



Programme Approval Policy

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Programme Approval Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out the University's processes relating to the approval of all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes (as defined in [Senate Regulations 2 and 3](#)); and all research degree programmes (as defined in [Senate Regulation 5](#)) involving formal taught elements (e.g., professional doctorates).¹ The Policy aligns with the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education's Advice and Guidance for Course Design and Development](#), and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the [European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG), section 1.2.
- 1.2 For apprenticeship programmes, this policy is informed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) [Apprenticeship Funding Rules](#); and Ofsted's [Education Inspection Framework](#).
- 1.3 Please note that there may be deviation from the processes defined in this Policy due to the nature of an initiative. Confirmation of the process for approval for each proposed programme will be determined at the strategic approval phase.
- 1.4 All documents relating to programme approval are available [here](#).
- 1.5 For guidance on the approval of new PhD routes, please see Additional Guidance section.

2 Principles of the Programme Approval Process

- 2.1 Programmes are designed, developed and scrutinised against a range of reference points to ensure that:
- the academic standard is commensurate with the proposed award(s);
 - the student experience will be of appropriate quality to support the achievement of the required standard;
 - the requirements of the University's Education Strategy; and the expectations of external bodies such as the OfS; QAA, including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications FHEQ; and where relevant, the ESFA and Ofsted, are met.

¹ The development, scrutiny and approval of short courses (i.e., non award-bearing provision) are subject to a separate policy.

Recognised Programme Developers (RPD)

- 2.2 Programme approval at Brunel University London is underpinned by the role of the “Recognised Programme Developer” (RPD). An RPD is an academic member of staff trained in: programme design and development methods; sector expectations; University programme structure and assessment regulations; and equality, diversity and inclusion. Additionally, in-role training is provided for RPDs without significant experience of programme development and review.
- 2.3 RPDs ensure appropriate expertise is brought to the programme design, scrutiny and approval process. Their role is either as a Programme Design Team member or as a member of a Panel scrutinising a programme.
- 2.4 A register of Recognised Programme Developers is maintained by Quality Assurance and is available [here](#).

3 Programme Approval Categories and Timelines

- 3.1 Programme approval at the University is split in to three categories, each with specific requirements regarding strategic and academic approval, and the date by which each stage should be achieved. An overview and explanation of the programme approval process is provided in Section 4 of this Policy.

Table 1

Programme Approval Category		Final Strategic Approval Body	Final Academic Approval Body	Strategic Approval Achieved by:	Final Academic Approval Achieved by:
1	New programmes – includes development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a programme in a new discipline; a new programme in a discipline where allied provision already exists. 	a) Executive Board – Business Case b) Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel (SASP)	Senate	24 months prior to the first planned intake	12 months prior to the first planned intake
2	Programme Variations - development of a programme which is a variation of an existing programme (includes existing programmes to be delivered through a TNE arrangement).	a) Executive Board – Business Case b) SASP	Senate	18 months prior to the first planned intake	12 months prior to the first planned intake
Brunel University London Pathway College					
3	New Validated Programme Element	As defined in the Collaborative Operations Manual	College Education Committee/s and Chair of University Education Committee	18 months prior to the first planned intake	12 months prior to the first planned intake

- 3.2 Chairs of the relevant approval bodies referred to in Table 1 may act on their behalf to grant approval, given that formal scrutiny by an appropriate body will have already taken place. Such Chair's actions will be reported to the next meeting of the approval body.
- 3.3 Where a new BPC programme element is developed at the same time as the associated new University programme, the approval process for the BPC programme element will be incorporated into the approval process for the University programme.
- 3.4 Where an existing BPC programme element is to be approved as a validated element of a new University programme, strategic approval is gained at the point at which the University programme receives strategic approval. Academic approval of the inclusion of the BPC programme as a validated element of a new University programme is incorporated into the academic approval of the University programme.
- 3.5 For information on how existing programmes may be modified, please see the Programme Modification Policy.

4 **Programme Approval Process**

- 4.1 Programme approval involves six distinct stages. This diagram provides a visual representation of the full programme approval process.



