all Schools and LEaD, which have informed the proposed revisions to the policies and associated guidance. The policies also take account of previous comments made by Education and Student Committee on ensuring that KPIs such as progression and data are embedded within these processes, as well as expanding the policy and guidance on programme approval regarding flexible course delivery. One of the key aims of the revisions is to simplify the guidance and make it more accessible to both staff and students.

The draft policies and guidance were circulated to the Associate Deans (Education) and School Quality Teams for detailed review and comment, prior to formal consideration by Educational Quality Committee.

4) Programme Approval Policy (see Appendix 1)

The current policy and guidance can be accessed here: <https://goo.gl/fJNqCB>

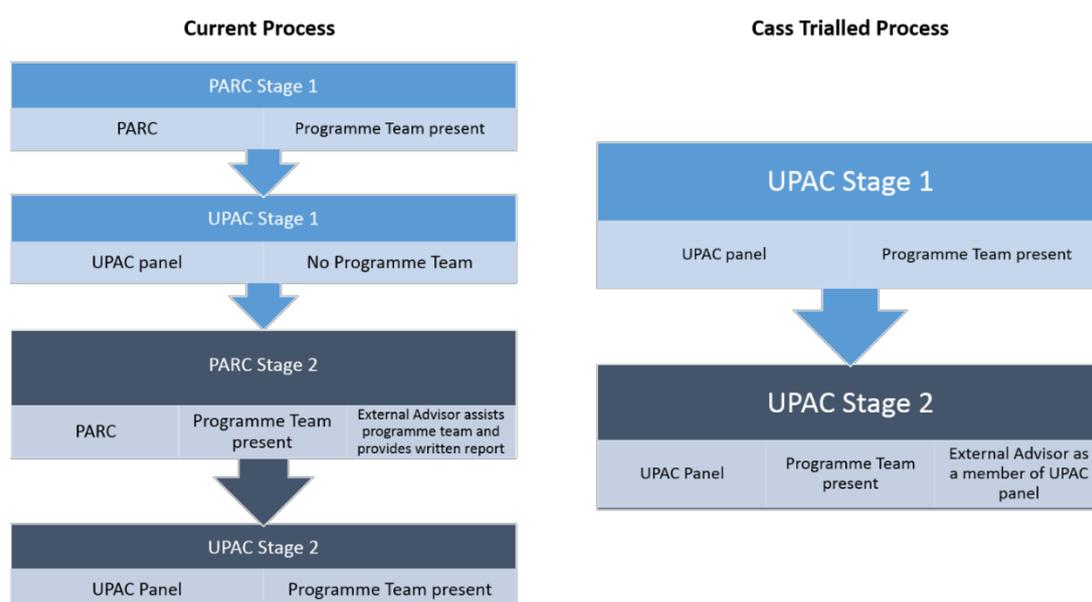
Programme Approval Stages

The review of the Programme Approval Policy took account of an adjusted Programme Approval process that has been operating as pilot in Cass over the last two academic years. The key features of the pilot process were:

- The two formal School Programme Approval and Review Committee (PARC) stages were combined with University-level consideration at University Programme Approval Committee (UPAC)
- Programme Teams were invited to attend and present at UPAC Stage 1. Previously they only attended UPAC Stage 2 meetings.
- The role of the External Advisor was still to scrutinise the proposed programme from an external perspective, however, instead of attending Stage 2 PARC and writing a written report for Stage 2 UPAC, they attended the Stage 2 UPAC as a panel member.

Partnership proposals were not included in the pilot process as this type of provision involves a higher level of risk.

An overview of the processes be found below:



Under both processes, sign-off from the Chair must be obtained before the next stage of the process may begin. This involves the Programme Team meeting any conditions set by the panel. Similarly, for both processes, advertisement of the proposed programme cannot begin until sign off by the Chair of Stage 1 has been obtained.

Based on the feedback received from those involved in the pilot process, and input from other Schools it is proposed that a hybrid approach be adopted as follows:

- Stage 1 UPAC (Strategic and Resourcing)
 - The formal submission would maintain the requirement of a sign-off from the Dean of the School and Finance.
- Stage 2 School PARC (Programme content)

- Stage 2 UPAC)

Removing Stage 1 PARC should allow programmes to be more responsive to sector changes and adapt accordingly, whilst still ensuring appropriate strategic oversight and resourcing needs from the Dean and Finance.

Schools had raised concerns that the piloted process removed School input and oversight by losing both PARC stages, as well as allowing full developmental input. The proposed hybrid process enables School input, development and oversight of the programme prior to final University approval.

