QUALITY FRAMEWORK

QUALITY MANUAL SECTION 2

VALIDATION

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QUALITY FRAMEWORK

VALIDATION

<u>**SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION**</u>

**1   REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL VALIDATION, MODIFICATION AND
      REVIEW OF ALL AWARD-BEARING COURSES**

All of the University's award-bearing courses are subject to initial validation by a University validation panel. Where proposals are recommended for approval at validation, the provision is granted 'indefinite approval' subject to ongoing annual review and to periodic review at least once every six years, in line with processes defined in the University's Quality Framework. The periodic review date of a course, once validated, is determined by the date of the 'owning' department's next Departmental Periodic Review. Once a course is validated, and provided that annual and periodic review processes do not indicate any major quality or standards-related issues, all courses are expected to continue in indefinite approval unless or until they are closed. Once granted indefinite approval, **award-bearing courses are not required by the University to undergo a formal 'revalidation' exercise at any point.** Under certain exceptional circumstances a revalidation exercise may, however, be deemed necessary (see below, section 6).

2   MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING, APPROVED COURSES

Following initial validation of a new course, the need to make changes to existing, approved courses may arise from time to time through the ongoing review, management and enhancement of the provision. This activity is managed by the relevant department board, according to the principles and processes set out in the University's Quality Framework. In practice, this means that full revalidation of approved courses should only be required in exceptional circumstances, such as where the changes proposed are so substantive this would effectively create a new award, or where revalidation is a formal requirement an external accrediting body (see below, section 6, for details of when revalidation may be required).

3   ANNUAL REVIEW

All courses, once validated, including those delivered in collaboration with partner organisations, are subject to annual monitoring and review. Individual modules are also subject to an annual review, feeding into the process for course level review. Annual review enables the University to monitor, review and evaluate the continuing quality, academic standards and effectiveness of courses, including their assessment and delivery, in relation to the achievement of the stated aims and learning outcomes. The annual review cycle provides course leaders with the opportunity to review the performance of their course against key performance indicators and identify actions for improvement and enhancement. Annual review also enables heads of departments to look at a range of evidence and feedback arising from annual review and to compare the effectiveness of courses within their area. The annual review exercise is intended to demonstrate and provide evidence that standards are being maintained and quality is being enhanced. Annual review activity is overseen and managed by the relevant department board, according to the principles and

processes set out in the University's Quality Framework. The outcomes of the annual review of courses and modules are used to inform each department's annual Departmental Overview Report. Outcomes of the annual review process are also reported to the University Teaching Quality Committee and the Board of Governors. Full details of the University's approach to annual review are set out in the relevant section of the Quality Manual.

4 DEPARTMENTAL PERIODIC REVIEW AND COLLABORATIVE PERIODIC REVIEW

Following initial validation of a new course, all award-bearing courses are subject to annual review, as described above. Courses are also subject to a more in-depth review and scrutiny as part of a Departmental Periodic Review held at least once every six years. Where courses are delivered in partnership with other organisations, additional scrutiny may be required as part of Collaborative Periodic Review process. Subject to a successful outcome, the Departmental Periodic Review process will confirm that a department's provision may continue in indefinite approval. All University collaborative partnerships are subject to a Collaborative Periodic Review. Details of Departmental Periodic Review and Collaborative Periodic Review are set out in the relevant section of the Quality Manual.

5 WHEN IS REVALIDATION REQUIRED?

All new courses are subject to validation and, if approved, are granted 'indefinite approval', subject to annual review and a departmental periodic review at least once every six years. **Following validation, a formal revalidation exercise will not normally be required by the University.** Instead, existing, approved courses are subject to continuous modification and enhancement, using a flexible, risk-based approach. Modifications to the approved curriculum can be made throughout the six yearly cycle, following validation of a course. It is therefore expected that the re-planning and revalidation of approved courses will be necessary only in exceptional circumstances. A revalidation exercise will only be required if specific criteria is met and where, exceptionally, the need arises for a more fundamental re-planning exercise followed by substantive changes to the existing provision that would, effectively, result in the approval of a new course. Revalidation may also be required if this is a formal requirement an external accrediting body, to retain accreditation status for the course. In such circumstances, the faculty and the department may need to consider a case for full re-planning and revalidation of existing provision, particularly if the proposed changes have significant resource implications.

