

HANDBOOK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF SSSC APPROVED PROGRAMMES

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Key

	Introduction		Dealing With Complaints
	Initial Enquiry		Closure of an Approved Course
	Approval of New Courses		Relevant Documents
	Annual Monitoring		Data Information and Records Management
	Renewal of Approval		Glossary
	Making Changes		The SSSC Learning and Development Adviser Role in Quality Assurance
	Failure to Comply with the Rules		
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INTRODUCTION

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 provides that the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) shall have the general duty of promoting high standards:

- (i) of conduct and practice among social service workers; and
- (ii) in their education and training.

In order to carry out the duties outlined above, the SSSC has introduced Rules and Requirements (Rules), as amended time to time, which govern the approval and ongoing quality assurance of approved courses.

There are currently three sets of Rules, each of which applies to a different kind of course and these are:

1. Rules for Social Work Training 2003;
2. Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005;
3. Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008

OUR APPROACH

The SSSC meets its regulatory function through the consistent application of the quality assurance framework at all stages of the process. The process is designed to provide sufficient evidence that the Rules are met and will continue to be met during the approval period through continuous monitoring and review. Decision making at all stages is evidence based, informed by risk intelligence and improvement led. Actions and responses are proportionate. The process is underpinned by the core principles outlined below.

Learning and Development Advisers will focus on working collaboratively with providers to improve and develop courses. In this context development refers to the continuous process of improvement that demonstrates a responsive and reflective approach to course development.

Where appropriate the SSSC will work with other relevant partners on a joint approval or review of an identified programme.

During the approval stage and the continuous monitoring and renewal of approvals, the SSSC takes a risk intelligence approach. Assessment of provider risk levels are based on criteria co-produced with existing providers and generic areas identified with stakeholders including significant personnel changes and complaints related to academic or practice provision. Additionally, there may be individual criteria linked to individual providers such as experience of delivery or newness of programme. This information

will be obtained from a variety of intelligence sources including annual monitoring, internal subject reviews, SSSC intelligence and the Social Work Education Partnership.

The process of monitoring and review also provides the SSSC with important information for workforce planning, reporting and other developmental processes. In particular, the SSSC uses the information it gathers to identify trends, common issues and examples of successful innovation in course development. The SSSC will retain relevant information generated from the quality assurance process. Records are compliant with the SSSC's Data Protection Policy (2021), Data Protection and Privacy Notice (2021) and Retention and Disposal Schedule (2020).

PRINCIPLES

The following principles reflect the SSSC's approach to quality assurance.

1	Avoid duplication
2	Not overly bureaucratic
3	Take account of existing internal and external quality arrangements
4	Reliable and robust enough to enable the SSSC to be assured that the provision is of sufficient quality
5	Promote continuous improvement in line with expectations of quality enhancement
6	Take account of feedback from a range of stakeholders
7	Transparent and evidence based
8	Based on principles of equal opportunity
9	Consistent with the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers
10	Based on a 'no surprises', collaborative approach between provider and regulator in which information is offered and advice sought in an ongoing way

OVERVIEW OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING PROCESS

Quality assurance and monitoring follows the same procedure for social work degrees, specialist training and the childhood practice awards.

Courses are approved for a maximum of six years. Following approval, courses are monitored annually and reviewed at a minimum every five to six years to align with University Internal Subject Reviews and SQA cycle of review and re-validation. For those providers who do not have internal reviews the SSSC retains the right to undertake a SSSC led review.

This five or six-year timeframe is dependent on providers continuing to have low risk in terms of provision. The SSSC will retain the right to call SSSC reviews any time that it feels the risk of appropriate delivery by providers has increased.

A risk matrix records any concerns advisers may have about their programme and a low, medium, high system is in place.

Existing approved courses that are deemed to be of medium or high risk will be reviewed at regular intervals, related to the nature of the risk and actions taken to mitigate the risk.



HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook outlines the SSSC's quality assurance and development responsibilities. It also outlines the quality assurance processes and procedures that officers of the SSSC, course providers, and other stakeholders should follow to meet the Rules.

The handbook is divided into sections which reflect the stages of the quality assurance process. Each section will set out the procedure and provide information on the people involved, required reading, relevant documentation and links to other relevant sections. A flowchart at the end of each section will provide an overview of the process.

Please note, the guidance in this handbook cannot act as a substitute for the Rules. It must be used in conjunction with the appropriate set of Rules for the course being provided or proposed.

INITIAL ENQUIRY

People relevant to this stage	Role
Representatives of course providers involved in development of course	<p>To make initial enquiry to the SSSC.</p> <p>Provide an overview of proposed course for approval and links with other relevant bodies.</p>
SSSC Learning and Development Adviser	<p>To assist the provider to determine if the course would meet approval requirements.</p> <p>To support development work from initial inquiry until the outcome of the approval application.</p> <p>To inform the provider of the process, direct to relevant reading, clarify expectations, timescales etc.</p> <p>Provide clear guidance and feedback about the approval process up to the point when the application is submitted.</p> <p>Lead arrangements for the approval panel and panel event.</p>

PROCEDURE

Course providers seeking to deliver an approved programme must contact the SSSC at quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com to request approval.

The SSSC will identify a Learning and Development Adviser to respond to the query. The Adviser will arrange a meeting with the potential provider for a preliminary discussion on proposed plans. Areas covered include:

- Is approval necessary?
- Does planned development fit within the relevant rules?
- Does the proposed course meet a need?
- Indication of amount of work required to support approval
- Indication of timescales for approval and initial delivery
- Joint approval requirements

OUTCOMES

Possible Outcomes

- No approval required, no further role for the SSSC
- Approval required, proceed to next stage – approval application

The outcome of the preliminary discussion will be confirmed in writing within 21 days.

APPROVAL OF NEW COURSES

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically part II

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically part II

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically part II

Relevant approved Standards

People relevant to this stage	Role
<p>Course provider Course lead and appropriate team members</p> <p>Course correspondent</p>	<p>To confirm intent to apply for approval To prepare submissions To host the approval panel To attend and contribute to approval event To be the point of communication with the SSSC regarding formal approval of the course.</p>
<p>SSSC Learning and Development Adviser</p>	<p>To collaborate with provider To agree timescale for written application submission and set a date for the approval panel To provide guidance and feedback at key stages as required</p>
<p>Officer of the SSSC (Usually a Learning and Development Adviser)</p> <p>Head of Learning and Development</p>	<p>To identify approval panel members To distribute submissions to panel members in advance of panel To chair/co-chair approval panel To record the SSSC decision and gives preliminary feedback to the course provider To complete a summary report of the approval process and recommended outcome (if an SSSC led approval panel)</p> <p>To confirm decision and notify course provider in writing within 8 weeks of receipt of report.</p>
<p>Representatives of people who use services and their carers</p>	<p>To support development of programme and/or contribute to decision making as a member of the approval panel</p>

Social service employer Individual with subject expertise	To contribute to decision making as a member of the approval panel
SQA/other SQA approved providers HEI	Co-chair joint validation and approval event where relevant

Relevant Documentation

Application Form
Relevant Application Guidance
Supporting Documents

PROCEDURE

1. Notification of Intent

If SSSC approval is required, course providers must send a written notification of intent to apply to the SSSC at quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com.

The notification must include:

- the name and contact details, including email and telephone number for the identified course correspondent.
- the course provider's plans for developing the course.
- any relevant information about the course including date of validation event or expected delivery date.

2. Confirmation of Dates for Submission and Approval Panel

The SSSC will notify the course provider of the named Learning and Development Adviser who will liaise with the potential provider to progress the application.

The Adviser and the potential provider will agree the date for submission of the written application for approval of the course. This will normally be minimum of **six weeks** in advance of the approval panel.

Where course providers have validation events planned, the SSSC may request a joint event. Any materials developed and used for internal validation purposes can also be used for the SSSC approval purposes.

3. Preparing Submissions

The ethos of the SSSC's approval process is to encourage a collaborative and developmental approach which allows course providers to prepare submissions for approval with guidance and feedback from the Adviser at key stages.

The submission must include the completed and signed application form using the relevant guidance document and signed Form of Agreement. Additional documents to support the application for approval can include internal validation documents, partnership agreements, RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) arrangements, and any additional documents used to support the application for approval (e.g. documents used for any course provider internal validation purposes, if relevant).

Where the course has been validated by an awarding body, the course provider must cross reference their own internal documents to the SSSC's requirements to demonstrate how each of the SSSC's criteria for approval have been met. An appendix is included with examples of types of supporting documentation that can be submitted for each section of the application form.

Considerations when completing application process

- Have all criteria been considered and evidenced?
- Are all the relevant policies and procedures available/written?
- Can you evidence stakeholder engagement now and in the future?
- Can you evidence that the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers are embedded in the course content?
- Has/will the course achieve the appropriate SCQF level?

4. Submissions

Completed SSSC paperwork and supporting documents should be sent electronically to the SSSC a minimum of **six weeks prior** to the approval panel.

The submissions should be marked 'For the attention of the Quality Assurance – Professional Learning Team' and emailed to quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com

The SSSC will formally confirm and log receipt of submissions to course provider. Course providers must strive to make sure that all documents submitted are as complete as possible to avoid delaying the process.

5. Approval Panel

The SSSC will establish an Approval Panel and confirm membership with the course correspondent. Where possible, the Approval Panel will comprise of an officer of the SSSC (usually a Learning and Development Adviser), a representative of people who use social services/carers, an individual with subject expertise and a social service employer from a related setting. The provider will plan to host the Approval Panel.

If a SSSC-led approval panel is being held online, suitable arrangements will be negotiated between the provider and the SSSC for electronic hosting and access to the event sessions.

The SSSC will distribute electronic copies of the approval application documents to the panel members for review in advance of the Approval Panel. In SSSC led approval events, the Chair of the Approval Panel is usually an officer of the SSSC. Where course validation and SSSC approval are to be run as a joint event, the arrangements to Chair or Co-chair the panel will be agreed with the representative of the awarding body in advance of the event.

The Approval Panel will discuss the application for approval at the start of the approval event. The panel will consider whether there is sufficient evidence that the course will meet the Rules and note any areas of query or concern.

The provider will have the opportunity to address any clarifications or concerns during the approval event. Where the course provider is still in the process of developing aspects of the course, the Approval Panel will take this into account.

6. Panel Recommendations

The recommendations of the approval panel will reflect the core principles of the SSSC's approach to quality assurance and be informed by a risk intelligence and improvement led approach.

The recommendations are based on the evidence presented. There is an expectation that the relevant Rules will be met in full at the point of approval unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The SSSC recognises that at the point of approval the course may not yet be operational, and therefore, the application may largely be based on planned inputs and processes. The emphasis at the point of approval will therefore be on the provider meeting the Rules **and**:

- a. the commitment of the course provider to meet the Rules
- b. agreements between the course provider and key stakeholders to meet the Rules
- c. policies, systems, procedures and protocols in place that reflect the Rules
- d. action plans to make sure that the criteria for approval will be met.

The SSSC will look to establish that the work undertaken by the time of the approval event happens is **as good as it can be**. It will also be looking for the course provider to have a clear plan and timescale in which to complete any work that is still outstanding.

7. Feedback

The Approval Panel will provide preliminary feedback on the day of the panel.

In SSSC led approval events, the Chair is responsible for recording the Approval Panel's recommendation and giving preliminary feedback to the applicant course provider.

Where course validation and SSSC approval are to be run as a joint event, the Chair of the awarding body will be responsible for recording and sharing the decision regarding validation in advance of the SSSC recommendation and feedback.

8. Outcomes

There are three possible outcomes following an application for approval particular to the course and set of Rules used.

Approval

The course is approved

Approval with conditions

The SSSC may approve a course and require conditions to be met by the provider. The approval panel will advise the course provider of any additional information or work required and agree timescales.

In some circumstances the SSSC will require the conditions to be met in full prior to granting a full approval.

In other circumstances, the SSSC may require that some conditions are met or are in the process of being met before the provider commences delivery of the course.

All conditions will be followed up by the SSSC as part of its quality assurance and development work and the SSSC will provide support and advice to the course provider.

The approval panel may also make recommendations that the course provider should consider. These are suggestions to further enhance the programme and can be explored as part of future support and review activity.

