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## Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy

### 1. Context

All programmes leading to an award from Trinity College Dublin and/or the University of Dublin<sup>1</sup> are delivered in line with the statutory requirements of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (QQI Act 2012) and are aligned with an appropriate level on the [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#) and with the [Joint Sectoral Protocol](#) between QQI and Designated Awarding Bodies.

All programmes leading to an award, modules delivered for credit, and micro-credentials, are subject to appropriate design and approval processes to ensure that a Trinity education delivers a student experience based on academic excellence.

### 2. Purpose

This policy requires that all new programmes, programme strands, subjects, modules, and micro-credentials, and significantly re-configured curricula at programme, strand, subject, and module levels undergo an appropriate approval process.

### 3. Benefits

- 3.1 Guidance and support are made available to Trinity academic staff in relation to programme and curriculum design and approval processes.
- 3.2 Programmes leading to awards are aligned to the appropriate level of the National Framework of Qualifications.
- 3.3 Trinity, its students and graduates, its partner institutions, and the wider public, can be confident of the quality of its educational offerings and its awards.
- 3.4 Alignment with the requirement of the [Joint Sectoral Protocol](#), as agreed between QQI and Designated Awarding Bodies, is evidenced.
- 3.5 Compliance with the requirements of professional accreditation and/or professional registration bodies is evidenced.

### 4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all new programmes and programme strands delivered by Trinity.
- 4.2 This policy applies to all new subjects (undergraduate) delivered by Trinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Degrees are conferred by the University of Dublin and non-degree awards, e.g., certificates and diplomas, are awarded by Trinity College Dublin. Within this policy, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin will be referred to as Trinity, apart from where this distinction is relevant.



- 4.3 This policy applies to all new programmes delivered collaboratively with other institutions, which lead to an award.
- 4.4 The design and approval of programmes delivered collaboratively with Trinity leading to Dual/Joint awards are covered by this policy and are also subject to the [Dual and Joint Awards Policy](#), and the Partnership Framework Agreement, if one has been agreed.
- 4.5 This policy applies to existing programmes undergoing significant curriculum review such as structural changes resulting in a new programme strand.
- 4.6 This policy applies to new stand-alone modules delivered for credit.
- 4.7 This policy applies to new or significantly revised modules for existing programmes.
- 4.8 This policy applies to micro-credentials.
- 4.9 This policy applies to credit-bearing modules for structured Ph.D. programmes that do not fall under other sub-sections within section 4.
- 4.10 The approval of programmes that are designed and delivered by Linked Providers and validated by Trinity is subject to section 7.4 of this policy.
- 4.11 Programmes delivered under CHARM-EU University Alliance are out of scope of this policy.

## **5. Principles**

- 5.1 The approval of proposals concerning the design and delivery of new programmes, programme strands, undergraduate subjects, micro-credentials, and standalone modules for credit is based on a rigorous assessment of each proposal in terms of its rationale, academic merits, market research, and financial implications.
- 5.2 Curriculum design and approval processes are appropriate, collaborative, coherent, and rigorous.

## **6. Definitions**

Definitions of relevant terminology are available from the [Curriculum Glossary](#).

## **7. Policy**

### **7.1 General**

- 7.1.1 Trinity supports the incorporation of inclusive teaching and learning practices into curriculum design.
- 7.1.2 Trinity requires that proposals for all new and revised programmes, programme strands, undergraduate subjects, micro-credentials, and modules adhere to curriculum design considerations and utilise the appropriate templates available from Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning (TT&L). Guidelines,



resources, and supports are provided to Schools by a number of areas including [Academic Affairs](#), [Academic Practice](#), the [Trinity Careers Service](#), and the [Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project](#).

- 7.1.3 A review of the delivery of programmes/programme strands/undergraduate subjects/micro-credentials and modules should take place each academic year, with student feedback and external examiner input taken into consideration to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and inclusive, offers a range of learning experiences to support achievement of the learning outcomes, and meets students' needs.
- 7.1.4 Changes to programmes/programme strands/undergraduate subjects, micro-credentials, and modules may arise following periodic Quality Reviews or Professional Body Reviews, or in response to changes in legislation or European Directives that impact on specific disciplines.
- 7.1.5 Changes to programmes/programme strands/undergraduate subjects, micro-credentials, and modules will be implemented as set-out in Appendix I: 'Oversight of Programme and Curriculum Changes'.

