Policy on the Approval of New Programmes

Introduction

1. When the College establishes a new programme or course, it is vital that it is academically viable, that academic standards have been appropriately defined and that it will offer students the best opportunity to learn.

2. This policy requires processes to be put into place in assuring quality and provides an opportunity to review the information that will be provided to students about the programme to ensure that it complies with Consumer Rights legislation and is clear, up to date and transparent.

3. The aims of the programme approval process are to:

   a. Ensure that each proposed new programme has a sound academic rationale and contributes towards achievement of the strategic aims and objectives of the College.

   b. Ensure that an appropriate business case is in place for each proposed new programme, which demonstrates the viability of the proposed new programme and that appropriate staffing and learning resources are in place for the effective delivery of the programme.

   c. Ensure that each proposed new programme has been designed in such a way as to meet the College's expectations for academic quality and standards, to meet or exceed the expectations of the *UK QAA Quality Code* where relevant, and to meet any appropriate requirements of Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).

Scope

4. This policy applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes leading to a Spurgeon's College award (including awards involving credit accumulation and transfer).

5. It also applies to non-higher education courses run by the College.

6. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'programme' should also be read as referring to non-higher education courses where relevant. The approval process will vary according to whether the programme/course carries higher education credits. Where this is the case, a clear distinction is made between the two.

Responsibilities

7. The responsibility for the programme approval process rests with Spurgeon's College Academic Board, operating under the delegated authority of the Governors and reporting to the Governors on all programme approvals.

8. New programme proposals will be initiated through the relevant Programme Committee. The Programme Committee will begin the planning and advice process for all new programmes. The Programme Committee is also responsible for nominating an External Adviser, who will be subject to approval and appointed by the Academic Board, in consultation with the Academic Director.

9. The Programme Design and Revalidation-Review Committee (PDRRC) is responsible for considering all new programme proposals in terms of strategic fit, business viability and academic standards. It will recommend approval (as relevant) at all three stages of the approval process.

10. The Course Development Working Group is convened by the PDRRC and carries out the detailed work involved in developing the business case and full academic proposal.

11. Once the approval process has been completed to the satisfaction of the PDRRC:

    11.1. For programmes or courses carrying higher education credits:

    - The proposal is sent to the Validation Panel for independent scrutiny. Once the Panel has approved the proposal and any recommendations have been actioned, the proposal is taken to the Academic Board for final approval.

    11.2. For courses that do not carry higher education credits:

    - The proposal is sent straight to the Academic Board for final approval.

Overview of the process

12. There are three stages to the programme approval process:

    a. Strategic approval

    b. Business case approval

    c. Academic approval.

    Each stage corresponds to one of the three aims of the process.

13. The normal expectation is that the three stages of the programme approval process are sequential and success at one stage does not guarantee success at the next stage. Caution should be exercised before starting work on a later stage before the outcome of the preceding stage is known.

Advice and Consultation

14. The programme proposer should consult the relevant Programme Committee for advice on approval arrangements, the support available and timescales.

15. The development of new programmes is underpinned by academic and professional peer review by internal and external experts. The proposer should

seek views and in-principle support from professional colleagues internally before embarking on the process.

16. Stakeholder engagement is also a key element of the process. Stakeholders must have been consulted about the proposed new programme or course at the strategic approval stage. Appropriate mechanisms for achieving this will vary according to the programme being proposed. It is especially important that students should be consulted or engaged in the development of the proposal at the academic stage.

17. External advisers are appointed by the College in relation to proposed new programmes and give advice at the Academic Approval stage of the process.

18. External advisers play an important role in supporting the College to discharge its responsibility for ensuring that proposed new programmes meet the expectations of the *UK Quality Code*, and that the academic quality and standards of proposed programmes are at least comparable to those in similar subjects in other UK Higher Education Institutions. They act as 'critical friends' by providing informed, independent and impartial judgments, and are given serious consideration at relevant stages of the process.

Strategic Approval

19. New programme proposals will be initiated through the relevant Programme Committee.

20. The Programme Committee will consider the initial idea, and if it is thought viable, will advise the proposer/s to complete *sections A and B of the New Programmes Approval Form* which is then sent to the Senior Management Team for consideration and if appropriate, for approval.

