



## **Programme Approval**

### **Criteria, Approval Mechanisms and Procedures**

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# 1. The Purpose of This Document

This document sets out the criteria, approval mechanisms and processes that govern the approval of:

- (i) new programmes of study (including those involving collaborative partnerships),
- (ii) the re-approval of existing programmes of study and
- (iii) approval of substantial revisions to an existing programme of study.

These processes are part of the broader academic quality assurance and enhancement structure of the University. The document focuses, in the main, on the process of preparing and submitting proposals for new programmes of study that must undergo University approval (validation and accreditation). This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Such Faculty-specific regulations and/or regulations in partner institutions, as may pertain with respect to programme approval. This is to ensure that all Faculty and partner institutions' regulations and procedures are followed.
- The University schedule of meetings at <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/academic-council-sub-committees> as well as schedules of relevant Faculty meetings.

## 2. Overview of Academic Approval Procedures

### 2.1 New Programme Approval

As a University and Designated Awarding Body, DCU is responsible for the accreditation of its own programmes and awards, which are, in turn, fully aligned with the National Framework for Qualifications. When the University wishes to facilitate the establishment of new programmes, it uses procedures referred to as validation and accreditation.

Validation and accreditation are important aspects of DCU's quality assurance. The University is committed to ensuring, on the one hand, that all new programme proposals have a clear strategic focus and are fully aligned to the University's strategic plan and component strategic plans and, on the other, that programme proposers have at their disposal a set of procedures designed to maintain the highest possible quality in terms of the preparation of proposals. The processes of validation and accreditation ensure, inter alia, that:


- each proposal meets the requirements of Academic Council for the relevant award, and the standards and learning outcomes set are appropriate to that award,
- individuals and groups are facilitated in creating new programmes of study within the University and/or in partnership with other institutions or organisations as appropriate,
- necessary human, financial and physical resources are available.

### 2.2 Revision of Existing Programmes

Where changes to programmes are made which do not require validation and accreditation, different procedures are followed. These are outlined at <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/programme-approval> under the 'Revised Academic Offerings' section. Please refer to the schedule of types of changes in the 'Revised Academic Offerings' form, and the associated required actions.

### 2.3 Re-accreditation

In some cases, the outcome of the review of a programme within the University may involve a recommendation that it be re-accredited. Where such a need arises, standard accreditation procedures are normally followed. In certain circumstances, the procedures may be carried out electronically. A recommendation on the desirability, or otherwise, of electronic accreditation may be made by the Faculty Teaching and Learning



Committee or Education Committee to the Office of the Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar). The final decision rests with the Vice-President Academic Affairs (Registrar).

A need for re-accreditation may also arise on the basis of recommendations from an external professional accrediting organisation (often following a review visit) and/or significant changes which such an organisation may make to its requirements in terms of recognising the programme.

It should be noted, however, that re-accreditations, especially electronic re-accreditations, are relatively rare.

### 3. Consultation and timing

#### 3.1 Academic Secretariat, OVPA

The [Academic Secretariat](#) is responsible for the coordination of the University approval processes with respect to new and existing programmes of study.

It is advisable that the Academic Secretariat is contacted at an early stage in programme design/re-design so to ensure the appropriate approval mechanisms are being applied and to discuss likely timelines involved in the following process:

- approval within Faculty/Faculties
- due diligence and the establishment of an MOU/MOA, where appropriate, in consultation with the Office of the Executive Director of Engagement
- validation and approval of validation recommendations by Academic Council
- accreditation and approval of accreditation by Academic Council
- finalisation of accreditation documentation to take account of the recommendations of the Accreditation Board
- preparation for launch

#### 3.2 Importance of timing

It is essential that documentation be submitted in a timely manner; failure to take into account the need for this may result in a programme not gaining approval, and therefore not being offered, within the schedule originally envisaged by the proposers. It is necessary, therefore, to take cognisance of the University's schedule of meetings and the schedules of relevant Faculty meetings. Early planning is of particular importance for programmes which are intended for offer through the CAO, those which involve partner institutions (collaborative programmes) and those which may require a foreshortened approval process due to the requirements of a particular funding call.

It is very important to be aware that engagement in due diligence with respect to a proposed external partner organisation must be undertaken before, rather than at the same time as, the validation process. Consideration may also need to be given to the possibility that a derogation from Marks and Standards (where required to meet the requirements of external bodies) may be needed and, if so, that a request will have to be submitted, in due course, to the University Standards Committee.

### 3.3 Consultation within the School and Faculty

A validation proposal may be submitted to the Education Committee (EC) only after it has gone through the appropriate discussion and consultation in the relevant School(s) and the appropriate approval procedures in the relevant Faculty or Faculties. The Head(s) of School must be satisfied that all relevant consultation takes place at School level. Advice on approval procedures within a Faculty should be sought from the Faculty Office and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning.

### 3.4 Collaboration with an external organisation (collaborative programmes)

Where it is proposed to offer a programme in partnership with an external organisation, reference must be made, as appropriate, to the University's policy on due diligence and the procedures for drawing up Memoranda of Understanding and related documentation. It is vital that engagement in due diligence be undertaken before, rather than at same time as, the validation process. For further information on the development of collaborative programmes see: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/collaborative-provision>.

