

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/21/2i)

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

11 March 2021

Agenda Item 5.4.6

COVER SHEET

EXTENSION OF APPROVAL

Faculty of Art, Humanities and Social Sciences

Belfast School of Art

Presenter: Professor R Fee

To consider a proposal for an extension to the period of approval for all revalidation units within the Belfast School of Art (the proposed extensions range from one to three years).

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REQUEST TO EXTEND APPROVAL AND POSTPONE REVALIDATION

Form CA6b)

SECTION A: FACULTY REQUEST

FACULTY: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

SCHOOL: Belfast School of Art

REVALIDATION UNIT NUMBER AND NAME: Units one to five

MONTH/YEAR CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: November 2021

PERIOD OF EXTENSION REQUESTED:

The school would like to request extension periods for the following units:

- Unit One: November 2022
- Unit Two: May 2023
- Unit Three: November 2023
- Unit Four: May 2024
- Unit Five: November 2024

COURSE(S):

To include all of the following proposed whole units

Unit One

- BDes Hons Animation (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)
- MA Animation (with PgDip exit award)
- BDes Hons Games Design (with CertHE and AB exit awards)
- MA Games Design (with PgDip exit award)

Unit Two

- BDes Hons Graphic Design (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards) *NB CA1 form to be completed to separate Graphic Design from Illustration*
- BA Hons Product Design (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)
- MA Product Design (with PgDip exit award)

Unit Three

- BA Hons Photography with Video (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)
- [\(on campus\)](#) MFA Photography (with PgDip and MA exit awards)
- [\(distance learning\)](#) MFA Photography (with PgDip and MA exit awards)
- BA Hons Illustration (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards) *NB CA1 form to be completed to separate Graphic Design from Illustration*

- BDes Hons Interaction Design (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)

Unit Four

- BA Hons Fine Art (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)
- MFA Fine Art (with PgDip and MA exit awards)
- BA Hons Textile Art, Design and Fashion (with Integrated Fdn Yr: Diploma in Fdn Studies in Art and Design, CertHE and AB exit awards)
- MSc Fashion and Textile Retail Management (with PgDip exit award)

Unit Five

- MSc Art Psychotherapy (with PgDip exit award)
- MA UX and Service Design (with PgDip exit award)
- FDS Sc Interaction Design

REASON FOR REQUEST:

The following sets out the context and reasons for this request:

1. WIDER SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT/REBUILDING FRAMEWORK

For contextual background information: the school has been emerging from an extremely difficult period which resulted in 2019 with a number of P&C interventions as staff wellbeing and morale was assessed as extremely poor). As a result, we have been working to stabilise and focus the vision of the school to ensure our future sustainability and enable growth. In order to do so we have taken a theme based approach across the school as opposed to programme specific to ensure optimum impact across the school. Our five key themes are:

- Pedagogy:** support to review approaches and practices and then successfully implement changes;
- Curriculum Content Review:** a series of audits and reviews to ensure programmes are 'fit for purpose'. This work is core to revalidation preparation;
- Supporting Curriculum:** activities to support and enhance the students learning experience and their employability skills and awareness;
- People & Culture:** training and support to enhance course team practices and cohesion; and
- Resources:** enhance learning spaces to positively impact student learning and staff working experience.

2. GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The current global pandemic has, of course, had huge impact on many learning and teaching practices in higher education. In particular this has been extremely challenging for those creative subject areas where learning and teaching activities are primarily based within the studio setting and use specialist workshops. This has been the case for our entire programme suite to varying degrees. The revision of pedagogies within an extremely condensed period of time to ensure that the student learning experience continues has had a monumental impact on both staff perceptions of and approaches to pedagogies. Many innovative and sector leading practices have evolved within the school and teams are looking beyond the immediacy that caused these changes to how they can be embedded within future curriculum content and delivery.

While this application requests an extension, the work is already ongoing across the school to examine in measured and robust manners how we ensure the upcoming revalidation is one that has been fully informed by these most recent developments. But to do this more time is required.

3. CURRENT SCHOOL WIDE PROJECTS

The school has received support through SLATE for two separate projects in 2021. These are 'Creative Pedagogies in a Pandemic' and 'The Envelope Project'. Both of these address the key themes listed above and our fundamental to the change implementation plan for the school. Along with the BSoA Archive Project and the school's increased role in the running of UNIQUE

on the Belfast campus we see these projects as fundamental to embedding a positive and future-focused culture within the school. Therefore we need to allow the outcomes of these projects to be achieved as they will directly influence and input to the revalidation process.

