

Central Film School

2025-26

Central Film School

Programme Design & Approval Process

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The approval and ongoing review of modules and programmes is one of the principal mechanisms through which the School secures academic standards and ensures the quality of learning opportunities within our programmes of study.
- 1.2. Central Film School's approach to programme design is governed by the below principles:
 - Programmes are designed not in isolation but in active partnership with the industry to ensure they remain relevant to current standards.
 - The curriculum is benchmarked against sector expectations regarding academic attainment and employability to ensure graduates are industry-ready.
 - Programme design is student focused, with a specific focus on deploying an inclusive pedagogy, particularly regarding how assessments are structured, aiming to amplify under-represented voices within the screen industries.

- Learning, teaching, and assessment strategies are specifically designed to support the inclusion and successful outcomes of diverse student groups.
 - Curriculums are developed to promote sustainability in teaching, learning and assessment
- 1.3. Responsibility for approving the School's taught academic programmes sits with the Academic Board, with the New Programme Development Board leading on programme development.
- 1.4. Proposals for new programmes or modifications should meet the below baseline criteria:
- The programme or modification complies with the Academic Regulations
 - Proposal documentation is clear to all stakeholders, including students.
 - There is clear evidence of appropriate stakeholder engagement in the development of the programme including:
 - Academic and Professional Staff
 - Students
 - External expertise including industry professionals and external examiners
 - Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies where relevant
 - The Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes are relevant to the proposed title of the named target and intermediate exit awards.
 - Learning Outcomes are explicitly specified at each relevant academic level where exit awards are available at the completion of each level.
 - The Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes align to the relevant external benchmarks including (but not limited to):

- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements
 - Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications
 - Relevant industry practice
- The entry requirements and admission arrangements are in line with the School's Admissions Policy, and are appropriate to the award.
 - The collective expertise of the academic team is appropriate for the programme provision, including an understanding of the differing demands of the different modes of study being proposed.
 - The academic team has the appropriate level of learning and teaching qualifications and expertise to deliver the programme.
- 1.5. The School's validation, modification, and periodic review processes seek to assure the continuing appropriateness of the existing programmes.

2. Categories of Validation Approval

- 2.1. **Validation** – Validation is the process used to describe the approval of new substantive programmes.
- 2.2. **Revalidation** - Revalidation is the mechanism for the continuing approval of existing programmes (every 5 years) or programmes which are seeking to make substantial changes or major modifications. Early revalidations may also be triggered if serious concerns are raised regarding student satisfaction (e.g. NSS scores), retention data, external examiner feedback or significant changes to the industry that affect programme delivery.
- 2.3. **Module Modifications** – Module Modification is the process by which validated programmes and/or modules can be changed during their validated period. Such changes could involve changes to programme content, structure or other delivery arrangements.

3. Planning

- 3.1. There are three stages to any programme seeking validation or revalidation. In the planning stage, the proposal should conduct initial research including a needs assessment and initial consultations with primary stakeholders:

- identify market demand, industry trends, and potential niches for new programmes.
 - conducting surveys, interviews, and market research to understand the needs and preferences of prospective students and employers.
 - The initial proposal should also consider the criteria listed in the Introduction section of this document.
- 3.2. Where a new programme is being proposed, a New Programme Proposal Form will need to be completed and submitted to the Quality & Registry Committee for review and then tabled and approved at the Academic Board. During review, the Academic Board may suggest recommendations for the Learning & Teaching Committee to consider.
 - 3.3. If the proposal is approved at Academic Board, a Business Case, which provides more detailed information and analysis for the new programme, will need to be completed and submitted to the Quality & Registry Committee for review and then tabled and approved at the Academic Board.
 - 3.4. The purpose of this is to formulate a detailed case outlining the rationale, objectives, target audience, curriculum framework, resources required, and anticipated outcomes of the new programme. Where appropriate, this proposal should also be tabled at other management committees, such as the Student Experience Committee and Production & Resources Committee, to assess needs/mitigations from, for example, a student wellbeing or equipment requirement perspective.
 - 3.5. The proposal should also be aligned with the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the School and the principles listed in the introduction of this document.
 - 3.6. After Academic Board approval, the next steps are detailed below under the 'Stages and Responsibilities' heading.
 - 3.7. Once a new proposal has been approved by the Academic Board, the Marketing & Communications Committee and the Recruitment & Admissions Committee will launch the marketing and recruitment for the

new programme with the explicit statement that this is subject to validation.

