

Part 1: Academic Quality Framework

Section 3: Programme Approval and Development

Programme Approval

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The design of a new programme takes a significant amount of research and development. The proposals are developed in consultation with staff, students, and employers, and are informed by academic and industry expertise.
- 1.2. All proposals for new programmes require initial approval by the relevant committee before progressing to the Approval Event. (See sections 4 and 5.)
- 1.3. Following time-limited Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) being awarded to ICMP by the OfS, final decisions are ratified by Academic Board.

2. Indicative Timescales and Deadlines

- 2.1. The typical timeframe for the programme approval process is 18 months from initial programme development to delivery.

Note: New programme proposals must be planned in sufficient time to take account of marketing and recruitment cycles, as well as the programme development and approval timeline.

Stage/Intake Point	Sept 2023	Sept 2024
Quality informed of new programme proposals	July 2022	July 2023
Programme Proposal Form considered	Sept 2022	Sept 2023
Rehearsal Event held	Dec 2022	Dec 2023
Formal Approval Event held	March 2023	March 2024

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Quality Office

- 3.1.1. The Quality Office is responsible for:
 - i. Overseeing the programme approval process
 - ii. Working with the Senior Academic Team to develop and make guidance available to the Programme Development Team
 - iii. Establishing the timeline for decisions and submission of documentation
 - iv. Scheduling and organising the Rehearsal, Formal Approval, and Post-approval events
 - v. The final documentation record

3.2. Senior Academic Team

3.2.1. The Senior Academic Teams is responsible for:

- i. Submitting the initial proposal to Executive Committee for consideration
- ii. Establishing the Programme Development Team
- iii. Ensuring that the programme documentation meets the required criteria
- iv. Providing training and development to support the Programme Development Team

3.3. Programme Development Team

3.3.1. The Programme Development Team is responsible for:

- i. Producing the required programme approval documentation
- ii. Meeting the required timeline for decisions and submission of documentation for all stages of the process
- iii. Ensuring the relevant stakeholders are consulted as part of the development of the programme proposal

3.4. Approval Panel

3.4.1. The Approval Panel is responsible for:

- i. Considering, advising on, and ultimately formally approving the proposed content and structure of new programmes.

4. New programme approval process: overview

4.1. Approval is granted at the following three points:

- Approval of the Programme Proposal Form at Executive Committee - Gate 1
- Approval of the Programme Proposal Form at Academic Board - Gate 2
- Approval of the new programme at Formal Approval Event – Gate 3

4.2. The process consists of the following stages:

- Initial Programme Approval: The Senior Academic Team will oversee the preparation of the initial proposal, establishing a Programme Development Team to carry out the work.
- Programme development: The Programme Development Team develop and produce the required documentation, with reference to approval criteria, relevant external reference points and benchmarks, and in consultation with staff, students and external expertise.
- Formal approval event: All proposals for new programmes will be considered by the Programme Approval Panel. The Panel will evaluate the proposal against the criteria and other external reference points.
- Post-approval: Approved programme documentation is provided to ICMP's Registry, Admissions, Data and Marketing teams by the Quality Team. An External Examiner is nominated.

5. New programme approval process: detail

- 5.1. Before a new programme is developed, initial approval must be obtained from the Executive Committee and Academic Board. The aim is to ensure that time is spent productively on developing proposals that are viable, accord with the ICMP vision and strategic plans, and are likely to succeed at validation.

Gate 1

- 5.2. The programme proposer completes a Programme Proposal Form, available from the Quality Office.
- 5.3. The completed form is returned to the Quality Office for submission to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) for approval.
- 5.4. The form is submitted for presentation to the Executive Committee, who will consider the rationale for the new programme, financial implications, projected student numbers, demand, resourcing requirements and alignment to the ICMP operational and strategic plans. The Executive Committee will either approve the proposal or reject the proposal with feedback. Where a proposal is approved with conditions, it is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to confirm if these conditions have been appropriately met.

Gate 2

- 5.5. The programme proposal is submitted to the Academic Board to ensure that the programme aligns to ICMP's [Academic Framework and Regulations](#) and considers relevant external guidance, including subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- 5.6. The Academic Board will either approve the proposal or reject the proposal with feedback. Where a proposal is approved with conditions, it is the responsibility of the Academic Board to confirm if these conditions have been appropriately met.
- 5.7. Following approval by Academic Board, the proposal form is submitted to the Quality Office by the Programme Leader and a planning meeting is arranged.