Programme Director attendance at UPAC

During the piloted process the Programme Director attended UPAC in order to provide clarification and answer queries. This was regarded by all as a sensible addition to the process.

Role of the external advisor

Under the current model of programme approval the external advisor provides a written report to PARC providing their views, which enables development of the programme with an external view point. In the piloted process the external advisor instead sat as a member of Stage 2 UPAC, giving externality to the formal approval of the programme.

It is proposed within the revised policy that the external advisor would write a written report for PARC, and then attend the Stage 2 UPAC as a member. This would enable the programme team to take account of the views of the external advisor prior to the final stage of approval and enable the external advisor to reflect on the changes made by the programme team in response to the written report.

Guidance

It is acknowledged that the current guidance is not easily accessible for those undertaking new programme approval. The guidance has been simplified, whilst clarifying the expectations of the programme team at each stage, in particular the required timing for different paperwork for the stages.

The current documents have been rationalised into a single revised guidance document:

- Programme Approval Guidance
- Programme Approval Framework
- Guidance for External Advisers
- Guidance for Student Representatives
- Checklist of Tasks
- Glossary of terms

The “Guidance for market research considerations” has previously been incorporated into the Stage 1 template form.

Stage 2 Form

As part of the revisions to the Stage 2 form it is proposed to include a requirement for module and assessment mapping, to embed the approach established through the review of undergraduate assessment strategies undertaken during 2017/18. Programme Teams are advised to work with LEaD during the development of their submission, ensuring authentic and robust assessment methods that align to the learning outcomes.

5) Programme Amendments Policy (see Appendix 2)

The current policy and guidance can be accessed here: <https://goo.gl/fJNqCB>

Annual oversight of amendments

It was acknowledged that in most Schools there was no systematic monitoring of cumulative change on a programme. Therefore there was the risk that individual changes were being made to modules within a programme without a holistic oversight to maintain programme coherence and an appropriate level of approval of major change.

It has therefore been proposed that School PARCs will review annually the amendments across a programme. This would allow holistic oversight by PARC of the impact of all changes to a programme. For example, this will include an opportunity to consider the impact of proposed changes to type, timing or volume of assessment on the overall assessment strategy for the programme. A proposal for a minor change to the PARC Terms of Reference will be made to Academic Governance Committee and subsequently to the next meeting of Senate to make this explicit.

Due to the increased oversight by the CMA and the stricter deadlines on when changes can take place, having an annual review would allow for Schools to have tighter control of amendments to ensure regulatory compliance and ensuring that students and applicants are provided with timely and accurate information on programme amendments.

The revised policy includes contingency for “unforeseen circumstances”, but with tighter wording around what would be accepted for approval after the annual amendments deadline.

The list of amendments would be appended to the programme’s next APE as an ongoing record of changes to the programme and an opportunity for the programme team to reflect on the impact of changes made, both during the APE and Periodic Review processes.

Clarification on Major Amendment categorisation

The current policy is ambiguous as to how the major amendment category should be utilised, in particular the wording around a threshold of change of 30% to the programme. This wording has now been removed and the wording updated to make it clearer that the route of approval for major amendments is required when there is significant change to the programme which would affect the programme learning outcomes or title.

Clarification on suspension of a module

The current policy does not specify how long a module may be suspended for. This has resulted in a number of programmes having a large number of suspended modules that have not been used for many years. Under the revised policy all suspended modules will be automatically terminated after 3 years if they are not re-introduced in that time. This then allows programme records to be kept up to date and clear.

Guidance

The Guidance for Programme Amendments has been revised to rationalise the current information, making it more accessible for Programme Teams. Guidance on the application of Consumer Law to programme amendments was a separate document, which has now been incorporated into the main guidance.

Programme Amendment Form

The Programme Amendment Form will be revised to incorporate the proposed changes. The Form will also be moved online to make the process more accessible and easier to administer.

6) Periodic Review Policy (see Appendix 3)

The current policy and guidance can be accessed here: <https://goo.gl/m8qhJt>

5-yearly cycle of review

The sector standard practice is for periodic reviews to occur on a 5-yearly cycle, which matches the standard timeline for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) reviews. The policy has been updated to reduce the time between periodic reviews from 6 to 5 years to align with sector practice. Student and Academic Services have developed the Periodic Review schedule based on this change.

Year-on reporting moved to APE process

Programme teams are currently required to provide a year-on report to PARC outlining the changes that had been made as a result of the Periodic Review, and providing an update on their action plan. However, there was no formal template for these reports, and members of PARC reported being unsure how to robustly monitor developments. It was also acknowledged that one year was not sufficient to observe if the changes that had been made were beneficial to the programme.