21. If approved the form is sent to the PDRRC. The summary of the key elements of the proposed new programme will allow the PDRRC to come to a decision on whether the potential strategic benefits of the proposed programme are sufficient to justify the allocation of time and resources to develop a fuller proposal.

22. Both the Senior Management Team and the relevant Programme Committee must approve the strategic proposal before it is submitted to the PDRRC for consideration against common criteria. The information must demonstrate that:

    a. There is a clear and appropriate academic rationale for the proposed programme;

    b. The proposed programme will support the achievement of the College's academic and strategic objectives;

    c. There is sufficient evidence of likely student demand for the programme to merit carrying out further market research.

23. The PDRRC will consult stakeholders at this stage.

24. In offering new programmes, the College must comply with regulations published by the Competition and Market Authority (CMA).

25. The information likely to be subject to these requirements is denoted *CMA* on the New Programmes Assessment form.

26. Having considered all of the information submitted, the PDRRC and Senior Management Team will complete Section C of the New Programmes Approval Form. They will either:

   a) grant permission for the Programme Committee to develop a Business Case;

   b) reject the proposal; or

   c) the form is referred back to the Programme proposer for revision.

Business Case Approval

27. Following strategic approval, the PDRRC should convene a Course Development Working Group to prepare and submit a Business Case for the proposed programme by completing sections D, E and F of the New Programmes Approval Form.

28. Business Case must demonstrate:

   - a full academic and strategic rationale for the proposed programme.

   - clear and sufficient evidence of sustainable market demand, or compelling non-monetary strategic reason for running the Programme.

   - appropriate resources are in place or identified to support the delivery of the programme and provide a high quality student learning experience.

29. Section E on resource requirements should be completed. This section requires consideration of staffing implications and other resources such as IT, the library, pastoral support, catering, accommodation, consumables and space requirements.

30. The Business Case should include a financial assessment. The financial case should be demonstrated for a minimum 5 year period or an estimated period before recruitment reaches a steady state. It should include full estimates of costs, revenues and the impact of the proposed programme on the College. An example Financial Model is available in the New Programmes Financial Assessment Form, which should be submitted with this form for approval.

31. A proposed fee structure should also be submitted and approved by the Finance Manager.

32. Further advice on completing the Business Case is contained in Appendix 1.

33. The Business case will be considered by the PDRRC who will reach one of the following decisions in section G of the New Programme Approval Form:

   - Permission is granted for the Course Development Working Group to develop/finalise and submit for consideration the Academic Case proposal for the programme(s).

   - The Business Case for the programme(s) is rejected and no further development of the Business Case or Academic Case should take place.

   - The Business Case is referred back to the Course Development Working Group for revision.

Academic Approval

34. On approval of the business case, the Course Development Working Group should prepare and submit a full academic proposal. This should demonstrate that the proposed programme will meet internal and external requirements and reference points for academic quality and standards.

<u>External Adviser</u>

35. At this stage, an external adviser must be appointed for each proposed new programme. Where a group of cognate programmes have been proposed together a single external adviser may be appointed to consider and comment on all programmes in that group.

36. External advisers are nominated by the Chair of the Programme Committee proposing a programme by the Academic Board in consultation with the Academic Director. If a nomination is approved, the Programme Committee is responsible for confirming with an external adviser that they have been appointed and that:

   a) they are willing to accept this appointment;

   b) provide the external adviser with the information they need; and

   c) obtain the external adviser's report.

37. In order to be appointed, a proposed external adviser should meet the following criteria:

   a. Possess appropriate and substantial levels of relevant and recent teaching and/or research expertise and experience in relation to the proposed programme.

   b. Command authority in their field, and the respect of colleagues.

   c. Not be a recent student or member of staff of the College (i.e. at least five years must have elapsed since their studies or employment at the College ended).

   d. Not be a current or recent (i.e. the last five years) external examiner in the academic department proposing the programme.

38. The external adviser should be provided with the completed New Programmes Approval form (up to section H).

39. This will include:

   • Draft programme and unit specifications (guidance on Programme Specifications is contained in Appendix 2)

   • Draft programme regulations

   • Details of the teaching and learning methods

   • Proposed assessment methods, criteria and integrity safeguards

   • Details of feedback mechanisms for students

   • How learning support needs will be met

   • How placements will operate and be monitored

40. External advisers must complete and submit an 'External Adviser Report Form – New Programmes' which sets out key issues relating to academic quality and standards and any other issues they wish to raise.

