Program Approval
(Training to be an Internal Quality Reviewer)

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Deanship of Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation
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STANDARDS

APPROVED
Reminder of Ground Rules

- Attendance and punctuality
- Respect for opinions
- Engagement (mobiles, laptops!)
- Openness
- Willingness to learn
- Support
- Feedback
- And
- Confidentiality...
Confidentiality

During the course of training participants may share confidential, sensitive or personal information; this should not be passed outside the training room, unless express permission of the relevant participant or trainer is given to do so.
Workshop approach:
model good learning conditions

We shall...

• Encourage active learning, interaction and discussion
• Encourage higher level and critical thinking
• Provide a clear structure, linking the parts together
• Provide variety and pace to maintain your interest and motivation
• Try to assess your engagement as we go along, to check whether we need to change our approach
Workshop approach:
adopt good learning behaviour

You should...

• Respond during the presentations and work hard during the practical exercises

• (So please turn off your mobile phones now...)

• Learn from each other as well as from us
• Try out the ideas after you leave
Learning Outcomes

Be able to plan and use the QMS defined approval processes to achieve a successful program approval.
Program Approval

Why bother?
Exercise 1

- Consider Handout 1. These are copies of famous logos. Can you identify each of them?

- Write down the company or organization of the logo owner in the space provided on handout 1.
Program Approval

The foundation of effective quality assurance
Securing Standards
Exercise 2

• What are the current difficulties that KFU faces in meeting this approach to securing standards?
Program Approval

Overview of NCAAA and KFU requirements

Requirements
Life Cycle of a Program

DEVELOPMENT
APPROVAL
Withdrawal?
REVIEW
MONITORING
PLANNING
DEVELOPMENT
APPROVAL
Withdrawal?
REVIEW
MONITORING
PLANNING
Life cycle

Five yearly Review

Annual Monitoring

Periodic Review

Environment Scan → Define/Review Mission/Goals

Set Objectives

Develop Plan

Implement Plan

Action Plan

Review Performance

Monitor Results

Yearly

Performance Review

Five yearly Review

Annual Monitoring

Periodic Review
Importance of a Program Approval (1)

If carried out properly and attentively, program approval:

• Sets the academic standards for the program
• Establishes safeguards for academic quality
• Ensures that programs meet national and University requirements and therefore international expectations.
Importance of a Program Approval (2)

Get it right at the beginning and you save a lot of trouble later!

Leads to:

• better experience for students;
• building university and staff reputations; and
• NCAAA accreditation
Purpose of Program Approval Process

• To assess whether:
• The program is aligned to the requirements of the Ministry of Education and NCAAA;
• The proposal is consistent with the University’s Mission and strategic direction
• There is market demand and evidence of external consultation with industry/professional bodies;
• The program is at the appropriate standard for the award and aligned to the NQF;
• The program is up to date and includes current knowledge and skills; and
• The resource base including staffing is adequate.
Committee Structure Undergraduate Program Planning and Approval

- Program Design Team
- Departmental Council
- College Council
- College Study Plans And Curriculum Committee
- Standing Committee - Study Plans and Curricula (SC-SPC)
- University Council

Program Approval Panel
Essential reference documents are:

• NCAAAA Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation for Higher Education Institutions
• The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
• QMS Handbook
• Program Development B.1.4
  • Externality B1.4.5
  • Documentation requirements B.1.4.6

• Program Approval B.2
Program Approval

Part 2 of the Handbook for the Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions

(page 71-90)
NCAAA Standards (1)

1. Mission Goals and Objectives
2. Program Administration
3. Management of Program Quality Assurance
4. Learning and Teaching
5. Student Administration and Support Services
6. Learning Resources
NCAAA Standards (2)

7. Facilities and Equipment
8. Financial Planning and Management
9. Employment Processes
10. Research
11. Relationships With the Community
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
Exercise 3

• Consider Handout 2. This is a quiz on some of the key features in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

• Work in your group around the table answering the questions.

• You have 10 minutes to complete this task. Then we will have a short plenary session.
Principal Elements

- Levels
- Credits
- Domains of Learning
Levels:

Levels numbered and linked to qualification titles used to describe the increasing intellectual demand and complexity of learning expected as students progress to higher academic awards.
Credits:

- Allocated to describe the amount of work or volume of learning expected for an academic award or units or other components of a program.

