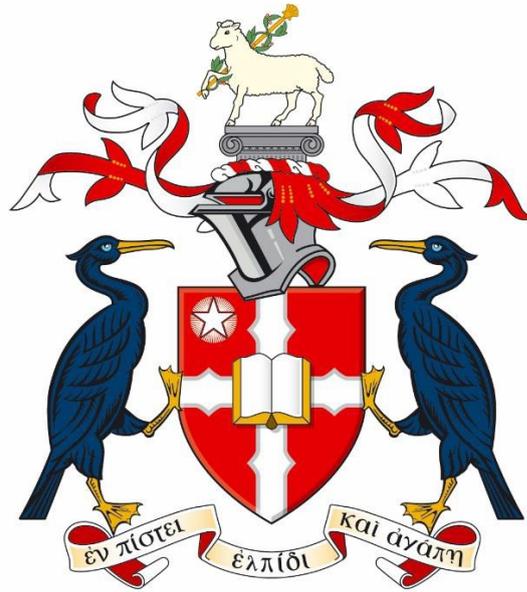


Liverpool Hope University



Academic Quality Handbook 1 (QH1): Principles of Course Design and Approval*

*Course refers to any provision offered by the University.

August 2019 version

A. Introduction

This handbook forms part of Liverpool Hope University's academic quality framework and is to be seen in that wider context. All the University's quality handbooks and guides are approved by Senate upon recommendation from Academic Committee.

The quality handbooks provide guidance for:

- Staff (in Schools/Departments, and partner organisations) responsible for the development, delivery, and oversight of academic provision.
- Student representatives/students interested in the processes by which courses of study are approved.
- QAA/OFS review teams, professional bodies and other external agencies with an interest in the quality and standards of the University's academic provision.

UK higher education is based on the principle of autonomy. A degree-awarding body such as Liverpool Hope University thus has responsibility for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of the courses it offers and also the qualifications and credits it awards. The University must therefore have a robust framework in place to ensure the quality and standards of its academic provision.

This Quality Handbook (QH1) sets out an overview of the University's approach to design and approval of its courses. The University is responsible for the academic standards of courses of study leading to its awards. The course approval process is the way in which the University satisfies itself that appropriate academic standards are set and high quality learning opportunities are in place for students.

Note that in addition to the overarching principles described in this Handbook, the following specific handbooks and guidelines relating to course design, approval and review are available:

- QH2 Approval of new courses of study leading to an award of the University (new courses that consist of **50% or more** of new provision).
- QH3 Approval of new courses of study leading to an award of the University where the new course consists of **more than 50%** existing provision.
- QH4 Review of existing courses.
- QH5 Approval of modifications to existing provision (at full course level or below).
- QH6 Withdrawal or suspension of courses.
- QH7a Professional Learning and Development Handbook - Approval of short courses leading to the award of University credit up to a maximum of 30 credits.
- QH7b Professional Learning and Development Handbook - Approval of non-credit bearing courses.
- QH8 Partnerships Guide (guidance for courses run in partnership with others).
- QH9 International Student Placements, Exchange and Study Abroad procedures.
- QH10 Seeking and Maintaining Professional Accreditations.
- QH11 Accreditation of Prior Learning.

The need for creation of new courses or change to existing courses can be in response to a range

of different criteria/circumstances. **The flowchart in Appendix 1 is designed to give support in identification of the appropriate route to take.**

B. External Reference Points

The University is accountable to the Office for Students (OFS) for the quality and standards of its provision. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is the Designated Quality Body (DQB) for OFS and as such oversees Quality and Standards of courses.

There are a range of external reference points that are crucial in defining and setting the academic standards of the University's provision. These are particularly of importance in decisions relating to course design and approval:

- QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education,
- Framework for HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies,
- Higher Education Credit Framework for England,
- Subject Benchmark Statements.

Links to these documents are available through the Liverpool Hope Academic Quality website.

A number of the University's academic courses are professionally oriented, and consequently the University is also accountable to a range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Links to the relevant PSRBs are available through the Liverpool Hope Academic Quality website.

C. Internal Reference Points

There are also a range of internal reference points that are also crucial in defining and setting the academic standards of the University's provision. These are also of importance in decisions relating to course design and approval:

- The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which provides the broad framework for its course of quality enhancement initiatives and is a driver for the provision of high quality learning experience for Hope students.
- The University Regulations.