Stage 1 – Department level Scrutiny and Approval

- 4.2 Proposals for all categories of programme approval should be considered and endorsed by the relevant Board of Studies (where an appropriate BoS already exists) and Department Management Board, and this should be recorded in the minutes of each meeting. In order for a proposal to be submitted for strategic approval, the BoS and DMB should confirm in the minutes of meeting that it endorses the development of the programme.
- 4.3 During this early stage, the development lead should consult with Brunel Pathway College regarding any proposed integration of a validated programme element in to the proposed Brunel programme/s.

Stage 2 – Strategic Approval

- 4.4 Proposals for new Brunel programmes are considered by a College Management Board (CMB) initially, and if approved at that level, are then submitted to the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel (SASP) for final strategic approval by the University.
- 4.5 Proposals for New Brunel Programmes are made using the “Strategic Approval New Programmes” form (available [here](#)) and must be submitted for consideration by SASP, via the Vice-Dean Education of the relevant College, to quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk
- 4.6 The process for the strategic approval of new BPC Programmes is set out in the Collaborative Operations Manual.

The outcome of the Strategic Approval Phase is formal approval for the development of a new programme and also confirmation of the Programme Review Route (see Section 6 of this Policy).

Stage 3 – Programme Design

- 4.7 This stage involves the design of a programme by a Programme Design Team. This will involve meetings between academic staff, students, Quality Assurance, senior College administrative staff and central service departments. Relevant external stakeholders such as industrial advisors and accrediting bodies must also be involved in the development phase. For Apprenticeship programmes, significant engagement with employers is a requirement.

The outcome of the Programme Design phase is a formal set of documents to be scrutinised at the Programme Review Stage.

Stage 4 – Programme Review

- 4.8 This stage incorporates the actual review of the proposed programme.

The outcome of the Programme Review stage will be one of the following:

- *recommendation for Final Academic Approval by the relevant body;*
- *a set of conditions which must be met prior to Academic Approval being recommended;*
- *recommendation that the proposed programme undergo significant redevelopment and be considered through a further programme review*

Stage 5 – Academic Approval

- 4.9 The outcome report from the Programme Review stage and the programme specification/s will go to the College Education Committee (CEC) for consideration and recommendation to Senate for Final Academic Approval. Submission to Senate is via the College Education Committee Report or where appropriate, a request may be made for approval by Chair's action.

The outcome of the Academic Approval Stage is an approved programme which can move on to the administrative set-up and Operational Implementation phase.

- 4.10 Communication to all stakeholders regarding the Academic Approval of a programme is the responsibility of Quality Assurance.

Stage 6 – Administrative Set-Up and Operational Implementation

- 4.11 This stage involves:

- finalisation and publication of documentation (e.g. programme specification and block outlines);
- setting up of web pages for marketing; and UCAS pages for recruitment; and
- the setting up or amending of the current programme on SITS (including progression and awarding rules).

- 4.12 For Apprenticeship programmes, administrative set-up will include the creation of the initial assessment template, which is the responsibility of the University's Apprenticeship Hub, in collaboration with the Programme Design Team.

The outcome of the Administrative Set-Up and Operational Implementation Stage is the complete set-up of a programme so that students may commence, progress and be awarded in line with the programme specification and Senate Regulations.

5 **Programme Review Routes**

5.1 The Programme Review Stage will be conducted according to the typical Routes identified in Table 2 below. Each Route is made up of the following three elements, which, when combined, establish a Programme Review Route:

1. The review format (how the review will be conducted)
2. The documentation requirements (which documents will be considered)
3. The Panel composition (who will consider the proposal)

5.2 The following table identifies Programme Review Routes for different categories of programme approval. Further detail on the particulars of each Route can be found Sections 7 to 9 of this Policy.

Table 2

Programme Approval Category		Route Details
1	New programmes	1. Two Stage review 2. Standard Document Set 3. Enhanced Panel
2	Programme Variations	1. Single Stage review 2. Standard Document Set 3. Standard Panel
3	Brunel Pathway College – New Validated Programme Element	1. Single Stage review 2. Standard Document Set 3. Internal Panel

5.3 In addition to these typical routes, the University may permit bespoke Programme Review Routes to meet the specific requirements of the programme proposal. Appendix A will be used by the University's Quality Assurance Team to determine non-typical Programme Review Routes.

Confirmation of Programme Review Route

5.4 Quality Assurance makes recommendations to the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel on Programme Review Routes, at the Strategic Approval stage. Recommendations are made on the basis of information available at the point of strategic approval, and therefore the Programme Review Route may change at a later date.