All of the activities and interventions we have planned and are implementing have been developed to work in tandem with each other as part of the school's change implementation plan. It is vital that this work is completed as it directly informs all aspects of the revalidation process.

CURRENCY AND VALIDITY:

The following quotes are taken from the External Examiner reports of 2019/20 for each of the programmes:

- BDes Hons Animation, Dr Scott Smith
"As mentioned in the previous year's report the structure and content of the courses is well informed by both academic standards and industrial standards for animation and visual effect area"
- MA Animation, Dr Scott Smith
"This programme has the potential to excel in animation masters level work nationally."
- BDes Hons Graphic Design and Illustration, Colum Leith
"Both subject areas produce students with a clear understanding of the professional requirements needed to be successful with their field. . . There is professionalism and employability skills throughout. It has been clear to see that the industry links have been consistent and are central to the student experience and these relationships lay the foundation for the curriculum. The ability to develop cross platform conceptual designers is key to this area."
- BDes Hons Interaction Design, Martin Reid
"The scenarios offered within the coursework briefs guided students to take a real-world approach to the design process through the production of in-depth case studies presented online, this gives this course the edge in getting students industry ready and supporting their employability through promoting their work as well as supporting contemporary practice."
- Foundation Year, Kristina Huxley
"The structure and content of the course are appropriately focused and consistent to the level of the Foundation qualification, but in addition, they are managed with a sense of reflexivity and sharp observance. There is an ethos of critical reflection, vibrancy, flexibility and diversity being nurtured within both the programme content and the teaching/learning methodologies manifesting in a sense of renewed energy, excitement and ambition, in a lot of the course areas, which is positive and progressive. There is also a healthy commitment and desire to keeping the students challenged. Reflective of and connected to the content within national subject benchmarking for Art and Design, Characteristic Statement 2020 Foundation Degree and previous qualification framework documents for degree level this outcome is also rooted in the teams experience and insight into the contemporaneous conditions within society and worlds of Art and Design, the development of degree programmes and also an understanding of the changing needs, expectations and diversification of the current student profile."
- BA Hons Fine Art, Annie Cattrell
"This course compares very well to others of a similar type in the UK. There was clear evidence in both the dissertations and the studio practise work of appropriate discipline-specific pedagogical research and scholarship."
- MFA Fine Art, Prof Andre Stitt
"generic and graduate skills are being delivered appropriate for MFA level. These include appropriate standards of student self-management, critical engagement, group/team working and social skills, research and information skills. Personal qualities were in evidence through the student's ability to deal with disruption due to the COVID19 pandemic and to still enquire into their discipline, their place within that discipline, and the motivation to advance it and to apply ethical principles and personal values to their work. These standards were delivered by a committed, knowledgeable team who have insight into the issues and concerns of local, national and global contemporary art through their own research and scholarly activities."
- BA Hons Product Design, Matt Malpass

- “I was struck again by the open interpretation of Product and Furniture Design held by the team in formed by their respective disciplinary backgrounds. The range of work on show from within a single product design cohort is commendable.”
- MSc Art Psychotherapy, Dr Ed Kuczaj
“There is a richness in the areas of practice coming through from the final year students, which bodes well in terms of pushing the frontiers of Art Psychotherapy practice and its developments”.
 - BA Hons Photography with Video, Judy Harrison
“The structure and content of the course and its component modules are coherent and appropriate to a BA (Hons) Photography with Video course. The aims of the course are comparable with equivalent courses nationally.”
 - MFA Photography, Max Houghton
“The Photography MFA’s reputation precedes it, which is due to the rigour, care and excellence of the staff team. It continues to produce some very fine image-makers indeed, and further, practitioners who can contribute to an ever-evolving contemporary practice. It may be worth considering whether future students might desire to extend their practice beyond image-making into curatorial work or writing too.”
 - BA Hons Textile Art, Design and Fashion, Jane Bartholomew
“This course also celebrates a wide range of practical making resources where students can explore numerous ways of capturing their visual ideas across all areas of textile design. The fashion specialism is also now seeing a resurgence following the department’s investment in appointing new staff to this area and I am confident that this specialism within the course will continue to go from strength to strength. . . I have felt privileged to be able to work with such a diligent staff team and to have witnessed some exceptional bodies of students’ work over the years.”
 - MSc Fashion and Textile Retail Management, Mike Baston
“Course content reflects the key issues and challenges facing the fashion industry and clearly combines appropriate academic and industry mix.”