The need to undertake extensive re-planning and major structural change to an existing course or programme may be identified through annual review and/or regular portfolio development/business planning activities and through ongoing consultation between heads of department or faculty Leadership Teams. Where planned changes to an existing, approved course would have significant resource implications or would significantly affect the overall structure, content and philosophy of an existing course or group of courses, a faculty may decide that a new business planning case is required. Additional consideration must be given to the implications of a revalidation of onsite provision if the same courses are also delivered in collaboration with external partner organisations at other locations.

The implications of a full revalidation exercise for existing students and potential applicants should also be carefully considered, particularly in the light of consumer protection legislation, to ensure any significant changes are consulted on and/or communicated to students in a timely way. Heads of Department are expected to seek advice from their Faculty Leadership Team in such circumstances. However, this should only be necessary in cases where the extent of planned changes to an existing, approved course or group of courses are so significant that this cannot be accommodated through ongoing review, enhancement and modification processes.

6   CRITERIA FOR REVALIDATION

If proposed modifications to an existing approved course or group of courses meet any of the following criteria, this would potentially require a new outline planning approval / business case to be approved by the relevant faculty, followed by a formal revalidation exercise as would normally apply to 'brand new' provision (i.e. the same as would be required for courses that have never previously been offered by the University). If there is any doubt about whether or not planned changes to existing provision will require a full revalidation exercise, the Head of Academic Quality and Standards will advise the relevant department on the appropriate approval process.

Careful consideration is required before a full revalidation exercise is requested because of the significant resource implications involved. In most cases, it is likely that proposed modifications can be accommodated through the Modifications Process. For example, the addition of new intermediate awards, new routes through or the addition of new modes of study to an existing, approved course would not automatically trigger a re-planning and revalidation exercise, though faculty planning approval may be required. Changes to the overall assessment package of a course, or one level of a course, will not, in itself, require revalidation of the course.

A revalidation exercise <u>may</u> be triggered if any/all of the following criteria are met:

- Changes to existing courses which would result in **significant resource implications** for the relevant faculty or department (faculty planning approval is required)
- Major structural and/or content revisions affecting **all levels** of existing courses, such as would result in / require new or substantively revised course level aims and learning outcomes
- Major structural and or content revisions affecting **all levels** of an existing course and that are **essential** to meet changing professional, regulatory and/or statutory body (PSRB) requirements in order to retain accreditation (e.g. introduction of a new professional competencies framework requiring complete restructuring of an existing course meet PSRB requirements for exemption from professional examinations, etc).
- Where a course has been accredited for a specified period of time by a relevant PSRB and/or the accrediting body requires the University to undertake a formal revalidation and related (or conjoint) accreditation exercise periodically, as a condition of continuing accreditation. **NB: in relation to accredited courses, options for modifications to the approved curriculum should always be explored with the relevant PSRB first, before a full revalidation exercise is requested.**

QUALITY FRAMEWORK

VALIDATION

SECTION TWO: OVERVIEW, PRINCIPLES AND KEY FEATURES OF VALIDATION

1   Introduction

The University aims to ensure all of its academic provision is robust, coherent and offers a high quality student learning experience that meets University standards and articulates a current, coherent and relevant curriculum. To achieve this aim, all new University courses are subject to the University's Validation process before they can be delivered to students. Key principles, features and stages of the Validation process are detailed below.

2   Key PRINCIPLES of the Validation Process

- Course planning, design and validation processes provide opportunities to encourage innovation alongside a culture of continuous improvement of provision
- Validation panels are responsible for the initial approval of all onsite and collaborative provision and other categories of provision such as that subject to joint approval and accreditation by the University and relevant professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. **Approval of new collaborative partnerships are subject to a final approval stage at University level.**
- To ensure new course proposals have the best chance of success in gaining University approval in a timely way, academic staff responsible for developing, designing and approving new courses are expected to have the relevant experience and skills and should be appropriately equipped and supported to engage in the course design process through appropriate opportunities for their support, training and continuing personal and professional development
- The Validation process is underpinned by University frameworks, policies and guidance which encourage and enable creativity and good practice in the design of all new provision
- Course design and planning teams are expected to demonstrate how they have engaged with the relevant University frameworks, policies and regulations and with national external benchmarks and other relevant external reference points, as part of the course development and design process
- Validation panels will seek to ensure the University's policies on equality and diversity are taken into account as part of course planning, design and validation processes
- The Validation process will seek to ensure new proposals meet the University's requirements for compliance with consumer protection legislation, in terms of their accurate, timely and clear description for students and applicants, as defined within the University's Student Terms and Conditions and by the Competition and Markets Authority Guidance to HE Providers (CMA, 2015)
- The Validation process involves peer and external review of all new

course proposals leading to a University award and provides a range of opportunities for students to make a contribution to the planning, design and approval of all new courses

