Academic Course Approval: Design Sprint Procedure (for courses 60 credits or more)

1) Introduction and Context

At Staffordshire University, all new course proposals will be subject to a rigorous course approval procedure. Course approval involves two stages: Strategic Approval and Academic Approval. The approval route and decision-making body will depend on the nature of the proposal and associated level of academic risk as provided in the course approval and amendment policy.

This procedure is for the **academic approval element of the Course Approval and Amendment Policy for courses with a credit value of 60 credits or more**. This includes apprenticeships, professional doctorates and new courses delivered by collaborative academic partners. Major changes to existing courses (revalidation) will also be considered through this procedure.

The procedure aims to be proportionate, evidence-driven, and peer-led and is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

2) Design Sprint Procedure

Once a course (60 credits and over) has gained University level strategic approval, it then progresses to a design sprint. Design sprints enable course design and development to take place with all the relevant stakeholders informing the procedure throughout. Course proposals may join at different stages of the sprint process; the most appropriate design journey will be agreed at the Preliminary meeting (please see section 2a below).

Initially a design sprint team will be established and allocated to each course proposal team to support them through the academic approval stage.

The Design Sprint Team

The design sprint team is made up of the following core members (who will attend all sessions of the sprint):

- Facilitator (Quality Manager, Academic Developer, Member of AQD SMT or Associate Dean)
- Coordinator (Quality Officer)
- Quality Manager (if not the Facilitator)
- Academic Developer (if not the Facilitator)
- Course / Proposal Lead
- Course Director
- Core module leads (recommended number of 4; the inclusion of additional module leads should be agreed with AQS)

The following will also be invited to relevant stages as required. Details of representatives to be invited will be agreed at the Preliminary meeting.

- Digital Pedagogies Representative
- Apprenticeships Quality Manager or nominee (for apprenticeship proposals)
- Head of Post-16 Partnerships (for UK partnership provision)

- Head of International Partnerships (for International Partnership provision)
- School Quality Champions
- Academic from another department or School
- Careers Liaison Manager
- Student representative(s) from the subject area
- Service Users and Carers (where applicable)
- Employers (where applicable)
- Partner representatives (where applicable)

Optional Panel Members: The design sprint procedure compensates one student representative and one core external panel member to attend the Course Refinement and Approval stage. Other relevant attendees, as outlined by the course team, are welcome to attend, however compensation for these attendees will need to be sourced and organised from within School/Department budgets.

The Stages of a Design Sprint

A design sprint is split into a number of individual sessions:

a) Preliminary Meeting between the School / Institute Proposal Leads and the Academic Quality Service

At the preliminary meeting, the Quality Manager will ensure that course teams are fully cognisant of the design sprint procedure and the related timescales, and that appropriate members of staff have been identified for each stage.

It will be agreed at the preliminary meeting where the proposal will join the design sprint procedure. For example, courses for which design work has already been undertaken, or courses that are being revalidated, may join the procedure at a later stage. Any other variations to the standard procedure (for example to meet PSRB requirements or funding body requirements) will also be confirmed at this stage.

Where the proposal involves partners, the Head of Post-16 Partnerships or the Head of International Partnerships (as appropriate) will be invited to join this meeting. For apprenticeship provision the Apprenticeships Quality Manager (or nominee) will be invited.

At the preliminary meeting the plan for the subsequent sprint sessions will also be discussed.

b) Design Sprint Session 1 (half day) – Student Personas and Journey

Before Session 1, course teams should reflect on the following areas, following their Strategic Approval:

a) The unique aspects of the course and the rationale for it being proposed
b) Curriculum design and alignment with the Academic Strategy
c) Employability Framework
d) Inclusive learning
e) Learning resources required
f) Student support arrangements
g) Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours mappings (for Apprenticeship provision)
h) Collaborative regulatory and policy context (for Partnership provision)

The course team should ensure that they have the foundations in place to begin the course design procedure. This includes collating, reviewing and reflecting on essential key features of the course (e.g. QAA Subject Benchmarks, PSRBs). Such documents should be uploaded by the Course Team into their Design Sprint digital space (created by the Academic Quality Service).

