Working Together

Approval Procedure

November 2019

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Correction of minor typing errors. Removal of the NoD form as part of the Approvals Procedure and applied the focus to the completion of the IV Feedback Form for New or Amended Assessments. Removal of Appendix 7 – Staff Qualifications and Competence document as this information is available on HR21. Inclusion of the revised IV Feedback Form for New or Amended Assessments now inserted as an Appendix. Inclusion of procedure for the Approval of lapsed Borders College SCQF Awards and a new Re-validation Approval form including Standards Verifier report attached in Appendix 5.	D Killean	Jan 2015
1.2	Inclusion of a site selection checklist within the approvals process to ensure that the sites for delivery and assessment out with the College premises are fit for that purpose.	D Killean	15/02/2016
1.3	Changes relating to CQT changing to SLT and a change to job titles. The inclusion of the new Curriculum Planning and Review Process.	C Elliott	05/05/2018
1.4	Amendments to reflect Approval Committee now held separately from SLT, making recommendations to it; removal of Appendix containing the IV Feedback form (it is now linked with the Internal Verification Procedure); removal of duplication; amendment of minor typographical errors.	J Robertson	01/02/2019
1.4.1	Change of Awarding Body name	J Robertson	November 2019

1. Approval Process

Borders College offer a wide range of qualifications which are certificated by various awarding bodies. It is the College's responsibility to ensure that all provision is valid, practicable, reliable and flexible to meet the needs of learners. Where the provision has been developed locally by the College it undergoes an additional validation process inclusive of SCQF credit rating and levelling (See Validating, Credit Rating and Levelling College Devised Awards Procedure).

All assessed units and awards presented for certification must meet the requirements of the Internal Verification Procedure as well as those of the awarding bodies.

The approvals process for each awarding body varies. The Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC) will assist the curricular area during the approvals process which includes providing guidance and support when completing the appropriate forms.

Please note: internal approval must be granted before any applications can be submitted to the awarding body.

A summary of the approvals process for each awarding body is listed below:

- **SQA**
  The College have devolved authority with SQA which means we can self-approve for any awards/units that are devolvable. For these awards/units, the QAC will complete the necessary paperwork to be sent to SQA. For awards/units that are not devolvable (i.e. regulated awards, such as SVQs) the curricular area will be required to complete a Qualification Approval Application form.

- **City & Guilds**
  The College is required to submit a QAP form. An approval visit will then be arranged where the External Verifier (EV) will recommend whether the College should be given approval.

- **edexcel (Pearson)**
  The College can self-approve awards via the edexcel online website. Once the internal process has been complete the QAC will process the application using the Edexcel online website. Quality

monitoring is carried out within the External Verification process and through external assessment and marking.

- **NCFE**
  As an approved Centre we will gain automatic approval to run additional product(s) upon receipt of a completed Application to Offer an Additional Product(s) form. However, for NVQs a centre approval visit may also be required.

- **BHSQ**
  The College is required to submit an Application for SVQ Centre Approval form. An EV will visit the College prior to approval being granted. Approval is on-going provided the centre continues to meet the criteria.

- **Active IQ**
  The College is required to complete an approval application for both the qualification and the delivering staff which is followed up with a visit from the EV.

- **College SCQF Credit Rated Provision**
  The College can credit rate and level locally devised qualifications through the SCQF process. The qualification is submitted to a SCQF rating and levelling panel for validation. The award can be developed for approval once it has been validated following the internal approvals procedure. The QAC uploads approved qualifications details on to the SCQF database and informs our College HMI. Re-accreditation of College SCQF provision that has lapsed will require an AP3 form to be completed by the Assistant Principal (AP)/Director of Business Development (DBD) with additional details provided by the Internal Verifier.

The College's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is ultimately responsible for curricular matters, and as such carries responsibility for the validation and approval of new or amended certificated provision including Borders College SCQF credit rated provision. The management of the validation and approval process is devolved to the Approval Committee (AC) who make recommendations to SLT to approve and implement the outcomes of applications for new or amended programmes/units.

1.1 Approval Committee

The AC is held separately from, but reports and makes recommendations to, the SLT. It meets every 2 months (although more frequently if required). Dates are available on the annual College Committee Schedule.

Remit:

The remit of the Approval Committee includes:

- To consider and recommend draft proposals for new/amended programmes and authorise development where appropriate.

- To consider and recommend proposals for new locally devised awards requiring validation and SCQF levelling and credit rating and to consider re-validation of Borders College SCQF qualifications that have lapsed.

