Main points of procedure	• To ensure programmes are compatible with Activate Learning's aims and mission. • To ensure that programmes are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for students and enable student's achievement to be reliably assessed. • To ensure there is a market for the programme. • To ensure that the programme develops the employability of graduates. • To ensure that the necessary learning resources are available
List of procedures for implementation	• Programme approval procedure • Procedure for creating a new programme on REMS • Procedure for creating a new programme on UCAS
Related policies, documents and strategies	• Activate Learning's Strategic Plan • QAA – Course Design and Development • Student Protection Plan • Closure of a Programme policy • Higher Education strategy

Equality and diversity statement

It is the policy of Activate Learning to recognise and encourage the valuable and enriching contribution from all who work and learn here and the rights of all individuals who come into contact with the organisation such as prospective students and job applicants.

We believe that people from a range of backgrounds and experiences can enhance the life and development of the institution and that all individuals should be treated on the basis of individual merit and without prejudice. Activate Learning will, therefore aim to provide an education service which actively promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, economic status, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, marriage/civil partnership or sexual orientation in both education and employment. We will strive vigorously to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage and will actively combat bigotry and discrimination. Activate Learning expects all employees, students, and associated partner organisations to adopt this policy.

Activate Learning is committed to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on its policies and procedures in order that some measurement is made of the contribution that the policy/procedure makes towards equality and diversity objectives.

1. Background

As Activate Learning is not an awarding body, the procedures have been designed to ensure that prior to seeking approval from an awarding body, the following aims are met:

• To ensure programmes are compatible with Activate Learning's aims and mission.
• To ensure adherence to the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher education, particularly those relating to course design and development.

- To ensure that programmes develop the employability of graduates.
- To ensure that the necessary learning resources are available
  This policy and procedure will also provide an opportunity to ensure that Activate Learning continues to meet its ongoing conditions of registration with the Office for Students in relation to Conditions B1, B2, B3, B4, and B5 of the regulatory framework

The procedures have been written in accordance with the Expectations and Core practices in the 'Course Design and Development' section of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Expectations for standards	Expectations for quality
The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework'	Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards'	From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
Core practices for standards	**Core practices for quality**
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.
The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience
	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.
	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

2. Scope

These procedures cover the development and approval of all higher education provision, including programmes which are intended to form part of a higher or degree apprenticeship, or delivered through a sub-contracting arrangement.

3. Procedures and timescales associated with policy

The procedures and timescales associated with developing and approving a new programme of study will vary according to the following:

- Which awarding body is associated with the proposal.
- Whether the programme is part of a higher or degree apprenticeship.
- Whether institutional approval is required (for new awarding bodies only);
- The intended start date.
- The availability of resources e.g., staff, accommodation, equipment etc

A proposal template is provided for all new developments (Appendix 1)

The procedure and timescales for developing and approving a new programme of study are illustrated in the flowchart (Appendix 2.)

4. Programme Development Team

Every programme development initiative requires the formulation of a Programme Development Team (PDT). The normal composition of the team will be:

- Programme Coordinator
- At least one member of the proposed teaching team
- Head of Quality Assurance (HE)
- Faculty Director (or equivalent)

Programme Development Teams must seek feedback during the design process from key stakeholders, including current, former or potential students, employers, and Marketing and Admissions staff.

5. Composition of Programme Approval Panel

Composition of the Programme Approval Panel is organised by the Higher Education Learning Partnerships office, and will include the following members:

- Executive Director (HE) – Chair
- Director of Higher Education
- Head of Quality Assurance (HE)
- Academic Registrar (HE)
- Faculty Director
- Programme Coordinator
- At least two members of the teaching team
- A student representative from another programme
- Student Experience Officer (HE) – Secretary to the panel

The criteria for programme approval are detailed in Appendix 3.

6. Documents required for approval event:

- Proposal document
- Programme Handbook
- Programme Specification
- Staff CVs
- Business Plan

Appendix 1: Programme Proposal Template

1. **Initial evidence of demand:** Please identify the source and volume of demand to support the proposal and indicate proposed start date and initial expected intake *(evidence could be in the form of expressions of interest, UCAS data, student forums, surveys)*

Response:

2. **Basic details of the proposed programme:** Please state the full title of the final award e.g., Foundation degree (FdA/FdSc), BA/BSc (Hons), HA/DA or HND/C in..., identify mode(s) of study, delivery method, location of delivery and preferred awarding body.

