# PROGRAMME AND MODULE APPROVAL PROCESS

## PILOT CHANGES 2017/18

### STAFF GUIDE (V1.3)

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## BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

In 2016, the Kent Service Delivery Diagnostic (KSDD) review of administration at the University, highlighted a number of efficiencies which could be gained and a number of suggested projects to realise these. As a result, the SK1 Project – Programme Approval and Curriculum Design (PACD) was commissioned in October 2016 to define and agree general principles for assessing existing and new programmes and modules to ensure their viability.

The SK1 Project has been broken down into three strands of work:

1) Review of the Programme and Module Approval System (PMAS) and process with a view to developing options for an improved, more efficient and effective process.

2) A Portfolio Review / “Schools Health Check” to better understand the current environment of Programmes and Modules across the University.

3) A work stream to explore the options for implementing change across the institution to further consolidate the module and programme offer. This is to include recommendations and roadmaps for change based on the outcomes of work streams 1 and 2.

Work stream 1 (Review of the PMAS system and process) was approved by the Simplifying Kent Programme Board to progress to a Pilot stage. This Pilot will test the recommended changes to the Programme and Module Approval process from September 2017. This will be run across all Schools and Centres for the 2017/18 academic year, with a review taking place alongside the Pilot, to report in May 2018.
**PMAS CHANGES**

*All relevant templates and forms can be found in the Quality Assurance Codes of Practice – Annex C. [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html)*

**Approving new programmes: Standard route**

**A. Development Stage:**

Ideas for new programmes can come at any time of year, once an intention to develop a new programme has been determined the following process should be followed:

*Note:* where programmes required *significant new resource*, Schools should approach Faculty Dean and Executive Group (EG) first, in order to secure this resource. Ideally this would be done during the Planning round but this is not essential.

1. A short one-page cover sheet should be developed. The Cover sheet is a document for tracking the progress of a proposal through the stages of the process, and will be generated, maintained and completed by the FSO, rather than by the School. *PROGRAMME PROPOSAL COVER SHEET* - [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixa.docx](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixa.docx)

2. The intention to develop a new programme should be communicated:
   a. At a School committee (i.e. School Education Committee or Graduate Studies Committee) – this should be minuted and will form part of an audit trail.
   b. With Faculties Support Office (FSO) – an appropriate person for your programme will be appointed to oversee the approval process.
   c. With Enrolment Management Services (EMS) (and other Professional Service Departments [PSDs]) – this will help them plan the workload associated with developing business cases for new programmes.
   d. With student reps, this may be done at Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), though depending on the committee timetable this might happen electronically.

3. A School Programme Lead (SPL) to be identified.

4. An appropriate external commentator to be identified.

5. Development of Business Case:
   a. To take place May – January.
   b. Completed with the support of EMS, Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (UELT), Planning and Business Information Office (PBIO), International Recruitment, International Partnerships, Careers, and Finance, as necessary. *BUSINESS CASE TEMPLATE* - [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixb.docx](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixb.docx)

6. Business Case approval by Business Case Committee (BCC). BCC to meet January, February and early September. (Membership: Senior DVC, DVC (education), Dean of the Graduate School, representative Associate Dean(s), director of EMS.)

**B. Quality Assurance and Curriculum Development stages:**
1. School-Faculty stage.
   a. Programme team formed to write programme and associated module specifications. Programme team to include SPL, School Director of Education (DoE)/Director of Graduate Studies (DoGS), School QA administrator or relevant member of professional services staff, FSO representative, Faculty Associate Dean and an appropriate DoE/DoGS from another School within the Faculty.
   b. Programme team to meet once or twice as necessary, with drafts shared via email. To take place over the course of 2-3 weeks.
   c. Student reps and any other key stakeholder engagement to take place at this time.
   d. Once complete, Faculty Associate Dean signs off on specifications.
   e. Record of this stage produced to comprise meeting records, development phase commentary and Associate Dean sign off.

   UNDERGRADUATE SPECIFICATION TEMPLATE – 
   https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixh.docx

   POSTGRADUATE SPECIFICATION TEMPLATE -  
   https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixi.docx

2. Faculty-University stage.
   a. Revised Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC): 6 Associate Deans of Education and Graduate Studies (in attendance as necessary), plus UELT, Quality Assurance Office (QAO) and FSO presence.
   c. External commentary and programme and module specifications are submitted to the committee for consideration. The Business Case will also be submitted for background information.
   d. SPL attends PASC meeting to answer any queries.
   e. Programmes are approved or approved subjected to conditions.
   f. Where necessary, SPL can begin work immediately on making amendments.
   g. FSO inform colleagues that a programme has been approved.

Following approval, marketing for the new programmes can begin.