- To allocate resources for the development of the proposed provision.

- To approve single unit applications or minor changes to programmes after successful Internal Verification.

- To authorise Approval Panels to consider evidence supporting the new/replacement provision.

- To consider and make recommendations regarding approvals.

- To consider and make recommendations on awarding body requirements.

- To monitor implementation of, and ensure adherence to, recommendations from External Verifiers

- To make and act on recommendations from the Senior Leadership Team.

Membership:

The AC consists of Director of Business Improvement and Performance, Vice Principal: Curriculum & Student Services, APs, DBD, Learning & Teaching Development Director, QAC, Head of MIS and the Head of Finance & Procurement (or a representative).

The role of the Chair is to provide independent chairing and facilitating of the AC. The Director of Business Improvement and Performance will report to the Curriculum and Quality Committee as well as SLT.

Quorum for AC: Director of Business Improvement & Performance or Vice Principal, two other members of the AC who are not presenting, the QAC, Head of MIS and the Head of Finance and Procurement (or a representative).

Presenting Staff:
• AP/DBD in charge of proposed award delivery as required
• Other curricular area staff as appropriate

The presenting AP/DBD will not have voting rights for their proposal.

The standing agenda for Approvals at AC will include:

• Outstanding actions from previous applications (report from the QAC)
• Applications
• Reports from Approval Panel(s)
• Approval reports from external awarding bodies
• EV reports and action plans
• Quality Audits (Internal Verification Systems)

Criteria for Reference to Panel:
(a) Single unit – no Panel is required but the Internal Verification Feedback Form must be copied to the QAC
(b) If additional development time is allocated to the curricular area to develop the proposed provision – this covers new provision and updates to specialist subject areas
(c) All other provision may be referred at the discretion of the AC to an Approval Panel

1.2 Timing
To be able to introduce new or amended provision leading to a recognised qualification at the commencement of a new academic year, the proposing curricular area must have formal approval at the earliest point possible.

For new qualifications where an Approval Panel is required, the following schedule should be borne in mind when considering applications:

September Yr. 0   Submit application to the AC for consideration and recommendation to SLT.

If permission to develop is granted, the curricular area works on the development of the assessment and teaching materials to meet the agreed Approval Panel* date.

No later than   The AC considers the report from the Approval Panel reporting to SLT and
May Yr. 1   annually to CQC.

September Yr. 1   If approved, delivery may commence provided all necessary awarding body documentation has been processed.

(*Mainstream Provision - Approval Panels relating to the next academic session should normally be completed by May of the current session. Only in exceptional circumstances, and with permission of the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Student Services and Director of Business Improvement & Performance, should an Approval Panel meet later than May if the programme is to commence in the following academic session. Approvals may be fast-tracked where there is a commercial requirement to develop and deliver provision to meet the requirements of a customer.)

SVQs

Approval of SVQs may need to follow a different timescale because of the cycle followed by the Sector Skills Council for developing awards.

1.3 Approval to deliver qualifications

The approval process is summarised in flowcharts in Appendix 1 & 2 and the stages of that process are:

1 The curricular area concerned submits a completed proposal to develop new provision or amend existing provision to the QAC using **either** form AP1: Develop New Provision or AP2: Replacement Awards, New Unit/s, new BC SCQF Accredited Awards, Minor Amendments to an Existing Award.

2 Where the award is being delivered and/or assessed at facilities out-with the college, the curricular area concerned must also complete the appropriate site checklist (AP6) for each of the sites to be used.

3 For re-validation of College SCQF Awards the AP/DBD should complete the required form (AP3), ensuring the Internal Verifier completes and signs the relevant section, and submit it to the QAC.

4 Where there are cost implications, whether it is development time or new resources required, a Costing Sheet (AP4) must be submitted with the approval application.

5 The AC gives due consideration to the application and may recommend the following to SLT:
   (a) authorise development work to proceed;
   (b) defer development work pending a revised application;
   (c) reject the application;
   (d) determine if there is a need to hold an Approval Panel;
   (e) approve replacement, small cluster or single unit applications, pending successful internal verification. In this case, copies of the IV Feedback Form for New or Amended Assessments must be sent to the QAC before approval can be authorised (see Internal and External Verification Procedure).

6   The developing curricular area must produce a representative sample of learning and teaching materials covering the range of work included within the programme for the award to be considered by the Approval Panel, the timing of which will be determined by the AC. This would normally be material for at least 6 months, or 50% (for delivery of less than one year) of delivery and all assessment material. However where integrated assessments are produced or holistic assessment undertaken all assessment materials **must** be presented to the Approval Panel.