5.5 Confirmation of the Programme Review Route will be recorded in the minutes of the relevant meeting.

- 5.6 Following confirmation of the Programme Review Route, Quality Assurance will provide the Programme Design Team with a Review Route Details document, clarifying all stages and requirements.

6 Programme Design

Programme Design Teams

- 6.1 Every initiative to develop a new programme should include the formation of a “Programme Design Team”, which is identified at the Strategic Approval Stage. The typical composition of the team will be:

- Programme Design Leader, who is also the Lead Academic (typically)
- An RPD, normally from within the College
- At least two academic staff members from the Department/Division
- Appropriate education administration staff from within the College
- Quality Assurance Manager for the College
- For Apprenticeship programmes:
 - One of the academic members of staff must have experience of delivering apprenticeship programmes
 - Apprenticeship Hub Manager
- For programmes to be delivered online, appropriate involvement should be sought from staff with experience in online pedagogy and programme design, and from the University’s external partner for Brunel Online programmes.
- For the development of Validated Programme Elements, the Design Team should include staff from both BPC and the relevant Brunel Department/s.

Student Involvement in Programme Design

- 6.2 Programme Design Teams should involve current or former students in the design process. This may be through:
- Membership of the Programme Design Team and attendance at meetings
 - Focus groups
 - Providing feedback on key document

Stakeholder Involvement in Programme Design

- 6.3 Programme Design Teams must seek views and feedback during the design process from stakeholders, including: current students; former students (where relevant); employers; PSRBs; and collaborative partner organisations (where relevant).
- 6.4 Where an Apprenticeship programme is being developed, partnership with employers in the design of the programme is a requirement.

Engagement with Central and Academic Services

- 6.5 To support the efficient design and set up of new programmes, Programme Design Teams should engage with the following central services as required.

Table 3

Central or Academic Service	Areas to Explore to explore during the design phase
SITS Data Management (Ops Team)	<p>The SITS Data Management Team should be consulted with regarding a new programme to explore any additional requirements regarding set up. Programme Design Teams should note the following examples and where appropriate, a meeting with the SITS Data Management Team should take place, by contacting sdm@brunel.ac.uk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end dates, particularly where programmes do not follow the 'normal' September start, and the length of the programme. • Whether there are BPC entry points (as these have to be set up in addition to the Brunel entry points). • Whether the programmes are non-standard and require any specific progression and/or awarding rules that sit outside of the standard Senate Regulations (e.g. where there might be more than the standard credits; whether specific modules have to be passed and at what grade in order to be awarded; whether any modules span levels; whether levels span academic years, and at what point in the academic year would students progress to the next level where this occurs). It's often helpful to have a 'map' or diagram of the programme where there are complexities involved. • What fee band applies to the programme. • Whether there are any accreditation requirements, particularly where these might also affect progression and awarding (e.g. credit limits within a grade band).
Office of Student Complaints, Conduct & Academic Appeals (OSCCA)	<p>For programmes where the professional suitability of students is of relevance, a meeting between the Programme Design Team and the University's Office of Student Complaints, Conduct & Academic Appeals (OSCCA) is required. Each programme, or suite of programmes will need to be considered against both Senate Regulation 14 and the relevant professional body requirements. Any specific requirements not catered within the Regulation can be accommodated in the appropriate appendix. It is important that professional suitability arrangements for a new programme are in place before the first cohort enrolls and for this reason final approval of any new SR14 appendix should be achieved alongside final academic approval of the programme. Programme Design Teams should read paragraphs 1 and 2 of Senate Regulation 14 to establish whether the proposed programme falls within its remit. If unsure, please contact the Manager of OSCCA (lisa.alderon@brunel.ac.uk).</p>
Professional Development Centre (PDC)	<p>The PDC can support Design Teams in planning and developing employability content within their programme, offering ideas and examples of best practice used across the University. PDC have</p>