**Approving new programmes: ‘Fast-track’**

*Note: ‘Fast-track’ approvals are reserved for extraordinary cases, where a strong business argument can be put forward. These extraordinary cases should evidence that the University would be at a disadvantage or miss business opportunities if the standard route was to be adopted. See: https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/pdf/annexc-appendixc.pdf for further information.*

1. Fast-track application form completed.
2. Consideration of fast-track application by specially convened BCC.
3. Fast-track programme to follow the same QA stages in a compressed time-frame, with an extraordinary PASC meeting convened, with expected completion one month after BCC approval.

**FAST-TRACK PROPOSAL FORM** - [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixd.docx](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/docs/annexc-appendixd.docx)

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### Other Approvals

| Major changes to existing programmes | • FSO and Associate Dean consulted prior to change being proposed: in some cases this can be handled with e-PMAS system. In some cases where there is an overhaul (e.g. Periodic Programme Review [PPR], reaccreditation) there may need to be one or two meetings in addition to e-PMAS – this is the same as the established process prior to this Pilot.  
• In 2017/18, e-PMAS will continue to be used for approval of major changes to programmes.  
• Change submitted for Faculty-University level PASC committee for approval. This should happen as part of normal business February-July, plus one meeting in November. |
| New modules and major changes to existing modules | • E-PMAS with Associate Dean and School Directors rota etc. As per the previous process.  
• One School DoE/DoGS is required to comment on module specifications prior to Associate Dean Approval.  
• Changes to Stage 2+ modules be approved September – December; changes to Stage 1 and PGT modules to be approved September - April  
• Stage 2+ modules ready by January/February for Online Module Review (OMR).  
• Some changes to modules will be allowed at the end of Spring Term ready for the following year. But, the University must remain Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliant!  
• In 2017/18 e-PMAS will continue to be used for approval of new modules and major changes to existing modules. |
| Minor changes to existing programmes or modules | • The minor change is reported to FSO by the School, who sends and updates programme/module specification.  
• Faculty Associate Dean is informed and provides electronic sign off. |
Previous Process (pre-Pilot)

**Programme and Module Approval – Previous Process**

1. **Minor Revisions to Programmes and Modules**
   - School approves minor module change
   - School report change or minor update submitted to PMAS
   - Faculties Support Officer checks if changes are minor
   - Two DoEs (DoGS and FSO) review changes to specification
   - Associate Dean approves change, referred to PASC
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO if changes required
   - Specification updated online

2. **New Modules and Major Revisions to Modules**
   - Decision to review or create a new module
   - Submitted to PMAS for review by two DoEs (DoGS and FSO)
   - CAO specification published to Faculty website
   - Made available for Associate Dean
   - Recommended for approval by Associate Dean
   - Initial decision to review programme

3. **Major Revisions to Programmes**
   - Initial idea for new programme
   - EG summary developed
   - Programme specification developed
   - Communication of the intention to revise programme
   - School upload revised specification to PMAS
   - Recommended for approval by Associate Dean
   - Associated Dean approves change, referred to PASC
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO if changes required
   - Revised programme specification ready for approval
   - Initial decision to revise programme

4. **New Programmes**
   - Initial idea for new programme
   - Final decision to develop new programme
   - Programme specification developed
   - Summary submitted to PASC for final approval
   - School upload specification to PMAS
   - Recommended for approval by Associate Dean
   - School approves minor revisions to programme
   - PASC
   - Communication of the intention to develop new programme
   - School upload specification to PMAS
   - Recommended for approval by Associate Dean
   - School approves minor revisions to programme
   - PASC

Please note that the implementation of minor revisions should have consideration for CMA regulations, where there may be restrictions as to when in the calendar year agreed minor revisions can be implemented.

Note: All new modules and programmes, and amendments to modules and programmes, are reported to the relevant Faculty Board since final approval has been received.

**PROCESS MAPS**

Simplifying Kent – Programme Approval and Curriculum Development
Pilot Process (September 2017 onwards)

Programme and Module Approval Pilot 2017-18

1. Minor Revisions to Programmes and Modules
   - School approves minor module change
   - School report change and upload specification to PMAS
   - Faculty Support Officer checks that changes are minor
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO if required
   - Specification updated online

2. New Modules and Major Revisions to Modules, outside the programme approval/revision paths
   - School approves major module change
   - School report change and upload specification to PMAS
   - Faculty Support Officer checks that changes are minor
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO if required
   - Specification updated online

Please note that the implementation of minor revisions should have consideration for CMA regulations; there may be restrictions as to when in the calendar year agreed minor revisions can be implemented.

Note: All new modules and programmes, and amendments to modules and programmes, are reported to the relevant Faculty Board and final approval has been received.

