

## UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA

# Procedures and Processes for the Validation of Credit Bearing Academic Provision (Taught Programmes)

Policy Schedule	
Policy title	Procedures and Processes for the Validation of Credit Bearing Academic Provision
Policy owner	Alice Helm-Alabaster (Quality Assurance Manager)
Policy lead contact	Alice Helm-Alabaster (Quality Assurance Manager)
Approving body	Academic Board
Date of approval	Version control update May 2018 Version control update July 2017 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2016 16 <sup>th</sup> June 2015 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
Date of implementation	May 2018
Version no.	4.0
Related Guidelines, Procedures, Codes of Practice etc.	Guide to Validation Guide to Minor Modification Guide to Re-Approval Programme Initiation Process Programme Withdrawal Process Collaborative Provision Procedures and Processes
Review interval	3 yearly

***NB. This policy is available on the University of Cumbria intranet and it should be noted that any printed copies are uncontrolled and cannot be guaranteed to constitute the current version of the policy.***

## Introduction

This document sets out the procedures and processes for the consideration, approval and review of the University's taught provision. Further supporting information is provided in the accompanying Guide to Validation.

The approval and ongoing review of modules and programmes is one of the principal mechanisms through which the University secures academic standards and ensures the quality of learning opportunities within programmes of study that lead to a University of Cumbria qualification.

The approval of Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) provision and Academic Collaborative Provision (ACP) delivered through Associate Partners follows the same processes. The University's Processes and Procedures for the Approval and Management of Academic Collaborative Provision should also be referred to.

Responsibility for approving the University's taught academic programmes is discharged through the Standing Validation Panel (SVP) which acts on behalf of Academic Board. The SVP comprises experienced academics from across the University who may act as Chairs and Panel Members of validations.

Validation Panels fulfil their role by judging proposals against the University's Threshold Criteria for Validation. These Threshold Criteria for Validation provide the benchmark against which new proposals are measured. These criteria have been developed to ensure that the University's portfolio satisfies the external requirements expected by the Quality Assurance Agency, PSRBs and other relevant bodies and frameworks.

In the case of Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) provision, the Standing Validation Panel are also responsible for judging proposals against the corresponding Apprenticeship Standard and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding and compliance rules. The Panel must therefore undertake a holistic review both of the academic University qualification and of the apprenticeship components.

The University's validation processes (including Minor Modification and Periodic Review) seek to assure the continuing appropriateness and currency of the existing programme (e.g. if a new or revised subject benchmark has been introduced).

Academic Board maintains oversight of the University's validation activity through its sub-committee, Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC). SSQAC considers and approves the membership of the SVP on an annual basis. It also receives an annual summary report of validation and revalidation activity and outcomes of Re-Approval Panel meetings.

This document has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in particular:

- Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards.
- Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval.
- Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review.

The validation process is managed by Academic Quality and Development (AQD).

# Section 1 - Principles

## General

1. University programmes are normally validated for 6 years. Shorter validation periods may be approved. Exceptionally a programme team may seek a year's extension to validation. Approval for this is considered by the Minor Modification and Awards Panel.
2. When new Subject Benchmark Statements or Apprenticeship Standards are published these are considered within the relevant Academic Department to determine what validation or minor modification activity may be required.
3. In cases of Academic Collaborative Provision involving Associate Partners, the Associate Partner must be approved by Academic Board before any validation event can take place.

## Changes to Programmes

4. Changes may be made to programmes and modules throughout their validated lifecycle through the Minor Modification Process.
5. Once a programme is validated, no changes should be implemented within the first year of the programme validation period (with the exceptions of changes in PSRB requirements) unless approval has been obtained from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). Discretion will be applied in the case of shared modules within adopting programmes.

## External Engagement

6. Programme Leaders are responsible for engaging with a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the programme e.g. employers, service providers, placement providers and students. The nature of these activities may vary (e.g. employer/industry meeting, email feedback from External Team Member, social media feedback from students, use of discussion boards, writing days with the academic team etc) but this engagement must be evidenced in the Validation Briefing Document. HLA proposals and ACP proposals for validated programmes and franchise proposals for a programme not already validated should follow the same processes for other stakeholder engagement. The University provides support to Associate Partners to enable them to fulfil this. This is not necessary for a franchise proposal of an already validated University programme (which looks at a partner's ability to deliver an existing programme).
7. Students must be involved in the development and periodic review of programmes. The Programme Leader is responsible for making arrangements for appropriate engagement and this must be evidenced in the Validation Briefing Document, along with detail of how feedback influenced final proposals. HLA proposals and ACP proposals for validated programmes and franchise proposals for a programme not already validated should follow the same processes for student input. This is not necessary for a franchise proposal of an already validated University programme (where the programme itself is already approved).