41. The Programme Committee is required to consider any comments made by the external adviser, and respond to these as part of the Academic Approval stage.

42. Any fee paid to an external adviser will be agreed upon appointment and payable on receipt of the signed report from the adviser.

Student consultation

43. Programme proposers must consult with current students to obtain their views on the proposed programme and keep records of the process and outcomes.

Approval route for higher education programmes/courses

44. The College's Validation Panel will meet to consider the academic proposal. The programme proposer will be invited to the Panel to discuss their proposed programme. They may be accompanied by other colleagues involved in the proposed programme, if they feel this would support the consideration of the proposed programme.

45. The Validation Panel will consider the full academic proposal, in relation to the following criteria which must be met for a proposed programme to be approved:

a. The academic standards of the proposed programme meet those defined by the QAA *Framework of Higher Education Qualifications*; relevant subject benchmarks; where appropriate the requirements of professional bodies.

b. The programme design is coherent in terms of design, delivery and structure.

c. The programme design has taken account of equality and diversity issues.

d. The content and level of the curriculum of the programme is designed to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes; promotes intellectual progression during the course or the programme; and is up to date.

e. There are assessment criteria in place that are clear and which discriminate between different levels of student achievement.

f. Appropriate arrangements are in place for obtaining feedback from students, and informing students of the outcome of consideration of this feedback.

g. Appropriate resources are in place to support the programme.

h. For programmes involving placement learning, that the design of the placement enables students to achieve specific intended learning outcomes, at the appropriate level given the timing of the placement within the programme; and that there are appropriate management and communication structures in place with the placement provider and students.

i. Where the placement is assessed:

- the proposed methods of assessment and feedback are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes and the structure of the placement;

- mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the security and consistency of assessment and marking procedures;
- resit opportunities are appropriate;
- all staff involved are suitably trained.

j. Where appropriate, any PSRB requirements have been taken into consideration.

46. Evidence of the decision making or approval process should be recorded and submitted to the Academic Board as necessary, e.g. reports or minutes of meetings.

Approval route for non-higher education courses

47. For Courses that do not attract academic credit, the academic case will be considered by the PDRRC against all the criteria set out in paragraph 45 except a.

48. Evidence of the decision making or approval process should be recorded and submitted to the Academic Board as necessary e.g. reports or minutes of meetings.

Academic recommendation

49. The Validation Panel or PDRRC must reach a judgment as to whether the proposed programme meets the relevant criteria, recording this in a report of the meeting. They should then complete section I of the New Programmes Approval Form and make one of the following recommendations:

a. The proposed programme meets the criteria for approval of new programmes, and should be taken to the Academic Board for approval.

b. The proposed programme does not meet the criteria for proposed programmes, and that further work should take place to revise the full proposal for re-submission to the Validation Panel Board/PDRRC for consideration (at a further meeting, through consultation or by Chair's action as agreed).

c. The proposed programme does not meet the criteria for proposed programmes and should be rejected, with no opportunity for resubmission.

50. The Validation Panel/PDRRC can also impose conditions and make recommendations relating to the proposed programme.

Final Approval by the Academic Board

51. Once the Validation Panel or the PDRRC have approved the proposed programme, it will then be taken to the Academic Board for final approval. This should be documented in Section J of the New Programmes Approval Form. This approval is required for a programme to be marketed and for recruitment and admissions to begin.

52. Decisions made should be fed back to key stakeholders.

Timescales

53. The timeline for the development and approval of each new programme will be impacted by internal and external drivers e.g. marketing, timetabling or the requirements of external bodies such as UCAS. It will be agreed between the relevant Programme Committee and the Academic Board taking into account academic, operational and marketing planning requirements.

54. The College's use of UCAS for undergraduate admissions means that the following timescales must be followed in relation to the approval of and recruitment to, undergraduate programmes. All new undergraduate programmes must have received final approval by the Academic Board no later than 31 May of the calendar year prior to the first admission to the programme (for example an undergraduate programme admitting its first students in September 2018 must have received full approval by 31 May 2017).

