

Apprenticeship Approval Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. This Policy sets out the School's processes relating to the design, approval and major modification of all apprenticeships delivered by the NFTS as an apprenticeship training provider.
2. A Major Modification is a significant modification of an existing curriculum for an apprenticeship standard e.g. changes to learning outcomes, changes to learning and training, changes to structure, or addition of a new mode of study.
3. A curriculum for an apprenticeship standard that has undergone a significant number of minor modifications since approval will be required to go through this major modifications procedure.

Aims

4. The responsibility for the apprenticeship approval process rests with Management and the Academic Board.
5. The aims of the course approval process are to:
 - Ensure that each proposed new apprenticeship contributes towards the strategic aims and objectives of the School;
 - Ensure that the curriculum is designed to equip apprentices to pass their end-point-assessment;
 - Ensure that the apprentice experience will be of appropriate quality to support the achievement of the required standard;
 - Ensure that the requirements of external bodies such as the ESFA and OfSTED are met or exceeded.

Overview of Process

6. There are four stages to the course approval process:
 - a. **Strategic and Business Case Approval:** scrutiny and approval of the strategic and business case is undertaken by the Director of Curriculum in conjunction with the Senior Management team. (See Appendix A for further guidance about Strategic and Business Case Approval.)
 - b. **Curriculum Development:** design of the curriculum will be led by one or more nominated member(s) of staff and will involve the Quality Assurance Manager, other relevant academic staff, current apprentices, employers and central service departments. External stakeholders such as industry advisers must also be involved. (See Appendix B for further guidance on Course Development.)

- c. **Apprenticeship Approval Event:** this involves a formal meeting of a Panel to scrutinise the curriculum design, and will either recommend the curriculum for approval or refer it back for amendments. (See Appendix C for further guidance on Design Review Panels and meetings.)
- d. **Academic Approval:** the report of the Review Panel and full details of the new apprenticeship curriculum will go to the Academic Board for approval.

Support for proposers of new courses

7. The following support is available to staff in the development of a new course:
 - Guidance and support on the completion of forms and on the requirements of external bodies is available from the Apprenticeship Development Manager, Quality Assurance Manager and the Registrar
 - Support on pedagogic elements of the curriculum can be obtained from the School's Director of Curriculum
 - Support in the development of the business case can be obtained from the Finance Department
 - Specific advice on ensuring an inclusive curriculum can be obtained from Student Support and Wellbeing.
 - Advice on a marketing and recruitment plan is available from the Marketing and External Relations team.

Externality

8. External Advisers play an important role in supporting the School to discharge its responsibility for ensuring that new apprenticeship curriculum meet the expectations of the ESFA and OfSTED, and that the academic quality and standards of proposed curriculum are at least comparable to those in similar apprenticeships offered in the UK. External Advisers act as 'critical friends' by providing informed, independent and impartial judgements, and the School gives serious and active consideration to their comments and advice.
9. External Advisers are nominated by the member of staff proposing the new apprenticeship and appointed by the Director of Curriculum. In order to be appointed, a proposed External Adviser must meet the following criteria:
 - i. Possess appropriate and substantial levels of relevant and recent training and professional experience in relation to the proposed apprenticeship
 - ii. Not be a recent student or member of staff of the School (i.e. five years must have elapsed since their relationship with the School ended)
 - iii. Not be a current or recent (i.e the last five years) external examiner at the School

10. All External Advisers should be provided with the information described in Appendix B.

Timescales

11. **Proposed new apprenticeships should not be advertised prior to their final approval by the Academic Board, unless express permission to do so is given by the Director.** If express permission is given, all marketing material must clearly state that the apprenticeship is offered subject to internal formal approval by the School.
12. After strategic and business case approval has been given to a proposed new apprenticeship, proposers can make a request for permission to advertise a new apprenticeship prior to its final approval with a 'subject to approval' flag. Exceptional reasons need to be given to justify such a request (for example it is made up of predominantly existing modules).
13. All new apprenticeships must have received final approval by the Academic Board in sufficient time to allow for appropriate marketing of and recruitment to the course.
14. Communication to all relevant professional support departments regarding the final approval of the new apprenticeship will be done by the Quality Assurance Manager.