6. Planning Meeting

- 6.1. A planning meeting is convened by the Quality Office to brief the Programme Development Team. The purpose of the meeting is to:
 - Agree provisional timeline for development and the approval event
 - Inform the programme team of the required documents
 - Advise the programme team of the process.

7. Programme development

- 7.1. In developing the programme proposal, the Programme Development Team will take account of the criteria as indicated in Section 12. The Programme Development Team will also make use of appropriate resources (industry and Higher Education sector

experts and the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#), the [Subject Benchmarks](#), [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and ICMP Tutors) to develop the programme and documentation (see section 8) in time for the Rehearsal and Formal Approval Events.

8. Required programme approval documentation

8.1. The responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the documentation rests with the Programme Development Team, overseen by the Senior Academic Team. Guidance and templates are available from the Quality Office.

- i. Programme Proposal Form
- ii. Draft Programme Specification (including draft course structure)
- iii. Draft Programme Handbook
- iv. Draft Module Specifications
- v. Contextual Document
- vi. External Adviser Nomination Form

9. Rehearsal Event

9.1. The Rehearsal Event assesses the quality of the documentation, providing the Programme Development Team with recommendations about revisions and other considerations to enhance the submission.

9.2. The panel membership includes:

- Dean, Chair (or delegate, a member of senior management)
- Representative of the Senior Academic Team
- Programme Leader from a different programme
- Academic staff with subject expertise
- Quality Manager
- Student Representative

The servicing officer will be a nominated member from the Quality Office.

10. Formal Approval Event (Gate 3)

10.1. All proposals for new programmes will be considered by a full meeting of the Formal Approval Panel. Panel members will meet onsite at ICMP if possible.

10.2. The Quality Office is responsible for scheduling and organising the meeting.

10.3. The Panel membership includes:

- Dean, Chair (or delegate, a member of senior management)
- Representative from Senior Academic Team
- Programme Leader from a different programme
- Academic staff with subject expertise
- Quality Manager

- Student Representative
- External Adviser(s)

The servicing officer will be a nominated member from the Quality Office.

10.4 At the end of the approval event, the Panel will decide whether to approve the programme. The approval may include conditions or recommendations. The programme may not be launched until all conditions are met and approval has been formally confirmed by the Chair.

11. Post Approval

11.1 Following the approval event, approved programme documentation is provided to ICMP's Admissions, Marketing, Programme Administration and Data departments by the Quality Office. An External Examiner is nominated.

11.2 The Programme Development Team meets with the Quality Manager to reflect on their experiences of the process and suggest any recommendations for process impr12.

Criteria for the approval of new programmes

The new programme approval processes (Gate 1, Gate 2 and Rehearsal Event) require consideration of the following criteria. These criteria should also inform the development and design of the programme, as evidenced through its documentation.

- a) Academic Rationale
 - i. The proposed programme promotes ICMP's mission and values, providing a relevant learning experience that effectively prepares potential students for industry.
 - ii. The proposed programme provides sufficient scope for potential students to be challenged at the appropriate academic level.
 - iii. The proposed programme is aligned with ICMP's [Graduate Attributes](#).
- b) Strategic Rationale
 - i. The programme supports ICMP's mission and strategic direction.
 - ii. The proposal includes market research to support the demand of the proposed provision.
- c) Quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment
 - i. The programme incorporates a systematic, relevant and stimulating assessment strategy, which enables course and module learning outcomes to be met.
 - ii. The programme proposal considers inclusive teaching and assessment practices.
- d) Quality and Standards
 - i. The programme has been appropriately aligned with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and the [FHEQ](#).
 - ii. The programme refers to external reference points, including [QAA subject Benchmark Statements](#).
- e) Programme Structure
 - i. The programme structure meets the requirements of the [ICMP Academic Framework and Regulations](#).

