

SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL HANDBOOK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

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Section 1

Introduction

The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 provides that the Scottish Social Services Council (referred to throughout this document as 'the SSSC') is responsible for the promotion of high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers and that high standards in their education and training are maintained.

In order to carry out the responsibilities outlined above, the SSSC has introduced Rules and Requirements ('the Rules') which govern all approved courses. There are 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

This handbook outlines the procedures to be followed by Officers of the Council, Course Providers, and other stakeholders in order to meet the Rules, and which form the SSSC's quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities. In this context quality enhancement refers to the continuous process of improvement that demonstrates a responsive and reflective approach to course development. Please remember that the guidance in the handbook cannot act as a substitute for the Rules themselves. It is recommended that you refer to the appropriate set of Rules dependent on the type of course being provided, or proposed, when using this document.

The flowchart at the end of the Introduction shows the different sections of the handbook. A simple flowchart is also included at the end of each section to provide an overview of the steps taken in carrying out that procedure.

Principles underpinning the quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities

The principles underpinning the quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities are that they:

- are streamlined and avoid duplication
- are not overly bureaucratic and take account of existing review and quality arrangements operating internally and/or externally
- are reliable and robust enough to enable the SSSC to be assured that the provision is of sufficient quality
- promote continuous improvement in line with expectations of quality enhancement
- take account of feedback from a range of stakeholders
- are transparent and evidence-based
- are based on principles of equal opportunity
- are based on a collaborative approach
- are based on a "no surprises" approach
- are at all times consistent with the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers.

Definitions of key words and phrases which appear in this handbook

The following are referred to in this handbook and are drawn from the Rules. It is important to note that some of the definitions do not apply to all three sets of Rules:

'Approvals Panel' means the group of four Panel members drawn from the Education and Workforce Development Advisers, people who use social services and their carers, staff from Higher or Further Education and social service employers.

'Awarding body' refers to Higher Education Institutions with degree conferring powers or other awarding bodies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

'Carer' means a person who provides informal, unpaid care to a member of their family or to another person.

'Chief Executive' means the Chief Executive of the SSSC.

'The Council' means the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The SSSC is the body in Scotland responsible for registering people who work in social services and regulating their education and training. It was set up to raise standards in social services, to increase the protection of people who use social services, to raise standards of practice, and to strengthen and support the professionalism of the workforce.

'Council Member' means a person who sits on the Scottish Social Services Council.

'SSSC Registration Department' means the department of the SSSC which manages the registration of the social services workforce and maintains the register.

'Course Correspondent' means the person who the Course Provider has identified will be 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 Provider - Course/Module Leader.

'Course Provider' means a Higher Education/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 - Head of Social Work or Training' means the person who the Course Provider has identified as having overall responsibility for course provision. The Course Provider - Course/Module Leader on the other hand means the person who the Course Provider has identified as having delegated responsibility from the Course Provider Head of Social Work or Training for managing a particular course or module of a course.

'Course Provider - Quality Assurance Officer' means a person who the Course Provider has identified as the person in their agency with specific responsibility for quality assurance.

'Course Provider - Course Teaching Staff' means people identified by the Course Provider as providing a teaching or training input to the approved course.

'Course Standards' means the standards upon which a particular course is built e.g. Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE), Standards for Childhood Practice.

'External Examiner or External Verifier' means a person who is independent and impartial and who is 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. Their feedback is presented annually to the awarding body or Course Provider in a report by the External Examiner or External Verifier and may include recommended action.

'Further Education College (FE)' means a college providing tertiary education and training and normally involved in the delivery of national and higher national qualifications awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

'The General Social Services Council (GSSC)' is the body responsible in England for setting standards of conduct and practice for social care workers and their employers, for regulating the workforce, and for regulating social work education and training.

'Head of Education and Workforce Development' means the Officer of the Council who has senior management responsibility for learning and development activity, which includes the regulation of education and training.

'Higher Education Institution (HEI)' means an institution with degree awarding powers.

'Education and Workforce Development Adviser' means the member of staff of the SSSC who may participate in carrying out the quality assurance and enhancement procedures outlined in this handbook and who may also be the link person to, and liaison with, a specific Course Provider.

'Learning Networks' means the four regional Scottish Social Services Learning Networks funded by the Scottish Government to set up and support the learning and development of staff working in social services in Scotland.

'Officer of the Council' means the SSSC's Head of Education and Workforce Development or any other officer appointed for the purpose by the SSSC's Chief Executive e.g. Education and Workforce Development Adviser.

'People who use services' means individuals, groups, communities or organisations that receive social work services. This includes the children and the parents of children who use an early years service.

'The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)' means 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 Qualifications and Standards Manager' means the person employed by the SSSC who manages the Education and Workforce Development Advisers in the SSSC's Qualifications and Standards Team. The Qualifications and Standards Manager reports to the SSSC's Head of Education and Workforce Development.

'Relevant national quality assurance body' refers to national bodies which have authority over the assurance and enhancement processes applied by providers of education.

'The Scottish Funding Council (SFC), formerly the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and Scottish Further Education Funding Council' means the body that distributes funding for teaching and learning, research and other activities in Scotland's colleges and universities.

'The Scottish Government' is the devolved government of Scotland.

'The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)' means the executive non departmental public body sponsored by the Scottish Government and responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and award of qualifications other than degrees in Scotland.

'Social service provider agencies' means 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.

'Social worker' means a person who has a professional qualification in social work (as defined in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001).

'Social service worker' means those who are currently eligible for registration in terms of Section 46 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.

'Stakeholders' means any individual or individuals who may have an interest in the business of the SSSC or the course provision. Such individuals may include people who use services, carers and students, representatives of provider agencies and Further/Higher Education Institutions, the Scottish Government and the Quality Assurance Agency.

'Student' means anyone undertaking a course provided by an approved Course Provider.

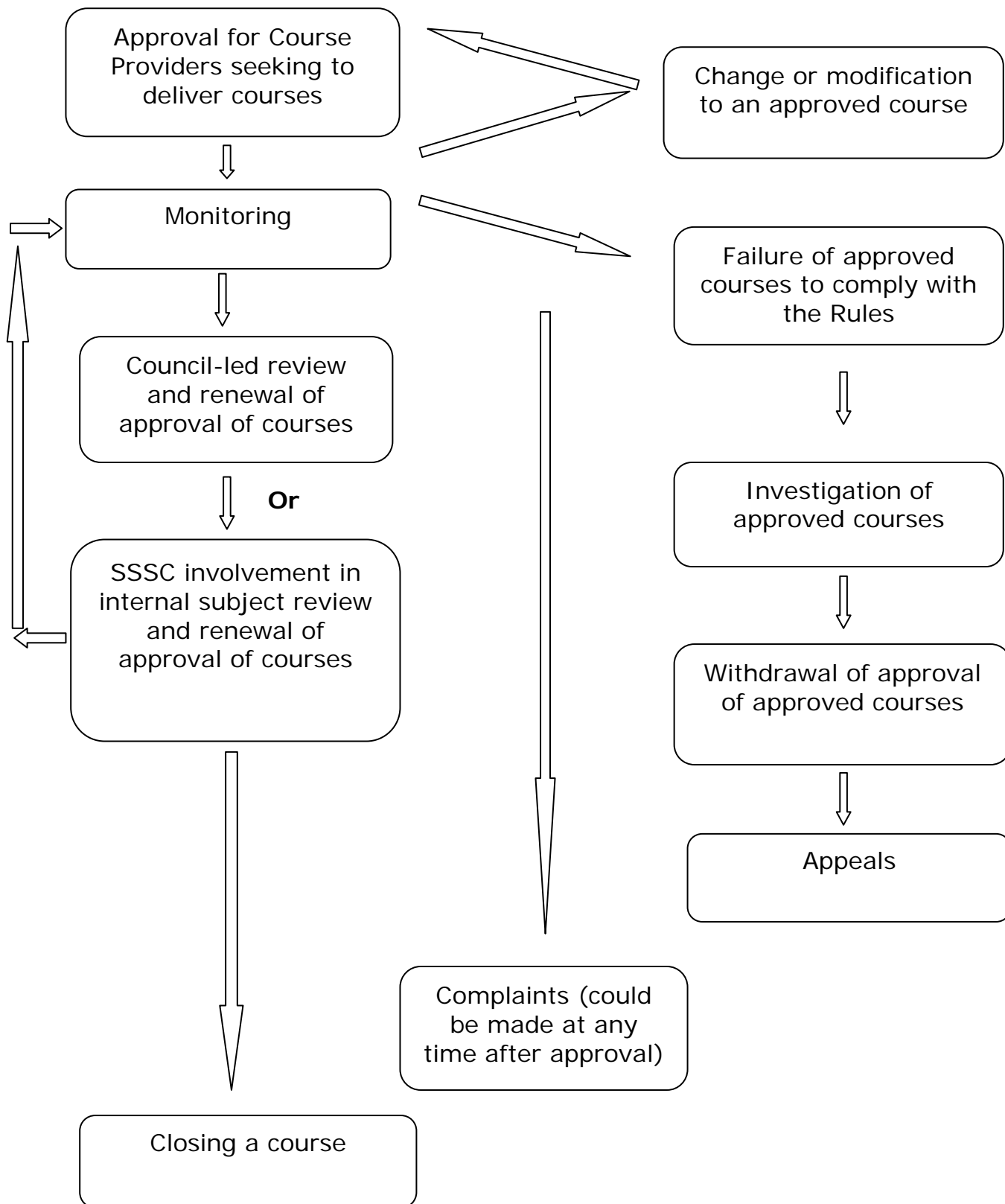
'Student Representative' means a person nominated by students undertaking a course provided by an approved Course Provider to represent them for a specific purpose. The student representative may, but will not necessarily be, formally elected for the purpose of representing students.

'SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers of Social Service Workers' means the standards of conduct and practice which all social service workers and their employers must follow.

'SSSC Registrar' means the member of staff who has overall responsibility for managing the registration functions of the SSSC.

If you would like to request this document in another format or language, please contact the SSSC on 0845 60 30 891.

Overview of SSSC Handbook for Quality Assurance and Enhancement



Section 2

Approval of courses

Introduction

This procedure has been developed to assist Course Providers in the planning and design of course provision and to help guide them through the SSSC's approval process. The approval process may vary slightly depending on the type of course being proposed and the set of Rules to be followed.

The system in place is designed to ensure that:

- applicant Course Providers are appropriately advised and assisted
- the support/development process enables positive outcomes
- individual Approvals Panel members are assisted/supported to engage knowledgeably and constructively with the processes and tasks
- applicant Course Providers can have confidence in the application process and in all parties involved in this.

Approvals Team

Approvals are the responsibility of a group of SSSC Education and Workforce Development Advisers. It is the responsibility of these Education and Workforce Development Advisers to assist Course Providers to prepare for and carry out course approval.

The SSSC will identify an Education and Workforce Development Adviser to work in the development of the approval with individual Course Providers, which will enhance the spirit of collaboration.

A different Education and Workforce Development Adviser will chair the Approvals Panel.

Approvals Panel

In order to ensure fair processing of the application for approval, the SSSC will arrange for a panel of stakeholders to review and comment on the application documents, this is called the Approvals Panel. The SSSC regularly advertises for new panel members and thereafter holds training/orientation sessions for interested parties. Panel members are then selected from the pool of people who wish to become members on the basis of the representation required and individuals' areas of knowledge and experience.