### 3.5 Consultation with other relevant offices

Timely consultation must also take place, as appropriate, with relevant offices, which may include those listed below (the list is not exhaustive):

- Registry, with particular reference to application and admissions processes and timelines, the submission deadlines for academic structure information and liaison between the Registry and school guidance counsellors, where relevant.
- Finance and Fees Office
- DCU Studio and the Teaching Enhancement Unit
- Office of the Chief Operating Officer, in relation to space requirements.
- Communications and Marketing and in particular, Student Recruitment
- International Office
- Student Support and Development (including the Careers Service)
- INTRA Office
- Heads of Schools from which service teaching will be requested
- Partner organisations in which it is proposed that students will spend time (e.g. on study abroad or clinical placements)
- ISS
- Library



## 4. Validation

### 4.1 Validation Criteria

Validation is the process that involves the EC in assessing new programme proposals with a view to ascertaining both their relationship to strategy and their likely viability. EC will assess a proposal on a number of criteria including:

- evidence of alignment with the **University strategic plan** and its component strategies
- evidence of alignment with **the strategic plans of the relevant Faculty/Faculties and School(s)**, as outlined in the validation proposal
- evidence of a **place for the proposed programme within higher education in Ireland generally**, taking into account programmes offered in other institutions
- evidence of the **likely demand** for the proposed programme, and the likelihood of achieving the **appropriate student intake**
- coherence of the **statement of programme purpose** and underpinning **educational philosophy**
- appropriateness of the **programme learning outcomes**, and coherence of their relationship to the purpose and educational philosophy
- reasonableness of the estimate of the **resources needed** to offer the programme
- reasonableness of the **proposed launch date**
- appropriateness of the **proposed development team**
- appropriateness of the **proposed members of the Accreditation Board** in light of the regulations for the appointment of such members

## 4.2 Validation Approval Mechanism and Process: Overview

Figure 4.1 below provides an overview of the validation process and approval mechanism. Further detail on each stage is included in subsequent sections.

It is important to note that, where a proposal involves a partner institution (i.e. a collaborative proposal), there are additional procedures and approval mechanisms to be followed. Therefore, it is vital that the programme proposer liaises with the OVPAA, External Affairs, and relevant Faculty colleagues before progressing to validation. Further information on collaborative proposals can be viewed at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/collaborative-provision>

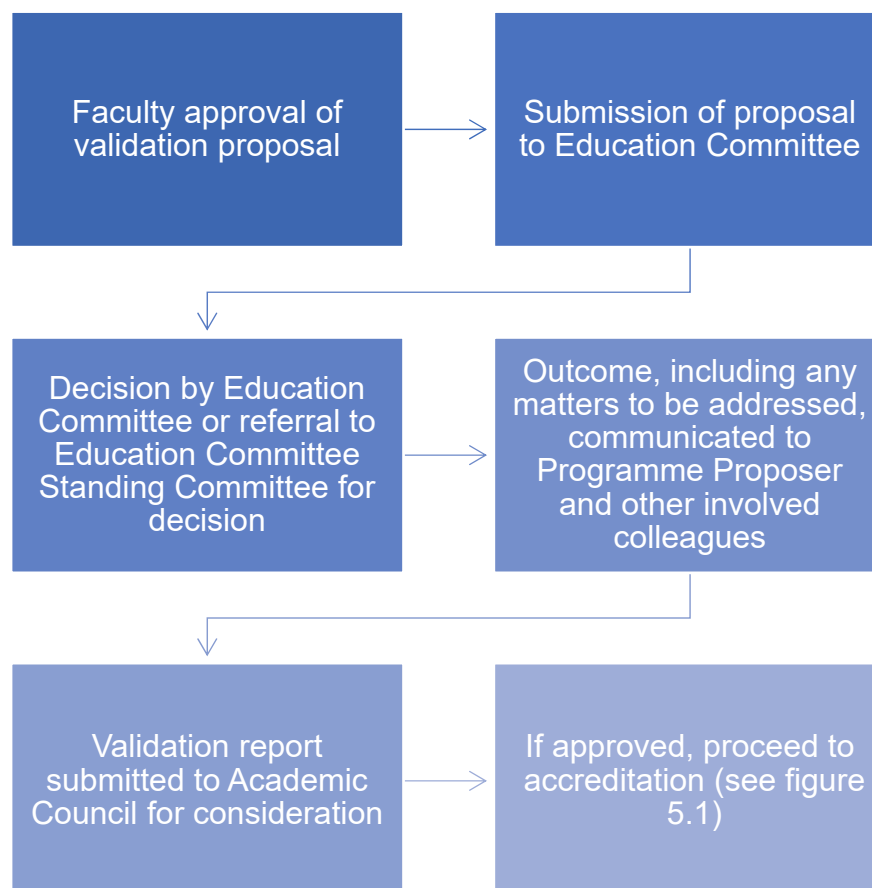


Figure 4.1: Overview of validation approval mechanism

### 4.3 Faculty approval of proposal

Validation proposals may be submitted for approval to EC once they have completed the approval process (including approval in relation to financial matters) within the relevant Faculty/Faculties. Information on Faculty approval processes is available from Faculty Offices. The programme proposers are welcome to submit a draft of the programme proposal to the Secretary of EC in advance with a request for advice on issues such as whether or not all of the necessary areas have been adequately covered in the document.

### 4.4 Submission of proposal to Education Committee

Once approved, the proposal is submitted to the Secretary of EC in electronic format (see section 4.7 for further information on completing the validation paperwork). There are ten EC meetings in each academic year and validation proposals may be considered at any of these (see section 3 for further information on timing). The submission dates of EC meetings can be viewed online at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/academic-council-sub-committees>.