- Following initial validation, all courses are expected to undergo continuous improvement and enhancement through the annual review process. At least once every six years, through a Departmental Periodic Review, all academic departments are required to demonstrate that all their award-bearing courses remain in good academic health and are continuing to meet University quality and standards requirements in order to continue in 'indefinite approval'
- Academic Quality and Standards is responsible for institutional oversight, delivery and management of the University's Quality Framework, including the Validation process
- The Validation process is an integral part of the University's Quality Framework and is intended to align with the expectation and indicators of the UK Quality Code, Chapter B1, Programme Design and Approval

3 Key FEATURES of the Validation Process

3.1 Validation Panels

Validation panels have delegated responsibility for considering proposals and for making approval recommendations on behalf of the University. The University Teaching Quality Committee endorses all validation panels' recommendations before new courses can commence. Validation panels are constituted by University academic staff with knowledge and expertise in course validation, quality enhancement and/or curriculum development and design. Academic panel members are drawn from an identified 'pool' of nominated and approved academic staff from across the University. All chairs and panel members are required to attend induction and briefing/training sessions co-ordinated by Academic Quality and Standards. All panels are chaired by a member of senior academic staff or a senior manager from outside the proposing faculty/department. Panels are expected to be accountable for the courses they approve whilst remaining impartial, independent and objective in relation to the specific design and content of new course proposals.

3.2 Validation panels include input from a nominated and approved external panel member(s). External peer review is an essential aspect of ensuring the University's provision is of comparable quality and standards to that offered elsewhere across the UK HE sector. External panel members are usually representatives from another UK Higher Education Institution, with subject or practice-related expertise relevant to the individual proposals under consideration. For proposals involving a collaborative partnership, the validation panel is similar to that described above, but is supplemented by a representative from the University's Library and Student Support Services Directorate. Proposals for new Higher and Degree Apprenticeships or new courses designed according the University's Work Basked Learning Framework (WBLF) are considered by a University Standing Panel with specialist expertise in this area. For proposals involving new provision and/or the institutional approval of a new collaborative partnership, the validation exercise will normally be undertaken during a visit to the relevant partner location.

3.3 External Panel Members
Consultation with an independent external panel member/reviewer is an essential part of the validation process and assists the University in assuring the quality and standards of provision, particularly with regard to the comparability of University courses to those offered elsewhere in the UK HE sector. Usually the external panel member is an academic with significant expertise in the relevant subject area. Professional/practitioner reviewers, externals with expertise in the area of work-based learning or employer representatives may also be asked to contribute and will assist the validation panel in making its judgements regarding the quality and standards of proposals. For the scrutiny of proposals for new collaborative partnerships and/or provision, it is expected that the external panel member will also be familiar with the management of quality and standards of HE provision as delivered in partnership with external organisations.

3.4 External panel members are invited to make initial comments on proposals prior to attending the validation meeting, though they may also be consulted wholly by correspondence, where appropriate, subject to agreement of the panel chair. External panel members are asked to comment on specific aspects of proposals, including the currency and relevance of the curriculum, comparability with similar provision offered elsewhere and how proposals align with relevant external reference points, including national Subject Benchmark Statements, where applicable. All external panel members are subject to nomination and must meet agreed criteria before they can be approved to join a validation panel. Nominations for external panel members are approved by the chair of the validation panel or by the Head of Academic Quality and Standards.

3.5 Timescale for Planning, Design and Approval of New Courses
To ensure the University's academic portfolio continues to be current, responsive and competitive, it is essential that new courses can be planned, designed and approved by means of timely, robust and cost-effective processes. Timescales will vary according to the time required by individual Planning and Design Teams to:
- gain faculty business planning approval
- engage with employers and/or professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies (PSRBs), as relevant to the specific proposals
- plan and design the course(s)
- produce the necessary submission documentation to be presented for consideration by a University Validation Panel

Dependent on the scale and nature of individual proposals, most new courses will take between 6 and 9 months to complete the planning, design and validation process. This includes sufficient time to meet any required actions or formal approval conditions that may be set at validation, prior to the start of delivery of the new course.