The course is not approved

The course provider can reapply taking account of the feedback from the SSSC.

9. Notification and confirmation of decisions

The officer of the SSSC will prepare a summary report of the approval process and recommended outcome for the SSSC Head of Learning and Development.

The Head of Learning and Development will ratify the decision and advise the course provider in writing of the outcome in 8 weeks. A copy of the summary report will also be shared with the applicant course provider.

10. Appeals

The SSSC approaches approval from a position of collaboration and partnership. Concerns about any aspect of the approval process will be discussed openly and resolved at a local level.

If a course provider is unhappy with the approval process or the outcome of the approval, they may appeal as outlined in the 'Appeals' section of this handbook.

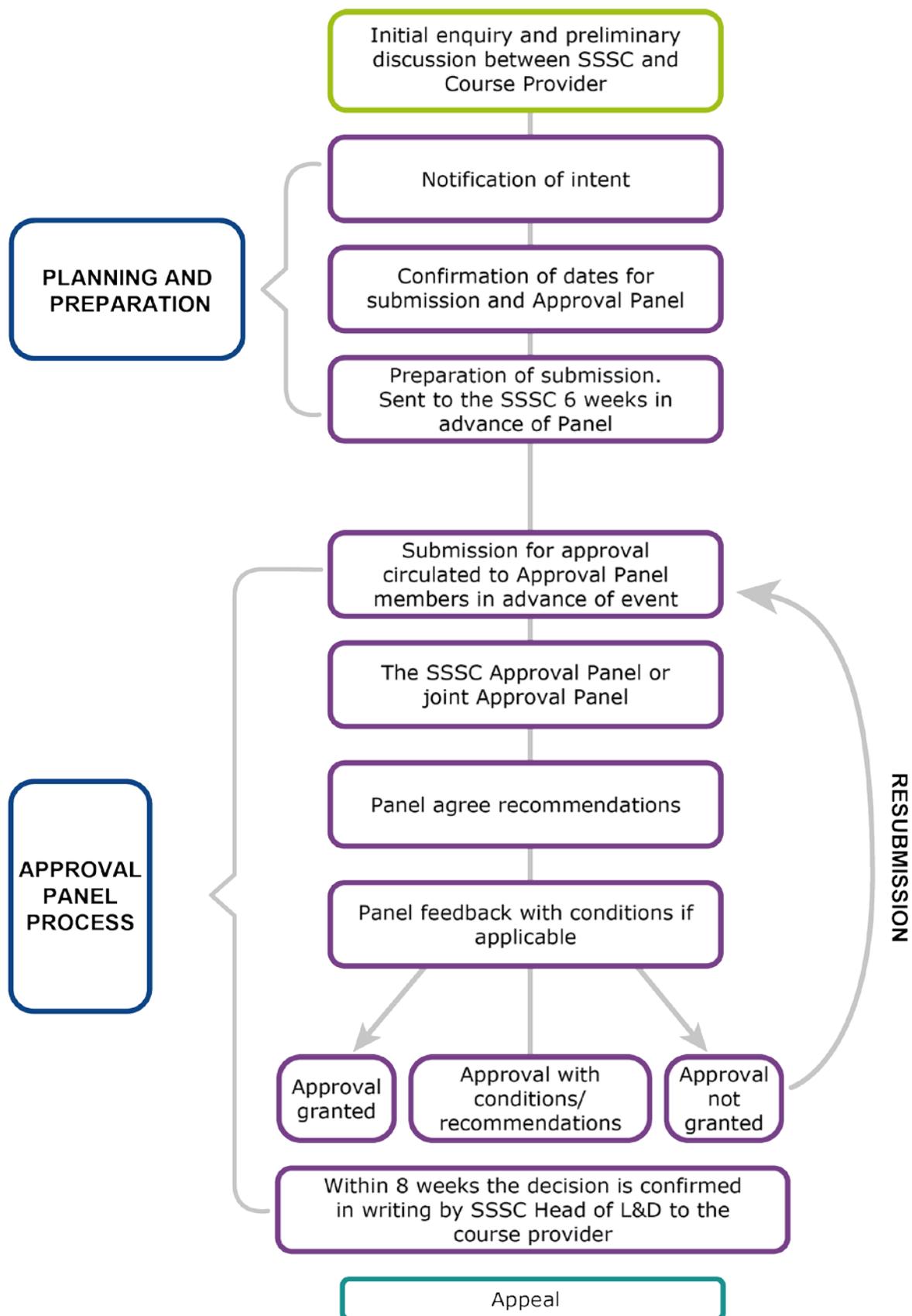
11. Going Forward

Approval is ongoing and will remain in place while the course provider meets the appropriate Rules and Requirements. The course provider must not make any material change to the course provision without consulting with and obtaining the SSSC's consent in writing as outlined in the 'Making Changes' section of this handbook.

Each course will be allocated a Learning and Development Adviser as the SSSC point of contact for quality assurance purposes. All courses are subject to annual monitoring and newly approved courses will be monitored to ensure that any actions/conditions have been met and implemented and that any recommendations have been considered and/or implemented. Further detail is provided in the relevant sections of this handbook.

The SSSC will publish a list of approved courses on the [SSSC website](#).

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROVAL PROCESS



ANNUAL MONITORING

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically rule 9 and rule 13.2

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically rule 11 and rule 15.2

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically rule 9 and rule 13.2

Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document including guidance notes

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider Course correspondent	To complete Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document and return within timescale To discuss returns with Adviser
Officers of the SSSC Learning and Development Adviser	To request Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document annually To coordinate and collate WFD data from the annual Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document To review submission and discuss with course provider To confirm in writing outcome of annual review

Relevant Documentation

Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document including checklist, general information and progression spreadsheets

Self-declaration form

Material Change form

Self-evaluation documentation

Course provider internal subject review findings

Course provider internal quality assurance reports eg. External Examiner or Verifier reports

Quality assurance documents related to practice learning

PROCEDURE

1. Requesting Information

To satisfy that the Rules continue to be met during the approval period, the SSSC requires approved course providers to complete self-declaration documentation and course data on an annual basis. These returns are part of the monitoring process and are collectively known as the Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document.

The SSSC will write to the course provider requesting that the QAM document be completed and returned. Templates of the relevant documents will be attached/linked to the communication. A deadline for receipt of the completed QAM document will be included in this request. Failure to return by deadline may impact on the continuation of approval of the course.

It is essential that course providers adhere to this deadline as the quantitative data for each of the course groups (social work, specialist courses and childhood practice) is collated simultaneously to inform the data intelligence analysis.

Any course involved in a review and renewal of approval should return their annual QAM returns when requested to do so as the review cycle may not align with the annual returns timetable.

2. Preparation of Returns

Course providers must complete the Quality Assurance Monitoring (QAM) document which comprises of the following documentation:

- Self-declaration form
- Quality Assurance Monitoring document
- Data relating to intake, progression and completion of candidates.
- Information relating to complaints, appeals or termination of training.
- Copies of External Examiner or Verifier annual reports and reports of any action taken as a result of these reports.
- Copies of any reports relating to internal quality assurance activity at subject level for the previous 12 months.
- A Material Change Form (if relevant)

A course provider authorised signatory must sign each completed document to confirm that the information provided is accurate and that the course continues to meet the SSSC's criteria for approval.

The course provider must confirm contact details for the staff members with whom the SSSC will liaise during the year ahead.

If the course provider has any queries about the QAM they should contact the allocated Learning and Development Link Adviser.

3. Submitting Returns

Completed returns should be submitted electronically to the SSSC by the **stated deadline**.

Returns should be marked '*For the attention of the Quality Assurance – Professional Learning Team*' and emailed to the following address:

quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com

The SSSC will formally confirm and log receipt of the annual returns to course provider.

Course providers must strive to make sure that all documents submitted are as complete as possible.

4. Feedback

The allocated Learning and Development Link Adviser will review the annual returns and arrange a time to discuss the returns with the course provider. Discussion points may include relevant quality improvement and development matters arising from the returns and progress to enhancement themes previously identified at approval or review and renewal of approval.

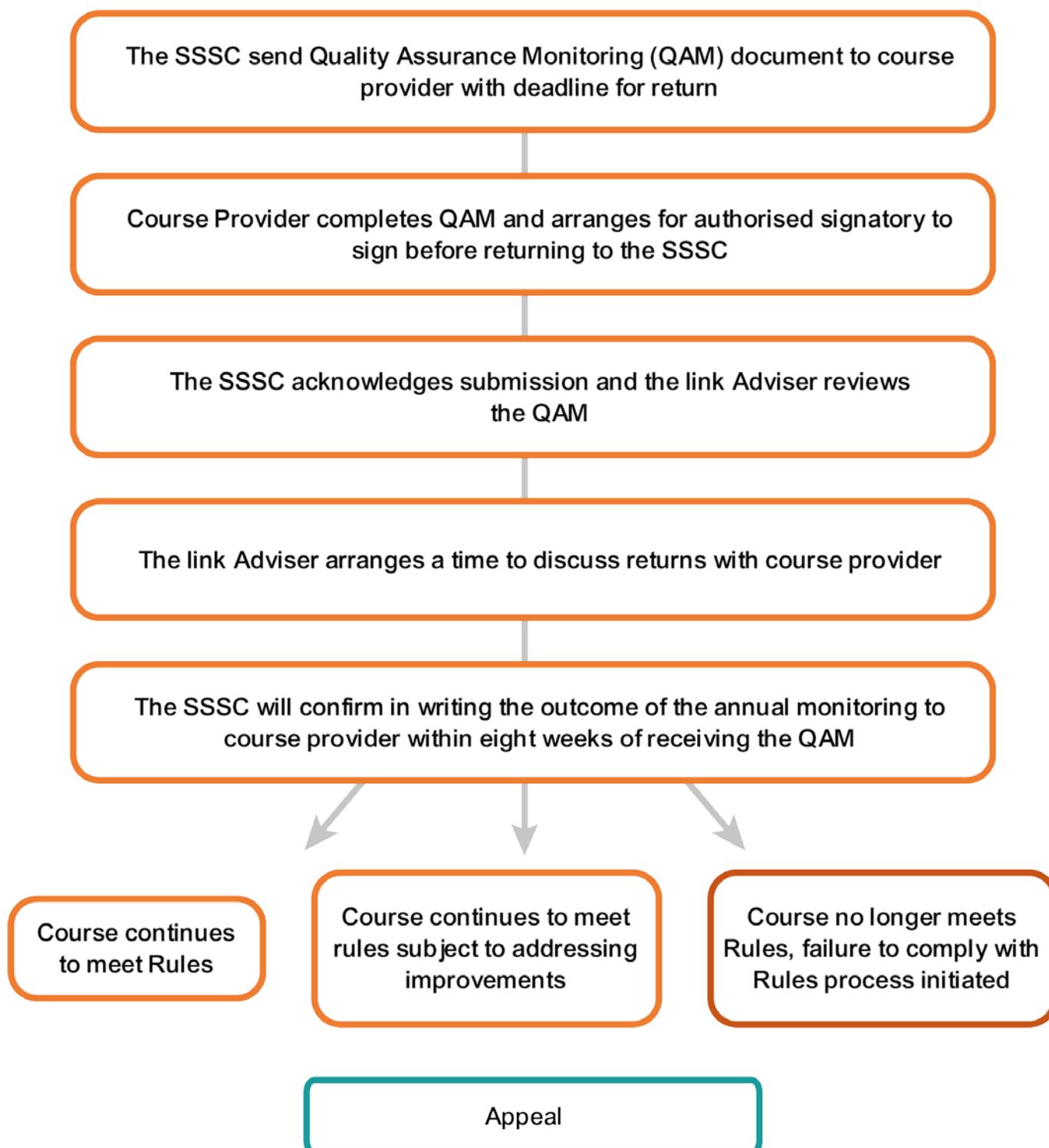
If a material change form is submitted the Learning and Development Link Adviser will contact the course leader and discuss the changes. If the changes are accepted within the terms of the approval, the approval will be continued, and the Adviser will confirm continuation of approval. If the changes constitute a major change to the conditions of approval the process outlined in the 'Making Changes' section will be followed.