D. Compliance with the UK Quality Code

In the design and operation of the course approval process, the University adopts the broad principles of the Quality Code for Higher Education. Appendix 2 details how course approval processes at Hope address the relevant Core Principles and Practices of the UK Quality Code. In particular, this addresses issues of externality, Independence and Expertise, Student Voice, Evidence, Enhancement and Support of staff.

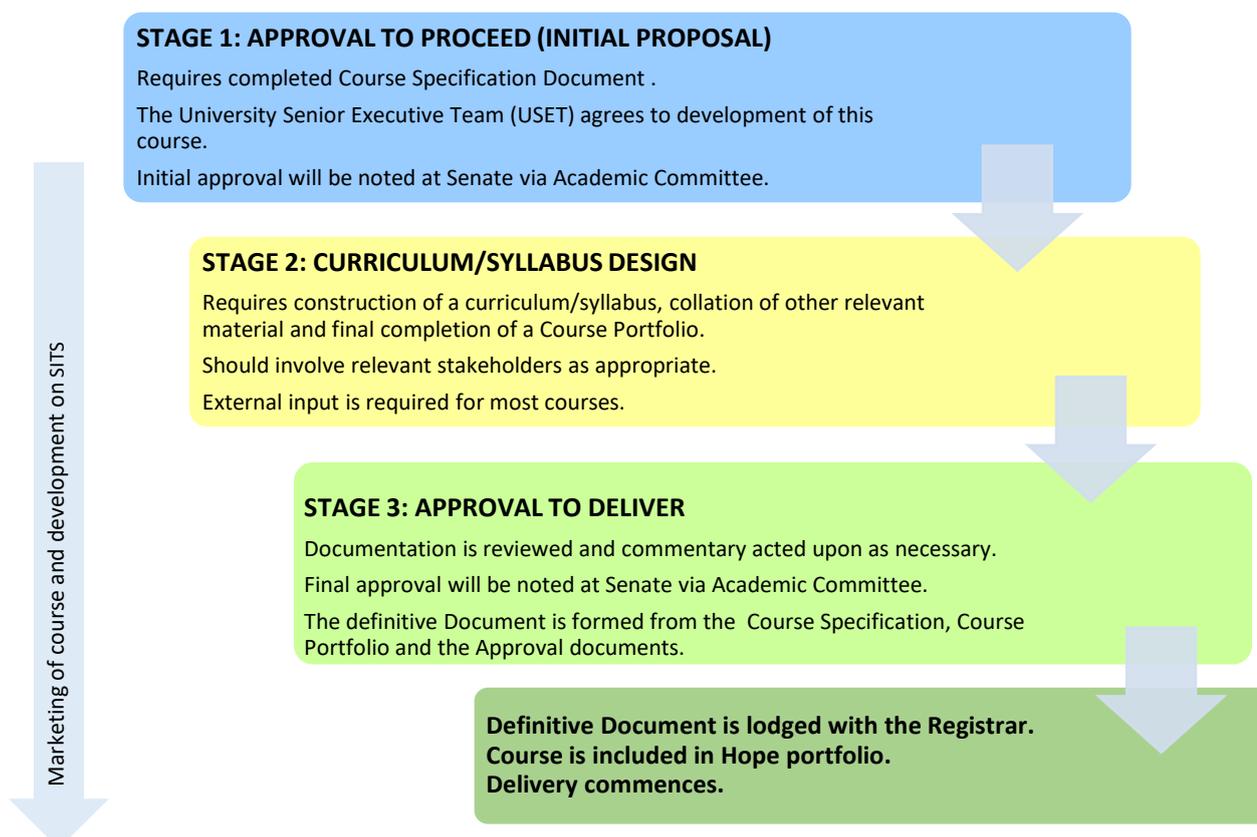
You can find more information in the UK Quality Code for HE Advice and Guidance Course Design and Development. There is a link to this document on the Liverpool Hope Academic Quality website.



E. Core stages in the Approval Process

The approval of all courses at Hope involves three core stages. All courses are approved using a process that includes these three stages although the detail of that process at each stage varies, dependent on the nature of the provision and its audience.

- Stage 1: Approval to proceed for an initial proposal,
- Stage 2: Curriculum/Syllabus Design,
- Stage 3: Approval to deliver the fully complete course.



