

Approval and monitoring of Open Online Courses

[For the purposes of the processes described in this document, in Henley Business School, references to 'School' should be taken to include 'programme area' and references to 'School Director of Teaching and Learning' should be taken to mean 'Director of Studies'.

References to the OOC Steering Group should be taken to mean the OOC Steering Group or the equivalent body in future.

As of August 2017, the University's OOC Team is funded until July 2020. The University's OOCs are currently delivered via FutureLearn.]

Scope of guidelines

1. These guidelines and the accompanying templates were developed by the Working Group on Quality Assurance and Enhancement for Open Online Courses (OOCs) during the Spring Term 2015. Revisions were made in the Summer Term 2016. They were informed by the *Statement on Massive Open Online Courses*, which was published by the Quality Assurance Agency in 2014, and by *Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval* and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, which served as useful reference points in adapting the University's quality assurance processes to the approval and monitoring of OOCs.
2. Credit-bearing OOCs will conform to the normal University approval and monitoring processes for credit-bearing modules. These guidelines specifically apply to non-credit-bearing OOCs, which are not required to adhere to the standard processes and will not be subject to formal scrutiny by QAA review processes. The procedures detailed in this document are intended to ensure that proposals for new OOCs are given proper consideration at the appropriate level and to ensure that the allocation of resources, academic course content and learning opportunities available to students have been properly considered. They are also intended to ensure that Schools are given an opportunity to routinely monitor their OOC provision and to reflect on ways in which those courses might be enhanced.
3. These guidelines apply to OOCs which are owned solely by the University of Reading or which have been developed by a consortium of which the University is the lead partner (see also paragraph 17 below). Where two or more Schools within the University are involved in the development and/or delivery of an OOC, one School should be identified as the lead School.
4. Attached to this document are:
 - a) an *Open Online Course Business Case Template*, which the lead School should use to put forward a proposal for a new OOC (Annex 1);
 - b) an *Open Online Course Evaluation Report Template*, which the lead School should complete after each run of an OOC (Annex 2).

Procedure for the development and approval of an Open Online Course

Initial development

5. The procedure for the development and approval of an OOC begins with the Proposer(s) in the lead School who have conceived an idea for an OOC. This may be in response to a call from the OOC Steering Group, or may be independent of this, in line with a bid for research funding or on the recommendation of a Head of School, Teaching and Learning Dean or similar. The Proposer(s) consults their School Director of Teaching and Learning/Director of Research and Head of School and propose a title and outline content of a new OOC to the OOC Steering Group.
6. The University's OOC Team meet with the Proposer(s), including the Head of School, to discuss the proposal. This meeting serves a number of purposes. It assists the OOC Team to better understand the proposal and the Proposers to understand the online platform. It also assists the Proposer(s) in the development of a Business Case.