The SSSC will confirm in writing the outcome of the annual monitoring to the course provider within eight weeks of receiving the QAM and the Learning and Development Link Adviser will complete the self-declaration template.

The three possible outcomes are:

- the submission is satisfactory and that the course continues to meet the Rules.
- the course continues to meet the rules subject to addressing improvements and development themes, including risks identified within the monitoring process.
- the course no longer meets the Rules and the SSSC is initiating the process for 'Failure to Comply with the Rules'.

OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL MONITORING



RENEWAL OF APPROVAL

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically rule 9 and rule 13.2

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically rule 11 and rule 15.2

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically rule 9 and rule 13.2

Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and Standards in higher education

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider Course lead and appropriate team members Course correspondent	To prepare submissions To host the renewal of approval event To attend and contribute to the renewal of approval event To be the point of communication with the SSSC regarding event
SSSC Learning and Development Adviser	To collaborate with provider To agree timescale for written application submission and set a date for the renewal of approval panel To provide guidance and feedback at key stages as required
Officer of the SSSC (Usually a Learning and Development Adviser)	To identify panel members To distribute submissions to panel members in advance of panel To chair/co-chair panel To record the SSSC decision and give preliminary feedback to the course provider followed by a report of the renewal of approval process and recommended outcome.

Head of Learning and Development	To confirm the SSSC decision to the course provider within 8 weeks of receipt of official review report.
Representatives of people who use services and their carers	To support development of programme and/or contribute to decision making as a member of the panel
Social service employer Individual with subject expertise	To contribute to decision making as a member of the panel
Present and former students Representatives of people who use services and their carers Social service employer	To contribute evidence to the panel as key stakeholders who have direct experienced of the course
SQA/other SQA approved providers HEI	Co-chair joint validation and renewal of approval event where relevant SSSC report including terms of approval QA annual returns

Relevant Documentation

Self-evaluation form
Course provider internal quality assurance and enhancement reports
Course provider internal subject review findings
Course provider internal quality assurance reports e.g. External Examiner or Verifier reports
Quality assurance documents related to practice learning
Course handbooks and any other relevant supporting documents

PROCEDURE

1. Notification of renewal of approval review

A formal renewal of approval review will be undertaken in the fifth or sixth year, according to the University/SQA review cycle. This can be undertaken jointly with the provider or may be SSSC led. The SSSC will write to the course provider to advise them that renewal of approval is required

2. Planning the renewal of approval review

The course provider will agree a suitable date for this alongside the Learning and Development Adviser within a period of **no less than 3 months prior** to the review.

The course leader and Learning and Development Adviser should plan for the review and jointly determine what form the review will take. The review can take the following forms:

o **A joint review with the awarding body**

The Learning and Development Adviser will participate as a full member or joint chair of the provider's Internal Subject Review. The nature of the role assumed by the Learning and Development Adviser will be determined in consultation with the appropriate persons within the provider institution.

o **SSSC led review**

The SSSC may initiate its own review of an approved course where it considers that the internal subject review is not appropriately timed or does not sufficiently focus on course provision. This may apply to courses that are delivered within a wider faculty that is reviewing a considerable number of courses, or where the nature of the internal review would not take account of the SSSC requirements.

The planning process may include significant others such as the University/College QA functions and/or the Chair of the review. The review may be jointly chaired by the appropriate person nominated by the University/College and the SSSC Learning and Development Adviser.

The course provider and the SSSC Learning and Development Adviser should collaboratively plan the format and content of the review and agree the composition of the review panel.

The review panel within joint reviews will normally comprise representation of senior members of the Faculty and/or other academic disciplines (for university courses) or SQA Advisers (for SQA courses), an employer from the relevant professional practice field and an academic with subject expertise.

3. Preparing Submissions

Course providers will complete a self-evaluation and provide a range of relevant documents to evidence the narrative within the self-evaluation. The self-evaluation comprises the following themes:

- course compliance and validation
- course development and management
- course content, structure, teaching and assessment
- quality assurance and enhancement
- stakeholder involvement

The narrative within each of the themes should be referenced to the supporting documentation. Where the renewal of approval is a joint review, the course provider may cross reference their own internal documents to the SSSC's requirements to demonstrate how each of the SSSC's criteria for approval have been met.

4. Submissions

Completed SSSC paperwork and supporting documents should be sent electronically to the SSSC **six weeks prior** to the review.

The submissions should be marked 'For the attention of the Quality Assurance – Professional Learning Team' and emailed to quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com

The SSSC will formally confirm and log receipt of submissions to course provider.

Course providers must strive to make sure that all documents submitted are as complete as possible to avoid delaying the process.

5. Renewal of Approval Review Panel

The panel will be constituted as agreed at the planning stage.

The review panel will consider the submissions in advance of the review and at the panel will agree the areas for further discussion or commendation.

During the review process the review panel will meet with the course delivery team and with a range of appropriate stakeholders engaged in course delivery including students, employers, service users and carers. The primary focus of the SSSC Learning and Development Adviser is to establish whether the course continues to meet the relevant Rules. There is an expectation that the relevant Rules will be met in full at the point of re-approval unless there are exceptional circumstances, and the course provider will have a clear plan and timescale in which to complete any work that is still outstanding.

6. Feedback

The Chair of the review panel will provide preliminary, verbal feedback on the day of the panel. The SSSC Learning and Development Adviser will provide supplementary verbal feedback on any specific point relating to the SSSC Rules not covered in overall feedback.

7. Confirming decisions

The Chair of the panel will provide the SSSC, as soon as reasonably practicable, with written reports on the outcomes of the review, including any conditions and recommendations.

The Learning and Development Adviser will draft a SSSC review report which will indicate if the Rules continue to be met and highlight commendations, any conditions and/or recommendations that should be met or that the course no longer meets the Rules.

The report will reflect the core principles of the SSSC's approach to quality assurance and be informed by a risk intelligence and improvement led approach.

There are three possible outcomes following the renewal of approval review:

Renewal of Approval

The course is re-approved and will be subject to usual annual monitoring.

Renewal of approval with conditions/recommendations

The SSSC may re-approve a course and require conditions to be met by the provider. The report will outline any reasonable requirements imposed by the SSSC to which the course provider will comply for the purpose of ensuring that the course continues to meet the Rules.

The course no longer meets the Rules

If the SSSC considers that the Rules are no longer met, the procedure for Failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules/Withdrawal of Approval of approved courses will be followed.

The Head of Learning and Development will ratify the recommendation and advise the course provider in writing of the outcome of the renewal of approval review 8 weeks from receipt of the Joint Review report or SSSC led review.

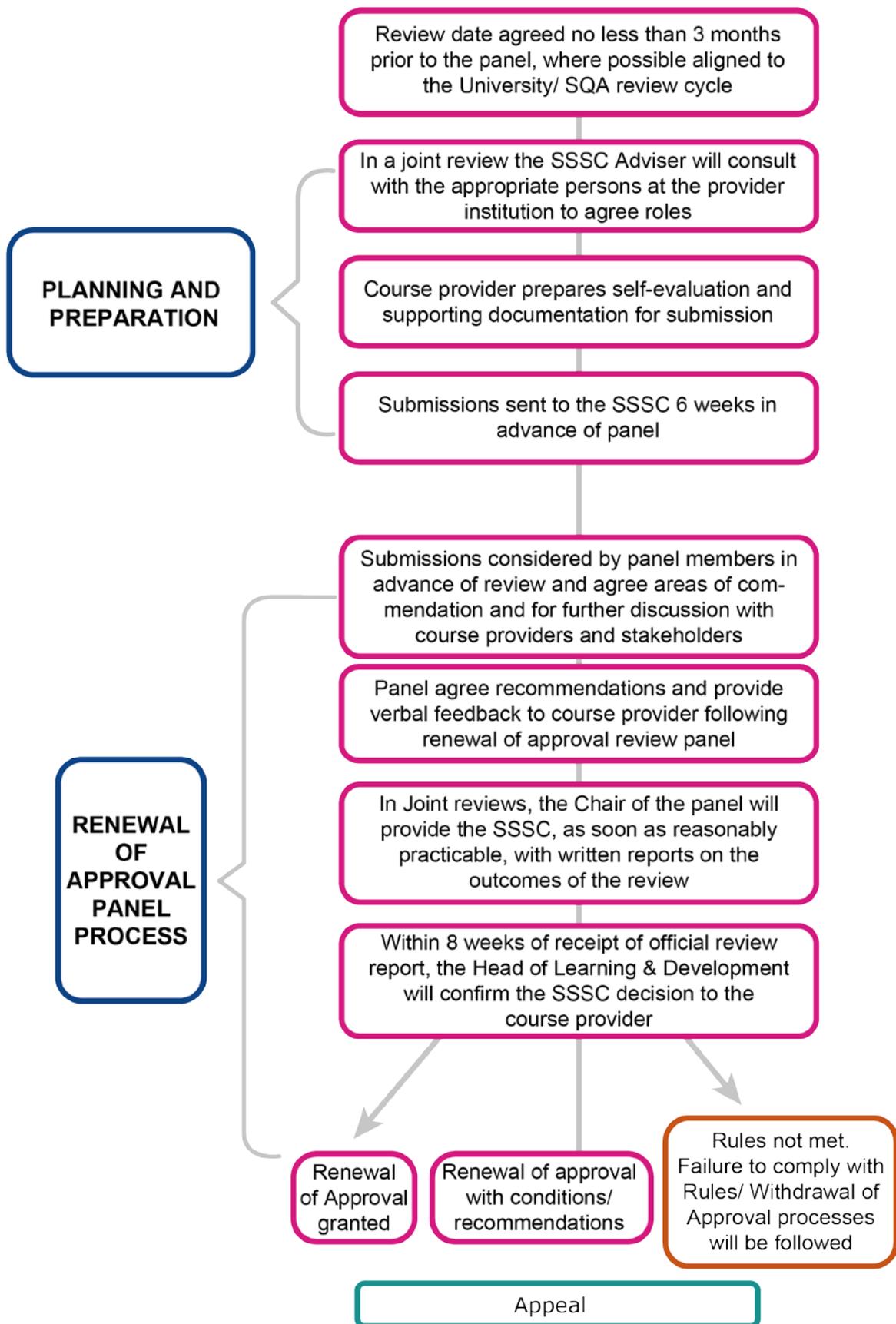
A copy of the SSSC report will also be shared with the applicant course provider.

8. Appeals

The SSSC approaches approval from a position of collaboration and partnership. Concerns about any aspect of the process will be discussed openly and resolved at a local level.

If a course provider is unhappy with the process or the outcome of the renewal of approval review, they may appeal as outlined in the 'Appeals' section of this handbook.

OVERVIEW OF THE RENEWAL OF APPROVAL REVIEW PROCESS



MAKING CHANGES

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically part II, Rule 7.7

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically part II, Rule 9

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically part II, Rule 7.7

Relevant course standards e.g. revised Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE).

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider Course/module leader Course correspondent Quality Assurance Officer as appropriate	To discuss proposed changes with the SSSC and internal QA To complete, sign and submit material change form
Learning and Development Adviser Officers of the SSSC Head of Learning and Development	To discuss proposed changes To review material change form, authorise and confirm change with course provider (minor change) To review material change form, provide rationale for recommendation to Head of Learning and Development. To approve material change or modification and provide written confirmation to provider.

Relevant Documentation

Material Change Form

Supporting documents

Written notification of approval of change and/or modification to the approved course provider from the SSSC

PROCEDURE

1. Notifying the SSSC of intent to make a change

It is recognised by the SSSC that change or modification to an approved course is likely to be evidence of continuous improvement and quality enhancement. However, the course provider must not make any material change to the course provision without consulting with and obtaining the SSSC's consent in writing.

Where any change or modification to an approved course is planned or anticipated by a course provider, the course provider must contact the SSSC. Usually, an initial contact is made with the allocated Learning and Development Adviser.

Intended changes to courses can also be notified to the SSSC by returning a completed Material Change form as part of the annual monitoring process or can be submitted at any time as required.

2. Discussing a change

It is preferable if the course provider contacts the allocated Learning and Development Adviser to discuss the proposed change or modification prior to completing the form.

