ESCAPE STUDIOS

Programme Approval Process

1.   New Programme Approval

1.   Proposals for new programmes may stem from discussions at programme or School level as well as at the level of Executive Team, Academic Board or Governing Body. In addition, formal processes such as the development of strategies may highlight the need for new programmes to be added to the overall portfolio of Escape Studios. Where a proposed programme constitutes an academic award, the development and approval process comprises the following four stages:
   a.   Business Case and Resourcing
   b.   Degree Concept Team
   c.   Validation Panel
   d.   Academic Board

2.   Business Case and Development

1.   The Business Case will include:
   a.   A brief outline of the aims, nature, content and key features of the programme(s) along with any particular challenges or benefits and how this fits with the strategy and mission of Escape Studios;
   b.   The mode(s) of the programme(s) proposed i.e. full-time, part-time or distance-learning;
   c.   The rationale behind the proposal;
   d.   The market research that supports the proposal, including an estimate of the potential level of demand;
   e.   The proposed programme(s) starting date(s);
   f.   An indication of the cohort sizes;
   g.   Identification of relevant professional accreditations which are desirable and/or required;
   h.   Identification of resources and any known resource implications for:
       i.   Physical resources;
       ii.   Library and Online Learning Resources;
       iii.   IT Services (e.g. specific software requirements etc.);
       iv.   Student Services;
       v.   Academic Staffing (including whether relevant expertise and experience already exists within Escape Studios and any additional staffing requirements.)
   i.   Financial model in the template provided by the Finance Director.

2. The Business Case is considered by the Executive Team who may:
   a. Agree that the programme should proceed to the next stage of development;
   b. Decide that the programme should not go forward for development;
   c. Require further documentation or amendment to the documentation produced before making a decision.
3. If the Executive Team decides that the programme should go forward to the next stage of development, the VP (Academic Quality and Enhancement) or their nominee will agree a timetable with the validating partner and ensure that the partner's process for preliminary approval is followed.
4. The programme cannot be advertised until:
   a. The validating partner agrees that it may be advertised;
   b. The "Main Course Information Sheet" is completed. This sheet is available from the Quality Office;
   c. At this stage the programme can be advertised "subject to validation."

3. Degree Concept Team ("DCT")

1. A DCT should be formed for the development of all degree programmes. The team comprises members from industry, academics and students and should normally include:
   a. Internal academic staff from the subject area (including the proposed Programme Leader);
   b. At least one external professional from the industry appropriate to the subject area (teams will normally include more than one external professional from industry);
   c. An external academic subject specialist;
   d. One or more students;
   e. A representative from any public, statutory or regulatory body;
   f. Other members as appropriate.

   A Quality Officer will, normally, be in attendance as a Secretary and to advise on process.

2. The DCT is responsible for developing the fundamental aspects of the programme including the overall learning outcomes, the learning teaching and assessment strategy, the structure of the programme, the core modules to be included in the programme and the distinctive aspects of the programme.
3. DCT meetings may take the form of formal meetings or may take other forms such as workshops, consultation via correspondence. In all cases, records should be kept, as a minimum, of the decisions taken by the DCT and the rationale for these decisions.
4. The DCT will consult with members of the Learning Resources team regarding the needs of the proposed programme. The development of the programme(s) is on the basis of the agreed resources submitted to the Executive Team in the Business Case. If during the process of development the DCT considers that a change in resource is required then this should be referred to the Executive Team for approval.
5. The programme leader is responsible for drafting the programme documentation on the basis of the decisions made by the DCT and the programme specification should be approved by the DCT and the Dean of School before the programme goes forward for validation.

