

Section 6: BIMM Institute Higher Education Course Approval & Modification Procedures (Policy & Process)

Policy objectives:

In line with the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education (UK) and the National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland), BIMM Institute will:

- Make clear the criteria against which course proposals are assessed;
- Define processes, roles and responsibilities for course design, development and approval and communicate them to those involved;
- Make use of reference points and expertise from outside the course in course design;
- Involve students in course design and in processes for course development and approval.

Course & Module Approval

All curriculum development is planned and agreed at the Learning, Teaching & Enhancement Committee (LTEC) under powers delegated to that committee by Academic Board (AcBd) in line with strategic planning and objectives set by the Board of Directors. New or re-approved courses are aligned to BIMM Institute's published Academic Framework and Regulations.

New courses and modules are written by BIMM Institute course development teams, which will include the Course Authors, Module Authors and advisors, and will be led by a nominated senior member of staff.

The development and approval process will be supported by the Academic Development & Quality Assurance team (ADQA), a member of which will be assigned as a critical friend to support the course development process and attend the approval event as a member of the team.

The process for approval has two stages, as follows:

Stage 1: Outline course approval by LTEC;

Stage 2: Formal course approval by LTEC Approval Panel.

Stage 2 Formal Course Approval

For each course being approved, there will be a full day's meeting between the Approval Panel and the course development team. Panels may also want to meet with students from the relevant subject area. Three weeks prior to the Approval Panel meeting, the course team will supply the approval documents to the Approval Panel Secretary for distribution to the panel (templates for which are available from ADQA).

Course Approval is conducted by a panel of experts appointed by LTEC, including the following indicative roles:

- Chair – a senior academic from BIMM Institute;
- Internal academic panel members;
- Quality expert – a member of institutional staff with expertise in regulations and quality assurance (may also be the Chair);
- External assessors – up to two external experts, academic and industry based;
- A Student Panel Member;

- A Secretary and note taker from ADQA.

Course development team staff will generally be invited to give a short presentation (10-15 minutes) on the rationale and context for the proposed course at the beginning of the meeting.

Approval Panels will relay their findings to the course development team at the end of the meeting and decisions will fall into the following categories:

- Course approved (with conditions, which must be addressed, and recommendations to which the course development team must consider and formally respond).
- Course to be re-submitted (with conditions and recommendations).
- Course not approved (a reason will be given).

Outcomes at Stage 2

Approval Panels will relay their findings to the course development team at the end of the meeting and confirm that the course is approved. Courses will be approved to run at specified BIMM Institutes for a maximum of 6 years (a shorter period may be specified for new subject areas). If the course is to be run at additional BIMM Institutes, post the initial approval, a Site Approval Event will be convened and overseen by the Quality Assurance & Compliance Committee - QACC. The secretary of the Panel will write formally to the course team once the Chair of the Approval Panel has approved the Panel's findings. The course development team will then be asked to respond formally to the Approval Panel's findings (to an agreed deadline) before formal approval is given in the form of final approval letter signed by the Chair of the Panel on behalf of LTEC. LTEC will receive the final approval letter sent to the course development team confirming that the conditions and recommendations have been met, alongside a detailed report from the Approval Panel Secretary, signed by the approval panel Chair. ADQA will file this correspondence alongside the report and a finalised set of course and module specifications, forming the definitive record of the approved course against which later modifications will be considered.

Roles of members of the BIMM Institute Course Approval Panel:

The Chair

The role of the Chair is to regulate the conduct of the event. The Chair will open proceedings by introducing members of the Panel and explaining the purpose of the event. Throughout the event, the Chair will seek to ensure that different points of view are given a fair hearing whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the schedule is adhered to and that discussions are brought to a close within the time allotted. Towards the end of the event, the Approval Panel will hold a private meeting to consider its conclusions, which the Chair will then present, verbally, to the full forum.

Internal Academic Panel Members

The internal academic panel members pay particular attention to the appropriateness and contemporaneity of the proposed curriculum and the resources available to support it. They will also have familiarity with BIMM Institutes' frameworks for quality assurance and academic standards, curriculum design, good practice in learning, teaching and assessment and be able to comment on these issues and the quality of learning opportunities provided by the proposed course.