Central or Academic Service	Areas to Explore to explore during the design phase
	<p>a team of dedicated subject specialist Careers Consultants and Placement Advisors that are able to support Design Teams in programme development in relation to employability, including how to deliver employability focused workshops/lectures. In addition to this, the PDC have access to a range of digital resources and subscription services which will be of relevance. For further information please contact: careers@brunel.ac.uk</p> <p>If the programme being developed has a period of placement learning, the PDC's Deputy Director (Placements) will be required to confirm that the appropriate resource is available to support this option and therefore a meeting with the Design Team is a requirement. The PDC will also be able to provide further information and advice on setting up a placement option and the practicalities of putting this in place. For further information contact: placements@brunel.ac.uk</p>
Apprenticeship Hub	<p>For any Apprenticeship programme, engagement between a Design Team and the Apprenticeship Hub is essential. The Apprenticeship Hub can provide Design Teams with specialist guidance and support when designing an Apprenticeship programme. This will include providing the most appropriate references or resources to help map the proposed programme to Apprenticeship standards and Ofsted requirements. The Apprenticeship Hub can also provide examples of sector best practice in Apprenticeships and help Design Teams embed employer engagement, literacy and numeracy, and other external quality expectations into a programme. The Hub has expertise in Apprenticeship funding, compliance and quality criteria, and can provide training on key aspects of Apprenticeships including design, on-boarding, delivery and monitoring.</p>

7 Review Format

7.1 The format for the review of a new programme will be one of the following.

Table 4

Review Format	Method	Detail
	Two Stage Review	This method includes two meetings: 1. Informal Review - This is an opportunity for select members of the Programme Review Panel to meet with the Programme Design Team to discuss the draft programme proposal in a supportive and collaborative manner. Programme Design Teams should use the feedback provided at this meeting to help develop the final documentation and programme proposal. Quality Assurance will facilitate the meeting. 2. Programme Review Meeting – this involves a meeting of the entire Programme Review Panel with the Programme Design Team to discuss the final programme proposal. The Panel will meet in private initially before discussing the programme design with the Programme Design Team.
	Single Stage Review	This method includes a single Programme Review Meeting (see above). The Panel will meet in private initially before discussing the programme design with the Programme Design Team.
	Scrutiny by correspondence	This method requires scrutiny of the programme documentation by one or more Scrutineers, outside of any formal meeting. Scrutineers may meet to discuss the proposal, however, there is no requirement for a formal meeting with the Programme Design Team.

Organisation of Review Meetings

7.2 Quality Assurance is responsible for organising and formally reporting on Programme Review meetings.

7.3 Programme Review meetings will typically take place online.

Informal Review Meetings for Two-Stage Reviews

- 7.4 The timing and attendance for an informal review meeting is agreed between Quality Assurance and the Programme Design Team. There is no formal report from this meeting, however, key points will be circulated to all attendees by Quality Assurance.
- 7.5 An Informal Review meeting does not require a Chair. Quality Assurance will facilitate the meeting and help support attendees in their discussion.
- 7.6 Panel membership for this meeting will typically be three members, including either the Chair or External Reviewer.

Outcomes from Programme Review Meetings

- 7.7 The outcome from a programme review meeting will be one of the following:
- The programme can be recommended to the College Education Committee for consideration;
 - The programme can be recommended to the College Education Committee for consideration, pending all conditions being addressed satisfactorily;
 - The programme cannot be recommended to the College Education Committee at this stage and should undergo significant redevelopment and be considered through a further programme review.
- 7.8 At the conclusion of the programme review meeting, the Programme Team will be provided with brief verbal feedback regarding the decision of the Programme Review Panel. Should there be any conditions and/or recommendations, the Quality Assurance Manager will send these in writing to the Programme Team as soon as possible after the meeting. The Programme Team must respond, in writing, to the conditions by the date agreed at the programme review meeting, usually this will be within one calendar month of the meeting. Whilst there is no requirement to respond to Recommendations, a written response about how they will be addressed will provide further confidence to the Panel.

8 Documentation

8.1 The documentation submitted at the Programme Review Stage will be one of the following categories.

Table 5

Documentation	Category	Requirements
	Standard Set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Approval Request Form, Scrutiny Report, and any other reports produced for this stage • QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (if extant) • Accrediting body expectations (where appropriate) • Programme <u>Design</u> Summary (max 20 pages) or Programme <u>Delivery</u> Summary • Programme Specification(s) • All Modular/Assessment/Study Block Outlines • HEAR description for the programme/s (for undergraduate programmes only) • Programme Design Endorsement Form (for collaborative cross-department or cross-college programmes) • Where applicable, proposed amendments to Senate Regulations or University policies.
	Programme Documents and Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Approval Executive Summary • Programme Specification/s (with tracked changes where required) • All relevant Modular/Assessment/Study Block Outlines (with tracked changes where required) • Where applicable, proposed amendments to Senate Regulations or University policies, including any new appendices.

