



Simple Guide to the Development and Approval

Of Postgraduate Programme Proposals at UWI Cave Hill

Developed by The School for Graduate for Studies and Research, Cave Hill Campus
(Professor Dwayne Devonish, Director, 2026)

This guide explains, in simpler language, the process for developing and approving postgraduate programme proposals at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus. It is designed to help new academics, junior staff, programme coordinators, and departments better understand the steps involved, the responsibilities at each stage, and how proposals move through the University system.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

Developing a postgraduate programme is primarily the responsibility of the Department and Faculty proposing the programme. However, the process also involves consultation with several university offices, committees, and academic bodies to ensure that the programme:

- meets high academic standards;
- is properly resourced;
- fits within the University's strategic direction;
- avoids unnecessary duplication with existing programmes;
- is financially and academically feasible; and
- provides students with a high-quality graduate education experience.

The process therefore involves both academic development and institutional approval.

KEY PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE PROCESS



01

Faculty Ownership

The proposing Department and Faculty are responsible for leading the development of the programme. This includes preparing the proposal, coordinating consultations, responding to feedback, and ensuring the proposal is complete.



02

Consultation and Collaboration

Programme proposals should not be developed in isolation. Departments are expected to consult with relevant university units, other Faculties, and in some cases other campuses.



03

Quality Assurance

Programmes must meet institutional standards for graduate education. Curriculum design, assessment strategies, delivery methods, and learning outcomes are all carefully reviewed.



04

Institutional Governance

The proposal moves through several formal committees and approval bodies before final approval is granted.

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STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE PROCESS



STAGE 1: CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of the process, the Department identifies the need for a new postgraduate programme.

This may be based on:

- Industry demand;
- Student demand;
- Emerging academic fields;
- National or regional priorities;
- Research opportunities;
- Professional development needs; or
- Strategic Faculty goals.

The Department is responsible for preparing the proposal using the approved institutional format.



STAGE 2: INTERNAL FACULTY ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAMME PLANNING

Once the initial concept is developed, the Department begins a more structured planning process.

In many cases, a Programme Planning Committee may be established to assist with:

- Curriculum planning;
- Consultation;
- proposal drafting;
- Stakeholder engagement; and
- Programme design.
- Key consultations normally include:
 - Campus Librarian – resource availability;
 - Campus Bursar – financial feasibility;
 - CETL – curriculum design and pedagogy;
- Campus IT Services – technology needs;
- Global Campus – online or blended delivery support.



STAGE 3: INTER-FACULTY AND INTER-CAMPUS CONSULTATION

The draft proposal is circulated to relevant Departments and Faculties across campuses for review and feedback.

The purpose is to:

- Identify overlaps with existing programmes;
- Explore collaboration opportunities;
- Encourage resource sharing;
- Avoid duplication; and
- Strengthen the proposal through wider academic input.

The proposing Department reviews all comments and revises the proposal where necessary.

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STAGE 4: PROGRAMME DESIGN AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

At this stage, the proposal becomes more fully developed.

The Department finalises:

- Programme structure;
- Course sequencing;
- Course descriptions;
- Learning outcomes;
- Teaching approaches;
- Assessment methods;
- Admission requirements; and
- Graduation requirements.

CETL and other quality assurance bodies may provide additional feedback at this stage.



STAGE 5: FACULTY BOARD REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The completed proposal is formally presented to the Faculty Board.

The Faculty Board reviews:

- Academic quality;
- Curriculum design;
- Staffing and resources;
- Strategic relevance; and
- Overall programme strength.

The Board may support the proposal, request revisions, or recommend additional consultation.



STAGE 6: ACADEMIC BOARD AWARENESS AND ALIGNMENT

Elements of the proposal may be shared through Academic Board channels for institutional awareness and alignment with broader university priorities.

This stage is not the formal approval stage.



STAGE 7: ADVANCEMENT THROUGH THE DEPUTY DEAN (GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH)

The Deputy Dean facilitates the movement of the proposal through institutional channels and prepares the submission for review by the Campus Committee for Graduate Studies and Research (CCGSR).



STAGE 8: CAMPUS COMMITTEE FOR GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (CCGSR)

The proposal undergoes detailed academic scrutiny.

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The Committee reviews:

- Programme structure;
- Academic quality;
- Assessment methods;
- Staffing capacity;
- Resource implications; and
- Alignment with graduate education standards.

The Committee may recommend revisions or advance the proposal to the BGSR.

STAGE 9: BOARD FOR GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (BGSR)

The BGSR is the final academic approval body for postgraduate programmes.

Possible outcomes include:

- Approved;
- Approved with minor conditions;
- Resubmission required; or
- Not approved.

In some cases, external expert review may also be requested.

STAGE 10: COMMUNICATION BACK TO FACULTY

The outcome is formally communicated back to the Faculty, Head of Department, and Dean.

If approved, implementation planning begins. This may include:

- Recruitment and marketing;
- Staffing arrangements;
- Admissions planning;
- Timetable development; and
- Programme launch preparation.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ACADEMICS

- Start consultation early.
- Keep clear records of feedback and revisions.
- Work closely with CETL.
- Think beyond academic content and consider resources and sustainability.
- Be prepared for revisions and committee feedback.