- The number of credit hours assigned to a course or a program is an indication of the amount of learning expected.
15 credit hours - the amount of teaching and instruction normally expected for a full time student at undergraduate levels in a semester (30 credit hours in an academic year)
NQF (5)

For the purposes of this qualifications framework and the accreditation and quality reviews conducted by the NCAAA, 18 credit hours is the maximum that can be recognized for studies in any one semester.
Documents for an Approval Event
QMS B.1.4.6

- Introduction about the College and Department.
- Introduction and Rationale for the proposed program.
- Additional required resources
- Refereeing of the proposal
- Complete program and course specifications using NCAAA templates
Approval Rationale

• The proposal is consistent with the University’s mission and strategic plan and those of the relevant college, particularly the community engagement contribution
• There is demand for the program as indicated by market intelligence
• The program is at the appropriate standard for the level of award(s) involved
• The program is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the subject
• The program and courses specifications have been thoroughly thought out and completed
• There is documented evidence of consultation with interested bodies/persons from outside the University
• The program prepares students for the world of work
• The program meets the appropriate criteria/regulations of the Ministry of Education and the NCAAA
• The resource base, including staffing, will be in place to run the program.
Exercise 4

• Consider that you are the member of a program approval panel. You have received the full set of documentation in advance (for the purposes of this exercise just the program specification is provided).

• Discuss as a group (acting as the approval team) what are the emerging issues. How would you explore those issues?
Typical Composition of a Program Approval Panel

- Chair is typically a senior member of faculty from another College (Vice Dean, Head of Department)
- External experts in the subject area under consideration. The balance of one expert from academia and one from commerce/industry typically provides a beneficial input
- Internal experts, typically one from another college and one from within the same college but a different department.
- Quality Officer from DQAAA
- Secretarial services provided by the College’s Quality Assurance Administrator
Some Skills

- Reading and analysing documentation
- Critical evaluation
- Comparing a strategy with action plan and progress reporting
- Meeting skills
- Recording observations
Chairing Meetings

The Chair and how he approaches the role are key factors in the effectiveness of meetings

- establishes an atmosphere where opinions are sought and contributions are valued
- discuss with the secretariat time limits for the meeting as a whole and for individual agenda items
- manage discussions so that the objectives of the meetings are met and that items on the agenda are given due attention
- must be well briefed about each agenda item and the relevant policies and procedures
Training

- For the secretariat
- For chairs
- For approval and review panel members
- Briefing for external experts
### Lead Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Lead person or likely source of evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The proposal is consistent with the university’s mission and strategic plan and those of the relevant college, particularly the community engagement contribution</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is demand for the program as indicated by market intelligence</td>
<td>Evidence of consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The program is at the appropriate standard for the level of award(s) involved</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The program is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the subject</td>
<td>External expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The program and courses specifications have been thoroughly thought out and completed</td>
<td>Internal experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is documented evidence of consultation with interested bodies/persons from outside the University</td>
<td>Evidence of consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The program prepares students for the world of work</td>
<td>External experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The program meets the appropriate criteria/regulations of the Ministry of Higher Education and the NCAA</td>
<td>DQAAA Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The resource base, including staffing, will be in place to run the program.</td>
<td>Evidence supporting proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program title...is it appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Agreed or alternative suggested</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program aims and learning outcomes clear?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course specifications are complete with clear learning outcomes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course learning outcomes achieve the program ILOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>All learning outcomes are at appropriate level?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear contribution to the community engagement goals of the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of program clear?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear learning and teaching strategy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear assessment strategy and assessment criteria with appropriate balance in variety of approaches?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate levels of student support available?</td>
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<td>Clear admissions and progression policy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision for access of students with range of specific needs if appropriate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods available for student input, feedback and representation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff and physical resource proposals appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Handbook of appropriate content in place?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sources of Information

- documentation
- tours
- meetings with faculty and students
- paper trails/samples
- management information including KPIs

Triangulation
Handling Documents

• know what you are expecting to receive
• check that it is all there
• how are you going to manage the reading?
• record keeping
The Approval Event Format

- Private meeting of the Panel
- Tour of facilities
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with Senior Staff of the College
- Meeting with the program team
  - educational aims, curricula, subject development, and academic standards.
  - quality of learning opportunities
  - enhancement activities, good practice
- Private Panel Meeting
- Final clarification meeting with staff to identify and discuss any outstanding issues
- Outline report on the Panel’s findings
Panel Preparation for Program Approval Meeting

• Identify any missing or incomplete information and identify any good practice or issues you would like to ask questions about at the approval event

• Asking questions in an event
  • Asking the program development team questions is an integral part of the approval event
  • Use both open and closed questions in an event
  • Is the answer sufficient to deal with the point – are you reassured?
Effective Meetings

- protocols
- techniques
- etiquette
In Meetings...