3.8. The Committees will ensure that prospective students have access to a minimum level of information at each relevant application stage. Material information must include as a minimum:

- award
- course location
- course duration
- core modules and likely options
- overall approach to assessment
- overall approach to learning and teaching including the mode of delivery (face to face or online or blended) and the balance of contact time and independent learning
- accreditation (where applicable)
- fees and additional costs

3.9. The Committees will ensure that they have sufficient approved and accurate information to advertise as prospective students will be making comparisons between institutions.

3.10. The School will not normally make changes to a course late in the applicant cycle as applicants will be tied into an offer. If material changes are proposed to the course specification, it may be necessary to seek consent from affected applicants to make a change as we may be changing the basis on which they accepted an offer of a place at the School.

4. Curriculum Design

4.1. After the initial proposal has been approved by the Academic Board and the draft programme documents have been finalised, the Lead Developer and New Programme Development Board, should aim to develop the proposed programme or modification.

4.2. This development should include the consideration and planning of:

- **Industry Skills and Knowledge** - Programmes are designed in active partnership with the industry to ensure currency relevance.
 - **Resource Allocation** - the human, financial, and physical resources needed to support the new programme including budgets, recruitment and training.
 - **Infrastructure and Facilities** - ensure that the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and equipment are available to support instruction, research, and student projects and coordinate with the Operations team to address any infrastructure needs or upgrades.
 - **Admissions** - establish admission criteria, application procedures, deadlines, and selection criteria for prospective students.
- 4.3. Proposing teams are required to seek the views of external peer reviewers, students, and industry experts to establish learning outcomes, course structure, sequencing, and assessment methods.
- 4.4. The student consultation should be undertaken with students from similar subject areas, including Student Representatives. In the case of revalidation, students from the same course should be consulted.
- 4.5. After the Lead Developer has finalised the programme documentation, these will be reviewed by the QARC and reported to the Academic Board before the next stage.


5. Validation

- 5.1. Once programme documentation has been received and approved by the Academic Board, the CEO (as Chair of the Academic Board) will appoint the Validation Panel. This panel must comprise of:
- A Chair
 - At least one Internal Panel Member
 - One External Panel Member
 - One Student Representative
 - A secretary

- 5.2. The External Panel Member is someone not employed by the School or someone who has worked as either a sessional tutor or external examiner.
- 5.3. Before the validation panel, the lead developed should submit the necessary documentation to the panel, including:
- Validation Briefing Document
 - Course Descriptor
 - Module Descriptors
 - Work-based Learning / Placement Handbook (where relevant)
 - List of staff involved in the delivery of the programme; CVs for external staff; or job descriptions for new staff recruitment
 - Critical Review (for revalidations)
- 5.4. After the validation meeting between the panel and the proposal team, the panel is required to make a decision about whether to validate the proposal and to agree to any conditions and enhancements. The potential outcomes are:
- To approve the proposal unconditionally.
 - To approve the proposal subject to satisfying minor conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents should be resubmitted within 3 weeks of the event.
 - To approve the proposal subject to satisfying major conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 6 weeks of the event.
 - To defer the proposal for a year. In cases where conditions are excessive in number or scale, the Chair will refer the proposal back to the Learning & Teaching Committee for further detailed redevelopment before re-presenting to a new Validation Event in the next academic year.
 - To not approve the proposal.
- 5.5. Conditions are 'deal breakers.' They must be satisfied before the proposal can be signed off.