The External Subject Specialist

The external member of the Approval Panel is an expert from the field in which the course is based. The

external assessor has a particular responsibility for ensuring that the quality and standards of the course is comparable with those offered throughout UK and Irish Higher Education, and for this reason they are normally drawn from another Higher Education Institution.

External Industry Specialist

The external industry specialist member of the Approval Panel is an expert from the industry which graduates from the course may wish to be employed. The external industry specialist has a particular responsibility for ensuring that the course is effective in preparing students for professional employment in the creative industries.

Student Representative (if available – some events may run outside term time)

A current student representative will be a member of the panel, with a focus on student support and the quality of learning opportunities to be provided by the proposed course.

Approval of new modules

New modules can be approved separately to courses (for example, to add to the option modules available). The process for module approval is to submit a new module specification (template available from ADQA) to LTEC. Changes to core modules would need to be dealt with through the modification process outlined below (see full policy and process – appendix 1).

New Course approval process timelines

Any new course proposal needs to be made at least three months in advance of the final external approval event. The ADQA team hold records of all approval and re-approval schedules and can advise on appropriate timelines for new course development to avoid scheduling clashes.

**Key areas examined at approval - courses
(indicative but not exhaustive list of areas the Approval Panel should consider)**

Course aims and vision:
Is it clear who the course is for?
Is the course title appropriate?
To what extent is the overall vision for the course now and in the future clearly articulated?
To what extent has the course team consulted with relevant stakeholders: employers and the industry/alumni/existing students/academic experts?
Is the approach taken to the design of the course appropriate?
Is the course appropriately placed within the context of existing or related courses?
To what extent do the outcomes of the course align with BIMM Institute's Graduate Attributes?
Academic Rationale:
To what extent is the rationale for introducing the course clearly articulated?
To what extent does the proposed course align with the BIMM Institute Academic Framework?
Is it clear how the course will be delivered (full-time, part-time, daytime or evenings and weekends, face to face or blended/online delivery)?
To what extent is the proposed curriculum appropriate to the abilities and needs of anticipated students?
How the course relates to BIMM Institutes' Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTS):
To what extent does the course level approach to learning and teaching align with the principles, values and aims of the BIMM Institute LTS?
Does the course level approach to learning and teaching align with the levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the expectations of the UK Quality Code?
To what extent does the approach to assessment on the course meet the requirements of the BIMM Institute Assessment Policy and BIMM Institute Assessment Regulations?
A description of the approach to learning & teaching on the course:
Is there a clear link between chosen teaching methods and the curriculum's content, aims and learning outcomes?

To what extent do the selected teaching methods take into consideration students' abilities and needs?
Will resources be appropriately used to support student learning and needs, embedding inclusive practice in materials and provision?
Are there appropriate plans for placements, trips or visits, including: specific aims and learning outcomes, criteria and approval processes for suitable placements, responsibility for finding and arranging placement, and supervision arrangements?
Are there appropriate arrangements for preparing and supervising students undertaking dissertations or projects and how staff will be supported to undertake this responsibility?
Will students be made aware of the expectations of them and their responsibilities as learners?
To what extent have the course team identified any areas of good and successful pedagogical practice that can be shared from existing modules/courses?
A description of the course assessment & feedback strategy:
To what extent are methods of assessment aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the course, teaching methods and resources?
To what extent are modes of assessment and feedback aligned across the course, providing students with opportunities to develop and re-apply skills?
To what extent is there a clear rationale for the balance and scheduling of formative and summative assessments in terms of student development across the course and how assessment will be used for learning as well as measurement of learning?
Are there clear mechanisms for provision of feedback to students on assessed work, including format, standards and timescale?
Learning resources and environment:
Are the staff who will deliver the course appropriately qualified and are there any developmental needs amongst the staff team?
Does the course require any additional academic or support staff?
Are there appropriate teaching spaces, specialist equipment & specialist facilities (studio, IT labs, workshop space, etc.) necessary to support the course at all colleges where it will be delivered?
Are there any specific library resources necessary to support the course (specific book, journal and media acquisitions)?
Are there any additional software, multimedia, IT and computing resources necessary for the course?

