

Portfolio Management Procedures (incorporating Programme Initiation and Programme Withdrawal)

POLICY SCHEDULE	
Policy title	Portfolio Management Procedures
Policy owner	Quality and Standards (Academic Registry)
Policy lead contact	Academic Portfolio Manager
Approving body	Academic Strategy and Planning Committee
Date of initial approval	May 2024
Version no.	1
Date of implementation for this version	September 2024
Related Guidelines, Procedures, Codes of Practice etc.	Validation Procedures Guide to Minor Modification and Awards Panel
Review interval	Three yearly basis. Next planned review Spring 2027.

1. Background and Context

The University's Academic Strategy sets out the University's intent to:

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‘strengthen and develop further the academic core of our university by broadening and diversifying our disciplinary offer to meet regional, national and international needs and priorities. Our approach will ensure the portfolio continues to evolve to meet the needs of (i) our students - to enable entry to, and success in, their future careers and (ii) key sectors and employers - in particular addressing the workforce and sector needs of Cumbria, and from this beyond.’

Effective portfolio management is key to ensuring that we can achieve our ambitions and ensure that our academic portfolio meets the needs of our students, employers and other stakeholders. These Procedures have been designed to support the implementation of the Academic Strategy and to operate effectively and efficiently. They have been informed by the work of the 2024 Size and Shape Project, ensuring that minimum threshold numbers are built into portfolio management procedures (these being embedded in the Programme Initiation templates).

2. Purpose

This document outlines the University’s approach to Portfolio Management. It covers:

- The role of the (new) Programme Approval Group (PAG)
- Programme Initiation procedures
- Programme Withdrawal procedures
- Programme Suspension procedures

3. Scope

This policy applies to all credit-bearing programmes offered by the University, including those delivered by collaborative partners.

4. Portfolio Approval Group

The authority to approve the development of new programmes or to withdraw or suspend programmes, resides with the University’s Portfolio Approval Group (PAG), a sub-group of Academic Strategy and Planning Committee.

The Portfolio Approval Group is responsible for:

- Managing the University’s portfolio, and portfolio planning developments in line with agreed academic planning cycles
- Understanding the direction of travel of portfolio developments across academic institutes
- The consideration and approval of Programme Initiation proposals (Stage 1 and Stage 2 elements – see Section 2 of this document)
- The consideration and approval of Programme Suspensions and Programme Withdrawals

The PAG Schedule of Business is designed to ensure that proposals submitted to PAG can be dealt with in an effective and timely way that:

- Optimises marketing opportunities in order to maximise student recruitment;
- Ensures that applicants are able to make informed decisions;
- Ensures that the University continues to be compliant with consumer legislation;
- Supports the AOP process, through enabling effective planning and resource allocation;

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- Supports compliance with the Office for Students’ Conditions of Registration, specifically B2:

“The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure:

a. each cohort of students registered on each higher education course receives resources and support which are sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

- i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and*
- ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education; and*

b. effective engagement with each cohort of students which is sufficient for the purpose of ensuring:

- i. a high quality academic experience for those students; and*
- ii. those students succeed in and beyond higher education.”*

4.1 Membership

PVC Growth and Development (Chair)
 Dean/Director of Institutes (or nominee)
 Deputy Academic Registrar
 Director of Centre for Digital Transformation
 Academic Planning Manager (Data Insights Team)
 Academic Portfolio Manager (Committee Officer)

The following will be invited to provide expert input:

Director of Marketing and Recruitment
 Data Insights Senior Analyst
 Finance Manager

Quoracy

Normal quoracy requirements will apply (50%+1)

4.2 Schedule of Business

The PAG will meet 6 times a year, with papers submitted to the Officer at least 7 working days prior to the meeting.

Each PAG meeting will consider proposals for Programme Initiation (Stage 1 Approval in Principle and Stage 2 Market and Financial Analysis), any Programmes Withdrawals and Programmes Suspensions, in line with the deadlines set out in the schedule of business.