4. Internal Validation Panel

1. The final programme specification and accompanying documentation should be provided to the Quality Office no later than 2 weeks before the internal validation event. The following must be provided:
   a. Programme specification;
   b. Module specifications;
   c. Mapping document of FHEQ to programme learning outcomes;
   d. Mapping document of Subject benchmark statement to programme learning outcomes;
   e. Mapping document of module learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes;
   f. Mapping document of programme learning outcomes to any PSRB/accrediting body requirements;
   g. Summary of DCT minutes/decisions;
   h. Programme Approval Process (this document);
   i. Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

2. The Validation Panel will normally comprise:

   a. The Dean of Academic Affairs who will act as Chair;

   b. One Independent Member of Governing Body;

   c. At least one internal senior academic from another discipline determined by the Chair;

   d. One external[1] academic subject expert (approved by the Chair);

   e. One external industry expert (approved by the Chair);

   f. One Student or Alumnus(a). In the case of programmes in a new discipline area, this may be a recent graduate from another higher education institution;

   g. An Academic Quality Officer who will act as Secretary.

3. The Validation Panel will be provided with the documentation in Section 4.1 above no less than one week before the Validation Event. The Agenda for the Validation event will normally be as follows:
   a. A private meeting of the Panel to discuss the documentation and formulate questions for the Programme Team;
   b. A meeting with the Programme Team/DCT members to discuss the documentation and delivery of the programme(s) in detail;
   c. A private meeting of the Panel to formulate conclusions;
   d. A feedback meeting to the Programme Team and the Principal (or his/her nominee) on their overall decision.

4. The Panel will consider the documentation and the information provided during the course of the meeting and make a decision on whether to validate on the basis of:

---

[1] In approving external members of the Validation Programme, the Chair will have due regard to their independence from the programme development team and seek to confirm that the external member being appointed to a Validation Panel has (a) not been part of the DCT; (b) is not an external examiner for Escape Studios; (c) is not employed by Escape Studios in any capacity; (d) is not a close friend, colleague or relative of a member of the programme development team.

a. The relevance, currency and validity of the programme (including its learning outcomes) in the light of developing knowledge and professional practice in the designated field;

b. The extent to which the programme(s) will effectively equip graduates with appropriate subject skills, expertise, workplace readiness and industry understanding;

c. The extent to which there will be industry engagement in the programme;

d. Evidence that the learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of the award and meet the descriptors for that level as set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK degree-awarding bodies ("FHEQ");

e. Evidence that the programme learning outcomes meet the expectations of the appropriate subject benchmark statement, as published by the QAA;

f. Evidence that whatever permitted module choices the student makes, the modules studied will enable them to have the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes for the programme;

g. The validity and soundness of the learning teaching and assessment strategy and its relationship to the learning outcomes and standards specified;

h. How the programme provides students with a fair and reasonable opportunity of achieving the academic standards required for successful completion;

i. How the programme will ensure inclusion and equality of opportunity;

j. Staffing, and how research, scholarship and / or professional activity inform teaching and the curriculum;

k. The effectiveness of resources to support learning;

l. The appropriateness of the title.

Decisions open to the panel and outcome:

5. The validation meeting will result in a Validation Report for Academic Board. The report will be drafted by the Secretary to the Panel in conjunction with the other Panelists. The report should be approved by the Chair before proceeding to Academic Board.

6. The Validation Report should summarise the discussions which took place, drawing conclusions on the matters identified in Section 4.4 above. The report should recommend to the Academic Board one of the following:

a. The programme is validated for a set period of time[2] (specified by the Panel) without any conditions.

b. The programme is validated for a set period of time (specified by the Panel) subject to amendments to the programme and/or module specifications or the fulfilment of other conditions to the satisfaction of the Panel.

c. Refusal to validate.

7. The Panel will specify whether fulfillment of the amendments or conditions needs to be approved by the Chair of the Panel only or by the whole panel electronically. Where amendments are required or approval is subject to conditions, the Chair must sign off in writing that the amendments have been made and/ or conditions have been met to the satisfaction of the Panel before the programme can be approved by Academic Board.

8. The report with the accompanying Panel approved programme and module specifications will be presented to Academic Board for final approval.

---

[2] The maximum permissible term is 5 years.