Programme proposers are not required to be in attendance at the meeting of EC. However, if the EC decides that a proposal needs to be discussed with the proposers, such discussion will take place some days after the EC meeting at a meeting of the Education Committee Standing Committee (ECSC). In these instances, the ECSC's recommendations must be endorsed by the EC.

### 4.5 Education Committee Standing Committee

The Secretary of EC notifies the proposers of the exact time at which the proposal will be discussed and at which they should therefore make themselves available. The principal programme proposer should be accompanied to the ECSC meeting by one or two colleagues (the group may include, for example, the Head of School, the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning or another staff member closely associated with the programme). If a programme is proposed in partnership with an external organisation, a representative of this organisation may also attend. The exact times and dates for the ECSC meetings are indicated in the University schedule of meetings, which can be viewed online at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/academic-council-sub-committees>

## **4.6 Decision by Education Committee/Education Committee Standing Committee**

The Secretary of EC/ECSC advises the principal programme proposer of the outcome of the meeting. This outcome will normally be a recommendation either to approve (with or without a number of matters to be addressed) or not to approve the programme for development towards accreditation.

If the EC/ECSC decides not to recommend approval, the Secretary of EC will let the programme proposers know this by e-mail following the meeting. Further action to be taken by the proposers will depend on the circumstances. For example, in certain cases, they may be advised that the EC considers the programme as proposed not to be likely to be viable while, in others, they may be invited to submit a revised proposal to a future meeting of the EC.

In the event of a recommendation to approve a proposal, the Secretary of EC drafts a validation report to be approved by the members of the EC/ECSC and then forwarded for approval to the next available meeting of Academic Council. This report includes a statement of the recommendation to approve and a list of sub-recommendations, if any. The Secretary of EC forwards this report to the principal programme proposer and other colleagues involved with the proposal.

Normally, the sub-recommendations relate to matters that need to be addressed in the accreditation proposal. However, on some occasions, EC may request that sub-recommendations are implemented in advance of accreditation. If that is the case, the Secretary of EC arranges with the programme proposer for confirmation to be submitted to the EC, at an appropriate date.

## **4.7 Decision by Academic Council**

Validation reports are normally for formal approval only and will be discussed only if a member of Council requests that this be done. If there is a request for a discussion, the Secretary of Academic Council will notify the principal programme proposer of this. In such instances, it should be ensured that there is someone present at Academic Council who can address any issues raised.

If there is no discussion about the proposal, it will be formally approved by Academic Council. If there is a discussion, various outcomes are possible: Council may approve, reject or amend the validation recommendations. In all cases, the decision (and recommendations, if any) of Council will be communicated to stakeholders by the Secretary of EC.

In the event of rejection, Academic Council will advise on the appropriate next steps for the proposal.

If approval is indicated by Academic Council, the programme proposers are in a position to prepare for accreditation. It is understood that, for practical reasons, they may already have begun the preparations, following EC approval.

Before a programme can proceed to accreditation, the Executive Dean of Faculty must confirm that all recommendations of the EC/ECSC, and any recommendations from AC have been implemented/addressed. The form for signature can be found in appendix 2 or at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/Z-of-Forms.shtml>.

## 4.8 Validation Proposal Documentation

A standard validation is one in which the proposed taught award does not involve working with a proposed external partner or institution. The AA1 validation form is used in such instances. The form is available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/Validation-and-Accreditation-of-Programmes.shtml>

Where a proposed programme of study involves single or multiple partner institutions (i.e. a collaborative proposal) an alternative validation (AA) form is required. These alternative forms contain much of the same information as the AA1 form, while also requiring additional information in regards to the proposed partner, the partnership context and the justification for partner involvement in the programme.

Further information on collaborative provision, and the relevant AA forms, are available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/Collaborative-Provision.shtml>

The AA1 validation form should contain the following information. Please note, the alternative AA forms will also require this information but also contain further sections relating specifically to the proposed collaborative arrangements.

Section	Heading	Notes
1	General information	Includes a brief description and background to the proposal.  Within the Faculty, a future programme chairperson (or equivalent title) should be

		<p>identified. This person is referred to, for the purposes of validation and accreditation, as the principal programme proposer.</p> <p>Refer to appendix 1 for a full list of agreed undergraduate and postgraduate titles.</p>
2	Strategic fit	It is important to ensure alignment with both the University Strategic Plan and component strategies, and the strategic plans of the relevant Faculty/Faculties and School/Schools.
3	Likely demand and proposed intake	<p>In indicating the extent to which the programme is expected to run over a limited period of years, or on an open-ended basis reference must be made to standard programme review procedures.</p> <p>Where market research does not apply, e.g. where a proposed programme has been commissioned by an external agency, 'not applicable' should be indicated.</p>
4	Entry requirements, and progression and exit routes	<p>Undergraduate Programmes: Normally, students will progress through to degree level. If it is planned to permit exit at Certificate and/or Diploma levels, state this with the number of credits which must be obtained for such exit (these must be in accordance with Marks and Standards).</p> <p>Postgraduate Programmes: It is assumed that standard entry procedures for international applicants and for applicants with disabilities apply. This should be stated.</p> <p>There should be no reference to 'mature' applicants, as this concept does not apply to postgraduate programmes.</p>
5	Purpose of the Programme	
6	Programme learning outcomes	It is assumed that the information will be identical with that submitted to Course Builder (subject to such modifications as

