**Trinity College Dublin**
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

# New Programme Design and Approval Policy

## 1.      Context

All programmes leading to an award from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Dublin are delivered in line with the statutory requirements of Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) and are aligned with an appropriate level on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

All programmes leading to an award from Trinity College Dublin and the University of Dublin are subject to a rigorous design and approval process to ensure that the Trinity education delivers a transformative student experience based on academic excellence.

## 2.      Purpose

This policy requires that all new and re-configured programmes and new programmes delivered collaboratively with Trinity undergo a robust design and approval process.

## 3.      Benefits

3.1    Guidance and support are made available to Trinity academic staff in the design and approval process for new and re-configured programmes.

## 4.      Scope

4.1    This policy applies to all new programmes delivered by Trinity.

4.2    This policy applies to existing programmes undergoing significant curriculum review such as structural changes resulting in a new programme strand.

4.3    This policy applies to new stand-alone modules delivered for credit.

4.4    The design and approval of programmes delivered collaboratively with Trinity leading to Dual/Joint awards are covered under the Dual and Joint Awards Policy.

4.5    The approval of programmes designed and delivered by other higher education institutions and validated by Trinity is subject to section 7.5 of this policy.

## 5.      Principles

5.1    The approval of proposals concerning the design and delivery of new programmes is based on an impartial assessment of each proposal in terms of its rationale, academic merits and financial implications.

5.2    Programme design and approval processes are collaborative, coherent, and rigorous.

## 6.    Definitions

6.1    An **Award** is an academic qualification (degree, diploma or certificate), conferred in recognition of the successful completion of a higher education programme of study, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level, and issued by a designated awarding body.

6.2    **Modules** are the building blocks of courses. They are self-contained units of teaching, learning and assessment on particular topics with defined academic credit values, learning outcomes, modes of delivery and assessment schemes. Students are required to pass a defined number of module credits in order to progress and to attain an award.

6.3    **Stand-alone Modules** are modules as defined above which have no pre- or co-requisites, and to which students may register independent of other modules.

6.4    A **Course** is a complete set of modules with an approved curriculum and assessment lasting one or more academic years. There may be modules and course options within the main curriculum, so students on the same course may not all necessarily be following the exact same subject matter.

6.5    **Learning outcomes** are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate on completion of a process of learning.

6.6    A **Programme** is a set of modules, courses or course options that lead to an award (e.g. a degree).

6.7    A **Programme Strand** is a series of modules which creates a distinct thematic pathway within a programme.

6.8    The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a system of ten levels used to describe the Irish qualification system. The NFQ describes what learners should know, understand and be able to do on the basis of a given qualification.

6.9    A **Designated Awarding Body** is a higher education institution with the legal authority to make awards, and to whom the Qualifications and Quality (Education and Training) Act 2012 applies.

6.10    A **Validated Programme** is a programme of study that is developed delivered and managed by a partner institution but approved and quality assured by an awarding institution leading to one of its awards.

## 7.    Policy

### 7.1    Programme Design and Approval

7.1.1 Trinity requires that new programmes align with the strategic plans of the University and the Schools in which they are to be delivered; the general regulations of the University; statutory requirements, and any professional and statutory accreditation requirements that may apply.

7.1.2 The programme design process is a consultative process informed by the perspectives of academic staff, administrative staff, students, external experts and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

7.1.3 Trinity supports the incorporation of inclusive teaching and learning practices into the design of new programmes (Ref. Trinity Inclusive Curriculum).

7.1.4 Trinity requires that proposals for the design and approval of new undergraduate programmes adhere to the Template for Proposals for New Undergraduate Courses.

7.1.5 Trinity requires that proposals for the design and approval of new postgraduate programmes adhere to the Guidelines for a New Postgraduate Course Proposal.

7.1.6 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 and deadlines set by external bodies e.g. Central Admissions Office (CAO) and collaborative partners for marketing and recruitment purposes.