This policy was approved in September 2023

Appendix A- Strategic and Business Case Approval

1. Proposers of new apprenticeships should prepare a strategic rationale for the new apprenticeship, and should set out the key elements of it. If the proposed apprenticeship involves more than one department, then written confirmation of support from the heads of the other departments involved must be obtained.
2. The strategic rationale should demonstrate that:
 - There is a clear and appropriate rationale based on employer needs and reported skills shortages in the sector for the proposed apprenticeship;
 - The proposed apprenticeship will support the achievements of the School's strategic objectives.
3. The business case should demonstrate that the proposed apprenticeships will be viable in relation to its likely recruitment and the resources needed to deliver the apprenticeship (including ensuring that appropriate teaching and learning resources are in place to support the delivery of the proposed apprenticeship).
4. Support on completing the business case is available from the Finance team, and proposers should also consult with Operations and the Production department where appropriate and evidence of this should be included in the business case.
5. The following documentation should be submitted to the School's Director:
 - A completed strategic and business case
 - A completed costing model
 - A clear estimate of projected apprentice numbers supported by a report showing evidence of sustainable market demand
 - A curriculum outline
 - Draft web copy
 - Evidence that appropriate resources are in place to support the delivery of the apprenticeship and provide a high quality learning experience.

Appendix B- Apprenticeship Development

1. A member of staff developing a new apprenticeship should consult with other academic members of staff, the Apprenticeship Development Manager, the Quality Assurance Manager, external stakeholders such as employers, accrediting bodies or placement providers, and current apprentices.
2. Consultation with current apprentices can take place either formally through a survey or a formal meeting, or informally through discussions.
3. The draft apprenticeship handbook should be prepared during the proposed apprenticeship development stage, which must include:
 - the apprenticeship standard as published by IfATE
 - the end-point-assessment as published by IfATE
 - the curriculum structure (including module outlines where relevant)
 - placement details (where relevant)
4. Details of the resource requirements and a statement of the admissions requirements should also be prepared in collaboration with employers, where appropriate.
5. An Apprenticeship Development meeting should be held to consider in detail the proposal for the new apprenticeship before it proceeds to a Apprenticeship Approval Panel. This meeting should be attended by the members of staff developing the apprenticeship, the Apprenticeship Development Manager, the Director of Curriculum, the Registrar and the Quality Assurance Manager.
6. After the Apprenticeship Development meeting has reviewed the proposal and any recommended changes have been made to it, the above documentation should be sent to the Apprenticeship Approval Panel.

Appendix C- Apprenticeship Approval Panel

1. Membership of an Apprenticeship Approval Panel will be:
 - Chair- the School's Director of Curriculum or a head of department appointed by the School's Director of Curriculum
 - At least one academic member of staff from outside the department
 - At least one External Reviewer (the number will depend on the course being proposed)
 - A representative from the student body, who may be an apprentice
 - A representative from the employer or prospective employer
 - The Registrar
 - The Quality Assurance Manager
 - If appropriate, representatives from professional support departments

2. Through its scrutiny of the documentation prepared during apprenticeship development stage, the Panel will consider all aspects of the curriculum design in relation to the following criteria:
 - The appropriate Apprenticeship Standard
 - Any requirements of accrediting or endorsing bodies;
 - The School's academic regulations for apprenticeships;
 - The curriculum is coherent in terms of design, delivery and structure;
 - Consistency with all School regulations and policies, including equality and diversity;
 - The content and level of the curriculum is designed to enable apprentices to achieve the intended apprenticeship standard and is up to date;
 - The course modes of learning and training are designed to enable apprentices to achieve the apprenticeship standard,
 - The course has appropriately considered the employability of students on completion of the apprenticeship;
 - Appropriate resources are in place to support the delivery;

3. The outcome of the Panel meeting will be either a recommendation that:
 - i. The proposed apprenticeship meets the criteria for approval of new apprenticeships, and should be approved;

OR

 - ii. The proposed apprenticeship does not meet the criteria for proposed apprenticeships, and that further work should take place to revise the full proposal for re-submission to the Apprenticeship Approval Panel for consideration (either through a further meeting, through consultation or by Chair's action).

4. The report of the Apprenticeship Approval Panel and its recommendation will be presented to the Academic Board at its next meeting.