• listen as well as ask
• concentrate on major issues
• participate in a collaborative manner
• be aware of dynamics
• put interviewees at ease
• use a variety of questioning styles
Agreeing Questions for the event

- Remember the purposes of approval
- What do you really need to know and why?
- The agenda – what should be covered?
- How will you be able to ask about subjects outside your academic knowledge?
Asking Questions In An Event

Discussion of the proposal with the program team in a collegial fashion is an important element of effective program approval.
Quality Assurance Question

• what are we trying to do?
• why are we doing it?
• how are we doing it?
• why is that the best way to do it?
• how do we know it works?
• how can we improve it?
Asking Questions

- open-ended
- exploratory
- probing
- closed
- confirmatory
Avoid

- asking multiple questions
- using a long preamble to questions
- telling anecdotes or making speeches
After Meeting...

- note down what you have learnt from the discussion
- consider where the meeting has taken you - what you now know and what you still need to know
- decide how you will fill in any gaps
Panel Decisions

• Approval
• Approval with Conditions and/or Recommendations
• Rejection

And do not forget....
• Features of good practice
Recommendation

The PAP may make recommendations which identify action(s) which, if implemented by the Program Design Team, should lead to enhancement of the proposal. A recommendation of the PAP has advisory status only but must be considered by the program design team and a report subsequently prepared and presented to the PAP outlining the response of the program design team.
A *condition* is a stipulation from the PAP which must be met before subsequent approval may be granted. They express the essential minimum requirements necessary before a program can be allowed to operate. Deadlines for meeting *conditions* should always be given and they should be clearly described so the program design team know exactly what is required of them.
Exercise 5

• You are the approval panel for the event considering the program specification and course specifications supplied as part of the workshop material.

• Agree which roles each of you will take as part of the review panel.

• You are going to meet the Dean of the College proposing this program. Agree the set of questions you plan to ask.
Exercise 6

You meet with the Dean of the College as one of scheduled meetings in the College.

Conduct the interview with the Dean using the questions you prepared in Exercise 5.

This meeting may last no more than 20 minutes.
Exercise 7

- During the tour of facilities for this program approval, an instructor in the computer laboratories informs the review panel that all the college computer labs are currently at full capacity, and there is no space available for extra programs (and their courses) in the timetable for laboratories.

- What should the panel do?
• Work as a team to agree and draft any initial outcomes that are emerging from the approval event so far.

• You have 10 minutes to complete this task. Please write your points on the sheet of flip chart paper provided.
An action plan must be realistic and allocate a role and responsibility to a real person and there must be suitable resources to enable the actions to be carried forward.
Role of Committees and Offices –
A Reminder

- People not committees carry out actions
- If there are no actions written and no actions carried out then program approval is a waste of time.
Follow-up

- closing the loop
- action plans
- who checks that recommendations are taken seriously?
- who checks whether it has made a difference?
Exercise 9

• At the approval event you set a number of conditions and recommendations to be met before the program could be forwarded to the next stage.

• The program leader (who is a personal friend) phones to say that the issues have been ‘picked up’ and asks that the panel now sign to agree that the program receives approval at this stage.

• What should you do?
Top Tips for Looking After Yourself

- allow enough time to prepare
- dealing with the day job
- staying independent/objective
- time for reflection
- cautious scepticism
- confidentiality
- remember the purpose of the activity
‘What can be asserted without proof can be dismissed without proof’
Christopher Hitchens, author and journalist (b.1949)
Example of issues that can arise!

- The documentation for an approval event arrive on your desk a week before the approval event is scheduled to take place, but are not complete. What should you do?
Exercise 11

• Example of an issue that can arise!
  • There is no planned external member of the approval panel proposed, and when the documentation arrives from the College, there is no evidence of any external consultation having taken place. What should you do?