- ii. The programme structure takes account of the relevant pedagogical demands of the discipline and field.
- f) Resource
 - i. There will be sufficient human and physical resources available to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
 - ii. There will be adequate library and learning resources to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
 - iii. There will be appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- g) Stakeholder Consultation
 - i. The proposal considered feedback from students in the design and development of the programme.
 - ii. The programme has considered guidance from ICMPs [Disability and Wellbeing Team](#).
 - iii. The proposal considered feedback from external stakeholders in the design and development of the programme.

Programme Review

1. Introduction

- 1.1. ICMP is committed to the continuous enhancement of the quality of programmes and student experience. Programme review is a key element of that enhancement process, providing the opportunity for self-critical evaluation and reflection. It supplements the ongoing and annual monitoring of programmes and modules conducted by ICMP.
- 1.2. Programmes are revalidated through the periodic review process at least once within a six-year cycle.
- 1.3. A programme review may be recommended by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee, Executive Committee or Academic Board outside of that six-year cycle for additional risk-based scrutiny of a programme.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of a programme review is:
 - 2.1.1. to evaluate the quality of the student learning experience and consider how it can be enhanced as necessary;
 - 2.1.2. to ensure that the student learning experience is aligned with the expectations set out in the ICMP's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy;
 - 2.1.3. to consider the continued relevance and currency of outcomes and content against student expectations, subject developments, and industry needs;
 - 2.1.4. to encourage the Programme Team to reflect upon their strengths and challenges, highlighting where support might be needed.
 - 2.1.5. to ensure the programme continues to meet the requirements and expectations of external frameworks and developments in the HE sector.

3. Key principles of Programme Review

3.1. The review is intended to be a supportive and productive process, in which conversations take place in meetings between ICMP staff and an independent panel of 'critical friends' in a visit held usually over a period of one day.

3.2 The Panel is expected to conduct the review according to the following principles:

- 3.2.1 the review must be informed by student consultation and external expertise;
- 3.2.2 the programme team will be encouraged to raise concerns and highlight examples of good practice prior to and during the visit;
- 3.2.3 the review will be framed by a clear understanding of the overarching nature of the programme's ethos and purpose within ICMP's portfolio
- 3.2.4 the Panel will acknowledge the standards and quality of the provision as evidenced through reports relating to previous review activities, such as the Annual Monitoring Review;
- 3.2.5 the review will be underpinned by both quantitative and qualitative information, all of which will be made available to the Programme Team;
- 3.2.6 the Panel will take account of factors outside the immediate control of the Programme Team which challenge its ability to sustain or enhance the quality of the provision. Where appropriate, the Panel will highlight these factors in its findings.

4. Preparing for a Review

4.1 The Senior Academic Team will organise a series of regular meetings with relevant staff from the Programme and Quality teams.

4.2 The first meeting will determine the approximate timeline of the review and discuss the requirements for external representation on the review panel.

4.3 The Quality Office will provide advice and guidance throughout the process.

4.4 Programme Review activity will be reported to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) throughout the process.

5. Documentation

5.1. Central to the Review process is the [Programme Evaluation Document](#) (PED). The document fulfils two functions:

- 5.1.1. To provide a reflective and comprehensive appraisal of the programme under review by evaluating performance and changes since the last review, the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students and the standards achieved by students;
- 5.1.2. To identify perceived strengths and areas for development by referring to appropriate evidence, to indicate actions currently being undertaken to address such areas for development and to comment on the success of such actions.

5.2. The PED is structured as follows:

- 5.2.1. Purpose of the programme under review;
- 5.2.2. Programme Leader Reflection;
- 5.2.3. Programme Data [Student Numbers (Applications, Offers and Accepts), NSS, Mock NSS (L4, 5 and 7), Progression from L4-5, Pass First Time Rate, Degree Classification Outcome and Student Satisfaction];

- 5.2.4. Summary of Strengths, Areas of Concerns and Stakeholder Feedback;
- 5.2.5. Competitor Benchmarking;
- 5.2.6. Key Recommendations.

5.3. The PED should be submitted on the correct template and supplemented by the following:

- 5.3.1. Programme and Module Specifications;
- 5.3.2. External Examiner reports (since the last review);
- 5.3.3. Annual Monitoring Review reports (since the last review);
- 5.3.4. Examples of student feedback (e.g. Programme Committee minutes);
- 5.3.5. Examples of stakeholder engagement.