Business case and formal approval

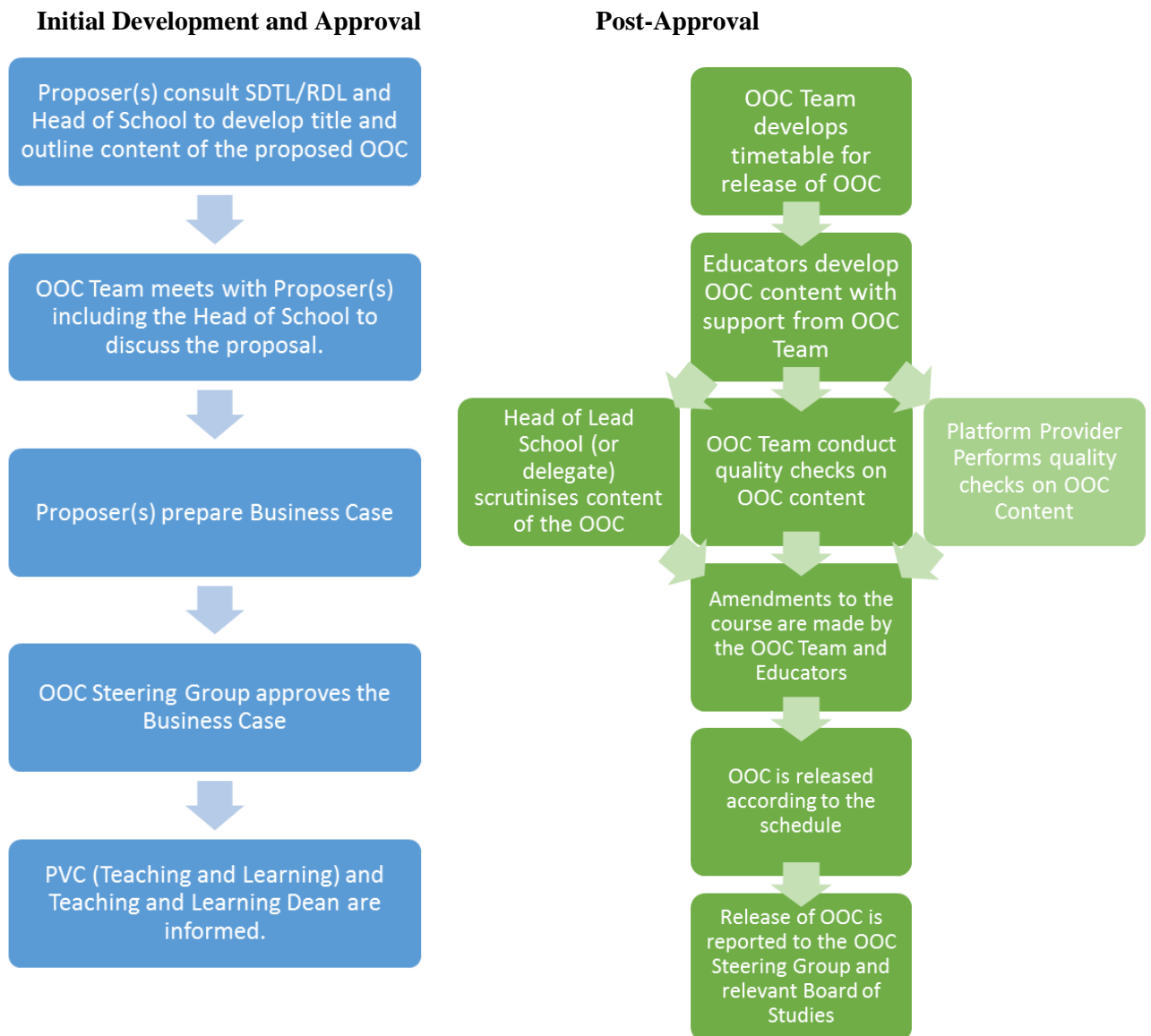
7. The Proposer(s) prepare a written Business Case, in line with the *OOC Business Case Template* which is appended to this document (Annex 1), and submit it to the OOC Steering Group.
8. The OOC Steering Group considers the Business Case for the proposed OOC, including: the objectives of the lead School; the intended primary and secondary audiences; the potential for follow-on courses; resource requirements for the initial development/first run and for subsequent runs; the fit with the University Strategy and other University priorities (including recruitment), and the fit with existing OOC provision. Consideration of resource requirements will include costs incurred in producing the online content and staff time (to include mentoring costs, academic staff time and central support from the OOC Team allocated to the development and running of the OOC). The Steering Group may send the proposal back to the Proposer(s) for further development or approve the development of the course.
9. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) and relevant Teaching and Learning Deans, at present Dr Clare Furneaux who sits on the OOCs Steering Group, are informed of courses approved by the OOC Steering Group.

Post-approval

10. Following approval of the proposal by the OOC Steering Group, the OOC Team develops a timetable for the development and release of OOCs in association with Schools, external events and the platform provider's schedule.
11. Relevant members of staff (referred to as the 'Educators') develop the OOC content. They may be based in one or more Schools/subject areas, but, as noted above, one School will be identified as the lead School. One of the Educators will take on the role of 'Lead Educator' and will assume overall responsibility for developing the course content including; providing a list of 3rd party materials that require permissions clearance and applying for these in the first instance, overseeing the smooth-running of the course and interacting with learners and mentors as appropriate. The Educators will receive guidance and support from the OOC Team, who will help to ensure that the structure of the course and balance of activities are tailored to the online platform and to the intended audience(s). The OOC team will also provide permissions guidance and support where necessary.
12. The Educators will liaise with their Head of School throughout the development process to ensure the School's satisfaction with the academic content of the MOOC. The OOC team will also conduct quality checks on the OOC content and discuss any comments with the Educators.

