



Procedure for Validation of a Programme Leading to a New Minor, Supplemental or Special Purpose Award

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1. Purpose

This procedure supports *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy*, which articulates the principles and standards underpinning the University's approach to developing and validating new taught programmes. The policy outlines the main stages in the process for developing and validating new programmes and this procedure gives the steps to validate a programme which leads to a new minor, supplemental or special purpose award, in adherence with that policy.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to staff involved in developing and validating new minor, supplemental and special purpose awards for taught programmes leading to awards at Level 6 to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Separate validation processes are not required where a major award and linked embedded awards are proposed concurrently. If a proposed programme leads to an award which is an embedded award of a programme leading to a major award, then the *AQAE010 Procedure for the Validation of a New Programme leading to a Major Award* should be followed.

The *Procedure for Proposing a New Award Title* and/or the *Procedure for Proposing a New Award Standard* must be implemented where a new award title and/or award standard is proposed for the new programme. This should be completed in advance or in parallel with this procedure.

3. Reference Documents

AQAE0003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy

4. Procedure

The process for validating a new programme leading to minor, supplemental and special purpose awards has 6 stages:

Stage 1	Initial Planning and Scoping
Stage 2	Faculty Endorsement
Stage 3	Outline Permission
Stage 4	Detailed Development
Stage 5	Validation
Stage 6	Approval

The steps required of each stage are detailed below and Appendix 1 provides a schematic overview.

New programme and module documentation is managed through the Academic Module Manager (AMM) application. Users are assigned roles for the use of AMM during the development of programmes by the lead proposer.

The submission of documentation to the Quality Office is also required at various stages in the procedure. Details on how to submit documentation to the Quality Office is contained in Appendix 2.

4.1 Stage 1 Initial Planning and Scoping

4.1.1 Research and Development

The Programme Development Team (PDT) conducts its research and development for a new programme or module ensuring compliance with the *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy* and the *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy*. The PDT should use the *New Programme Proposal Form, Programme Specification (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards) template* (outline available in Appendix 2) and the *Module Template* to guide the research and development of the programme proposal.

4.1.2 Completion of New Programme Proposal Form

The lead proposer of the PDT will co-ordinate the completion of the *New Programme Proposal Form*. This should be completed via AMM (preferable) or on the template provided where AMM is not yet available.

4.2 Stage 2 Faculty Endorsement

4.2.1 Submission of New Programme Proposal Form

Once satisfied that the proposal is sufficiently developed, the lead proposer of the PDT will submit the completed *New Programme Proposal Form* electronically to the Faculty Executive for their review.

4.2.2 Faculty Executive Review

The Faculty Executive will meet to consider the proposal outlined in the *New Programme Proposal Form*. In their deliberations the Faculty Executive must consider the following:

- Rationale for the development of the programme
- Demand for the programme
- Alignment with faculty and university plans
- Alignment with existing courses in the faculty and the extent of cross-university collaboration
- Resource implications

- Potential for economies of scale with exiting modules/programmes
- Appropriateness of the award title and award standard
- A draft outline Programme Schedule

The Faculty Executive then decides to

- i. Endorse the proposal.
- ii. Refer the proposal to the Outline Permission Stage for consideration by the Faculty Academic Planning Committee (FAPC).
- iii. Reject the proposal, outlining the reasons.

The decision must be communicated via email to the PDT and FAPC.

4.3 Stage 3 Outline Permission

4.3.1 Outline Permission

The *New Programme Proposal Form* is forwarded from the Faculty Executive to the FAPC if endorsed or referred for further review at the Outline Permission Stage.

If the proposal has been endorsed by the Faculty Executive, it is noted by the FAPC and permission is granted.

If the proposal has been referred for further review, the FAPC must review the proposal and consider the suitability and viability of the programme.

The FAPC must decide whether to

- i. Grant Outline Permission.
- ii. Grant Outline Permission, subject to prescribed conditions.
- iii. Reject the proposal, outlining the reasons.

If the FAPC prescribe conditions that must be met before the outline permission is granted the FAPC will notify the lead proposer of the programme of this decision and the associated conditions in writing. The proposal must be resubmitted to the Faculty Executive to verify that the conditions are met and endorse the proposal (Stage 2).

