

Programme Development and Validation Policy

16th June 2026

Version 1.0

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0.2	Amendments made following feedback from members of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning.	0.2
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Feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy author.	
Policy Author:	Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning

Policy Management Framework Compliance Review as requested by EMT all draft policies should be reviewed by the Policy Review Group ¹ in advance of review by EMT. Please confirm that the policy was reviewed by the policy review group.	
Date Policy Reviewed:	10 th December, 2025

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1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, as amended by the Technological Universities Act 2018, SETU is a designated awarding body and has the statutory authority to make awards up to and including Level 10 on the NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications).
- 1.2 Each award granted by the University is aligned to the NFQ and is made in accordance with SETU Award Standards.
- 1.3 Following the satisfactory completion of a recognised SETU programme, a student may be eligible for an award. This may be a major or a non-major award.
- 1.4 The University takes appropriate and necessary action to provide assurance as to the quality of its programmes and awards, which is overseen by Academic Council. An important element of this is the manner in which SETU develops and validates its programmes and approves any changes to its programmes.
- 1.5 Definitions of specific terms used in this Policy are set out in Appendix 1.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Programme Development and Validation Policy (the 'Policy') sets out the University policy as pertaining to the development and validation of SETU programmes, including joint award, collaborative provision, and transnational provision programmes as relevant, and changes to SETU programmes.
- 2.2 The application of this Policy is mandatory across the University. Any derogations from the Policy must be approved by Academic Council.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all SETU programmes, including joint award, collaborative provision, and transnational provision programmes as relevant.
- 3.2 All members of the University community must adhere to and implement the Policy. Other persons and bodies may also need to follow and implement this Policy as appropriate, to include *inter alia* joint awarding, collaborative provision, and transnational provision partners as relevant, and external persons involved with validation processes.

4. Principles

4.1 The principles that apply to this Policy are:

- i. SETU programmes are developed in accordance with and follow University regulations, policies and procedures and any other requirements determined by Academic Council;
- ii. All programmes developed by SETU must align with the strategic objectives of the University;
- iii. SETU programmes that have been developed must undergo and successfully complete appropriate University validation processes prior to the granting of Academic Council approval and their subsequent incorporation within the list of approved University programmes, in accordance with University regulations, policies and procedures;
- iv. Collaborative provision and transnational provision programmes being developed by the University must also undertake an appropriate due diligence and risk assessment; develop and agree a memorandum of understanding and collaborative/joint awarding agreement; and agree and document the necessary quality assurance procedures to include periodic monitoring and review as appropriate. These are all subject to approval by the Executive Management Team and Academic Council as relevant;
- v. Proposed changes to SETU programmes are considered in accordance with University regulations, policies and procedures. Changes must be recommended by the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee to Academic Council. All changes must be approved by Academic Council in advance of implementation;
- vi. Academic Council is the overall approving body for the validation of programmes and for all changes to programmes.

5. Policy

- 5.1 The development of programmes in SETU must be undertaken in a structured and coherent manner that involves input and feedback from relevant internal and external persons and bodies as appropriate. This helps to ensure that programmes that are being proposed for validation are of a high quality and that the proposers of programmes provide the necessary information to allow for a comprehensive review.
- 5.2 The validation of programmes is an essential activity to ensure each programme's relevance, currency and alignment with the University's strategic priorities, necessary standards and other requirements as determined. The University ensures that all programmes leading to SETU awards undergo validation.
- 5.3 No programme can commence until its validation has been complete and the programme has been approved through SETU academic governance processes.

- 5.4 The University implements an appropriate Policy and procedures for the validation of SETU programmes of study, being this Policy and the associated Programme Development and Validation Procedure which sets out the relevant procedures to be applied. The Policy and procedures ensure that persons and bodies with relevant expertise are involved in programme validation (including independent external persons), and that any evaluation required of proposed programmes of study considers relevant academic and non-academic factors.
- 5.5 The University recognises that changes to programmes may be necessary at times and that they are an important element of ensuring that programmes remain contemporary, relevant, of high quality, and accredited where applicable.
- 5.6 Where changes to programmes are being proposed by Programme Boards, there must be an appropriate rationale grounded in relevant data and information associated with the proposed change.
- 5.7 Proposed changes to programmes cannot be implemented until they have been approved.
- 5.8 The overall approving body for the validation of programmes and for changes to programmes is Academic Council.
- 5.9 The validation of programmes and changes to programmes² may be recommended to Academic Council by the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee ('the Committee') based upon work undertaken and reviewed.
- 5.10 In the case of changes of a minor nature ('Minor Change'), the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee may delegate authority to a Faculty Programmes sub-committee to consider minor change proposals and make recommendations to the Committee .
- 5.11 Each Faculty may – with the authority of the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee – establish³ a Faculty Programmes sub-committee, which will undertake the necessary work on minor change proposals. The authority given to make recommendations to the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee on minor changes is periodically reviewed by the Committee and may be rescinded where deemed necessary.
- 5.12 The procedures that are necessary to implement this Policy are set out in the Programme Development and Validation Procedure. These procedures should be read in conjunction with this Policy and followed as appropriate.