9. Following Academic Board approval, the programme documentation will be sent to the validating partner for approval. Thereafter it will follow the processes of the validating partner.

10. After the validating partner's approval, the School will:
    a. be permitted to advertise the programme without the caveat "subject to validation" (subject to Section 2.4(a));
    b. be permitted to enroll students on the programme;
    c. enter the programme into the periodic review schedule;
    d. undertake annual monitoring after the first full year of operation;
    e. comply with all other QA processes and procedures.

5. Amendments to Approved Programmes

Major changes

1. Proposals for major changes to approved programmes of study must be considered and recommended for approval by the Academic Board. A major change to a programme includes:
    a. Any amendment resulting in a change to the programme intended learning outcomes or educational aims;
    b. A substantial change to the learning or teaching methods (e.g. substantial change of contact hours or change of delivery mode);
    c. A substantial change to the assessment methods;
    d. A combination of minor changes that, when aggregated, can be considered to be a major change.

2. Major changes can be proposed by the programme leader, School Board, or the Dean of School. The programme leader shall prepare a revised programme specification and/or module specifications (as appropriate), a description of the proposed changes and the reasons for the proposed changes and submit these to the Academic Board for approval.

3. After Academic Board approval, the documentation will be sent to the validating partner for final approval. Thereafter, it will follow the processes of the validating partner.

Minor changes

4. Proposals for minor changes are those that do not involve revision of the programme aims and/or intended learning outcomes and/or substantial change to teaching and learning methods and/or assessment methods (as specified in Section 5.1(a)-5.1(c)).

5. Where there is doubt as to whether a proposed change to a programme constitutes a minor or major change, advice should be sought from the Dean of Academic Affairs.

6. Proposals for minor changes (as specified in Section 5.4) to approved programmes of study must be approved by the Dean of Academic Affairs following consideration of a revised programme specification and/or module specification/s.

7. After approval by the Dean of Academic Affairs, the documentation will be sent to the validating partner for final approval. Thereafter, it will follow the processes of the validating partner.

New modules

8. Proposals for new modules will usually arise in the context of approval of a new programme of study. If a new module is proposed for addition to an existing Programme of Study, the following procedure applies.

9. A module specification will be prepared by the Programme Leader who will arrange for an external academic subject expert to review the module specification and prepare a written

report. The external report and proposed module specification, together with a draft revised programme specification, will be submitted to the Academic Board for approval.

10.　　After Academic Board approval, the documentation will be sent to the validating partner for final approval. Thereafter, it will follow the processes of the validating partner.

6.　Programme Closure

1.　　The Executive Team may propose to withdraw or close a programme of study leading to an award, on grounds of, for example, lack of student demand, the programme not being financially viable, or the programme not fitting with the strategy and mission of Escape Studios.

2.　　In such case, the Academic Board must review such proposals and must satisfy itself that the standards of awards directly affected by the proposal and the interests and rights of students registered on the relevant programme, and on other programmes directly affected by the proposed withdrawal or closure, are reasonably safeguarded before determining whether or not to consent to the withdrawal or closure proposed.

3.　　Before reaching a decision to suspend or withdraw academic approval of a programme, the Academic Board should consider the advice of relevant parties including that of the validating partner, the Dean of School, or programme leader, as appropriate.

4.　　In the event of a programme approval being suspended for more than one calendar year, the approval of the programme will be deemed withdrawn.

5.　　In the event of a decision to close a programme, the Academic Board must satisfy itself that the standards of awards directly affected by the proposal and the interests and rights of students registered on the relevant programme, and on other programmes directly affected by the withdrawal or closure, are reasonably safeguarded, and must consider and approve plans for securing adequate standards and learning opportunities for any student remaining on the programme.

Person responsible	Dean of Academic Affairs
Approval date	March 2023
Version Number	7
Approved by	Academic Board
Effective from	Immediately
Date of next formal review	November 2024
Status (Current or Post DAP)	Current