		may be required on the basis of recommendations at validation and, in particular, accreditation.
7	Aptitudes and proficiencies	<p>It is assumed that the information will be identical with that submitted to Course Builder (subject to such modifications as may be required on the basis of recommendations at validation and, in particular, accreditation).</p> <p>Postgraduate programmes: For proposed taught postgraduate programmes, this section should be left in the document (i.e. it should not be omitted, nor should the subsequent sections be renumbered). The following should be stated: 'The University's initiative with respect to graduate attributes applies in particular to undergraduate programmes at present'.</p>
8	Outline structure of the Programme	The standard Programme Academic Structure, Registration Schedule and Assessment Schedule should be completed and inserted here.
9	Online and Blended delivery	This section should be included where the intended delivery is online or strongly blended.
10	Resources required	<p>A template for outlining the resources required to run a programme is available from the Finance Office. This template must be used for validation. Advice on completing it is available from Faculty Offices. Only the overview page is required by the EC/ECSC, though the more detailed pages which provide the background information to this overview page may be required for School and Faculty approval and may also be requested at the discretion of the EC/ECSC. (They should not, however, be submitted to the EC/ECSC as a matter of course.)</p> <p>Physical space requirements: Please contact the Office of the Chief Operation Officer to provide the following information:</p>

		An indication if additional resources are required within the existing timetable. Specialist space e.g. science lab, computer lab, specialist classroom.
11	Implementation plan	To include: Liaison with CAO (via the Registry), if relevant, including timescales  Advertising and marketing plans, including timescales
12	Membership of the proposed Development Team	
13	Membership of the proposed Accreditation Board	Refer to section 4.9 for further information.
14	Endorser sign off	

Table 4.1: Validation form template

## 4.9 Accreditation Board Members

At the point of validation, programme proposers are required to nominate the members of the Accreditation Board. Accreditation Board meetings typically take place on Zoom and so experts may be identified from outside of Ireland. Those nominated must be approved by the EC as part of the validation process, using the form provided in Appendix C. Where a subsequent change has to be made (e.g. where an approved individual becomes unavailable), the CV of the substitute (on the standard form) should be forwarded to the Secretary of EC, who will submit it electronically to the EC for consideration.

In the selection of nominees to the Accreditation Board, account must be taken of the following:

- The principal programme proposer should ensure that there is appropriate professional distance between all nominated Board members and the University. No individual employed by the University, or a student of the University, in the previous five years may be considered. Nomination of individuals with a personal connection with the University should also be avoided, as appropriate. Reference should be made to the University's Conflict



of Interest Policy and Guidelines at [http://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/president/pdfs/conflict\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/president/pdfs/conflict_guidelines.pdf).

- It should be ensured that the Board includes senior academic and professional experts as appropriate. There should normally be a minimum of one individual of professorial rank.
- It can be desirable, even necessary, for an individual to be appointed to a Board because they represents a professional accrediting body. In no circumstances, however, should an individual be appointed who is a member of an organisation which has commissioned a programme.
- Every effort should be made to ensure an appropriate gender balance and an appropriate balance between national and international expertise.
- An Accreditation Board should include no more than one representative from any one institution.
- Reciprocal arrangements between the University and other institutions should be avoided.
- In no circumstances may a staff member from DCU act as a member of an Accreditation Board in a linked college, or *vice versa*. Nor may a staff member of a linked college act as a member of an Accreditation Board in another linked college.

The number of external experts who sit on an Accreditation Board should never be less than three and should normally not be more than five. To allow for unforeseen events which might prevent an individual from attending a Board meeting as scheduled, it is recommended that a minimum of four be identified and invited. This ensures that, if one individual is prevented at short notice from attending, there will still be a minimum of three in attendance.

If an expert indicates, within a reasonable time period before the Board meeting that they cannot now attend, there may be time for the approval of a substitute. In certain cases, an individual may indicate that they cannot attend the Board meeting but would be willing to read the documentation and submit comments in advance. This can be accommodated on occasion, though it is not recommended because it does not allow the individual to interact with the other members of the Board or the programme proposers.

## 5. Accreditation

### 5.1 Accreditation Criteria

Accreditation involves the submission of a detailed programme proposal to an Accreditation Board. The Accreditation Board includes a group of academic and, as appropriate, other professional experts from outside the University. The role of the Accreditation Board is to consider whether the programme meets the nationally and internationally accepted requirements for the award(s) to which it is designed to lead.

Each accreditation proposal is assessed on a number of criteria, which include:

- the likelihood that the proposed **programme will meet the needs** which the proposal indicates it is **intended** to meet
- the appropriateness of the **entry requirements and exit routes**
- the validity of the purpose and **underpinning educational philosophy** of the proposed programme
- the linkage of the **programme learning outcomes** with the purpose and the underpinning educational philosophy
- the **consistency and coherence** of the proposed **modules** in the context of the underpinning educational philosophy and the programme learning outcomes
- the **reasonableness of achieving the programme learning outcomes, in the time specified**, by the majority of students
- the appropriateness and **mix of learning and assessment methodologies**
- the coherence between **assessment methodologies**, per module, and the module **learning outcomes**
- the coherence of the group of **skills and competencies** that the student would be expected to have at the end of the programme
- the appropriateness of the **quality assurance procedures** to be used in relation to the programme
- the **qualifications and experience of the programme team** and the module coordinators.

