



**Higher Education Services
Programme Development and Approval Policy
and Procedure**

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Higher Education Services Programme Development and Approval Policy and Procedure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The policy and procedure provide an outline for the approval for the development of new and substantially revised online courses and programmes. It ensures there is alignment with sector standards, pedagogic practices, partner learning models as well as FutureLearn's adopted Discover-Explore-Apply-Share (DEAS) model, and engagement principles.

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Director of Academic Affairs has overall strategic responsibility for course and programme development within the Higher Education Services Division and upholds sector standards.

2.2 The Head of e-Learning or Senior Learning Designer has operational responsibilities for delivering the course and programme development strategy.

2.3 The Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee approves concept/full proposals for new product development.

2.4 The Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee oversees the quality of new and updated programme content in line with this policy and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

3.0 Proposals for New Product Development

3.1 The concept/full proposals for new product development are submitted to the Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee four times per year.

3.2 The Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee will initially review the proposal for the programme, once the proposal has been approved the Director of Academic Affairs and Vice President Higher Education Services will work with the partner and academic teams to develop and launch the programmes by the planned deadlines.

3.3 The Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee has the responsibility for reviewing course and programme proposals including marketing insights, projected student numbers, assumptions and internal capacity to develop and build the courses/programmes.

3.4 The Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee will either:

- Approve the concept or request further information.
- Approve with conditions attached.
- Not approve and require re-evaluation or revision.

4.0 Partner Institution Approval

4.1 For all courses and programmes developed in partnership, FutureLearn will follow the partner universities' validation process.

4.2 The outcome of the validation event is reported into the Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee by the Vice President Higher Education Services or the Director of Academic Affairs.

5.0 Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 The programme teams will convene an Employer Engagement Panel (EEP) comprising professionals not affiliated with the Higher Education Services Division or partner institution. These will be led by the Director of Academic Affairs and Programme Leader.

5.2 The EEP will provide feedback on the relevance of the content, employability outcomes and alignment with skills and trends in the industry. Feedback from the EEP will be documented and form part of the quality auditing process.

5.3 Ongoing engagement with the EEP will continue annually as part of the annual monitoring process.

6.0 The Development Process

6.1 Upon approval of the course/programme development the Head of e-Learning or Senior Learning Designer will prepare a roadmap for development working with the academic teams to fully represent the course/programme development in line with launch dates of the modules.

6.2 The Head of Programmes will work with the Programme Leaders to recruit and appoint a suitably qualified subject matter expert (SME), and an Academic Reviewer. Where the SME is an existing lecturer, teaching time will be taken off the lecturer's workload to accommodate the additional development work.

6.3 The SME will collaborate with the learning designers and co-create the story board in line with the module descriptor. This will include the content, structure, activities and assessment.

6.4 All content will be designed around the [inclusive curriculum framework](#).

6.5 The completed course/programme content will be internally signed off by the Head of e-Learning/Senior Learning Designer and Academic Reviewer.

7.0 Monitoring

7.1 The Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee monitors the ongoing development and implementation of the programmes as per the e-learning roadmap.

7.2 Post-launch monitoring of the quality and performance of the modules and programmes are ongoing through programme committees, annual monitoring reviews and quinquennial reviews.

Appendix

Framework for Inclusive Curriculum

This is a framework for the critical audit of programme content to explore how equality/equity, diversity and inclusion is embedded in programme material. It is not expected that every single module on a programme is measured against this framework but that the overall holistic programme demonstrates and embodies elements of the framework to make it inclusive and diverse. The framework has a series of prompts that authors can use to review whether the material in a programme embodies principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion. It supports authors to identify good practice and areas that may require action or intervention to support greater equity for learners. It works to support three core principles:

- Create an accessible curriculum.
- Enable students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- Equip students to participate in a global and diverse world.

The framework should be used for:

- Internal programme reviews and periodic reviews.
- Revalidation of existing programmes and modules.
- The development of new programmes and modules.
- Reflecting on individual teaching practice to ensure it is inclusive and diverse.

Programme Title:					
	Theme	Prompt	Issues	Action to be taken	Examples of good practice
1	Drawing on the student/lecturer perspective	Have there been any comments or feedback about inclusion and representation by students or teaching colleagues?			

2		Have students input into programme materials or design?			
3		Have you created a clear statement related to inclusive programme values within the student handbook?			
4	Language	Is there any use of idiom, exclusive cultural reference, or colloquialism?			
5		Is there any use of English language inappropriate to the level of study?			
6		Is the language up to date, appropriate and inclusive?			
7		Are the terms used in assessment tasks clearly explained?			
8	Images	Is there sufficient representation of diverse people in the imagery? Do images include disabled people, ethnically diverse people, and people of different genders (including LGBTQ+)?			
9		Considering the text, are any images out of context?			
10		Are any of the images potentially stereotypes?			
11		Do images have alt text descriptions so visually impaired students can engage with them?			

12	Videos	Do videos contain sufficient diversity of representation?			
13		Do videos have captions, subtitles and/or transcripts?			
14	Audio clips	Is there any indication that audio clips have diverse voices in them?			
15		Is the content of the discussion inclusive, appropriate, and respectful?			
16		Do audio clips have captions or transcripts?			
17	Case studies or evidence (if used)	If there are case studies and evidence, do they reflect diversity?			
18		Are there any case studies that reinforce potentially harmful stereotypes?			
19		Is the use of authentic assessment inclusive and diverse?			
20		Do potential guest speakers reflect the diverse student body?			
21	Programme materials	Is there material from, as well as about, other countries?			
22		Are reading lists and references by diverse authors?			

23		Is there a diversity of views expressed in material? If there is a viewpoint from a particular background or experience, is that acknowledged and are any limitations created discussed?			
24		Is any potentially distressing content signposted? And are students directed to guidance to support them to study this?			
25	Activities	Are any groupwork activities clearly scaffolded, with guidance on communication and behaviour? Are alternatives available for students who cannot collaborate for disability reasons?			
26		Are there activities and material that create respect and an appreciation of the value of difference?			
27		Are there activities that allow students to use lived experiences and diverse ideas to enrich the understanding of other students?			
28		Do the activities encourage confidence and a sense of belonging?			
29		Are there activities or material that make students with privilege aware of how their experience and viewpoints are shaped by their cultural, historical,			

		geographical, economic and other contexts?			
30		Are there opportunities created for direct discussion of age, culture, disability, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation or other aspects of identity? Are there opportunities created for direct discussion of racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, or religious intolerance?			
31		Are there any activities that would be challenging for disabled students (e.g., activities requiring vision, hearing, manual dexterity or physical movement?) If so, are alternatives available for disabled students?			
32		Do activities link to external materials? If so, have these been tested for accessibility for disabled students?			
33		Do any reflective activities include examples or scaffolding questions to support neurodiverse students?			
34	Programme Assessment	Is there scope for assessment questions to encourage responses about diverse lived experiences? Does the module material sufficiently support students who might want to write about diverse experiences?			

35		Are any students placed at a disadvantage in assessment, i.e., because of disability or another protected characteristic? If so, are there alternatives in place for students who need it?			
36		Does the assessment wording and design encourage a growth mindset?			
37		Do assessment tasks link to external materials? If so, have these been checked for accessibility?			
38		Have assessment tasks been designed so that they do not trigger undue stress? I.e., have students been given a chance to practise and receive feedback on new skills, and can presentations be delivered asynchronously?			
39		Does the assessment provide students with choice so not to cause unnecessary stress and anxiety?			