8. The University's validation procedures require the involvement of experienced academics and/or practitioners. Such engagement is secured through the use of an External Team Member (during programme development) and External Panel Member (at the approval stage). In the case of minor modifications and re-approval, external engagement is secured through use of External Examiners in approving changes.

## **Deadlines**

9. Dates of Pre-Validation Scrutiny and Validation Events are set following completion of Stage 4 of the Programme Initiation Process.
10. Validation and revalidation events should be held by the end of March with sign-off in place by the end of June, prior to the start of the recruitment and application cycle
11. Exceptionally compressed timescales may be negotiated in the case of HLA programmes or other provision where permission is granted at the discretion of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

## Section 2 - Categories of Approval

2.1 The University operates a range of validation processes. All forms of approval use the same reference points to ensure a level of consistency as to what constitutes a University of Cumbria award:

**Validation** – Validation is the process used to describe the approval of new substantive programmes (as described in the Academic Regulations (B2.1), other than 'Other Awards'). It is a 2-stage process, with Pre-Validation Scrutiny followed by the Validation Event.

**Franchise** –Where the University approves an Associate Partner to deliver an academic programme which the University owns ("Franchise Model") or approves an Associate Partner to deliver a part of an academic programme which the University owns, normally up to 50% ("Shared Delivery Franchise Model"). Franchise approval events largely follow the same 2-stage process as Validation. However, where the provision is already validated as a University programme, the process will focus on the partner's delivery, management, and student support arrangements.

**Periodic Review** - Programmes are normally validated for a period of 6 years. Toward the end of this period, the continuing appropriateness of provision is reviewed and confirmed via the appropriate mechanism; either revalidation or re-approval. The Guide to Validation provides explanatory information on the different categories.

- **Revalidation** is the mechanism for the continuing approval of existing provision which is seeking to make substantial changes. Revalidation approves the revised programme for a period of 6 years. Revalidation follows the same process as Validation with a Pre-Validation Scrutiny and subsequent Validation Event.
- **Re-Approval** is the mechanism for the continuing approval of existing provision which is seeking to make no changes or small scale changes only through Periodic Review. Re-Approval may be given for up to 6 years.

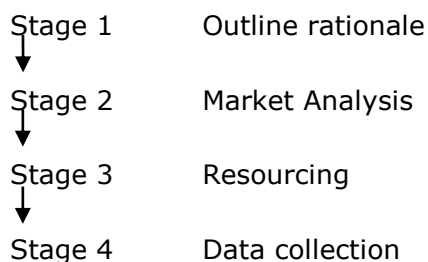
**Minor Modification** – Minor Modification is the process by which validated programmes and/or modules can be changed during their validated period, ahead of their next scheduled Periodic Review. Such changes could involve changes to programme content, structure or other delivery arrangements. Minor awards (defined in the Academic Regulations (B2.1) as 'Other Awards') may also be approved through the Minor Modification Process.

## Section 3 - Processes

- 3.1 Programme planning and approval processes have three main phases – Planning, Development (Curriculum Design and Development) and Validation.

### **Planning Phase**

- 3.2 The Planning Phase is overseen by the Portfolio and Programme Development Manager, as set out in the University's Processes for Programme Initiation. This gated process comprises four stages:



- 3.3. On approval of Stage 4, the proposal proceeds to the Curriculum Design and Development phase.

