

APPLICATION FOR SPECIFIC COURSE DESIGNATION

Who is this form for?

This application form should be completed by private/alternative providers of higher education in Northern Ireland who wish to receive specific course designation for their eligible students on specific courses to access student support. In Northern Ireland, specific course designation is granted at course level; providers must, therefore, specify the details of each course requiring designation at this time. Should you, at a later date, wish to apply for specific course designation for additional courses which have not yet been granted specific course designation, a new application must be completed.

Accompanying guidance

Before completing this form, please read the [Department for the Economy Specific Course Designation Guidance](#) . You may also find it useful to refer to this guidance when checking that the required evidence and documentation accompanies your completed application before submitting it to the Department.

Contact

Should you have any queries regarding the application process or completing this form, please contact the Course Designation team:

Student Support Branch,
Department for the Economy,
Adelaide House,
39-49 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8FD,
Email: studentsupport@economy-ni.gov.uk
Telephone: 028 90257715

Completed application forms

Completed application forms, associated evidence and required documentation should also be returned to this address, either via post or email.

Section A – General Applicant Information

Please use the following section to tell us about the organisation applying for specific course designation and the key personnel involved.

1. Provider details (i.e. the teaching organisation offering the course)

Information required	Response
Legal Name:	
Trading Name(s):	
Website address:	
Address of registered office: (including postcode) Note – this must be an address in Northern Ireland	
Contact telephone number:	

2. Accountable Officer details (i.e. the head of the legal entity that is applying for designation, such as Director, Chief Executive or equivalent)

Accountable officers will be subject to a fit and proper persons test using the information provided below.

Information required	Response
Title:	
Legal first name(s): (in full for fit and proper test)	
Preferred first name: (for contact purposes)	
Surname:	
Job title:	
Date of birth:	
Home address: (including postcode)	
Phone number:	
Email:	
Does the accountable officer hold current directorships or trusteeships at other organisations?	Yes / No (delete as appropriate) If yes, please provide full details below
Other directorships: (list company names and contact numbers or note as not applicable)	
Other trusteeships: (list charity names and contact numbers or note as not applicable)	
Other information: (if the nominated accountable officer is not the chief executive or equivalent, please explain why this person is being nominated. Please include details of any relevant delegated authority)	

3. Head of higher education provision (i.e. the person in the organisation with overall responsibility for HE provision) This person will be subject to a fit and proper persons test using the information provided below.

Information required	Response
Title:	
Legal first name(s): (in full for fit and proper test)	
Preferred first name: (for contact purposes)	
Surname:	
Job title:	
Date of birth:	
Home address: (including postcode)	
Phone number:	
Email:	
Does the head of HE provision hold current directorships or trusteeships at other organisations?	Yes / No (delete as appropriate) If yes, please provide full details below
Other directorships: (list company names and contact numbers or note as not applicable)	
Other trusteeships: (list charity names and contact numbers or note as not applicable)	

4. Main contact for specific course designation (i.e. the person who will be contacted for day-to-day queries)

Information required	Response
Title:	
First name:	
Surname:	
Position:	
Email:	
Contact telephone number:	

Section B – Course Details

Please use the following section to provide as much detail as possible regarding the course(s) for which you are seeking specific course designation. This will be used to inform assessment against Criterion 1 – Course Eligibility (see guidance). **If you are applying for specific course designation for more than one course, you must complete all the required information for each course covered by this application. You can add additional courses by cutting and pasting this section on a new page.**

Course and validation information

Information required	Response
Full course title:	
Validating body: (name and address)	
Validation agreement start date:	
Validation agreement end date:	
Validating body contact details: (name, email and contact number)	
<p>Is a copy of the validation document / awarding body approval confirmation document enclosed with application?</p> <p>The validation document must clearly state a start and end date and the duration of the course being considered. A course prospectus should also be provided. Please note – incomplete documentation will delay your application. Copies of validation documents are required in order to inform the assessment of course eligibility.</p>	Yes / No (delete as appropriate)
<p>Is the course being delivered on behalf of a publicly funded institution (publicly funded institutions in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales) where students are treated as students of that institution and subject to number controls and fee regulation?</p>	Yes / No (delete as appropriate)
<p>If you answered No to above, is the course being provided under another type of franchise/partnership agreement?</p>	Yes / No (delete as appropriate)

If you answered 'Yes' to either of the questions above please provide a copy of the franchise/partnership agreement and the contact details of the partner body.