Other factors affecting the timescale for planning and validation must also be taken into consideration, including the UCAS recruitment cycle (for UG provision), the proposed marketing campaign (including online and print copy prospectus deadlines) and, for courses subject to joint validation and accreditation, any additional timing requirements stipulated by an external accrediting bodies. For **collaborative provision**, more time may be required to

take account of additional stages in the approval process including: risk assessment and due diligence processes; institutional approval (where a prospective collaborative partner is new to the University); the timescales needed to complete any necessary overseas governmental approval processes and finally the drafting and signing of a formal collaborative agreement prior to the start of delivery.

3.6 Submission Documentation/Curriculum Information

Course design and planning teams are responsible for producing high quality proposal documentation and other curriculum information for submission to a University validation panel. Individual faculties and departments will have specific requirements for the 'sign off' of proposals prior to submission to a validation panel, to ensure the proposal is of an appropriate standard, is comprehensive and 'fit for purpose'.

Submission/Proposal information required for validation consists of the following and is produced by using standard University templates and/or the University's corporate system* which must include:
- Course Descriptor/Specification (one per course)
- Module Descriptors and Module Schedule (for each course)
- Rationale, context and other supporting information for new proposals, to provide the necessary background information for the validation panel

information will be provided using new functionality in SITS online to be available from 2018 onwards

Additional information to support collaborative proposals includes:
- Risk Assessments and Due Diligence Reports and Information
- Operations Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Formal Agreement/Contract

Provision Subject to Accreditation by a PSRB(s)

Further, additional and/or supplementary documentation may also be required for provision that is subject to joint validation and accreditation by an external accrediting body such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) or Health Care Professions Council (HCPC). In such cases, any additional information and other materials to be submitted for accreditation (whether accreditation is sought as part of a joint validation and accreditation event or post-validation) will be as defined by individual external bodies.

3.7 Evaluation and Review of the Validation Process

As set out in the governance arrangements for the University's Quality Framework, operation of the validation process is subject to review and evaluation and is managed at institutional level by Academic Quality and Standards. Review, evaluation and revision of the validation process is overseen by the University Teaching Quality Committee.

3.8 Overview of Validation Process - Key Stages and Indicative Timings

The key stages of the validation process, with indicative timings (dependent on the scale and nature of the proposals) are shown below. Each process stage is described in more detail later in this section of the Quality Manual.

STAGE	DETAILS OF PROCESS STAGE	INDICATIVE
OUTLINE PLANNING (faculty level)	❖ Proposer seeks business planning / outline approval for new provision from faculty authority according to locally-determined faculty planning process and deadlines. Faculty planning approval is granted or rejected.	3 - 12 months prior to validation date
OUTLINE PLANNING (institutional level)	❖ Additional planning permission, risk assessment and due diligence required for collaborative or cross-University developments involving a new partner organisation.	3 - 12 months prior to validation* *timeline may vary as agreed by faculty and
COURSE DESIGN AND PLANNING STAGE	❖ Once planning approval granted, a course design and planning team is convened; membership of planning team and approach to development is agreed locally; planning and design activity begins. Marketing strategy/activity agreed. Input from students required as part of design and planning process.	6 - 12 months prior to validation date
PREP FOR VALIDATION BEGINS	❖ AQS informed that planning approval granted by faculty and begin to make arrangements for validation, including allocation of Panel Chair.	3 - 9 months prior to validation date
PRELIMINARY MEETING	❖ Preliminary Meeting held between Chair of the validation panel and Academic Lead for the proposal to agree schedule, date of validation meeting, deadline for submission of proposal.	3 - 6 months prior to validation date
EXTERNAL PANEL MEMBER(S) APPOINTED	❖ External panel member(s) nominated and approved. Validation panel constitution and date of validation is confirmed.	3 - 6 months prior to validation date
COMPLETION OF PROPOSAL DETAILS AND FACULTY 'SIGN-OFF'	❖ Planning and design process is completed; submission documentation is completed and checked. Faculty/dept 'sign-off' of the submission to enable this to go forward to validation.	6 - 8 weeks prior to validation date
PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO PANEL	❖ Submission Deadline - documentation submitted AQS for circulation to Validation Panel	3/4 weeks prior to validation date
PANEL PROVIDES INITIAL COMMENTS	❖ Panel members submit their initial comments on proposals; comments circulated to course design and planning team to indicate significant issues to be discussed at validation meeting	3 - 5 days prior to validation date
VALIDATION EVENT	❖ Panel meets with design and planning team to discuss proposals in detail. Panel makes recommendations on approval, including any required actions, operating requirements or approval conditions, as relevant.	