The SSSC aims to recruit a large enough pool of panel members to ensure the workload can be spread over a reasonable number of people; that each category of representation is reasonably covered; and to have a spread of members across the country to allow for geographical and travel factors.

The membership of each Panel consists of stakeholder representatives as follows:

- an Education and Workforce Development Adviser (one person, who is the Chair of the Panel)
- someone who uses services and/or a carer (one person)
- a member of staff from a Higher Education/Further Education Institution (one person)
- a social service provider agency in the statutory or voluntary sector (one person)

Panel members receive training and support to undertake the role. The SSSC aims to increase the number of trained panel members with emphasis on widening access for users of services and carers.

The Chair of the Approvals Panel is responsible for recording the SSSC decision and giving feedback to the applicant Course Provider.

All Approvals Panel members will treat the approvals process as confidential.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for approval

The following people may be involved in, or affected by, this process:

- Approvals Panel
- Carers
- Course Correspondent
- Course Provider
- Higher Education Institution
- Further Education Institution
- Officers of the Council
- People who use services
- Social service provider agencies
- Social workers
- Social service workers
- SQA.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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
- SSSC Procedure for monitoring
- SSSC Procedure for appeals
- SSSC Procedure for complaints
- Record of the SSSC decision and feedback to the applicant Course Provider.

Forms

The following is a list of standard forms which are available with the handbook and which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure:

- Form of Agreement
- Approvals Proforma.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out. These may be completed forms (as listed previously) and/or any other relevant written documentation produced as a result of carrying out the procedure:

- Written Notification of Intent
- Completed Form of Agreement
- Completed Approvals Proforma
- Additional documentation provided in support of the application for approval
- Written approval recommendation
- Written confirmation of decision and feedback to the applicant Course Provider.

Procedure for approval

The initial enquiry and planning for approval

Course Providers seeking to deliver a course must approach the SSSC to request approval.

This initial informal or formal enquiry will lead to an initial visit and preliminary discussion between the Course Provider and an Education and Workforce Development Adviser. The SSSC aims to work closely with Course Providers to plan for each individual course approval and to agree the best way forward in each case. Preliminary discussions between the SSSC and Course Providers will therefore begin as early as possible.

Planning, support and development for Course Providers

The ethos of the SSSC's approvals process is to encourage a collaborative and developmental approach which enables Course Providers to prepare submissions for approval with guidance and feedback at key stages. It is also important that the approval process is impartial and that Approvals Panel members have no direct prior involvement with the Course Provider in the development of the course provision that is being approved.

Notification of Intent

Once it has been agreed that SSSC approval is required, Course Providers will be required to send a written Notification of Intent to the SSSC. This must set out the Course Provider's plans for developing the course. The written Notification of Intent must contain the name and business address of the person that the Course Provider has identified as the Course Correspondent. It is with this person that the SSSC will communicate with regarding formal approval of the course.

Written application for approval

On receipt of the Notification of Intent, the SSSC will agree and notify the Course Provider of the date for submission of the written application for approval of the course. The Approvals Panel will normally consider the application six weeks after the submission date and will notify the Course Provider of this date.

The dates of Approvals Panel meetings are set in advance and scheduled throughout the year. These are made available to Course Providers.

The submission must include the completed and signed Form of Agreement, the completed Approvals Proforma and any additional documentation used to support the application for approval (e.g. documentation used for any Course Provider internal validation purposes, if relevant).

Where there are Course Provider validation events and/or activity taking place, the Course Provider must cross-reference their own internal documentation with the SSSC's in order to demonstrate where information can be found easily and to show how each of the SSSC's criteria for approval have been met.

Four hard copies of the application documents must be submitted to the SSSC marked "For the attention of the Education and Workforce Development Team" and posted to the following address:

Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

An electronic copy of all paperwork must also be forwarded to the SSSC and must be e-mailed to the following address:

l&d.admin@sssc.uk.com

The SSSC will check that the paperwork is in order and will formally log receipt of the application. Course Providers must strive to ensure that all documents submitted are as complete as possible. Incomplete submissions for approval may affect approval timescales.

Copies of the application will be distributed to the members of the particular Approvals Panel that has been convened to deal with the approval of the course.

Support/development sessions for Approvals Panel members

Some Approvals Panel members may require additional support to review the approvals documentation in advance of the formal approval event. Support/development sessions for individual Approvals Panel members will be arranged and undertaken as required by the SSSC in advance of the event.

The approval process

When the written application is received, the approvals process will, in agreement with the Course Provider, be progressed by either:

- a. the Course Provider and the Approvals Panel meeting formally
- or
- b. the Approvals Panel and the Course Provider communicating through correspondence.

The Course Provider will advise the SSSC of their preference. The SSSC would prefer for there to be a meeting.

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.

The Approvals Panel will then meet to discuss the application for approval.

Where Course Providers are still in the process of developing particular aspects of the course, the Approvals Panel will take this into account.

Approval is 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 criteria for approval and:

1. the commitment of the Course Provider to meet these
2. agreements between the Course Provider and key stakeholders to meet these
3. policies, systems, procedures and protocols in place that reflect these
4. action plans to ensure 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 is "as good as it can be." It will also be looking for a set of undertakings by the Course Provider, with clear plans to complete any particular work that is still outstanding.

After full consideration of the application, the Approvals Panel will provide feedback to the Course Provider. The Panel will make a written recommendation to the SSSC's Head of Education and Workforce Development, who will make the decision about approval. The Chair of the Panel will inform the Course Provider in writing of the decision. Prior to this, the Panel may give informal feedback to the Course Provider.

Possible outcomes following the approvals event

There are several possible outcomes following an application for approval, depending on the course and set of Rules being used, and these are as follows:

- the course is approved
- in some circumstances the SSSC will approve a course but will want to agree an action plan with the Course Provider. The Approvals Panel will advise the Course Provider of any additional information or work that is required, and agree timescales. The action plan will be followed up by the SSSC as part of its longer-term quality assurance and enhancement work and the SSSC will provide support and advice to the Course Provider. The SSSC requires that some things are firmly in place before candidates can commence their training
- under some Rules¹ a course may be approved with conditions which when met will result in full approval. An action plan and timescales would be provided by the SSSC
- the course is not approved. In this case, the Course Provider would have to re-apply taking into account the feedback from the SSSC.

The SSSC's approach to approval is that it is undertaken in collaboration and partnership. Concerns about any aspect of the approval process will be discussed openly and resolved at a local level.

¹ Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rule 7.6

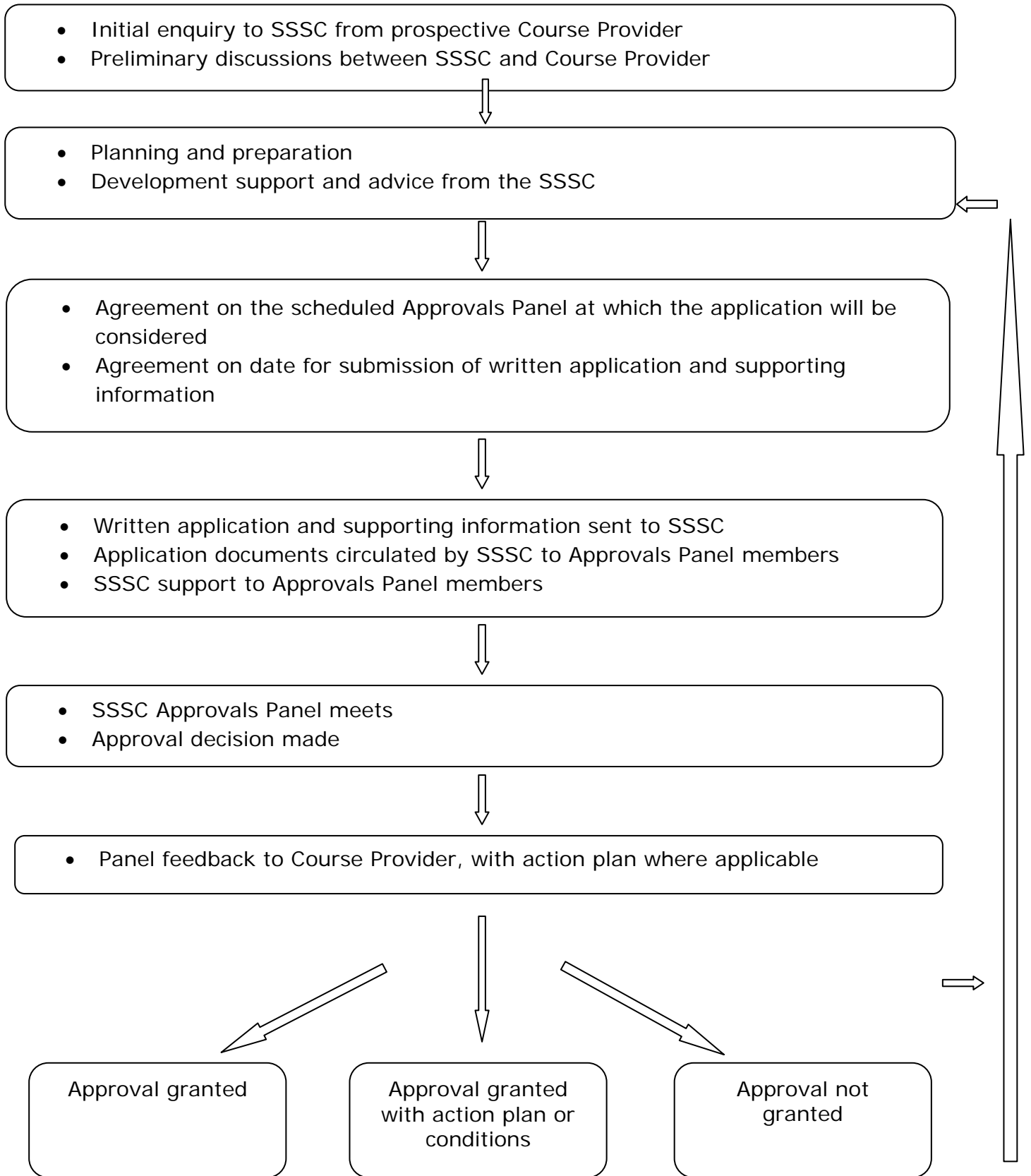
If a Course Provider is unhappy with the approval process or the outcome of the approval, the SSSC has comprehensive procedures for Appeals and Complaints in terms of the relevant Rules which can be found in Sections 9 and 10 of the handbook.

Approval will remain effective for five years from the date of approval by the SSSC unless withdrawn earlier in accordance with the Rules. If the Course Provider wishes to continue delivering the course after this period they will have to arrange for the SSSC to review the course provision and renew approval, as per the Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses.

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 per the Procedure for making a change or modification to an approved course.

The SSSC will publish a list of approved courses in a range of formats.

Procedure for approval flowchart



Section 3

Making a change or modification to an approved course

Introduction

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 obtaining the SSSC's consent in writing. The SSSC reserves the right to determine what changes are minor, major or substantial.