Response:

3. **Subject and Qualification benchmark/standard** Please state which subject benchmark the proposed programme will be aligned to. All BA/BSc programmes will need to be mapped to the appropriate subject benchmark standards: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements All Foundation Degree programmes will need to be aligned to the Foundation Degree Qualification Characteristics: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Foundation-Degree-qualification-benchmark-May-2010.pdf Proposals which articulate to Higher or Degree Apprenticeships will need to be mapped to the appropriate standard: https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/?levelFrom=4&levelTo=6

Response:

4. **Main aims of the programme:** State the main aims of the programme, which must include the unique aspects (selling points) which will meet the needs of students and/or employers.

Response:

5. **Target market:** Identify the main target market(s) for the programme, including evidence of competitors and how the proposed programme will differentiate itself from similar provision at other institutions.

Response:

6. **Progression routes:** Identify existing and potential progression routes to and from the proposed programme, including title of the programme(s) and delivery location/institution.

Response:

7. **Resources:** Provide details of existing physical and human resources and identify any additional requirements to develop and deliver the programme e.g., capital investment, staff and/or staff development, including an estimate of the costs.

Response:

8. **Inclusive Curriculum** Provide details of how the proposed programme adopts an inclusive curriculum which supports access, continuation, attainment and progression for all students. Inclusive Curriculum Framework

Response:

9. Accommodation:
Provide details of the type(s) of accommodation required to support the programme and whether these are existing or not or need further investment.

Response:

10. Employer engagement:
Provide details of any consultations which have been held with employers and the extent to which employers will be expected to contribute towards the development and/or delivery of the programme.
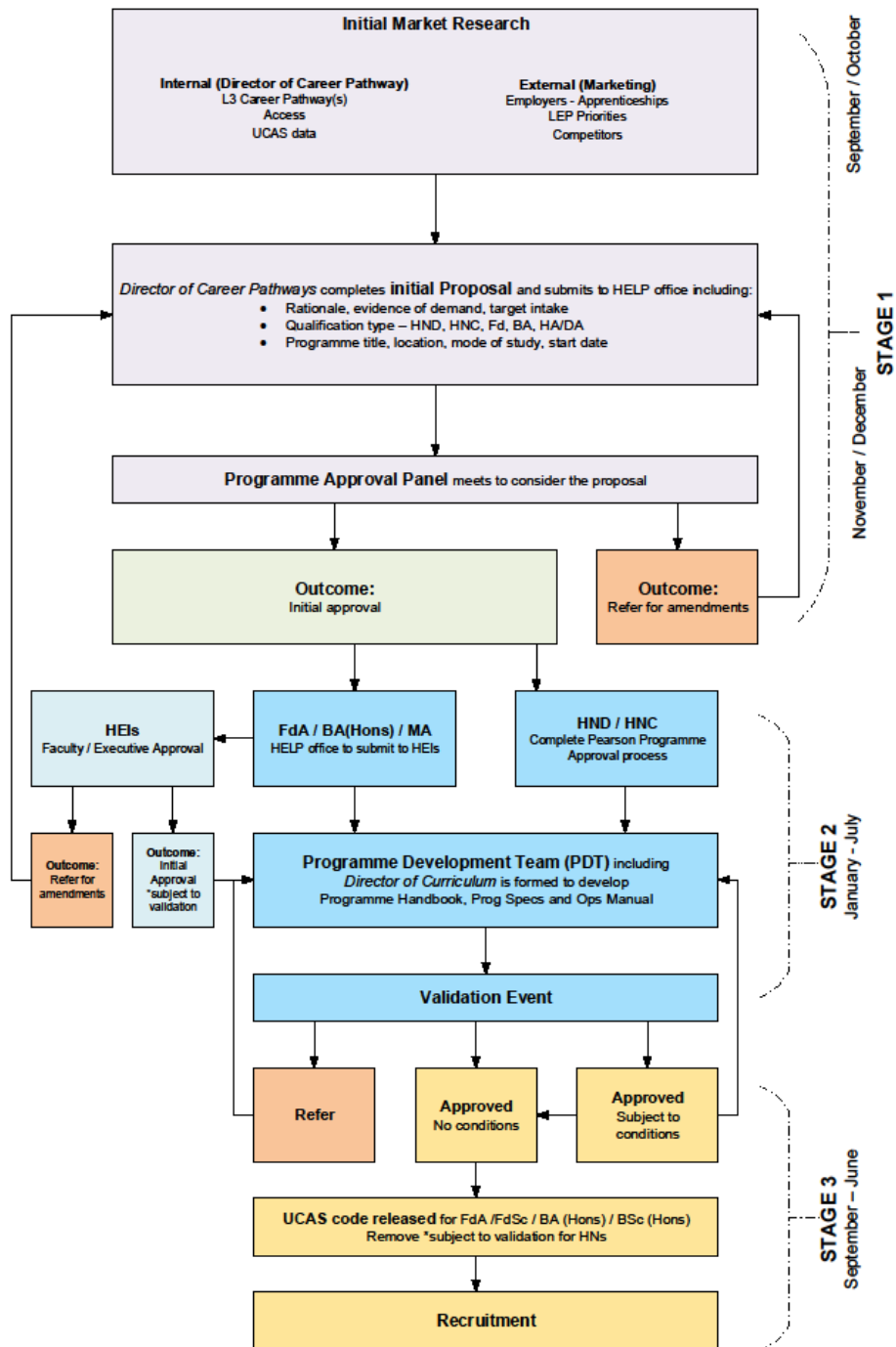
Response:

11. Indicators of Quality:
Provide evidence which indicates the quality and standards of the programme. This may be drawn from SAR / KPI data and grades, student survey results, employer feedback etc.

Response:

Appendix 2. Programme Approval Flowchart

Higher Education Programme Approval Process

Initial Market Research

Internal (Director of Career Pathway)
L3 Career Pathway(s)
Access
UCAS data

External (Marketing)
Employers - Apprenticeships
LEP Priorities
Competitors

Director of Career Pathways completes **initial Proposal** and submits to HELP office including:
- Rationale, evidence of demand, target intake
- Qualification type – HND, HNC, Fd, BA, HA/DA
- Programme title, location, mode of study, start date

Programme Approval Panel meets to consider the proposal

Outcome:
Initial approval

Outcome:
Refer for amendments

HEIs
Faculty / Executive Approval

FdA / BA(Hons) / MA
HELP office to submit to HEIs

HND / HNC
Complete Pearson Programme Approval process

Outcome:
Refer for amendments

Outcome:
Initial Approval *subject to validation

Programme Development Team (PDT) including
Director of Curriculum is formed to develop
Programme Handbook, Prog Specs and Ops Manual

Validation Event

Refer

Approved
No conditions

Approved
Subject to conditions

UCAS code released for FdA /FdSc / BA (Hons) / BSc (Hons)
Remove *subject to validation for HNs

Recruitment

September / October

STAGE 1
November / December

STAGE 2
January - July

STAGE 3
September – June

Programme Approval Criteria

The Teaching Excellence & Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) expects course design, development, standards, and assessment to be "effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential" (*criterion TQ3*). Panels should bear this in mind when considering whether the criteria for the approval of new programmes have been met

1. *Consultation*

    The panel should establish that the Programme Development Team has taken full account of the outcomes of internal and external consultation and engaged with an appropriate range of relevant reference points.

2. *Curriculum*

    The Panel should satisfy themselves that the curriculum presented for approval:

    i.   articulates an educational rationale, aims and intended learning outcomes which are appropriate to the level of the award, reflect the award title and show how the students' achievements will be reliably assessed. The intended learning outcomes for each exit award should also be articulated.

    ii.   is designed so as to enable the students to meet the programme's aims and learning outcomes, i.e., it can be shown how individual modules contribute to the achievement of the programme outcomes.

    iii. demonstrates coherence and intellectual integrity.

    iv.   is designed to ensure depth, breadth and balance of subject, intellectual, practical, and personal skills, including opportunities for students to acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and thereby enhances the potential student's employability.

    v.   is designed to ensure relevant progression in terms of the demands placed upon students as the programme advances.

    vi.   demonstrates a commitment to inclusive practice.

    vii. will be taught by a team of staff with appropriate qualifications, experience and expertise

    viii. supports the overall enhancement of the student experience

3. *Recruitment and admissions*

    The Panel should assure themselves that the admissions criteria are consistent with the programme's aims, learning outcomes and level of the award, taking account of the target market and the requirements of any PSRB requirements or relevant legislation. They should also consider how the programme team intends to assess applicants against the admissions criteria.