4.3.2 Communication of Decision

When Outline Permission is granted the Chair of the FAPC must notify the lead proposer and the Quality Office. The lead proposer must then submit the completed *New Programme Proposal Form* to the Quality Office for their records.

The VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar presents a list of all new programme proposals approved to proceed to detailed development to the next meeting of the Academic Council.

4.4 Stage 4 Detailed Development

4.4.1 Co-ordination of Programme Development

The lead proposer agrees responsibilities and deadlines for the development of the Programme Specification with the PDT.

4.4.2 Planning for validation

The lead proposer will meet with the Quality Office and agree the proposed timeline for validation and proposed commencement of the programme.

The lead proposer then requests that the FAPC convene a dedicated programme review sub-committee (validation panel) of 5-6 members for conducting the validation of the programme. The nominee of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar will convene the panel.

The recommended membership of validation panel is:

- a Head of Faculty/School/Department who may be internal to ATU, but not involved in the programme or from another Irish HEI (Chair),
- a nominee of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar (mandatory, Academic Secretary),
- a person from a profession, industry, or the community with relevant discipline expertise,
- one - two people with discipline expertise, who may be an academic from another HEI or an academic staff member or Head of Department from the FAPC (not involved in the programme), and
- a student representative, registered on an award at, or higher than the NFQ level of the programme and from outside the proposing Faculty, who is selected by the Quality Office from the *Register of Students Eligible to participate in Programme Validations*.

The nominee of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar will act as Academic Secretary to the panel. Their role is to advise on queries related to quality assurance and enhancement policy and procedure.

The Chair will nominate a recording secretary to the panel.

The PDT will submit a list of up to five suitable persons with discipline expertise who may be selected as panellists. The *Validation Panel Nomination Form* should be submitted to the Quality Office with the particulars of any nominees a minimum of four weeks in advance of the scheduled panel meeting.

The following criteria will apply:

- Nominees may be academics from another HEI or those from a profession, industry, or the community with expertise in the discipline(s).
- Nominees must not have been involved in the development of a programme and any potential conflict of interest should be indicated.

In constituting the panel, gender balance should be sought.

4.4.3 Developing the Programme Specification

The Programme Specification is developed in AMM using the *Programme Specification (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards) template* (outline available in Appendix 3).

The lead proposer may assign permission to members of the PDT to draft modules and populate other sections of the document in AMM. This should be completed by a deadline agreed by the PDT, allowing time for review and amendment to the draft before submission for validation.

4.4.4 Completion of Programme Specification

The draft *Programme Specification* must be reviewed by the PDT and revised as necessary. The PDT must agree the completed document.

The lead proposer must submit the completed *Programme Specification* to the Quality Office for distribution to the Validation Panel for validation.

4.5 Stage 5 Validation

4.5.1 Preliminary review

The Quality Office circulates the *Programme Specification* to the Validation Panel who must conduct a preliminary review of the programme. The validation criteria outlined in the *AQAE003 Developing and Validating a New Taught Programme Policy* must be used to conduct the review.

If there are major concerns these must be recorded by the Secretary. The Chair must notify the lead proposer and provide them with an opportunity to address the concerns and resubmit the *Programme Specification*.

If no major concerns are identified the Chair proceeds to organise the validation proceedings.

4.5.2 Validation Meeting

The mechanism for the programme validation is via a meeting of the Validation Panel and the PDT, organised by the Chair.

A quorum of 4 persons (including the Chair) is required for the meeting to proceed.

The meeting will take the following format:

- The Chair and members of the panel meet to identify the key observations in relation to the programme and outline their plan for coordinating the meeting with the PDT.
- The lead proposer and Head of School/Faculty for the proposal meet with the panel to introduce the programme proposal and brief them on the alignment of the programme with ATU and Faculty strategy.
- The panel then conduct the validation proceedings by meeting with the PDT to evaluate the programme against the validation criteria provided in the *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Programmes Policy*.
- Following the meeting the panel hold their own deliberations and prepare an oral report on their decision. The panel must decide whether the programme should be:
 - i. validated (without changes).
 - ii. validated, subject to conditions and/or recommendations.
 - iii. rejected, stating the reasons.
- The Validation Panel present a brief overview of their findings and decision to the PDT, lead proposer and Head of School/Faculty.

