



New Programme Design and Validation Policy

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1. REVISION HISTORY AND APPROVAL

Revision	Nature of change	Approval	Date
1.0	First Issue	JL	27/07/21

2. POLICY OVERVIEW

- 2.1. The focus of PCI College's development of an educational programme encompass a review of the necessary knowledge, skills and competence (including clinical competencies) in order to satisfy our institution that a learner's award is justified.
- 2.2. A robust system of design, development, review, approval and validation is necessary for new academic programmes.
- 2.3. Where a future opportunity to derive a new programme from an existing validated programme, the implications for differential validation will be incorporated in that new programme's design.
- 2.4. Programmes developed collaboratively, via consortium, jointly between two or more validating bodies, a transnational programme or parallel validation will comply with QQI policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training (e.g. see Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes & Joint Awards Policy)
- 2.5. Where a future programme may have a requirement to share content with a new programme, careful consideration will be given to QQI Shared Curriculum requirements.
- 2.6. Should a collaborative programme (two or more parties) be required, due consideration to the need for specialised validation policies and criteria for those programmes will be given (QQI, 3(d), Initial Validation Policy).
- 2.7. During programme design, development and validation, consideration will also be given for identifying improvements to these policies and procedures themselves. In other words our policy is to continuously improve our programmes and our quality system which produces those programmes.
- 2.8. All proposed academic programmes must be underpinned by the following principles:
 - 2.8.1. Consistency with the College's Mission and Values Statement and represent a contribution to the College's strategic aims and objectives.
 - 2.8.2. Offers a valuable educational experience for learners.
 - 2.8.3. Complies with all validating body standards (e.g., Middlesex University, QQI).
 - 2.8.4. Meets national academic and professional benchmarks as set by the relevant validating body, for example QAA; Middlesex University, QQI.
 - 2.8.5. Complies with professional body criteria as set by the relevant accrediting body, (e.g., Irish Association for Counselling and psychotherapy (IACP), British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), National Counselling Society (NCS)).

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy refers to all stages in the development of new programme proposals, from initial stage through to approval by the College, where the College has the power to make its own awards, and validation by Middlesex University, QQI or other external validating bodies.
- 3.2. The process of design, approval and validation of new courses involves some or all the following stakeholders:
 - 3.2.1. Academic Council
 - 3.2.2. Head of Counselling and Psychotherapy
 - 3.2.3. Link Tutor
 - 3.2.4. College Board
 - 3.2.5. Marketing
 - 3.2.6. Academic Quality Assurance Co-Ordinator
 - 3.2.7. Clinical Manager
 - 3.2.8. A proposer, individual, or group
 - 3.2.9. A developer, individual, or group, that may or may not be the proposer
 - 3.2.10. Academic Committee of external Validating body (e.g. Middlesex University, QQI)
 - 3.2.11. Programme Leader

- 3.2.12. Lecturing Team to deliver the course
- 3.2.13. Panel from Validating Body (e.g. Middlesex University, QQI)
- 3.2.14. Professional Accreditation Bodies (e.g., Irish Association for Counselling and psychotherapy (IACP), British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI), National Counselling Society (NCS))
- 3.3. Programmes which will be delivered from multiple locations will;
 - 3.3.1. Identify those locations proposed for multiple site delivery during programme design
 - 3.3.2. Identify additional locations proposed for delivery
 - 3.3.3. Identify locations which are proposed to be removed from current multi site programme(s)