4. *Learning, teaching and assessment*

    The Panel should satisfy themselves that the programme team's strategy for learning, teaching and assessment:

    i.   provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies.

    ii.   is consistent with the stated aims of the programme, and that appropriate learning opportunities will be provided to enable students to meet the learning outcomes.

    iii. validly and reliably assesses the achievement of all the programme's intended learning outcomes.

iv.   ensures that assessment and feedback are used effectively to support students' development, progression, and attainment.

v.   reflects good practice in teaching and learning, with arrangements in place to assure and enhance the quality of teaching.

vi.   provides accessible opportunities for all students, including, but not limited to, those with additional needs, to meet the learning outcomes.

5. *Programme management*

The panel should be satisfied that the programme management structures, including those concerned with academic and pastoral support for students, will meet the needs of all groups of students, including, but not limited to, the provision of support for students with disabilities.

6. *Learning resources*

The panel should assure themselves that sufficient resources (including teaching staff with the appropriate expertise) are in place, or are planned, so that the programme team may provide learning opportunities which will enable students to achieve the programme learning outcomes. Systems should also be in place to provide reasonable adjustments for students with additional needs.

7. *For programmes delivered by distance or e-learning*

The panel must assure themselves that the proposal meets the expectations of Activate Learning in respect of the security and reliability of the delivery and assessment systems; assuring the quality of study materials; the skills and expertise of the staff delivering on the programme; and the mechanisms for providing timely academic support and feedback.

Outcomes of the Approval Event

Panels must refer to Activate Learning's criteria for approval (above), as well as the evidence they have gathered from the documentation and discussions with the Programme Development Team, when making their decision on whether to approve the proposal. The options available to panels in respect of approval are:

i.   To **recommend approval** of the programme/s to the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB), with or without (essential) conditions and/or (advisable) recommendations. Most approval decisions are subject to a number of conditions and recommendations, which should reflect the panel's confidence in the proposing team. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the distinction between a condition and a recommendation, but panels need to consider carefully the consequences of a concern not being addressed before students are admitted to the programme. Panels should also consider the strength of the evidence underpinning a potential condition or recommendation. In giving feedback to the proposing Programme Development Team, the panel chair should make it clear that the panel's decision is subject to the satisfactory fulfillment of any conditions, and to final approval by the HEAB (through the Chair, having received assurance from the panel that the conditions have been met).

ii.   To **refer** the proposal for further work where there are a number of significant issues to be addressed. This will allow time for the Programme Development Team to consult more widely and further refine and develop the proposal to address the panel's concerns. The revised submission should be considered by a re-convened panel.

iii.   To **reject** the proposal because a range of substantive issues affecting several aspects of delivery and assessment need to be addressed. This decision requires the proposal to be re-submitted for development approval from the start of the approval process described in Appendix 2.

The Approval Report and Response to Conditions

Immediately after the event, the secretary should agree the wording of the conditions and recommendations with the panel Chair and these should be circulated to the PDT. The full report of the panel's discussions and conclusions is subsequently prepared by the panel secretary – where possible, within two weeks of the event. The report should be approved by the panel Chair, agreed as an accurate record by all other panel members; and forwarded to the Programme Development Team to inform the action being taken in response to the conditions and recommendations. The confirmed report is then submitted to the HEAB to provide assurance that the approval process has been properly conducted.

The panel should agree the deadline for meeting any conditions with the chair of the Programme Development T team, bearing in mind the recruitment cycle for the programme. The Programme Lead should return the revised documentation to the panel Chair via the panel Secretary, together with a completed *Response to conditions and recommendations report*, indicating how the issues raised by the panel have been – or (in the case of recommendations not yet considered) will be addressed. In some cases, the panel Chair may choose to consult with other panel members to confirm whether the conditions have been satisfactorily addressed.