## 5.2 Accreditation Approval Mechanism and Process

Accreditation is carried out by an Accreditation Board, composed of a number of external experts, a senior member of the University who acts as Chair, and a member of the Academic Secretariat who acts as Rapporteur. Figure 5.1 below provides an overview of the accreditation process and approval mechanism. Further details on each stage is included in subsequent sections.

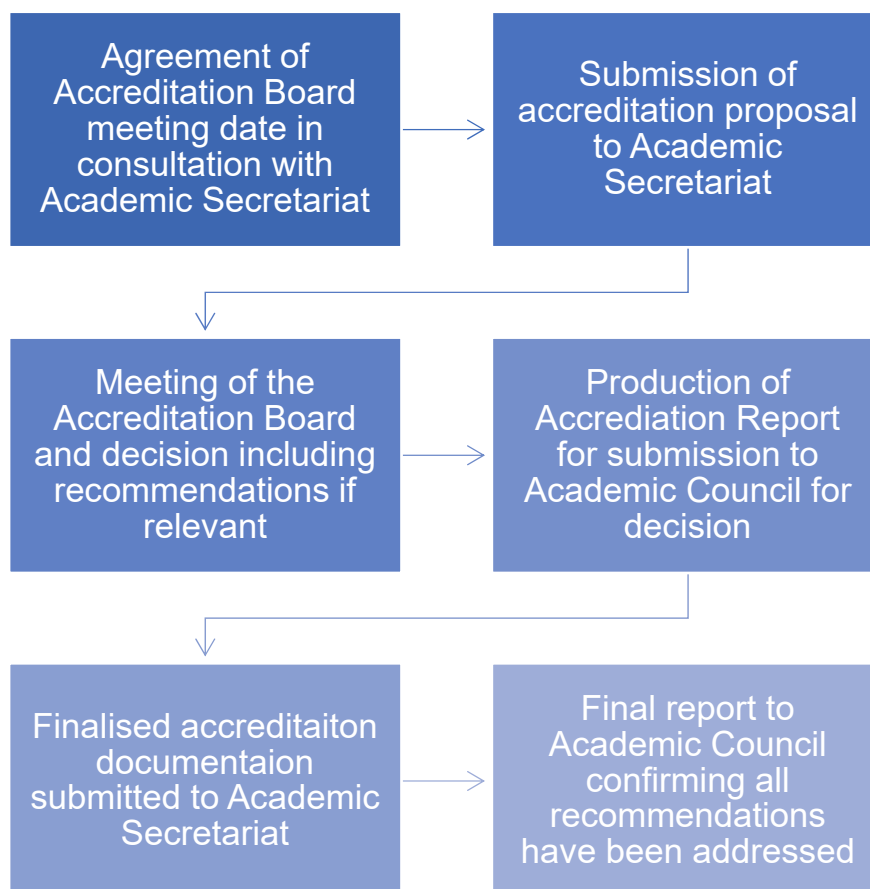


Figure 5.1: Overview of accreditation approval mechanism

### 5.3 Arrangements for Accreditation Board meeting

In enabling programme proposers to access the widest pool of external experts, and in keeping with the University's commitment to sustainability, Accreditation Board meetings are typically held remotely, using Zoom.

To arrange a date for the meeting, the principal programme proposer must first contact the Academic Secretariat<sup>1</sup>. In no circumstances should dates be arranged with the external experts, even tentatively, without prior consultation. The approximate time period in which the meeting will take place depends on a number of factors, including the likely amount of time required by the programme proposers to prepare the accreditation proposal and the availability of those who must be present for the meeting. These include:

- Accreditation Board members including the Chair and Rapporteur
- the principal programme proposer and others closely associated with the proposal, including the Dean/s of Faculty and Head/s of School
- the module coordinators

The Academic Secretariat agrees with the principal programme proposer a list of possible dates. The principal programme proposer consults with all relevant parties, including the external experts, on the most suitable date. The slot will then be entered into the accreditation diary and all others will be erased.

The principal programme proposer advised the Academic Secretariat on who will be in attendance at each session. If it appears likely that it will be impossible for an individual to attend, a substitute should be identified who will be able to speak on the individual's behalf.

The Academic Secretariat identifies a senior member of the academic staff of the University to chair the meeting. This person will usually be a Dean. In no instance will a meeting be chaired by the Dean of Faculty from which the programme proposal has come.

### 5.4 Completion and Submission of the Accreditation Proposal

The accreditation proposal is a detailed document aimed at describing the proposed programme. It is much longer than the validation document, however, certain sections of the two documents can be the same or similar.

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<sup>1</sup> [Rachel.keegan@dcu.ie](mailto:Rachel.keegan@dcu.ie), ext. 6285, [Margaret.irwanbannon@dcu.ie](mailto:Margaret.irwanbannon@dcu.ie), ext 7754, [David.McCarthy@dcu.ie](mailto:David.McCarthy@dcu.ie)

A template for the accreditation proposal can be found on the OVPAA website at: <https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/programme-approval>

Where recommendations have been made at validation stage, these must be incorporated into the accreditation proposal. In addition, the information in the accreditation proposal may sometimes need to be more details than in the validation documentation.

