Validation Overview

- The purposes of the validation process, the process by which new programmes are formally approved, is to secure academic standards, to ensure appropriate alignment with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and to deliver excellence in the student experience.

- The process is managed via a validation event, based on the principle of enhanced peer evaluation. That is, the curriculum is approved by other practitioners from within the University, supported by professionally-oriented guidance from specialist units within the University (primarily the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) and the Academic Office). In addition, new programme proposals will receive external input from academic peers and, where appropriate, external stakeholders.

- The process is designed to develop the most appropriate portfolio of programmes for Sussex, linking to research interests and strengths but focusing on delivering an effective and sustainable curriculum. The curriculum must be able to provide the highest quality of education to Sussex students whilst reflecting research and other strategic needs.

Structure of Validation Event

The approvals event will commonly last between 2 and 3 hours, and will follow a generic format:

Outline of the event (Panel Chair)
Presentation of the programme (Programme Convenor)
Scrutiny of documentation (Panel and programme team)
Discussion of key issues (Panel and programme team)
Decision (Panel in private meeting)
Feedback (Panel and programme team)

Validation Panel

Panel Chair	A Head of School or Director of Taught Programmes, not from the owning School[1].
Cognate Academic	A Head of School or nominee from a cognate area (this may be someone from within the same School where there are multi-department Schools)
Academic Programmes and Regulations Committee representative	A member of academic staff from a school other than the owning school appointed on behalf of Academic Programmes and Regulations Committee
External Academic	An appropriately qualified academic from a peer institution appointed by the Teaching and Learning Committee[2].
External Stakeholder (desirable)	Where appropriate an external stakeholder may be included on the panel to represent the needs of employer organisations or targeted recruitment groups.
Secretary	The Head of Academic Registry, in consultation with the School, will appoint a Secretary to support the approval event.
Observers	Observers may be invited to attend the event, (eg a representative from a School preparing for its own programme approval).

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[1] Strategy and Resources Committee sub-group is empowered to direct an alternate chair where appropriate, normally a PVC.

[2] Proposing departments will normally be invited to recommend an external panel member. The external will not normally be the same person as the external examiner for the programme and three years must have elapsed since they held an appointment (if any) at Sussex.

Programme Team

The programme team will attend the event in order to present the programme and to engage in discussion with the panel. There is an expectation that attendance will include:

- programme convenor
- Chair of Department Teaching Committee (or equivalent)
- Members of core faculty involved in delivering the programme
- Administrative or technical support where complex student arrangements are involved (e.g. placements, on-line learning)
- A departmental student representative

Documentation

- an overview document setting out the rationale for the new programme covering academic/discipline issues, target audience and recruitment strategy, employment or post-qualifying opportunities. A section should cover resource needs. Much of this information will have been developed during the planning process and should be evidence based.

- Programme template and full set of course templates for the programme.

- Minutes of meetings where the development has been considered (e.g. university, school, departmental levels).

Issues for Consideration

The main focus of the validation process is to ensure that the new programme(s):

- meets the needs of students and will recruit well
- is sustainable over time
- is consistent with corporate and School teaching and learning strategies
- is consistent with institutional frameworks
- is consistent with standards set in the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*
- is informed by the relevant *Subject Benchmark Statements*
- takes account of national expectations of good practice identified in the QAA *Code of Practice*
- takes account of national and international good practice in curriculum design and delivery
- enhances the national and international standing of academic provision at Sussex

While some areas for discussion will emerge from the documentation there are a number of key issues which will form the core focus for each validation. In preparing documentation the programme team should therefore pay particular attention to the following areas:

Key Issue	Criteria
Academic coherence	The panel will wish to see how the structure of the programme develops from the initial point to final outcomes, showing coherence in curriculum content, the pattern of learning, and assessment. The core information will be included in the programme and course templates (which must be complete and provided for all courses), and may be enhanced by a short narrative in the covering document explaining how the programme structure meets student learning needs.
Programme regulations	The panel will wish to confirm that the programme regulations for progression, exit awards, and final award/classification are clearly

	stated in the documentation and are consistent with the University's academic framework. The core information will be included in the programme template. Unusual programme regulations should be signalled in the covering document.
Consistency of programme outcomes with FHEQ Qualification Descriptors	The panel will wish to confirm that the outcomes of the programme meet the FHEQ qualification descriptors, establishing the standard of student achievement. The core information will be included in the programme template (as programme learning outcomes). The descriptors will be available to the validating panel.
Subject Benchmark Statements	Where appropriate (undergraduate programmes, and some postgraduate programmes) the panel will wish to confirm that the relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements are reflected in the programme design. The core information will be included in the programme template.
Teaching and Learning methods	The panel will pay close attention to the teaching and learning methods, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that the methods of delivery are appropriate to the intended programme and course learning outcomes, and are appropriately informed by and reflective of a research culture. The core information will be included in the programme and course templates, but may benefit from a brief narrative in the covering document explaining how the selected methods deliver appropriate learning opportunities, including any key skills.
Assessment strategy	The panel will pay close attention to the choice of assessment modes, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the modes of assessment are appropriate to the course learning outcomes; and overall, that programme learning outcomes are secure. The core information will be included in the programme and course templates, but may benefit from a brief narrative in the covering document explaining how the selected methods deliver an appropriate range of targeted assessment.
Resources	The panel will seek to verify that all resources required to deliver the programme are available (or have been identified and planned). This includes, *inter alia*, academic and administrative staffing (where relevant); IT and other technical learning resources; library; space (e.g. labs). Some information is likely to be included in the professional services report and programme documentation. Programme teams will need to take particular note of any resource issues that were identified during the development process and should address these directly in the covering document.
Sustainability	The panel will wish to assure itself that the programme is likely to succeed, and to be sustainable over an appropriate period of time relative to the investment. In considering sustainability the panel will take account of projected recruitment, the integration of the programme with other provision, and resource requirements. The core information – and any risks - will have been identified during the initial development . The programme team may wish to address any such concerns in the covering document.

Impact	The panel will wish to assure itself that the design and delivery of the programme contribute positively to the development of the characteristics of a Sussex graduate as set out in the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

Decision

The Validating Panel may determine:

(i) that the proposal should be approved without amendment, or

(ii) that the proposal should be approved subject to specific conditions, including the dates by which they should be satisfied. (Note: until the conditions set have been satisfied students cannot be admitted to the programme), or

(iii) that the proposal should be approved under either (i) or (ii) above, with a recommendation that the programme team consider certain matters on which a report back would be required; or

(iv) reject the proposal with advice to its originators as to the reasons for doing so.

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