### **Development Phase - Curriculum Design and Development**

- 3.4 This phase describes the period used by the proposing team to design and develop the programme and produce the programme documents.
- 3.5 Following successful completion of Stage 4 of the Programme Initiation Process, a Validation Officer from AQD is assigned to the Validation Event and a Standing Validation Panel chair and panel are also assigned. Allocations are managed through AQD and the Dean for Student Success who ensure that there are no conflicts of interest.
- 3.6 The Pre-Validation Scrutiny Panel Chair is sourced from a different subject area to the proposal being presented. The Validation Panel Chair is sourced from a different Academic Department to the proposal being presented
- 3.7 The Validation Officer will liaise with the Programme Team to develop a timeline of activities and deadlines. This will include the following:
- Date of Pre-Validation Scrutiny event
  - Deadlines for document submission for Pre-Validation Scrutiny
  - Date of Validation Event
  - Deadlines for document submission for Validation Event
  - Any permitted variations required by PSRB accreditation/approval procedures
- 3.8 At this point, the Validation Officer will liaise with the proposer to confirm the name of the External Team Member (as captured in Stage 4 of programme initiation), to identify an External Panel Member<sup>1</sup> and to identify any PSRBs to be involved and ascertain their requirements and deadlines for the event.

---

<sup>1</sup> For details about the External Panel Member and External Team Member, refer to the Guide to Validation.

## **Planning for Validation**

- 3.9 Planning for validation and review activity is an ongoing process, led by the Academic Departments.
- 3.10 The Dean for Student Success and Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that programme teams are undertaking planning and development activities to meet the requirements of the institution's validation processes and associated deadlines.

## **External Team Member**

- 3.13 The proposing team is required to consult with a nominated External Team Member as part of programme development for validation and revalidation. Detail of the feedback from the External Team member and how it shaped the final proposals must be summarised in the Validation Briefing Document.
- 3.14 In the event of sets of programmes coming forward within a joint event, a number of External Team Members may be required. This should be discussed with the Validation Officer (AQD) in the first instance. HLA proposals and ACP proposals for validated programmes and franchise proposals for a programme not already validated should follow the same processes for External Team Member input. This is not normally necessary for a franchise proposal of an already validated University programme (where the programme itself is already approved).

## **Pre-Validation Scrutiny**

- 3.15 Pre-Validation Scrutiny provides a formal check of the readiness of the proposal to come forward to the Validation Event.
- 3.16 The date of the Pre-Validation Scrutiny (PVS) Event is confirmed by AQD following completion of Stage 4 of the Programme Initiation Process.
- 3.17 The PVS Event is chaired by a Chair of the Standing Validation Panel from a different subject area to the proposal being presented. Administrative support for the PVS is provided by AQD, with action notes taken from the meeting.
- 3.18 The PVS Event will take the form of a formal meeting with the programme team (including the Programme Leader and appropriate Principal Lecturer). The programme team will be expected to present their fully completed documentation by the agreed deadline date. The PVS event should be held by the end of February to allow validation to be completed prior to the start of the recruitment and application cycle.
- 3.19 Failure to submit PVS documents by this deadline will result in the PVS being cancelled and the Validation Event being postponed until the next academic year. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). In the case of revalidation, this may require an extension to validation and in the case of new provision, the Academic Department must notify potential applicants as soon as possible, being mindful of consumer law.

- 3.20 PVS documents will be sent to the PVS Chair and internal stakeholders. Those internal stakeholders will be required to submit comments on the PVS documents at least 3 working days before the PVS Event.
- 3.21 The PVS Chair may make one of the following recommendations as an outcome of the PVS Event:
- Proceed to validation subject to housekeeping only
  - Proceed to validation subject to substantive actions and housekeeping (Head of Departments (HoD), Dean for Student Success, and Director of AQD alerted)

The PVS Chair also retains the right not to proceed with the PVS Event if the documentation submitted requires significant further development.

Where the PVS Chair identifies substantive action required, this will necessitate further discussions with the HoD, Dean for Student Success and Quality Assurance Manager to agree whether the proposal can be progressed within the original timescales or if it will require deferral to the next academic year.

- 3.22 The deadline for resubmission of all validation documents will be reconfirmed at the PVS Event. This will normally be at least 5 weeks before the validation event.
- 3.23 The PVS Chair is responsible for confirming that they are satisfied that all actions and housekeeping identified through the PVS Event have been addressed. If the Chair is not satisfied that this is the case, this will result in the validation being postponed until the next academic year. In the case of revalidation this may require an extension to validation and in the case of new provision, the Academic Department must notify potential applicants as soon as possible, being mindful of consumer law.
- 3.24 No PVS Event will take place for any Academic Collaborative Provision (ACP) for which the Associate Partner has not already been approved by Academic Board.
- 3.25 No PVS Event will take place for any Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) programme for which the Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan has not been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

