QUALITY FRAMEWORK

VALIDATION (ANNEX 2)

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING QUALITY AND STANDARDS AT VALIDATION

The Validation Panel should establish that the Course Design and Planning Team has taken full account of the outcomes of internal and external consultation and engaged with relevant internal and external reference points, including:

Internal Reference Points	External Reference Points
Academic Awards Framework	UK Quality Code for Higher Education The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
Standard Assessment Regulations	Subject Benchmark Statements
University Minimum Entry Requirements	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements (consult individual PSRB requirements relevant to the accreditation of individual courses)
Equality Legislation and associated policies	Consumer Protection Legislation and associated policies Competition and Markets Authority Guidance to HE Providers (CMA, 2015)
SHU Research Ethics Policy	
Management of Collaborative Provision	UK Quality Code (B10)

The University expects all its award-bearing courses to demonstrate that they will achieve academic standards for student performance consistent with those set out in the University's academic and regulatory frameworks, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), national HE Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points relevant to individual courses (eg. to meet professional, statutory and/or regulatory body requirements). University courses are expected to set and monitor academic quality and standards in relation to the following areas:

1   **Curriculum**

The Validation Panel should be satisfied that the curriculum presented for approval:

- Meets the requirements for a University award as defined in the Academic Awards Framework and Standard Assessment Regulations and is aligned with current University strategies for the provision of a distinctive, applied educational offer to all students
- Includes an educational rationale, aims and intended learning outcomes which are appropriate to the level of the award and accurately reflect the proposed the award title/s. The intended learning outcomes for each main exit award and standard intermediate awards should be articulated in the approved Course Specification/Course Descriptor
- Is designed to enable the students to meet the course aims and learning outcomes and makes clear how individual modules contribute to the achievement of course level learning outcomes
- Demonstrates academic coherence, intellectual integrity and an appropriate level of academic challenge as the course progresses
- Is designed to ensure appropriate depth and breadth of subject, intellectual, practical and personal skills and ensure relevant progression in terms of the demands placed upon students as the course progresses
- Designed to reflect the rapidly-changing external environment and to equip students with the knowledge and transferable skills needed to excel in their chosen professions and succeed as future-looking global citizens
- Will be taught by a team of staff with appropriate experience and expertise and is informed by relevant research and scholarship and/or current developments in professional practice
- Incorporates the requirements of relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) where courses are subject to accreditation
- Demonstrates a commitment to inclusive practice and is in line with University policies and practice relevant to equality and diversity legislation
- Takes account of University policy on research ethics, as appropriate
- Meets the University's requirements for compliance with consumer protection legislation

2 Recruitment and Admissions

The Validation Panel should he assured that the admissions criteria are consistent with the stated programme aims, learning outcomes and level of the award, taking account of the target market and any PSRB requirements or relevant legislation. The admissions criteria should align with the University's Minimum Entry Criteria and Admissions Policy, including English language competency. The Panel should consider the means by which the course team intends to assess candidates against the standard admissions criteria, and also how non- standard entrants are to be assessed, to be assured that selection procedures are fair, transparent and operate in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy and procedures.

3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The Validation Panel should be satisfied that the Course Team's strategy for learning, teaching and assessment:

- Is aligned with University strategy and is consistent with the stated aims of the course, and that appropriate learning opportunities will be provided to enable students to meet the course aims and learning outcomes
- Reliably and validly assesses the achievement of the course's intended learning outcomes
- integrates feedback strategically and uses formative assessment methods effectively towards appropriate engagement with summative tasks and successful delivery of the course aims
- Complies with current University policies, good practice and guidance on learning, teaching and assessment, in particular assessment design, threshold standards for technology enhanced learning and employability
- Provides accessible and inclusive opportunities for all students, including those with additional needs, to meet the learning outcomes.

4   Course Management / Quality Enhancement

The Validation Panel should be satisfied that the course management structures, including those concerned with academic and pastoral support, will meet the needs of all students. The Panel will seek evidence that current students have been consulted and have actively engaged in the planning and design process. The Panel should also be assured that the course will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the University's Quality Framework and that appropriate quality management and enhancement arrangements are in place, including systems for seeking and responding to feedback from students.

5   Learning Resources

The Validation Panel should be assured that appropriate resources, including learning spaces and teaching staff with relevant subject expertise are in place, or are planned (as approved through the faculty's business planning approval process) so that the course team can provide learning opportunities that will enable students to achieve the programme learning outcomes. Arrangements should also be in place, or planned, to provide reasonable adjustments for students with learning contracts.

6   Courses to be Delivered wholly or substantially by Distance or online/e-Learning

The Validation Panel must be assured that the proposal meets the expectations of the University in respect of the security and reliability of the delivery and assessment systems for distance/flexible/online learning. The Panel should also be assured as to the quality of distance learning / online

materials, the skills and the expertise of the staff delivering the course via these methods and the use of appropriate mechanisms for providing timely academic support and feedback to distance learning students. The Panel should expect to see a significant sample (see below) of the distance learning materials demonstrated either prior to or at the validation event. In considering this aspect of a proposal, the Panel should seek further advice and guidance from the specialist panel member for technology enhanced-learning who will form part of the Panel's constitution.

