4. Programmes of Education & Training

Version	Description of Amendments	Approval Date	Implementation Date
1.0	Original Draft copy of QA Guidelines	18/05/2018	18/05/2018
2.0	Re-engagement process		
2.1	Addition of table to track changes made to individual policies and procedures. `	01/05/2023	01/06/2023
2.2	4.1 Addition of blended learning considerations	16/10/2023	3/11/2023
2.2	4.2.1 Addition of New programme proposal for Blended Learning	16/10/2023	3/11/2023

Policy Title   **Programmes of Education & Training Policy**

Date Approved   17/12/2018

Effective From   02/01/2019

Monitor   Dean of Academic Affairs/ QA Committee

Summary   This policy provides an overview of the policies directly related to the programmes of study offered at Dorset College. This policy will be inclusive of the various stages of a programme, from its inception and initial development, to its monitoring and review.

Related Policies

Revision History & Commencement Date & Date of Next Review

Version 1 – 2019

Commencement Date (Version 1): 02/01/2020

Date of Next Review: Following Independent Assessment from Re-engagement process

Purpose   The purpose of this policy is to provide structure and process in the administration and management of the programmes offered at Dorset College. This inclusive policy will provide structure to the programme development, transparency to programme access, transfer and progression, and ensure that programmes are monitored and reviewed to ensure their continued relevancy.

Scope   This policy applies to all Further and Higher as well as English Language education programmes that Dorset College has devised and will devise with the intention of validation with QQI and other relevant validating bodies.

Policy Statement   Dorset College recognises the importance of underpinning the administration and management of its programmes with quality structures and processes. It also acknowledges that this ethos of quality does not start and end with the operations of a programme,

but should be inclusive of programme development, programme monitoring and review.

Therefore, the Programmes of Education & Training policies at Dorset College are devised to provide this overarching structure that is inclusive of the holistic development, operation, and monitoring of its programmes.

4.1 Programme Development

Dorset College follows a systematic programme development process for the programmes that it considers developing. Any potential programme is required to present a compelling case for development. Furthermore, all internally developed programmes must be internally approved by the College, before it is submitted to an external body, such as QQI, for its consideration. To be approved for development, a programme proposal is submitted for the consideration of the Academic Council. A proposal must:

- Outline the programme's rationale and coherency with the strategy of Dorset College.
- Have clearly defined programme aim(s), objectives, and Minimum Intended Programme

Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs).

- State the intended National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level of the programme and provide a clear rationale for the level chosen.
- Outline the stakeholder consultation that has taken place as well as outlining all consultations with the College's Advisory Board to ensure industry engagement with the proposed programme.
- State the intended delivery method, the teaching & learning strategies of the programme, and its assessment strategy.
- Outline the resources that the proposed programme would require.
- Timeframe for the development of the programme, should the Proposal be successful

The development of a potential programme will culminate in a programme document being produced. This programme document will follow any template provided by QQI, or the relevant accrediting body, and will be informed by engagement with a variety of stakeholders as outlined below:

The Development of programmes at Dorset College will:

- Be informed of stakeholders' views and expertise.
- Ensure learners are fully informed of their access, transfer, and progression opportunities.
- Consult with professional bodies, where applicable. Also, if possible, programmes at Dorset College will seek membership, exemptions etc., for graduates of the programme.
- Be written using learning outcomes and aligned to the appropriate award standards.
- Be internally, including a mock panel, considered before being put forward for consideration to QQI.
- Meet the criteria for **Preparing an Application for Validation**, as detailed in section 5 of *QQI's Policies and criteria for the validation of programmes of education and training*. This will ensure that the preliminary matters for any validation are in place, that the programme is appropriately documented in the template provided by QQI, and that the programme has been evaluated against the validation criteria.

The design of all Blended Learning programmes leading to an award or programme components leading to credit towards and award must ensure the following:
- The teaching, learning and assessment strategies and delivery mechanisms adopted are specifically designed for blended contexts.

- Blended learning developments are learner-centred and subject-led rather than technology-led.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment practices are accessible, consistent and fair for all learners.
- The security and reliability of its online learning and support systems are ensured.