The SSSC must be notified of any changes made to approved courses. For the majority of changes the SSSC will note these and discuss them in terms of, for example, rationale, potential impact on course delivery, learning outcomes and student experience during routine visits to the Course Provider.

Definition of minor and major changes or modifications

Minor changes would include the 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.

A major, significant or substantial change or modification to a course would include the following:

- 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 provision
- where internal Course Provider processes or changes in course and module design and delivery are imposed which introduce major amendments to the approved course
- where substantial or major re-structuring of the approved course takes place in preparation for renewal of approval of that course
- where the change is based on sound pedagogical principles and will enhance the student experience.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for making a change or modification to an approved course

The following people may be involved in, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider - Course/Module Leader
- Course Provider - Quality Assurance Officers as appropriate
- Officers of the Council
- Other stakeholders.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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. Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE).

Forms

There are no standard forms which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out:

- Written notification of change/modification to an approved course
- Written notification of approval of change/modification to the approved course provider from the SSSC.

Procedure for making a change or modification to an approved course

Notification of change or modification

Where any change or modification to an approved course is planned or anticipated by a Course Provider, that Provider should notify the SSSC in writing. There is no specific form for completion; the only requirement is that any request to make a change must be in writing and must provide as much information as possible. This must include rationale, implications and anticipated benefits.

Minor change or modification

An Education and Workforce Development Adviser will acknowledge this notification and, if the change/modification is minor, will record the changes and confirm this in writing to the Course Provider.

Major change or modification

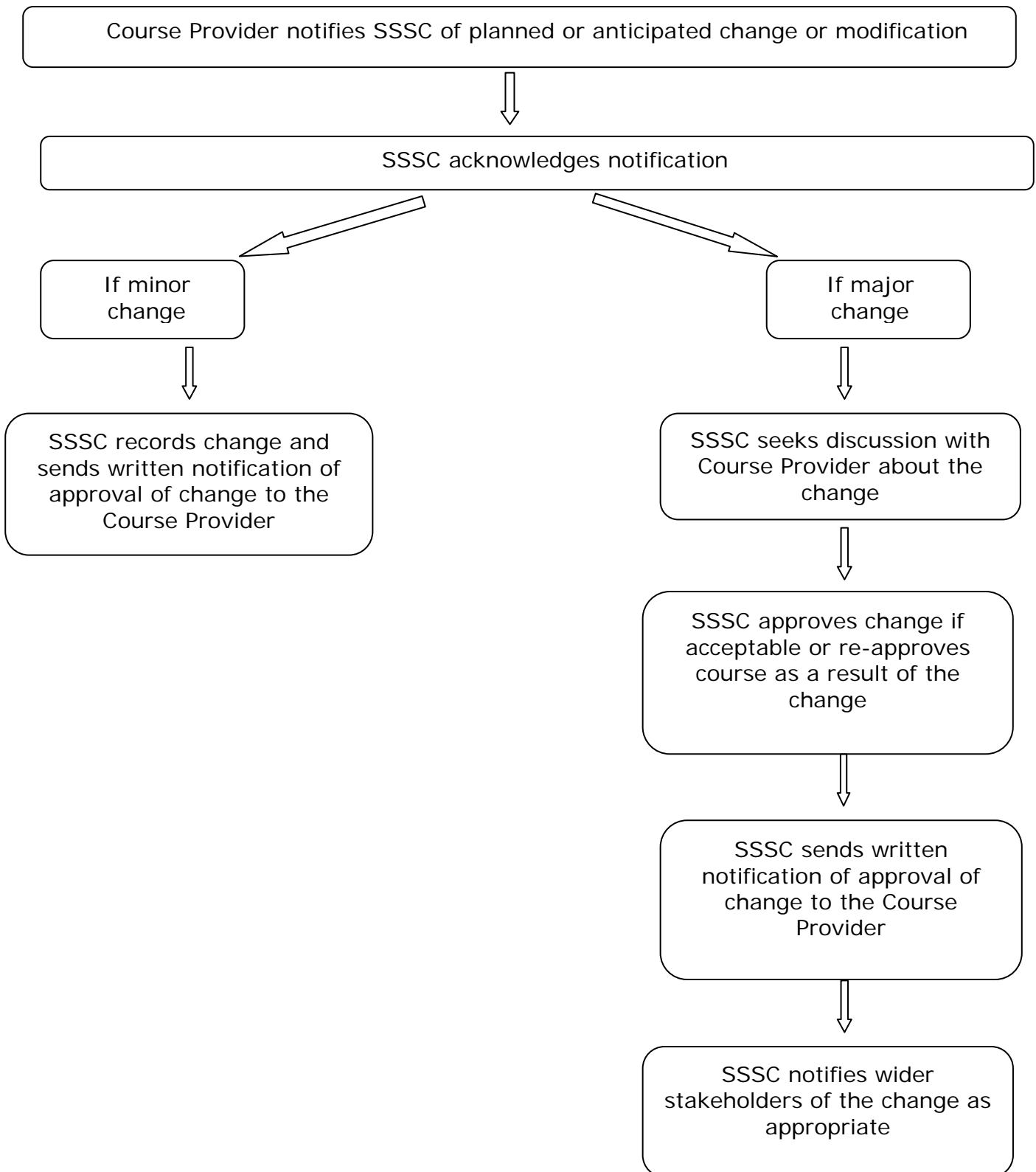
Where the change or modification is considered major or substantial, the Education and Workforce Development Adviser will seek a discussion with the Course Provider to examine the rationale, extent and implications of the proposed change and to clarify the process of approval or re-approval for any such change.

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

Confirming the change or modification

Once the approval is confirmed, the Education and Workforce Development Adviser will confirm the change in writing to the Course Provider and will notify wider stakeholders as appropriate. This may include the Scottish Government, Learning Networks, etc.

Procedure for making a change or modification to an approved course flowchart



Section 4

Monitoring

Introduction

The monitoring procedure for courses approved by the SSSC is part of the SSSC's regulatory function related to the quality assurance and enhancement of courses. It also provides the SSSC with important information for workforce planning and other developmental processes. In particular the SSSC uses the information it gathers to identify trends, common issues and examples of successful innovation.

Quality assurance and monitoring of specialist training and the childhood practice award mirror the procedure for the social work degree.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for monitoring

The following people may be involved in, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider - Course/Module Leader
- External Examiner/Verifier(s)
- Officers of the Council
- Other stakeholders as appropriate.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically Rule 9
- Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically Rule 11
- Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically Rule 9
- Annual Monitoring Return Spreadsheet Guidance Notes
- SSSC Procedure for managing failure to comply with the Rules
- SSSC Procedure for investigation
- SSSC Procedure for closing a course
- Course Provider internal quality assurance reports
- External Examiner/Verifier reports
- Quality assurance documentation related to practice learning
- Quality Assurance Calendar
- SSSC Regulation and Practice Learning management information system

Forms

The following is a list of standard forms which are available with the handbook and which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure:

- Revised Annual Monitoring Return (AMR) including checklist and general information and progression spreadsheets

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out. These may be completed forms (as listed previously) and/or any other relevant written documentation produced as a result of carrying out the procedure:

- Written request for AMR to be completed
- Completed AMR (checklist, general information and progression spreadsheets, and any other internal quality assurance documentation provided by the training provider)
- Written acknowledgement of completed AMR
- Written AMR Feedback
- Management information system (MIS) reports
- Annual Quality Assurance Report for the SSSC.

Procedure for monitoring

Completing the necessary documentation

Each Course Provider will have an SSSC Education and Workforce Development Adviser aligned to them who will undertake a monitoring and development role in line with the SSSC's quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

The SSSC will write to the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training, as per the Quality Assurance Calendar, requesting that the AMR be completed. A deadline for receipt of the completed AMR will be included in this request. It is essential that Course Providers adhere to this deadline. Failure to do so may impact on approval of the course.

The Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training will ensure that the AMR for their approved course is completed and returned to the SSSC by the stated deadline, along with any supplementary documentation such as internal quality assurance reports. Two signed hard copies of the AMR, and one hard copy of the additional documentation must be provided by the due date, in addition to an electronic copy of the AMR.

In addition to the information about the course, a Course Provider authorised signatory must sign each completed AMR to confirm that the information provided is accurate and that the course continues to meet the SSSC's criteria for approval. Contact details for the staff members with whom the SSSC will liaise during the year must also be confirmed.

If the Course Provider has any queries about the AMR they should contact the Education and Workforce Development Adviser aligned to them.

The SSSC will acknowledge receipt of the completed AMR in writing within two weeks of receiving it.

Reviewing the documentation and providing feedback

The Education and Workforce Development Adviser aligned to the Course Provider will be responsible for reading the AMR, confirming that it is satisfactory and providing feedback within six-weeks.

The adviser will, through their ongoing relationship with the Course Provider, follow up all relevant quality and enhancement matters arising from the AMR.

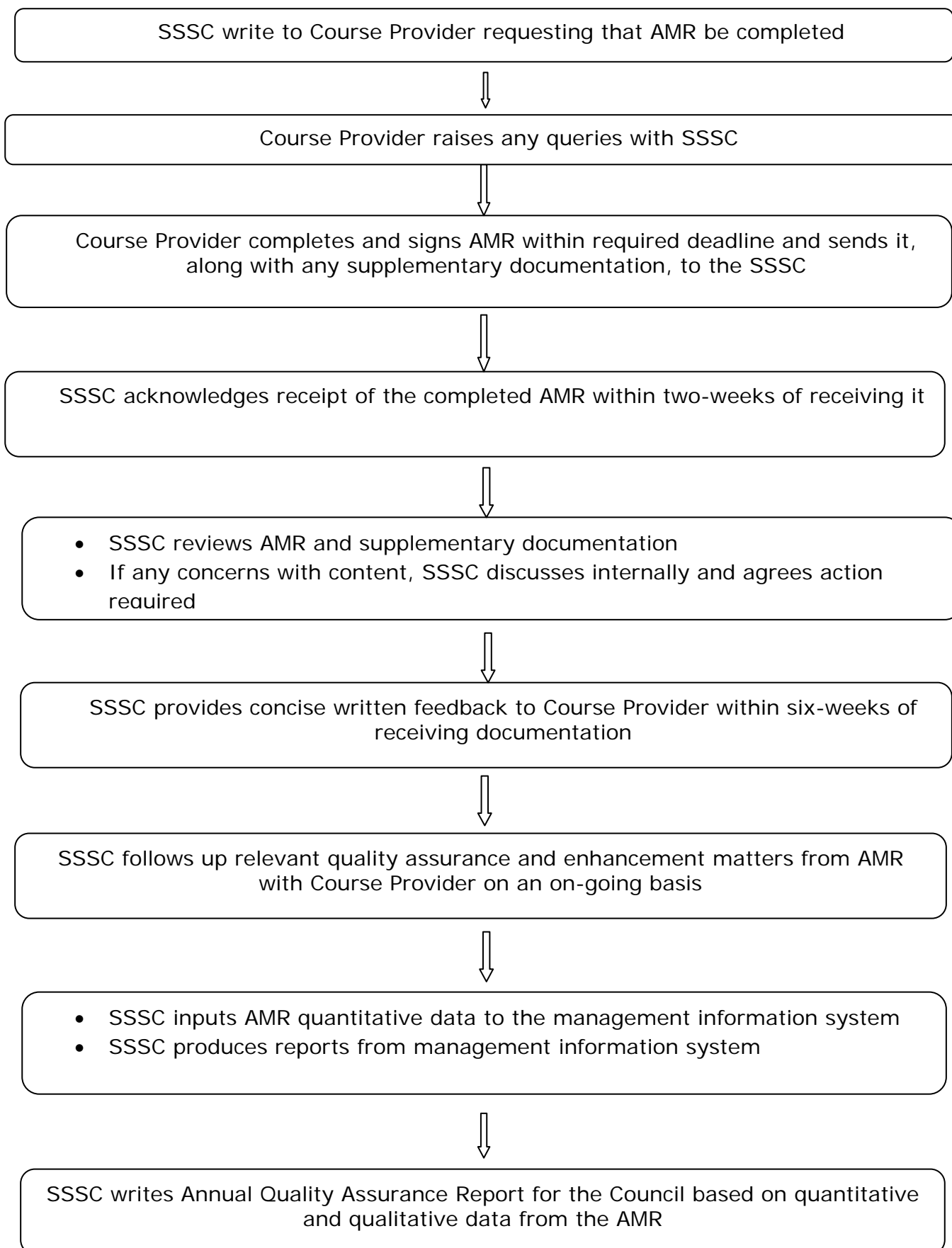
Management of information and reporting

Education and Workforce Development Advisers will collate the quantitative data received and produce reports. This information will be used for quality assurance purposes and for informing the Annual Quality Assurance Report which is submitted to the Council every autumn. This will include reference to the hard work and achievements of Course Providers, students and wider stakeholders in achieving the aims of the approved course and meeting its standards and requirements.