Issues such as rationale, potential impact on course delivery, learning outcomes, student experience and anticipated benefits will be discussed. The Learning and Development Adviser will also determine if the course provider has consulted with their internal quality assurance and if relevant course standards are maintained.

This information will enable the SSSC to determine if the changes are likely to be minor or material and to support the course provider in the completion of the material change form.

In some instances, the proposed changes or modifications are significantly different from the original terms of approval that a re-approval of the course will be required.

Examples of minor change

- rewriting of modules within the existing course and assessment framework
- minor amendments to the assessment criteria
- restructuring of the course in terms of delivery while maintaining the credit and levelling values

Examples of a material change or modification

- the provision of new modules within the existing course and assessment framework
- where a change or changes to a course are the direct result of a rise or fall in student numbers and/or staff resources as related to the resource level at the time of the original approval of the course
- where a change or changes to a course are the result of alterations in partnership arrangements with external stakeholders which have impacted on course resources such as adequate supply of practice learning opportunities
- where a new mode of delivery is introduced such as distance learning or part time or online
- We review how the change/s impact on standards, anticipated benefits/risks, etc. Intelligence can come from provider's internal QA and enhancement processes including External Examiner/External Verifier reports
- where material restructuring of the approved course takes place in preparation for renewal of approval of that course

3. Submission of change form

Following discussion, the course provider will complete and submit the form to the SSSC via quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com marked 'For the attention of the Quality Assurance – Professional Learning Team'.

The SSSC will formally confirm and log receipt of submissions to course provider.

4. Decision making

The SSSC will review the submission and confirm one of the following:

- minor modification or change
- a material change or modification
- a re-approval is required

The relevant course standards will be referred to in order to make sure that the course will continue to meet these following the proposed change.

Further negotiation may be required between the SSSC and course provider about proposed change prior to approving the change.

The Learning and Development Adviser will record a rationale for approving the change or modification or requiring a re-approval of the course on the modification of change form. The Head of Learning and Development will countersign the change form to confirm the decision.

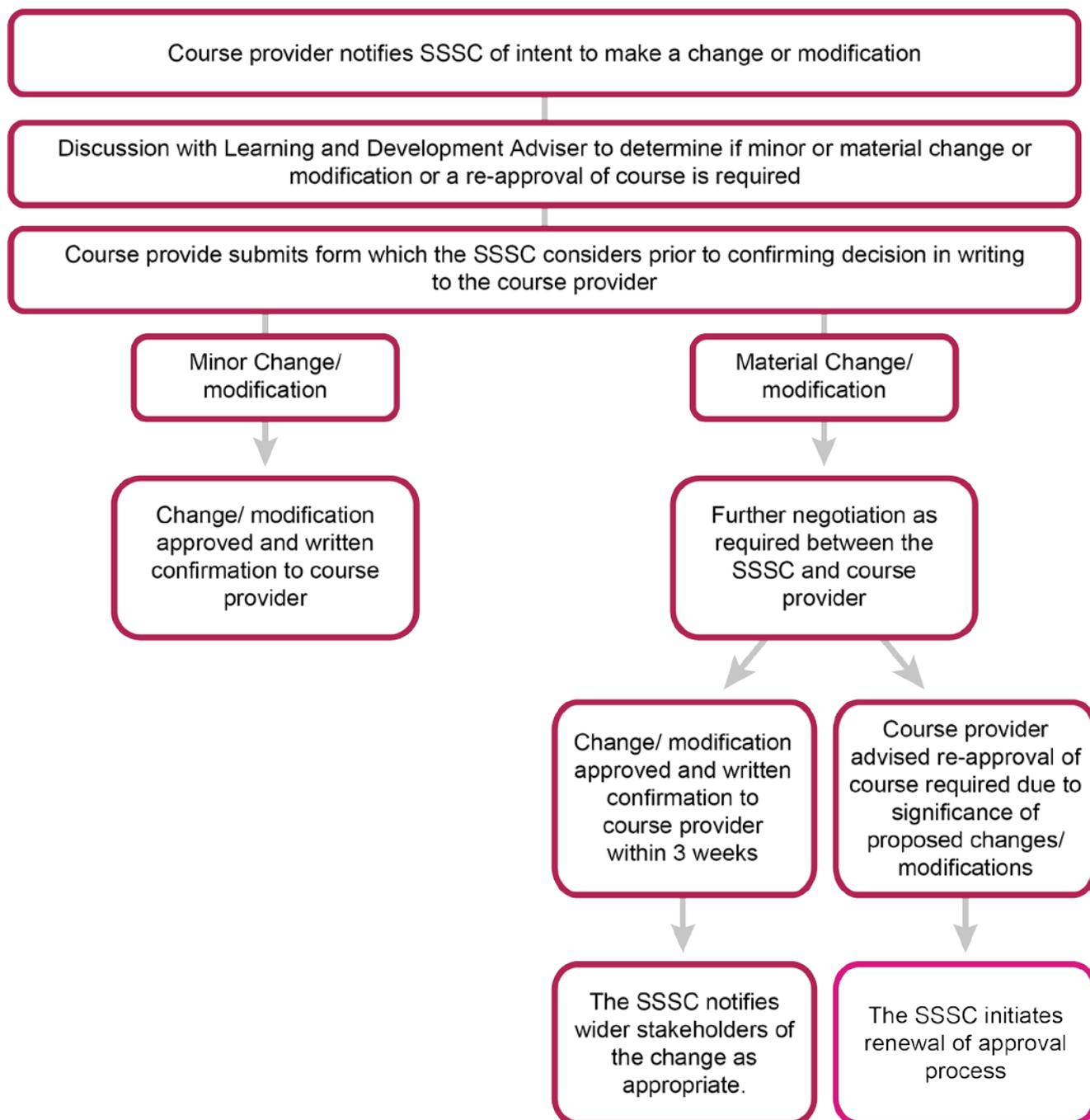
5. Confirming the change

The decision regarding approval of change will be confirmed to the course provider in writing via return of the completed and signed change form, within 3 weeks.

The SSSC notifies wider stakeholders of the change as appropriate.

If re-approval is required, the Learning and Development Adviser will follow the renewal of approval process outlined in the relevant section of this handbook.

OVERVIEW OF MAKING CHANGES PROCESS



FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE RULES

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically rule 14, 15

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically rule 16, 17

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically rule 14, 15

SSSC procedure for managing the withdrawal of approval
Data Protection Act 1998

SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers.

People relevant to this stage	Role
Head of Programme/Programme Lead Course/module leader Course correspondent Quality Assurance Officer as appropriate	To discuss proposed changes with the SSSC and internal QA To complete, sign and submit material change form
Learning and Development Adviser	To respond to the breach of Rules To carry out preliminary inquiries and investigation where required
Head of Learning and Development	To decide on outcome and inform course provider in writing
Council Members	To be kept informed

Relevant Documentation

There are no standard forms for the course provider to complete

SSSC Preliminary and/or Investigation Report

Relevant documentation from course provider

Action plan and response

Minutes of Meetings

PROCEDURE

1. Responding to an issue

The SSSC will approach any concerns that a course provider has failed to comply with the Rules in a transparent and timely manner. The SSSC will attempt to ensure compliance through negotiation and collaboration and issues are resolved at the earliest opportunity.

The Learning and Development Adviser or Head of Learning and Development will notify the course provider's Head of Programme/ Programme Lead in writing that the SSSC is in possession of information that suggests a possible failure to comply with one or more of the Rules.

The notification will set out the possible breach, the SSSC officer to carry out the preliminary inquiries, the scope of the inquiry and a timescale for completion. The Learning and Development Adviser to notify of possible failure and if breach upheld after investigation, then Head of Learning and Development decides the outcome and informs the course provider in writing.

The SSSC reserves the right to immediately initiate an investigation into the alleged failure of a course provider to meet the Rules when the SSSC considers it appropriate due to the seriousness of the alleged failure. The definition of the seriousness of the matter is at the sole discretion of the officers of the SSSC. In such instances the preliminary stage will not be required.

2. Preliminary Inquiries

The Learning and Development Adviser will carry out preliminary inquiries to obtain additional relevant information from the course provider and any other relevant parties.

3. Preliminary Findings

The Learning and Development Adviser will summarise the information available in a brief preliminary report.

Where there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Rules, this will be stated in the report and that no further action is required.

Where there is evidence of a possible failure to comply with the Rules, the course provider will be given the opportunity to remedy any alleged breach of the Rules, either within 28 days or such longer period at the discretion of the SSSC. The report will set out what action needs to be taken to make sure the Rules are met.

The SSSC will advise the Head of Programme/Programme Lead that the SSSC is in possession of information that suggests a possible failure to comply with one or more of the Rules. Thereafter, the SSSC will seek to obtain additional information from the course provider and other person or

persons having an interest normally within 28 days from receipt of the original information.

The preliminary report will be sent to the Head of Programme/Programme Lead and they will be asked to respond as appropriate.

4. Decision at Preliminary Stage

The course provider must send confirmation in writing to the SSSC that the required actions have been taken to remedy the breach.

The SSSC will consider the response from the course provider along with information obtained through preliminary inquiries. If the SSSC is satisfied that the planned action has resolved the matter satisfactorily and the risk of reoccurrence is minimised no further action will be taken. This will be communicated in writing to the course provider.

If the SSSC remains of the view that there may be a failure on the part of the course provider to comply with one or more of the Rules, or the breach is of such seriousness, it will advise the named correspondent of the course provider, in writing, of the intention to initiate an investigation.

5. Initiating an investigation

An investigation will be implemented at any point during the approval period where:

- the SSSC is of a view that there may be a failure on the part of a course provider to comply with one or more of the Rules and where an opportunity for the course provider to remedy this has not in the view of the SSSC been successful **or**
- where the SSSC considers the alleged failure to be serious enough to warrant an immediate investigation.

The course provider will be informed in writing of the SSSC's intention to immediately initiate an investigation.

The notification will specify the grounds for taking this course of action, the SSSC investigation participants, the scope of the inquiry and a timescale for completion.

The purpose of an investigation will be to establish whether a course provider has breached one or more of the Rules and what remedial action is required to resolve the breach or if approval should be withdrawn.

6. Conducting an investigation

The investigation will commence no later than 28 days from the course provider receiving the written notice.

The SSSC will appoint Council Members or other individuals to participate in the investigation of approved courses they can do so if they do not have, or have not had, any significant connection with the course provider.

In this instance significant connection is defined as having been involved in any aspect of the course provider's course provision in the previous four years. This may include:

- current or recently retired external examiners or verifiers
- honorary professors
- visiting lecturers/trainers
- an employee of the course provider

An officer of the SSSC will:

- gather information on the alleged breach of the Rules
- prepare a list of issues to be considered
- prepare a list of people to be interviewed
- agree the questions to be asked of individuals
- prepare a list of additional documents required
- arrange a schedule of meetings.

Visits to the course provider will be undertaken by a Learning and Development Adviser, a senior officer of the SSSC and/or Council Members or other individuals who do not have, or have not had, any significant connection with the course provider.

The purpose of these meetings is to gather information that will assist the SSSC in their decision making. The meetings will deal with questions and any additional documents requested, subject to the requirements of data protection legislation.

Minutes will be taken at these meetings and agreed with those present.