Amendments to Senate Regulations and University Policy

8.2 Where the proposed programme is to require an amendment to Senate Regulations or University Policy, this documentation will be developed alongside the programme documentation and will be submitted to the Programme Review Panel, alongside evidence of endorsement by the relevant member of staff or department, for noting.

Additional requirements for Apprenticeship Programmes

8.3 Where the programme being proposed is an Apprenticeship, the following documentation must also be submitted:

- Apprenticeship Training Plan Specification
- Completed Ofsted Readiness Assessment
- Completed programme costings
- Apprenticeship Standard
- Tripartite review form template

Programme Design Summary

8.4 The Programme Design Summary provides a narrative to support the programme specification and block outlines. This document, to be devised by the Programme Design Team, should be no more than 20 pages and must cover, at minimum, the following areas:

- Rationale for Development of the Programme (including alignment with the College and Brunel's education strategies)
- Overview of programme design phase
- Overview of programme
- Programme Structure (typically in diagrammatic form)
- Assessment strategy
- Teaching and learning strategy
- Resource requirements/impact
- Placement Support (including where students will typically undertake placements)
- For Apprenticeship Programmes:
 - A detailed explanation (with supporting examples) for how learning is to be evidenced, and how the requirement for 20% off the job training is to be monitored and ensured.
 - A detailed explanation for how the programme prepares apprentices for the End-point Assessment.
 - For integrated apprenticeships, a detailed explanation of how the University will deliver this element.
 - A detailed explanation for how the programme will manage tripartite reviews including frequency, staffing and format.

8.5 The Programme Design Summary is to be considered alongside the programme specification and block outlines and thus there should be minimal repetition in the information provided. For Apprenticeship programmes much of the detail expected to be covered in a Design Summary may be presented in the Training Plan specification.

Programme Delivery Summary

8.6 Where the proposal is to deliver an already approved programme through an approved collaborative partner, a Programme Delivery Summary will be produced. In this instance, the focus of the Programme Review is the delivery of the programme at/by the collaborative partner, not the programme itself or the partnership, both of which have received prior approval. Therefore, the Programme Delivery Summary should cover the following:

- Brief overview of the existing programme/award to be delivered and an explanation of any programme or block level modifications that are being proposed as part of this approval
- Detailed breakdown of staffing responsibilities by block

- Overview of physical resources at the partner and how they support/facilitate the achievement of the programme
- Student support and welfare provision to be offered by the partner and the University
- Programme administration arrangements (template provided)
- Governance arrangements
- Processes for complains, appeals and misconduct

9 Programme Review Panels

9.1 Quality Assurance is responsible for organising Programme Review Panels.

9.2 The Panel composition for a programme review will be one of the following

Table 6

Panel Composition	Category	Detail
	Enhanced Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair – normally an RPD from another College • One academic from another College • One academic from outside the Department <i>(at least one of the academic Panel members must be an RPD)</i> • At least two academic/professional members from outside the University (External Reviewers) • One student from outside the Department/Division • When appropriate, representatives from relevant Academic Service Departments
	Standard Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair – normally an RPD from another College • At least one academic from another College • At least one academic/professional member from outside the University (External Reviewers) • One student from outside the Department/Division • Where appropriate, a representative from a relevant Academic Service Department
	Internal Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above but with no external reviewer
	Scrutineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or more members of Brunel staff, with experience or current responsibilities which enable them to conduct meaningful and valid scrutiny. • Scrutiny may be provided by an external reviewer, in addition to, at minimum, one member of Brunel staff.

9.3 NB. Due to their role, Quality Assurance is an ex officio member of all Panels.

External Reviewers

9.4 Programme Design Teams must nominate External Reviewers using the “External Reviewer - Nomination Form” available [here](#). When nominating External Reviewers, Programme Design Teams should consider both the nominee’s academic/professional expertise in relation to the programme being developed and in the case of an academic nominee, their experience of programme design/approval.