4.5.3 Validation Report

Following the meeting the Academic Secretary and Recording Secretary, compile the *New Programme Validation Report (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards)* using the template provided. This must be reviewed and agreed by the Chair and then circulated to the panel. Following this the report is sent to the Quality Office, who forwards it to the lead proposer.

If the programme has been validated without changes, the *Programme Specification* is submitted to the Quality Office by the lead proposer and Stage 5 Validation is concluded (proceed to Stage 6).

If the programme is validated subject to conditions and/or recommendations, they must be reviewed and addressed by the PDT.

The PDT compiles a revised *Programme Specification* and completes a detailed response to the report (included in the *New Programme Validation Report (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards)*). The response must detail specifically how the conditions have been addressed and where applicable, how the recommendations will or have been addressed. This is submitted to the Quality Office, who may review and liaise with the PDT for further clarification.

The Quality Office must

- verify compliance with the conditions, and

- consider the response to recommendations and the rationale for not addressing recommendations, where relevant.

Once the conditions have been verified, the Quality Office will notify the lead proposer and VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar.

4.6 Stage 6 Approval

The VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar presents *New Programme Validation Report (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards)* to Academic Council for approval.

The Academic Council must formally acknowledge that the conditions of validation are met and approve the programme.

The programme is now validated, and the Quality Office will:

- change the programme status to approved in AMM,
- add the programme to the student record system,
- add the programme to the *Register of University Programmes*, and
- include the programme in the next update of the *Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ)*.

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Procedure

5.1 Forms and Templates

- New Programme Proposal Form
- Programme Specification (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards) template
- Module Template
- New Programme Validation Report (Minor, Supplemental & Special Purpose Awards) template
- Validation Panel Nomination Form

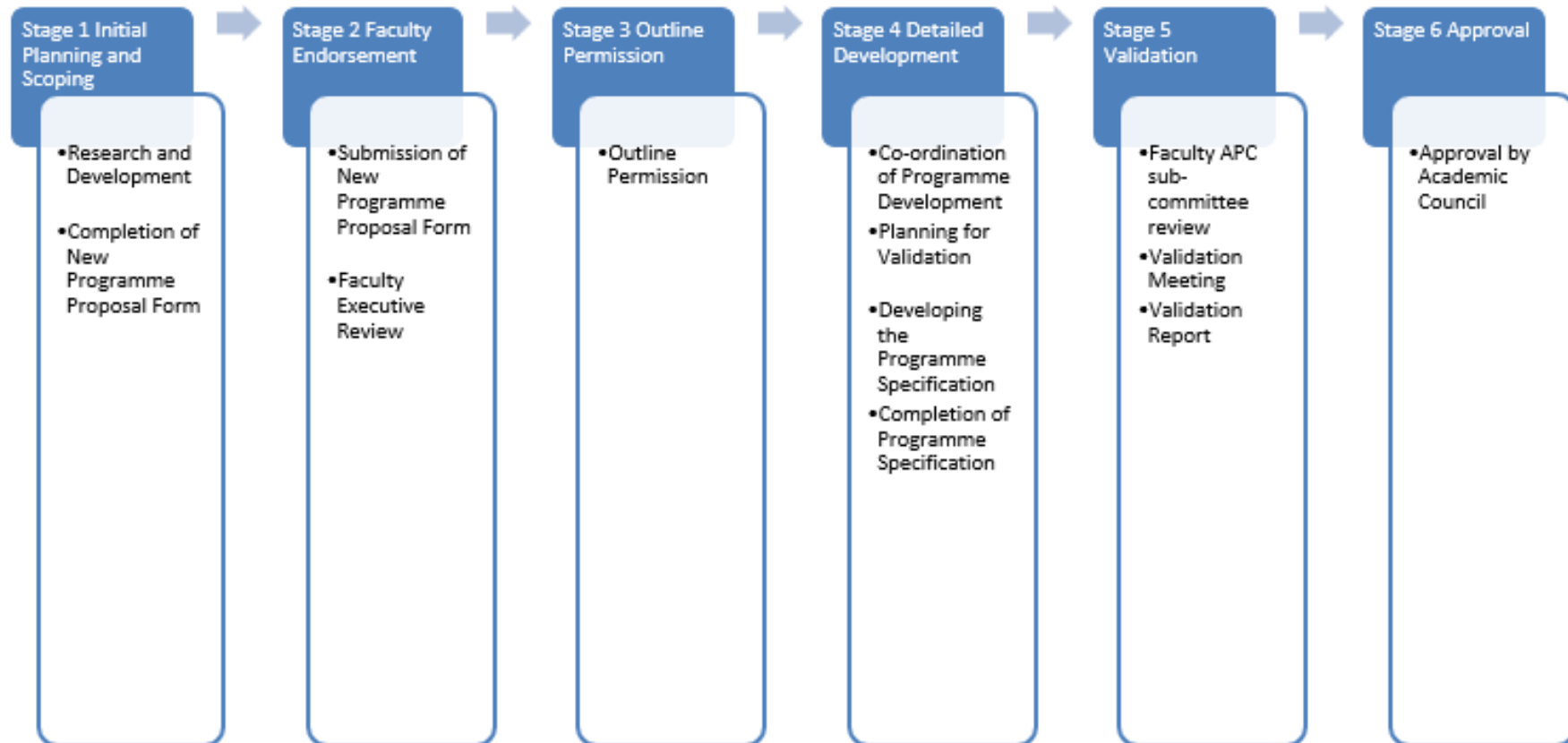
6. Measurement of Effectiveness of this procedure

