

Regent College London

Programme development, approval, suspension, and discontinuation procedure

1. This document describes Regent College's procedures for the development and approval (and reapproval) and suspension and discontinuation of taught programmes of higher education leading to awards of the College or another awarding body.
2. The purpose of the procedure for development and approval is to ensure new and reapproved programmes reflect and support the College's strategy and meet the requirements of students, regulators and other stakeholders.
3. The procedure requires that the development and approval process:
 - ensures that approved programmes will provide a high-quality academic experience consistent with the OfS's conditions of registration B1 and B2;
 - considers the likelihood that approved programmes will deliver successful outcomes for students as defined by the OfS's condition of registration B3;
 - ensures that the academic standards of approved programmes, and the arrangements for maintaining those standards, are consistent with the OfS's conditions of registration B4 and B5;
 - clearly assigns responsibilities for approving new programmes;
 - monitors subsequent follow-up action (such as of conditions of approval).
4. The procedure for development and approval varies according to whether the programme is designed by the College or by another awarding body, as described below.
5. The purposes of the procedure for suspension or discontinuation are:
 - to safeguard the interests of students and applicants by identifying any risks to their experiences and considering how these may be mitigated;
 - to safeguard the interests of the College by identifying any legal, financial and regulatory risks and considering how these may be mitigated;
 - to identify and consider any implications for the College beyond the programmes affected, such as for its access and participation targets.
6. Colleagues involved in programme development and approval should refer to the Programme Development Handbook for further information and guidance.

Programme development and approval

Overview

7. Regardless of who designs the programme and makes the award at the end of it:
 - a new programme must be formally approved before it can register students;
 - an existing programme must be formally reapproved before it reaches the end of its period of approval (or be suspended or discontinued).
8. There are six stages in the approval or reapproval procedure:
 - 1) Preliminary review by the Principal
 - 2) Approval by Curriculum and Planning Committee
 - 3) Detailed programme development, including external review
 - 4) Approval by Programme Approval and Review Committee
 - 5) Approval by Academic Council
 - 6) Preparation for delivery.

Stage one: Preliminary review by the Principal

9. Proposals relating to the approval or reapproval of a programme are made by the Provost. S/he will first talk to the Principal to set out details of the programme including learning outcomes and delivery, and whether the programme complements or replaces existing provision or represents a new subject area.
10. The Principal will consider the proposal and determine the extent to which it aligns with the College's strategy, and whether it is financially viable. Where the Principal is satisfied that there is a case for further developing the proposal, s/he will ask the Provost to appoint a programme development team, who will be responsible for managing the programme through the rest of this procedure.
11. Where the Principal does not agree that there is a case for further developing the proposal, s/he will reject it.

Stage two: approval by Academic Planning and Portfolio Committee

12. The second stage involves consideration of an outline business case for the programme by Curriculum and Planning Committee (CPC).
13. The proposal to CPC should be made on the standard Programme development consent form, which directs the programme development team to consider issues such as the rationale for development, risks and resource requirements. The proposal must be approved by the Provost prior to consideration by CPC.
14. CPC has authority delegated from Academic Council to approve detailed programme development. Therefore, where CPC approves the development, it may proceed straight to the next stage. Where CPC does not approve the development, the proposal must be discontinued or referred for further work and begin again at stage one.

Stage three: detailed programme development

15. Stage three is when the programme development team develops the full details of the programme, including the learning outcomes, assessment methods and modules or units. These details should be captured in a programme specification.

16. The other information programme teams should produce at this stage depends on whether the programme is new or proposed for reapproval, and whether it is designed by the College, as shown in the table below.

	Programme specification	Programme information form	External review	Evidence of performance
New programmes designed by the College (leading to an award by the College or another awarding body)	x	x	x	
New programme designed by another awarding body	x	x		
Existing programmes designed by the College (leading to an award by the College or another awarding body)	x	x	x	x
Existing programmes designed by another awarding body	x	x		x

Programme specification

17. For all programmes, the programme development team is required to produce a draft or updated programme specification using the template provided in the programme development handbook, or, for a programme designed by another awarding body, provide the specification produced by that awarding body. The specification describes the content, structure, delivery, assessment and regulation of the programme and its units or modules. It must include:

- the name of the award (including any exit awards), credit, level and volume of study;
- module- and programme-level learning outcomes aligned to an assessment strategy;
- details of the delivery and regulation of the programme and its modules.

18. The programme development handbook provides further information about what the programme specification should contain.

19. In the case of a programme designed by another awarding body, the programme development team should also request from the awarding body an explanation of how the programme has been designed to support graduate to progress to employment or further study.