Any information that needs to be discussed with the Course Provider will be brought to the attention of the Qualifications and Standards Manager for a decision on action to be taken.

Where a closure date has been set for a course) information will be requested in the AMR by the SSSC and the Procedure for closing a course will be invoked. Further details can be found in Section 11 of the handbook.

Procedure for monitoring flowchart



Section 5

Reviews and renewal of approval of courses

Introduction

A review of approved course provision and renewal of approval must be undertaken within five years of the original date of approval or last renewal of approval as relevant. The SSSC will initiate its own, Council-led, review of an approved course where it considers that internal subject reviews are not appropriately timed nor sufficiently focus on course provision.

The Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses has been developed to assist Officers of the Council and Course Providers to prepare for and undertake Council-led reviews specifically. It identifies the type and range of information that the SSSC is seeking for Council-led review purposes. There may be occasions when the SSSC takes part in an HEI's own internal subject review instead of initiating a Council-led review. Other Course Providers will be subject to a Council-led review.

SSSC involvement in HEI-led internal subject reviews

Officers of the Council are entitled to take part in internal subject reviews led by HEIs. Internal subject reviews – sometimes referred to as internal subject (health) reviews are held periodically within HEIs and are used to assess the “continuing validity and relevance”² of approved programmes. The internal review framework, including an overview of the factors reviewed, is outlined in the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.

Each HEI's internal subject review procedure will be different and the involvement of Officers of the Council may differ from one HEI to another and cannot be prescribed. A nominated lead Education and Workforce Development Adviser and one other Education and Workforce Development Adviser will always be involved in these reviews where the SSSC has reserved its right to be involved.

The Qualification and Standards Manager should be notified by the HEI whenever an internal subject review is planned. Thereafter a plan for SSSC involvement including timing, format and process will be agreed between the HEI and the SSSC as appropriate, depending on the timing and focus of the review. Involvement in an internal subject review as opposed to a Council-led review will be the SSSC's preferred option if the timing and focus on course provision are appropriate. A review must allow time for evidence to be considered, a decision made, and action taken within five years from the date of approval or renewal of approval.

² Quality Assurance Agency's *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*; page 15; Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education; Second Edition; September 2006

The SSSC is entitled to raise any relevant matters within an internal subject review. Normally such matters would be notified prior to the review but may also arise as a consequence of the process and emerging information. The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will collate information similar to that outlined in the Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses. Although the SSSC's involvement in the internal subject review process cannot be prescribed, Education and Workforce Development Advisers will use the Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses as a guide to the steps they should take, as appropriate.

The SSSC must receive reports from the HEI about the outcome of the internal subject review as soon as reasonably possible. Outcomes of action points will also be required within the action plan timescale.

The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will produce a Review Report within four-weeks of receipt of the report(s) from the HEI. The Review Report will indicate how the Course Provider is continuing to meet the Rules and will include reference to issues and responses arising from the review process and any issues to be actioned. The Review Report will be sent to the Head of Education and Workforce Development by the Education and Workforce Development Advisers, with a recommendation regarding renewal of approval.

The Head of Education and Workforce Development will confirm renewal of approval in writing and will outline any requirements imposed by the SSSC, ensuring that the course continues to comply with the Rules.

The HEI must comply with any reasonable requirements imposed by the SSSC, as noted in this letter.

If the decision is made not to renew approval of the course, action will be taken in accordance with Rules, as appropriate, which are covered by separate procedures. These procedures are the:

- SSSC Procedure for managing failure to comply with the Rules
- SSSC Procedure for investigation
- SSSC Procedure for managing withdrawal of approval.

The SSSC's Procedure for appeals indicates those areas where a Course Provider may appeal a decision made by the SSSC in respect of renewal of approval.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, a copy of the Review Report will be sent to the QAA for consideration in the Course Provider institutional review.

People involved in, or affected by, HEI-led internal subject reviews or the Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses

The following people may be involved in, or affected by, this process:

- Officers of the Council
- Council Members
- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider – Course/Module Leader
- Course Provider - Quality Assurance Officers

- External Examiners/Verifiers
- Quality Assurance Agency
- People who use services
- Carers
- Students
- Social service provider agencies.

Significant connection

Where the SSSC appoints Council Members or other individuals to participate in the review processes they must not have any 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:

- current or recently retired External Examiners/Verifiers
- honorary professors
- visiting lecturers/teachers/trainers
- employees of the Course Provider.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically Rule 13.2
- Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically Rule 15.2
- Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically Rule 13
- SSSC Regulation and Practice Learning management information system
- Course Provider internal subject review findings
- Course Provider internal quality assurance processes e.g. external examiner reports
- Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
- Self Evaluation Document
- SSSC Procedure for managing failure to comply with the Rules
- SSSC Procedure for investigation
- SSSC Procedure for managing the withdrawal of approval
- SSSC Procedure for appeals.

Forms

The following is a list of standard forms which are available with the handbook and which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure:

- Review Preparation Checklist
- Review Report Template including Review Evidence Matrix.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out. These may be completed forms (as listed previously) and/or any other relevant written documentation produced as a result of carrying out the procedure:

- Timetable of planned Course Provider internal subject reviews
- Self Evaluation Document
- Completed Review Preparation Checklist
- Review Report
- Course Provider reports used as supplementary evidence e.g. internal quality assurance reports
- Written confirmation from the SSSC of renewal of approval or otherwise.

Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of courses

Arranging a Council-led review

A timetable of planned Course Provider internal subject reviews and deadlines for the renewal of approval of approved courses will be compiled by SSSC Education and Workforce Development Advisers and updated on an annual basis. Education and Workforce Development Advisers will ask Course Providers to provide these dates and will also clarify the focus of the internal subject review.

Where the date for a planned Course Provider internal subject review:

- a. does not fall within five years from the date of course approval/re-approval

or

- b. in the opinion of the SSSC the internal subject review does not focus sufficiently on course provision

then the Head of Education and Workforce Development will inform the HEI of their decision to initiate a Council-led review, giving at least six months notice of the start date.

Two Education and Workforce Development Advisers will be identified to carry out the review, with one taking a lead role.

A timetable will be sent to the Course Provider by the lead Education and Workforce Development Adviser at least six months prior to the start of the review and will include a note of who will be involved in the review and confirmation of the types and possible sources of evidence required.

A Council-led review will be undertaken by Officers of the Council and/or Council Members or other individuals to participate in this process so long as they do not have, or have not had, any significant connection with the Course Provider being visited.

Each Course Provider will be supported in preparing for the Council-led review by an Education and Workforce Development Adviser. This will include a discussion about the nature and extent of evidence required.

Some evidence will be available to the SSSC before the review in the form of Annual Monitoring Returns, internal quality assurance documents, and external examiner or verifier reports. Education and Workforce Development Advisers and Course Provider staff will use these to prepare for the review. The lead Education and Workforce Development Adviser will complete the Review Preparation Checklist to assist in the planning of the review.

Evidence to be prepared before the Council-led review

The Course Provider must prepare a Self Evaluation Document of no more than 4,000 words which will allow them to reflect and critically appraise issues relating to how the Course Provider course continues to meet the Rules³. This will be written in the four months before the start of the review.

The Self Evaluation Document can refer to other documents which provide evidence of how the Rules continue to be met. A copy of this additional or supporting evidence may also be requested and may include:

- course specification
- module descriptors
- student handbooks
- school structures for quality assurance and monitoring
- most recent internal subject review report for the subject
- SCQF information and level descriptors
- mapping to Standards in Social Work Education (SiSWE)
- mapping of appropriate standards relating to specialist training
- mapping of Standards for Childhood Practice
- the school strategic plan
- the university prospectus
- reports containing student feedback
- internal quality assurance reports
- external quality assurance reports e.g. the SSSC Annual Monitoring Returns (AMRs), SOA reports
- External Examiner/Verifier reports
- Quality of Student Experience reports (QSER).

This list is not exhaustive and the SSSC has the right to ask for further evidence and information as deemed necessary. Documents which are cross referenced as above should be made available with the self evaluation. These documents may be requested as a part of the review process irrespective of their reference within the self evaluation.

Education and Workforce Development Advisers will arrange in advance all meetings to be held with key personnel during the review, venues for these meetings, authorise relevant expenses, collate documents held internally, request documentation from the Course Provider in advance of the start of the review, and ensure that those involved in the review receive a copy of all relevant documentation.

³ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rule 6.1, (a)-(p) inclusive; Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, Rule 8.1, (a)-(o) inclusive; and the Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rule 6.1, (a)-(n) inclusive

Conducting a Council-led review

The review process will be led by the Education and Workforce Development Advisers.

Minutes of review meetings will be taken.

Feedback from other stakeholders will be requested as appropriate. These may include:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider – Course/Module Leaders
- Course Provider - Course Teaching Staff
- Student Representatives from relevant courses
- People who use services
- Carers
- External Examiners/Verifiers
- Course Provider - Quality Assurance Officers.

The review will end no less than three months before the renewal of approval date and be four to six-weeks in duration.

The following actions will be taken to carry out the review:

1. The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will read all relevant documentation and will identify areas to explore further and questions to ask key personnel/stakeholders.
2. The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will meet with the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training and other course personnel to review the documentation received, including the Self Evaluation Document.
3. The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will meet with key personnel and stakeholders as pre-arranged, in order to explore identified areas further and ask questions.
4. Towards the end of this process the Education and Workforce Development Advisers will start to draft a Review Report which will:
 - record the Course Provider findings
 - take account of how the Course Provider is continuing to meet the Rules
 - take account of how the Course Provider is continuing to meet the relevant course standards
 - indicate how comments made as part of the review process have been responded to by the Course Provider
 - highlight good practice
 - identify areas for further reflection/development within the Subject Team/School including timescales
 - provide feedback on the Council-led review process
 - specify any actions which are identified as essential.
5. The Education and Workforce Development Advisers will meet to complete the Review Report and finalise the proposal regarding the renewal of approval. Once the proposal has been agreed, they will send a copy of the Review Report with a request for authorisation to the Head of Education and Workforce Development.