7. Decision

The SSSC will prepare a report and notify the course provider in writing of the outcome of the investigation setting out reasons for this decision. The investigation is likely to result in one of the following decisions:

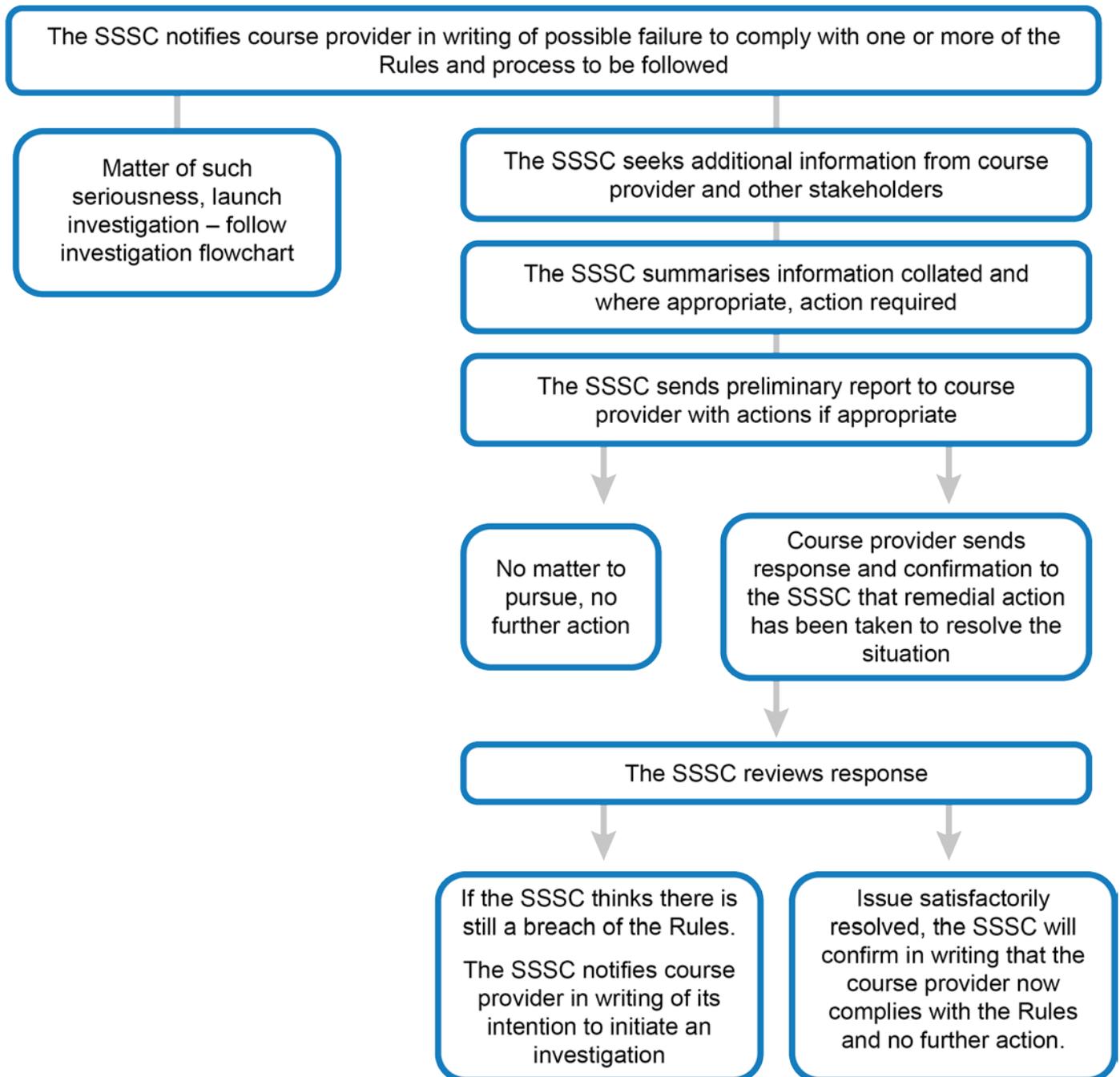
- **No breach of the Rules has taken place.** The Head of Learning and Development makes the decision and will inform the course provider in writing. A note of this is kept on file.
- **Breach of the Rules has taken place.** The Head of Learning and Development makes the decision and will inform the course provider in writing, setting out the reasons for the outcome of the investigation, and will also outline agreed remedial action and timescales.

If the remedial work is completed to the satisfaction of the SSSC, within the agreed timescales, and remedies the breach of the Rules, Head of Learning and Development will advise the course provider, in writing, that it is satisfied with the action taken and will confirm that the course provider now complies with the Rules.

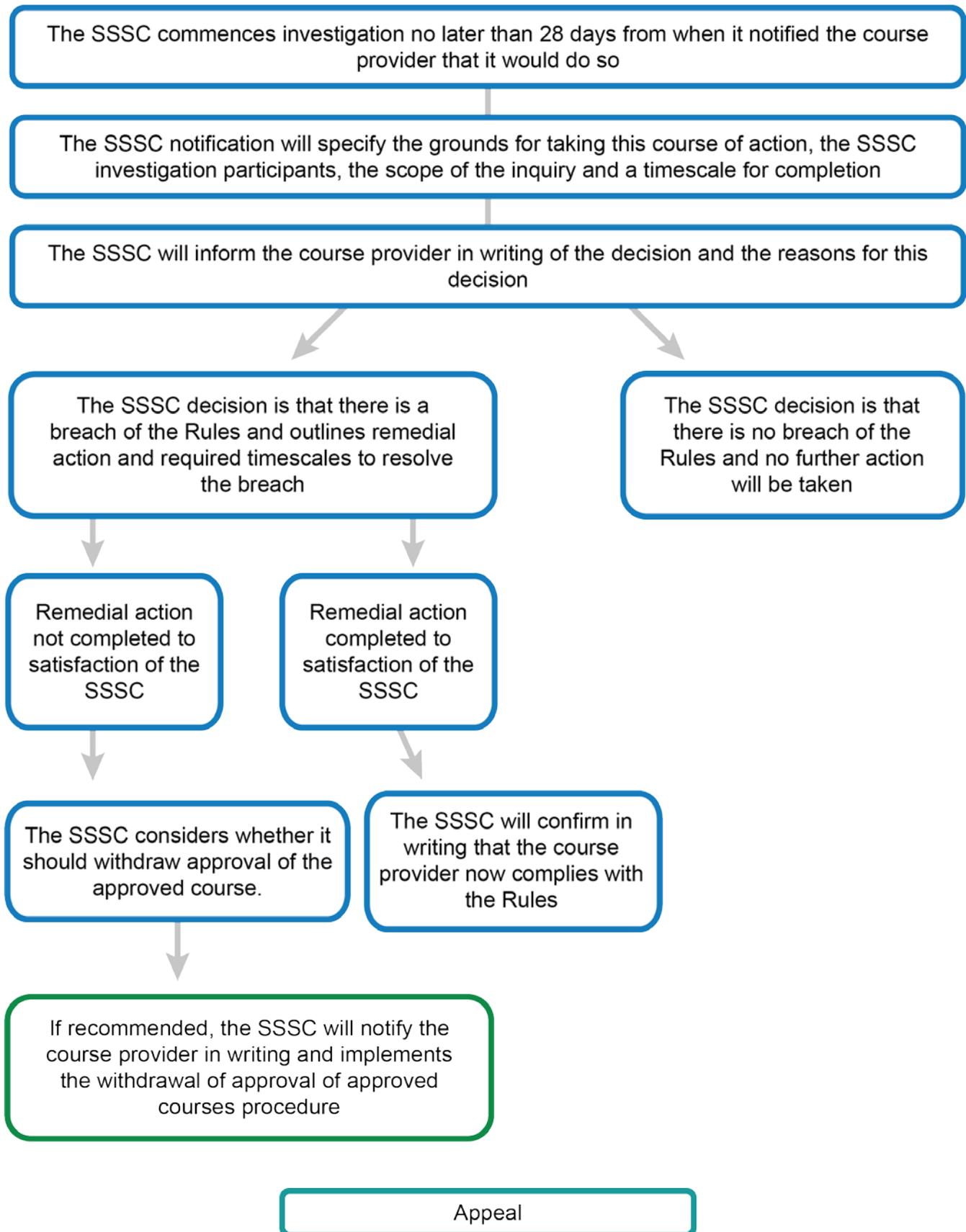
If the remedial work is not completed within the agreed timescales or is not completed to the satisfaction of the SSSC, the SSSC will consider whether steps should be taken to withdraw approval of the course. The same applies if a plan of work to remedy a breach of the Rules is not agreed and completed within a reasonable timescale.

If it is recommended that approval of the approved course is withdrawn, the Head of Learning and Development will advise the course provider in writing and the SSSC procedure for managing the withdrawal of approval of an approved course will be implemented.

OVERVIEW OF FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE RULES PROCESS – Preliminary Inquiries



OVERVIEW OF FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE RULES PROCESS – Investigation



WITHDRAWAL OF COURSE APPROVAL

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically rule 16

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically rule 18

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically rule 16

SSSC procedure for the investigation of Failure to comply with Rules approved courses.

SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers.

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider Head of Programme/Programme Lead Course/module leader Course correspondent Quality Assurance Officer as appropriate	To make representation regarding intent to withdraw approval To complete, sign and submit material change form
Learning and Development Adviser Head of Learning and Development Officers of the SSSC	To review representation, make a recommendation to Head of Learning and Development To make final decision and inform course provider in writing of intent to withdraw approval To work with course provider to seek alternative provisions for students To inform relevant stakeholders

Relevant Documentation

There are no standard forms for the course provider to complete
 Representations from course provider
 Correspondence between the SSSC and course provider

PROCEDURE

1. Notification

The SSSC will only consider withdrawing approval for an approved programme following an investigation into failure to comply with the Rules.

When it is recommended that approval of the approved course be withdrawn, the Head of Learning and Development will notify the course provider in writing, setting out the reasons for this recommended course of action.

The letter will confirm that the course provider has 28 days from the receipt of the letter to make written representations to the SSSC regarding the proposal.

2. Response by course provider

In the first instance, written representations should be sent to the assigned Learning and Development Adviser and copied to the Learning and Development Manager.

3. Review of recommendation to withdraw approval

Following receipt of representations from the course provider, the learning and development adviser and manager, Head of Learning and Development or Director of Development and Innovation will review the recommendation against the representations submitted.

Due consideration will be given to whether withdrawal of approval is still the most appropriate course of action.

4. Decision

The SSSC will produce a report to outline the decision made and rationale for reaching this decision and the Head of Learning and Development will then write to the course provider to confirm the decision.

If approval is to be retained, investigation materials and subsequent discussions will be kept on file.

If approval is to be withdrawn this will be confirmed to the course provider, in writing, including the reasons for the decision and the date the withdrawal will become effective. It will also ask the course provider to consider the needs of students registered on the course and work with the SSSC, where required, to seek alternative provision for those affected.

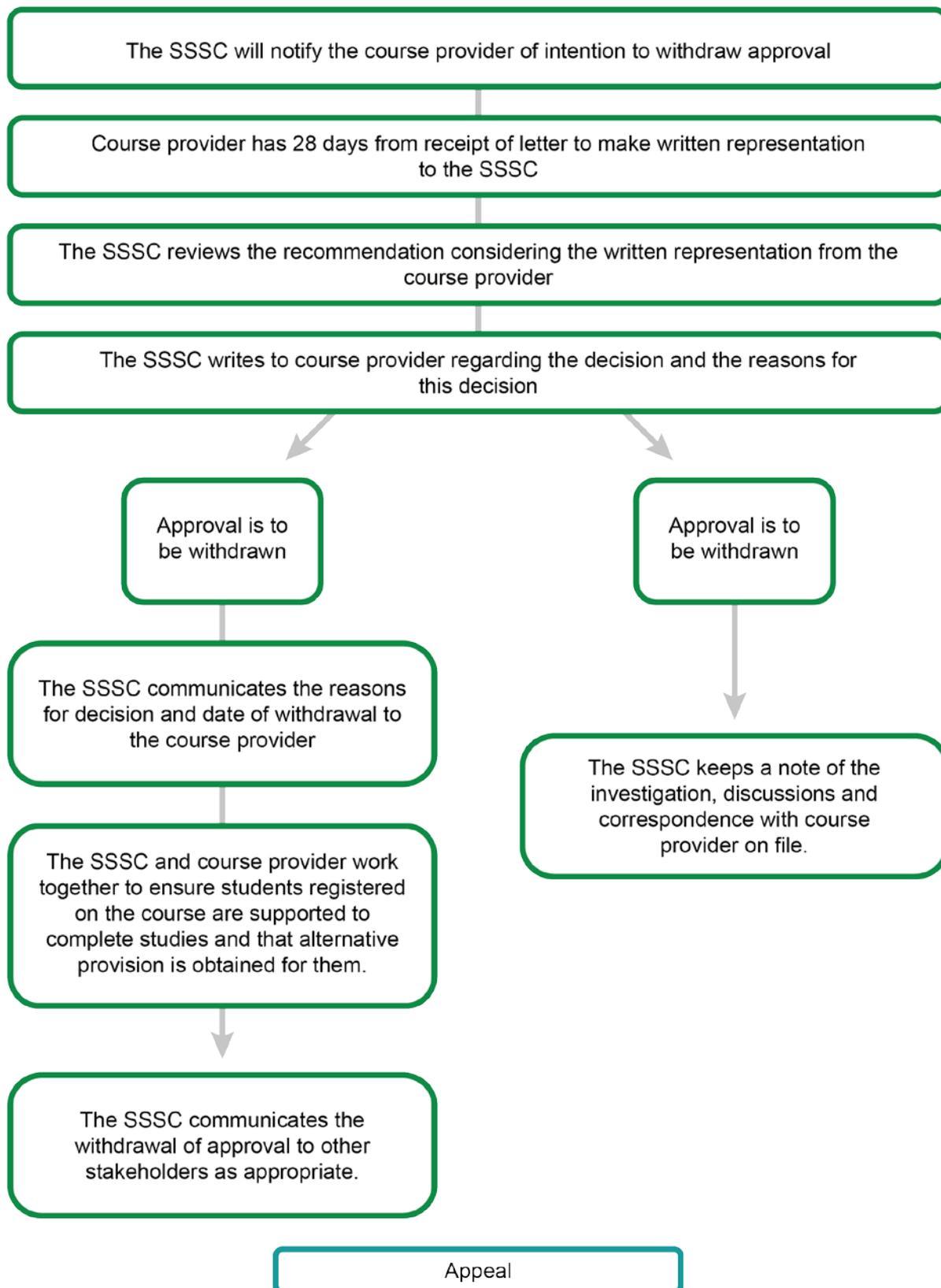
Where approval is withdrawn, this will be communicated to relevant stakeholders.