REPORTING OUTCOMES	❖ Validation outcomes notified to planning team at the end of the validation meeting, including Panel's recommendation, any approval or operating requirement, required actions and commendations etc.	Notified at validation event (full report produced within 2 weeks of event)
RESPONSE TO CONDITIONS	❖ planning team provides response to any approval conditions or required actions, making necessary amendments to documentation and/or definitive curriculum records in SITS online (as appropriate)	normally within 2 working days of validation event to enable course records set-up to be completed
ACTIONS/ CONDITIONS SIGNED OFF	❖ Response to conditions (where applicable) are considered by Chair. Conditions signed off by Chair on behalf of Panel. Definitive Curriculum Records are finalised. ❖ NB: If approval conditions are not met at this point, further work may be requested from the planning team until all conditions are satisfied. Course cannot begin until actions/conditions are met.	normally within 2 working days of validation event. Definitive Curriculum Records set up will be completed within 10 working days of event
APPROVAL BY UTQC	❖ Validation Panel's recommendations are reported to the University Teaching Quality Committee for endorsement, via Course Matters paper	Usually next UTQC meeting following validation date
DELIVERY OF NEW COURSE AND INDUCTION OF STUDENTS	❖ Course Team, with support from faculty and central professional services make arrangements for marketing, delivery and implementation of newly validated course (including induction for new students due to begin the course/s).	No later than 1 to 3 months prior to proposed course start date (may be much earlier depending on marketing strategy)

QUALITY FRAMEWORK

VALIDATION

SECTION THREE: VALIDATION PROCESS - DETAILED DESCRIPTION

VALIDATION

1   FACULTY BUSINESS PLANNING APPROVAL

1.1   All new course proposals (applies to all onsite, distance learning and collaborative provision involving an external partner) are subject to initial Business Planning Approval by the proposing Faculty's planning authority. Once an initial idea for a new course has been identified, the proposer should consult the Head of Department and other relevant stakeholders. Business planning approval at faculty level should be sought in accordance with the local, faculty arrangements for planning approval (process and deadlines). Each faculty can provide the relevant planning forms, costings and business case templates, as required.

1.2   The Faculty planning approval process takes into consideration the strategic 'fit', resources, financial and policy implications of all new proposals, together with the potential market demand. Planning proposals should be supported by evidence of consultation with relevant staff and by the specific market, financial and other information as required by individual faculty authorities. In addition to faculty business planning approval, all proposals for new collaborative partnerships are subject to additional risk assessment, due diligence checks and approval at University level. New developments with existing collaborative partners may also require additional information to be provided at both faculty and University level, before the proposal can be progressed to approval.

1.3   Faculties have the authority to grant permission to plan new course proposals or to make significant changes to existing approved courses. As part of the planning approval process, the faculty planning authority will agree all necessary resources required for the development and design stage (for example, the time allocation required for academic staff to complete the course design and planning team, and any administrative support needed during the planning and design process). The faculty also approves the resources necessary to implement and deliver the proposals, subject to validation. Depending on individual faculty requirements, the faculty planning authority may ask for further information or changes to a proposal before it can proceed to validation, or it may decide to stop the development at this point if any emerging viability issues cannot be resolved.

1.4   Once faculty planning approval has been granted and confirmed, initial information about the new course proposal is collected by Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) via the Senior Quality Officer for the faculty. The academic

lead that will be responsible for the planning, design and approval of the new course will be invited to meet with a member of the AQS team to begin a new course planning request (currently this will required completion of a Course Development Form, but this will be replaced during 2018 with new functionality in SITS Online). At this stage the planning lead will need to provide essential information about the new proposal, to be shared with a range of faculty and central directorate staff across the University, to begin the associated processes of marketing, admissions and curriculum records set-up processes and to alert other areas about the new proposal (timetabling, Library and Student Support Services, etc) about other aspects of delivery that will need to begin, subject to validation. AQS will include the new proposal in the University's annual Validation Schedule and will begin to make preparatory arrangements for validation.