6. If the Head of Education and Workforce Development does not agree with the proposal, a meeting will be arranged for the Education and Workforce Development Advisers, Qualifications and Standards Manager, and Head of Education and Workforce Development to discuss the issues raised. Further evidence will be sought as required.
7. Once authorisation has been obtained from the Head of Education and Workforce Development, an Education and Workforce Development Adviser will meet with the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training to present a copy of the Review Report, confirm renewal of approval for a further five years or otherwise, discuss the issues arising, required actions, etc.

What to do after a Council-led review

If the decision is made to renew approval of the course for a further five years, this will be confirmed to the Course Provider in writing with a letter from the Head of Education and Workforce Development within three weeks from the end of the review. The letter will outline any reasonable requirements imposed by the SSSC, for the purpose of ensuring that the course continues to meet the Rules.

The Course Provider must comply with any reasonable requirements imposed by the SSSC, as noted in this letter.

If the decision is made not to renew approval of the course, action will be taken in accordance with the Rules, as appropriate⁴, which are covered by separate procedures. These procedures are the

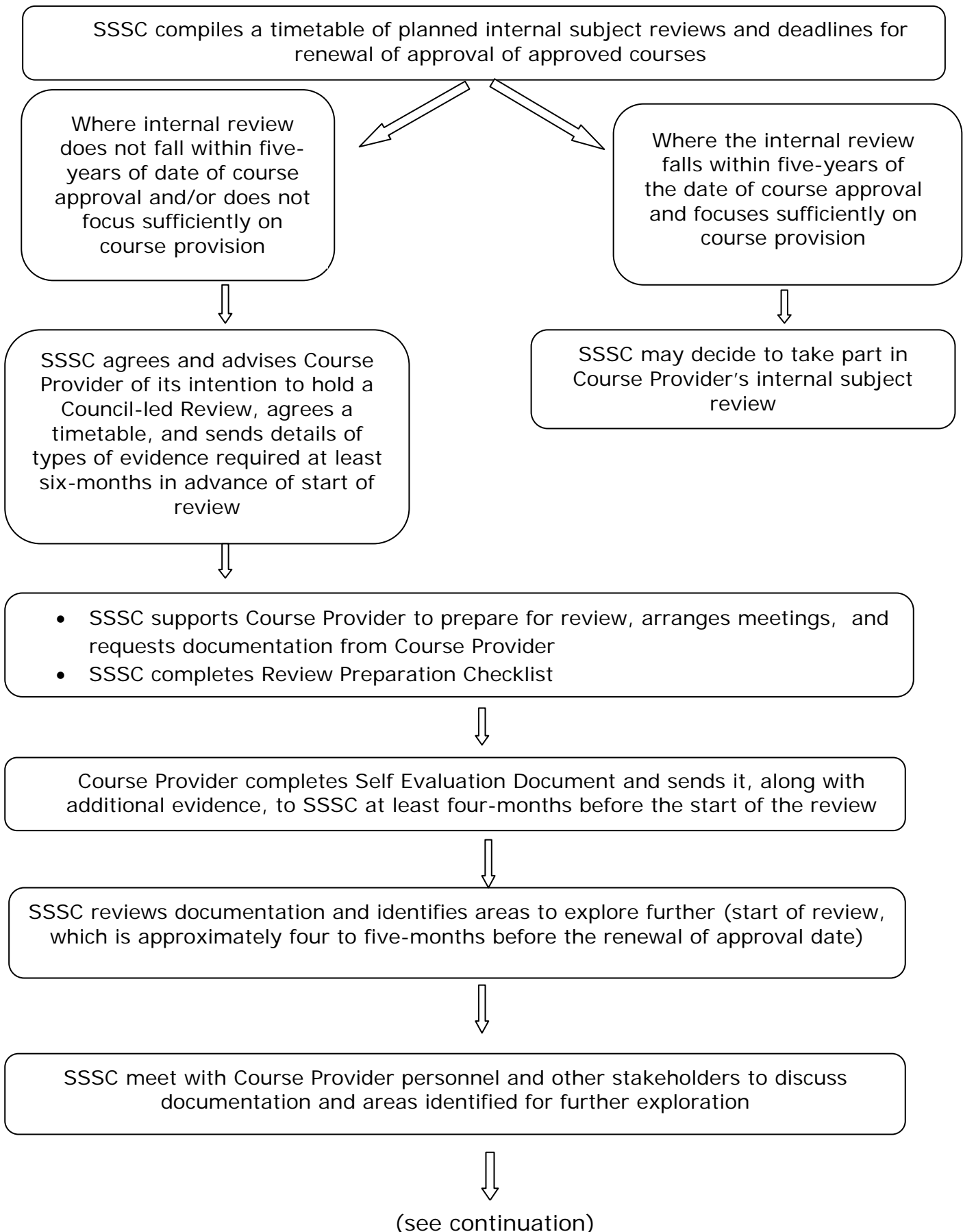
- SSSC Procedure for managing failure to comply with the Rules
- SSSC Procedure for investigation
- SSSC Procedure for managing withdrawal of approval.

The SSSC's Procedure for appeals indicates those areas where a Course Provider may appeal a decision made by the SSSC in respect of renewal of approval.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, a copy of the Review Report will be sent to the QAA for consideration in the Course Provider institutional review.

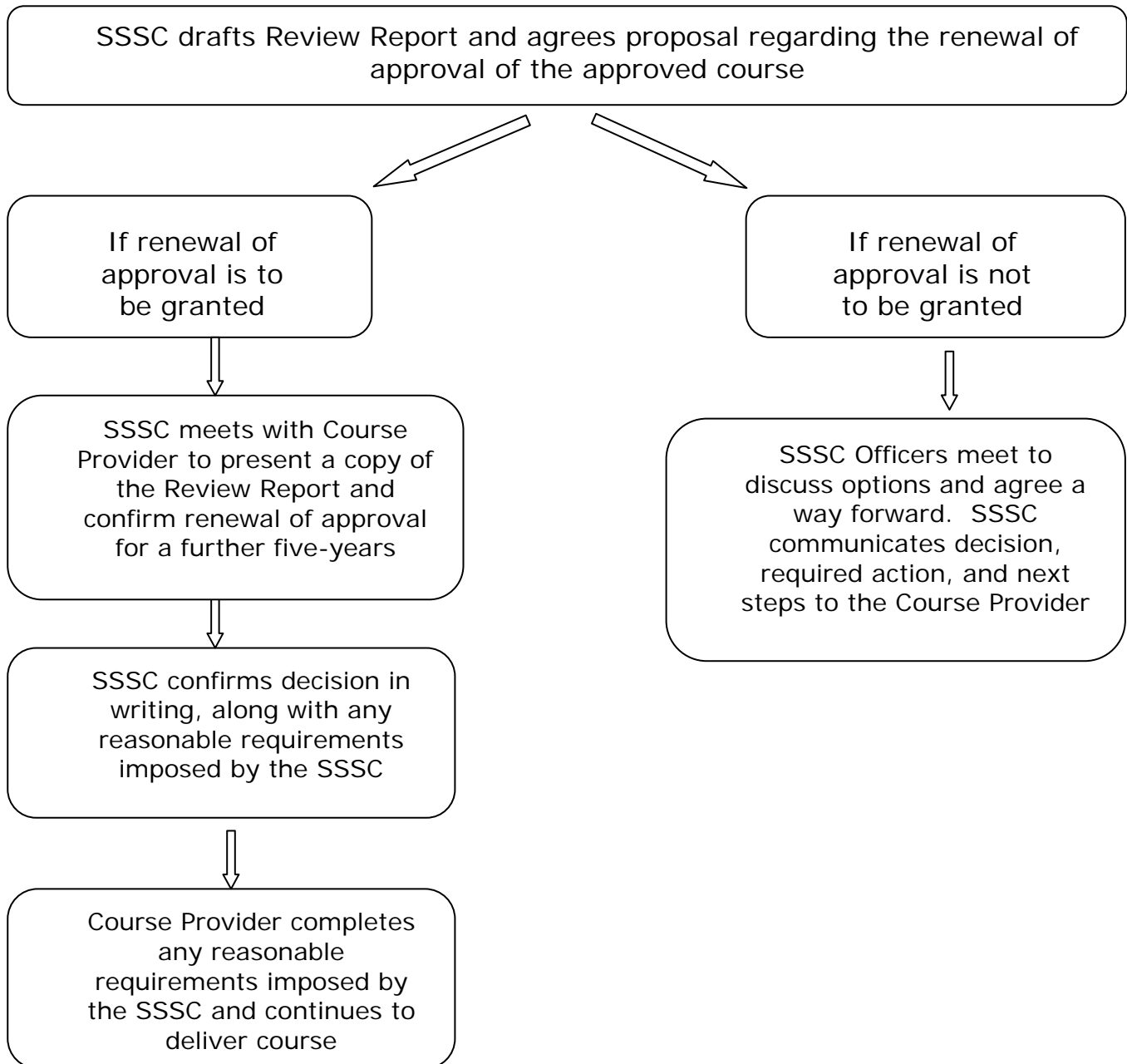
⁴ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rules 14, 15 and 16; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rules 14, 15 and 16; and 2008 Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, Rules 16, 17, and 18

Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of approved courses flowchart



Procedure for Council-led review and renewal of approval of approved courses flowchart (cont)

(SSSC has met with Course Provider personnel and other stakeholders to discuss documentation and areas identified for further exploration)



Section 6

Failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules

Introduction

Where the Course Provider fails to comply with one or more of the Rules at any stage during the year the SSSC will attempt to ensure compliance through negotiation.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider – Course/Module Leaders
- Officers of the Council.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically Rule 14
- Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically Rule 16
- Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008 , specifically Rule 14
- SSSC Procedure for investigation of approved courses.

Forms

There are no standard forms which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out:

- Written notification of possible failure to comply with one or more of the Rules
- Preliminary Report
- Written confirmation of action taken by Course Provider to remedy a breach of the Rules.

Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules

Where an issue comes to the attention of the SSSC, an Education and Workforce Development Adviser or other Officer of the Council will notify the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training in writing that the SSSC is in possession of information that suggests a possible failure to comply with one or more of the Rules.