Document control box			
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Approving body		Governors	
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Member of staff responsible		Academic Director	

Appendix 1: Additional information for a Business Case

Strategic Rationale for the proposed programme

I. Consider:
- The strategic aims and objectives of the College
- The academic reputation and strengths of the College. Particular specialisms or combinations of subjects unique to the College
- Links to research
- Opportunities presented by the availability of new sources of funding
- Professional/statutory body requirements
- New developments within a subject area
- Utilisation of new areas of staff expertise or sources of funding
- Reorganisation of previously offered programmes into a new structure for reasons of economies of scale, shared teaching, utilisation of course units offered in other programmes etc.
- Widening student choice
- Creation of opportunities for progression for further study

Supporting the academic case

II. Points you may want to consider and include are:
- Are there similar programmes running at other UK HE institutions? If similar programmes exist, what would be attractive/unique about the Spurgeon's College programme?
- If the programme does not already exist elsewhere, what is the target market for the programme and what demand would be generated?
- Is the programme a Spurgeon's College first in a new area which may lead to the delivery of other new courses?
- Consider any potential overlap with other programmes in the College.
- Consult with colleagues about the impact the new programme may have on existing provision.
- eLearning opportunities to extend or open up new markets.

Demonstrating demand

III. This section should include a statement of the anticipated level of student recruitment for the first 5 years of the programme's operation.

IV. Has any direct market research been carried out? For example, have students attending open days in the College been asked if they would be interested in this programme? Has it been discussed with any schools, Sixth Form Colleges, or with current students or employer groups?

V. In providing evidence that there is demand for the programme you may wish to consider the following:

- statistical evidence: HESA data, college data;
- market gaps;
- national trends: in the area, other areas which may impact on this discipline, feeder subjects;
- potential for growth;
- student enquiries in this area;
- attractiveness to students;

- size of the recruitment pool – anticipated number of home and overseas students;
- what is being offered by competitor institutions; if so how successful are they in recruitment;
- student/alumni/employer/Professional Body feedback;
- entry requirements (academic and non-academic) which may have a bearing on likely recruitment;
- other issues that may affect demand such as availability of student accommodation or facilities.

<u>Financial Assessment</u>

VI. The financial viability of the programme should be considered and detailed for a minimum three year period or an estimated period before recruitment reaches a steady state. This should include full estimates of costs, revenues and the impact of the proposed programme on the College. A student fee structure will also need to be agreed.

VII. An example financial model is available in the **New Programmes Financial Assessment Form**, which should be submitted for approval.

VIII. The Financial assessment should consider the following:

<u>Income</u>

- List the base assumptions in terms of student fee levels (home and overseas); OFS grants.
- Classify the projected total income according to the stated projected student numbers and base assumptions for fees, bursaries or other income

<u>Expenditure</u>

- List the base assumptions for staff costs according to role and level.
- Staff time for programme design and development (academic and administration)
- Staff time for programme management
  - Recruitment and admissions (and placements if relevant)
  - Management and administration
  - Registry
  - Student support
- Teaching supervision and assessment costs
  - Preparation time
  - Teaching time
  - Assessment time
  - Supervision time
- Other costs
  - Marketing
  - Technical support
  - Materials/equipment
  - Catering/library/accommodation etc.

Appendix 2: Programme Specification Guidance

<u>What is a Programme Specification?</u>

I.   The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) expects that a definitive record of each programme and qualification is maintained by the College. This record acts as a reference point for the delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of the programme and is designed to be shared with academic and professional support staff, students, internal and external examiners, professional and statutory bodies, and academic reviewers. The record will be updated as and when amendments to the programme or learning outcomes are approved.

II.   Programme specifications are used for this purpose and they should make explicit the intended outcomes in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and other attributes.

III. They should help students to understand the teaching and learning methods that enable the outcomes to be achieved; the assessment methods that enable the outcomes to be demonstrated; and the relationship of the programme and its study elements to the qualifications framework and to any subsequent professional qualification and career path.

IV.   They should help the student to understand:

- the aims and structure of the programme;

- how different units contribute to the overall aims;

- and what makes the programme offered at Spurgeon's College distinctive.

V.   They should also provide information on:

- how a student will progress through the programme;

- how they can expect to develop from year to year;

- and what knowledge, understanding and skills they can expect to have acquired by the time they graduate.

VI.   Claims about learning outcomes must be supported by evidence of how they are developed and, where appropriate, assessed.