STANDARDS AND QUALITY:

The following quotes are taken from the External Examiner reports of 2019/20 for each of the programmes:

- BDes Hons Animation, Dr Scott Smith “excellent quality level of the candidates work, it compares very favourably at the national and international level for these programmes and disciplines.”
- MA Animation, Dr Scott Smith “the standards of the course compare with work done at other institutions in the national and international context”
- BDes Hons Graphic Design and Illustration, Colum Leith “All students continue to demonstrate high levels of competency, control and ambition over the technical and creative aspects of an industry related skillset.”
- BDes Hons Interaction Design, Martin Reid “As a new external I was very impressed with how the course is run, the quality of students work and the industry focus of the delivery and assessments.”
- Foundation Year, Kristina Huxley “There is evidence of consistent progress and maturation within the student work from the summer project through to the summative assessment in semester 2 reflective of the sustained and commitment approaches to teaching and delivery. It is evident that there is much investment made by the staff into their students and projects.”
- BA Hons Fine Art, Annie Cattrell “This course is very well taught and rigorously run. The standards allow for the students of all abilities to excel and reach their full potential. They are nurtured and challenged, both academically and as people undertaking a course that challenges all aspects of their creative and intellectual abilities. U of U Fine Art has a significant national and international reputation of academic excellence, pastoral and professional support.”
- MFA Fine Art, Prof Andre Stitt “course and its delivery is of a very high standard for MFA study and compares favourably with similar courses in the UK. Standards of the course/subject strand and its assessment, and of student performance, are comparable with those at other institutions.”

- BA Hons Product Design, Matt Malpass “The standard of work produced by students is strong. Highest attaining student work was of a high standard for the level of study and again comparable to leading courses within the subject area.
- MSc Art Psychotherapy, Dr Ed Kuczaj “All the student submissions I read, and which reflected a good range of the marking given, indicated that the marks given were done in a fair and impartial way and with a consistency. The staff team work hard at maintaining academic rigour in the work of students, maintaining a fairness and good deliberation of the marks given and how they sit, within the overall result levels”.
- BA Hons Photography with Video, Judy Harrison
“Overall the standards of the course and its assessment and student performance are comparable in the majority of areas with those at other institutions. The programme specification is in line and relates to the award given.”
- MFA Photography, Max Houghton
“The work is double marked, and is marked fairly, rigorously and consistently, in accordance with marking criteria. The final feedback is superbly well crafted and considered.”
- BA Hons Textile Art, Design and Fashion, Jane Bartholomew
- “One of the strengths of this course is the commitment of the staff team in ensuring that the students have an excellent experience whilst studying the subjects of fashion, textiles within a broader context on their course. Students are encouraged to research their ideas fully, be creative in their endeavours and engage with current issues by understanding ethical and sustainable practice within both a historical and contemporary context. All staff have strong research interests, and this also feeds the curriculum which in turn inspires the students to ask more questions of their practice. . . Over the last few years, I have observed a reflective and reflexive approach to curriculum design involving the introduction of more industry-focussed content that has contributed to the students increased levels of awareness of the breadth of opportunities open to them after they graduate. A continual review of the relevant skills, attributes and competencies that the creative sector requires graduates to have is on the minds of the staff team as they continue to build new projects and opportunities into the course year on year.”
- MSc Fashion and Textile Retail Management, Mike Baston
“Overall the quality level is high and compares favourable with national masters levels. There appears to be an excellent teaching and learning atmosphere on the programme where all tutors engage fully with students at all times.”

PSRB (if applicable): n/a

DEMAND: Demand for all programmes remains healthy with the exclusion of the following programmes:

- MA Games Design. Low applications for 2021/22 so recruitment has been suspended. We envisage with the current high success and popularity of the undergraduate programme that this programme will have an increased demand for 2022/23 entry.
- MSc Fashion and Textile Retail Management was suspended from recruitment for 2020/21. The school is closely monitoring recruitment for 2021/22.
- MA Product Design is currently under review as part of this subject’s provision in the school.

FACULTY CONFIRMATION:

SIGNED: 
Associate Dean (Education)

DATE: 03.03.21

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office, Room J410, Tower Building, Coleraine.