7.1.7 Programmes within Trinity are recommended by the School Executive Committee, Faculty Dean, Undergraduate Studies Committee or the Graduate Studies Committee (as appropriate) and approved by the University Council.

7.1.8 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.

7.1.9 The provisions for the design and approval of programmes in this policy should be read in conjunction with the Dual and Joint Awards Policy.

7.1.10 Prior to submission for approval by the University Council all new undergraduate and postgraduate programme proposals are required to be sent for external review.

7.1.11 Programmes will not be advertised prior to the approval by the University Council.

7.2 **New Strands**
A Programme Strand is a series of modules which creates a distinct thematic pathway within a programme.

7.2.1 New undergraduate strands follow the approval process for undergraduate programmes and are normally submitted for external review after they have been approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

7.2.2    New taught Master strands normally have 60 ECTS credit-worth of taught modules, share a 30 ECTS credit-worth of dissertation/research module already present in the existing 'parent' programme/course, and follow the approval process for new postgraduate programmes.

7.2.3    Where a strand is being added to the existing programme/course and where more than 30 ECTS of the taught module is new, the strand is normally sent for external review.

7.2.4    The Dean of Graduate Studies has discretion as to whether a new strand should be sent for external review.

## 7.3    Stand-Alone Modules

7.3.1  New undergraduate/postgraduate stand-alone module proposals are submitted to the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and the Graduate Studies Committee 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.

## 7.4    New Modules and Modules with Significant Change

7.4.1  New undergraduate modules and modules with significant changes are submitted to the designated course committee, and any other course committee which shares the modules, for approval, including cross Schools and Faculties.

   7.4.1.1   The module descriptor template must be used for the creation of new modules and the module(s) should map to the overall programme learning outcomes using the mapping tool.

   7.4.1.2   Significant changes to an existing module will not be implemented without reference to the overall programme learning outcomes of the programme to which it belongs.

   7.4.1.3   Schools involved in courses, as partners or through the provision of service teaching modules or by otherwise sharing modules, will have due regard to any existing agreements they have in place with other Schools or institutions in relation to delivering specific module content and enabling approved learning outcomes.

7.4.2  New postgraduate modules and modules with significant change are submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval as part of the Calendar changes process.

7.5 **Validated Programmes**

7.5.1 Trinity requires that new programme proposals submitted for approval and validation by Trinity align with any professional and statutory accreditation requirements that may apply.

7.5.2 Trinity requires that proposals for new validated undergraduate programmes adhere to the Template for Proposals for New Undergraduate Courses.

7.5.3 Trinity requires that proposals for new validated postgraduate programmes adhere to the Guidelines for a New Validated Postgraduate Course Proposal.

7.5.4 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 academic committee meetings, deadlines set by external bodies e.g. Central Admissions Office (CAO) and the partner institution's marketing and recruitment timetable.

7.5.5 Programmes submitted for validation are considered by the related School, by the relevant Associated College Degrees Committee, and recommended to the Undergraduate Studies Committee or Graduate Studies Committee, as appropriate, prior to approval by the University Council.

7.5.6 Where a strand is being added to the existing programme/course and where more than 30 ECTS of the taught module is new the strand is normally sent for external review.

7.5.7 The Dean of Graduate Studies has discretion as to whether a new strand should be sent for external review.

7.5.8 Prior to submission for approval by the University Council all new undergraduate and postgraduate programme proposals are required to be sent for external review.

7.5.9 Programmes will not be advertised prior to the University Council approval.


8. **Responsibility**

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


9. **Related Documents**

9.1 National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

9.2 Undergraduate Course Proposal Approval Process

9.3 Template for Proposals for New Undergraduate Courses

9.4 Postgraduate Programme Approval Process Map

9.5 Guidelines for a New Postgraduate Course Proposal

9.6 Guidelines for a New Validated Postgraduate Course Proposal

## 10.     Document Control

10.1    Date Policy Approved: December 2016

10.2    Date of Next Review:  Academic year 2019/20