4. PROPOSALS FOR NEW PROGRAMMES

- 4.1. Proposals for new programmes can originate from many sources. These include proposals for new courses, proposals for changing existing courses, and proposals for discontinuing existing courses.
- 4.2. The most frequent sources for proposals on course developments/new programmes are likely to be academic staff of the College, the Marketing Department, the Directors of the College, and requests from professional bodies and community groups.
- 4.3. Proposals are considered both on their own merit and within the framework of the overall mission, vision and values of the College, guided by the stated principles.
- 4.4. Proposals for new programmes must include an outline of the programme for approval detailing:
 - 4.4.1. Proposed validating body/bodies
 - 4.4.2. Budget for development and delivery of the programme (e.g. fees, costs, etc.)
 - 4.4.3. Demand from certain professions and/or groups in society
 - 4.4.4. Demand from prospective learners; potential learner profile
 - 4.4.5. Demand from the profession
 - 4.4.6. Programme 5-year plan e.g. step-up resourcing plan
 - 4.4.7. Admission criteria
 - 4.4.8. Delivery language (Irish, English, German)
 - 4.4.9. Learner requirement for language competence (e.g. IELTS)
 - 4.4.10. Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression
 - 4.4.11. Aims and learning outcomes at the programme level (general details) and how these align to the requirements of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
 - 4.4.12. Programme design – a broad outline of proposed modules, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methodologies, programme assessment strategy, clinical elements.
 - 4.4.13. Programme schedule - proposed contact hours and level of award as well as the specified credits in line with award/validating body e.g. QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards (2017), Section 3.8
 - 4.4.14. Mode of delivery and learning environment (taught programme, online delivery, blended learning, including suitable learning platforms)
 - 4.4.15. Proposed accrediting body and their respective accreditation requirements
 - 4.4.16. Self-assessment outlining how core validation criteria are met (QQI 2017/QP.17-V1.03)
 - 4.4.17. Programmes related to collaborative, transnational or joint award provision follow the requirements as outlined in the Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Policy and the relevant validating body requirements in this regard.
 - 4.4.18. Resources – staffing, physical, administration (including CVs for proposed staff)

- 4.4.19. Venues
 - 4.4.19.1. Multiple sites for delivery of the programme
 - 4.4.19.2. Assessment of suitability of delivery sites
 - 4.4.19.3. Assessment of consistency of delivery at each site
 - 4.4.19.4. Assess the impact of this cohort for formal public announcement of all awards made (i.e. size of the conferring/graduation venue to accommodate these learners).
- 4.4.20. Where the programme fits in to the menu of courses already offered by the College
- 4.4.21. The core validation criteria have been met (QQI 2017/QP.17-V1.03)
- 4.5. The proposal should comply with QQI requirements for programme naming (Policy and Criteria for Making Awards 3.1.b.i-iv, 2017 – QP 11.1)
- 4.6. The College Board, Marketing Department and the Academic Council at a minimum must be involved in the approval of new programmes.
- 4.7. A Steering Committee must be appointed to oversee the quality assurance of all new programme designs and their subsequent development.
- 4.8. The Steering Committee will keep track of progress and ensure that the proposed programme integrates into existing structures and where appropriate, designate further resources.

5. PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1. Proposals must go through a number of internal and external quality assurance steps during the development phase.
- 5.2. Internal and external (including independent evaluation) review steps ensure that all criteria listed in section 3.4 (above) are met.
- 5.3. Internal review consists of input from:
 - 5.3.1. Steering Committee
 - 5.3.2. College Board
 - 5.3.3. Marketing Department
 - 5.3.4. Academic Council
 - 5.3.5. Venues and Contracts Manager
 - 5.3.6. Finance Director
 - 5.3.7. Clinical Manager
 - 5.3.8. Academic Committee
 - 5.3.9. The Learner
- 5.4. External review includes input from:
 - 5.4.1. PCI College External Consultant
 - 5.4.2. E-Learning Expert (where applicable)
 - 5.4.3. Accrediting Body
 - 5.4.4. Validating Body
 - 5.4.5. Collaborative Provider (where applicable)
 - 5.4.6. Panel of External consultants

6. PROPOSED PROGRAMME DELIVERY

- 6.1. The procedures and guidelines for the design and approval of new programmes apply equally to programmes that are delivered online or through a blended learning model as they do to taught programmes.

7. PROPOSED PROGRAMME CONTENT

- 7.1. The procedures and guidelines for the design and approval of new programmes must be rigorous and effective to develop coherent new programmes of study.