The timescale for the process of approval of individual courses will vary according to the type of provision and is outlined in the relevant document. Generally, completely new UG or PGT provision might be expected to have an 18 month gestation from initial idea to arrival of students on the course. This will allow for appropriate marketing and inclusion in the relevant prospectus. The University Executive Manager (UEM) (via the Head of School/Department) is responsible for adhering to these timescales. For more on timescales see the relevant Quality Handbook/Guide.

Stage 1: Approval to Proceed with an Initial proposal for New Provision.

STAGE 1: APPROVAL TO PROCEED (INITIAL PROPOSAL)

Requires completed Course Specification Document .

The University Senior Executive Team (USET) agrees to development of this course.

Initial approval will be noted at Senate via Academic Committee.

(a) Identification of new courses

Potential new courses, both credit bearing and non-credit bearing may be identified through reflective meetings, by individuals (Heads of School/Department, academic tutors), through cross-school/departmental collaborations, or because of identifiable gaps in the market.

Subject teams are asked to ensure that an appropriate/reasonable timeline is used for the approval of each individual course. 'Normal' timelines are included in the specific guidance documents although it is recognised that it is sometimes necessary to expedite matters. Teams should, however, bear in mind the timeline for applications and for appropriate promotional material to be prepared.

Subject teams are also asked to take particular care that their documentation meets CMA Guidelines (see Hope Academic Quality website for more details).

(b) Completion of the Course Specification Document

All courses should be proposed initially on a standard Course Specification Document following the procedure as set out below:

The Course Specification Document sets out the fundamental properties of the provision and how the provision links to both internal and external reference points. This form requires initial marketing information, which will be used to advertise the course whilst the approval process is underway. Subsequent marketing documentation will be required for all courses but may vary dependent on the course and audience. Information on the Course Specification Document will also be used to populate SITS to create a course outline ready for further detail as it is agreed, to include a new course in the timetable as early as possible and to make an initial entry for the course on the Curriculum Overview Record.

After appropriate local discussions (with relevant HOS/D), the relevant subject team should complete the Course Specification Document via the online course approval system. The completed Course Specification Document should be included as an agenda item at the next School/Departmental Academic Committee.

(c) Recommendation of the proposed course to University Senior Executive Team (USET)

If the School/Departmental Academic Committee (and specifically the HOS/D) support the proposal, the relevant UEM should indicate this on the online system. This will indicate to the University Senior Executive Team (USET) Secretary that the Course Specification Document should be included in the agenda for the next USET meeting. It will then be presented by the HOS/D to USET (or the Chair of Senate if the matter is urgent).

USET will discuss whether the proposed provision accords with wider institutional goals and corporate strategy. USET will also consider the resources and staffing needed to deliver the course. USET may:

- i) approve in principle the proposal for report to Academic Committee and to Senate **or**
- ii) refer the matter back to the School/Department for further clarification/detail **or**
- iii) reject the proposal.

The Head of Committees will record the relevant outcome on the online system. This outcome will also be recorded on the formal Curriculum Overview of courses. If the proposal is approved this will then trigger the request for it to be included in the agenda for Academic Committee and then to Senate. Once Academic Committee has noted the approval in principle of USET, the relevant team may move forward with curriculum design and according to the agreed timeline, complete the full definitive document for approval.

NOTE that Stage 1 is common to all new provision although the content of the Course Specification Document varies slightly according to the nature of the provision being proposed. The initial selections on the online system will generate the correct version of the document.

Stage 2: Curriculum/ Syllabus Design

STAGE 2: CURRICULUM/SYLLABUS DESIGN

Requires construction of a curriculum/syllabus, collation of other relevant material and final completion of a Course Portfolio.

Should involve relevant stakeholders as appropriate

External input is required for most courses

Every Course, whether credit bearing or otherwise, must go through the process of course design. This must involve the design of a detailed curriculum and syllabus. In some instances, this will be a very simple process directed by a specific need for Professional Learning and Development (PLD). In other cases, such as the design of new awards of the University, this will be a longer process that requires a full co-design approach, involving external colleagues. The detailed approach for each type of provision is explored in the relevant Quality Handbook/Guide: See Appendix 1.

In all cases the curriculum/syllabus must be contained within an appropriately structured

Course Portfolio which is built from the relevant Course Specification Document. Other aspects of the Course Portfolio will vary dependent on the types of provision being approved. Construction of the Course Portfolio should be undertaken on the online approval system, which will provide the appropriate fields for entry. Once the online documentation is complete the system will forward it to the relevant HOS/D for checking prior to moving to the approval stage.