Programme information form

20. The purpose of the programme information form is to describe how the programme will meet the College's obligations to provide a high quality academic experience, deliver successful outcomes for students and safeguard academic standards. It is structured according to the OfS's ongoing conditions of registration for these elements, B1 – B5.

External review

21. For programmes designed by the College, the third part of this stage is an independent review of the programme specification by an external subject expert or adviser. A particularly important part of this review is the adviser's view as to whether the programme meets the OfS's ongoing conditions of registration B4 and B5 for academic standards.

22. While the external adviser's role is to provide a summative assessment of the draft or updated programme specification, rather than developmental feedback, the programme development team may wish to update the specification to reflect the adviser's comments. Where changes have been made as a function of these comments, the team should make that clear to the Programme Approval and Review Committee at the next stage.

23. The programme development handbook gives information about how the programme development team should identify and commission an external adviser.

Evidence of performance

24. For existing programmes being proposed for reapproval, the programme development team must also provide evidence of the programme's performance. This evidence should include:

- copies of the last two annual monitoring reports or similar for the programme, which should include external examiner reports as annexes;
- an analysis of outcomes for students on the programmes by reference to the OfS's ongoing condition of registration B3.

Stage four: approval by Programme Approval and Review Committee

25. Stage four involves the consideration by Programme Approval and Review Committee (PARC) of the information developed and compiled by the programme development team during the previous stage.

26. One or more members of the programme development team should attend the PARC meeting at which the programme is considered to allow members of PARC to ask questions or seek clarification about the proposal.

27. Pursuant to its terms of reference, and based on the information given to it before and during the meeting, PARC is responsible for considering all aspects of the academic standards and quality of the proposed programme and deciding whether the proposal should proceed. The decision from PARC should be either:

- Approval for five years (the College's standard period of approval); or,

- Approval for a specified period (i.e. for less than five years); or,
- Conditional approval, depending on the fulfilment of requirements to the satisfaction of the committee by a specified date; or,
- Referral for further development by the programme development team, after which the proposal may be resubmitted to the committee; or,
- Rejection, where the committee identifies significant problems or shortcomings which it considers cannot be rectified without major changes to the proposed programme.

28. Externality is built into PARC’s consideration of programme proposals through external membership.

29. The following table sets out the criteria PARC will use in determining its recommendation. These criteria are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive; they illustrate what the information given to PARC will tend to show or demonstrate to support a particular recommendation.

Approval for five years	PARC has been given all the information specified in this procedure.
	PARC is satisfied that this procedure has been followed properly to this point.
	PARC is confident that the programme will meet the requirements of external bodies (including regulators) for academic standards and the quality of students’ learning experiences.
	PARC is confident that the programme will lead to good outcomes for students.
	PARC is satisfied that the programme aligns with the College’s academic regulations and requirements (and those of the awarding body, where relevant).
Approval for a specified period	PARC has been given all the information specified in this procedure.
	PARC is satisfied that this procedure has been followed properly to this point.
	PARC is confident that the programme will meet the requirements of external bodies (including regulators) for academic standards and the quality of students’ learning experiences, but it has identified or anticipates a change in the external or internal environment within the next five years which may diminish that confidence.
	PARC is confident that the programme will lead to good outcomes for students, but it has identified or anticipates a change in the external or internal environment within the next five years which may diminish that confidence.

	PARC is satisfied that the programme aligns with the College's academic regulations and requirements (and those of the awarding body, where relevant).
Conditional approval	PARC has been given all the information specified in this procedure.
	PARC is satisfied that this procedure has been followed properly to this point.
	PARC has identified one or more SMART actions which need to be taken for it to be confident that the programme will meet the requirements of external bodies (including regulators) for academic standards and the quality of students' learning experiences.
	PARC has identified one or more SMART actions which need to be taken for it to be confident that the programme will lead to good outcomes for students.
	PARC has identified one or more SMART actions which need to be taken for it to be satisfied that the programme aligns with the College's academic regulations and requirements (and those of the awarding body, where relevant).
Referral for further development	PARC has not been given all the information specified in this procedure.
	PARC is not satisfied that this procedure has been followed properly to this point.
	PARC is not confident that the programme will meet the requirements of external bodies (including regulators) for academic standards and the quality of students' learning experiences. This might be because of a misunderstanding of these expectations and requirements on the part of the programme team, or because PARC has identified weaknesses which it is not confident can or will be addressed in good time.
	PARC is not confident that the programme will lead to good outcomes for students.
	PARC has identified multiple inconsistencies between the proposal and the College's academic regulations and requirements (and those of the awarding body, where relevant).
Rejection	There are significant gaps or weaknesses in the information given to PARC.
	PARC is not satisfied that this procedure has been followed properly to this point.
	PARC has identified significant and serious inconsistencies between the proposal and the requirements of external bodies (including regulators) for academic standards and the quality of students' learning experiences.