13. The platform provider(s) may also conduct quality checks on OOC content. These checks typically focus on presentational issues, including the quality of video clips and the level of English employed. The University should not, however, rely on these checks.
14. Where issues are identified by any of these parties, they are resolved by the OOC Team and Educators prior to the release of the OOC.
15. The OOC is released according to the previously-agreed schedule.
16. The release of the OOC is reported to the OOC Steering Group and to the relevant Board of Studies.

Flowchart: Overview of Approval Procedure for Open Online Courses



Modifications to the approval process

17. Where an OOC has been developed by a consortium of which the University is a partner and where the University's name will be associated with the OOC, the OOC Steering Group will retain the right to comment on the content of the OOC and must clarify who will be responsible for conducting quality assurance checks. All co-branded course materials must also adhere to the University of Reading's co-branding guidelines. Approval of subsequent runs.
18. The Educators, the OOC team and the platform provider will continue to conduct quality checks on each subsequent run of an OOC.

Monitoring of Open Online Courses

19. The Lead Educator will be required to produce a formal evaluation report after the first run of a course which will fulfil a quality assurance function and also encourage enhancement of learning and teaching. Educators are invited to complete evaluation reports after each subsequent run; however, there is no formal requirement. The OOC Steering Group may also, from time to time, request an evaluation of a particular course.
20. A template has been designed for this purpose, the *OOC Evaluation Report Template*, which is appended to this document (Annex 2). The template encourages Educators to reflect upon and analyse: course statistics; key events or developments in relation to the current run of the course; the achievement of course aims and outcomes, and resource requirements. Educators are asked to reflect on what worked well, any issues encountered and how these have been/will be addressed, and plans for the next run of the course (where relevant). They are also asked to highlight examples of good or innovative practice in the context of OOCs.
21. In their analysis of course statistics, Educators are advised to be mindful of the context and to avoid making broad comparisons across courses. For example, any reflection on the number of enrolled learners or the retention rate over the duration of the course should be set in the context of the intended audience(s). The OOC Team can offer guidance to Educators in relation to which course statistics might be useful to monitor.
22. Educators are asked to reflect on the achievement of course aims and outcomes. This might include learning outcomes for participants as well as outcomes for the School or the wider University, such as profile-raising.
23. The OOC Evaluation Report will be sent to the OOC Team, who will be invited to comment briefly on the contents of the Report and on the course itself.
24. The OOC Evaluation Report will then be signed off by the relevant School Director of Teaching and Learning. The Director of OOCs will consider OOC Evaluation Reports as recommended by the OOC team and, where necessary, provide brief individual feedback to Schools on the content of the reports and any resulting outcomes/actions.
25. The OOC Steering Group will produce a brief (maximum 3 pages) over-arching, evaluative OOC Annual Quality Assurance Report which will be considered by DELT during the Spring Term, alongside the Annual Quality Assurance Reports.

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective From
1	AGS	Every year	UBTL	28/04/2015	Immediately
2	AGS		UBTL	30/01/2017	Immediately

**Centre for Quality Support and
Development**

OPEN ONLINE COURSE: BUSINESS CASE

Please complete the following sections in as much detail as you can at this stage. Send completed forms to Matthew Nicholls (m.c.nicholls@reading.ac.uk).

1. Course title

Suggest a name for your course - it should sum the course up and draw people in.

2. Brief description

Give a very brief overview of your proposed course, including proposed length and any particular content you wish to include.

3. Primary audience

Who are you aiming your course at? Try to narrow this down to specific groups such as 'prospective u/g / p/g students for course(s) X' or 'healthcare professionals'.

3b. Further potential audience(s)

Do you have a secondary target audience in mind? Please provide a brief description; 'parents or teachers of prospective students', for example. Please list in approximate order of importance.

4. Brief breakdown of the course week by week

No need to go into depth here - just outline the key theme(s) that will be covered in each week.