- 7.2. Effective procedures and guidelines smooth the internal approval and external validation processes and bring about programmes that are amenable to effective monitoring and review.
- 7.3. The following points will be addressed in the design of new programmes:
 - 7.3.1. Compatibility with the PCI College Mission and Values Statement
 - 7.3.2. Potential impact on College in-flight programmes
 - 7.3.3. The intended aims and learning outcomes of the programme
 - 7.3.4. Whether the programme is consistent with the requirements of the relevant validating bodies
 - 7.3.5. For the development of collaborative, transnational and joint award provision, viability in relation to the development of consortium agreements and joint awarding agreements must be assessed.
 - 7.3.6. Demand for graduates of this programme, the opportunities that graduation offers learners, and the demand for the programme from a sufficient cohort of appropriately qualified learners
 - 7.3.7. The level of the programme, the degree to which the programme challenges the learner, and where the programme sits within the College's framework as well as that of the National Framework of Qualifications
 - 7.3.8. Mode of delivery of the programme
 - 7.3.9. Time to complete the programme
 - 7.3.10. The development of the curriculum as the learner's progress through the programme
 - 7.3.11. Resources necessary and available to run the programmes – venues available and required, staff qualified, available and required, administrative staff available and required, equipment available and required, library and information technology resources available and required, staff development required for delivery of the proposed programme, including requirements specific to online or blended delivery. Resources must be considered specific to the mode of proposed delivery.
 - 7.3.12. An award title at a level in keeping with the intended learning outcomes and duration of the programme
 - 7.3.13. A programme assessment strategy
 - 7.3.14. Sufficient emphasis on promoting the intended learning outcomes; how learners will satisfy these learning outcomes together with the means of outcome assessment
 - 7.3.15. An appropriate balance between the breadth and depth of the curriculum and the academic and practical requirements of the programme
 - 7.3.16. The personal development of the learner is central to PCI College programmes, balanced carefully with the required academic programme outcomes
 - 7.3.17. The appropriateness of the total contact hours and the breakdown of these hours into lectures, practicals, placements etc.
 - 7.3.18. The workload of the learner in terms of assessment requirements, reading, research, study, client work, supervision, personal therapy etc.
 - 7.3.19. The design process begins with specifying the course Aims and Learning Outcomes.

8. STATEMENT OF PROGRAMME AIMS

- 8.1. The programme aims are normally general in nature and reflect the overall purpose of the course. The aims provide an overview of and direction for the course. Formulation of course aims is fundamental to the development of specific modules and their respective aims and provides the bedrock for module development.
- 8.2. Because of the general nature of aims it can be difficult to confirm that the course and subject aims have been met. Programme aims on their own are not sufficient to convey to the lecturers or learners what the intended learning requirements are alone.

9. DEFINITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 9.1. Learning outcomes for each module reflect the cognitive and skills content to be attained.
- 9.2. Learning outcomes are designed to demonstrate required learning and must be measurable.
- 9.3. Verbs used in each learning outcome should be appropriate to the level of the module.

10. PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT DETERMINANTS

- 10.1. Learning outcomes drive assessment procedures; assessment procedures are designed to assess learning outcomes in as realistic a way as possible.
- 10.2. Assessment criteria are developed that take into consideration the learning outcomes, course and module content, together with the level of the programme.
- 10.3. The assessment of new programmes will be in line with the procedures and guidelines for the assessment of learners as outlined in the Assessment of Learners Policies and Procedures.
- 10.4. A regulatory impact assessment for new programme assessments will be completed.

11. PROGRESSING PROGRAMME APPROVAL

- 11.1. A Steering Committee is tasked with progressing the approved outline proposal into a full programme specification including statements of:
 - 11.1.1. Aims
 - 11.1.2. Learning Outcomes
 - 11.1.3. Syllabus
 - 11.1.4. Teaching/Learning Methodologies
 - 11.1.5. Assessment Methodologies
 - 11.1.6. Effort Allocation
 - 11.1.7. Resource Schedule
 - 11.1.8. Curriculum Vitae of required Staff
 - 11.1.9. Course Schedule (draft)
 - 11.1.10. Programme Level
 - 11.1.11. Balance of Academic and Practical work
 - 11.1.12. Personal Development of the Learner
 - 11.1.13. Programme Award and Title
 - 11.1.14. Compliance with Middlesex University Standards or QQI standards
 - 11.1.15. Access, Transfer and Progression provisions
- 11.2. The Steering Committee, supported by the Academic Quality Assurance Co-Ordinator, are responsible for delivering the new programme including achieving specified deadlines.
- 11.3. The Academic Council of the College Board will receive regular and timely updates in the development of new programmes as part of internal quality assurance.
- 11.4. In the case of collaborative, transnational and joint award provision, the steering committee are responsible for drafting the required agreements, for example, consortium agreement and for ensuring that the proposed programme meets any jointly agreed minimum standards within same.
- 11.5. For collaborative and joint provision, due diligence must be carried out in respect of the partner provider in terms of their financial and academic ability to deliver the required provision.