5.4. Further guidance on writing the PED is available from the Quality Office.

6. Panel Membership and Selection

6.1 The Panel membership includes:

- Dean, Chair (or delegate)
- Representative from Senior Academic Team
- Programme Leader from a different programme
- Academic staff with subject expertise
- Quality Manager
- Student Representative
- External Adviser(s)

The servicing officer will be a nominated member from the Quality Office.

6.2 The Dean (or designated co-ordinator) nominates appropriate external subject specialists to take part in the review. The suitability of the external nominees is determined by the External Examiners Appointments Panel.

6.3 The following criteria are considered when determining the suitability of the external nominee:

- the depth of subject knowledge;
- knowledge and experience of comparable programmes at other institutions;
- prior experience of teaching on programmes at the same level or above;
- professional expertise;
- prior experience as a QAA reviewer and/or External Examiner/Reviewer.

6.4 It is unlikely that any single nominee will meet all the requirements. In making judgments about the suitability of the proposed external subject specialists, the Chair of the ASQC shall take into account the overall balance of expertise presented by the external advisers.

6.5 A minimum of three external subject specialists is required on the panel.

7 Programme Review Meeting

7.1 Prior to inviting the Programme Team into the meeting, the Panel will decide what lines of questioning will be pursued. These will be based on the outcomes of the analysis of the PED.

7.2 Following the meeting, the Panel will provide a set of commendations and recommendations designed to highlight good practice and enhance the programme. The Panel will also agree upon a timeframe to complete any actions raised during the process.

7.3 Once the recommendations have been received, the Programme Team will draft an action plan designed to implement the recommendations, while also detailing how good practice highlighted will be built upon and disseminated.

8 Report of the Programme Review

8.1 A summary of recommendations will be made available to the Panel and Programme Team within 5 working days. A formal report will be circulated within 15 working days. The report will be submitted to the Academic Board for information, and the action plan will be monitored by ASQC.

Programme and Module Modifications

1. Introduction

1.1. Programmes and modules may require modification outside of the scheduled programme review cycle, perhaps to maintain currency, to address issues identified through annual or other monitoring processes, or in response to feedback from External Examiners or students.

1.2. All modifications to programmes or modules other than the routine updates described in section 5 require formal approval, as described in sections 3 (major modifications) and 4 (minor modifications). The appropriate procedure is determined by the impact on the student. The Quality Office can advise which process is appropriate.

1.3. Modifications cannot be applied retroactively and should only be implemented at the start of the semester following their approval.

1.4. Consumer protection law requires that students, including applicants, must be informed of significant changes to “material information”; all students who have accepted an offer or are already on the programme must consent. The Quality Office can advise on the appropriate procedure.

2. Types of modification

2.1. Examples of modifications include the following:

- Replacement of a core module
- Additional, removal or reallocation of a core module
- Change in credit weighting of a core module

- Change to the learning outcomes of a core module
 - Change to the curriculum content of a core module
 - Change in the mode of delivery of a core module
 - Change to an optional module
 - Changes to length or nature of assessment
 - Changes to module title
- 2.2. Modifications can be categorised in three ways:
- 2.2.1. Changes that constitute a major change to a programme (major modification);
 - 2.2.2. Changes that constitute a minor change to a programme (minor modification);
 - 2.2.3. Normal and routine updating of core and optional modules
- 2.3. The Quality Office will advise which category the change falls into. A significant number of minor modifications in combination may need to be considered a major modification.

3. Major Modification Process

- 3.1. The need for a modification will typically be initially flagged by the Programme Leader through review of the Module Leader Reports.
- 3.2. The need should be discussed at the first Programme Committee Meeting of the academic year.
- 3.3. Current students and External Examiners must be consulted about the proposed changes. Evidence of communications should be retained by the Programme Leader.
- 3.4. The Programme Leader will submit the following information to the Quality Office:
 - i. Rationale for modification
 - ii. Evidence of student and External Examiner consultation
 - iii. Existing and revised module specification
 - iv. Existing and revised (if relevant) programme specification
- 3.5 The Quality Office will submit the information to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) for approval.
- 3.6 The ASQC will determine whether the submission should go to the Academic Board for approval and whether a revalidation of the programme is required.
- 3.7 The Quality Officer will notify the Programme Leader of the outcome and arrange subsequent steps.