- 9.5 For programme approvals involving significant collaborative activity and/or transnational education, at least one of the External Reviewers must have significant experience in these areas.
- 9.6 Programme Design Teams may wish to engage the expertise of additional External Reviewers to that required by this policy.
- 9.7 All nominations for External Reviewers are approved by the Head of Quality Assurance.
- 9.8 For further guidance on identifying and nominating External Reviewers, please contact Quality Assurance.

Additional requirements for Apprenticeship Programmes

- 9.9 Where a Panel is to consider an Apprenticeship programme, the following are requirements:
- One of the academic members of staff from the University must have experience of delivering Apprenticeship programmes (unless this is covered by the Chair).
 - One of the External Reviewers must have significant experience of delivering Apprenticeships.
 - The Head of Apprenticeships should be a Panel member.

Student Panel Members

- 9.10 Opportunities for student involvement in Programme Review Panels will be advertised via the [Union of Brunel Students](#) and the University's [Job shop](#). Further information on the involvement of students in Quality Assurance Events can be found in the Policy for Student Participation in Quality Assurance available [here](#).

Role and Responsibilities of Review Panels

- 9.11 Through its scrutiny of documentation, and meeting/s with Programme Design Teams (where required), Review Panels should consider all aspects of the programme design in the context of the following:
- The FHEQ and relevant Benchmark Statements
 - Intended intake cohorts and how the curriculum is designed in consideration of them
 - Intended destinations and how the curriculum facilitates progression to employment or further study
 - Resource requirements
 - Appropriateness of academic standards at each Level
 - Appropriateness of learning outcomes in the context of the academic level and the planned assessment
 - Consistency with all University regulations and policies, including equality, diversity and inclusion

- Programme management and student support
- For Apprenticeship programmes:
 - The Apprenticeship standard and the knowledge, behaviours and skills that are to be developed.
 - The readiness of the Department and programme in the context of Ofsted inspection.
 - The role of employers in the design and delivery of the Apprenticeship.
 - The approach to pastoral care and personal tutoring.
 - How the programme embeds British Values; equality, diversity and inclusion; and the development of literacy and numeracy.
 - How the programme prepares apprentices for the next steps.

9.12 Programme Review Panels should also consider the impact of the programme on Brunel University London Pathway College provision.

10 **Additional Guidance**

Programme Approvals Involving Collaborative Partners

- 10.1 Approval of a programme to be delivered through a new partnership, will be independent of the process for agreeing the partnership, but both will be required in order for the partnership to commence and the associated programmes offered.

Approval of new PhD Routes

- 10.2 New PhD routes should be approved at the PGR directors meeting(s) of the Colleges involved and reported to the relevant College Education Committee(s). Following approval of the route, the relevant member of College staff should contact SDM via SDM@brunel.ac.uk and provide the following information for set up:
- Route name;
 - Modes of study;
 - Any partnership information, and
 - Confirmation if MPhil route is to be offered.

Timescales and Marketing

- 10.3 Timescales for the Strategic and Final Academic approval of a programme are presented in Table 1 of this Policy.
- 10.4 For New Programmes or Programme Variations, marketing may commence following College Education Committee consideration of the final programme specification. Please note that applications may only open following Final Academic Approval by Senate.
- 10.5 Colleges and Departments will need to plan programme developments well ahead of planned intake dates. Whilst the University sets limits on when a programme must receive Final Academic Approval (see Table 1), it is advisable that new programmes achieve this stage no later than 18 months (undergraduate) or 17 months (postgraduate) prior to the first September intake, so that they benefit from a sufficient marketing and recruitment cycle.

Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) Coding

- 10.6 The University's programme specification and block outline templates require the listing of Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes. HECoS codes are external codes to define the subject area of the course or module, for external reporting purposes. Brunel's statutory data returns to bodies like HESA and the OfS are required to put HECoS codes against our courses. This in turn affects things like external funding eligibility, inclusion in league tables, other national data such as the NSS or Graduate Outcomes, and much more. Using an inappropriate or incorrect HECoS code can lead to a significant loss of funding, failure to appear in league tables or NSS results, the programme not being easily findable in UCAS searches or websites like DiscoverUni, and so on.