The accreditation proposal consists of three main sections:

- Section A: The description of the proposed programme (sections 1 to 9 below). This section might run to 15-20 pages or approximately 6,000 to 8,000 words.
- Section B: The module descriptors (using the approved template in Course Builder)
- Section C: The *curricula vitae* of the members of the programme team (using the template provided in Appendix C).

In every instance where reference is made to a document which is available on line, the appropriate web link should be included. A table of contents should be provided, including a list of all the modules and a list of all the members of the programme team, for whom *curricula vitae* are provided.

An accreditation proposal should contain the following information<sup>2</sup>:

Section	Content	What to include
1	Summary description and background to and development of the proposal	Adopted from section 1 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations
2	Entry, progression and exit routes	Adopted from section 4 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations
3	Purpose of the programme	Adopted from section 5 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations
4	Programme learning outcomes	Adopted from section 6 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations
5	Aptitudes and proficiencies	Adopted from section 7 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations

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<sup>2</sup> Resources at the following link may be of assistance to programme proposers:  
<http://www.dcu.ie/teu/index.shtml>.

6	Outline structure of programme	Adopted from section 8 of the validation proposal, incorporating any AC recommendations
7	Online and blended delivery	<p>Building upon section 9 of the validation proposal. Refer to Appendix D for information on the questions to be addressed in this section.</p> <p>And</p> <p>DCU's Principles for Quality Assurance of DCU E-Learning and Blended provision at:  <a href="https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Principles%20for%20Quality%20Assurance%20of%20DCU%20E-learning%20%26%20Blended%20Provision_final_0.pdf">https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Principles%20for%20Quality%20Assurance%20of%20DCU%20E-learning%20%26%20Blended%20Provision_final_0.pdf</a>Please refer to</p>
8	Marks and Standards and programme-specific regulations	<p>Specify that the programme adheres to DCU Marks and Standards. A web link to Marks and Standards as below should be provided:</p> <p><a href="https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/Policies-and-Regulations.shtml">https://www.dcu.ie/ovpaa/Policies-and-Regulations.shtml</a></p> <p>In certain cases, the possibility of requesting a derogation from Marks and Standards may need to be factored into discussions. As outlined in Marks and Standards (page 2): 'only derogations required by professional bodies will be considered for approval'. Such derogations, where approved by the Faculty, should be outlined here but flagged as provisional pending approval by the University Standards Committee (which must consider all requests for derogations) and ultimate approval by Academic Council.</p> <p>In all cases the following statement must be included:</p>

		<p>'The derogation(s) is/are being requested within the parameters permitted by DCU Marks and Standards.'</p> <p>The proposed programme-specific regulations (using the approved template, available at <a href="https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/ovpa_a/programme_regulations_template_2019-2020.docx">https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/ovpa_a/programme_regulations_template_2019-2020.docx</a>)</p> <p>The following statement must be included here also:</p> <p>'These programme-specific regulations are in addition, and complementary, to DCU Marks and Standards. They are proposed for the initial years of implementation and will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing fitness for purpose.'</p>
9	Alignment matrix	<p>The alignment matrix should provide a clear demonstration that each programme learning outcome can be achieved and assessed by the discrete modules that make up the programme. It should indicate the extent and strength of the contribution of each module to each of the programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>This section should be copied and pasted from the section in Course Builder called 'PO Delivery' which indicates how each module on the programme contributes to the programme learning outcomes.</p> <p>Further examples of alignment matrices can be found on Course Builder.</p>
10	Quality assurance and programme evaluation	<p>Reference must be made here to:</p> <p>use of external examiners in accordance with University procedures (with links to relevant parts of University website, especially:</p>

		<p><a href="https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/ovpa_a/regulations_and_guidelines_for_external_examiners_app_ac_12_october_2016.pdf">https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/ovpa_a/regulations_and_guidelines_for_external_examiners_app_ac_12_october_2016.pdf</a></p> <p>use of programme review procedures</p> <p>use of student feedback procedures (with references to national and University procedures; the advice of the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning/Education should be sought about this)</p> <p>periodic review by external professional bodies, where relevant</p> <p>any other quality assurance mechanism that may apply.</p> <p>In all cases, it should be stipulated that standard procedures will be adhered to. Where additional detail is necessary, e.g. with regard to reviews by external professional bodies, this should be provided.</p>
11	Module descriptors <sup>3</sup>	As in Course Builder. Please note the table of contents should include a list of all the modules and a list of all the members of the programme team, for whom <i>curricula vitae</i> are provided.
12	<i>Curricula vitae</i> of the members of the programme team	These should be made available in alphabetical order by surname using the template below. The CVs should normally be omitted from any additional copies of the documentation which are made available to the programme team
13	Any necessary appendices (but these should be	

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that, where a proposed new programme incorporates both new and existing modules, the latter are not of themselves deemed due for accreditation (as they have already been accredited in a previous context). What is due for accreditation is (a) the new modules, and (b) the programme as a whole, including the appropriateness of the relationship between the new and the existing modules.



	kept to a minimum)	
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Table 5.1: Accreditation Report Template

The final accreditation proposal must be submitted to the Academic Secretariat at least two weeks in advance of the date of the meeting. The documentation is only required in electronic format. Programme proposers are welcome to submit a draft of the accreditation proposal to the Academic Secretariat in advance with a request for advice on issues such as whether or not all of the necessary areas have been adequately covered in the document.