5. Support during withdrawal process

The SSSC will continue to work with the course provider to plan for the end of the course, seek alternative provision for affected students and provide additional support for these students through the period of transition to an alternative course provider.

The SSSC will seek confirmation from the course providers that all students have transitioned to another provider or completed their studies.

OVERVIEW OF MANAGING WITHDRAWAL OF COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS



APPEAL

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically part VI

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically part VI

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically part VI

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider – Head of Programme/Programme Lead	To make representation regarding the appeal
Officers of the SSSC	To collate documentation for appeal
Council Members	To be members of the Appeals panel
Independent stakeholder	To be a member of the Appeals panel

Relevant Documentation

There are no standard forms for the course provider to complete

Representations from course provider

Correspondence between the SSSC and course provider

A course provider may appeal to the SSSC against the following:

- a decision not to approve a course¹,
- any requirements imposed by the SSSC²,
- or any decision to withdraw approval³.

Reference should be made to the Rules for detail of when the decision comes into effect.

¹ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, rule 7; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, rule 7; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, rule 9.

² Rules for Social Work Training 2003, rules 12.6 and 13.7; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, rules 12.6 and 13.7; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, rules 14.6 and 15.7.

³ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, rule 16; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, rule 16; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, rule 18.

List of grounds for appeal

A course provider may appeal against a decision of the SSSC, referred to in the Rules, on the following grounds:

- a. that the SSSC did not take into account material information which was made known to it at the time of the decision
- b. that new information which could not have been made available at the time of the decision and which materially affects the outcome has since become available
- c. that the SSSC based its decision on an incorrect material fact
- d. that the SSSC did not observe its own procedures and that this failure materially affected the decision
- e. that the SSSC acted contrary to natural justice
- f. that the SSSC exercised its discretion in an unreasonable manner

PROCEDURE

1. Notification of Appeal

A written notice of appeal must be lodged with the SSSC by the course provider within 28 days of notification of the decision appealed against and must identify:

- (a) the decision being appealed against
- (b) the grounds for appeal.

A written statement in support of the appeal and any documentary evidence will also be lodged with the SSSC by the course provider within this timescale.

2. Convening an Appeals Panel

An Appeals Panel will be convened. Under the Rules⁴, an appeal will be heard by an appeals panel consisting of:

- two Council Members
- an individual who is not a Council Member or an officer of the SSSC, but who has knowledge and experience of the type of course provision which is the subject of the appeal.

No person may be a member of the appeals panel if that person has had any previous involvement in the matter which is the subject of the appeal.

The members of any appeals panel will also be independent of the course provider making the appeal.

The SSSC will lodge any documentary evidence with the appeals panel within seven days of receipt of the written notice of appeal.

The course provider and the SSSC will be provided with a copy of any documentary evidence lodged by the other party no later than 14 days prior to the hearing of the appeal.

The appeal will be heard within 28 days of receipt of written notice of appeal by the SSSC where it is practicable to do so. Otherwise, the appeal will be heard as soon as reasonably practicable.

The appeals panel may hear oral submissions by the course provider and the SSSC and may consider documentary evidence and the evidence of witnesses.

The standard of proof will be on the balance of probabilities.

⁴ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, rule 23; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, rule 22; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, rule 25.

3. Appeals Panel Decision

An appeals panel may, by majority vote, make one of the following decisions:

The appeal is upheld, in which case an officer of the SSSC may be redirected to reconsider any material information known about, but not taken into account at the time of the decision appealed against or new material information or agree an action plan to rectify the effect of any failure to observe its own procedures which materially affect the decision and make a new decision on the matter in terms of the Rules.

The appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision will stand.

Adjourn consideration of the appeal to a later date and if it thinks it appropriate to do so, require an officer of the SSSC and/or the course provider to provide additional information to the reconvened hearing.

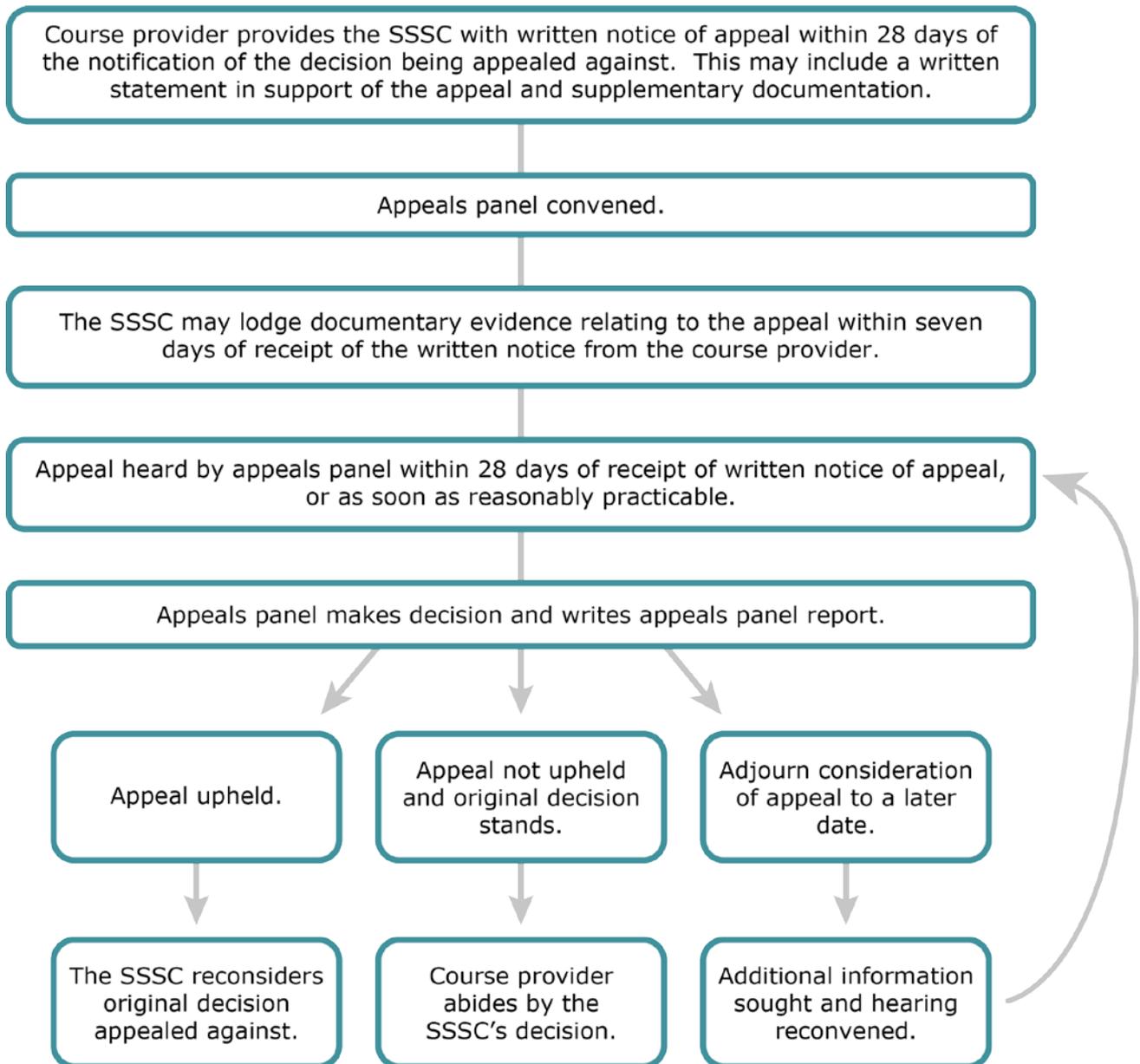
4. Communicating the decision

The SSSC will issue to the course provider a written appeals panel report setting out the decision and the reasons within 14 days.

The SSSC will make available detailed information about its appeals process on the SSSC's website and in such other manner as the SSSC sees fit.

The appeals panel's decision will be final.

OVERVIEW OF APPEALS PROCESS



DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rule 6.1(p)

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, Rule 8.1(o)

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rule 6.1(l)

Relevant course provider student and course handbooks

Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education

Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001

UK GDPR 2016/679 and Data Protection Act 2018 ("data protection law")

People relevant to this stage	Role
Stakeholder	To raise the complaint
Course provider – Head of programme	To make representation regarding the appeal
Officers of the SSSC	To update the complaints log To conduct investigation, make a decision and review decision when requested to do so.

Relevant Documentation

There are no standard forms for the course provider to complete

Representations from course provider

Correspondence between the SSSC and course provider

PROCEDURE

1. Making a complaint

The SSSC can only investigate complaints in which the issues seem to constitute a breach of the Rules through which the course provider has been approved to deliver a course.

Complaints in respect to any course approved by the SSSC must first make full use of the course providers complaint/appeal procedures prior to contacting the SSSC. Guidance for this should be within the course/student handbook.

If the outcome of this process is unsatisfactory, students and other stakeholders have a right to lodge a complaint with the SSSC.

Complainants must have due regard for data protection law when processing personal data including communication regarding complaints.

Complaints about the **conduct** of any registered student undertaking a course approved by the SSSC should be made to the Fitness to Practise Department at the SSSC and will be dealt with as a discrete process.

Other complaints should be marked **Private and Confidential** and submitted in one of the following ways:

In writing, for attention of:

Learning and Development Manager – Professional Learning Team
Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY

Or via **secure email** to quality.assurance@sssc.uk.com and marked Private and Confidential FAO Learning and Development Manager – Professional Learning Team.

2. Responding to the complaint

Complaints will be dealt with in the first instance by the Learning and Development Manager and by officers of the SSSC to whom they delegate responsibility.

The Learning and Development Manager or delegated officer of the Council will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within seven working days.

The Learning and Development Manager will inform the course provider that a complaint has been received

The complaint will be investigated, information reviewed, and a formal response made to the complainant within 21 working days.

3. Outcome of the complaint

The investigation will result in one of the following outcomes:

Complaint is upheld

If the complaint is upheld and the SSSC is subsequently of the view that there may be failure on the part of the course provider to comply with one or more of the Rules, then the SSSC will attempt to ensure compliance through negotiation with the course provider as described in the Rules⁵, and by following the SSSC procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules in this Handbook.

Complaint is not upheld

The matter is closed unless there is a request to review of outcome. If a request for review is not requested within agreed timescale, the course provider will be advised that the matter is closed.

4. Request review of outcome

If the complaint is not upheld and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, they can request in writing, for the course provider complaint to be reviewed by the SSSC's Chief Executive.

The request for review must be made within seven working days of receiving outcome of complaint.

The Chief Executive or their nominated officer will acknowledge the request within seven working days.