- 10.7 Appropriate HECoS codes should be identified during the design and development phase for all Brunel courses and modules, specified in Programme Specifications or Module/Block Outlines, and then confirmed at the point of approval (including for major modifications) and set up in SITS. Setting the right HECoS codes is an academic decision, for which the relevant Programme Director or Module/Block Leader should normally be responsible. The Quality Assurance and/or Strategic Planning teams can give further expert advice.
- 10.8 There are two key lists to look at on the HESA website at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/hecos>:
- The “View the HECoS vocabulary” button will bring up a spreadsheet of all available six-digit HECoS codes with their associated name and definition. There will be multiple codes for any given subject area, with varying definitions. For example HECoS codes for ‘Business’ as a subject include generalist codes like ‘100078 business and management’ or ‘100079 business studies’, as well as more specialist codes like ‘100738 e-business’ or ‘100808 European business studies’.
 - The “View a list of CAH groups” button will take you to a page where you can download the latest version of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) spreadsheet. This shows how each individual HECoS code fits into the national CAH groupings used for things like the NSS and league tables. For example, while ‘100078 business and management’ falls into ‘business and management’ CAH groups, ‘100738 e-business’ falls into ‘computing’ CAH groups and would attract a different level of OfS funding, contribute to different league tables and NSS subject groupings, etc.
- 10.9 To identify the right codes to use, the following is recommended:
- (i) Click the Filter button on the HECoS vocabulary spreadsheet, then click the arrow next to ‘Term’ at the top and enter keywords to bring up different options that may be relevant. Look at these carefully to select the most applicable based on the full definition shown.
 - (ii) Having identified or shortlisted the most appropriate codes, check which CAH groups they fall into on the Common Aggregation Hierarchy spreadsheet. Consider whether these match where the programme or module should appear in, for example, course finder websites or league tables or the NSS. Generally, all courses in a specific Department or Division will fall into a very short list of CAH groups.
- 10.10 It is important to note that a programme or module may be given multiple HECoS codes where they cover different subjects, each being given an appropriate percentage weighting (to add up to 100%). Joint programmes might typically be coded 50% - 50% to their respective subjects, e.g. as is the case for BA Politics & History at Brunel (coded half to ‘100491 politics’ and half to ‘100310 modern history’). Multi- or trans-disciplinary programmes might cover more than two subjects, e.g. the Division of Digital Media at Brunel has courses which cover Engineering, Design and Computer Science in varying mixes. However individual modules/blocks should be coded to a single HECoS code wherever possible, unless it is clear that a single code cannot encompass the scope of what is taught in the module/block.

10.11 All existing block outlines submitted as part of a major modification must have the relevant HECoS code/s listed.

ELEMENTS OF PROGRAMME REVIEW								
Review Format (see Section 7)	Category	Indicative criteria	Documentation (see Section 8)	Category	Indicative criteria	Panel Composition (see Section 9)	Category	Indicative criteria
	Two Stage Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The programme is in a new discipline, at a new level for the programme team, or is an apprenticeship with no related Brunel degree award already in operation.A new award type (for the University or programme team).The structure and/or awarding rules for the programme represent a significant variation to Senate Regulations.The programme proposal/design is of considerable complexity and requires significant development and review.		Standard Set	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The programme in its entirety needs to be considered, either from a design and/or delivery perspective.Approval is dependent on scrutiny of all relevant programme specifications and block outlines.		Enhanced Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The programme is in a new discipline, at a new level for the programme team, or is an apprenticeship with no related Brunel degree award already in operation.A new award type (for the University or programme team).The structure and/or awarding rules for the programme represent a significant variation to Senate Regulations.The programme proposal/design of considerable complexity and requires significant development and review.
	Single Stage Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The programme is in a familiar subject area.The programme is a variation to an existing programme.The structure adheres to University norms. An apprenticeship which incorporates an existing degree award.		Programme Documents and Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The proposal includes limited new academic content.The programme is a variation to an existing programme.		Standard Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New programme which is a variation or new pathwaySignificant new or modified academic content.
	Review by correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The proposed programme incorporates a significant amount of existing and already approved content/blocks.					Internal Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The proposed programme does not require scrutiny by an external specialist.
							Independent scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The proposal does not require review by a subject specialistThe key considerations are logistical or relate to fundamental aspects of programme delivery and/or management.