Stage 3: Full Course Approval

STAGE 3: APPROVAL TO DELIVER

Documentation is reviewed and commentary acted upon as necessary.

Final approval will be noted at Senate via Academic Committee

The definitive Document is formed from the Course Specification, Course Portfolio and the Approval documents.

Once the curriculum, syllabus and assessments and any other required elements are designed, every course must have approval to be delivered. Approval can happen in a range of ways depending on the nature of the course. For example, a non-credit bearing PLD course may be approved directly by the relevant member of USET, whereas a new award of the University must have scrutiny from external experts followed by approval of the relevant HOS/Ds and the Chairs of the relevant University subcommittees.

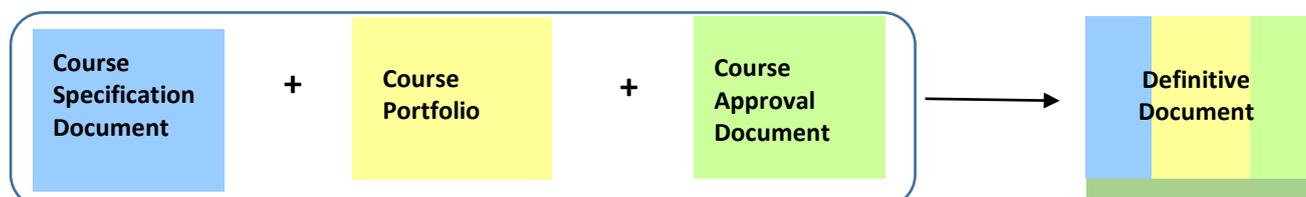
Details of approval requirements for each form of provision are in the relevant Quality Handbook/Guide as above. The approval process should be completed through the online system where it is available. The output for each process is a Definitive Document that comprises the Course Specification, the Course Portfolio, and the Course Approval Documentation.

All courses that receive final approval to be delivered must be reported to Senate via Academic Committee.

F. Documentation

Definitive Document is lodged with the Registrar.
Course is included in Hope portfolio
Delivery commences

At the end of the approval process every course will have a completed Definitive Document that consists of three elements: Course Specification, Course Portfolio and Approval Document. These come together to form the Definitive Document.



After final approval, a copy of the completed definitive document must be dated and lodged with the Registrar/Student Administration Team.

G. On-line Course Approval System

The online course approval system should be used for all courses where it is available. This system is under development. Where it is not yet available for the course that is being proposed, paper versions of documentation will be made available and should be completed as appropriate.

H. Periodic Review of the Course

Once approved, all courses leading to the award of University credit are subject to the University's standard processes for review and enhancement (see QH4).

Every course offered as part of the University's portfolio is subject to a yearly review under the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process.

Full Course Review is usually conducted once every five years. However, a review may be triggered at any stage where there are concerns voiced by the Head of School/Department or Chair of Academic Committee (for instance, in response to ARE issues, School/Departmental Reviews or from analysis of key subject data sets) or from external examiner comments, for example, in which case, the process may begin at the co-design stage.