The Chief Executive will then review the complaint considering the initial investigation and response and send a written response within 15 working days of the receipt of the request to review the complaint.

⁵ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, rules 14.1-14.5; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, rules 14.1-14.5; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, rules 16.1-16.5.

5. Outcome of the review

The review will result in one of the following outcomes:

Complaint is upheld

If the complaint is upheld and the SSSC is subsequently of the view that there may be failure on the part of the course provider to comply with one or more of the Rules, then the SSSC will attempt to ensure compliance through negotiation with the course provider as described in the Rules mentioned previously.

Complaint is not upheld

The decision of the Chief Executive will be final. The course provider and complainant are advised that the matter is closed.

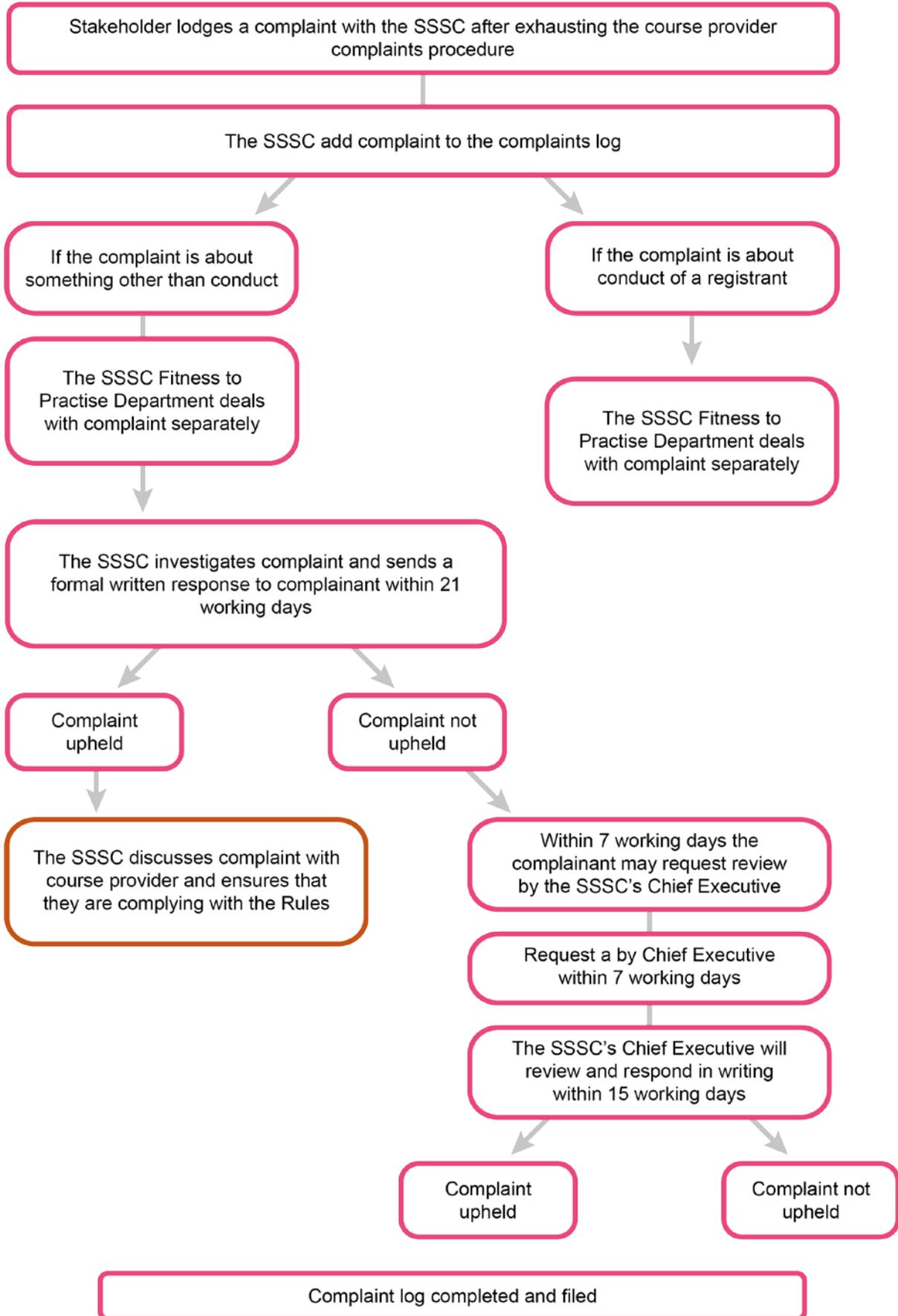
6. Recording of complaints

Complaints will be managed with due regard to data protection law.

A record of all complaints will be kept on a complaints log held by the SSSC.

Complaints will be recorded to assist the SSSC monitor the types of issues occurring, how these are resolved and how long it takes to deal with them.

OVERVIEW OF DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS PROCESS



CLOSURE OF AN APPROVED COURSE

Required reading in conjunction with this section:

Rules for Social Work Training 2003

Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005

Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008

SSSC procedure for annual monitoring

People relevant to this stage	Role
Course provider Head of Programme/ Programme Lead Course/module leader Course correspondent Quality Assurance Officer as appropriate	To advise SSSC of intent to close programme To arrange for external assessor/ examiner summary closure report To provide the SSSC with necessary documentation To liaise with the SSSC on plans for closure
Learning and Development Adviser Officers of the SSSC	To liaise with provider on plans for closure To confirm the SSSC is satisfied that all requirements have been met To inform key stakeholders To update list of approved courses and providers

Relevant Documentation

In the event of the closure of a course, a closure letter will be sent to the course provider

External Assessor/Examiner summary closure report

PROCEDURE

1. Notifying SSSC of pending closure

In the event of a course moving to closure the course provider must notify the SSSC in writing that they intend to close the course, the reason(s) for closure and the planned closure date.

It is important that the SSSC and the course provider formalise this process to ensure that all students are accounted for and that the course provider and stakeholders, including Scottish Government, are aware of the closure position.

Where closure is anticipated for all course providers, a section requesting details of this will be included in the annual monitoring return completed by the course provider and sent to the SSSC.

It is likely that there will be a staged progression to the closure as ongoing student assessment issues will require time to be resolved.

2. Preparation for closure

The course provider must confirm to the SSSC in writing that there are no continuing students, nor outstanding complaints nor appeals.

On receipt of such a notification the SSSC will check through student records to ensure that all students registered with the SSSC have been accounted for. The SSSC will bring to the course provider's attention any emerging differences.

The course provider and the SSSC will reach a shared understanding about student completion numbers.

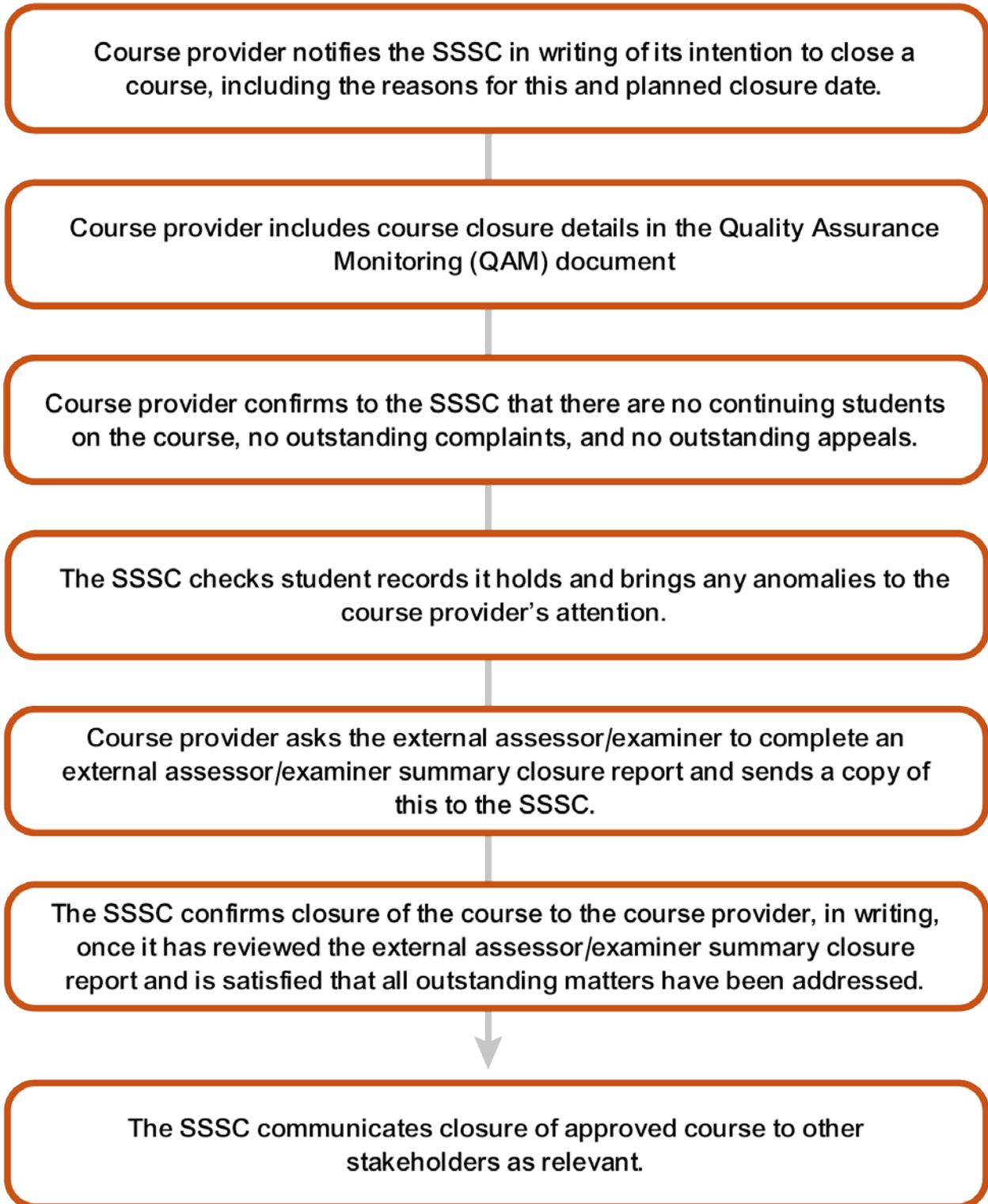
The course provider will request an External Assessor/Examiner summary closure report from the External Examiner (degree) and provide the SSSC with a copy.

3. Confirming closure

Once the SSSC is satisfied that the final results sheet has been signed and provided to the SSSC it will confirm in writing that:

- it has received all necessary information required to confirm closure of the course
- it is satisfied that there are no continuing students or ongoing complaints or appeals
- the course has been removed from the approved list and that the revised list of approved courses will be published for stakeholder notification.

OVERVIEW OF CLOSING A COURSE PROCESS



RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

SSSC Rules and Requirements:

- [Rules for Social Work Training 2003](#)
- [Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005](#)
- [Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008](#)

SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers 2016

Application Forms and Guidance:

- [Application for Approval of Social Work Training Courses](#)
- [Application for Approval of Childhood Practice Awards](#)
- [Childhood Practice Awards Approval Application Guidance](#)
- [Application for Approval of Specialist Training Awards](#)
- [Specialist Awards Approval Application Guidance](#)

Standards:

- [Standards in Social Work Education 2019](#)
- [Standard for Childhood Practice Revised 2015](#)
- [Standards and Audit for Practice Learning Qualification and Practice Learning Qualification \(Social Services\) December 2005 \(Revised 2006\)](#)
- [Standards of the Mental Health Officers Award 2007](#)
- [Standard for Chief Social Work Officers \(2015\)](#)
- [Standard for Residential Child Care \(2015\)](#)

Quality Assurance:

- [Quality Assurance Monitoring \(QAM\)](#)
- [Progression spreadsheets](#)
- [General information spreadsheet](#)
- [Material Change form](#)
- [Self-declaration form](#)
- Self-evaluation templates for 5/6 year reviews. [Social Work, Childhood Practice, Specialist Awards](#)
- [QA monitoring template](#)

DATA INFORMATION AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records will be retained as a result of the quality assurance and monitoring process.