Information required	Response
Please state if this course is a full-time, part-time or sandwich course.	
If this course is full-time, how many learning credits does it attract?	
If this course is part-time, how many learning credits does it attract?	
If this is a sandwich course, the division of time between college and practical periods should be provided along with any other relevant information (for example arrangements for the practical periods both in relation to training and continued contact with the college by way of visits, tutorials etc).	
Does this course involve any distance learning?	Yes / No (delete as appropriate) If yes, please provide full details
Please state the pattern of course attendance indicating number of days / evenings / weekend study.	
What is the duration of this course?	
Is the minimum entry qualification 2 A level passes or equivalent?	Yes / No (delete as appropriate) If no, please provide full details

Section C – Quality

Please use the following section to provide as much detail as possible regarding your organisation's quality assessment status. This will be used to inform assessment against Criterion 2 – Quality (see guidance).

Quality assessment information

Information required	Response
Do you have a published, successful Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER(AP)) from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)?	Yes / No (delete as appropriate)
If you answered yes to the above, please provide details including a hyperlink to the published report:	
If you answered no, please state the scheduled date for your QAA HER(AP):¹	

¹ Applications without a recent successful HER(AP), or a scheduled date for one, will not be successful and the application will be rejected.

Section D – Financial Sustainability, Management and Governance

This section seeks the information required by the Department in order to inform an assessment against Criterion 3 – Financial Sustainability, Management and Governance (see guidance). It is important that all requested documentation is provided with the application, as failure to do so will delay your application and may result in an unsuccessful result. The Assurance Statement at Annex A (to be completed for continuing course designation applications only) provides an indication of the evidential information required by the Department.

Financial information

You are required to provide at least the last 3 years of unqualified accounts which have been ratified by an independent, external, qualified auditor. These must include:

- Profit and loss account / income and expenditure statement;
- Balance sheet;
- Cash flow statement; and
- Full notes to the accounts.

You are required to provide financial forecasts for the next 3 years complete with commentary on assumptions made and how risks are managed.

You are required to provide an outline of contingency arrangements for students should the courses be discontinued for any reason.

The information you submit must include:

i. Historical performance - a track record of financial performance evidenced by annual reports and externally-audited full financial statements for the three years prior to the application. The accounts must be audited each year by a registered auditor.

ii. Financial strategy - financial information such as a forward plan that reflects the overall strategic plan available at the point of submitting an application for specific designation, sets appropriate benchmarks and performance indicators, shows how resources are to be used, and how activities and infrastructure will be financed. This should include how applicants assess and review their sustainability, including the use of sustainability assessments.

iii. Forecasts - applicants must be able to provide evidence that they have:

- adequate cash flow to remain solvent, that is, sufficient liquidity to pay debts as they fall due; and
- a balance sheet, to include a statement on its policy on reserves.

Management and Governance information

You are required to:

- demonstrate that the organisation is owned and managed by fit and proper persons (see guidance for definition), including identifying key personnel (accountable officer, head of higher education, main contact, main shareholders, directors and trustees);
- confirm the legal status of the organisation; and describe the organisation's corporate governance arrangements (see guidance)

Assurance Statement – Annex A – for continuing applicants only

If your application is for continuing course designation (i.e. for a course which was previously designated by the Department) you must, in addition to providing the evidence described in Financial Information and Management and Governance Information above, complete the Assurance Statement attached at Annex A

Section E – Academic Performance

This section seeks the information required by the Department in order to inform an assessment against Criterion 4 – Academic Performance (see guidance).