Anytime of the year

Programme and Module Approval Pilot 2017-18

3. Major Revisions to Programmes
   - Initial decision to review Programme
   - Associate Dean recommends development of module and programme specifications, module mapping, and rationale for change
   - Module approved by Associate Dean
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO (Required)

Note: Minor Revisions to Programmes and Modules

Anytime of the year

4. Process for NEW Programmes
   - Initial idea for a new programme
   - Communication of the intention to develop new programme
   - School Programme Lead (identified)
   - Curriculum Coordinator identified
   - School Programme Lead sends Module and Programme Proposal to CMA and FSO
   - CMA and FSO review proposed module and programme
   - Associate Dean recommends development of module and programme specifications, module mapping, and rationale for change
   - Module approved by Associate Dean
   - Pro forma sent to CSAO (Required)

Anytime of the year

Key:
- *3 / 2 – in one years time / two years time
- CMA – Competition and Markets Authority
- DDE – School Director of Education
- DSGT – School Director of Graduate Studies (Taught)
- EC – School Education Committee
- EGS – Executive Group
- PMAS – Moodle Programme and Module Approval System
- EMS – Enrolment Management Services
- GSC – School Graduate Studies Committee
- FSO – Faculty Support Office
- OMW – Online Module Registration
- PMAC – Programme Approval Sub-Committee
- PIBD – Planning and Business Information Office
- POS – Programme of study
- PS – Professional Services Department
- SPI – School Programme Lead
- SUC – Staff Undergraduate Committee
- UELT – Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

Anytime of the year
FAQ’S

These FAQs are available on the Quality Assurance website at:

https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/faq.html

Programme Approval

Q: There is a revised set of procedures in place for programme and module approval, how do they differ from the system we have been using to until now?

A: In a number of ways. There is an increased emphasis on developing a sound business case at the outset, one that is informed by appropriate market research, for consideration by the Business Case Committee. To compensate, however, there are fewer stages of approval to negotiate subsequently and a greater emphasis on input from the Faculty with regard to development of the curriculum and the completion of specifications. School and Faculty representatives will form Programme Development Teams and attend each stage of the procedure in order to bring specific projects to completion. Full details can be found in Annex C: Programme Approval and Withdrawal of the University’s Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/pdf/AnnexC.pdf

Q: Will the new procedure apply to all new programmes of study?

A: Only to taught programmes of study (UG & PGT) developed by Kent’s Schools, either unilaterally or in collaboration with other Schools or partner providers. New programme of study leading to research degree awards will remain subject to the present procedures for approval as set out in Annex B: Programme Approval and Withdrawal of the University’s Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes. https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/documents/quality-assurance/codes/taught/pdf/AnnexB.pdf There is a real sense that the new procedures for approving taught programmes, with its greater emphasis on business case development and intensive curriculum development by a School / Faculty programme team, will be inappropriate for a new research programme. Of course, should there be a perceived benefit to a specific proposal opting into the more intensive procedure, such as for a new taught doctorate, that could be accommodated.

Also, new programmes submitted directly by partner providers, such as the Validated Institutions or the Partner Colleges, will not be subject to the revised process but will be covered by the relevant procedures set out in Annexes L and O of the Code of Practice respectively.

Q: What will be the involvement of EG in the new process?

A: Any new proposal or area of development that requires the provision of significant new resource (e.g. a new post or posts, significant capital expenditure, significant expansion of space, but not, for example, a small increase in library budget) must first be considered and greenlit by EG before it proceeds to the Business Case Committee. Where no such new resource is required, the proposal will be considered first by the BCC.

Q: How will market research fit within the revised process?

A: Market research will be at the centre and EMS have been closely consulted throughout the project. The intention is that early engagement between EMS and Schools will facilitate
marketing new programmes. All Schools intending to put forward a business case for a new taught programme of study should contact the FSO when it seems this will be a likely possibility. This is so that workload can be planned.

Q: Will there be a concentrated amount of work for business departments/teams supporting the process at business case stage?

A: Schools will be encouraged to inform supporting departments as early as possible to help them plan workloads and FSO will be gatekeepers to the process, supporting other departments by implementing specific deadlines for each new programme and in addition the window for this stage has been made as wide as possible.

Q: Will there be any knock-on effects to the academic calendar?

A: No, there will be a fixed cycle for this specific process but no impact on anything else such as term dates. Please note that in a separate development, there will be discussion in Senate and its Boards during 2017/18 of changing the structure of the academic year. We will discuss what any proposed changes will mean for the programme and module approval process.

Q: What does the new cycle for the approval of programmes look like?

A: It looks like this:

(a) Planning and Development
- Any time of year: Planning of new provision;
- May-February: Development of business cases;
- January-February and early September: Meetings of the Business Case Committee (BCC).

(b) Curriculum Development, Approval and Marketing

UG
- February-July: Curriculum development and approval stages;
- March-April: update on progress at planning round;
- Sept/Oct: end of process and marketing begins for entry. Note – approx. 18 months is needed prior to September entry.