Not Applicable.

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Procedure Approved by Programmes committee of Academic Council	20/06/2023

Appendix 1 Outline of Procedure for the Validation of a Minor, Supplemental or Special Purpose Award



Appendix 2 Submitting documentation to the Quality Office

The Quality Office operates a SharePoint site for the submission of all documentation related to programme validation.

Once a programme is endorsed by the Faculty Executive, the completed New Programme Proposal Form must be uploaded to the Developing and Validation of New Programmes area of the Office of the Registrar/Quality Office SharePoint site using the relevant online form.

Following approval of the New Programme Proposal all subsequent documentation including the Programme Specification and any subsequent revisions, Appendices to the Programme Specification, and Panel Nomination Form should be uploaded in the same manner.

The Quality Office will file documentation appropriately and documentation relating to the validation process will be visible by all.

Appendix 3 Outline of Programme Specification (Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose Awards) template

The following is the table of contents of a Programme Specification for Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose Awards. This is populated from AMM during the development of a programme.

1. Programme Specification
2. Introduction
 - 2.1. Programme Aim
3. Overview of University
 - 3.1. Context and History
 - 3.2. Vision, Mission and Values
 - 3.3. Profile of the University
4. Introduction to School and Department
 - 4.1. Overview and Profile
 - 4.2. School Strategy
 - 4.3. Programmes Currently Offered
5. Rationale for Programme
 - 5.1. Justification for the Programme
 - 5.2. Research and Consultation
6. Demand for this Programme
 - 6.1. Profile of Learners and Anticipated Demand
 - 6.2. Employment Potential for Graduates
7. Programme Design and Management
 - 7.1. Structure of Programme
 - 7.2. Programme Delivery
 - 7.3. Programme Management

8. Resources Available for Programme Delivery

8.1. Additional Resources Required for Programme Delivery

9. Access, Transfer and Progression

9.1. Entry Requirements and Access Routes

9.2. Transfer Routes

9.3. Progression Pathways

10. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

10.1. Teaching & Learning Strategy

10.2. Assessment Strategy

11. Programme Learning Outcomes

12. Schedules

12.1. Approved Programme Schedule

12.2. Programme Delivery Schedule

12.3. Programme Assessment Matrix

13. Module Descriptors

14. Appendices