TITLE	REF	VERSION
Programme Development Procedure for Higher Education	HEPRO002	5

DEPARTMENT	Higher Education		
DATE	18 August 2026	**REVIEW DATE**	30 August 2027

Programme Development and Approval Procedure for Higher Education

1. Procedure Statement

1.1. Activate Learning is committed to ensuring that all higher education provision is developed in such a way that it aligns with the Group's strategy, meets the needs of students and employers, provides a high-quality academic experience for students, and ensures that necessary resources are made available.

1.2. Activate Learning is also committed to ensuring that all curriculum developments, new or existing, meet Conditions B1 to B6 of the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of registration and are compliant with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Consumer law advice for higher education providers.

2. Background

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

- To ensure programmes are consistent with Activate Learning's strategy, aims and mission.
- To ensure that programmes develop the employability of graduates.
- To ensure that necessary learning resources are made available
- To ensure adherence to the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024, particularly those relating to course designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes as detailed in the table below.

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.

3. Scope

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

4. Procedures and timescales associated with the procedure

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

a) Which awarding body is associated with the proposal.

b) Whether the programme is part of a subcontracted arrangement or part of a higher or degree apprenticeship.
c) Whether institutional approval is required (for new awarding bodies only).
d) The intended start dates.
e) The availability of resources e.g., staff, accommodation, equipment etc.

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

5. Programme Development Team

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

- HE Programme Coordinator
- At least one member of the proposed teaching team
- Quality Assurance Business Partner
- HE Access and Participation Manager
- Faculty Director (or equivalent)
- HE Academic Registrar

5.2. 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.

5.3. Authority for the proposal to be progressed with the identified awarding body must be obtained from the Group Director of Quality and Consistency.

Appendix 1: Programme Proposal Template

1. **Initial evidence of demand:**
   Please identify the source and anticipated volume of demand to support the proposal and indicate proposed start date and initial expected intake *(evidence could be in the form of a commissioned market research report, expressions of interest, employer demand, 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, technological 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.

Additional Guidance Notes

The Teaching Excellence 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 proposal should consider the outcomes of internal and external consultation and have engaged with an appropriate range of relevant reference points.

2. Curriculum

The proposal should ensure that it:

- 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.

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

- demonstrates coherence and intellectual integrity.
- 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.
- is designed to ensure relevant progression in terms of the demands placed upon students as the programme advances.
- demonstrates a commitment to inclusive practice.
- will be taught by a team of staff with appropriate qualifications, experience, and expertise.
- supports the overall enhancement of the student experience.

3. Recruitment and admissions

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

4. Learning, teaching and assessment.

The proposal should ensure that the programme team’s strategy for learning, teaching and assessment: provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies.

- 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.
- validly and reliably assesses the achievement of all the programme's intended learning outcomes.
- ensures that assessment and feedback are used effectively to support students’ development, progression, and attainment.
- reflects good practice in teaching and learning, with arrangements in place to assure and enhance the quality of teaching.
- provides accessible opportunities for all students, including, but not limited to, those with additional needs, to meet the learning outcomes.

5. Programme management

The proposal should ensure 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 proposal should ensure 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 (asynchronous), blended (combination of face-to-face and synchronous/asynchronous) or online (synchronous) learning.

The proposal must ensure 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.

Version & date:	Summary of updates
V2, July 2022	Section 4 - Included Access and Participation Manager as a member of programme development team. Section 5 – Amended role of secretary to HE Support Officer. Appendix 1 – Added market research report and evidence of employer demand.
July 2023	Wording updated to reflect organisation changes and that Activate Learning does not have awarding powers
July 2024	Progression of proposals to awarding bodies to be approved by the Group Director for Quality and Consistency