The Approval Panel will use the checklist (AP5) in arriving at their decision. Any conditions/recommendations given will have an agreed date for achievement. Satisfactory completion of these will be checked by the appropriate Vice Principal, and reported back to the AC. If the conditions/recommendations are not met by the agreed dates, the ultimate sanction of the AC is to recommend to SLT to suspend approval for the next academic year.

7   The Approval Panel will then report back to the next meeting of the AC.

8   When the College approves an award, but awarding body procedures are still required, the QAC will administer the process in conjunction with the AP/DBD and the awarding body.

9   Approval for short commercial courses that do not lead to the achievement of a nationally recognised qualification is by agreement of the appropriate Senior Manager prior to commencement; they do not need AC or therefore SLT approval.

1.4 Applications:

These notes should be read prior to completing an Application to the AC.

The Application will include:

- Evidence that the proposed award is valid and current (check with the awarding body)

- Evidence of demand for the award

- Evidence that the proposed provision is financially viable; this should include projections of student numbers, progression routes, and opportunities for employment, more advanced education/training and costing

- Proposed access routes, entry requirements, mode(s) of delivery and intended commencement date

- Evidence of sufficient competent staff to:
  Develop the assessment and teaching material
  Deliver and assess the proposed programme
  Internally verify the proposed programme

- Justification for any identified staff development needs

- A proposed timescale for development of the teaching and assessment materials together with a proposed allocation of development time to identify appropriate staff involved

- Evidence of available resources to include equipment, learning and teaching materials, consumables, and accommodation to meet the full range of conditions required to assess student performance, or a costed development plan with target completion dates

Application Forms
There are 2 different application forms, depending on the type of provision requiring approval.

Application Form 1 - Develop New Provision (AP1):
The AP/DBD will complete the form and costing sheet and pass to the VP: Curriculum & Student Services/VP: Finance and Corporate Services as appropriate for approval. The forms will then be submitted to the QAC. The AP/DBD will present the application at the next AC meeting.

The application should also include the completed form Section 2 from the Curriculum Planning and Review Process.

Application Form 2 - Replacement Awards, New Unit/s, Minor Amendments to an Existing Award (AP2):
The AP/DBD will complete the form and costing sheet and pass to the VP: Curriculum & Student Services/VP Finance & Corporate Services for approval. The forms will then be submitted to the QAC. The AP/DBD will present the application at the next AC meeting.

This form should **only** be used for single units where the curricular area are seeking resources or expertise out-with the current availability.

There is no requirement to seek approval from the AC where:
•	A unit or other nationally recognised award has been updated and the awarding body has automatically approved the College to deliver the new version of the award and there is no additional development time required;
•	A unit is already approved for delivery by the awarding body as part of an approved national framework but the College has not delivered the unit before and there is no additional development time required.
The curricular area should liaise directly with the QAC to ensure that internal records are updated.

1.5 Use of assessment sites not owned or managed by the College.

The following issues must be considered when selecting sites out-with the College that are suitable for assessment of candidates. For most work-based qualifications delivery and assessment will be undertaken with employers. It is important to ensure that their premises and resources are sufficient for the assessment of the award. Consider the following issues when completing the Site Checklist Form (AP6).

•	Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award? (Reference should be made to the qualification's assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the specific award(s) being assessed at the site.)

•	Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?

•	Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?

•	Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?

•	Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers? (*see note)

- Is there agreed access to the site for Awarding Body quality assurance staff (for all qualifications) and regulatory body staff (for regulated qualifications)? (*see note)

- Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?

If there are College staff and/or candidates based entirely, or for part of their time, at a site not owned or managed by the College, consideration must also be given to the following issues:

- Are candidates, assessors and IVs based at this site given induction covering the requirements of the Awarding Body?

- Do candidates and staff have access to the relevant policies and procedures of the College?

- Is the College's quality assurance system being applied at this assessment site?

- Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with the College's data management policy and procedures?

*Note: There may be exceptional circumstances at some assessment sites making physical access impossible, but there must be remote access to candidates and evidence in these cases, and confirmation of the other points on the checklist.

Once Sites Have Been Approved Through the Approval Procedure

The College will carry out site checks and keep up-to-date records:

- When a new site is being used for the first time

- If new qualifications are to be assessed at an existing and/or new site

- In order to review the on-going suitability of the site (at least annually, or if there is a change of circumstances or key personnel at the site)

- If a site is not approved or not approved immediately, this will be noted with relevant actions on the Approvals documentation and followed up at the next Approval Committee meeting

Up-to-date records must be retained and made available to Awarding Body verifiers.