2 COURSE DESIGN AND PLANNING TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 When the faculty planning group has granted planning approval for a new course proposal (onsite or collaborative), the academic lead responsible for developing the proposal will convene a course design and planning team. The size and scope of the team will depend on the scale, nature and timescales required to develop the individual proposal/s. The course design and planning team will be expected to:

- Consult with relevant stakeholders, at faculty and University level, including current students and professional services, to assist with the development of the new provision
- Plan the academic content and structure of the new provision, taking into account relevant University frameworks, policies and regulations (see Criteria for Assessing Quality and Standards)
- Ensure an appropriate contribution to the design process from students, employers and external academic subject experts and other professionals and/or practitioners relevant to the provision being planned
- Ensure the programme of study will set appropriate academic standards and offer students a high quality learning experience, in line with relevant national subject benchmarks and other external reference points, as applicable
- Produce high quality submission documentation, by the agreed deadlines, to be submitted for formal validation and subsequently to be used for reference purposes by students and staff of the University
- Take account of the University's policies relating to equality and diversity as part of the course design and planning process
- Ensure new proposals meet the University's requirements for compliance with consumer legislation, in terms of their accurate and clear description and as defined within the University's Terms and Conditions and by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Guidelines for HE Providers

3 NEW COURSE REQUEST (COURSE DEVELOPMENT FORM**)

3.1 When planning approval has been granted and confirmed by the relevant faculty planning group, Academic Quality and Standards (AQS) will make initial

arrangements for the validation exercise. Based on the proposed timescale for the development, validation and planned start date of the course, early preparations by AQS will include the allocation of a panel chair and constitution of the panel. The academic lead responsible for the planning, design and validation of the new course proposal will be invited to meet with a member of the faculty-based AQS team to complete a **Course Development Form (CDF)****. The CDF form triggers the arrangements to be made for the validation process by AQS and provides essential planning information about the new proposal to a range of faculty and central directorates including Admissions and Pre-enrolment Services, Registry Services, Marketing, Library and Student Support Services, etc. The information collected at this stage enables preparation for marketing, admissions, applicant records set-up in the corporate system and for other aspects of delivery to be arranged in advance, subject to validation of the course. The academic lead will be invited to meet with an AQS Quality Officer who will act as secretary to the validation panel and who will be able to advise on issues or queries relating to the validation process. The Quality Officer, in liaison with the academic lead for the proposal, is responsible for advising both the course design and planning team and the validation panel on matters of academic policy, frameworks and regulatory issues during the lead-up to validation.

**NB: during 2018, the Course Development Form will be replaced by new functionality in SITS Online to provide an online 'new course request' notification to be submitted.

4   PRELIMINARY MEETING

4.1   A one-hour Preliminary Meeting will be arranged by AQS as soon as possible after the course planning and design process has begun. Usually the preliminary meeting will take place in the proposing faculty. Other representatives from the course design and planning team and the relevant departmental quality lead may also wish to attend the meeting. For collaborative proposals, the meeting may take place at the University or at the partner location. The collaborative course leader/link tutor and representatives of the partner organisation may also be invited to attend. Notes, action points and deadlines will be produced and circulated after the Preliminary Meeting by the AQS Quality Officer.

The purpose of the <u>Preliminary Meeting</u> is to:

- Allow the academic lead and representatives from the course design and planning team to meet with the Chair and Secretary of the Validation Panel
- To enable the Academic Lead to set the context and discuss the proposals in details with the Chair of the Validation Panel
- Confirm all award titles to be presented for validation
- Confirm the date of validation and to agree the deadlines that the course design and planning team will work to, to produce the submission documentation for validation
- Discuss nomination of the External Panel Member/s

- Establish if any exemptions from the Academic Awards Framework or Standard Assessment Regulations will be required and to explain the separate processes for seeking such exemptions prior to validation
- Discuss plans for student engagement in the planning and design process
- Discuss any additional support that may be required by the planning and design team (e.g. specialist LTA advice, technology-enhanced learning support, input/advice from Library and Student Support Services, etc)
- Confirm any professional, regulatory and/or statutory body requirements and/or involvement during or post-approval, where the new course is to be subject to external accreditation

5 COMPLETION OF SUBMISSION DOCUMENTATION

5.1 The course design and planning team will complete the planning and design process, culminating in the production of submission documents using standard University templates (based on Word templates and SITS Online forms). Once completed, the submission documentation will be 'signed-off' by the proposing faculty/department as ready to go forward for validation. The approach to faculty or departmental 'sign-off' should be discussed with the relevant department quality lead, acting on behalf of the Department Board.