- 5.6. Enhancements are recommendations from the panel for the proposing team to consider. The proposing team is not required to adopt an enhancement, but they are required to respond to it and demonstrate that they have considered the proposal.

6. Module Modifications

- 6.1. The Module Modification Policy provides a mechanism for the ongoing enhancement of programmes and modules within the validated period.
- 6.2. For module modifications, a Module Modification Proposal Form will need to be completed and submitted to the Quality & Registry Committee for review. This should then be discussed at the Courses Board, and then tabled and approved at the Academic Board.
-  CFS Module Modification Proposal Form
- 6.3. During the lifetime of a programme, the programme team may wish to make modifications to the programme or individual modules. These may be for a variety of reasons, but typically to:
- Ensure continuing currency of programmes in light of developments in the sector (such as industry practice and pedagogy).
 - Responding to feedback from staff, students or the external examiner.
 - Responding to changes in the external environment such as PSRB requirements or government policy changes.
- 6.4. Module Modifications are considered under the Module Modifications Policy.

7. Revalidation

- 7.1. Each Central Film School programme is initially validated for 5 years and will undergo a revalidation after this period to ensure quality, relevance, and the success of students on CFS degrees.

7.2. Revalidations may also occur when proposed modifications to a programme are considered to be significant in nature or multiple minor modifications are deemed to have had a cumulative effect.

7.3. The Quality & Registry Committee or the Academic Board may also trigger an early revalidation if serious concerns are raised regarding student satisfaction (e.g. NSS scores), retention data, or external examiner feedback.

7.4. Revalidation is considered under the Revalidation Policy.

8. Validation Stages and Responsibilities

Abbreviation	Name
L&TC	Learning & Teaching Committee
QARC	Quality & Registry Committee
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
AB	Academic Board
LD	Lead Developer
MCC	Marketing & Communications Committee
RAC	Recruitment & Admissions Committee
NPDB	New Programme Development Board
VP	Validation Panel

Stage 1 - Proposal	By
Initial Research including first consultations with primary stakeholders	L&TC or MCC
Submission of new programme proposal form to the Quality & Registry Committee for initial review	L&TC or MCC
Quality & Registry Committee review and assess the suitability of the new programme proposal. This is then submitted to the	QARC

Academic Board for approval with a recommendation to proceed	
Academic Board approve new programme proposal and instruct the Learning & Teaching Committee to develop a Business Case	AB
Submission of Business Case to Quality & Registry Committee for initial review	L&TC or MCC
Quality & Registry Committee review and assess the suitability of the Business Case. This is then submitted to the Academic Board for approval with a recommendation to proceed	QARC
Academic Board approve Business Case and appoint Lead Developer	AB
New Programme Development Board appointed	LD
Launch new course recruitment and marketing (subject to validation)	MCC and RAC

Stage 2 - Development	By
Further consultation with students and industry contacts	NPDB
First draft of programme documents finalised	NPDB
Peer review of first draft of programme documents	NPDB
Formal Student consultation - review of programme documents	NPDB
Formal Industry consultation - feedback on programme structure and outcomes	NPDB
Final documents produced by Lead Developer	LD
Internal Faculty review of final documents	L&TC
Final documents submitted to the Quality & Registry Committee for review	LD
Quality & Registry Committee reviewed finalised documents and submit these to the Academic Board for approval	QARC
Academic Board approve course documentation and plan for	AB

implementing delivery and student recruitment	
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Stage 3 - Validation	By
Appoint Validation Event Panel Members	AB
Document Submission for Academic Approval/Validation Event	LD
Validation Event	LD
Responses Conditions and Recommendations	VP
Panel Response	VP
Panel Approves Programme	VP
Programme approval is communicated to applicants and relevant communications including the website	MCC
Lead Developer finalise arrangements for course delivery	LD

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