## **7.2 Programme/Programme Strand/Subject and Micro-credential Design and Approval**

- 7.2.1 Trinity requires that new programmes, programme strands, undergraduate subjects, and micro-credentials align with the strategic plans of the University and the Schools (s) in which they are to be delivered; follow the general regulations and requirements of the University; statutory requirements, and any professional and statutory body accreditation requirements that may apply.
- 7.2.2 The design process is a consultative process informed by the perspectives of academic staff, professional staff, students, external experts, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.
- 7.2.3 The lead-in time for the completion of the design and approval process will give due regard to the requirement for internal and external consultation and review, the schedules for academic committee meetings, internal marketing and student recruitment deadlines, and deadlines set by external bodies e.g. Central Admissions Office (CAO) and collaborative partners for marketing and recruitment purposes.
- 7.2.4 Programmes/programme strands/undergraduate subjects/micro-credentials follow the approval process set down by Trinity and are endorsed by the Head of School(s), Faculty Dean(s)/Faculty Executive(s), School Executive Committee (s), Undergraduate Studies Committee (including relevant sub-committees as appropriate), and/or the Graduate Studies Committee (including relevant sub-committees as appropriate) prior to approval by the University Council.
- 7.2.5 Prior to submission for approval by the University Council, all new undergraduate



and postgraduate programme proposals, undergraduate programme strands, and subject proposals are sent for external review; postgraduate programme strand proposals are sent for external review at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies

- 7.2.6 Programmes to be delivered jointly with collaborative partners are subject to the same robust design and approval process as those to be delivered wholly by Trinity. Where such programmes are to lead to dual or joint awards, the provisions for the design and approval of programmes in this policy should be read in conjunction with the [Dual and Joint Awards Policy](#), and the Partnership Framework Agreement, if one has been agreed.
- 7.2.7 Advertising will not take place prior to the approval by the University Council.
- 7.2.8 Specific [Undergraduate Considerations](#).
- 7.2.9 Specific [Postgraduate Considerations](#).
- 7.2.10 Specific Micro-credential Considerations (see section 7.2.10 in [Postgraduate Considerations](#))

### 7.3 Module Design and Approval

- 7.3.1 Stand-Alone Modules<sup>2</sup> (for credit) for External Applicants<sup>3</sup>

New undergraduate/postgraduate stand-alone module (for credit) proposals<sup>4</sup> for external applicants are submitted to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC), and the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) for approval, as appropriate. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies have discretion as to whether the stand-alone module should be sent for external review.

- 7.3.2 Undergraduate module (including stand-alone module) design and approval is discussed further in section 7.3.2 of [Undergraduate Considerations](#).
- 7.3.3 Postgraduate module (including stand-alone module) design and approval is discussed further in section 7.3.3 of [Postgraduate Considerations](#).

### 7.4 Validated Programmes/Strands

- 7.4.1 Trinity requires that new programme proposals submitted for approval and validation by Trinity align with any professional and statutory accreditation requirements that may apply.
- 7.4.2 Trinity requires that proposals for new validated programmes adhere to Guidelines for Proposals for [New Undergraduate](#) / [Postgraduate](#) Programmes.

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<sup>2</sup> A Standalone Module for Credit is a module offered with a defined academic credit value which may be taken on its own or within a programme of study (e.g., UG Trinity Elective). Normally these have no pre- or co- requisite modules.

<sup>3</sup> In certain situations, Ph.D. students may enrol on stand-alone postgraduate modules designed for external applicants.<sup>4</sup> Postgraduate stand-alone modules are not typically offered to external applicants.