² Changes to programmes are designated as a 'Programme Modification' or a 'Minor Change' depending on the nature of the change.

³ Where a Faculty chooses not to or is unable to do this, all minor changes for the Faculty will be reviewed by the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The principal roles and responsibilities under this Policy are:

Academic Council	● Approval body for the validation of programmes and for changes to programmes
Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee	● Review of work undertaken regarding the validation of programmes and changes to programmes ● Make recommendations to Academic Council ● Authorise and periodically review the work of Faculty Programmes sub-committees
Faculty Programmes sub-committee	● Review of work undertaken regarding minor changes to programmes ● Make recommendations to the Taught Studies Programmes, Teaching and Learning Committee regarding minor changes
Faculties	● Development of programmes
Programme Boards	● Proposal of changes to programmes through University processes
Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning	● Overall management of the programme validation and programme change processes ● Oversee the implementation of the Policy

7. Compliance

7.1 It is expected that all members of the University community and other persons and bodies, as relevant and appropriate, will comply with this Policy.

8. Useful Links and Related Documents

Programme Development and Validation Procedure: <Link available when approved>

Global Partnerships Framework: <Link available when approved>

Academic Unit Reviews Policy: <https://www.setu.ie/Craft/assets/policies/Academic-Unit-Reviews-Policy-Sept-2025.pdf>

SETU Award Standards

SETU Policies and Documents: <https://www.setu.ie/about/policies-and-documents>

SETU Quality Assurance Webpage: <https://www.setu.ie/about/quality-and-teaching/quality-assurance>

9. Review of Policy

9.1 This Policy will be reviewed in advance of the review date, and/or as soon as possible following new or updated legislation, national or sectoral policy.

10. Policy Author

10.1 The author of this Policy is the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Teaching and Learning. Any feedback or issues arising on implementation of this Policy should be communicated to the Policy author. The Policy author is responsible to ensure that the Policy Owner is aware of these comments when reviewing the Policy.

Appendix 1 - Definitions

Award	An award which is conferred by SETU and which confirms that a graduate has satisfied the relevant requirements of the University.
Award Standard	The standard specified for a type of award, including <i>inter alia</i> knowledge, skill and competence.
Collaborative Provision	A process that occurs where two or more providers are involved by formal agreement in the provision of a programme of higher education and training. There may be collaboration in the development of the programme, in the academic monitoring of the programme, in the teaching, in the assessment, etc. or a combination of any of these. The collaborating providers constitute a consortium.

Joint Award	A single award is made jointly by two or more awarding bodies upon completion of a related joint programme.
Major Award	The main class of award made at each level on the NFQ ⁴ .
Minor Change	A change that does not impact programme learning outcomes or the meeting of programme academic standards, and which is limited both in frequency and volume.
Non-Major Award	Awards on the NFQ that are not major awards, including <i>inter alia</i> minor awards, supplementary awards and special purpose awards ⁵ .
Programme	The specified programme of study that a student must pursue to earn an award. A programme is comprised of modules.
Programme Board	A body established by the University with overall responsibility for a particular programme(s), including the programme assessment strategy.
Programme Modification	A programme change which is not considered to be a minor change.
Transnational Provision	Transnational provision is the provision or partial provision of a programme of education in one country by a provider which is based in another country. Transnational provision may or may not involve collaborative provision.

⁴ Examples of major awards would *inter alia* include an Ordinary Bachelor Degree, an Honours Bachelor Degree and a Masters Degree.

⁵ Examples of non-major awards would *inter alia* include a Certificate and a Diploma.