4.2 Programme Proposal Procedure

	Procedure Stage	Responsibility	Evidence
1	**Development of Programme Proposal:** An initial programme proposal report is developed by a member of the College's staff/programme team. A proposal should include the elements stated in the Programme Development Policy which is developed in line with the QAM Policy on Policy with appropriate and sufficient stakeholder engagement.	Programme Proposer(s) / Programme Team	Programme Proposal
2	**Consideration by Academic Council:** The Senior Management Group will consider the initial programme proposal at a scheduled meeting or at a special meeting for the purposes of considering a Proposal. This decision is than circulated to the Academic Council.	Senior Management Group	Minutes of the Senior Management Group
3	**Notification by Academic Council regarding Programme Proposal:** The Programme Proposal is rejected: the programme must be revised and resubmitted back to Step 1. The Programme Proposal is accepted as having academic merit and the Programme team is notified.	Programme Team Academic Council	Minutes of the Academic Council
4	**Development by the Programme Team:** The Programme Development Team will then prepare an Interim Programme Proposal and present this to the Academic Council which will be in line with the following: - QQI Programme Validation Manual - Self Assessment Programme Report	Programme Team Academic Council	Minutes of the Academic Council

5 **Academic Council Decision:**	Academic Council	Notification of Commercial Viability Assessment

5 **Academic Council Decision:**

The Academic Council will then review the Interim Programme Proposal to ensure it meets all the QQI criteria for Programme Validation and can either:

1. Reject - Programme Team must revise and resubmit
2. Accept - the Interim Programme Proposal will be sent to the Advisory Board for recommendation in line the following:

A commercial viability assessment will be undertaken by the Programme Team and the Financial Manager and considered by the Senior Management Group and the

Academic Council to see:

- The anticipated demand of the programme.
- Cost of the resources (human and physical) required to develop and operate the programme.
- Infrastructure and support services.
- Any other related costs to the programme development.

Academic Council

Programme Proposer(s)

Advisory Board

6 **Programme Development:**

If the commercial viability of the proposal is approved, then the proposal moves into programme development stage. The Programme is developed and presented to a Mock Panel who will either:

- Approve - submit to QQI; or
- Reject - revise and resubmit

Programme Development Team

4.2.1. New Programme Proposal for Blended Learning

For the purpose of blended learning programmes, the programme proposer is responsible for defining the resources and infrastructure requirements of the programme and identifying any special hardware or software requirements as well as identifying any training gaps. This is established in the curriculum planning stages when the nature of the blended approach is determined. Programme development teams are required to be mindful of the potential for overload in blended learning programmes.

At a programme level, the following issues are pertinent:
- the programme design should be informed by best practices in curriculum design.
- The learning experience should be learner-centred and include active and self-directed learning.
- where appropriate, strategies which focus on the development and assessment of soft skills during online components should be included.
- the learning resources and delivery mechanisms should be of high quality and appropriate to the programme content and context.

The validated programme document should contain:
- Completed tables mapping module content and assessment to delivery mode.
- Details of the delivery and assessment modes for online components with any specific resources or delivery requirements – with specified costs.
- A schedule of key assessment deadlines (including all e-activities and continuous assessments).
- The detailed specification of the time required for online discussion, forums, and e-activities.
- An account of how online components of the programme are evaluated and provision of opportunities for feedback, review and monitoring.
- Details of specific requirements for assessment implementation with particular reference to the verification of each learners' identity and the authenticity of assessment submission.
- Online components should be equal to any face-to-face components and that appropriate measures for verifying assessment validity are followed.

Programme resourcing issues should be specified such as time for facilitating, moderating, and assessing online activities.

The resources and time required for the development of course content for blended and online modules will vary depending on the range of learning resources, including online interactive components, collaborative tasks, delivery mode and assessment types. These elements form an essential part of the programme and module design process. Careful consideration at the design and planning phase will ensure the provision of a pedagogically sound, interactive, and engaging learning experience and help to determine the detailed time required for development and delivery.
The development of learning objects and resources can involve audio, video, text, animation, gametion among others and can be time-intensive depending on the nature of the activity. The structure, layout and delivery mode may vary for each blended and online module. It is important that the provision of online learning experiences involve delivering content efficiently using available tools effectively.

In addition to the traditional time required for the development and delivery of course content, consideration should also be given to the time required for online activities such as online discussion forums and e-activities.

In summary, adding in e-activities, group work and learning objects are important ways enhancing student engagement in class and helps to ensure they are active participants and not just observers. Dorset College supports the application of the pedagogy first approach to blended learning whereby the module content and learning outcomes inform the choice of tools and technologies used.

4.3.   Programme Development

Programme Development