Session 1 of the design sprint procedure is key in producing student and graduate personas, which will then inform the intended learning journeys, and identifying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that learners need to gain on the path to completing the course. By the end of the session, the course team will have developed a clear idea of the rationale and a direction for module and course level learning outcomes, based on intended learning journeys.

c) Design Sprint Session 2 (half day) – Design Principles and Learning Outcomes

Session 2 is instrumental in developing the learning objectives for the proposed course(s), in line with backwards design principles. The Academic Developer explores course design principles and guidance on developing learning outcomes. By the end of this session, the team will have produced the first draft of programme outcomes.

d) Design Sprint Session 3 (half day) – Course Structure

At this session, the Academic Developer will guide the team through a series of activities designed to prompt discussion and decision about the learning and teaching and assessment strategies, modes of study and course structure. By the end of this session, the team will have a defined course and module structure.

Between each of these sessions, proposing teams have a period of time to progress their proposals in preparation for each subsequent session. Prior to the curriculum refinement and approval event, a well-developed programme specification and module descriptors will be available.

For **Partnership Provision**, a preparatory session will be included to scrutinise the collaborative context and implementation requirements (this will take place prior to the curriculum refinement and approval event and will look at staff and resource requirements and the production of the implementation plan).

e) Curriculum Refinement and Approval Event

The aim of the curriculum refinement and approval event is to assess the course(s) with relevant key stakeholders, make final changes based on the feedback received and approve the provision on behalf of Quality and Enhancement Committee. The relevant documentation will be sent out the stakeholders 1 week prior to the refinement event (programme specification, module descriptors and staff CVs accompanied by a short overview of the proposal). For partner provision, an additional document covering resource requirements and an implementation plan will also be produced.

The external stakeholders will include:

- External academic from the subject area
- Student representative chosen from a pool of student representatives trained by AQS
- PSRB representative (where required)

A senior academic member of the University (Dean, Associate Dean Heads of Department or member of AQD Senior Management Team) will chair this session.

The first part of the day (half day) will be an online meeting with the stakeholders. At this session, the course team will present the proposal to the stakeholders, with a focus on the following areas:

- The unique aspects of the course and the rationale for it being proposed;
- Curriculum design and alignment with the Academic Strategy
- Employability including the Employability Framework
- Inclusive learning
- Learning resources required (including staffing)
- Approach to Technology Enhanced Learning
- Student Support arrangements
- Fundamental British Values, Prevent, Gateway requirements for end point assessment and end point assessment (for Apprenticeship Provision)
- Partner Schedule (for Partner provision)

This first part of the meeting will be the opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the proposal with the team and identify good practice and further areas of work.

By the end of this discussion both good practice and further areas of work (where required) will be identified. These will be recorded by the Quality Officer. The external stakeholders and Chair will leave at this point.

The remainder of the day is an opportunity for the team to incorporate the feedback received by the stakeholders into the course design, working with the Design Sprint Team, so that by the end of the day the final course and module details are complete. If further time is needed to complete this work this will be agreed by the Design Sprint Team and an agreed deadline noted by the Quality Officer.

3) Course Approval

By the end of this final stage, the course documentation (programme specification, module descriptors and staff CVs) will have been finalised and a short summary report of the event produced by AQS. This final documentation will be submitted for approval by the Chair of the Curriculum Refinement and Approval Event on behalf of QEC. At this point the course is fully validated. Approved courses will be noted by QEC.

For courses delivered by a partner(s), the final documentation will also include a resource and implementation plan for each partner. In these instances, the panel will be approving the course and the delivery of the course by the respective partners.

4) Design Sprint Digital Space

Each School will have a designated digital space within which, each approved course will hold key documentation.

This space will house all the outputs from the sprint activities, support quality assurance and version control elements for paperwork involved with course design and approval procedure and will also be the main communication channel for the sprint team.

5) Revalidation

For provision requiring revalidation, a preliminary meeting will be held with the course team and the aspects of the sprint procedure to be engaged with will be agreed (this can be the full sprint procedure where required). The Curriculum Refinement and Approval event will be required for all provision being revalidated.

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