The PAG Schedule will be communicated annually to Institutes and published on the Portfolio & Programme Development SharePoint page, to inform Institute planning.

After each PAG meeting:

- Confirmed outcomes will be communicated to relevant stakeholders
- Approved Stage 1 documentation will be sent to Finance, Marketing and Recruitment, International Recruitment, and Data Insights in order for Stage 2 to be progressed and completed in time for the next PAG
- Approved Stage 2 documentation will be communicated to enable Data Collection to be completed within the prescribed period

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- Notes / action points from each meeting will be reported to the next Academic Strategy and Planning Committee meeting.

5. Programme Initiation

Programme approval is a two stage approval process (followed by data collection) which ensures that proposals to develop new provision:

- represent a strategic fit for the University
- align to the University's expectations and quality assurance requirements
- evidence a clear market, or supplier demand
- demonstrate that the programmes to be developed will provide a high quality student experience and an attractive student value proposition
- are financially viable
- will be effectively resourced

Programme initiation is required for any University award of 60 credits or more. Awards of 60 credits or less can be approved through the Minor Modification and Awards Panel, through a streamlined process, a Minor Modification PI form will be required to be completed, but the new programme will not be required to go through the PAG meetings for approval.

Programmes being reviewed either through Periodic Review or Revalidation will not normally require Programme Initiation. The processes of Periodic Review and Revalidation, and preparation for this, involve reflection on the operation of the course including demand, student satisfaction, numbers and viability.

The Programme Initiation template is published on the Portfolio & Programme Development SharePoint page. A log will be maintained by the Academic Portfolio Manager to enable Institutes and stakeholders to see the status of any proposals in progress.

5.1 Summary of the Process (see Annex 1 for flowchart)

Initial Development

The proposal lead should first consult with the Institute Senior Leadership Team to ensure that endorsement is sought.

Stage 1 Proposal

Following endorsement from the Institute's senior leadership team, the development team may submit their Stage 1 form in line with the PAG Schedule of Business. The Stage 1 form represents a high level outline proposal, expected to be 2-3 pages, identifying the key features, rationale and the proposer's assessment of demand for the proposal. The Stage 1 form will be scrutinised by the PAG to ensure that proposals only proceed where a demand or need has been identified, where the proposal represents an attractive offer to applicants or businesses/stakeholders and it aligns to the University's strategic intent.

The PAG will consider the Stage 1 proposal. If approval is given, the Institute may proceed to Stage 2. The PAG officer will provide a set of 'next steps' instructions to the development team at this stage.

Stage 2 Proposal

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The Stage 2 process is conducted by Professional Services in consultation with the academic team, it contains both Data Insights/Marketing and Finance analysis, alongside insights from International and Admissions. The completion of this stage can take up to a month.

The Stage 2 form will be scrutinised by the PAG to ensure that there is substantiated evidence of market and that the programme is financially viable. If approval is given then programme Data Collection will need to be completed to enable the programme to be advertised in the prospectus and online as 'subject to validation' and other early set up can be completed.

The programme will then proceed to Validation Process. A Quality Officer will contact the proposal lead to arrange a validation event. Normally half a day event per programme, with internal and external scrutiny, successful validation concludes the new programme proposal process and the 'subject to validation' tag is removed. Note: A validation event is expected to take place within nine (9) months of Stage 2 approval being granted. If longer than nine (9) months passes after stage 2 approval, PAG approval expires, and the programme can no longer proceed to validation.

5.2 Key Timescales

Undergraduate programme proposals should have PAG Stage 2 approval by the end of September, twenty-four (24) months prior to planned commencement e.g. PAG Stage 2 approval by September 2024 for entry in September 2026.

Taught postgraduate programme proposals should have PAG Stage 2 approval by the end of May sixteen (16) months prior to planned commencement e.g. PAG Stage 2 approval by May 2024 for entry in September 2025.

Apprenticeships/substantive CPD programme proposals should have PAG Stage 2 approval no later than twelve (12) months prior to planned commencement e.g. PAG Stage 2 approval by September 2024 for entry in September 2025.