6.1 Documentation and Sample of DL/online/e-learning media/study materials for Validation

The validation process for flexible, distributed learning and distance (including online/e-learning) courses will include, as appropriate:
- Sample media/learning/study materials for at least the first module of the course to be presented in full, together with an outline of the second module and a detailed production schedule for the development of further modules/study materials
- Demonstration of any related on-line/web-based learning materials in the appropriate virtual learning environment/platform, as requested by the Validation Panel either prior to, or as part of the validation process

7   Collaborative Provision (courses delivered in collaboration with others)

In considering award-bearing courses to be delivered in collaboration with approved partner organisations (i.e. external organisations that have been granted Institutional Approval by the University) there are a number of further issues to be considered by the Validation Panel. In addition to meeting all the criteria set out above in paragraphs 1 to 6, the Panel should also be assured that courses to be delivered under collaborative arrangements meet the additional criteria set out below:

7.1 Recruitment and Admissions for Collaborative Provision

The University retains ultimate responsibility for the admissions standards of all the awards it makes and therefore Validation Panels should expect collaborative programmes to have effective mechanisms in place to enable the University to:

- verify that students have met the approved admissions criteria
- assure that selection procedures are fair, transparent and operate in accordance with University admissions policy and procedures
- have effective oversight of the collaborative partner's procedures for approval of applications for the recognition of prior learning leading to

admission to later stages of an approved programme, where such procedures are proposed as part of the collaborative arrangements

Admissions criteria are expected to include requirements for competency in English language that are consistent with University Minimum Entry Requirements / Admissions Policy and other guidance to admissions tutors. There should also be an appropriate mechanism for checking that students' current competency in spoken and written English Language is adequate to enable them to achieve the academic standards of the course.

7.2 Assessment of Collaborative Provision

The University's Standard Assessment Regulations and associated procedures must apply to all credit and award-bearing courses, including all collaborative provision. To assure effective operation of the assessment process, collaborative proposals are also expected to demonstrate that:

- there are effective mechanisms for assuring the integrity of the assessment process, where it is operated by academic staff at a location outside the University
- there are arrangements to ensure that collaborative students have access to the University's Academic Appeals Process
- External examining and moderation arrangements will operate in accordance with the relevant University policies and requirements

All modules contributing to a University award are normally expected to be taught and assessed in English except where demonstrating competence in a foreign language is integral to the final award. If a proposal includes any courses or modules that are assessed in a language other than English, it must demonstrate effective arrangements for producing authoritative and independent translations of assessment documentation, for quality-assuring translations and for ensuring appropriate external examining arrangements are in place to secure the standards of award/s.

7.3 Planning, Risk Assessment, Due Diligence and Resources for New Collaborative Partners and Provision

Validation Panels should be assured that proposers have gained their faculty's business planning approval to address any resource issues raised by collaborative proposals. This may occur prior to, or in parallel with, the negotiation and development phase of the proposal but should be resolved prior to validation.

All collaborative proposals are expected to be fully supported by the proposing faculty (or faculties) and are expected to align with University and faculty strategic plans for the collaborative portfolio. For all new collaborative partnerships, additional quality and financial risk assessments and due diligence checks must have been completed, and have been approved, prior to validation.

7.4 New Provision with Existing Partners

Where existing collaborative partnerships and associated arrangements are to be expanded, further risk assessments may be required, depending on the scale and nature of the new proposals. The proposal will be expected to present evidence that there are appropriate learning resources to meet the needs of students. Where this is principally the responsibility of the collaborative partner, Validation Panels should be assured that the organisation has the capacity to provide and maintain learning resources of an appropriate quality and standard. Collaborative students' access to SHU learning resources, and all associated fees and charges relating to the collaborative provision, will be detailed in a formal agreement between the University and the collaborating organisation. The respective roles and responsibilities of both the University and the collaborative partner organisation, including responsibilities for quality management, will also be detailed in the formal agreement.

7.5 Staffing Resources for Collaborative Provision

Where teaching and/or assessment of a collaborative programme is carried out by staff of a collaborative partner organisation, the Validation Panel should expect the proposal to provide evidence of the adequacy of staffing arrangements to fulfil these responsibilities, including:

- evidence there is a satisfactory number of appropriately qualified staff (subject qualification and teaching) allocated to undertake academic and pastoral duties
- that there are effective mechanisms for identifying and addressing staff professional development needs, on a regular basis, that are aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework
- that there are effective means for the University to approve permanent staff changes to ensure that the composition of the course team continues to be adequate to support the academic standards of the programme
- that there is an appropriate administrative infrastructure and level of staffing to support the provision

7.6 Sustainability of Collaborative Provision

Supporting higher education courses successfully requires substantial ongoing commitment by the University and the collaborative partner. Validation Panels will therefore expect a proposal to provide evidence that there is capacity for the collaborative arrangement to sustain a long term commitment to the delivery and enhancement of the provision, including:

- details of the University's Collaborative Course Leader's role and ongoing responsibilities in relation to the collaboration

- evidence of sufficient institutional commitment in the University and in the collaborative partner organisation to meet the ongoing resource commitments required for delivery and enhancement of the course/s
- clearly specified maximum and minimum student numbers for the collaborative course/s to run a cohort (with regard to securing the quality of the student experience) and, if applicable, how many cohorts will operate in a year
- for overseas collaborations, details of any risk factors in the cultural, legal, financial or political environment in which the collaborating organisation operates that might pose a threat to ongoing maintenance of academic standards and how these are to be minimized, as evidenced in the risk assessment and due diligence reports undertaken prior to the approval exercise, in accordance with current University requirements

Date Updated	Version Number	Published by	Valid From
December 2015 (initial approval by Academic Board)	1	AQS	December 2015
February 2018	2	AQS	February 2018