5. VALIDATION PROCESS DOCUMENT (PARTNERSHIP)

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Validation is the process by which new courses are fully approved by the University. This process enables the University to have confidence that for each course:

- academic standards have been secured
- content and learning outcomes are aligned with the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- an excellent student experience will be delivered

5.1.2 This process is facilitated through a validation event, based on the principle of enhanced peer evaluation. That is, the curriculum is approved by academic peers both internal and external to the University as well as, where appropriate, external stakeholders. Professional services representatives provide support, with the Academic Development and Quality Enhancement (ADQE) Office assuming the primary role in this regard.

5.1.3 Validation enables the University to develop a curriculum that will provide the highest quality of education to students whilst reflecting research and other strategic needs. Approved courses will be effective, sustainable and will incorporate teaching led by the research strengths and interests of academic staff.

5.2 Structure of the Validation Process

5.2.1 Approval to proceed to validation is determined by the Portfolio Approval Committee (PAC). As soon as Stage 2 (outline) approval is secured, a new course may be marketed and active recruitment may begin. All marketing material must include a statement that the new course is ‘subject to validation’.

5.2.2 An initial meeting is held between the Partner Institution and ADQE to discuss the validation process and the timeframe for approval, including suggestions for course team membership.

5.2.3 The Partner Institution develops the course with support from ADQE and prepares documentation as required (see section 5).

5.2.4 ADQE is responsible for establishing a Validating Panel in respect of each proposal and specifying the membership and conduct of such a committee. ADQE is responsible for nominating and appointing the Independent Stakeholder.

5.2.5 Documentation is sent to ADQE four weeks in advance of the event. Generic documents should be sent in electronic format and Course documentation should be sent in hard copy. ADQE will distribute the documentation to the panel.

5.2.6 A pre-validation meeting of University-based members of the panel is held, with contribution from external members, to identify any initial themes for discussion based on the documentation provided, and to identify any additional information or clarification required.

5.2.7 The formal validation event is held at the Partner Institution.

The event itself will normally last between three and five hours, depending on the number of proposed courses under consideration and the complexity of the issues that require discussion. The meeting will follow a standard format:

- Tour of relevant resources
- Private meeting of panel
- Course Team arrival and introductory remarks from Chair
• Introduction of the proposal from the Course Team
• Discussion of the proposal
• Panel meeting with students at the Partner Institution
• Panel discussion in private to determine outcome
• Communication of outcome to Course Team

The Validation Secretary will record the proceedings of the event.

5.2.8 The costs of validation will be borne by the partner institution.

5.3 Joint/Dual/Double awards

In the case of a joint award, where both institutions have degree awarding powers, a joint Validating Panel will be appointed comprising faculty from both institutions, as well as external representatives. Approval to deliver the course will have to be granted by both institutions. It will be agreed from the outset which will be the primary administering University with responsibility for admissions and registration processes, collection of fees, monitoring of students in debt, the conduct of examinations and assessments, the maintenance of student records and archives, the provision of transcripts, certificates and formal references, the conduct of student complaints and appeals, the administration of the appointment and remuneration of external examiners and the conduct of annual monitoring of courses.
### 5.4 Validation Panel

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Description of role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panel Chair</td>
<td>A PVC, a Head of School or Director of Teaching and Learning, not from the owning School.</td>
<td>Will chair the validation event and ensure that all elements of the process have been adhered to.</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Sussex</td>
<td>A senior academic, preferably from a cognate area.</td>
<td>Will provide professional scrutiny and fulfil the peer review function, bringing the perspective of someone familiar with the University.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Academic</td>
<td>An appropriately qualified academic from a peer institution appointed by the Chair of Collaborative Provision Committee</td>
<td>Will provide both professional scrutiny and externality, ensuring that the Panel has objectivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent Stakeholder</td>
<td>Where appropriate an external stakeholder may be included on the panel to represent the needs of employer organisations or targeted recruitment groups.</td>
<td>Will provide commentary on the likely employability of students on the proposed course and will be invited to comment on other areas.</td>
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<td>(desirable where there is a clear link to industry)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Panel Member</td>
<td>Usually a current elected student representative from a similar course.</td>
<td>Will provide feedback and comments from a student perspective on all areas under discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>Where appropriate a representative from the Careers and Employability Centre, IT Services, or the Library may be included.</td>
<td>Will be able to provide commentary on the resource required and issues concerning the delivery of the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panel Member (desirable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADQE Panel Member</td>
<td>A manager from the ADQE Office.</td>
<td>Will ensure that the proposal is compliant with HE sector standards and University policy and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>An officer from the ADQE Office</td>
<td>Will be responsible for the operation and organisation of the event.</td>
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### 5.5 Course Team

#### 5.5.1 The course team at the Partner Institution will attend the event in order to present the course and respond to the panel’s questions. The Partner Institution is free to choose the composition of the team with the following provisos:

- The team should have a maximum of six members;
- The Director of Teaching and Learning or equivalent must be a member;
- The Course Convenor must be a member.

### 5.6 Documentation for submission

#### 5.6.1 The proposing Partner Institution will be required to produce the following documentation for the Panel to consider and discuss with the Course Team at the validation event:

- A course overview document comprising:
A narrative section covering the overall vision for the course now and in the future, the intended student experience and the anticipated employability of those who graduate

- Mapping of course learning outcomes to modules
- Mapping of the course’s assessment
- Mapping of the course’s teaching methods

The mapping of learning outcomes helps to demonstrate the academic coherence of the course and how course learning outcomes are met by students undertaking the modules available to them.