12. INTERNAL EVALUATION

- 12.1. Prior to considering external validation, the Steering Committee for new programme development will conduct and prepare a report on, an evaluation of the relevant

programme against the applicable validating body policies and criteria (Internal Evaluation Report).

- 12.2. This policy will be the benchmark for conducting that evaluation.
- 12.3. The Internal Evaluation Report will be considered for approval by the Academic Council and the College Board as this is required as part of the application pack (External Validation).

13. INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

- 13.1. Prior to submission of an application for validation, the Internal Evaluation Report will be sent to the External Consultant and/or PCI College eLearning Expert for evaluation.
- 13.2. Parties providing independent evaluation must have the necessary training and familiarity with the policies and criteria of validating/accrediting bodies.
- 13.3. An accrediting body consultation will also be held.
- 13.4. Stakeholders in independent evaluation will provide a report on the satisfaction of the programme compliance with required policy and criteria. Programme status may be indicated as;
 - 13.4.1. Satisfactory
 - 13.4.2. Satisfactory with special conditions
 - 13.4.3. Not satisfactory
- 13.5. Programmes will not be submitted for external validation until

14. EXTERNAL VALIDATION

- 14.1. The proposed new programme will undergo external approval via a validation event by the relevant validating body.
- 14.2. The relevant validating body will set out all expectations and requirements for the validation event and PCI College will act according to those requirements.
- 14.3. The PCI College Link Tutor is responsible for ensuring that relevant validating body requirements are prepared for and adhered to for the purpose of validating events.
- 14.4. Validations are approved cyclically (every 5 years minimum).

15. BUDGETS

- 15.1. The Financial Director, in conjunction with the College Board prepares budgets to cover the cost of running existing courses, introduction of new courses as well as any significant amendments to existing courses.

16. PROGRAMME LAUNCH

- 16.1. The Marketing Department will prepare the College Prospectus and website for the launch of newly approved programmes. Marketing ensure that the prospectus and website:
 - 16.1.1. Do not include a course which has not been properly and fully approved
 - 16.1.2. Presents an accurate description of each course including details related to the type of provision, provider and awarding body involved with the programme
 - 16.1.3. Contains entry conditions as determined by College authorities

17. ONGOING MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 17.1. All new programmes are subject to ongoing programme monitoring and evaluation. See Ongoing Programme Monitoring Procedures and New Programme Evaluation Procedures.

18. CHANGES TO A VALIDATED PROGRAMME

- 18.1. Where it is identified that a validated programme requires enhancements and changes during the 5-year validation cycle the following apply:
- 18.2. Minor Changes
 - 18.2.1. Minor changes to validated programmes must:

- 18.2.1.1. not be extensive or significant.
 - 18.2.1.2. Be subject to internal expert review and approved by the Academic Council
 - 18.2.1.3. Be within the scope of existing QA policies and procedures
 - 18.2.1.4. Not impact the core validation criteria, learning outcomes or programme requirements
 - 18.2.1.5. Be communicated to all relevant stakeholders (including the validating/accrediting body) and updated in the relevant documentation
- 18.3. Major Changes
- 18.3.1. Where it is identified that changes are required in respect of core validation criteria, learning outcomes, programme requirements, move of programme transnationally, changes to delivery venues, or more than 1/3 of the core/compulsory credits of the programme, these constitute major changes and are subject to revalidation or review, depending on the validation body (e.g. revalidation, differential validation for QQI and revalidation or review for Middlesex University).
 - 18.3.2. Revalidation, differential validation or review is undertaken with comparable rigor to all other forms of validation.
 - 18.3.3. If the proposed changes are deemed “significant” by the Academic Council then the policies of the validating/accrediting bodies which trigger a revalidation, differential validation or review process.

19. LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Linked Policies	Access Applications and Admissions Policy Blended Learning Policy Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Policy New Programme Design, Development and Validation Policy Ongoing Programme Monitoring Policy Revalidation Policy Recognition of Prior Learning Policy QA Management Policy Transfer and Progression Policy
Linked Procedures	Access Applications and Admissions Procedure Blended Learning Procedure Collaborative Programmes, Transnational Programmes and Joint Awards Procedure New Programme Design, Development and Validation Procedure Ongoing Programme Monitoring Procedure Revalidation Procedure Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure Transfer and Progression Procedure