

## **Critical Friend Role Description**

Critical friends are a group of senior academics, experienced in programme development, who advise on educational and regulatory aspects of new programmes and major curriculum changes. The critical friends are led by the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education Quality and Standards) and facilitated by the Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO).

### **Main role purpose**

The role of the critical friend is to:

- Provide developmental support to academic leads in designing and developing new programmes and major curriculum changes, advising on educational and regulatory aspects from an early stage in development;
- provide a report which assesses how the academic case aligns with the University's academic framework and other key curriculum enhancement initiatives.

### **Process**

Upon approval of the business case, AQPO will assign a critical friend to work with the academic lead. Critical Friends are not assigned to proposals within their home faculty.

AQPO will arrange an initial meeting with the academic lead and the critical friend, usually within two-weeks after allocation. The academic lead should provide a summary of the proposed programme at the initial meeting. The meeting will establish the timeline for the academic case development and approval and agree the method of working and further points of contact between the academic lead and the critical friend.

The following describes the expectations and minimum contact requirements with the critical friend:

1. Initial meeting – usually within two-weeks of the business case approval, to agree the timelines for further contact;
2. Draft academic case paperwork – the proposer sends the draft academic case to the critical friend and the external assessors. Feedback from the critical friend is provided on the draft academic case, normally in the form of an initial report;
3. Complete academic case paperwork – at least two weeks prior to the deadline for the papers for the school committee the proposer must send the critical friend the final version of the academic case, indicating how any issues that were raised in the initial critical friend report have been addressed.
4. Critical friends write a report which forms part of the academic case for consideration by committees. The report template is held on the [AQPO website](#).

### **Outcomes from the Critical Friend's Report**

The academic lead must respond to and address any issues that have been raised in the final report of the critical friend. The response must be provided in the relevant section of the report template and included in the academic case that goes for Committee approval. Where relevant, the academic case documents must be revised to address issues that were flagged.

It is the responsibility of the approving committees to ensure that any issues flagged in the critical friend's report have been addressed and that the academic case documents have been revised accordingly where necessary.

The academic case will not be considered for university-level approval by the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) if the issues flagged in the critical friend's report have not been satisfactorily addressed and documents revised where necessary. The University Education Director (UED) charged with leading on University-level scrutiny for AQSC, will not present the proposal to the Committee for approval if the response to the critical friend is considered inadequate or incomplete. In such cases, the UED will liaise with the AQPO coordinator to communicate the outstanding issues to the academic lead and critical friend. The academic lead will revise the academic case and re-submit it for consideration by AQSC at a later date.

### **Term of Office**

The normal term of office for a critical friend is four years. The appointment may be extended for a further term, if the critical friend agrees to an extension.