Two weeks before the date of the meeting the Academic Secretariat sends an electronic copy of the accreditation proposal to each member of the Accreditation Board along with:

- a covering letter
- a guide to the accreditation process
- a list of the members of the Accreditation Board
- a timetable and details of the Zoom details
- information regarding fee payment
- the validation recommendations approved by Academic Council, where relevant

The timetable, zoom details and list of accreditation board members will be emailed to the programme proposers and other relevant colleagues.

## 5.5 Meeting of the Accreditation Board

Accreditation Board meetings are typically conducted via Zoom over a half-day, usually with a 9:30 am or 13:30 pm start. However, time zone considerations may necessitate a later or earlier start time. The indicative timetable for both a morning and afternoon accreditation board meeting is as follows:

Session	Morning Accreditation	Afternoon Accreditation	
Session 1	9:30	13:30	Private meeting of the Accreditation Board
Session 2	10:15	14:15	Meeting with the Dean, principal programme proposer and others closely associated with the proposal (the Senior Team)
	11:00	15:00	Break

Session 3	11:15	15:15	Meeting with module co-ordinators for detailed discussion of the academic content and other programme-related matters
Session 4	12:45	16:45	Private meeting of the Accreditation Board to review the outcome of discussions and formulate the recommendations
Session 5	13:15	17:15	Final meeting with the Dean, principal programme proposer and others closely associated with the proposal (the Senior Team)
	13:30	17:30	Close of proceedings

Table 5.2: Indicative Accreditation Board Meeting Timetable


During the first private meeting of the Accreditation Board (session 1) the Accreditation Board members agree on the issues to be raised with the Senior Team during session 2. The accreditation criteria (see 5.1) may be used to direct discussions.

Session 3 is intended to allow detailed discussion of individual modules with the module coordinators. If possible, the Dean(s) and Head(s) should be present at this point. The principal programme proposer should in all cases be present at this point.

During the second private meeting of the Accreditation Board (Session 4) the members agree if the programme has met the criteria (as per 5.1). There are a number of options open to the Accreditation Board:

- To recommend for accreditation
- To recommendation for accreditation with recommendations
- To recommend for accreditation with conditions
- To recommend that the programme not be accredited

It is important to note that in a small number of instances conditions may be included in the recommendation. These are included where there are fundamental issues that need to be addressed before the accreditation report can be approved by Academic Council. In such instances, confirmation that such issues have been addressed must be submitted to EC for approval.



During the final meeting with the Senior Team (session 5) the Chair or Rapporteur of the Accreditation Board summarises the decision of the Accreditation Board and any recommendations made.

## **5.6 Accreditation Report Approval**

Following the meeting, the Rapporteur will draft an accreditation report to be approved by the Accreditation Board and then forwarded for approval to the next available meeting of AC. This report will include a summary of the programme proposal together with a statement of the recommendation and a list of any sub-recommendations. Once the members of the Board have approved the report, the Rapporteur forwards it to the principal programme proposer and other relevant colleagues.

Accreditation reports are placed in Section C of the agenda for AC, which means that they are normally for formal approval only and will be discussed only if a member of AC requests it. If there is a request for a discussion, the Secretary will notify the principal programme proposer of this.

If there is to be a discussion about the proposal, it should be ensured that there is a person present at AC who can address any issues raised. If there is a discussion, various outcomes are possible: AC may approve, reject or amend the accreditation recommendations. In all cases, the decision (and recommendations, if any) will be communicated to stakeholders by the Secretary.

If there is no discussion about the proposal, it will be formally approved by Academic Council.

## **5.7 Finalisation of Accreditation Documentation**

In the event of a positive recommendation, the principal programme proposer must ensure that finalised documentation is lodged with the Academic Secretariat before the beginning of the next academic year (by a date agreed with the Academic Secretariat). A copy should also be held by the relevant Faculty/Faculties. This finalised documentation consists of the following:

1. The accreditation proposal, incorporating the accreditation recommendations, with all changes tracked.
2. Confirmation that the module specifications have been updated in Course Builder as per the recommendations.
3. The accreditation proposal with all changes accepted (clean copy).  
This document becomes the definitive accreditation document that

describes the programme as it was accredited and should be used as the basis for future revisions.

4. A copy of the accreditation report, as approved by Academic Council, with an indication under each recommendation of where and how it has been addressed.

## 5.8 Advertising a Programme

A programme should not be advertised before the EC has approved the validation proposal. After this, and before the meeting of the Accreditation Board, the programme may be advertised as 'subject to accreditation'. Between the meeting of the Accreditation Board and approval of its recommendations by Academic Council, and if the recommendation of the Board is positive, the programme may be advertised as 'subject to final approval'.

## 5.9 Electronic re-Accreditation

In certain exceptional circumstances, accreditation may be carried out electronically, i.e. by e-mail, without the necessity for the Board members to meet. These circumstances may include the re-accreditation of a programme, after it has been running for some years, where the changes are relatively straightforward.

Procedures for identifying the members of the Board are as 4.8 above except that, normally, (re)validation will be deemed not to be necessary so there will be no validation document.

The principal programme proposer should discuss with the Academic Secretariat an approximate time period during which the accreditation takes place. The principal programme proposer and the Academic Secretariat agree a number of key dates:

- the date on which the accreditation proposal is to be submitted to the Academic Secretariat
- the date by which responses are to be requested from the Board members (normally about three weeks from the date on which they get the proposal, though this can be extended to four if required)
- the date by which the Secretary the Accreditation Board completes the accreditation report and agrees it with the Board members (normally about one week from receipt of responses from the members of the Board).