VII. Usually programme specifications are drafted by groups of staff including a number of colleagues involved in the delivery of the programme. The process should also involve student input. A programme specification is required for all programmes and should be reviewed regularly to keep them up to date.

<u>How do I write a Programme Specification?</u>

VIII. The purpose of this guidance is to provide advice on the writing of programme specifications, not to be prescriptive. The guidance centres on the minimum core content required in programme specifications but there is no prescribed format for this.

IX.   A programme specification document should contain information on the following topics:

Summary

- Awarding body/institution
- Teaching institution (if different)
- Details of accreditation by a professional/statutory body (if any)
- Name of the final award *(include details of any exit awards, if relevant)*
- Programme title
- UCAS code (undergraduate only)
- Subject benchmark (not applicable for research degrees)
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- The role of the programme specification (generic statement of purpose)
- Date at which the programme specification was written or revised
- Further links to other relevant information such as programme handbooks,

Aims and intended learning outcomes

X. It may be helpful in terms of both aims and intended learning outcomes to refer to the development of discipline-specific skills, knowledge and understanding, intellectual and practical skills, and personal qualities, though this need not be done under separate headings.

Aims of the programme

XI. This section should act as a "mission statement" for the programme and should be written to enthuse students about studying this particular programme. What is the programme's overall purpose? What makes it distinctive? Why have these aims been settled on?

XII. The aims are for the programme as a whole. It may be helpful to refer to links with current research and scholarship, and the employability of graduates.

XIII. Items mentioned in the 'Aims of the programme' should be able to be demonstrated through a combination of learning outcomes in the next section.

XIV. It is accepted that aims may be quite general and may not cover all aspects of the programme. It is not advisable to state too many aims.

Intended learning outcomes

XV. The learning outcomes should set out what students should be able to do on successful completion of the programme. They should be determined by considering what the typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities.

XVI. Programme learning outcomes will often be different from unit learning outcomes; they will be more than the sum of the unit learning outcomes. It should however be possible to evidence the programme learning outcomes through a combination of unit learning outcomes.

XVII. It is not expected that the programme specification will list every learning outcome associated with the programme. The specification is a concise summary rather than an exhaustive description.

XVIII. For undergraduate programmes, intended learning outcomes should be listed for each year of the programme as markers for student progression. Outcomes for the programme as a whole should also be provided.

XIX. For postgraduate taught and research programmes, aims and intended learning outcomes should be provided for the complete programme. Separate outcomes for exit awards at postgraduate level are not required.

XX. Staff setting up a new programme or revising an existing programme may wish to discuss with potential employers or accreditation bodies the intended learning outcomes that employers are particularly looking for.

Teaching, learning and assessment methods

XXI. A summary of teaching, learning and assessment methods for the programme

- The particular approaches to teaching, learning and assessment for the programme as a whole should be noted, including any distinctive or innovative features such as major independent work or unique project work.

- Students should also be made aware of the breadth of types of assessment involved in the programme.

- Programme specifications are not required to contain lists of every teaching, learning and assessment method for every unit; the exact assessment will depend on the students' selection of units. Students may therefore find it helpful if this section of the programme specification includes a cross-reference (a web link if possible) to unit specifications.

XXII. Support for student learning and development

- Provide an overview of sources of support for students on the programme.

- Detail specific support including support for part-time, disabled, overseas students, skills support, English Language, supervision for research degrees and generic and subject skills training.

Programme structure

XXIII. A summary of the programme structure and requirements

- For each year or component of study, a list of the mandatory units and the credit rating for each of these units should be noted. Also the total amount of credit that can be taken as optional units should be listed and cross-referenced (by a web link if possible) to the appropriate unit specifications.

- Requirements for exit awards and any specified pathways should also be made clear.

- A curriculum (or skills) map of units and learning outcomes is not required but it may be included if the Programme staff believe that students will find it useful. If a skills map is not included then particular care should be taken to ensure that a narrative is provided that explains how the programme fits together. The QAA website provides examples of how partial skills maps can be used.

Mechanisms for programme revision

XXIV. A summary of what the procedures are for revising the programme and in particular how feedback from students feeds into this process. This might involve reference to annual monitoring, the procedures for dealing with the outcome of unit questionnaires and what use is made of other methods for gaining student feedback.