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- 7.4.3 The lead-in time for the completion of the validation process will give due regard to the requirement for internal and external consultation and review, the schedules for the Associated Colleges Degrees Committees (ACDC), academic committee meetings, deadlines set by external bodies e.g., Central Admissions Office (CAO) and the partner institution's marketing and recruitment timetable.
- 7.4.4 Programmes submitted for validation follow the approval process of the institution concerned and are considered by the related Trinity School(s), by the relevant ACDC, and recommended to the USC or GSC, as appropriate, prior to approval by the University Council.
- 7.4.5 Prior to submission for approval by the University Council, all new undergraduate and postgraduate programme proposals are required to be sent for external review.
- 7.4.6 Where a new strand is being added to an existing undergraduate programme, the approval process for new undergraduate programmes is followed and the proposal is normally sent for external review.
- 7.4.7 Where a strand is being added to an existing postgraduate programme and where more than 30 ECTS of the taught modules are new, the strand is normally sent for external review. The Dean of Graduate Studies has discretion as to whether a new strand should be sent for external review.
- 7.4.8 Changes to programmes/strands/subjects, and modules will be implemented as set-out in Appendix I: 'Oversight of Programme and Curriculum Changes'.
- 7.4.9 Programmes will not be advertised prior to their approval by University Council.

## **8. Responsibility**

- 8.1 The responsibility for this policy lies with the Senior Lecture/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Registrar, as appropriate.

## **9. Related Resources**

- 9.1 [Curriculum Glossary](#)
- 9.2 [Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#)
- 9.3 [National Framework of Qualifications \(NFQ\)](#)
- 9.4 [QQI Blended and Fully On-line Quality Assurance Guidelines](#)
- 9.5 [Undergraduate Course Approval Process](#)
- 9.6 [Postgraduate Course Approval Process](#)
- 9.7 [Micro-credentials Approval Process](#)
- 9.8 [Dual and Joint Awards Policy](#)
- 9.9 [Non-EU Collaborative and Transnational Education Partnerships Policy](#)



9.10 [Trinity Inclusive Curriculum](#)

**10. Document Control**

- 10.1 Date Original Policy Approved: December 2016
  - 10.2 Date of Revision: December 2023
  - 10.3 Date of Next Review: Academic year 2026/27
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## Appendix I: Oversight of Programme and Curriculum changes

	Education level	Type of change	Approval required
Programmes/Strands/Subjects <sup>1</sup>	Undergraduate Programmes/Strands/Subjects	<b>Major Changes:</b> <i>Learning Outcomes changes</i> <i>Architecture/Pathway changes</i> <i>Programme title change</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – full-time/part-time, in-person/online</i> <i>ECTS credit volume changes</i> <i>Award title changes</i> <i>Suspension/cessation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University Council, via USC (contact Academic Affairs)</li> </ul>
		<b>Moderate Changes i.e.</b> <i>Changes that do not result in changes to programme learning outcomes e.g. changes to modes of assessment, modules etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School-level (programme/curriculum committee or by programme/strand/subject director, with sign-off by DUTL).</li> <li>Shared curriculum sign-off by each School (as above) and the Undergraduate Common Architecture Office (UCAO)/Science Course Office, as appropriate.</li> </ul>
	Postgraduate Programmes/Strands/Subjects	<b>Major Changes:</b> <i>Learning Outcomes changes</i> <i>Programme title change</i> <i>Changes to programme structure</i> <i>Entry and exit route changes and admissions criteria</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – full-time/part-time, in-person/online</i> <i>ECTS credit volume changes</i> <i>Award title changes</i> <i>Suspension/cessation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University Council, via GSC (contact Academic Affairs)</li> </ul>
		<b>Moderate changes i.e.</b> <i>Changes that do not result in changes to programme learning outcomes e.g. changes to modes of assessment, modules etc</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School-level (School Committee/School Executive Committee, decided by School). Shared curriculum sign-off by each School.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Any change to Columbia Dual B.A. programmes is communicated to the Dual-Degree Programme Director and UCAO and agreed with counterparts in Columbia.

