



ACADEMIC QUALITY POLICY & PRACTICE 2023 V1.5

Section 5: New Programme Approval

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5. NEW PROGRAMME APPROVAL

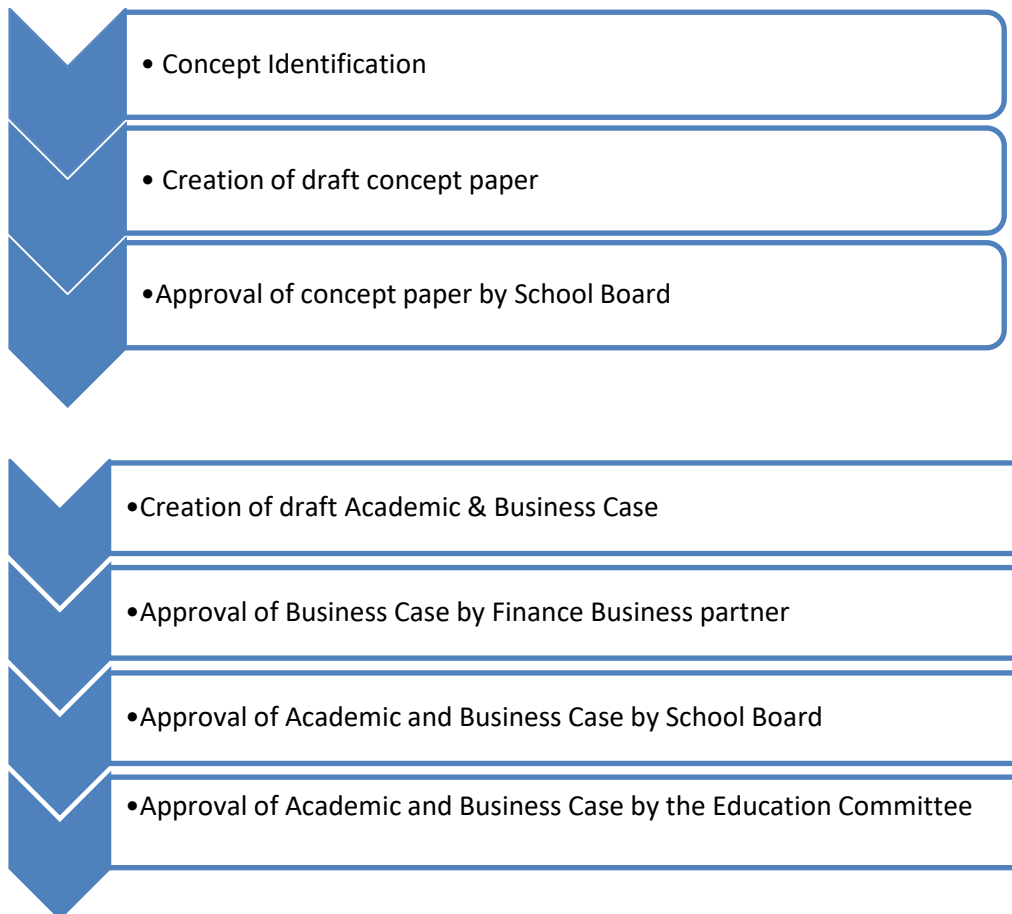
5.1 Introduction

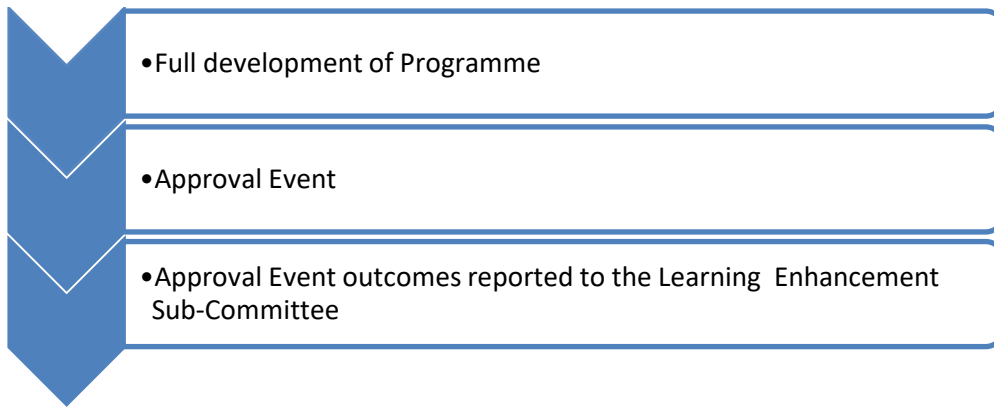
This section applies to the approval of new programmes only. New programmes are defined as those where the provision is not currently part of the existing School/Department Portfolio. Review of current programmes is detailed in Programme Review in [Section 7](#).

New programme concepts are outputs of the planning cycle and annual School and Department Portfolio Review. The process for developing and approving new programme proposals aligns with the [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#)

5.2 Development of New Programme Proposals

New programme proposals must support the delivery of GCU's [Strategy 2030](#) and [Common Good Mission and Vision](#), be designed and delivered in accordance with the [Strategy for Learning](#), reflecting the embedding of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the [GCU Values and Behaviours](#). Programme developments will follow the undernoted process:





Details of the timelines for completion of each of the above processes is contained in the [Guidelines for Programme Approval](#).