	PARC has identified serious and unmitigated risks to good outcomes for students.
	PARC has identified significant and multiple inconsistencies between the proposal and the College’s academic regulations and requirements (and those of the awarding body, where relevant).

30. PARC has authority delegated from Academic Council to refer proposals back for further development or to reject them entirely. Therefore, where PARC decides that a proposal should be referred or rejected, the proposal will not go forward to Academic Council. Alternatively, where PARC decides that a proposal should be approved with or without conditions, this should go forward as a recommendation to Academic Council.

Stage five: approval by Academic Council

31. The fifth stage in this procedure is consideration of the programme by Academic Council, which is responsible for approving all new programmes and reapprovals of programmes.

32. Academic Council’s consideration will be made on the basis of a recommendation and report from PARC, to include the information given to PARC by the programme development team.

33. Although Academic Council has complete discretion over programme approval, it is not expected to scrutinise the academic standards and quality of the programme in the same way as PARC. Normally, Academic Council’s decision to approve or reapprove a programme will rest on evidence that this programme development procedure has been followed diligently and comprehensively.

Stage six: preparation for delivery

34. Once the programme has been approved by Academic Council, the programme development team should begin its preparations for delivery. This will involve the production of a Student Handbook as well as student assessments, teaching and learning materials and schemes of work for each module. These requirements are covered in a separate document, ‘From programme approval to delivery.’ [to be drafted]

Programme suspension or discontinuation

Overview

35. Suspension means there will be no new recruitment and enrolment of students to a programme for the period of suspension. Discontinuation means the permanent cessation of recruitment and enrolment of students.

36. Regardless of who designed it and makes the award, before an existing programme can be suspended or discontinued it must go through the procedure described below.

37. There may be circumstances in which the College does not have discretion over the suspension or discontinuation of a programme, such as where an awarding body has decided to withdraw it. Nevertheless, this procedure should still be followed to ensure the College does all it can to protect the interests of students and discharge its own regulatory and legal responsibilities.

38. There are four stages in this procedure:

- 1) Preliminary approval by the Principal
- 2) Consultation with students
- 3) Approval by Academic Planning and Portfolio Committee
- 4) Approval by Academic Council.

Stage one: Preliminary approval by the Principal

39. Proposals relating to the suspension or discontinuation of a programme are made by the Provost. S/he will first meet with the Principal to set out details of the programme including the numbers of students and applicants affected.

40. Where the Principal is satisfied that there is a case for suspension or discontinuation, s/he will ask the Provost to make arrangements to consult existing students and prepare a formal proposal for Curriculum and Planning Committee.

41. Where the Principal does not agree that there is a case for suspension or discontinuation, s/he will reject it.

Stage two: consultation with students

42. Before commencing the formal procedure to suspend or discontinue a programme, the Provost (or nominee) must ensure that current students on the programme are consulted (including those who have suspended their studies for a period of time or are referred) and that full account is taken of the needs of applicants, given that the suspension or discontinuation may represent a breach of the College's contract with them.

43. A formal proposal to suspend or discontinue a programme must take full account of how current students will be supported through to the completion of their studies or put in place appropriate transitional arrangements in consultation with students.

44. A formal proposal to suspend or discontinue a programme must also take full account of how applicants will be supported in making a decision about an alternative programme or releasing themselves from their place and their contract to the College.

45. The Programme suspension or discontinuation form (see below) asks for evidence of consultation with students.

Stage three: Approval by Academic Planning and Portfolio Committee

46. Formal proposals to suspend or discontinue programmes should be made on the standard Programme suspension or discontinuation form, which directs the author to consider, among other things, the impact on students and applicants and any legal, financial and regulatory implications. Where there are no existing students and/or applicants, parts of this form may be marked 'not applicable'.

47. The proposal must be approved by the Provost prior to consideration by CPC, and also by the Chief Partnerships Officer where the programme leads to the award of another awarding body.

48. Where CPC approves the proposal, it may proceed straight to the next stage.

49. Where CPC does not approve the proposal, for instance because it is concerned that the interests of existing students will not be adequately protected, it may refer the proposal back for further work, after which the proposal may be resubmitted to the Committee.

Stage four: Approval by Academic Council

50. The fourth and final stage in this procedure is consideration of the proposal by Academic Council, which is responsible for suspending or discontinuing all programmes.

51. Academic Council's consideration will be made based on a recommendation and report from CPC, to include the information given to CPC.

52. Although Academic Council has complete discretion over programme suspension and discontinuation, it is not expected to scrutinise the proposal in the same depth as CPC. Normally, Academic Council's decision to suspend or discontinue a programme will rest on evidence that this procedure has been followed diligently and comprehensively.

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