Relevant data required

You are required to demonstrate that your academic outcomes represent value for money for the students and the taxpayer, and that the students accessing student support are likely to achieve the qualification for which they are studying and achieve positive outcomes.

Relevant data of student outcomes which will provide evidence of this include:

- achievement rates;
- non-continuation rates;
- non-completion rates; and
- any other relevant indicators.

This relevant data should be drawn from data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). If your organisation does not subscribe to HESA, alternative data sources, such as the Student Loans Company (SLC) may be considered – please contact the Department for further information.

Section F - Checklist

Please use this section to check that your application is complete and that all the relevant documentation has been enclosed.

If an incomplete application is received, or the relevant documentation is not provided, your application cannot be assessed, any decision will be delayed and students will not be able to access student support.

Information required	Response
<p>Application form All sections completed including the declaration signed by the accountable officer (Section G). Please ensure all sections have been completed in full before signature.</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Course information Details of all courses to which this application pertains as described in Section B.</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Copy of the validation document / awarding body approval confirmation document (see Section B)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Details including a hyperlink to the published QAA HER(AP) report (see Section C)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Required financial information (see Section D)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Required management and governance information (see Section D)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Signed Assurance Statement at Annex A – in cases of continuing designation only (see Section D)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>
<p>Relevant data re. academic performance (see Section E)</p>	<p>Complete? Yes / No / Comment</p>

Section G – Accountable Officer declaration

This declaration must be signed by the accountable officer as per Section A, Q2.

In signing this declaration you are confirming that:

- a. All of the information provided in the application is accurate and is approved as correct and subject to management review and appropriate governance oversight.
- b. Your organisation will not misuse public funds and will, should specific course designation be granted, comply with the criteria and conditions set out in the Department for the Economy guidance.
- c. You have been open, honest and transparent in your dealings with the Department, the QAA and, is applicable, HEFCE.
- d. Your organisation complies with all relevant tax obligations and legislation. Where this is not the case an explanation has been provided.
- e. Your organisation is not subject to any ongoing HMRC investigations, nor have any been completed in the last three years. Where this is not the case details have been provided.
- f. Your organisation (as a legal entity) and its directors, trustees, shareholders (with more than a 20 percent holding) or accountable officer have not been:
 - i. Convicted of a criminal offence anywhere in the world.
 - ii. The subject of any adverse finding in civil proceedings (in the last three years).
 - iii. The subject of any disciplinary proceedings by any regulatory authorities or professional bodies.
 - iv. Involved in any abuse of the tax systems.
 - v. Involved with any entity that has been refused registration to carry out a trade or has had that registration terminated.
 - vi. Involved in a business that has gone into insolvency, liquidation or administration while the person has been connected with that organisation or within one year of that connection.
 - vii. Investigated by a professional body, a court or tribunal, whether publicly or privately.
 - viii. Dismissed from a position of trust or similar.
 - ix. Disqualified from acting as a company director or from acting as a charity trustee.
 - x. Involved with a provider that has had a specific course designation application refused or has had a course de-designated.
- g. Where an item listed in f. does apply, you have provided details of who the item is applicable to and further details such as the nature of the offence/investigation/refusal/dismissal, dates and locations below.

If you wish to make any information known in relation to the above items, or if there is any other information which you think is relevant to this application and should be declared, please add details in the space below.

Failure to disclose relevant information may result in your course designation being reviewed and possibly revoked.

In the event of failure to provide accurate information during the application process, and throughout the duration of the period of course designation, the Department reserves the right (under the Education (Student Support) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008) to take necessary action including, but not limited to, the recouping of public money.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Annex A – Assurance Statement for Continuing Course Designation

If you are applying for continuing course designation (i.e. for a course which was previously designated by the Department) you must also complete this section which forms part of the overall application.

*Please note – this will be emailed with your application pack as a separate document entitled “**Course Designation – Application Pack – Annex A – Assurance Statement for Continuing Course Designation**”*