6 VALIDATION PROCESS - CIRCULATION OF DOCUMENTATION AND INITIAL COMMENTS

6.1 AQS will receive the final submission documentation from the course design and planning team by the agreed deadline. The proposals will be circulated to the validation panel for scrutiny and consideration usually three to four weeks before the scheduled validation meeting. This will enable Panel Members to arrive at their preliminary conclusions about the quality and standards of the proposals. The Secretary to the Panel (AQS Quality Officer) will also check that the proposal is in line with University frameworks and regulations, as set out in the University's Criteria for Assessing Quality and Standards.

6.2 Based on their scrutiny of the proposals, Panel Members will submit their initial comments to the Chair and Secretary of the Panel approximately three to five working days before the validation meeting. Initial comments are provided according to a standard format and are intended to give the Chair and Panel Members an indication of the key issues to be raised and discussed at the validation meeting. The Academic Lead, on behalf of the course design and planning team, will also receive a copy of all initial comments submitted prior to the validation meeting. The Academic Lead may be asked, or may wish to provide, a written response to the Panel's initial comments if this would help
to clarify any substantive issues in advance of the validation meeting. In some circumstances, a Panel Chair may agree to conduct the final stages of the validation process by correspondence if Panel Members indicate their confidence in the quality of the proposals and have not raised any substantive issues through their initial comments.

7 THE VALIDATION MEETING

7.1 Validation is essentially a peer review process by which the University assures

the quality and standards of all new course proposals. Proposals submitted for approval will be judged against the University's Criteria for Assessing Quality and Standards (see Annex 2 of this section of the Quality Manual). Validation applies to all onsite provision and to provision to be delivered in collaboration with UK and international collaborative partner organisations. Following initial scrutiny of the proposals and submission of written comments in advance, the validation panel will hold a formal meeting (usually of 2 to 3 hours' duration) to discuss the proposals with representatives from the course design and planning team.

7.2   The validation meeting will take the form of a constructive dialogue between the Panel and the proposers, to explore key aspects of the proposals to ensure that quality and standards are in line with University requirements. The agenda, timings and attendance for individual validation meetings will be agreed by the Panel Chair and the relevant AQS Quality Officer acting as Secretary to the Panel. Validation meetings are usually scheduled for a morning or afternoon and generally last for 2 - 3 hours, depending on the scope of the proposals under consideration. Most validation meetings will begin and end with a 30-minute private meeting of the Panel, to set an agenda for the meeting, agree key issues for discussion and finally to agree conclusions and recommendations. The academic lead, departmental representatives supporting the proposals (including the departmental quality lead) will be invited to join the Panel after its initial private meeting and again following the Panel's final private meeting, to receive the Panel's recommendations and findings.

7.3   Discussions at validation are intended to be constructive rather than defensive and the Chair will emphasise the importance of establishing an open and supportive dialogue between the Panel and proposers. Representatives from the planning and design team and other departmental representatives attending the validation meeting are encouraged to contribute and participate in discussions. By the end of the validation meeting, the Panel will be in a position to agree its findings and make recommendations on approval of the proposals. The validation meeting is usually concluded with a short private meeting of the Panel to discuss its findings and conclusions, agree areas of good practice to be highlighted/commended and to agree recommendations for approval. The academic lead and other faculty representatives will be invited to re-join the meeting after the final private session to receive feedback from the Panel.

8   OUTCOMES OF THE VALIDATION PROCESS

8.1   As a result of scrutiny and discussion of the proposals, the Validation Panel may recommend any of the following **three outcomes**:

- **Indefinite Approval Without Conditions and/or Required Actions or Operating Requirements**

    The course is recommended for approval. The course can operate from this point forward in indefinite approval subject to evidence that the provision is maintained in good academic health, as demonstrated through regular annual review and six-yearly departmental Periodic Review

- **Indefinite Approval With Conditions and/or Required Actions or Operating**

Requirements

The course is recommended for approval subject to specific approval conditions and/or required actions or operating requirements that have been identified at validation and that are essential to assure the quality and/or standards of the course/s and therefore must be met prior to the start of the course. The validation panel will agree a deadline for a response to the approval conditions and/or required actions, usually to be finalised within 2 working days of the validation event. Subject to satisfying any approval conditions/required actions prior to commencement, the course can operate in indefinite approval subject to regular annual and periodic review, as outlined above

- **Proposals Not Approved**

    The course cannot be recommended for approval at this stage as there are substantive issues affecting the quality and/or standards of the proposal. In this case, the proposals will be recommended for substantial revisions and / or further development and re-submission. Where approval cannot be recommended by the validation panel, detailed reasons for non-approval will be given to the planning and design team, together with an opportunity to further develop, revise and re- submit the proposals at a later stage, as appropriate. In the unlikely event that a dispute between a faculty and a validation panel (or its chair) arises and cannot be resolved at validation (for example, in relation to the outcomes of the validation process), the Head of Academic Quality and Standards and/or UTQC will take action as necessary, to conclude the matter.