Records

The College uses the site checklist approved by SQA for all site approvals regardless of Awarding Body (AP6). All site checklists must be signed and dated by representatives of both the centre and the organisation which owns the site.

Site checklists are required for:

- Site regularly used for delivery and assessment
- Candidate temporary work placement site
- Candidate's workplace (employed candidates)

Sites hired for regular used for delivery and assessment

If the College hires a site owned by another organisation there will be a formal rental agreement or contract. This may address responsibilities for the safety and maintenance of the site, and provision of certain facilities, but may not cover issues relating to assessment and quality assurance.

If candidates and/or College staff are based at this site for all or part of their time, the curricular area must also ensure that they have the same rights and information as candidates and staff based at the main campus (e.g. access to information about, and the mechanism for, making a complaint). In these circumstances a site selection checklist should be used in its entirety, in addition to any rental agreement or contract.

Checks must also be carried out on new assessment sites introduced after the approval stage for every qualification. The site checklist should be used as a record for this purpose.

Under the Health & Safety procedures each Department has a Health & Safety Audit to complete for all assessment sites used. The Assistant Principal is responsible for ensuring that any actions are addressed. Outcomes of reviews and any actions to be taken should be recorded through course team meetings. Site checklists or other documented agreements may need to be updated.

Site checklists are signed agreements and should have regular planned review dates. They should also be reviewed and updated if there are any significant changes at the assessment site (e.g. change of ownership, change of key personnel, changes to facilities).

Student Work Placement Sites

The College conducts a Health & Safety assessment prior to any site being used for work placement which incorporates elements of the site checklist to ensure that where assessment is to take place the site is suitable and access arrangements are in place for the assessors and verifiers including those from the awarding body.

Candidate's workplace (employed candidates)

If an employed candidate is being assessed for a qualification in their usual place of work, their employer will already have responsibility for them as their employee.

However, the College also has responsibility for them as a candidate. In particular, the College must ensure that:

- The activities, environment and resources at the site will allow the candidate to be assessed in line with the assessment strategy for the qualification.

- Workplace assessors must be competent to carry out assessment

- There is agreed access to the site for the College assessors and internal verifiers to carry out their roles, and also, if required, for SQA quality assurance personnel and regulatory body personnel (where regulated qualifications are being delivered)

- Candidates must have equal access to assessment to candidates in any sites – including the provision of any agreed assessment arrangements

- Any concerns about safety at the site are raised with the employer.

2. The Approval Panel

2.1 Membership

The membership of the Panel will vary according to the nature of the proposals it has to consider. This is allowed for through the appointment of an AP/DBD and External Specialist(s) and the attendance of the appropriate Vice Principal. The Vice Principal: Curriculum & Student Services or a designated depute will chair each panel. The AC shall appoint each panel.

Quorum:
• Vice Principal: Curriculum & Student Services or Depute Chair to be agreed with the AC when agreeing the date for an Approval Panel
• Appointed External Specialist(s) with appropriate professional and/or vocational knowledge and experience
• Appointed AP/DBD (not presenting)

The appointment of External Specialist(s) is **mandatory** for all Approval Panels. The organisation of an appropriate External Specialist is the responsibility of the presenting curricular area. The curricular area will also liaise with the External Specialist to advise on Panel procedures.

The following sources of External Specialists may be considered and it is recommended that the faculties develop more than one source:
• local employers
• professional bodies
• local enterprise company
• reciprocal arrangements with other colleges
• universities
• voluntary bodies

2.2 Presenting Staff

The AP/DBD in charge of the proposed delivery must present. The External Specialist should take no part in the curricular area's presentation.

2.3 Remit of the Panel

(a) To ensure that the approval criteria are met.

(b) To place conditions on any area where criteria for approval are not met, with a timescale for the submission of new/revised evidence to the panel chair.

(c) To make recommendations on any area where criteria for approval are not fully met, with a timescale for the submission of new/revised evidence to the panel Chair.

(d) To prepare reports for the next meeting of the AC in line with the Panel's decision using the Approval Panel Checklist (AP5).

2.4 Roles and Remits

Chair (VP Curriculum & Student Services):	the key role is to facilitate the smooth running of the Panel, provide independent advice and maintain and circulate a record of the decisions of the Panel to the AC.
External Specialist:	the key role is to provide independent scrutiny of the proposal from an external perspective to the College and contribute to the decision of the Panel.
AP/DBD/ Learning & Teaching Development Director:	the key role is to provide independent scrutiny of the course management and delivery of the proposal and contribute to the decision of the Panel, and to provide technical advice and support to the external specialist.