## **Validation Phase**

- 3.25 The Validation Event is managed by the designated Validation Officer in Academic Quality and Development.
- 3.26 As a minimum, Validation Panels comprise<sup>2</sup>:
- A Chair (drawn from the SVP but outwith the proposing team's Department)
  - Two Internal Panel Members (drawn from the SVP but outwith the proposing team's Department<sup>3</sup>.)
  - One External Panel Member (see below)
  - The Validation Officer

---

<sup>2</sup> Where appropriate, validation panels may vary in size. AQD is responsible for agreeing the exact panel size. Typically, variants will be due to PSRB attendance, for complex validations or where the validation is seeking to approve substantial changes to an existing programme.

<sup>3</sup> This is essential to the integrity of the process (ref, Indicator 5, [Chapter B1 of the QAA Quality Code](#)).



- 3.27 To enable the Validation Panel to comment on the appropriateness of the subject and curriculum content, an independent External Panel Member attends as a member of the Validation Panel. The External Panel Member is not involved in the Development Phase and is different to the External Team Member<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.28 An External Panel Member is not normally required for Franchise events where the programme has already gone through the University's validation process that included external input. In such instances, it would be expected that the relevant External Examiner provide external commentary on the ability of the Associate Partner to deliver the validated programme. However, an External Panel Member would be required for Franchise events where the programme is not already validated.

## Validation Documentation

- 3.29 The proposing team is required to submit a validation document set to the Validation Officer in the agreed timeframe. The document set comprises:
- Validation Briefing Document.
  - Programme Specification.
  - Module Descriptor Forms (MDFs).
  - Work-based Learning / Placement Handbook (where relevant).
  - Links to online staff profiles for University staff involved in the delivery of the programme (and staff CVs for external staff, such as ACP proposals, PSRBs, etc).
  - Critical Review (for revalidations).

Where there are multiple target awards proposed as part of a larger framework of interrelated programmes, the team should also provide:

- A mapping of the modules and awards, clearing identifying shared modules

For all Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes, the following is also required:

- Mentor Handbook

For Academic Collaborative Provision, the following is also required:

- Programme Handbook (draft)
- Operational Manual for delivery (draft)
- Institutional Agreement
- Memorandum of Co-operation (draft) or other programme-level agreement.

- 3.30 The Validation Officer will circulate the document set to the Validation Panel and ask for comments to be returned. This will normally be 3 weeks prior to the event. Note: Earlier deadlines may be required by PSRBs.
- 3.31 The Validation Officer liaises with the Validation Chair to collate comments and questions into a Validation Agenda which is circulated prior to the Validation Event.
- 3.32 Programme Initiation documentation is not normally considered part of the validation document set. The Chair and Validation Officer are responsible for checking and confirming that the proposal as presented for validation aligns to the Programme Initiation proposal/s. Should queries be raised, a pre-validation meeting may be

---

<sup>4</sup> Ref, Indicator 5, [Chapter B1 of the QAA Quality Code](#). See also the Guide to Validation for details about the External Panel Member role.

convened. Outcomes from this meeting will vary depending on the query but may lead to:

- A document rewrite.
- Liaison with the Academic Department and/or Academic Strategy and Planning Committee (ASPC) to consider and approve changes.
- A report into the validation to enable further discussion and consideration by the Validation Panel.

## **The Validation Meeting**

- 3.33 Validation Events take the form of a meeting between the Validation Panel and the proposing team. The event is led by the Validation Chair and facilitated by the Validation Officer.
- 3.34 The Validation Officer will agree the timings for the Validation Event in advance. A Validation Event is typically either half day or a full day depending on the size and scope of the proposal. Longer meetings over more than one day may be arranged in the case of larger proposals or due to PSRB requirements.
- 3.35 For International validations, a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) or other suitable representative of the University Senior Management Team may be presented to provide backing and context for the proposal.
- 3.36 For revalidations, it is expected that the panel will have the opportunity to meet with a representative group of students (or recent graduates) from the existing programme.
- 3.37 At the end of the meeting, with reference to the Threshold Criteria for Validation, the Validation Panel is required to make a decision about whether to validate the proposal, to agree any conditions and enhancements and to identify areas of good and best practice.
- 3.38 In making its decision, the potential outcomes open to the Validation Panel are:
- To approve the proposal unconditionally
  - To approve the proposal subject to satisfying minor conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 3 weeks of the event.
  - To approve the proposal subject to satisfying major conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 6 weeks of the event.
  - To defer the proposal for a year. In cases where conditions are excessive in number or scale, the Chair will refer the proposal back to the Academic Department for further detailed redevelopment before re-presenting to a new Validation Event in the next academic year.
  - To not approve the proposal.
- 3.39 Following the meeting, the Validation Officer produces a Validation Report. This describes the main points of discussion and outcomes and confirms any conditions, enhancements and good and best practice. It is circulated to the Validation Panel and the proposing team.