Undergraduate Modules	Education level	Type of change	Approval Required
	Undergraduate Modules (for existing Programmes)	<b>Moderate Changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>Credit volume changes</i> <i>Learning outcome changes (if no impact on PLOs)</i> <i>New modules.<sup>2</sup></i> <i>Mode of delivery</i> <i>Discontinuation of modules</i> <i>Offering existing modules as designated open modules</i> <i>Module capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval at School level (programme/curriculum committee or by programme/strand/subject director, with sign-off by DUTL).</li> <li>Shared modules<sup>3</sup> sign-off by each School (as above) and by the Undergraduate Common Architecture Office/ Science Course Office as appropriate.</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus etc.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>
	Bespoke Open Modules	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – in-person/online</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i> <i>Suspension/cessation of modules</i> <i>Module capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval by Undergraduate Common Architecture Office</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus etc</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Co-ordinating School/Discipline will complete new module set-up in SITS and confirm relevant details to UCAO and Central Timetabling Unit (CTU)

<sup>3</sup> Shared across Schools/disciplines/programmes.



	Education level	Type of change	Approval Required
Undergraduate Modules	Stand-alone modules for credit (external)	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – in-person/online</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i> <i>Discontinuation of modules</i> <i>Module capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval at School level (programme/curriculum committee or by programme/strand/subject director with sign-off by DUTL).</li> <li>• Shared modules<sup>3</sup> sign-off by each School.</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus etc</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>
	Trinity Electives	<b>Moderate Changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery e.g. from online to in-person</i> <i>Suspension/cessation of Trinity Electives</i> <i>Module capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval by Trinity Elective Sub-Committee (TESC)</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor Changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>

	Education level	Type of change	Approval Required
Postgraduate Changes	Micro-credentials	<b>Major Changes e.g.</b> <i>Suspension (MC office sign-off)</i> <i>Cessation of micro-credentials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval by Graduate Studies Committee</li> </ul>
		<b>Moderate Changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – in-person/online</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval by the Micro-credentials sub-committee</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus etc</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-off by the MC coordinator at School-level</li> </ul>
	Postgraduate Modules	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>ECTS Credit volume changes</i> <i>Learning outcome changes (if no impact on PLOs)</i> <i>New modules</i> <i>Discontinuation of modules</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval at School level (programme/curriculum committee or by programme/strand director with sign-off by DTLP).</li> <li>Shared modules sign-off by each School.</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes e.g.</b> <i>Changes to reading lists,</i> <i>Introduction of new topics into a module syllabus etc</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>
	Structured PhD Modules <sup>4</sup> <a href="#">Category 1, 2, 3 modules</a>	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>ECTS Credit volume changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – in-person/online</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval at School level (programme/curriculum committee or by programme/strand director with sign-off by DTLP). Shared modules sign-off by each School.</li> </ul>
		<b>Minor changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-off by the module coordinator</li> </ul>
	<sup>4</sup> <a href="#">Category 4 modules</a>	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Title changes</i> <i>ECTS Credit volume changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – in-person/online</i> <i>Learning outcome changes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> See [Five categories of credit-bearing structured PhD modules](#)

	Education level	Type of change	Approval Required
Trinity Validated Programmes	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate programmes	<b>Major changes e.g.</b> <i>Programme Learning Outcomes changes</i> <i>Programme title changes</i> <i>Mode of delivery changes – full-time/part-time, in-person/online.</i> <i>Changes to programme structure</i> <i>ECTS credit volume changes</i> <i>Programme award title changes</i> <i>Suspension/cessation</i>	University Council, via ACDC and USC/GSC (contact Academic Affairs)
	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate modules	<b>Moderate changes e.g.</b> <i>Module Title changes</i> <i>ECTS Credit volume changes</i> <i>Module Learning outcome changes</i> <i>New modules</i> <i>Discontinuation of modules</i>	University Council, via ACDC and USC/GSC (contact Academic Affairs)
		<b>Minor changes</b>	Signed-off by the Linked Provider concerned

**Notes:**

- Programme Directors/module coordinators will ensure that approved changes are communicated to AR and that SITS is updated accordingly. Changes will also be notified to the UCAO, the CTU, and the Micro-credentials Programme Office where appropriate.
- All changes will be reflected in programme handbooks, School websites, and College prospectuses.