

Requirements for developing and actioning DAG outcomes

1. Approval decisions

- 1.1 A Development and Approval Group (DAG) outcome constitutes one of the following:
 - a. unconditional and indefinite approval (with or without recommendations);
 - b. indefinite approval with conditions;
 - c. limited (fixed-term) approval (collaborative courses will always be time-limited to a maximum of three years – see Quality Handbook (QH) Section 10);
 - d. a decision to require further course planning before reconsideration for approval;
 - e. rejection of the proposal.
- 1.2 An approval decision can be accompanied by any or all of the following:
 - a. conditions;
 - b. recommendations;
 - c. commendations.
- 1.3 There are no other formal outcome categories. However, the main body of the DAG report can contain observations or suggestions that provide pointers for future enhancements. These do not require specific action on the part of the course team or School Academic Standards and Quality Committee (SASQC).
- 1.4 There are also standard requirements that apply to all approval events and which are used to capture technical conditions such as ensuring the course documentation is current and accurate (see para. 5.1).

2. Conditions

- 2.1 DAG approval is a peer judgement that a course satisfies the University's expectations, at a threshold level, for the particular award(s) to which it is intended to lead. A condition should only be imposed where that judgement cannot otherwise be exercised because an aspect of course design, operation or management has been inadequately developed. **The course is not approved until the course team has satisfied the condition(s) and students must not be enrolled.**

- 2.2 Conditions, therefore, describe actions that need to be put into place to ensure an appropriate student experience which will enable students to achieve the appropriate standards. A DAG may also conclude that aspects of the course or module specifications (or associated documents) require 'technical' correction or further drafting in order that the course is adequately described and meets University requirements. In such cases, a deadline for re-submission of that documentation is included in the standard requirements category of the DAG report rather than articulated as a condition of approval.
- 2.3 A DAG does not have the authority to alter the proposed course title or to require a change of course title as a condition of approval. However, a DAG may make conditions or recommendations on changes to the course content to match the proposed course title.
- 2.4 Chairs should not feel reluctant to express requirements as conditions because an event has gone well; essential requirements may not be unduly difficult for the course team to meet.
- 2.5 Deadlines for meeting conditions should always be specified and the mechanism for considering the response agreed by the DAG, e.g. consideration by the Chair, Centre for Academic Development and Quality (CADQ) or by the full DAG. The importance of meeting the conditions by the deadlines should be emphasised. If they are not met by the due date, the course is not approved and students cannot be enrolled. Specific changes to documentation required by a DAG and articulated in the standard requirements category of the DAG report also require a decision by the DAG about when and how these should be completed and agreed.
- 2.6 Where approval is dependent on a large number of substantive conditions, a DAG should re-consider whether it should be recommending approval. It may be appropriate in this situation to require the course team to undertake further design work before consideration at a later approval meeting.
- 2.7 Conditions that make the approval of the course dependent on the provision of resources should be avoided. Courses come forward for approval on the basis that the resources necessary for them to operate are available and are 'signed off' by the School and College (and University where appropriate) as part of the appropriate Business Evaluation process. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) (which ratifies DAG outcomes) has no authority to agree resources. It may be possible for a condition to, for example, limit the number of students the course can take with the resources available. The need for the approval of the course itself to be conditional on the provision of resources should not arise. The exception to this is collaborative provision, where a centre is required to ensure that learning resources are in place before a course may commence.
- 2.8 The provision or submission of a course handbook for students should not be articulated as a condition of approval since this is a standing requirement for all the University's courses. However, it is legitimate for the DAG to require the course handbook to be used as a vehicle to clarify issues raised at the approval event relating to information provided to students. This requirement may be expressed as a condition if such clarification is critical in order for the DAG panel to confirm its approval decision, or, alternatively, may be requested as part of a Standard Requirement if it is of a technical nature.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Recommendations are not sufficiently serious to affect or qualify the approval decision but do express advisable or desirable improvements that should be addressed by the course team. Consideration of the recommendations by the course team is obligatory but not necessarily in advance of the course start.
- 3.2 Recommendations should be tangible and designed to directly enhance the course and the student learning experience. They should be clearly articulated so as to be capable of consideration, reflection and report on the part of the course team.
- 3.3 SASQCs are responsible for monitoring and tracking DAG recommendations, via interim, periodic review, or an alternative mechanism.
- 3.4 As noted in para. 1.3, the main body of a DAG report may contain more aspirational pointers to future enhancements or developments, but these should not be expressed as recommendations.

Explanatory note

- Care should be taken not to express concerns as recommendations when in reality they are conditions e.g. the term *strong recommendation* is not valid as this is perceived as a 'hidden' condition.

4. Commendations

- 4.1 A commendation must only be formulated if it relates to an exemplary and transferable aspect of course planning, design, operation or management.
- 4.2 Aspects of course design, operation or management that demonstrate good professional practice will not be expressed as commendations but can be highlighted in the main body of the DAG report.
- 4.3 Commendations will form part of a synopsis produced by CADQ annually.

Explanatory note

- A course team should not be commended (in the technical use of that term) on the quality of the course documentation or its commitment to the proposal unless there are exemplary and tangible aspects that have transferable value across the University. However, a DAG chair (and the DAG report) may draw attention to such aspects as part of their verbal 'summing up' at the conclusion of the event.

5. Standard requirements

- 5.1 Standard requirements attached to all course approvals are as follows:

- a. that the course operational document and course specification(s) (including appendices) are checked for accuracy and currency after the DAG process and submitted to CADQ before the course commences; thereafter the course specification(s) must remain accurate and current and approved changes submitted to CADQ for appropriate uploading;
- b. that the module specifications are checked for accuracy and currency after the DAG process and submitted to CADQ before the course commences; thereafter the module specifications must remain accurate and current;
- c. the nomination (or continuing nomination) of an external examiner(s);
- d. that course handbook information is made available to students and kept accurate and current;
- e. that current students are made aware of any effects these approval or review outcomes may have on their course of study, that they are inducted into the new or revised course(s), and that the course handbook reflects any changes made subsequent to this approval or review;
- f. that the College Marketing team have been consulted about notifying students holding an offer in time for them to alter their decision;
- g. that the course team(s) continues to refine its expression of course or module outcomes as practice develops;
- h. Additionally, where the proposal is collaborative:
 - that a Collaborative Agreement is signed by all parties and a copy lodged with CADQ before students are enrolled (if approval relates to a new, substantially revised or re-approved collaborative arrangement);
 - that a verifier or course coordinator is (or continues to be) appointed (as determined by the nature of the collaboration).

Explanatory note

- The responsibility for ensuring that the final post-DAG documentation is accurate and transparent resides with the course team. CADQ will undertake one final check of the documentation when it is received (with the involvement of DAG members as appropriate). CADQ will refer any further points back to the course team. If the re-submitted documents retain inaccuracies or poor drafting, CADQ will refer these to the Dean of School for resolution before the course specification is published online.

Policy owner
CADQ

Change history			
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Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	Additional Standard Requirement added Reference to Strategic Plan and Curriculum Refresh Framework
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Equality Impact Assessment		
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