Retention, storage and deletion of information is governed by the following organisational policies:

[Data Protection Policy \(2021\)](#)

[Data Protection and Privacy Notice \(2021\)](#)

[Retention and Disposal Schedule \(2020\)](#)

All relevant completed forms, correspondence and supporting documentation relating to any aspect of the quality assurance processes outlined in this handbook will be stored securely and retained in line with the retention and disposal schedule which states 5 years from closure of file.

Examples of data retained include:

- contact details course leads
- completed application for approval and supporting evidence
- relevant documents from approval/renewal of approval events
- outcome of application or approval process
- written confirmation of decision and feedback from SSSC relevant to any part of quality assurance process
- SSSC reports produced for approval, renewal of approval
- documentation for closure of approved courses
- annual returns
- completed material change form/s and written notification of approval of change and/or modification to the approved course
- documentation relevant to receipt and management of appeals and outcome
- documentation relevant to receipt and management of complaints, investigation and outcome
- documentation relevant to receipt and management of course closures.
- correspondence between course provider and the SSSC

This list is not exhaustive.

How data is used:

The process of monitoring and review provides the SSSC with important information for workforce planning, reporting and other developmental processes. In particular, the SSSC uses the information it gathers to identify trends, common issues and examples of successful innovation in course development. The SSSC will retain relevant information generated from the quality assurance process.

GLOSSARY

The following words and phrases are referred to in this handbook or are drawn from the Rules.

Approval Panel	<p>An approval panel is made up of a panel of impartial stakeholders selected from a larger pool who review and comment on the application documents and contribute to making a recommendation about the approval of a course. Where required, the SSSC will provide additional support to panel members to review the documents required.</p> <p>Panels generally comprise of an Officer of the SSSC, representative of people who use social services/carers, an individual with subject expertise and a social service employer from a relevant setting.</p> <p>Identified SSSC Learning and Development Advisers have responsibility to either assist course providers to prepare for course approval or to chair the approval panel.</p> <p>An officer of the SSSC will chair or co-chair the approval panel. It is usually a Learning and Development Adviser however it could be any other Officer appointed for the purpose by the SSSC's Chief Executive.</p> <p>The SSSC recruits a pool of panel members to make sure that each category of representation is reasonably covered and a spread of members across the country. All receive training and support from the SSSC to carry out the role and are bound by confidentiality.</p> <p>Members of the approval panel should not have had direct prior involvement with the course provider in the development of the course provisions that is being approved.</p> <p>In SSSC led approvals, an officer of the SSSC will chair the approval panel. They are responsible for recording the recommendation of the Approval Panel and giving feedback to the applicant course provider.</p>
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	<p>They will be the link person for any subsequent submissions relating to progress on any conditions set as part of the approval.</p> <p>Where there is a joint approval panel the panel chairs will work in partnership to avoid duplication of process. The SSSC will retain the responsibilities for recording of the recommendation of the approval panel relevant to SSSC approval.</p>
'Awarding body'	Higher education institutions with degree conferring powers or other awarding bodies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority.
'Carer'	a person who provides informal, unpaid care to a member of their family or to another person.
'Chief Executive'	The Chief Executive of the SSSC
'The Council' (our Council Members)	Oversee the work of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The SSSC is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. We also have responsibility for the approval and quality assurance of social work education, childhood practice and specialist awards approved by SSSC.
'Council Member'	A person who sits on the SSSC Council. The SSSC has a Council of 10 members, including the Convener, who come from a variety of backgrounds. The Council is required to include SSSC registrants and users, or previous users of care services or care for a person who uses services in the membership.
'SSSC Registration Team'	The department of the SSSC who manage the registration of the social service workforce and maintains the Register.
'Course correspondent'	The person who the course provider has identified as the point of contact with the SSSC. This may sometimes, but not necessarily, be the course provider, head of social work or training or the course or module leader.

'Course provider'	A higher or further education institution, or other learning centre that is approved by an awarding body, that provides or proposes to provide a course that is designed to meet the criteria for approval set out in the Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, or Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standards for Childhood Practice 2008, or on whose behalf a course is provided in terms of a franchising agreement.
'Course provider – course leader/head of programme'	The person who the course provider has identified as having overall responsibility for course provision.
'Course provider - quality assurance officer'	The person who the course provider has identified as the person in their agency with specific responsibility for quality assurance.
'Course provider - course teaching staff'	The people identified by the course provider as providing a teaching or training input to the approved course.
'Course standards'	The Standards upon which a particular course is built eg Revised Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE), Standards for Childhood Practice Revised 2015.
'External Examiner or External Verifier'	The independent and impartial person contracted by an awarding body or course provider to provide informed comment on the standards set for approved courses and student achievement in relation to these standards. They present their feedback annually to the awarding body or course provider in a report by the External Examiner or External Verifier and may include recommended action. Reports are included in annual self-declaration returns to the SSSC.
'Further education (FE) college'	A college providing further education and training and normally involved in the delivery of national and higher national qualifications awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.
Head of Learning and Development	The officer of the SSSC who has senior management responsibility for learning and development activity, which includes the regulation of education and training.
'Higher education institution (HEI)'	An institution with degree awarding powers.

'Learning and Development Adviser'	The member of SSSC staff who participates in carrying out the quality assurance and enhancement procedures outlined in this handbook. Learning and Development Advisers are the link person to, and liaison with, a specific course provider.
'Learning and Development Manager'	The person employed by the SSSC who manages the Learning and Development Advisers in the Professional Learning Quality Assurance Team. The Learning and Development Manager reports to the SSSC's Head of Learning and Development.
'Material Change'	When any change or modification to an approved course is planned or anticipated by course provider and likely to be evidence of continuous improvement and quality enhancement
'Officer of the SSSC'	The SSSC's Director of Development and Innovation or any other officer appointed for the purpose by the SSSC's Chief Executive eg Learning and Development Adviser in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.
'People who use services'	Individuals, groups, communities or organisations that receive social work services. This includes the children and the parents of children who use early years services.
'Quality Assurance Monitoring' (QAM)	<p>To satisfy that the Rules continue to be met, the SSSC requires approved courses to provide annual quality assurance monitoring (QAM) documentation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) data relating to intake, progression and completion of candidates. (b) information relating to complaints, appeals or termination of training. (c) copies of External Examiner or Verifier annual reports and reports of any action taken as a result of the annual reports. (d) copies of any reports relating to internal quality assurance activity at subject level for the previous 12 months.
Risk intelligence	Gathering information to identify and manage risk

'Significant Connection'	<p>Where the SSSC invites an employer or academic representative to participate in the approval or review of a course, the person must not have significant connection with the course provider being visited. In this instance significant connection is defined as having been involved in any aspect of the course provider's course provision in the previous four years. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> current or recently retired external examiners or verifiers honorary professors visiting lecturers/trainers employees of the course provider employers represented on provider boards
'Social service provider agencies'	<p>Organisations in the statutory, voluntary and private sector that are providers of social services. These may include agencies whose primary function is in relation to health, education and housing and which provide social services.</p>
'Social worker'	<p>A person who has a professional qualification in social work (as defined in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001).</p>
'Social service worker'	<p>A person who is currently eligible for registration in terms of Section 46 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.</p>
'Stakeholders'	<p>Any individual or individuals who may have an interest in the business of the SSSC or the course provision. This may include people who use services, carers and students, representatives of provider agencies and further and higher education institutions, the Scottish Government and the QAA.</p>
'Student'	<p>Anyone undertaking a course provided by an approved course provider.</p>
'Student representative'	<p>The person nominated by students undertaking a course provided by an approved course provider to represent them for a specific purpose. The student representative may, but will not necessarily be, formally elected to represent students.</p>

'SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers' (the Codes)	The standards of conduct and practice which all social service workers and their employers must follow.
'SSSC Registrar'	The member of staff who has overall responsibility for managing the registration functions of the SSSC.
'The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education'	The UK wide body whose mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.
'The Scottish Funding Council (SFC)'	The body that distributes funding for teaching and learning, research and other activities in Scotland's colleges and universities.
'The Scottish Government'	The devolved government of Scotland.
'The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)'	The executive non departmental public body sponsored by the Scottish Government responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and award of qualifications other than degrees in Scotland.
Decision	The outcome communicated to course provider once due process completed
Conditions	Actions required by course provider to meet SSSC Rules and Requirements to be met within agreed timescale

THE SSSC LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ADVISER ROLE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

The role of the SSSC Learning and Development Adviser is set out at the beginning of each stage of the process from initial enquiry by a potential course provider to approval and ongoing monitoring and quality assurance responsibilities. Advisers work collaboratively with each other, course providers and partners to monitor, review and approve new and existing courses in Social Work, Childhood Practice and Specialist Awards.

When a provider informs the SSSC that they wish to deliver a course which requires approval, the Professional Learning Team Manager will appoint an Adviser to give clear information to the provider on the approval process and support the application process in its development.

The supporting Adviser will:

- lead arrangements for the Approval Panel and approval event, including the selection of appropriate panel members. Another Adviser from the Professional Learning Team will chair the approval panel.
- ensure relevant papers are provided to the panel.
- support the panel in advance of, and during the event for points of clarification only and does not take part in, or influence, the panel's decision.

When a course is approved, the Professional Learning Team Manager will allocate a Learning and Development Adviser who will be the SSSC point of contact for quality assurance purposes and will work collaboratively with providers to improve and develop courses. The course provider will be given the name of their Link Adviser following the approval event and this person may be different to the supporting Adviser.

The Link Adviser will:

contact the course correspondent (normally the course leader) to inform them of their role in ongoing quality assurance and development. The Adviser will ensure the course correspondent has a copy of the SSSC Handbook for Quality Assurance and Enhancement of SSSC Approved Programmes.

- discuss and support any actions and/or recommendations required from the point of approval after feedback has been given and action plan agreed.
- undertake a monitoring and development role in line with the SSSC's quality assurance and development procedures.
- ensure the QA process is sufficiently robust, reliable and maintains high standards in learning as set out in the SSSC's Rules and Requirements which govern all approved courses.

- ensure the QA process determines that those who successfully complete approved courses demonstrate an ability to meet the relevant standards.
- build and maintain effective relationships with a range of stakeholders to share best practice and continuous improvement including Universities, Colleges of Further Education, service users and carers, employers, service regulators and independent course providers.
- develop and implement local, regional and national strategies with stakeholders who deliver qualifying programmes across the range of Social Work, Childhood Practice and Specialist Awards.
- actively work with course providers to ensure sufficiency and robustness of practice learning opportunities and provide advice and guidance to course providers on practice learning arrangements.
- analyse and consider QA submissions and related review activity to make a professional decision about renewal of approval and any conditions and/or recommendations that may apply subject to approval.
- prepare comprehensive, evidence-based reports for course providers following approval events and renewal of approval reviews.
- liaise with course providers on plans for closure of an approved programme and confirm the SSSC is satisfied that all requirements have been met.
- work with course providers to monitor content and delivery of approved courses.
- analyse annual returns and ensure that all quality assurance documentation is passed to Business Administration for safe storage.
- update list of approved courses and providers.

Courses are approved for a maximum of six years. Following approval, courses are monitored annually and reviewed at a minimum every five to six years to align with University Internal Subject Reviews and SQA cycle of review and re-validation. The Adviser will be responsible for undertaking annual monitoring and the review and renewal of approval events. Approvals and reviews can be done jointly with course providers or be SSSC led, following which Advisers are responsible for completing a report.

Advisers may have more regular contact with courses where there have been identified concerns through annual monitoring or 5/6 year reviews. The Adviser will inform the course provider of any changes to monitoring arrangements and the reason for this.

Advisers will meet at least once a year with course staff to consider course progress, developments and any issues arising that relate to quality assurance. The focus is to ensure that approved courses continue to meet the SSSC Rules and Requirements and that those who successfully complete the course meet the relevant standards.

Our QA processes are informed by a risk intelligence and improvement approach. Advisers will work collaboratively with course providers to ensure that they are providing a high quality learning experience for learners to equip them with the knowledge, skills and values to undertake complex professional roles. The approach will be improvement led and the Adviser will work with courses providers to identify strengths and areas for development to improve the learning experience and course delivery. If material changes are noted these will be considered by the Adviser who will determine whether they remain compliant with the terms of approval.

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We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.

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