CONCLUSION

The postgraduate programme approval process at UWI Cave Hill is designed to ensure that new programmes are academically rigorous, strategically aligned, properly resourced, and beneficial to students and the institution.

Although the process may appear complex initially, it becomes easier to manage when understood as a structured system involving programme development, consultation, quality assurance, Faculty engagement, and institutional review.

COMMON ISSUES AFFECTING THE SUCCESSFUL APPROVAL OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

This reference guide outlines some of the most common weaknesses, issues, and institutional concerns that may affect the successful review and approval of postgraduate programme proposals at UWI. The issues listed below frequently emerge during Faculty Board, CCGSR, and BGSR review processes and should therefore be carefully considered during proposal development.

Issue / Constraint	Detailed Explanation of the Problem	Recommended Action
Weak programme rationale	The proposal may not clearly demonstrate why the programme is needed academically, professionally, nationally, or regionally. In some cases, the rationale is too general and does not sufficiently explain how the programme aligns with institutional priorities, labour market needs, industry demand, emerging disciplines, or strategic development goals. Weak rationales often make it difficult for reviewers to justify programme approval.	Provide stronger evidence-based justification linked to national, regional, institutional, and disciplinary needs.
Insufficient evidence of demand	Some proposals do not provide enough evidence to demonstrate likely student interest or market viability. There may be little or no labour market data, employer consultation, student demand analysis, or benchmarking against comparable programmes. This creates concerns about sustainability, enrolment levels, and long-term viability.	Include labour market evidence, surveys, employer feedback, benchmarking, and projected enrolment data.
Poor consultation and limited feedback	Key institutional stakeholders such as CETL, the Library, the Campus Bursar, Campus IT Services, Global Campus, or other Faculties may not have been adequately consulted during proposal development. Inadequate consultation can result in unresolved concerns emerging late in the review process.	Begin consultations early and append formal responses from all relevant stakeholders.
Weak curriculum design and pedagogical structure	Courses within the programme may not be sufficiently developed from a pedagogical perspective. In some cases, teaching methods are unclear, assessment methods are poorly aligned with learning outcomes, course sequencing is weak, or there is insufficient graduate-level rigour. Some proposals also contain outdated reading lists or references that do not reflect current scholarship or professional developments.	Strengthen curriculum mapping, update references, clarify teaching and assessment methods, and ensure alignment between learning outcomes and assessments.

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Incorrect credit structures or programme configuration	The programme may not comply with graduate regulations regarding total credits, course weighting, research requirements, contact hours, or thesis/project structures. Incorrect credit allocation can create major governance concerns during review.	Carefully review UWI regulations and approved programme structures before submission.
Assessment concerns	Assessment strategies may not adequately demonstrate graduate-level learning, critical thinking, research competencies, or applied skills. Some proposals rely too heavily on traditional examinations without sufficient diversity in assessment approaches.	Develop stronger and more balanced assessment strategies aligned with graduate education standards.
Resource and staffing concerns	Questions may arise regarding whether the Faculty has sufficient staffing capacity, supervision expertise, physical resources, laboratories, software, equipment, or financial support to sustain the programme.	Clearly outline staffing plans, resource availability, and sustainability arrangements.
Library and learning resource limitations	The Library may identify insufficient access to journals, databases, books, software, or other learning materials necessary to support the programme at the graduate level.	Engage the Library early and address all resource gaps before submission.
Technology and delivery concerns	For online or blended programmes, proposals may not adequately explain the technological infrastructure, LMS support, digital teaching strategies, or student support systems required for delivery.	Consult the Global Campus and Campus IT Services early in the development process.
Programme duplication or overlap	Reviewers may identify similarities between the proposed programme and existing programmes either within the Faculty, across other Faculties, or across campuses. This can raise concerns about duplication and unnecessary competition.	Clearly explain the distinctiveness of the programme and identify collaboration opportunities where appropriate.
Weak implementation planning	Some proposals focus heavily on curriculum but provide little detail regarding implementation planning, marketing, admissions processes, staffing arrangements, timelines, or operational readiness.	Develop a clearer implementation and operational plan.
Missing appendices or incomplete documentation	Important appendices, consultation responses, course outlines, budget details, staffing information, curriculum maps, or supporting evidence may be missing from the proposal package. Incomplete documentation often delays review or results in proposals being returned for revision.	Ensure all appendices and supporting documents are fully completed and attached before submission.
Poor formatting and unclear writing	Some proposals are difficult to review because sections are incomplete, poorly organised, inconsistent, or unclear. Weak academic writing and formatting issues can reduce the overall quality and professionalism of the submission.	Use approved templates carefully and ensure clarity, consistency, and professional academic writing throughout.

Prepared as a practical institutional reference guide for programme developers, Deputy Deans, Heads of Department, programme coordinators, and academic staff involved in postgraduate programme development at UWI Cave Hill.