## Appendix A: Titles for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes

The following is the list of agreed titles for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes:

### **Undergraduate programmes**

BA: Bachelor of Arts

BSc: Bachelor of Science

BBS: Bachelor of Business Studies

BEng: Bachelor of Engineering

BCL: Bachelor of Civil Law

BEd: Bachelor of Education

Certificate in...

Diploma in....

### **Taught Postgraduate Programmes:**

LLM: Master of Laws

MA: Master of Arts

MBA: Master of Business Administration

MEd: Master of Education

MEng: Master of Engineering

MSc: Master of Science

PME: Professional Master of Education

Graduate Certificate in..

Graduate Diploma in..

Professional Diploma (e.g. Professional Diploma in Accounting)

Professional Certificate in..

Should the proposed title need to deviate from those listed above please provide a rationale for the selection of the proposed title.

## Appendix B: Sign-off by the Executive Dean of Faculty (form)

**Confirmation by the Executive Dean of Faculty that all validation recommendations, and any recommendations from Academic Council in the context of consideration of the validation recommendations, have been carried out.**

I the undersigned confirm that, following the validation process, all the validation recommendations in respect of the proposed programme named below have been implemented and/or any recommendations that are not for immediate implementation but are aspirational or future-oriented have been fully considered and discussed by the relevant Faculty committees with a view to action as appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

Title of proposed programme:

.....

Role	Name
Executive Dean of Faculty	
Signature	Date

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<sup>4</sup> Where more than one Faculty is involved, please copy and paste the table.

## Appendix C: Outline curriculum vitae for proposed members of the Accreditation Board

(To be completed by the principal programme proposer in respect of each nominee to the Accreditation Board)

<b>Title</b>	
<b>First name</b>	
<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Current position in home institution</b>	
<b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Home institution</b>	
<b>Contact address</b>	<i>Please provide complete postal address for correspondence purposes.</i>
<b>Telephone number(s)</b>	
<b>E-mail address</b>	
<b>Web page</b>	
<b>Academic and/or professional qualifications</b>	
<b>Principal research and/or professional interests</b>	
<b>Five publications of particular relevance to the proposed programme</b> <i>(full citation required) If nominee is a practitioner as distinct from an academic and does not have publications, please indicate as such.</i>	
<b>1.</b>	
<b>2.</b>	
<b>3.</b>	
<b>4.</b>	
<b>5.</b>	

**Case for nomination to the Accreditation Board** (250 words max.) (to be completed by the principal programme proposer, note this is not part of the CV)

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## Appendix D: Questions to be addressed for programmes intended for online or blended delivery

The following questions should be addressed in the accreditation proposal (see section 5.4 for further information).

Learning Design	
Headings	Questions to Consider
<b>Design Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Detail how teaching and learning and assessment practices are been designed to make the programme suitable for online/blended delivery, using specific module examples.</li> <li>– Provide detail of how Loop will be used to support the programme delivery.</li> <li>– Describe how the approach to delivery will be reflected/evidenced in all resources used to support delivery and to which students have access (i.e. Course Builder, Loop, programme handbooks etc.).</li> <li>– What plans are in place to communicate to students to explain why learning is organised in a particular way?</li> </ul>
<b>Designing for Presence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Describe how programme and module design ensure teacher presence. Detail some of the activities that will demonstrate and ensure teacher presence.</li> <li>– Describe how expectations of the teacher's availability is made explicit.</li> <li>– Describe how learners will be encouraged to be active and present throughout the programme of study.</li> </ul>
<b>Designing for Flexibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Detail of how the programme will accommodate the need for student flexibility in the context of online or blended delivery.</li> </ul>



<b>Blended and Online Technology Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Detail what continuous professional development has been undertaken by academic staff with respect to online learning. How is that training reflected in the programme design and through the selection of the variety of tools to be utilised?</li> <li>– Detail how the technology tools chosen enhance or support the intended learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Alignment and Coherence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A coherent design approach should be adopted across the programme to aid students in navigating content and in understanding how learning and assessment is organised to support the achievement of learning outcomes. Modules should reflect a close alignment between the types of technologies utilised, forms and spread of assessment, and design choices. Outline how this has been addressed, using specific module examples.</li> <li>– Outline what engagement has taken place with DCU Studio with respect to the move to online or blended delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Scaffolded Interaction</b>	
<b>Headings</b>	<b>Questions to Consider</b>
Scaffolded Appropriate Learning Technology Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Learners have two ways of engaging in a module, one is by directed learning by the academic/facilitator and the other is self-directed. How will students be given support in learning to how to effectively use learning technology for their study and encouraged to be active in their self-directed learning in the context of the online/blended environment?</li> </ul>
Facilitated Independent and Inter-Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Describe how the programme has been designed to promote a rich, vibrant and socially interactive learning community. What elements of the programme and module design encourage students to actively engage online with their peers?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How will interaction be encouraged between learners and teacher?</li> </ul>
Supporting Digital Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How is the programme informed by international benchmarks and contemporary literature on online or blended delivery?</li> <li>– How will the teaching and learning approaches ensure student awareness of <a href="#">academic ethical awareness and integrity</a>?</li> <li>– How have you taken account of the <a href="#">principles of academic integrity</a> and the <a href="#">universal design for learning</a> in the development of the programme?</li> </ul>