SECTION B: ACADEMIC OFFICE COMMENTS:

The majority of the course provision of the Belfast School of Art was scheduled for revalidation in 2021/22 (comprising 3 units) and the School's remaining 2 units were scheduled for revalidation in 2022/23. The Academic Office initiated discussions with the Faculty in order to revise the current revalidation units as some are too large however the units proposed by the Faculty in this request are not yet agreed with the Academic Office. The proposed units 1-4 appear coherent but unit 5 appears a 'catch all'. The FdA Interaction Design at SRC should be revalidated in the same year as the home degree (proposed as unit 3 in 2023/24) and the MSc Art Psychotherapy (is recognised by the HCPC but no reference is made to HCPC approval duration in the request) and do not fit well within any of the other proposed units and may be single course unit? The MA UX and Service Design might align with Interaction Design in unit 3?).

I note that the request for an extension of approval has been submitted in the context of a significant School review process and the pandemic so spreading the revalidations over multiple years seems sensible from an operational standpoint.

In terms of the Faculty's proposed units the request is therefore:

Unit 1 – a one year extension for all courses to 2022/23

Unit 2 – a one year extension for BDes Hons Graphic Design to 2022/23 (the two Product Design courses are already scheduled for revalidation in 2022/23).

Unit 3 – a two year extension for all courses to 2023/24

Unit 4 – a two year extension for all courses to 2023/24

Unit 5 – MSc Art Psychotherapy is currently scheduled for revalidation in 2022/23 so a two year extension to 2024/25 has been requested. The MA UX was scheduled for revalidation in 2021/22 so a three year extension has been requested. The FdA Interaction Design at SRC is scheduled for revalidation in 2023/24 so a one year extension to 2024/25 has been proposed however it is also proposed the home course is revalidated in November 2023 so the FdA revalidation could remain in the year currently scheduled albeit in semester two of 2023/24.

External Examiner Reports:

Unit 1: The two Games Design programmes were approved to start in September 2019 but no external examiner reports are available. The external examiner for The BDes Hons Animation has highlighted (in both of the most recent reports) severe staffing issues, no response to the 2018/19 report and that internal moderation was undocumented. The external examiner opined that the staffing issues would be exacerbated by the introduction of the Games Design programmes. The staffing issue in particular may present a risk to standards and thereby introduces a question as to the merit of the request for extension to approval.

Unit 2: The external examiner reports do not indicate a risk to quality and standards in relation to the two undergraduate programmes. The MA Product Design course started in September 2018 but the only report is for 2019/20 and that raises some significant issues as it appears that the external examiner was not involved in the moderation of coursework assignments and that staff (academic and technical) were only available to students for 6 weeks of the summer semester. The external examiner considered that the lack of semester 3 student access to staff impacted upon student performance – clearly this matter presents a risk to standards and quality. This introduces a question as to the merit of the request for extension to approval.

Unit 3: Except for the BA Hons Photography with Video course the external examiner reports do not indicate a risk to quality and standards. For the Photography with Video programme the external examiner has stated in the two most recent reports that 'the method of final assessment did not allow for discrimination between candidates' and they also advise a redesign of the Professional Practice module in both reports. In the most recent report the external examiner also cites that marking standards were too high. This introduces a question as to the merit of the request for extension to approval.

Unit 4: The external examiner reports do not indicate a risk to quality and standards.

Unit 5: The external examiner reports do not indicate a risk to quality and standards. There appears to have been a change of academic staff delivering both the postgraduate courses and that change has evidently caused some disquiet amongst students but the external examiners appear content with the standards of the provision.

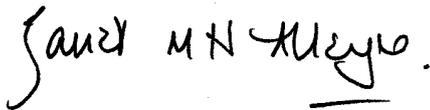


SIGNED: _____
Academic Policy and Standards Manager

DATE: 4.3.21

SECTION C: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ASSESSMENT (reflecting annual monitoring data)

Note that the Art Psychotherapy course will be included in a pilot HCPC process this year so it is probably helpful that the revalidation exercise is postponed to allow time for them to work on their HCPC submission.



SIGNED: _____
2021 DATE: _____
Head of Quality Enhancement

4 march

**SECTION D: ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
(delegated authority from Senate)**

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

Late requests (in-year and no imminent Committee meeting) (actioned by Chair on behalf of ASQEC)

DECISION: Approve (Yes/No)

SIGNED: _____
Chair ASQEC

DATE: _____

DATE REPORTED TO ASQEC:

Academic Office
July 2019