- 3.40 Where conditions and or enhancements are set, the proposing team is required to respond to these in the agreed timescale with associated documentation re-presented as appropriate. Where good and best practice is highlighted, responses are also required as appropriate to indicate how they might be more widely disseminated.
- 3.41 Post- Validation Event activity is undertaken between the Validation Chair, Validation Officer, and the proposing team. Exceptionally, Internal Panel Members and/or External Panel Members may be involved.
- 3.42 Once the Chair is satisfied that conditions have been met, that any enhancements have been responded to, and that appropriate avenues for dissemination of good and best practice have been identified, the Chair signs off the proposal. At that point it is considered validated.
- 3.43 The Validation Officer is responsible for notifying the programme team, internal stakeholders, and Associate Partners (where applicable) that a proposal has been formally validated.

### **Post Validation Activity - Definitive Programme Documents**

- 3.44 Following validation, AQD is responsible for the storage and maintenance of the Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors Forms (which form the Definitive Programme Document - DPD) during the life of the programme.
- 3.45 DPDs are stored on the University Shared Drive and this will be the source from which staff will access validated programme documentation.
- 3.46 AQD is responsible for making Programme Specifications ready for publication and uploading to the web content management system to form part of the programme's webpage.
- 3.47 Updated Programme Specifications should be uploaded onto programme webpages by the end of June, prior to the start of the recruitment and application cycle. Until validation approval is confirmed a placeholder or covering statement may be used to indicate the status of the programme to prospective applicants.

## **Section 4 – Periodic Review of Programmes**

- 4.1 Programmes are normally validated for a period of 6 years. Toward the end of this period, the continuing appropriateness of provision is reviewed and confirmed via the appropriate mechanism, either revalidation or re-approval.
- 4.2 AQD maintains the definitive record of programmes coming up for periodic review. The academic year before programmes are due to run out of validation, AQD will provide the Portfolio and Programme Development Manager with the list of programmes due for periodic review.
- 4.3 The Portfolio and Programme Development Manager will undertake a criteria-based review of the programmes to determine whether a revalidation or re-approval will be sought. This will normally be timed to feed into the Programme Initiation cycle if required to do so).

### **Revalidation**

- 4.4 Revalidation is reserved for programmes seeking to make substantial changes to the existing programme. Additional guidance is provided in the Guide to Validation.
- 4.5 Programmes going through revalidation will normally follow the University's Programme Initiation Processes and timelines after which a Revalidation Event date, and other deadlines, will be set by AQD.
- 4.6 Revalidation follows the same process as Programme Validation with a Pre-Validation Scrutiny and subsequent Validation Event.
- 4.7 All Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes must follow revalidation processes, regardless of the scale of change to the programme. However, Programme Initiation may not be required
- 4.8 All Academic Collaborative Provision delivered through Associate Partners must follow revalidation processes, regardless of the scale of change to the programme. However, Programme Initiation may not be required
- 4.9 Revalidation may approve the programme for up to a further 6 years.
- 4.10 For revalidations, it is expected that the panel will have the opportunity to meet with a representative group of students (or recent graduates) from the existing programme. The proposing team will liaise with the Validation Officer to secure appropriate representation.

### **Re-Approval**

- 4.11 Re-Approval represents a streamlined mechanism for the continuing approval of existing provision where no changes or small scale changes only are proposed (and programme aims and outcomes remain largely unchanged).

