**Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Research Courses**

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Note: Where the text states ‘School’ this should be understood to refer to ‘School’ or ’Department’ at the sub-divisional level, as appropriate.

# 1. QA Policy Statement

1.1This annex of the Code of Practice establishes the requirements and procedures for the approval of new research courses of study, whether proposed by a Division unilaterally or in collaboration with other Divisions or partner organisations, or where new courses are proposed by partner organisations themselves.

1**.**2 The requirements and procedures are designed to ensure that all such courses:

* are consonant with the University Plan, the Internationalisation Strategy, the Student Employability Strategy, the Graduate and Researcher College Strategy and Divisional Plans;
* have appropriate aims and learning outcomes;
* have structure and content appropriate to the aims and learning outcomes;
* will have available human and physical resources such as will ensure the achievement of aims and learning outcomes;
* reflect Kent’s research expertise (except where proposed by a partner provider), are inclusive[[1]](#footnote-1), and are responsive and attractive to the core student population that Kent wishes to attract to fulfil the University’s strategic plan (including any new and alternative markets);
* reflect an inclusive, innovative and internationalist approach to learning;
* deliver planned targets and are financially sustainable;
* are launched in an effective and timely fashion;
* meet the requirements of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance and other current legislation as relevant, the QAA UK Quality Code (visit the [home page](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)) and the University’s regulatory requirements.

1.3 The procedures that follow are based on the principle that detailed consideration of proposed new courses of study is best undertaken by academic staff in cognate disciplines and by those with expertise in quality assurance and curricula development, and that the Graduate and Researcher College Board, rather than considering proposals in detail, should be assured that proposals have received appropriate consideration by the relevant teams, panels and committees established for this purpose.

# 2. Stages of Approval

The course approval procedure consists of several stages of consideration by University committees, each of which has areas of specific focus:

1. Business Case Committee
2. Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee
3. The Course Approval Sub-committee (CASC) of the Graduate and Researcher College Board.

## 2.1 Approval Deadline

The deadline for courses to come forward for approval by CASC will be the June meeting each year. Therefore, for both new and major revisions to courses, specifications must be approved by the Division in time for submission to CASC and no later than two weeks before the date of the June meeting.

## 2.2 Submission to Business Case Committee

All new courses, except in those cases where the proposing Division certifies that the new course is cognate to an existing course and that it can be resourced from within the existing resources of the School/Division, are to be considered in outline and approved in principle by the Business Case Committee before significant time is spent on their development. Where the proposing Division or partner organisation certifies that the new course is cognate to an existing course and that it can be resourced from within the existing resources of the Division/partner, the proposal should take the form outlined in section 3 below. The submission to the Business Case Committee should be via the Business Case template and accompanied by a completed cover sheet, to include a brief description of the proposed course and toaddress:

2.2.1 The relationship of the course to the University's Mission and Plan and the Division’s Plan.

2.2.2 How it is proposed that the course will be resourced.

2.2.3 A business plan drawn up as per the template provided by the Finance Department should be included.

2.2.4 Any special resources, (e.g. staff, space, library, IT, learning technologies, training, timetable), and the implications of putting these in place. An estimate of likely student numbers compared with the existing courses with any market research/surveys on which this is based.

2.2.5 A statement of which courses, if any, will be withdrawn as a result of the new proposal.

2.2.6 Evidence of discussion/agreement with other Schools/subject areas that might be affected together with information about collaboration, partnership and/or potential competition.

2.2.7 Confirmation of appropriate supervisory expertise for the course (i.e. a list of approved supervisory chairs may be appended).

2.2.8 Proposals for new collaborative courses of study will only be considered where the collaborative partner has first successfully completed the process of institutional approval set out in Annex O of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses of Study. Specific proposals for new courses will only be considered where the partner organisation(s) concerned have already achieved ‘approved institution’ status. See section 12 below for more detail.

2.2.9 In preparing the submission, Schools will need to consult the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office, the Academic Practice department and, where necessary, the Student Planning Data Office, Finance, Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions (MORA), and Communication and Development (for marketing advice).

2.2.10 In considering the outline proposal,the Business Case Committee will determine if it has sufficient information upon which to base a decision. If so, it may grant approval for the proposal to be developed in full and considered formally by the relevant Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee. Alternatively, further information may be requested, or the proposal rejected.

2.3Additional guidance on the submission of outline proposals for new collaborative coursesis set out in section 15 below.