Course Specification:
Do the aims and learning outcomes of the course meet the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications descriptors for the relevant awards?
Is the course aligned with relevant QAA subject benchmarks? (Undergraduate courses only)
To what extent are the learning outcomes well expressed and clear to students and other stakeholders?
Is there a clear structure and rationale for the choice of modules and the modular structure?
Is the curriculum content coherent and does it provide an appropriate balance of breadth and depth?
Are the core modules suitable?
Is the choice of option modules suitable and relevant?
Does the course contain clearly defined pathways?
If the course contains pathways are these pathways appropriate?
Are module titles appropriate and reflective of their aims and content?
To what extent do the module outcomes map effectively to level and course outcomes?
Admissions:
Are any additional entry requirements, besides the approved entry tariff, suitable in demonstrating potential to succeed on the course?
Are there any statutory or regulatory body requirements for the course?
Are there any course restrictions to BIMM Institute's Admissions Policy including RPL or RPP policies?
Will there be any course specific induction arrangements?

Key areas examined at approval for module approval events

Module Specification:
Are the aims and learning outcomes of the module appropriately aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications descriptors?
Is there a clear rationale and description of the module?
To what extent has industry been consulted with in the development of the module?
Is the module title appropriate and reflective of its aims and content?
To what extent are the learning outcomes well expressed and clear to students and other stakeholders?
Learning and Teaching:
Is there a convincing strategy for learning and teaching?
Is there a clear rationale for the role of learning technology within the module?
To what extent will the module provide opportunities for work-related learning, work experience or placements?
Are the arrangements for the supervision of dissertations or major projects or work-related learning, work experience or placements suitable (if relevant)?
Are the transferable skills listed appropriate?
Is module information accurate, complete and written in a way that is accessible to students and staff?
Assessment:
To what extent Does the assessment for the module align with the BIMM Institute Learning & Teaching Strategy?
To what extent is the module assessment effective in ensuring that students are able to demonstrate attainment?
Are any specific module progression requirements appropriate, equitable and transparent to students?
Are the assessments constructively aligned to the module learning outcomes?
To what extent does the timing of assessment provide an appropriate and manageable workload for students?
To what extent is formative assessment used appropriately and to support student learning and achievement?

To what extent does the assessment strategy help students use developmental feedback effectively?

Resources:

Are there any additional specific physical (hardware or software) or infrastructure resources required to deliver the module?

Is the module reading list appropriate and complete?

To what extent will the module make appropriate and effective use of existing blended learning resources?

Key areas examined at approval for spine module approval events

Rationale:
To what extent is the rationale for introducing the spine modules clearly articulated?
To what extent is the spine suitable for its intended purpose?
To what extent is the spine aligned fully with BIMM Institute graduate attributes?
To what extent has the course team consulted with industry on the proposal?
Specification:
Do the aims and learning outcomes of the spine meet the requirements of Framework for Higher Education Qualifications descriptors at the relevant level?
To what extent do the outcomes provide sufficient coverage of descriptors at each level?
To what extent are the learning outcomes well expressed and clear to students and other stakeholders?
Is there a clear structure and rationale for the choice of modules and the modular structure?
Is the curriculum content coherent and does it provide an appropriate balance of breadth and depth?
Are module titles appropriate and reflective of their aims and content?
Learning and Teaching:
To what extent is the spine learning and teaching strategy appropriate and well-articulated?
To what extent does the spine, learning and teaching strategy clearly relate to the BIMM Institute Learning & Teaching Strategy?
To what extent does the learning and teaching strategy set out a clear rationale for the role of learning technology within the spine?
To what extent will the spine provide opportunities for work-based or work-related learning, experience or placements, and if so how?
Are the arrangements for the supervision of dissertations or major projects, work-based/work-related learning and placements clearly articulated and appropriate?
Is module information accurate, complete and written in a way that is accessible to students and staff?
To what extent does the documentation clearly articulate how teaching will be informed by both practice and research?