4 Minor Modification Process

- 4.1 The need for a modification will typically be initially flagged by the Programme Leader through review of the Module Leader Reports.
- 4.2 The need should be discussed at the first Programme Committee Meeting of the academic year.
- 4.3 Current students and External Examiners should be consulted about the proposed changes as a matter of good practice. Evidence of communications should be retained by the Programme Lead.
- 4.4 The Programme Leader will submit the following information to the Quality Office:
 - i. Rationale for modification
 - ii. Evidence of student and External Examiner consultation (if applicable)
 - iii. Existing and revised module specification
- 4.5 The Quality Office will submit the information to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) for approval.

4.6 The Quality Officer will notify the Programme Leader of the outcome and arrange subsequent steps.

5 Routine updates to modules

5.1 It may be necessary to make routine updates to core and optional modules. Changes might include the updating of reading lists or typographical corrections.

5.2 Such routine changes do not require student or External Examiner consultation.

5.3 These changes are normally completed prior to the start of an academic year.

5.4 Information about such changes should be submitted to the Quality Office by the Programme Leader in sufficient time to allow for review of amendments and sharing of the documents with the relevant Registry departments.

5.5 The Quality Office will retain a record of changes and notify other departments as necessary.

Programme Closures and Suspensions

1. Introduction

1.1. A decision to close or suspend a programme must take into account the needs of existing students and applicants (including deferred applicants).

1.2. Programmes may be closed or suspended for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:

- i. Declining student applications;
- ii. Creation of an alternative new programme;
- iii. Changing strategic priorities;
- iv. Concerns about the quality and standards of the programme;
- v. Changes in staff availability.

2. Definitions

2.1. A programme is closed when there are no students enrolled on the programme, including those who have deferred. There are therefore two stages to a programme closure:

- i. The programme is closed to applicants;
- ii. The programme is fully closed when all enrolled students have left the programme.

2.2. A programme is suspended when a decision is taken not to recruit to the programme or to deliver the programme for a defined period.

3. Process

3.1. Recommendations for the planned closure or suspension of a programme will be considered by the Academic Board and Executive Committee, both of which must grant approval.

3.2. A notification of the intention to close or suspend a programme should first be approved by the Dean, who will submit the *Programme Closures and Suspensions Form* to the Chair of ASQC.

3.3. The form should state:

- i. The basis on which the decision has been reached;
- ii. The risk assessment of the impact of any closure, including consultation with relevant departments including Marketing and Finance;
- iii. The proposed arrangements for current students on the programme at each level;
- iv. The proposed programme closure action plan;
- v. For suspensions, the period of time that it is anticipated the programme will be closed and the conditions for reopening.

3.4. ASQC will make a recommendation to the Academic Board and Executive Committee.

3.5. Following decisions by the Academic Board and Executive Committee, the Quality Office will notify ICMP's Admissions, Marketing, Programme Administration and Data departments and terminate the External Examiner contract.

3.6. Following notification, the Quality Office will then work with the Senior Academic Team and Programme Team to create and monitor the programme closure plan.

Version number	Date approved	Reason for production/revision	Author	Proposed next review date
V2.2	28/06/22	Degree Awarding Powers	Quality Manager	Annually and as required
V2.1	14/09/20 Academic Board	Annual review	Deputy Registrar	Annually and as required
V2.0	01/09/20 Academic Board	Annual review	Deputy Registrar	Annually and as required
V1.0	03/09/19 Academic Board	Annual review	Deputy Registrar	Annually and as required
Related policies				
AQF sections on Periodic Review and Programme Documentation				
External Reference				
<p><u>UK Quality Code for Higher Education</u>, Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development. Programmes are designed in line with sector-recognised standards and meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework. Regular monitoring and evaluation are used to drive improvement and enhancement of these processes.</p> <p><u>UK Quality Code for Higher Education</u>, Advice and Guidance: Partnerships. Processes are in place for the management and oversight of all aspects of the student academic experience by ICMP and its Awarding Bodies.</p>				