PG
- February-April: Curriculum development and approval stages;
- March-April: update on progress at planning round;
- April: end of process and marketing begins for September +1 year entry.

Q: How can Schools be responsive to student feedback and external examiner recommendations?

A: We would like to retain the facility for someone at Faculty level to allow revisions to take place in July (before the summer vacation period). However, any changes will have to conform with Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements, which have changed recently. There will be a separate taskforce to look at the implications of CMA requirements during 2017/18.
Q: How will work in Schools and relevant committees’ link? How will duplication of effort be avoided?

A: The key players in Schools and Faculties (Directors of Education & Graduate Studies / Associate Deans) will retain their engagement with the process. They will remain the obvious route for coordinating approval activities with local committees. Also, there is a module available to be added to KentVision that will help links between Schools and other units working on approval and tackle the problem of duplication. However, this won’t be ready for this year.

Q: Will there be the option to have electronic updates on the programme/modules process?

A: This is slightly outside the scope of the project. However, because FSO will have more comprehensive engagement with the entire approval process this will facilitate far better communication for everyone. We hope in future to buy a software module for KentVision to facilitate all programme and module development from first idea to marketing.

Q: Under the former system there was a sense that the approval process was fragmented into discrete stages (School / Faculty / University), with staff working in isolation on their part of the process with no real-time insight into developments at any of the other stages. Will we see this end?

A: The revised procedure will allow for explicit engagement between the School and Faculty in developing the curriculum and recommending it for approval to PASC. This will take place in the new School / Faculty Programme Development Team, which will feature a Programme Lead nominated by the School (the SPL). The SPLs will also be invited to attend the meeting of PASC at which their programmes will be considered. Also, as the FSO are now actively participating at every stage of the process will ensure there is a clear workflow.

Q: Will there be further consultation with Schools about the annual timetable for programme and module approval?

A: We have carried out a range of research and consultation to inform the current proposals and we will review in partnership with Schools how the new cycle of approval works for them in May 2018, following discussions throughout 2017/18.

Q: Will there be changes to programme and module specifications?

A: No changes will be made as a result of PMAS changes. However, some minor changes have been incorporated in to the programme specification templates (UG & PGT) in order to foreground the University’s increased emphasis on developing and incorporating inclusive practices in learning and teaching. After this year, we may have to make small changes to the specifications to reflect ongoing work by KentVision on the ‘academic model’: that is, the structures that help to support and create a programme (e.g. start date, exit route, stage structuring.)

Q: Why will it now take so long for a new programme to go from initial idea to admittance of students?

A: For UG we are constrained by UCAS requirements and key periods when prospective students are looking at their options and making their applications. The lead-in time can take as much as two years. We hope that as the new procedures for programme and module approval evolve and bed down, our internal processes should take a shorter time than has
previously been the case. PGT is different as the process is normally completed in a shorter timeframe anyway.

Q: There are times when the University needs to be responsive to the rapidly changing marketplace with its new programme development, can the new system handle that?

A: There is an out-of-cycle “fast-track” option for these cases. This involves getting together a business case and then going through a more time-compressed curriculum development and approvals process. Please note this will be used only in exceptional circumstances and that successful applications are likely to be those that can make the case for acting quickly in order to capitalise on specific opportunities arising in the HE sector and/or market.

Q: Any other key changes arising from the new system that we should be aware of?

A: The approval of new programmes has been largely taken out of the existing School and Faculty Committee structures, with the School and Faculty Development Teams making recommendations directly to PASC. This has a knock-on effect for modules coming forward as part of new programme developments, as the approval will take place on the authority of the Associate Dean assigned to the specific Programme Development Team. New modules coming forward outside of a new programme development will be approved under the arrangements in place prior to the advent of the new methodology. See the QA Codes of practice, Annex B: Approval and Withdrawal of Modules. https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html

Q: The foregoing refers exclusively to the development of new programmes, how will amended programmes of study be treated?

A: Substantially amended programmes of study will proceed through a similar structure, albeit less intensively. Should the Associate Dean be satisfied with the outline of the proposed development s/he will greenlight its development and convene a virtual Programme Development Team (PDT) to consider the full submission via PMAS. The PDT will be empowered to approve modules and makes recommendations on the programme to PASC. See section 6 of Annex C: Programme Approval and Withdrawal of the University’s Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html
LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

EMS:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/ems/

FSO:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/fsb/

QA Codes of Practice:
https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexc.html

KSDD Report:
https://sharepoint.kent.ac.uk/BIPU/KSDD/_layouts/15/start.aspx#/SitePages/Final%20Report.aspx

CONTACTS

If you have any questions on the new PMAS processes, please contact the relevant Faculties Support Officer in the FSO.

The Project will be collating all feedback on the new PMAS process as part of the Pilot. Please send any thoughts, observations, and suggestions for improvements to the below email prior to May 2018:

skone@kent.ac.uk