E.g. "Week 1 - Cardiovascular anatomy and physiology. Introducing the anatomy of the heart and cardiovascular system and how it works."

5. Pre-existing and proposed materials

Do any materials already exist which could be incorporated into the course (e.g. videos or online activities)?

Do you have suggestions for any special content that you would wish to create for this course?

6. Follow-on products & assessment

Please outline any current or proposed initiatives that we could flag or develop as a follow-on from this online course. This might include further online courses or courses/workshops delivered on site, at the University, print or other 'products', etc.

FutureLearn is considering the addition of paid-for tutor-marked assessments and/or exams as an add-on to online courses. Please indicate whether your course would be suitable for such assessments, and what they might be.

7. Primary objective

What is the main objective you would like to achieve with this course? How does this relate to your target audience? The Open Online Course Steering Committee are particularly looking for courses which fall into one or more of the following categories; however, each course will be assessed on an individual basis.

- Drawing on and publicising particular strengths of the University – e.g. research strengths.
- Offering scope for ‘massive’ public appeal (the M in MOOC).
- Acting as a recruitment tool (supporting recruitment to a particular u/g or p/g course at the University, or also e.g. acting as an alternative entry qualification).
- Responding to offers of external funding, such as fulfilling a research grant.
- Using Open Online Courses as pilots for online/blended/distance learning or revenue raising/freemium models (see q6. above).
- Fitting with existing courses to form part of a FutureLearn Collection:¹ you may wish to look at our existing course portfolio to find potential groupings. We would particularly welcome proposals of courses that complete the following groups:
 1. Group 1 (Healthcare): Heart Health, Obesity
 2. Group 2(Business): Managing People, Digital Leadership
 3. Group 3 (Sustainability): Our Changing Climate, Our Hungry Planet

7b. Secondary objective(s)

What other objectives would you like to achieve? Please consult the categories above but include any alternative objectives not covered. What will success look like for this course?

What are the benefits of running this course for the School/Unit and the University?

¹ FutureLearn proposed grouping courses into themed ‘collections’ to increase participation and retention rates, and search engine visibility.

8. Support/ endorsement

What internal/external support is there for the course? Are there any external bodies who might wish to contribute to, or endorse, it? Do you have any funding which could be contributed to production costs? Include details of any funding bids linked to the course and/or sponsorship.

9. Competitors

Please provide details of any competing courses you have found online. These might be other online courses or short courses that are available on campus. Please provide a brief summary of the key differences between your proposed course and any competitors.

10. Team

It's important to have support from colleagues for writing, developing and checking content, as well as help in managing discussions while the course is running. Please list academics who will be involved, and indicate whether they will act as visible Educators on the course or just support its development.

11. Support of Head of School(s)

Designing, developing and running an open online course involves a substantial and ongoing commitment of time, and may also incur costs for the School (for e.g. discussion forum mentors, often postgraduate students). A course will typically run two-three times per year. It is important that your HoS is aware of this workload.

Please confirm that your HoS is aware and supportive of this proposal.

12. Main contact details

Give the name, email and phone number of the main person to contact re this proposal.

13. Resource requirements.

Please note that by submitting this course proposal, you confirm that you have discussed the associated resource costs (eg academic time in creating and delivering course materials, mentoring etc...) with the OOC Project Manager.

Open Online Course Evaluation Report

Please refer to the *Approval and monitoring of Open Online Courses* guidelines when completing this Report. Sections 1-3 should be completed by the Lead Educator. The OOC Team should then be asked to complete Section 4. The Report is then to be submitted to the relevant School Director of Teaching and Learning for approval (Section 5).

Section 1: Introduction	
Name of course	
Lead School	
Lead Educator	
Start date of course	
Course Length	
Date of report	
Section 2: Please comment briefly on how the course has met the objectives set out in the course proposal (1/2 page) You might choose to comment on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The course statistics available from FutureLearn; • Key events/achievements from the course; • Examples of good practice in online teaching from the course; • The use of resources for the course. 	

Section 3: Are there aspects of the course to be addressed or enhanced before a subsequent run of the course? (1/2 page)

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Section 4: Input from the OOC Team

Name	
Comments	
Date	

Section 5: School Director of Teaching and Learning

Name	
Comments	
Date	