To respond to these concerns, and to reduce unnecessary duplication, the reporting of developments arising from periodic review will be embedded within the Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) process. The APE template already has an area for reporting developments and action planning within it, therefore allowing for easy alignment of the two processes and Boards of Studies to have a more robust overview of the ongoing development of the programme.

Guidance

The guidance has been developed to more succinctly provide an overview of the expectations of programme teams and panels. More specific guidance has also been included to better articulate the roles of the Periodic Review Secretary and School Professional Services staff.

It is proposed to maintain the short 1-2 page guides for Periodic Review Chairs, Student Panel Members, External Panel Members and Students separately to the core Guidance.

7) Programme Termination/Suspension Policy (see Appendix 4)

The current policy and guidance can be accessed here: <https://goo.gl/BBoSva>

Formal sign-off required from Associate Dean (Education)

The current form for terminating or suspending a programme requires sign-off from the Dean. However, it was considered for more robust oversight of the educational impacts on terminating/suspending a programme it would be beneficial to have the Associate Dean (Education), or equivalent, sign off before the Dean.

Clarification on automatic removal of suspended programmes

Under the current policy there is no automatic removal of suspended programmes after a certain period, so there are a substantial number of suspended programmes that have not been re-introduced. Under the revised policy it has now been clarified that where any programme has not been re-introduced within 3 years, it will automatically be terminated.

Clarification on re-instating suspended programmes

The current policy states how a programme can be terminated or suspended, but does not state how a programme can be re-introduced. The revised policy states that re-introduction of a programme will require the required paperwork being submitted to Stage 1 UPAC only for approval if no other changes are being made to the programme.

For cases where there are significant proposed changes to the programme then it is expected that the full programme approval process will be utilised.

Guidance and Forms

The Guidance has been rationalised to make the process more accessible.

The forms for Termination and Suspension have been separated to make it clearer which is being proposed as this was previously not always clear.

8) Approval and implementation

If approved by Senate, the revised policies and guidance will be implemented for the 2018/19 academic year. To ensure that programme directors and school quality

teams are aware of changes Student and Academic Services have identified a number of methods of training and communication:

- **Guidance** – the guidance has been updated to be streamlined and user friendly.
- **Quality Forum** – Student and Academic Services will run a session for School Quality Teams on the key changes to the policies and guidance.
- **Workshops** –
 - Workshops will be run for programme teams looking to introduce new programmes, outlining the approval process and best practice.
 - Workshops will be run for UPAC panel members to outline changes and training will be provided for new UPAC members.
 - Workshops will be run for programme teams undergoing periodic review to help guide them through the process, in particular focusing on how to run a productive development day and write a reflective report. Training will be provided for Periodic Review panel members.

9) Reporting

The four policies underpin essential quality processes, and therefore it is appropriate that reporting on each policy is undertaken annually to ensure that they are being utilised robustly, with appropriate oversight. The table below outlines where each policy will be reported.

Policy	Initial Reporting	Final Reporting
Programme Approval	<u>Educational Quality Committee</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight of the process, including number of new programmes and breadth of new provision. • Includes key themes that have arisen, in particular around conditions and recommendations that have been made. • Identification of areas of interest for Education and Student Committee. 	<u>Senate</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight report, similar to EQC. <u>Council</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in the Annual Quality and Standards Report to Council.
Programme Amendments	<u>Educational Quality Committee</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight of the process, including number of amendments • Includes key themes that have arisen across programmes. • Identification of areas of interest for Education and Student Committee. • The record of programme amendments would be 	<u>Senate</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight report, similar to EQC. <u>Council</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in the Annual Quality and Standards Report to Council.

	<p>appended to the APE for reflective analysis during the APE and Periodic Review processes.</p>	
<p>Periodic Review</p>	<p><u>Educational Quality Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight of the process, including which programmes were reviewed and the outcomes. • Includes key themes that have arisen across programmes. • EQC will also receive the annual report on UG, and PGT APEs, which, moving forward, will include oversight of Programme Teams embedding their Periodic Review Action Plans into their APEs. • Identification of areas of interest for Education and Student Committee. 	<p><u>Senate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight report, similar to EQC. <p><u>Council</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in the Annual Quality and Standards Report to Council.
<p>Programme Termination/ Suspension</p>	<p><u>Educational Quality Committee</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight of the process, including which programmes have been terminated or suspended. • Includes key themes that have arisen. • Identification of areas of interest for Education and Student Committee. 	<p><u>Senate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual oversight report, similar to EQC. <p><u>Council</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in the Annual Quality and Standards Report to Council.

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