University of Sheffield  
Quality Assurance of Short Courses

This guidance covers the procedures for the approval, ongoing quality assurance and reporting of short courses delivered by the University of Sheffield. These processes are line with the approval of standard programmes resulting in the award of a degree but are distinct from them. Details of approval for all other programmes and modules can be found on the LeTS webpages.

**What is a short course?**
A short course is a course which does not directly contribute to a university award / degree (e.g. a UG degree, MA or MSc or PhD) and lasts less than 9 months. The following are examples of short courses:

- Non-credit bearing CPD courses designed for a particular employer or group of professionals, typically with no assessment attached. Certificates of attendance are often provided.
- Single credit bearing modules from an approved degree programme taken either as CPD or for general interest. Students may be registered with the University as “visiting” students or not registered at all.
- Attendance of particular aspects of a module (e.g. a small number of lectures) from an approved degree programme
- MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)

**Procedures for approval and ongoing quality assurance of short courses**

1. **All short courses that could potentially contribute to a student’s future academic career i.e. they could be used as approved or recognized prior learning are subject to the University’s standard quality assurance procedures.** This means that such courses must be approved by the Faculty in the same way that credit-bearing modules are approved. Please use the short course approval form. Ongoing review and monitoring is then carried out by the department putting on the course as with other credit-bearing provision.

2. **Short courses which are unlikely to contribute to a student’s future academic career** are not subject to the standard University quality assurance procedures but should be approved and monitored within the department putting on the course.

3. **MOOCs are currently subject to a different set of procedures given this is a new venture for the University.** The MOOCS team can provide further details.

**Reporting of short courses**
Faculties maintain a register of all short courses delivered by departments within their faculty. The Board of Extra-Faculty Provision is responsible for any short courses which are delivered by professional service departments such as USE, Careers, ELTC. The register is reviewed on an annual basis as part of the Annual Reflection. The register will also be used to inform reporting on short courses to HEFCE.

**How to decide whether a short course could be used as recognized or approved prior learning or not**
Short courses which could be used for recognized or approved prior learning:

- Courses which contain assessment which allow the learner to demonstrate the learning outcomes of the course.
- Courses which can be linked to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Levels.
Short courses which are unlikely to be used for approved or recognized prior learning:

- Courses which contain no assessment by which the participant can formally demonstrate their learning.
- Courses which only offer a certificate of attendance rather than a certificate based on achievement of learning outcomes.
- A short course covering material of a technical/practical nature which is unlikely to be covered in an academic qualification.

Certificates
University of Sheffield certificates of attendance can be requested from Jackie Parkin, J.Parkin@sheffield.ac.uk in the Taught Programmes Office. There is a small charge per certificate.

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