# 3. Submission to Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee

3.1 Following Business Case Committee approval of the outline proposal a detailed submission for the new course should be drawn up by the Division and submitted to the Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee. Detailed proposals for new courses, accompanied by a completed cover sheet, should include:

3.1.1 A course specification in the approved format.

**Note:** The course specification will subsequently be used as a source of basic information about the course by students, potential students and internal and external reviewers. The list of approved Supervisory Chairs required at section 1.10 of the specification will constitute the list of staff initially approved to act as Supervisory Chairs for students registered on the course, but should not be regarded as the definitive list. Additional Supervisory Chairs may be approved by the Graduate and Researcher College and Divisions will be responsible for reviewing the ongoing suitability of Chairs of supervisory teams.

The specification will include:

* Minimum/maximum student intake and source of funding.
* The Division that will hold responsibility for course management.
* Evidence of need and demand for the course.
* Implications for learning resources including staff, library, IT and space.
* Where appropriate, how the course reflects the requirements of professional or statutory bodies.

3.1.2 Where approval is sought for a course which relies in whole or in part on practice research, the Division must additionally evidence its commitment, resources and expertise in the following areas:

* The distinct practices of practice research within the Division’s own subjects.
* Ongoing staff practice research activity.
* Student research training in the area of practice research, to include, for example, sessions on the relationship between practice and theory, ways of ‘reading’ practice research and the documentation of practice research.

3.1.3 For a new course that is not similar to an existing course, a supporting statement from an external academic adviser (or advisers, if appropriate to the proposal) should be provided (see Appendix B), along with a response from the Division to any issues raised.

The external adviser’s supporting statement might usefully comment on:

* Potential market for the course;
* Is the course subject area appropriate and set at the correct level?
* Does the course reflect relevant sector needs or professional requirements (as applicable)?
* Any other areas of note considered appropriate by the external adviser.

3.1.4 Where such a submission was required, the outline proposal, business plan and all accompanying commentaries as indicated at 2.2 above, as submitted to and approved by the Business Case Committee.

* + 1. The relevant extract of the Student Voice Forum minutes that notes the student discussion of the proposed course specification (see [Annex M:Student Evaluation](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-m)*,* section 5.7).

1. Where a proposed new course of study involves input from another institution, a representative of that institution may be invited to attend Divisional meetings at which the proposal is subject to scrutiny.

1. All new course proposals should be accompanied by a statement from the proposers that consideration has been given, in anticipation of the needs of students with disabilities, to potential adjustments that may reasonably be required to the curricula content, modes of delivery and assessment methods.

# 6. Consideration of Proposal by Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee

6.1 Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committees should address the following matters when considering proposals:

* Fit with the Divisional plan or strategy;
* That resources are in place, or budgeted for, to support the proposal, as per the outline proposal and business plan approved by the Business Case Committee;
* Adherence to any professional body requirements (subject related);
* Confirmation that the course structure reflects the QAA guidance on [Doctoral Degree Characteristics](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/doctoral-degree-characteristics-statement-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=a3c5ca81_14);
* Confirmation that the course reflects current research or other advanced scholarship carried out by academic staff in the Division;
* The external adviser’s supporting statement and the Division’s response to it. Where a proposal is amended in the light of comments received by an external adviser, a statement should be provided indicating the nature of such amendments;
* Confirmation of appropriate progression throughout the stages of the course;
* That criteria for alternative exit awards are detailed in the course specification;
* Any relevant accessibility issues;
* Any related reports from PSRB accreditation visits, and the evidence of engagement with any issues raised therein;
* Any other matters considered appropriate by the Committee.

If it is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so, the Committee may forward the proposal on behalf of the Division to the Course Approval Sub-committee (CASC) of the Graduate and Researcher College Board (GRCB), together with the recommendation that the course be approved.

6.2 Submission to CASC will be via the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office.

# 7 University-Level Approval

7.1 At the University level, proposals for new courses of study will be considered for approval by the Course Approval Sub-committee (CASC). The voting membership of CASC will comprise the Divisional Directors of Education and UG Student Experience and the Divisional Directors of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience, one of whom will normally serve as Chair. Of those, at least one representative from each Division will attend each CASC meeting. Other members attending in an advisory capacity (i.e. the non-voting members) will include:

* the Head of Quality Assurance and Compliance;
* the Graduate and Researcher College Head of Operations;
* the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing;
* The academic staff member proposing the course (or nominee) to attend in support of the specific course proposal in order to answer any questions that the Sub-committee might raise and to receive feedback (for both new and substantially revised course specifications).
1. The meetings will be convened and serviced by the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office.
2. Meetings of CASC will be staged on a monthly basis from October to July. For each proposal CASC will consider the full set of documentation in the submission.
3. Course submissionswill normally only be considered at a scheduled CASC meeting.
4. The Course Approval Sub-committee is responsible for making a detailed assessment of the design, level, coherence and currency of the specification under approval and of the capacity of the School to provide learning opportunities sufficient for students to achieve the intended outcomes. The terms of reference of CASC are to:
5. Evaluate whether the proposed course is set at the required academic level and, where appropriate, consistent with the relevant subject benchmarks, or other appropriate external reference points (e.g. PSRB requirements, QAA Statements of Qualification Characteristics, the UK Quality Code, any relevant international requirements).
6. Ensure that the proposal meets the requirements of the University’s Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Research Degree Courses and the Regulations for Research Degrees;
7. Determine whether the course specification can be delivered and quality and standards maintained.
8. Evaluate the external adviser’s supporting statement and the proposing Division’s response to this. Where a proposal has been amended in the light of comments received by an external adviser, a statement should be provided by the Division indicating the nature of such amendments;
9. Ensure that the final proposal remains congruent with the original outline submission for the course and accompanying commentaries as approved by the BCC;
10. Ensure engagement with the University’s policies on developing inclusive curricula;[[2]](#footnote-2)
11. Ensure engagement with the University’s policies on internationalisation;
12. Ensure engagement with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance;
13. Ensure engagement with the University’s policies on employability;
14. Make decisions on the proposals in accordance with these terms of reference, specifying any conditions required for the approval of the proposals;
15. Report its decisions to the Graduate and Researcher College Board (GRCB).

7.6 Based on its assessment, CASC is empowered to make one of a number of decisions on behalf of GRCB:

A. That the proposal be approved;

B. That the proposal be approved subject to the prior satisfaction of specified conditions set out in the minutes of the approval meeting. These conditions might include revisions to the proposal or provision of additional resources – to be signed off either by the Chair of CASC or, at the discretion of the Sub-committee, by the appropriate DDGSSE;

C. That the proposal be resubmitted in a revised form for further consideration by the Sub-Committee;

D. That the proposal be rejected.

1. At the end of the approval meeting the Chair will inform the attending academic staff member proposing the course of the sub-committee’s decision, of any conditions that it wishes to set, the deadline for meeting these conditions and whether they should be signed off by the Chair or by the appropriate DDGSSE. Failure to meet the conditions by the set deadline may result in the withdrawal of conditional approval and entail the resubmission of the course proposal. The status of the conditional approval shall be reported to CASC at its following meeting; however, conditions may be regarded as satisfied, and the course may be advertised, as soon as they have been signed off by the DDGSSE, on behalf of CASC.
2. If it is satisfied with the quality and standards of the proposal submitted, the Course Approval Sub-committee will report to GRCB that it has approved the proposed course on its behalf. GRCB will report annually to the Senate on the new courses that have been approved under delegated powers.
3. Under no circumstances may any new or substantially revised course of study commence delivery prior to the specification receiving the approval of CASC.
4. The minutes of CASC meetings will be made available to stakeholders. The Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will inform the Division on the progress of proposals throughout the approval process and will advise when the process has been completed. Where a new course has been approved, either directly by CASC or by the Divisional Director of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience in response to course conditions set by CASC, the Division will notify the Data Quality Team, MORA and any other relevant stakeholders. In addition, the Division will submit a formal report to the next meeting of CASC reporting the Divisional approval of the conditions set by CASC.

## 7.11 New Course Publicity and Recruitment

7.11.1 A new course may be advertised and applicants offered places on such courses when, and only when, the course has been fully approved by the Course Approval Sub-committee, except where under exceptional circumstances the Business Case Committee or the Chair of the BCC authorises that a proposed new course might be advertised as subject to approval.

* + 1. The University shall publish the approved course specifications online. The approved specification will remain the definitive statement of the curriculum to be provided for the course and award. These specifications may only be amended following the successful completion of the relevant re-approval process as set out in this Code of Practice.

## 7.12 The Chair of CASC

7.12.1 At the beginning of the first CASC meeting of the academic year, the voting members of CASC will normally agree which of them will act as the Chair of the sub-committee for the coming academic year.

7.12.2 The duties of the Chair of CASC will include leading the meetings of the sub-committee, agreeing the minutes as the official record of the meetings, exercising the Chair’s prerogative for an additional casting vote as required (as per section 7.13 below), taking action on the behalf of the sub-committee outside of meetings with regard to confirming the satisfaction of the conditions of approval relating to any particular proposal (except where these have been formally remitted to the appropriate DDGSSE), and dealing with any other matters relevant to the terms of reference of the sub-committee on its behalf as might from time-to-time arise. In the event of their non-availability the Chair may deputise another voting member to act on their behalf.

## 7.13 Voting Process at CASC

7.13.1 Where the sub-committee members cannot agree a recommendation on a course proposal, the voting members present will be polled and a majority established. Where no majority view can be established, the Chair will command an additional casting vote.