Assessment:
To what extent does the assessment for the spine align with the BIMM Institute Learning & Teaching Strategy?
To what extent is the assessment strategy effective in ensuring that students are able to demonstrate attainment?
Are assessment volumes and weightings suitable and in line with sector expectations?
To what extent are the assessment modes appropriate and sufficiently varied?
Are the assessments constructively aligned to the module learning outcomes?
Does the timing of assessment provide an appropriate and manageable workload for students?
To what extent is formative assessment used appropriately and to support student learning and achievement?
To what extent does the assessment strategy help students use developmental feedback effectively?
Resources:
Are there any additional specific physical (hardware or software) or infrastructure resources required to deliver the module?
Are arrangements in place to ensure that library resources are sufficient?
To what extent will the spine make appropriate and effective use of existing blended learning resources?

Periodic Review and Re-Approval

BIMM Institute will periodically review all courses and the expectation is that major changes to courses will normally be approved as part of the periodic review of the curriculum. Where the cumulative effect of such major changes is significant, a full re-approval event may be required.

However, there may also be times when Course Leaders feel that they need to make major modifications outside of the periodic review/re-approval process and, therefore, BIMM Institute does have a process that allows for both minor and major modifications between periodic review points.

Course and Module Modifications Policy and Process

Overall principles to consider when making modifications to courses that effect new applicants

When considering any modifications to courses, college course teams should take notice of current consumer protection legislation and specific guidance on this legislation from the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA).¹ Advice on this guidance can also be provided by the ADQA team.

Because of the contractual nature of the application/offer, Higher Education Institutions are required to supply applicants with sufficient 'pre-contract' information to allow them to make an informed decision regarding where and what they want to study. This is defined as 'material information' and our students are provided with this in the BIMM Institute prospectus and the pre-contract information packs. College course teams should take note of the following clause in the BIMM Institute Student contract:

Due to the time period between prospectus publication and registration on your course, circumstances may change due to factors beyond our reasonable control and therefore it may sometimes be necessary to vary the content of the course or modules or services as described in the prospectus. We will use reasonable endeavours to ensure that changes are kept to a minimum, but if we need to make any material changes to your course (as described in your Offer Letter and/or relevant prospectus) before you register at BIMM Institute, we shall bring the changes to your attention as soon as possible and if you reasonably believe that the proposed changes will have a material prejudicial effect on you, you may either terminate the Contract and/or withdraw your application for the course without any liability to us for tuition fees, or transfer to another course (if any) as may be offered by us for which you are qualified.

The table below categorises what the CMA refer to as 'material information' and our responsibilities to inform applicants of changes to this information.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>

Category:	Detail:
Key information	Duration of course* Fees* Entry requirements UCAS code Type of award* Course title*
Curriculum information	Structure of course+ Core modules* Range of optional modules+ Details of modules mandatory to achieve external professional body accreditation (i.e. HEA fellowship)+
Curriculum Composition	Module content+ Type and amount of teaching+ Type and amount of assessment+ Study abroad/placement opportunities+
Supplementary information	Information on teaching staff and their qualifications Information on potential scholarships Career information and recent graduate destinations General contextual information about each BIMM Institute College

*** Denotes that express consent from applicants is required, if changes are taking place mid-application cycle (from January onwards).*

‘+’ Denotes express consent from applicants may be required, if changes are taking place mid-application cycle (from January onwards). College course teams should consult the ADQA team for guidance.

The overall principles to consider once a student enrolls onto a course are that:

- Changes should be kept to a minimum.
- Removal of a subject or curriculum area from a course will require consultation.
- Changes should be beneficial to students or be required due to an accrediting body or legal/regulatory requirements.
- Current students affected by the change should be consulted through Boards of Study (BoS) and Student Representation Forum (SRF).