8.2 Setting of Approval Conditions or Required Actions

The setting of approval conditions is a serious matter and will only apply to matters that are essential and must be addressed to assure the quality and/or standards of the course/s prior to the start of delivery. Where approval is recommended subject to conditions, the validation panel considers there are important issues that must be resolved before the proposals can be fully approved. All approval conditions must be met and a satisfactory response to each condition must be approval by the validation panel chair or full panel if required, prior to the course commencing. Where a proposal would require a high number of approval conditions to be set in order for it to meet the University's requirements, the validation panel may choose to recommend that the proposals should not be approved at this stage. The panel will also need to exercise judgement, depending on the scope, scale and nature of any conditions required, as to whether the conditions an met within the available time prior to the planned start date for the new course. If the scale of the revisions required is too significant to be met by conditions, the panel may not recommend approval of the proposals at this stage. The setting of 'Required Actions' may be specified as an alternative to Approval Conditions, where the issues to be addressed are of a relatively minor nature, eg. to ensure all essential curriculum information has been completed and submitted, to provide any missing delivery information to enable course records set-up to be finished, or to correct any typographical errors or omissions.

8.3 Setting of Operating Requirements
In addition to conditions of approval or required actions, validation panels may set Operating Requirements. Operating Requirements are a type of mandatory approval condition which cannot be fulfilled before the course commences but which must be addressed once the course is operating (e.g. a review of the overall course assessment strategy may be required after the first year of operation). Operating Requirements are reported to the relevant departmental board. Monitoring and progress of operating requirements should be reported through the annual review process, via Course Improvement Plans (CIPs).

8.4 Recommendations
Recommendations made by the validation panel are not mandatory but may be made to facilitate good practice or enhancement and to provide helpful advice to the course team in the implementing the proposals. Recommendations are formally recorded in the validation report.

8.5 Commendations for Areas of Good Practice
As part of the formal recommendations, validation panels will provide feedback on areas of good practice that have been highlighted / commended during the validation process. Areas of good practice will be recorded in the validation report and may be shared across the University.

9   REPORTING THE OUTCOMES OF VALIDATION

9.1   The outcomes of a Panel's discussions and recommendations will be set out in a standard Validation Report prepared by the Secretary to the Panel (usually the relevant AQS Quality Officer). A verbal report of the Panel's recommendations will be provided a the end of the validation meeting and an initial draft of the approval recommendations will be provided within 1 working day of the validation. This is to enable the academic lead to begin work on the response to any approval conditions or required actions that have been set, without delay. The full Validation Report will provide formal, written feedback to the proposers in a standard format and will usually be issued within 10 working days of the validation meeting. The report will include any commendations on areas of good practice and a brief summary of the key issues discussed at the validation meeting. All new course approval recommendations are reported at University level via the Course Matters paper, submitted to the next scheduled meeting of the University Teaching Quality Committee following the date of the individual validation meeting. Validation reports are also submitted to the relevant departmental board.

10   RESPONDING TO CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

10.1   A response to any conditions of approval must be submitted by the academic lead for the proposals within approximately 2 working days of the validation meeting. The agreed deadline and format for the response will be agreed with the chair and secretary of the validation panel. All approval conditions must be satisfied before the new course can begin. The chair of the panel, acting on the panel's behalf, will consider and approve the response to conditions. The chair may request further work to be undertaken until all conditions have been satisfied and met in full and may request the response to be considered by the whole panel, where necessary. Amendments and revisions to the proposals

are usually required to meet conditions of approval, to ensure that the matters addressed by the conditions are accurately reflected in the associated curriculum records. Following a satisfactory response to all conditions, the definitive curriculum records will be confirmed as the final, approved versions. Definitive curriculum records (held both as documents and curriculum records held in the corporate records system, SITS) form an essential and permanent part of the University's central record of award-bearing provision and may be used for internal and external reference and audit purposes.

11 POST-VALIDATION - DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Following validation, the course team will begin to prepare for the first delivery of the new course in liaison with relevant academic and professional services to ensure all necessary arrangements for the admission and induction of new students and delivery of the new course(s) are in place.

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