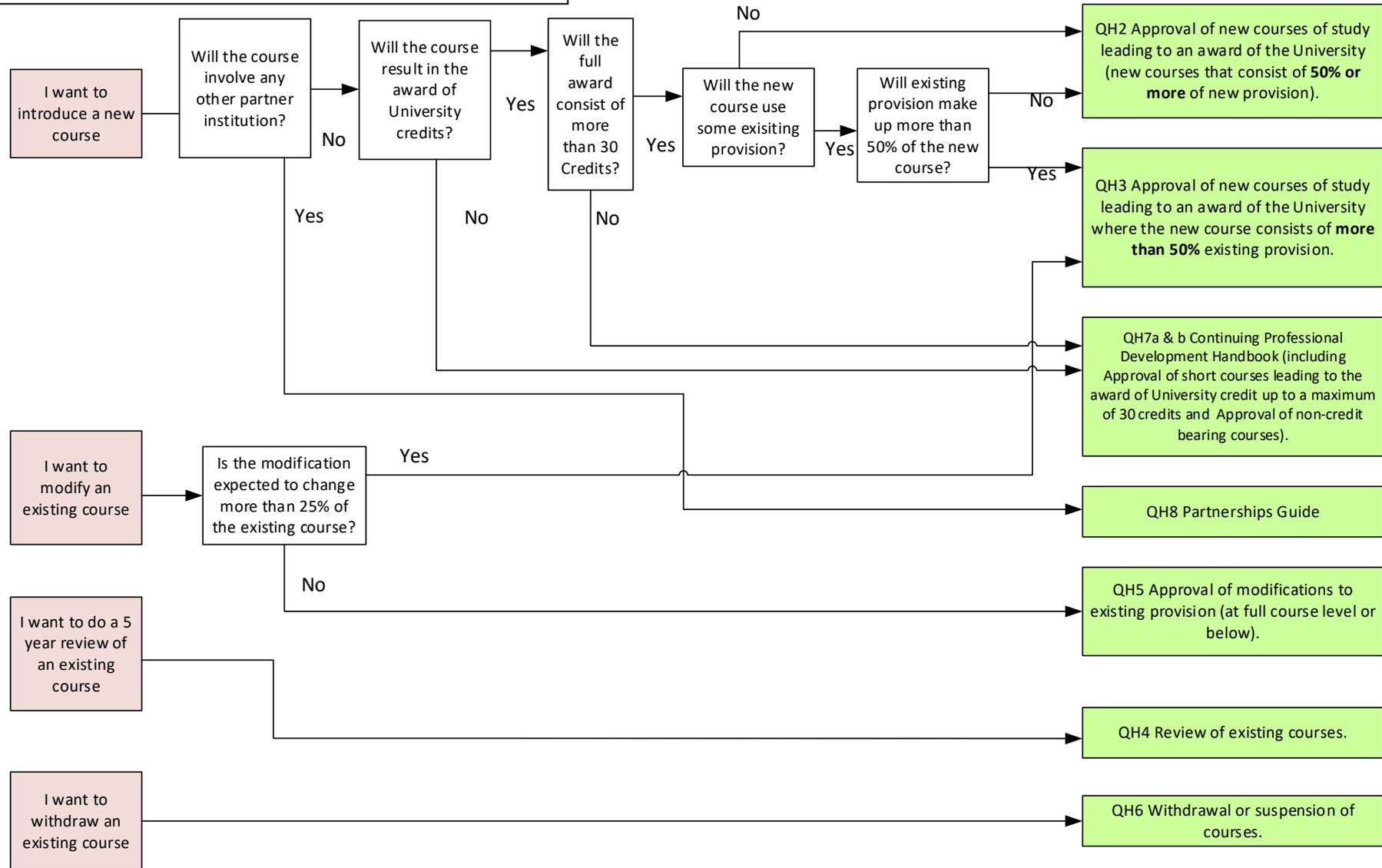
I. Modifications to Approved Courses

Should a subject team wish to make modifications to an approved course of study outside of the normal review cycle, this should be undertaken using the University's **Course Modification Processes** (see QH5). This includes offering a course in a different mode to that originally approved (for example, offering a current course as a wholly on-line course) or for (new) delivery in the Network of Hope or other 'at a distance' location.

Appendix One

Flowchart identifying appropriate Documentation

Handbook to use



Appendix 2: Relationship to Relevant Parts of the UK Quality Code

Scope

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) is focused around expectations for both Standards and Quality. These expectations are underpinned by a range of Core and Common expected practices. The following sets out the most relevant parts of this code to the course approval and review process, the guidance for QAA and indicates how Hope ensures that it meets these requirements within these processes.

1. Expectations for standards

The UK Quality Code has the following expectations for standards:

The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.

The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.

The following table sets out how Liverpool Hope aims to meet these requirements as expressed in the Core and Common Practices of the code:

(a) Core practices	
What QAA says	What Hope does
The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.	
In practice, this means that when designing and approving courses, relevant national qualifications frameworks are referred to.	The University recognises the importance of independent external participation in the course design and approval process (i) in order to gain the benefit of appropriate academic/professional expertise in the design of the course, (ii) in the interests of transparency to stakeholders, and (iii) to provide assurance to Academic Committee and Senate on the academic quality of new provision and that the University's approval processes have been conducted in line with sector-wide requirements. The principle of externality is reflected in the requirements for subject teams to engage with a range of relevant external reference points, to carry out engagement and consultation activities during course development and in the activities of approval Panels.

Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

In practice, this means that the awarding body or organisation ensures that it maintains responsibility for setting and maintaining standards of a course regardless of where it is delivered.