The Chair of the Panel, the appointed External Specialist and the appointed AP/DBD make the decisions of Approval Panels.

All recommendations should be met within three months of the date of the panel meeting.

2.5 Timing

The timing of the Approval Panel will be as determined by the AC.

2.6 Materials for the Approval Panel

The Approval Panel will use the College Internal Approval Panel Checklist (AP5) to guide their judgement of the materials and information presented, which must contain the following:

- All Internally Verified assessment materials and checklists for the award
- A list of the component elements of the award
- Evidence of professional qualifications and experience for every Assessor and Internal Verifier demonstrating competence to assess/verify (can be printed from the College HR21)
- Developed teaching materials – normally for the first six months of delivery (or 50% for delivery of less than one year).
- Availability of all resources referred to on the appropriate forms for the Panel to inspect
- Availability of proposed delivery/assessing/verifying staff for the Panel to interview
- Copies of IV feedback Form for New or Amended Assessments completed by the relevant IV
- Section 3 and 4 Part B forms from the Curriculum Planning and Review Process

Remember that no assessor can internally verify their own assessments.

Development Responsibility:
It is the responsibility of the AP/DBD of the proposing curricular area to manage the development process and to meet the requirements of the Approval Policy and system.

For programmes where no unit specification exists, for example Skills Accreditation programmes, these must be devised and agreed prior to entering the AC cycle. All such programmes must be presented for approval.

Process Flowchart 1 (Approval)

Faculty

The faculty making the proposal prepares and submits "Application Form 1 - Develop New Provision" or "Application Form 2 - Replacement Awards, New Unit/s, BC Accredited Awards, Minor Amendments to an Existing Award" to the QAC no less than two weeks before the scheduled Approval Committee meeting at which the proposal is to be tabled

Approve

Minor alterations to programmes or single unit applications, after successful Internal Verification

Approval Committee

The proposing faculty will present their case to the Approval Committee, which will consider the application and make a decision at the meeting to recommend to SLT to:

Authorise

Faculty to develop:

a) Internally verified assessment material
b) Teaching materials
c) Proposed timetable

To Approval Panel

Defer

The faculty must respond to conditions by agreed time for further scrutiny by the Approval Committee/SLT

Reject

Process Flowchart 2 (Approval Panel)

Approval Panel

The faculty presents ALL necessary evidence that they meet the requirements for approval (see Approval Panel Checklist – AP5)

Approval Panel

The panel meets and considers the evidence submitted using the College Approval Panel checklist

Approved

The Panel Chair reports to Approval Committee using the

Approval with Recommendations

The presenting faculty must respond to the recommendations as required by the Panel

Approval withheld – Conditions Imposed

The presenting faculty must respond to the conditions and re-present as required

Approvals Committee

The Approvals Committee notes the Panel's decision and the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Student Services monitors any recommendations and reports to Approval Committee

Useful Internal and External Documents

Available from the College Intranet:

Appendix 1   Process Flowchart 1 (Approval)

Appendix 2   Process Flowchart 2 (Approval Panel)

AP1 _ Application Form 1 Developing new Provision

AP2 _ Replacement Awards, New Unit(s), Minor Amendments to an Existing Award

AP3 _ Request for Re-validation of Lapsed Borders College SCQF Awards

AP4 _ Costing Sheet

AP5 _ Approval Panel Checklist

AP6 _ Site Checklist Form

Equality Impact Assessment

(Rapid impact assessment tool)

What Impacts may there be from this proposal on any group's ability to use the College services?

Policy: Approval Procedure

Positive Impacts (Groups affected)	Negative Impacts (Groups affected)
The procedure sets out the College's approach approving new and revised qualification. The process includes equality impact assessment as part of approval. This helps to ensure that no group with protected characteristics will be unfair treated as a consequence of the introduction of a new or revised qualification.	None
Actions taken to alleviate any negative Impacts: None	
Recommendations:	

From the outcome of the rapid equality impact assessment, have negative impacts been identified for any protected characteristic or any other potentially disadvantaged group?

No

Has a full Equality Impact Assessment been recommended?

Yes   ☐

No   x

Reason for recommendation:

No negative impact

Status: Noted at JCCP
Procedure Dated: November 2019
Author: Director of Business Improvement & Performance
Review Date: November 2021
Equality Impact Assessed: March 2016