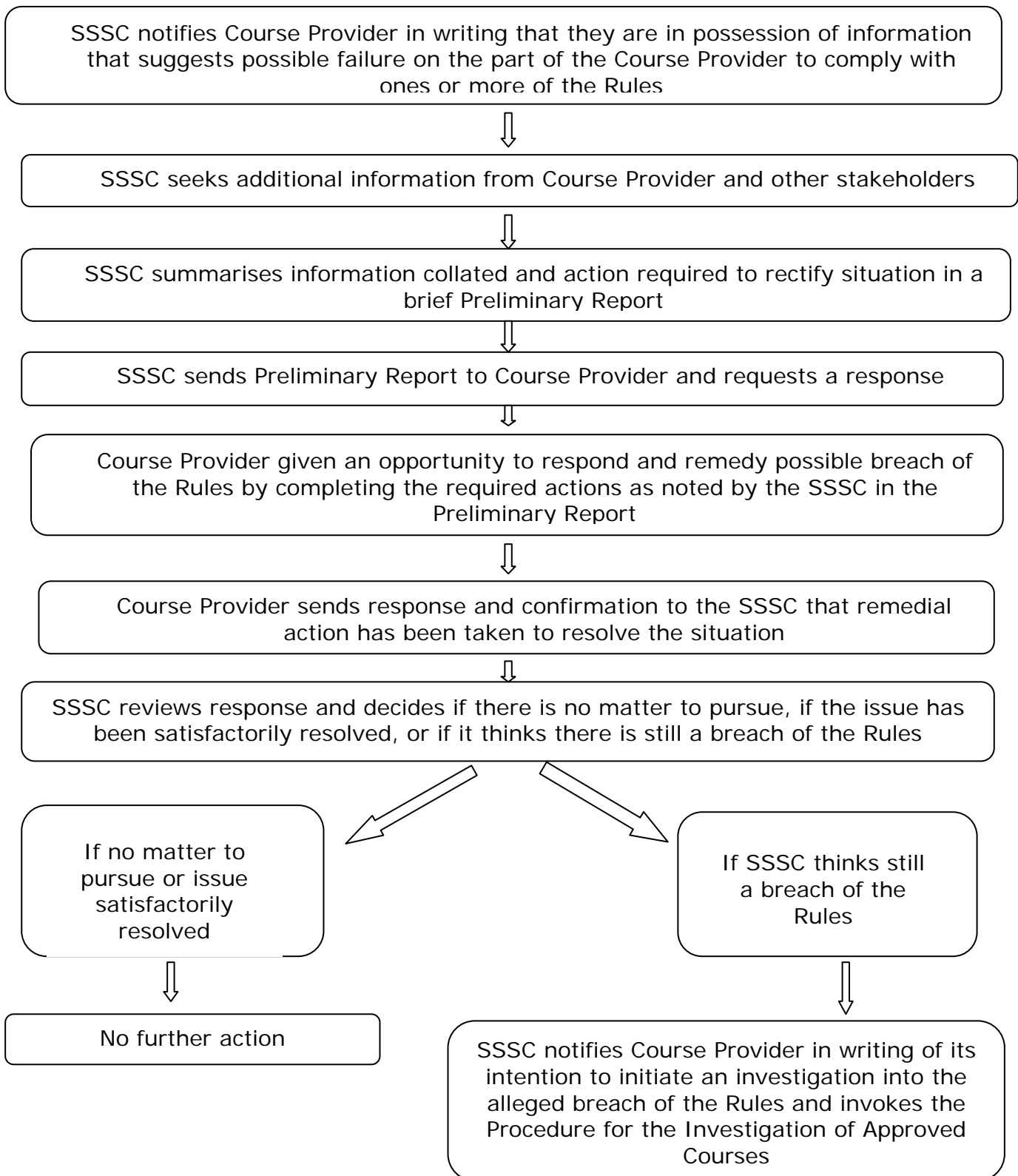
The Education and Workforce Development Adviser will seek to obtain additional information from the Course Provider and any other relevant parties. The Education and Workforce Development Adviser will then summarise the information available in a brief Preliminary Report, which will also outline what action needs to be taken to ensure that the Rules are met. The Preliminary Report will be sent to the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training, and they will be asked to respond.

If there is indeed a breach of the Rules, the Course Provider will be given an opportunity to remedy this. Confirmation of remedial action taken must be sent to the Education and Workforce Development Adviser in writing by the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training. The SSSC will then make a decision as to whether it believes that there is no matter to pursue or that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved. If this is the case, no further action will be taken.

Where 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, it will advise the Course Provider, in writing, of its intention to initiate an investigation using the SSSC Procedure for investigation of approved courses. This notification will specify the grounds for taking this course of action.

Where the SSSC considers it appropriate due to the seriousness of the alleged failure the Course Provider will be informed in writing of the SSSC's intention to initiate an investigation immediately. The definition of the seriousness of the matter is at the sole discretion of the Officers of the Council.

Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules flowchart



Section 7

Investigation of approved courses

Introduction

This procedure will be invoked 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 purpose of an investigation will be to ascertain whether or not a Course Provider has breached one or more of the Rules and this may occur at any time.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for investigating approved courses

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Course Provider – Course/Module Leaders
- Officers of the Council
- Council Members.

Significant connection

Where the SSSC appoints Council Members or other individuals to participate in the investigation of approved courses they can do so as long as 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/Verifiers
- honorary professors
- visiting lecturers/teachers/trainers
- an employee of the Course Provider.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- Rules for Social Work Training 2003, specifically Rule 15
- Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, specifically Rule 17
- Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, specifically Rule 15
- SSSC Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules
- 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.

Forms

There are no standard forms which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out:

- Written notification of intention to initiate an investigation
- List of issues to be investigated and people to be interviewed as part of the investigation
- Meetings Schedule
- Meeting minutes
- Written confirmation of decision following an investigation, including details of remedial action if relevant
- Written confirmation of decision following completion of remedial action.

Procedure for investigating approved courses

The investigation will take place no later than 28 days from written notice to the Course Provider of its intention to do so. Written notice will have been provided as part of the SSSC Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to Comply with the Rules.

An Officer of the Council 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 documentation required
- arrange a schedule of meetings.

Visits to the Course Provider will be undertaken by an Education and Workforce Development Adviser, a Senior Officer of the Council and/or Council Members or other individuals who do not have, or have not had, any significant connection with the Course Provider. These meetings will deal with questions and any additional documentation requested, subject to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. Minutes will be taken at these meetings.

If the decision is that no breach of the Rules has taken place, the Education and Workforce Development Adviser will inform the Course Provider and keep a note of this on file.

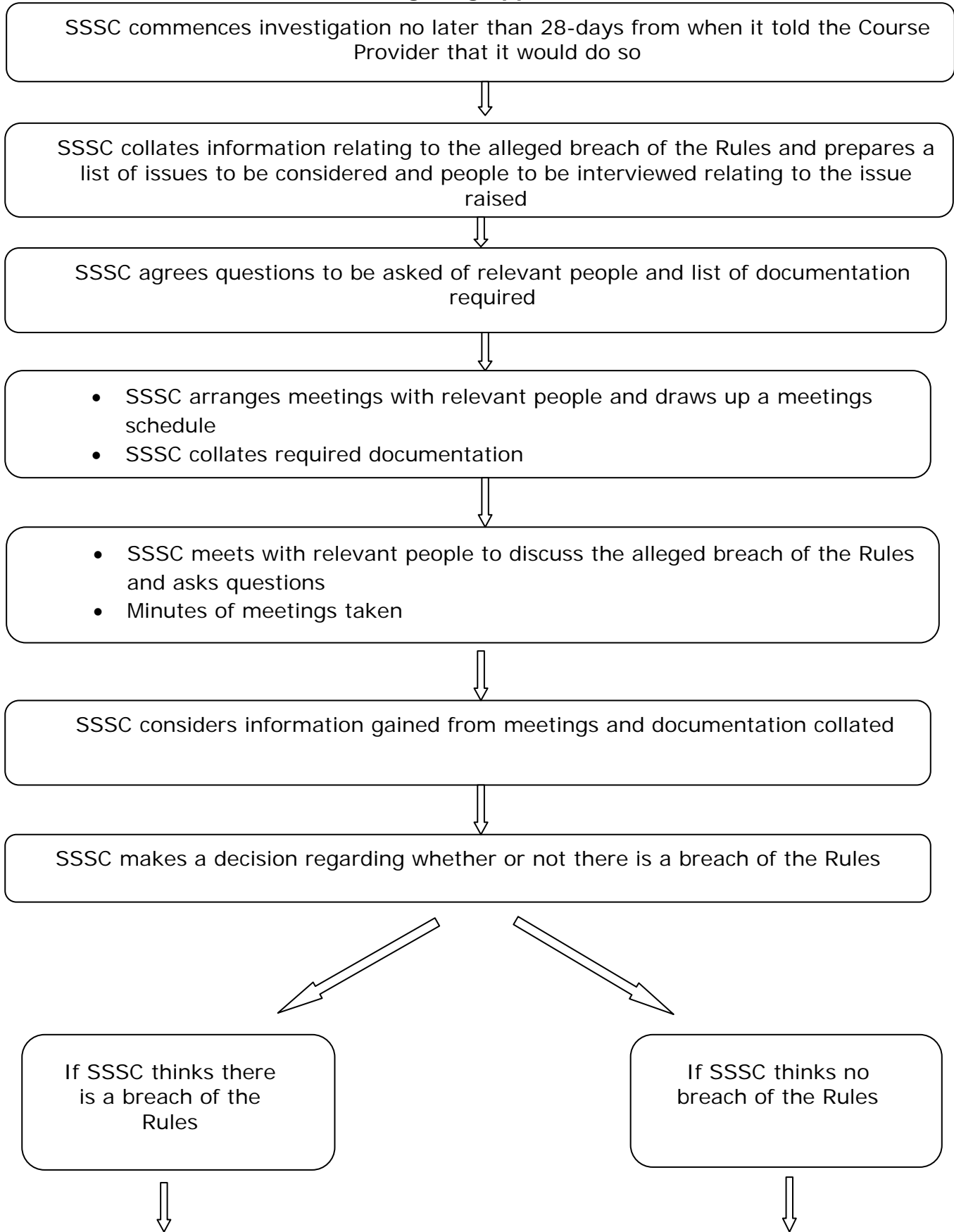
If a decision is made that a breach of the Rules has taken place, the Head of Education and Workforce Development will inform the Course Provider of this, the reasons for the outcome of the investigation, and will outline agreed remedial action and timescales.

If the remedial work is completed to the satisfaction of the SSSC, within the agreed timescales, and remedies the breach of the Rules, an Officer of the Council 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, nor 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 SSSC Procedure for managing the withdrawal of approval of an approved course will be invoked.

