



Validation and Approval Policy

November 2024

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Reviewed and no substantial changes required	D Killean	June 2015
1.2	Responsibility for Validation and Approvals is transferred from SMT and CQT to the College Management Team	D Killean	22 May 2017
2.0	Updates to terminology; removal of references to credit rating third party awards	J Robertson	03 June 2020
3.0	Updates on job titles	Lynne Gilchrist	20 October 2022
3.1	Responsibility approvals and validation updated to Assistant Principal for Curriculum and the Director of Enterprise and Business	J George	06 November 2024

1. Introduction

Validation is a process whereby a proposed qualification is checked for relevance, demand, coherence, accessibility and fits with prescribed design rules. The proposed qualification must allow candidates to demonstrate significant and measurable outcomes of value.

The College may choose to validate its own awards or those of a third-party organisation. It will take this course of action only where there is a clear demand for the award, and it is unable to source a qualification from a recognised awarding body to meet the training or educational need.

Where the College is validating an award, it will use the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework to establish the level and credit value of the award.

Approval is a quality assurance process whereby the College or an awarding body approves an organisation to deliver and assess a qualification on their behalf. The purpose of approval is to ensure that, staff qualification and experience, assessment, verification, learning and teaching approaches and resources comply with their quality requirements for the qualification. Some awarding bodies have assessed the quality assurance and enhancement processes of the College and have devolved responsibility for approval to the College on their behalf.

All College programmes leading to a recognised qualification must be approved internally by the College prior to delivery commencing for the first time. The awarding body will also have an external approval process that must be completed where the College does not hold devolved responsibility.

2. Scope

The curricular areas, including the Department of Enterprise & Business Innovation (DEBI), must seek validation of an award if:

- The award is college devised and an SCQF credit rating is required.
- The award is to be validated by the College on behalf of an awarding body (in which case the awarding body design criteria and validation process are followed).

Following successful validation, the curricular area / DEBI unit should seek approval to deliver the award.

The curricular area or DEBI unit must seek approval to deliver an award for the first time when:

- The award leads to a nationally recognised qualification.
- The award is certificated by an awarding body and the College has devolved responsibility for the approval of the award.
- Delivery and assessment of the award is approved by the awarding body and the College has responsibility for assessment and verification thereafter.
- The award is college devised, validated and credit rated.

The curricular area /DEBI unit must also seek approval to deliver when:

- Additional units are to be added to an existing programme where the awarding body has not previously granted approval to the College.
- An existing approved award has been updated with significant changes that have resource and development implications beyond the resources or expertise currently available to the Portfolio Area.

Approval is not required if:

- The programme does not lead to a recognised qualification.
- The award is assessed and verified by the awarding body or its approved agent.
- For additional units which are new to the College programme where the awarding body has previously granted approval to the College.
- Where an awarding body has approved the College to deliver an updated version of a previously approved award and there are no additional resource requirements beyond those available within the Curricular Area / DEBI unit (whether the awarding body requires an assessment declaration or not).

3. Key Principles

Qualifications offered by the College are nationally recognised having been validated by an Awarding Body or through the College's own processes. They have been validated as meeting the design criteria of the particular type of award. Common examples are Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), National Qualifications (NQs, Highers) Higher Nationals (HNC, HND) Awards.

The College may also offer programmes that are locally designed but consist of nationally validated units or courses.

The Awarding Body such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) provides certification in all the above cases.

The College validates locally developed awards using the College's SCQF Credit Rating – Procedures for Creating and Validating Awards and credit rates and levels the award using the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. Certification is through the College in these cases.

The College will quality assure all programmes and approve them prior to delivery commencing for the first time. This approval process is to ensure that the devised programme meet the requirements set out in the awarding body's validated framework. This will include programme entry requirements, structure, delivery, assessment and verification. It also ensures that the necessary resources are available, and staff are suitably qualified and experienced to deliver, assess and verify the award.

Validation and Approval are both two-stage processes, with the proposed award first presented to the College's Quality Approvals Committee (QAC), which can authorise the second stage of both processes.

A validation panel is required in all cases where a Curricular Area / DEBI unit wishes the validation of an award. In the case of approval, the Quality Approval Committee can refer the award to an approvals panel or in some cases approve an award itself.

The validation and approval panel membership varies but will include appropriate internal and external expertise for the proposed award. The panel can recommend validation/approval of an award with or without conditions on behalf of QAC. The final decision to approve an award is made by the Approval Panel and an approvals report is submitted to Strategic Leadership Team. An approval report is presented to Curriculum and Quality Committee on an annual basis.

Some awarding bodies do not devolve authority to centres to approve their awards. In these cases, the College makes application to the awarding body to deliver the award having first completed its own approval procedure and satisfying itself that it is capable of delivering the award successfully. The awarding body will have its own procedures for approving the College as a centre to deliver its award. These normally involve a visit by an expert and/or checks of presented documentation.

4. Responsibilities

The Strategic Leadership Team has responsibility for final approval.

The Quality & Approvals Committee has responsibility for overseeing the process for validation and approval of the College to deliver new awards.

It also has responsibility for the validation and approval process, establishing and managing the work of approvals panels, and reporting to the CQC on validation and approval activity.

The Vice Principal Student Experience is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

The Quality Assurance Co-ordinator is responsible for the operational processes involved with the associated procedures, liaison with the Awarding Bodies, updating the SCQF database and the maintenance of the College's approvals database.

The Assistant Principal for Curriculum and the Director of Enterprise and Business Innovation are responsible for ensuring that all qualifications delivered have been approved and meet the requirements of validation.

The Internal Verifiers are responsible for ensuring that assessment instruments and decisions are valid, accurate, consistent, repeatable and reliable.
Academic Staff are responsible for the learning, teaching and assessment.

5. Related Documents

- SCQF Credit Rating – Procedure for Creating and Validating Awards
- Approval Procedure
- Assessment Policy
- Curricular Development Policy and Procedure
- Internal Verification Policy and Procedure.

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