7.13.2 The meetings of the sub-committee will be quorate when at least two Divisional Directors of Education and UG Student Experience and two Divisional Directors of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience are present. When a meeting becomes inquorate, the sub-committee’s recommendations will be subject to ratification by the absent voting members before they may be confirmed. However, any recommendations requiring confirmation during the Long Vacation will only require the agreement of two Divisional Directors of Education and UG Student Experience and two Divisional Directors of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience, without further consultation.

# 8 Course Withdrawal

8.1 Approval of a new course of study will be rescinded where the course receives no registrations within three years of approval.

8.2 If an existing course is to be withdrawn from the University portfolio, the Division must prepare a written rationale, outlining the reasons for withdrawal of the course, whether any offers have been made to applicants and details of the arrangements for allowing existing students to complete their studies, and submit it to the Course Approval Sub-Committee with the recommendation for withdrawal. If accepted, CASC will formally record the course withdrawal. The withdrawal will be reported for action by i) Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions (MORA), which will inform any applicants of the discontinuation of the course, and ii) the Student Records and Examinations Office (SRE), which will amend the status of the course accordingly. The withdrawal will be noted by the Graduate and Researcher College Board.

# 9 Course Title Changes

1. A course title change is regarded as a material change by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)[[3]](#footnote-3) and thus will be a major amendment.
2. When a proposed title change is submitted to the Divisional Director of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience for approval it should be accompanied by a rationale setting out the reason for the change. A proposed title change may require discussion with another School/Division, for example, where it is similar to the title of a course already offered by that School/Division. The discussion and outcome must be included in the rationale.
3. Where the DDGSSE approves the proposed title change, the proposal plus the rationale should be submitted to the next meeting of CASC for consideration and approval.

# 10 Course Suspension

10.1 Where a course of study is to be suspended, the Division must prepare a written rationale, outlining the reasons for not continuing to offer the course, the period of time for which it is to be suspended (see 10.3 below), whether any offers have been made to applicants and details of the arrangements for allowing existing students to complete their studies, and submit it to the Divisional Director of Graduate Studies and PG Student Experience for consideration. Where the relevant DDGSSE agrees to the suspension of the course they will ensure it is reported to the QACO so that a record of the suspension can be made. The Division will report the suspension to i) MORA, which will inform any applicants of the suspension of the course, and ii) Student Records, which will amend the status of the course accordingly. Should there be any applicants or existing students for the course in question, consideration must be given as to whether the suspension is compliant with CMA guidance.

10.2 When a suspended course of study is to be offered once more, the Division will report this to the QACO, MORA and Student Records, which will amend the status of the course accordingly.

10.3 A course of study may be suspended for no more than two years. After two years if the course in question is not run it must be formally withdrawn (refer to section 9 above).

# 11 Amendments to Approved Courses

11.1 Proposals for major changes to approved research courses must be considered and recommended for approval by the relevant Divisional Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee, as appropriate, prior to submission of the revised specification for approval by the Course Approval Sub-committee (CASC)*.*A major change to a course specification includes:

* Any amendment that constitutes a material change to the course information[[4]](#footnote-4);
* Any amendment resulting in a change to the course intended learning outcomes or educational aims;
* A major change to the learning/research methods;
* A combination of minor changes that, when aggregated, can be considered to be a major change;
* A change to, or the addition of, a different campus for delivery of the course. In such cases the approval submission must be accompanied by a rationale from the Division or Collaborative Partner, to include an indication of the resources required and confirmation that those resources will be available at the new campus.

11.2 Where there is doubt as to whether a proposed change to a course specification constitutes a minor or major change, advice should be sought from the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office (qaco@kent.ac.uk).

11.3 Such changes should not be approved unless a revised course specification, a description of the proposed changes and the reasons for the proposed changes have been submitted.

11.4 Proposals for minor changes to approved courses of study, which involve no revision of the course aims and intended learning outcomes, must be considered and recommended for approval by the relevant Divisional Committee***.***

11.5 Other interested Divisions should be consulted as appropriate with regard to changes to courses***.***

1. See [Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs)](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/accessible-content/kent-inclusive-practices) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See [the Code of Practice: ANNEX B: Approval and Withdrawal of Modules (Appendix A)](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/codes-of-practice-for-taught-courses#annex-b), which outlines inclusive design principles required at the module specification stage to ensure consistency of approach across course and module design processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Refer to [Kent’s CMA pages](https://www.kent.ac.uk/academic/cma/index.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Refer to [Kent’s CMA pages](https://www.kent.ac.uk/academic/cma/index.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)