Proposals for UG programmes must be approved before the release of the print and online prospectuses in which it would be published e.g. all new UG programmes, suspensions, withdrawals etc, must be approved by September 2024 before the AY2026/27 prospectus is published in November 2024.

NOTE: Awards of 60 credits or less may be approved through the Minor Modification process, not requiring full Programme Initiation Process (a Minor Modification PI collection form will be required and institute endorsement) data collection and institute endorsement collected through the MM process)

5.3 Fast-Track Proposals for New Programme Developments

In exceptional circumstances there will be permitted exceptions to the schedule which may arise outside the usual planning cycle; these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Reasons may include:

- A specific requirement of an accrediting body and/or employer
- The focus of an external contract or tender
- Where a programme is considered to be of strategic importance to the University

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These proposals will be considered under the 'fast-track' process. Fast-tracking will enable a new programme proposal to combine stage 1 and stage 2 of the PI process.

A request for a new programme proposal to be considered for fast-track approval should be submitted to the PAG officer. The request should include Stage 1 details completed, including within the rationale section for why fast-track approval is being sought. The process of fast-tracking will be initiated as follows:

- a. The PAG officer will submit the proposal to the Chair of PAG for review.
- b. If approved by the Chair, the proposal will be permitted to enter the process directly at PAG Stage 2 (by Chair's Action).
- c. The proposing team will then be expected to work with Professional Services to produce PAG Stage 2 proposal
- d. The Stage 2 proposal will be considered by PAG within a standard PAG meeting
- e. If approved by PAG, the proposal will proceed to validation

Note that the latest that a programme may be validated before its first entry point is normally 3 months before enrolment, e.g. the end of June for a September entry.

6. Programme Withdrawals and Suspensions

Requests for programme withdrawals and suspensions must be approved by the PAG. The University's Withdrawal and Suspension templates ensure that due consideration is given to:

- Impact on learners and students
- Consumer Protection Law and CMA Guidance
- Any activity requiring reporting to UCAS or Notification to the Office for Students
- The University's obligations under its Student Protection Plan

A request to withdraw a programme should be made to the first possible meeting of PAG. Institutes should submit the Withdrawal/Suspension proposal to the PAG officer, at least 7 working days prior to the Committee meeting. The PAG will determine whether the withdrawal/suspension is in the University's interests.

Note: Institutes should consult Admissions to discuss the likely impact of any proposal to withdraw or suspend a programme.

Withdrawal of an undergraduate programme in the middle of an applications cycle should be by exception, therefore, institutes should normally propose withdrawals for the first appropriate year unaffected by the current application cycle. (Any suspensions or withdrawal decisions made after offers have been accepted on courses may, in certain circumstances, require reporting to the regulator the Office for Students,)

The Programme Withdrawal and Suspension templates are published on the Portfolio & Programme Development SharePoint page.

6.1 Key Timescales

Planned Withdrawals and Suspensions should have PAG approval by the end of September twenty-four (24) months prior to the withdrawal or suspension coming into effect e.g. PAG approval by September 2024 for no intake in September 2026

