

Major Academic Initiatives Policy

1. The Major Academic Initiatives (MAI) process provides a structure for the evaluation of the service requirements of new major teaching, research and other academic initiatives. It ensures that:
 - i) the initiative is in line with both the School's regulations and the School's strategic priorities;
 - ii) resource plans take into account the full costs of undertaking the new initiative;
 - iii) separate resource plans are established so the financial impact of the MAI is clear;
 - iv) due diligence is applied on a consistent basis;
 - v) Professional Service Divisions (PSDs) can plan for any additional or bespoke requirements.
2. **Definition of a MAI:** The MAI process is primarily intended for use in relation to non-standard teaching activities, the establishment of new academic entities and large scale research ventures, although it has been applied to other initiatives which have an impact across the School (e.g. the implications of the change in the structure of the teaching year).
3. **Non-standard teaching activities:** Standard teaching programmes are of a defined length (three or four years for undergraduate, one or two years for taught postgraduate) and are delivered by LSE academic staff during the day in term time on the LSE campus. Teaching programmes falling outside of these parameters can be considered non-standard and the MAI process is likely to apply. Examples of non-standard programmes include executive MSc programmes, joint degrees, part time undergraduate programmes and ancillary programmes that deviate from the model already in use.
4. **New academic entities:** The MAI process can be used to evaluate the impact of new academic entities such as new Departments and Institutes.
5. **Large scale research ventures:** Research ventures involving substantial levels of funding (i.e. more than £5m total income or more than £1m income per annum) or placing significant demands on School resources (e.g. space for more than 5 FTE research staff) are likely to be subject to the MAI process. The establishment of a new research centre is the most common example of a large scale research venture. All such proposals must comply with the conditions set out in section C7.3 of the Financial Regulations.
6. **MAI Process:** The main features of the MAI process are:

- i) The appointment of a facilitator to assist in the development of the MAI proposal and guide it through the consultation and approval process.
- ii) Consultation and input from PSDs, via completion of the MAI checklist. PSDs are not asked to approve the initiative but rather to consider what is required to make it happen.
- iii) Completion of a resource plan pro-forma with full economic costs.

7. There are four stages in the MAI process:

- **Stage 1 – Support in principle from senior management:** The MAI is proposed by an individual, an academic unit or via a School committee. Based on a brief description (akin to question 1 of the MAI checklist), the strategic fit of the proposal should be assessed against the School's priorities via the following routes: For **non-standard teaching activities**, the MAI should be discussed by the Pro-Directors and appropriate head(s) of academic units during the Annual Monitoring meetings in Michaelmas Term. The Pro-Directors will either reject the proposal or provide support in principle for the MAI to progress to the next stage. For **new academic entities**, support for the proposal should be considered at one of the regular meetings of the School Management Committee (SMC). For **research initiatives**, the Pro-Director (Research) should decide on whether to support the proposal and report, if necessary, to SMC. If the MAI proposal originates from the SMC or from a committee then the head(s) of the appropriate academic unit(s) will be consulted and must take the proposal to a departmental meeting to ensure strategic fit with the unit's plans, and confirm their support. For all MAIs, a Pro-Director should be assigned as sponsor to represent the views of SMC in the development of the MAI and approval process.
- **Stage 2 – Development of proposal, consultation with Service Areas and production of resource plan:** A facilitator from the central administration will be identified to work with an academic lead and administrative lead nominated by the academic unit. For non-standard teaching activities and new academic entities, the facilitator will usually be a member of the Planning Division. For large scale research ventures, the facilitator will usually be the Head of Research Development (or a delegate). Facilitation for other initiatives will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Planning and CFO. In consultation with the academic and administrative leads, the facilitator will: (i) complete the appropriate MAI checklist, (ii) consult with staff in the PSDs to review the MAI and feed into the checklist (via an in-person meeting if necessary), (iii) establish a timetable for approval and implementation. The academic unit must liaise with Finance to complete a resource plan for the MAI. This must include all relevant direct and indirect costs and adhere to the principles of full economic costing, as advised by the CFO. Typically external deadlines for research funding can be extremely tight and many applications for funding will be unsuccessful. The facilitator for research initiatives must liaise with Finance regarding the resource plan and ensure that all potential costs are included, but can be selective in communicating with other PSDs in the completion of the MAI checklist depending on the nature of the proposal (this is reflected in the MAI checklist for research initiatives).
- **Stage 3 – Senior management sign-off:** For **new academic entities**, the completed checklist should be presented, with any other pertinent information, to SMC for a final decision on whether to support the initiative. For **research initiatives**, the Pro-Director (Research) will liaise with the Research Committee (or the Research Development Panel (RDP) to which it has delegated authority) to confirm their approval of the MAI proposal and will confirm that the CFO has reviewed an outline resource plan (any issues raised in the finance review must have been addressed satisfactorily and any obvious one-off

costs have been identified within the resource plan). Proposals for **non-standard teaching programmes** can progress directly to the appropriate committees for approval once the checklist resource plan are completed, unless the Pro-Directors have specifically advised that further SMC approval is necessary (for example for entirely new modes of teaching or other programmes not matching the format of existing non-standard programmes).

- **Stage 4 – Progress through committees and approval:** The facilitator will advise on the specific route through the School's committee structure, however all proposals must proceed to and be supported by the Finance and Estates Committee and be included in the overall School budget which will be approved by Council. The success of any new initiative will be monitored and reviewed through existing mechanisms (e.g. Annual Monitoring) where appropriate. If no such mechanism exists, the appropriate Committee will be asked to advise on monitoring and review arrangements. The facilitator will ensure that the decisions of the committees are communicated back to the academic lead and Service Areas including providing final confirmation when the initiative has been agreed or rejected and confirming future monitoring and review arrangements.

8. The MAI process was approved by the APRC in October 2015. The ongoing development of the MAI process is managed by the Director of Planning (Wayne Tatlow) and overseen by the MAI Project Board. Any queries regarding the MAI policy and process should be directed to w.n.tatlow@lse.ac.uk in the first instance or Planning.Division@lse.ac.uk.

Review schedule

Review interval	Next review due by	Next review start
1 year	December 2022	December 2022

Version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Notes
1	Last updated: 26 February 2018	APRC	
2	Last updated: 17 May 2019	Wayne Tatlow	
3	Last updated: 2 December 2021		

Contacts

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Communications and Training

Will this document be publicised through Internal Communications?	No
Will training needs arise from this policy	No
If Yes, please give details	