The University has extensive processes set out in QH5. This describes partnerships with other institutions are set up monitored, with a particular emphasis on approval and delivery of courses. This work is overseen by the Academic Committee which then reports to Senate on this matter.

The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.

In practice, this means that feedback from external stakeholders is used to inform course design and development.

The University recognises the importance of independent external participation in the course design and approval process (i) in order to gain the benefit of appropriate academic/professional expertise in the design of the course, (ii) in the interests of transparency to stakeholders, and (iii) to provide assurance to Academic Committee and Senate on the academic quality of new provision and that the University's approval processes have been conducted in line with sector-wide requirements. The principle of externality is reflected in the requirements for subject teams to engage with a range of relevant external reference points, to carry out engagement and consultation activities during course development and also in the activities of approval Panels.

(b) Common practice

The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.

In practice, this means that regular monitoring and evaluation are used

The course approval process itself is reviewed annually, through the analysis of approval reports and through feedback from co-design members, senior academics and Chairs via post- event reflection activities.

to drive improvement and enhancement of course design and development processes.	
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2. Expectations for quality

The UK Quality Code has the following expectation about Quality:

Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student’s achievement to be reliably assessed.

The following table sets out how Liverpool Hope aims to meet these requirements as expressed in the Core and Common Practices of the code:

(a) Core practices	
The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.	
In practice, this means that course approval processes facilitate the design and development of high-quality, relevant, market-attractive courses which lead to credible and recognised positive outcomes for students.	Independent and expert judgements can be made on the quality and standards of the provision under consideration through the involvement in course design and approval of academic peers and, as appropriate, students, graduates, employers, service users, collaborative partners, etc. Decisions to approve new provision are given in principle by the Rectorate and Chair of Senate at the start of the process, and signed off by the Chair of Academic Committee at the end of the process ensuring a further level of independence from the delivering School/Department: Independent and expert advice is also given by externality at the co-design stage and via external academic review.

The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	
In practice, this means that course approval processes ensure that there are appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	The approvals process is led by the Head of School/Department and the relevant UEM. Additional support is also given through the Communities of Practice (for example, Curriculum Design; Assessment) and formal opportunities such as modules run on the PGCert LTHE which are open to all Hope Staff. All staff are expected to attend a range of L & T focused events throughout the year.

The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	
In practice, this means that course approval processes ensure that there are appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	The specific evidence required by via the approval process, in order to recommend to Senate that the course be approved, varies according to the nature of the proposal under consideration (a new undergraduate course, for example, compared to a 15 credit short course professional development module), although the core principles are common throughout. The principles which should underpin course design and which will be considered throughout the approval process are clearly stated in this handbook and in the submission document requirements. The quality of information which will be provided for students and other stakeholders following approval is also considered through approval of course specifications, which form part of the documentation considered within the approval process but are also intended for separate publication.

Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.	
In practice, this means that when a	QH8 the Partnerships Guide describes the University's processes for approval and delivery of courses in partnership with other institutions. There

<p>course is designed and developed in partnership with an external organisation, the degree-awarding body's course approval processes consider and document responsibilities in relation to delivery, support and monitoring arrangements.</p>	<p>is a full set of processes which include approval of the partnership by USET and Senate, due diligence relating to the partner organization and the signing of a specific document relating to the arrangements for each individual partnership. The experience of students is monitored through the central University procedures in addition to those highlighted in QH8.</p>
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<p>(b) Common practices</p>	
<p>The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	
<p>In practice, this means that regular monitoring and evaluation are used to drive improvement and enhancement of course design and development processes.</p>	<p>The primary focus of the course approvals process is to assure the University that appropriate academic standards are being set and that mechanisms are in place to ensure appropriate learning opportunities will be provided to students. The process is a forward- looking one in that, through their discussions, the University (via Senate) should be able to form a judgement of confidence in the proposing School/Department's likely future management of the course to ensure the continuing quality and standards of, and to take steps to enhance, the provision for which they are responsible.</p>

<p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>	
<p>In practice, this means that students are key</p>	<p>Students are actively involved throughout the design and approval of academic courses. Students are represented at subject meetings and will be party to the initial discussions in relation to new proposals. Students also form part of the initial scrutiny at School/Departmental Academic Committee and will be present at the co-design stage, where the detail of the curriculum and its delivery is considered and lastly, at Senate,</p>

stakeholders in
course design and
development
processes

where the final approval is given.