6.2 Submissions for Withdrawal and Suspension outwith the Standard Schedule

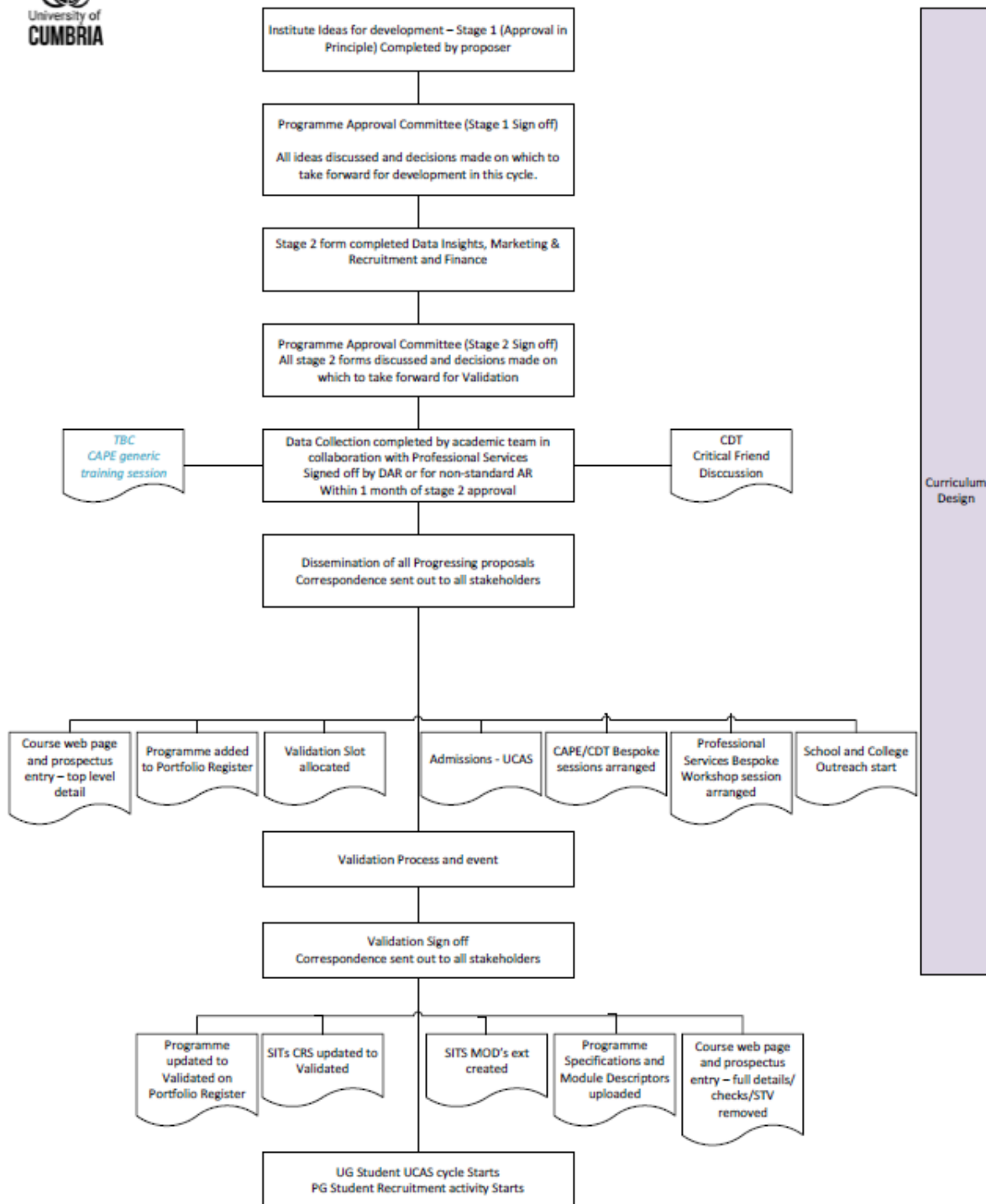
In exceptional circumstances, programme suspensions or withdrawals may be submitted to and considered by PAC outside the standard PAC schedule. Requests for late proposals to be considered outside the published PAC schedule may be considered where a proposal meets one of the following criteria:

- Recruitment figures are very poor, and there is a risk that the resulting student experience will be unsatisfactory.
- Inability to deliver the programme as intended (e.g. exceptional staffing/resource matters)

Where a proposal is received outside of the published PAG Schedule, the proposal should be sent to the PAG officer along with a brief rationale explaining the proposal and the reason why it should be considered out of cycle. The process will be as follows:

- a. The PAG officer will submit the proposal to the Chair of PAG for review.
- b. If approved by the Chair, the proposal will be permitted to be submitted to the next available PAG meeting (outwith the normal Schedule of Business).
- c. If not approved by the Chair, the course team will be asked to submit an updated proposal, to come into effect the following academic year.

Annex 1 – Programme Initiation Flowchart



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