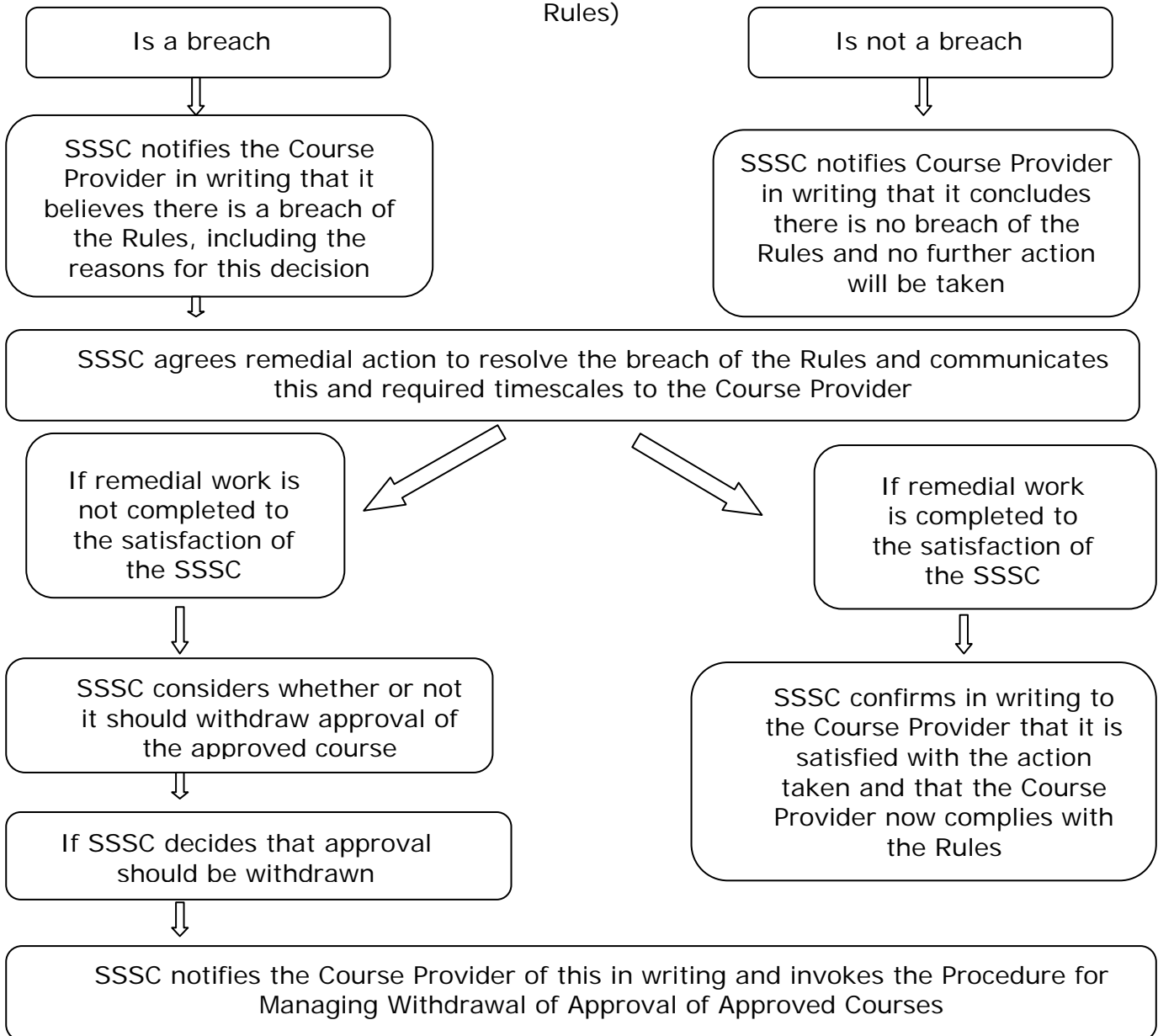
Procedure for investigating approved courses flowchart



(see continuation)

Procedure for Investigating Approved Courses flowchart (cont)

(SSSC has made a decision regarding whether or not there is a breach of the Rules)



Section 8

Withdrawal of course approval

Introduction

This procedure may be invoked where the SSSC is satisfied that a Course Provider is in breach of one or more of the Rules.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for managing the withdrawal of course approval

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training
- Officers of the Council
- Students.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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 approved courses.

Forms

There are no standard forms which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out:

- Written representation from Course Provider regarding proposal to withdraw course approval
- List of reasons why approval should or should not be withdrawn
- Written confirmation of decision regarding proposed withdrawal of approval.

Procedure for managing the withdrawal of course approval

If, following an investigation, the SSSC is satisfied that a Course Provider is in breach of one or more of the Rules, it will confirm in writing to the Course Provider - Head of Social Work or Training a proposal to withdraw approval and the reasons for this proposal. This letter will be sent by the Head of Education and Workforce Development.

This letter will confirm that the Course Provider has 28 days from the date of the letter to make written representations to the SSSC regarding any such proposal, and that these should be sent to the Education and Workforce Development Adviser who acts as a link person to the Course Provider or the Qualifications and Standards Manager if there is no link adviser.

Following receipt of representations from the Course Provider, the Education and Workforce Development Adviser, Qualifications and Standards Manager and Head of Education and Workforce Development will review the situation and consider the representations. They will then make a decision on whether or not approval should be withdrawn. A list of the reasons for the decision will be drafted.

The Head of Education and Workforce Development will then write to the Course Provider to confirm the decision.

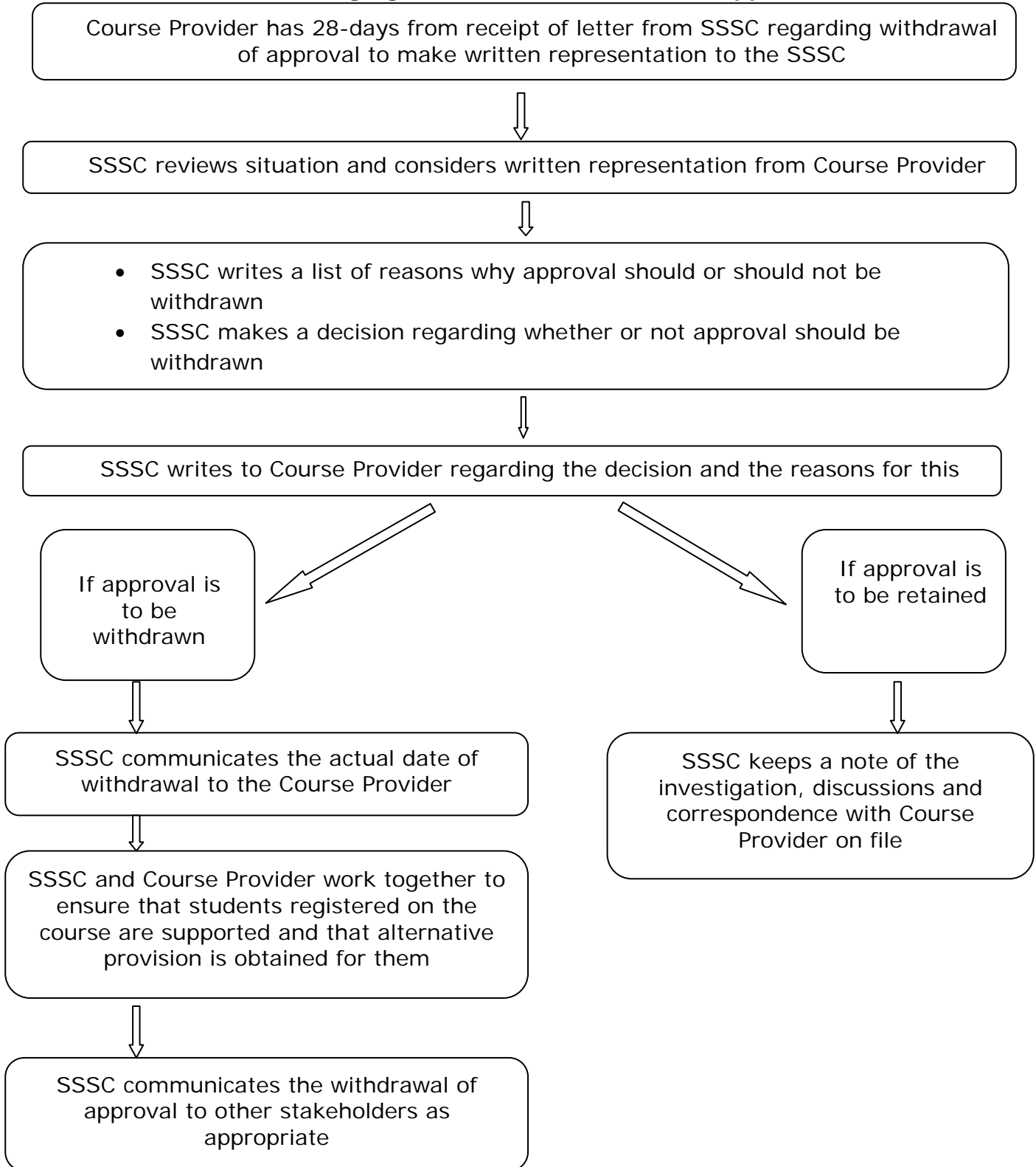
If approval is to be retained, investigation materials and subsequent discussions will be kept on file.

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 to seek alternative provision for those affected.

The SSSC will continue to work with the Course Provider to seek alternative provision for affected students and provide additional support for, and protect, these students through the period of transition to an alternative Course Provider.

Where approval is withdrawn, this will be communicated to relevant stakeholders via the normal channels.

Procedure for managing the withdrawal of course approval flowchart



Section 9

Appeals

Introduction

The SSSC will operate an appeals process whereby a Course Provider may appeal to the SSSC against a decision not to approve a course⁵, any requirements imposed by the SSSC⁶, or any decision to withdraw approval⁷.

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

List of grounds for appeal

A Course Provider may appeal against a decision of the SSSC, referred to in the Rules⁸, 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.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for appeals

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Council Members
- Council Officers
- An individual who is not a Council Member or Officer of the Council, but who has knowledge and experience of the type of course provision which is the subject of the appeal.

References

⁵ 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

⁶ 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

⁷ 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

⁸ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rule 21.1; Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rule 22.1; and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, Rule 23.1

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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.

Forms

There are no standard forms which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out:

- Written notice of appeal
- Written statement in support of the appeal
- Documentary evidence relating to the appeal
- Appeals Panel Report.

Procedure for appeals

Under the Rules⁹, an appeal will be heard by an Appeals Panel consisting of:

- two Council Members
- an individual who is not a Council Member or Officer of the Council, 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.

A written notice of appeal must be lodged with the SSSC 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. 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.

⁹ 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

An Appeals Panel may, by majority vote, make one of the following decisions:

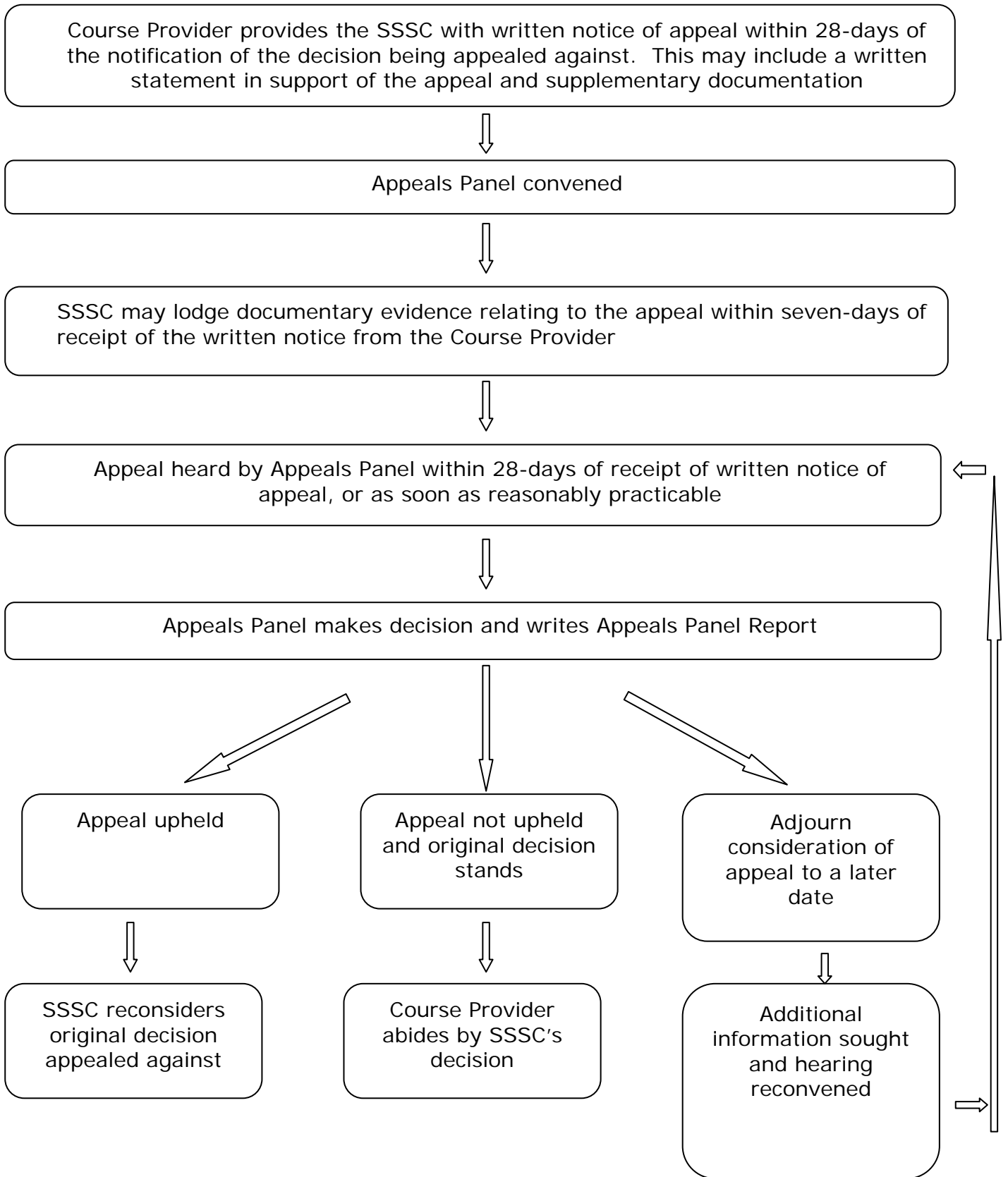
- (a) the appeal is upheld, in which case an Officer of the Council may be directed to reconsider any material information known about, but not taken into account at the time of the decision appealed against or new material information or agree an action plan to rectify the effect of any failure to observe its own procedures which materially affected the decision, and make a new decision on the matter in terms of the Rules
- (b) the appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision will stand
- (c) adjourn consideration of the appeal to a later date and if it thinks it appropriate to do so, require an Officer of the Council and/or the Course Provider to provide additional information to the reconvened hearing.

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.

Procedure for appeals flowchart



Section 10

Complaints

Introduction

Social work honours degree and post graduate degree courses are approved by the SSSC in terms of Part 3, Section 54(1) of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.

Specialist training courses and the Awards in Childhood Practice are approved by the SSSC in terms of Section 57 of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001.

The need for Course Providers to inform students about the SSSC's Procedure for complaints in respect of proposed course provision can be found in the Rules within the criteria for the approval of courses¹⁰.

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.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for complaints

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Complaints can be made by any stakeholders of a course
- Complaints will be dealt with in the first instance by the Head of Education and Workforce Development and by Officers of the Council to whom he/she delegates responsibility. Further investigation will be dealt with by the Chief Executive and/or his/her nominated Officers of the Council or Senior Officers of the Council.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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
- 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
- Data Protection Act 1998.

¹⁰ Rules for Social Work Training 2003, Rule 6.1(p); Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, Rule 6.1(l); and Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training for Social Service Workers in Scotland 2005, Rule 8.1(o)

Forms

The following is a standard form which is available with the handbook and which will be completed as part of carrying out this procedure:

- Complaints Log.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out. These may be completed forms (as listed previously) and/or any other relevant written documentation produced as a result of carrying out the procedure:

- Written notification of complaint
- Written initial acknowledgement of complaint
- Written response to complaint
- Completed Complaints Log.

Procedure for complaints

Complaints about any aspect of social work honours degree or postgraduate programmes, courses approved under the Rules and Requirements for Specialist Training or courses approved under the Rules and Requirements for Awards Developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice 2008, must first follow the internal complaints procedure for that Course Provider. Guidance for this would normally be found 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.

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

Other complaints should be sent in writing to the Head of Education and Workforce Development at:

Scottish Social Services Council
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

Complaints will be acknowledged within seven working days by the Head of Education and Workforce Development.

Complaints will be investigated and a formal response made to the complainant within 21 working days.

If a 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 Rules¹¹, and by following the SSSC Procedure for managing the failure of approved courses to comply with the Rules in this handbook.

If a complaint is not upheld and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, they can ask for the Course Provider complaint to be reviewed by the SSSC's Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive will acknowledge the complaint within seven working days.

The Chief Executive will then review the complaint in light of the initial investigation and response.

¹¹ 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

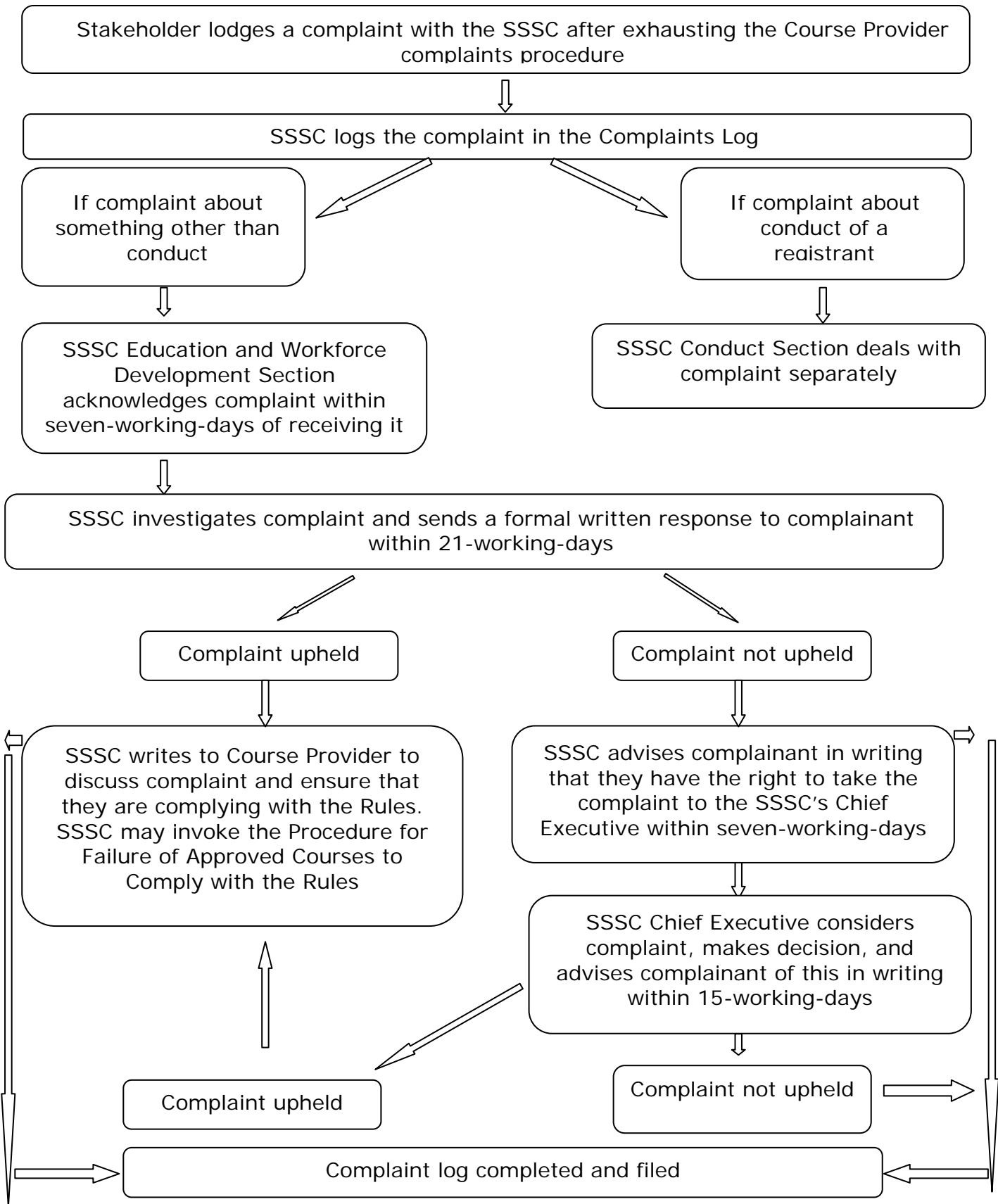
The Chief Executive will send a written response within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint.

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 Rules mentioned previously.

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

A record of all complaints will be kept on a Complaints Log held by the SSSC. Complaints will be recorded to assist in monitoring the types of issues occurring, how these are resolved and how long it takes to deal with them.

Procedure for complaints flowchart



Section 11

Closing a course

Introduction

Courses may close for a number of reasons such as being replaced by other courses. It is important that the SSSC and the Course Provider formalise this process in order to ensure that all students are accounted for and that the Course Provider and stakeholders, including Scottish Government, are aware of the closure position. During the closure process it is likely that there will be a staged progression as ongoing student assessment issues are resolved over time. Accordingly a closure process may move through each of three stages:

1. where the Course Provider and the SSSC are seeking a shared understanding about student completion numbers
2. where both Course Provider and the SSSC are awaiting outcomes of final assessment processes
3. where agreement has been reached about student completion and the final results sheet signed and supplied to the SSSC so that the closure process can be completed.

People involved in, or affected by, the Procedure for closing a course

The following people may be involved, or affected by, this process:

- Course Provider
- Officers of the Council
- Students
- Scottish Government
- General Social Services Council (GSCC)
- SSSC Registration Department
- External Examiner/Assessor.

References

The following is a list of other SSSC or external documents and/or procedures which are referred to in this section and must be read in conjunction with it:

- 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 Standards for Childhood Practice 2008
- SSSC Procedure for monitoring.

Forms

The following is a standard form which is available with the handbook and which must be completed as part of carrying out this procedure for Diploma in Social Work courses:

- DipSW External Assessor Summary Closure Report.

In the event of the closure of other courses, closure report forms specifically for these will be developed by the SSSC accordingly, and included in the handbook for Course Providers to use.

Records

The following is a list of the written records which will be created as a result of this procedure being carried out. These may be completed forms (as listed previously) and/or any other relevant written documentation produced as a result of carrying out the procedure:

- Written notification that course is closing
- Completed DipSW External Assessor Summary Closure Report
- Written confirmation that course has been closed.

Procedure for closing a course

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. Where closure is anticipated for all Course Providers, a section requesting details of this will be included in the monitoring return completed by the Course Provider and sent to the SSSC.

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 that all students registered with the SSSC or GSCC have been accounted for and will bring to the Course Provider's attention any emerging anomalies.

The Course Provider will request an External Assessor/Examiner Summary Closure Report from the External Examiner (degree) and provide the SSSC with a copy. The Course Provider can use the DipSW External Assessor Summary Closure Report as a template to request this information for courses

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.

Procedure for closing a course flowchart