College course teams should take note of the following clauses in the BIMM Institute Student contract:

Following suitable consultation with affected students, in circumstances where it is necessary to make a material change to your course (such as the nature of the award or in relation to a material aspect of the curriculum), we will notify you as soon as possible. If you are unhappy with the material change(s) to your course, you may terminate the Contract and withdraw from the course by giving BIMM Institute notice in accordance with clause 9.2 and without incurring any further liability to us for tuition fees and you shall be entitled to a refund of all tuition fees paid to date.

We reserve the right to vary minor elements of your course from that described in the prospectus and/or your Offer Letter in order to improve the quality of educational services and ensure the student experience, in order to meet the latest requirements of a commissioning or accrediting body, or in response to student feedback. How we notify you will depend on the nature of the changes but, in any event, such changes will be published in the updated course information on our website.

The option modules available on your course are subject to variation dependant on minimum student numbers of fifteen students for each module and the availability of expert staff and module specific resources at your BIMM Institute college. We will ask you to choose your option modules towards the end of the academic year during the first and second years of your course and you may be required to choose new optional modules if any that you have selected will not be available. Once this process is completed, we will confirm your final options to you in writing before the end of the academic year.

Course and Module Specifications

At approval and through periodic review/re-approval, course and module specifications are used to define and approve the key technical aspects of each course and all the modules associated with that course. **Any change to Course or Module Specification is considered to be a Major Modification** requiring a full consultation and approval process as outlined in the following sections of this policy. To ensure clarity for college course teams, and for the avoidance of doubt, the tables below outline the fixed components of Course and Module Specifications.

Course Specification:

Course title and award
BIMM Institute Course Code
UCAS Code
Delivery Mode
BIMM Institutes that will deliver the course
FHEQ/QCF level
Course and exit awards
Course level learning outcomes (FHEQ levels)
QAA subject benchmark(s) referenced
Admissions requirements
Modules: codes, FHEQ level, titles, type and credits
Assessment calendar

Module Specification:

Module code and title
Parent Course
Credits
Module type: Spine, Core, Common Option or Option
FHEQ/QCF level
Pre or co-requisite module (Optional Modules only)
Any pre-requisite learning required for module (Optional Modules only)
Academic rationale
Module aims
Indicative content
Transferable skills
Module learning outcomes (assessed)
Mode of assessment
Weighting (if no sub-components)
Weighted subcomponents (where applicable)
Learning outcomes assessed by each mode/component
Duration or word length
Week of submission
Resit modes for assessment (including duration/word length)
Number and duration of taught sessions
Total taught hours
BIMM Institute resources required for independent study
Hours per week of independent study and number of weeks required
Additional resources

Major modifications

Major modifications must be agreed across BIMM Institute and, therefore, can only be approved by LTEC. Major modifications to module and course specifications can be dealt with through drafting a short document detailing the changes to the module or course (including a statement on the academic rationale for the change) and including the relevant definitive documentation (Module/Course Specifications) marked up with the proposed changes using the 'track changes' function in Microsoft Word. Course Leaders must then submit this documentation to the relevant External Examiner/IAP and BoS/SRF for consideration and then to LTEC for approval. If the changes proposed indicate a major shift in the nature of the course (including changes to course title or award), then LTEC will require the course to go through a re-approval event. Please note that this process can take longer than you might expect, and major changes proposed at the beginning of an academic year will only take effect for the following academic year to ensure current students are not disadvantaged.

Minor modifications - Module Guides

To ensure the consistency of information provided to BIMM Institute students, LTEC provides a standardised BIMM Institute Module Guide template that includes all the key information provided to students on their modules. Using the approved module specifications and the template, Module Guides are produced and published to students on the VLE. A definitive record of all current Module Guides is maintained by ADQA. Minor Modifications to the information provided in Module Guides (but not any of the information listed above as part of the course or Module Specification) and schemes of work can be made annually and approved through the relevant BoS. The table below lists information that may be updated annually as Minor Modifications. Minor Modifications to BIMM Institute approved courses can, therefore, be approved at college level. BoS must provide clear records of changes approved in order to maintain a definitive record of these modifications. The table below lists the Minor Modifications that can be made to Module Guides:

Permitted Minor Modifications to Module Guides and Schemes of Work:

Updates and revisions to the Module Scheme of Work (that do not alter the content or aims of the module)
Updates and revisions to the Module formative (ungraded) assessment.
Updates and revisions to the assessment guidance in Module Guides – this guidance may be clarified or updated, but no changes that would alter the technical aspects of the Assessment Brief as detailed in the Module Specification may be made (the specification includes: assessment mode, tasks, weighting, assessment duration/word length). However, colleges may add information to Module Guides that is contextual: such as noting differing legal requirements outside of the UK, changes to UK law, or particular socio-cultural contexts unique to the college that may impact the students taking the assessment.
Updates and revisions to Reading/resource lists.

Modifications to Course Handbooks

To ensure consistency of published course information provided to students, BIMM Institute's Quality Assurance & Compliance Committee (QACC) oversees the standardised Course Handbook template for each BIMM Institute award. Course Leaders should seek advice from ADQA on changes to the information provided in Course Handbooks.

BIMM Institute course teams should also be mindful of the cumulative effect of a significant number of individual changes to a course over a period of time and must ensure that all changes are approved through the appropriate process, and clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. Approval or re-approval of an existing course outside of the standard

curriculum periodic review/approval cycle should be initiated where substantial curriculum change is required covering several major modifications at once. This may occur, for example, in the case of changing professional or industry requirements, or where the addition of a significant number of compulsory modules results in a change to the programme learning outcomes. For advice and guidance on these matters, please contact the ADQA team.

Modifications Process

It is important that staff and students are consulted regarding all modifications. Therefore, for both modification types, changes should be brought to the relevant Board of Studies (BoS) for consultation before seeking final formal approval from LTEC. LTEC will provide an annual schedule of deadlines and milestones for the modifications process and the ADQA team can advise on timing of proposals to meet the LTEC schedule. The approval process is outlined in the table below:³

Outline of the modification approval process:

Process	Minor Changes	Major Changes	Re-approval/Periodic Review
Consultation:	Staff and students (BoS)	External examiner; Staff and Students (BoS & SRF); Other relevant stakeholders (Industry Advisory Panel); Course	See BIMM Institute policy on course and module approval/Periodic Review: http://www.bimm.co.uk/academic-quality/
Documentation Required:	Revised module guide marked up in track changes (ADQA to file)	Revised module and/or course specification marked up in track changes	Full course approval documentation or Self Evaluation (contact ADQA for templates)
Approval by:	Board of Studies (BoS)	LTEC	Course Approval Panel or Periodic Review Panel
Reported to:	LTEC	LTEC/Academic Board	LTEC/Academic Board

Annex 1: Documentation & Materials for Approval:

Stage 1:
<p>Stage 1: LTEC Course Approval Document with signatures from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIMM Group Executive Sponsor • Chair of LTEC • BIMM Group Finance Director
Provided by Course team(s) for stage 2:
<p>Course Approval document including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A narrative section covering the following topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. The course aims and vision. B. The academic rationale for the course. C. How the course relates to the Institutes Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategies. D. A description of the approach to learning and teaching on the course. E. A description of the course assessment & feedback strategy F. Learning resources and environment 2. A completed undergraduate course specification. 3. The course assessment calendar. 4. A map of how the course learning outcomes will be achieved (using the supplied Excel Spreadsheet mapping template). 5. Completed module specifications for all modules. 6. A draft course handbook. 7. A course diagram for all levels showing the spine, core and option modules available to students. 8. Staff CVs for staff managing and delivering the course.

Annex 2: Indicative Programme for Stage 2 Approval Events

Indicative programme for Approval of BIMM Institute based provision (exact timings may vary)	
Time	Meeting
0900-1030	Private meeting of approval panel
1030-1045	Break
1045-1215	Meeting with course team/s
1215-1315	Private meeting of approval panel, to include lunch
1315-1415	Meeting with students (if required)
1415-1500	Tour of learning resources (of college where approval event is based – if required)
1500-1600	Private meeting of review panel
1600-1630	Feedback meeting with course team
1630	Panel departs