5.3 Concept Paper

The [Concept Paper](#) will be completed in accordance with [the Guidelines for Programme Approval](#) and will evidence consideration of the following:

- Student demand
- employer requirements
- external benchmarks, including subject benchmarks and where appropriate the requirement of PSRB (professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies)
- compatibility with University, School and Department aims, mission and existing provision including globalisation
- strategic academic and resource planning (*e.g. annual portfolio review*)

Market intelligence is an important part of a concept paper. Programme teams must seek assistance from Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence and confirm this, together with market demand in the Concept paper.

5.4 Academic and Business Case

Completion of the [Academic and Business Case](#) should be undertaken in accordance with the [Guidelines for Programme Approval](#). The Academic Case for a new programme will incorporate:

- student demand
- the final programme title
- the background and rationale for programme development
- an outline of the programme content
- an outline statement of demand
- a summary of consultation with, e.g. academic support departments, international agents (if appropriate), GCU alumni, careers staff in Schools or FE, potential applicants and likely employers

- a summary of consultation with Academic Development and Student Learning/Student Support Services.
- detailed costs (forming the Business Case and, once agreed, confirmation of approval by the Finance Office)

5.5 Approval Event

Following approval of the Academic Case, the Programme Development Team (PDT), will develop full [Programme Approval Submission Documentation](#) in accordance with the [Guidelines for Programme Approval](#) following a timeline agreed with Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE). QAE will work with the PDT to ensure an appropriate panel is assembled.

From this point QAE will facilitate arrangements for the formal approval of the fully developed proposal in accordance with [the Guidelines for Programme Approval](#).

5.6 Accreditation by Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies

Normally, the accreditation of programmes will form an integral part of the approval process with representatives of relevant professional, statutory, and regulatory body (PSRB) as members of Programme Approval Panels. The aim will be to allow the quality enhancement and assurance requirements of the University and PSRB to be satisfied by a single event.

In cases where separate accreditation visits are required, the process will be supported by Quality Assurance and Enhancement who will also ensure that the PSRB report for these separate visits will be submitted to the Learning Enhancement Subcommittee for consideration.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement can also provide administrative support to Departments with an accreditation process.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement actively engage with academic Departments/units, to maintain an institutional register of accreditation activity.

5.7 Programme Handbooks

Following formal approval of the Programme the Programme Board will be responsible for ensuring the preparation and provision of a [Programme Handbook](#) to each student at enrolment or, if there is no enrolment, through a mechanism designed by the Programme Board to ensure that each student receives their copy of the Handbook prior to the commencement of the programme.

The Programme Leader will be responsible for maintaining and annually updating the [Programme Handbook](#). Where possible the information will be provided by electronic means (with associated web links) utilising the University's [Programme Handbook](#) template and [Programme Handbook Notes of Guidance](#).

5.8 Principles for the design, development and delivery of a GCU Graduate/Degree Apprenticeship

The University apprenticeship model has been developed around characteristics that are distinctive and unique to GCU. The principles outlined in this section underpin the design, development and delivery of all GCU Degree Apprenticeships (DA) (England) and Graduate Apprenticeships (GA) (Scotland). GCU Apprenticeships align with the [Strategy for Learning](#), Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP), and GCU [Strategy 2030](#) and reflect the [GCU Values and Behaviours](#)

The GCU model is based on the [Skills Development Scotland Frameworks](#) and the [Trailblazer Standards \(England\)](#). Together these frameworks define and bound the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to perform the specific job role.

The GCU apprenticeship model is designed to explicitly meet the Degree Apprentice (England) and the Graduate Apprentice (Scotland) criteria drawing reference to the emerging [QAA guidance](#). The Apprenticeships fulfil the expectations of employers who work in partnership with the Academic Schools. The apprenticeships will meet the requirements of the major funders; Education and Skills Funding Agency (England), Skills Development Scotland and relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies' involved in specific apprenticeships.

Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships are work based learning programmes. Apprenticeships in Scotland align with the [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and appropriate [SCQF levels and level descriptors](#), which cover knowledge and understanding, cognitive development and applied skills.

Competencies should be developed around SCQF Level Descriptors and based on the 'language of the Levels'. The QAA encourages the use of external reference points, benchmarks. This includes [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#).

Three categories of Apprentices have been identified as potential applicants:

1. A new employee of no experience, recruited specifically to undertake the Degree or Graduate Apprenticeship.
2. An existing employee seeking to change career within the company
3. An experienced employee with limited formal qualifications.

The GCU model outlines a number of core principles which are intended to demonstrate a flexibility that can take account of the needs of organisations, their employees and also specific subject and discipline requirements, including Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, where applicable. All elements align with the [Strategy for Learning](#) and the [core principles underpinning GCU Degree and Graduate Apprenticeships](#).

5.9 Ongoing oversight of Programme Development

Ongoing consultation with Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Institute for University to Business Education (U2B), Programme Leaders, employers, students and graduates will provide guidance for the forward movement of the apprenticeship model.