- 4.12 Re-Approval is reserved for programmes which can evidence that they continue to meet the standards expected by the University and set out by the QAA and PSRBs. Proposals must demonstrate that they continue to meet the Threshold Criteria for Validation. There must be evidence of successful evaluation by students, External Examiner(s) and other stakeholders.
- 4.13 Re-Approval is normally appropriate where effective use has been of the Minor Modification process during the programme's lifespan to ensure that the programme continues to be current and meets internal and external requirements.
- 4.14 Re-Approval may be given for up to 6 years.
- 4.15 Programmes seeking re-approval will be considered through a Re-Approval Panel meeting, normally chaired by the Dean for Student Success (or equivalently experienced and independent Chair from the Standing Validation Panel) and consisting of:
- A Re-Approval Panel Chair (normally the Dean for Student Success)
  - The Quality Assurance Manager from AQD
  - Two Internal Panel Members (drawn from the Standing Validation Panel but outwith the proposing team's Department)
- 4.16 Re-Approval meeting dates are set each year, in accordance with the scale of re-approval activity planned in that session (January to April). The Re-Approval Panel is supported by AQD.
- 4.17 The following documentation must be presented to the Re-Approval Panel meeting:
- Re-Approval Briefing Document including links to online staff profiles
  - Programme Specification on the latest template (using track changes to show the intended changes)
  - Module Descriptor Forms on the latest template (using track changes to show the desired changes)
  - The last two years' Annual Monitoring Reports
  - The last two years' External Examiner Reports and Programme Leader responses
  - Evidence of student engagement in the proposals for re-approval (e.g. Staff Student Forum minutes, notes of a focus group, or details of student surveys)
- All documents must be submitted to AQD at least 5 weeks before the re-approval meeting.
- 4.18 AQD will invite the existing External Examiner to comment on the proposed changes (replacing the External Team Member function for re-approval).
- 4.19 AQD will also provide the Re-Approval Panel with a summary of Minor Changes or Minor Modifications since the last revalidation/re-approval.
- 4.20 The Re-Approval Panel will consider the documentation using the University's Threshold Criteria for Validation.
- 4.21 In making its decision, the potential outcomes open to the Re-Approval Panel meeting are:
- To approve the proposal unconditionally (normally for a further 6 years)

- To approve the proposal subject to satisfying minor conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 3 weeks of the event.
- To approve the proposal subject to satisfying major conditions and responding to any enhancements. Where this is the case, documents must be resubmitted within 6 weeks of the event.
- To defer the proposal for a year. In cases where conditions are excessive in number or scale, or where the Panel judge the amount of proposed change to be in excess of the normal criteria for re-approval, the Chair will refer the proposal back to the Department for further detailed redevelopment before re-presenting for full revalidation in the next academic year. In such cases, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) will be alerted and the team may be asked to make Minor Modifications and seek a year's extension of the current validation period.

4.22 Following the meeting, the AQD Officer will produce notes of the Re-Approval Panel. This describes the main points of discussion and outcomes including any conditions, enhancements, and good / best practice. This is circulated to the Re-Approval Panel and the proposing programme teams.

4.23 Post- Re-Approval Panel activity is undertaken between the Re-Approval Panel Chair, Validation Officer, and the proposing team. Exceptionally, the External Examiner may also be involved.

4.24 Once the Re-Approval Panel Chair is satisfied that the conditions have been met, that any enhancements have been responded to, and that appropriate avenues for dissemination of good and best practice have been identified, they will formally sign off the proposal for re-approval. At that point it is considered re-approved and Definitive Programme Documents (Programme Specifications and Module Descriptor Forms) are re-saved.

4.25 The AQD Validation Officer is responsible for notifying institutional stakeholders that a proposal has been formally re-approved.

4.26 Notes of Re-Approval Panel meetings are presented to Student Success and Quality Assurance Committee (SSQAC) for information.

### **Post Re-Approval and Revalidation - Definitive Programme Documents**

4.27 Following revalidation or re-approval, AQD is responsible for the storage and maintenance of the Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors Forms (which form the Definitive Programme Document - DPD) during the life of the programme.

3.48 Updated Programme Specifications should be uploaded onto programme webpages by the end of June, prior to the start of the recruitment and application cycle. Until revalidation approval or re-approval is confirmed, a covering statement is provided on the existing document to ensure that applicants understand that the Programme Specification on the University website is undergoing routine review and that some of the details may change.

## Section 5 – Minor Modification and Minor Awards

- 5.1 The Minor Modification and Minor Awards process provides a mechanism for the ongoing enhancement of programmes and modules within the validated period and for the approval of new academic awards of up to 60 credits.
- 5.2 Approval of Degree/Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes will not be permitted via the Minor Modification and Minor Awards process, regardless of the size of the award. The full validation process must instead be followed.
- 5.3 During the lifetime of a programme, the programme team may wish to make minor modifications to the programme or individual modules. These may be for a variety of reasons, but typically to:
  - Ensure continuing currency of programmes in light of developments in the sector (such as industry practice and pedagogy).
  - Responding to feedback from staff, students or the external examiner.
  - Responding to changes in the external environment such as PSRB requirements or government policy changes.
- 5.4 Requests for minor modification are initiated within Academic Departments and considered by the University's Minor Modification and Awards Panel (MMAAP).
- 5.5 The minor modification process represents a risk-based approach with a gradation of approval depending on the scale of changes being proposed. A summary table of Minor Modifications is detailed separately in the Guide to Minor Modification.
- 5.6 There are no specific limits to the number of minor modifications that can be made to a programme. The Guide to Minor Modification provides further detail. Changes that impact on the overall programme aims and outcomes may require more detailed revalidation activity.
- 5.7 Once a programme is validated, no changes should be proposed for Minor Modification within the first year of the programme validation period (with the exceptions of changes in PSRB requirements) unless approval has been obtained from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). Discretion will be applied in the case of shared modules within adopting programmes.
- 5.8 In proposing a change, affected students must be consulted and their agreement to the proposal must be sought. More detail is provided in the Guide to Minor Modification.
- 5.9 AQD maintains a record of Minor Modifications.
- 5.10 The QA Team in AQD have responsibility for maintaining the Definitive Programme Documents and must be kept informed of all modifications required, including Housekeeping. The QA Team is responsible for the timely dissemination of Minor Modifications to relevant internal stakeholders.
- 5.11 Where new academic awards are approved through the Minor Modification process, they are considered against the Threshold Criteria for Validation.

5.12 The Membership and Terms of Reference for the MMAP are set out in the University's Committee Handbook.

## **Process for Approval of Minor Modifications**

5.12 Requests for a Minor Modification are submitted to the University's Minor Modification and Awards Panel (MMAP).

5.13 Paperwork must be completed by the Programme/Module Leader and submitted to AQD at least 4 weeks before the Minor Modification and Awards Panel.

5.14 Requests for changes to existing provision for implementation in the following academic year must be provided to AQD by the published deadlines set out in the Guide to Minor Modification.

5.15 Programme teams are expected to engage students in making proposals for minor modifications, through consulting with students who will be affected by the proposed change, and communicating any outcomes to students and applicants through corporate communications mechanisms.

5.16 In making its decision, the potential outcomes open to the Minor Modification and Awards Panel are:

- To approve the proposal
- To not approve the proposal
- To approve the proposal with minor housekeeping conditions. Where housekeeping conditions are attached to the approval, it is the responsibility of the lead proposer to respond and provide any amended documentation. The Chair may approve any responses to conditions outwith the meeting, to be reported back to the Panel under Matters Arising. A Minor Modification proposal is only approved and implemented following confirmation from the Chair that any conditions have been met

5.17 Where a change to the Definitive Programme Documents is regarded as Housekeeping only (as set out in the Guide to the Minor Modification), it can be made by Programme/Module Team in liaison with AQD, outwith the MMAP.

5.18 AQD is responsible for ensuring that approved Minor Modifications are reported to Professional Services. Where relevant, academic colleagues (i.e. normally the person making the proposal) are responsible for reporting Minor Modifications to students and applicants.

5.19 The Consumer Protection Regulations (2008) and Consumer Contracts Regulations (2013) protect the rights of students to study the programme the University contracted with them to deliver in accordance with an offer made and accepted based on information provided to the student which informed the student's choice. This has implications for making certain minor modifications. The Guide to Minor Modification provides detail of minor modifications that could have implications in relation to Consumer Protection Law.

5.20 The minor modification is not approved until it has been approved by the MMAP.



## **Section 6 – Programme Withdrawal**

- 6.1 The University operates a formal process for Programme Withdrawal.
- 6.2 Programme Withdrawal is defined as the complete withdrawal of a named programme. This could be within or at the end of its validation period.
- 6.3 The procedure for Programme Withdrawal is set out in the [Programme Withdrawal Processes](#).