The mapping of the course’s assessment helps to demonstrate that the students are provided with a sufficiently distributed and diverse set of assessment. The map should also demonstrate how each module learning outcome is met by individual assessments.

The mapping of teaching methods will allow the Panel to visualize the pace of teaching employed across the course and the demands made upon students. The map will also help the Panel understand the resource implications of the course.

- A new course specification (examples of those used at the University can be found at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/curriculum/newcourseapproval](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/curriculum/newcourseapproval))
- Specifications for new modules to be validated as part of the course (examples of those used at the University can be found at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/curriculum/newcourseapproval](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/curriculum/newcourseapproval))
- Specifications for existing modules that will form part of the course undergoing validation
- CVs of all staff teaching on the course
- The intended course handbook for students
- Where a distance learning course is proposed, a presentation of the virtual learning environment for the course is required, along with two fully-developed modules as exemplars
## 5.7 Issues for Consideration

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 course team should therefore pay particular attention to the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key issue</th>
<th>Criteria to be considered by panel</th>
<th>Document</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic coherence</td>
<td>The panel will wish to see how the structure of the course develops from the point of entry to final outcomes, demonstrating coherence in curriculum design, the pattern of teaching, learning, and assessment. Where non-standard delivery is proposed, this should be signalled in the documentation and in the course team’s introduction at the event. The course team should also draw the panel's attention to any operational issues identified. Where a distance learning course is proposed presentation of the virtual learning environment is needed with two fully-developed modules as exemplars</td>
<td>Narrative document, course specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of course and module learning outcomes with FHEQ Qualification Descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements</td>
<td>The panel will wish to confirm that the course and module learning outcomes meet the FHEQ qualification descriptors (including Master’s level characteristics, where relevant), establishing the standard of student achievement. Where appropriate (undergraduate courses and some postgraduate courses) the panel will also wish to confirm that the relevant Subject Benchmarks Statements are reflected in the course design. The FHEQ descriptors, Master’s degree characteristics and Subject Benchmarks can be viewed on the QAA's website.</td>
<td>Course specification, module specifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course regulations</td>
<td>The panel will wish to confirm that the course regulations for progression, exit awards, and final award/classification are consistent with the University’s Academic Framework. Requests for derogation(s) from the Framework or other regulations must be highlighted in the documentation and in the course team’s introduction at the event.</td>
<td>Narrative document, Course specification, module specifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning methods</td>
<td>The panel will pay close attention to the planned teaching and learning methods, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that the methods of delivery are appropriate to the intended course and module learning outcomes and the intended student cohort. The panel will also consider whether there are opportunities for technology-enhanced learning.</td>
<td>Primarily course specification, module specifications. The narrative document may comment on the underlying philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment strategy</td>
<td>The panel will pay close attention to the choice of assessment modes, with particular emphasis on ensuring that the modes of assessment secure the course and module learning outcomes. The panel will expect to see an appropriate range of assessment modes and information on the timing of assessments, including opportunities for formative feedback.</td>
<td>Primarily course specification, module specifications. The narrative document may comment on the underlying philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student experience</td>
<td>The panel will need to be satisfied that the course as presented will provide students with a high-quality narrative document</td>
<td>Narrative document</td>
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experience. The course documentation should address how the course will enhance the employability of students, the support that students will receive (particular to the course), and how the course will develop them as individuals, linked to graduate employment or further study.

Resources

The panel will seek to verify that all resources required to deliver the course are available (or have been identified and planned). This includes academic and administrative staffing (where relevant); IT and other technical or specialist learning resources; library; space.

Course 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.

Impact and sustainability

The panel will wish to assure itself that the design and delivery of the course contributes positively to the development of the characteristics of a Sussex graduate as set out in the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The panel will wish to assure itself that the course is likely to succeed, and to be sustainable over an appropriate period of time. In considering sustainability the panel will take account of projected recruitment, the integration of the course with other provision, and resource requirements.

5.8 Outcomes

5.8.1 The Validating Panel may determine that the proposal should be:
   a. approved without amendment;
   b. approved subject to specific conditions, including the dates by which these should be satisfied. (Note: until the conditions set have been satisfied students cannot be admitted to the course);
   c. rejected with advice to its originators as to the reasons for doing so.

5.8.2 If approved, the Validating Panel will also determine the period of validation after which the course must be re-validated if it is to continue. This will usually be four years in order to allow the course teams for undergraduate courses to reflect on delivery of all three stages (Levels 4-6) prior to re-validation.

5.9 Post-validation

5.9.1 Following the validation event the following outputs or actions are expected:
   a. A summary report, confirming the outcome of the validation and any associated conditions of approval, together with a clear and achievable timescale for delivery, will be circulated normally within five working days. The summary report will also include any recommendations for further consideration and any commendations acknowledging best practice;
   b. A full report, incorporating the content of the summary report but including a detailed record of the discussion held at the event, to provide context for the commendations, conditions and recommendations made by the panel;
   c. A report from the course team, addressing any conditions and recommendations
set, together with supporting or revised documentation, will be submitted to the Secretary by the deadline set;

d. The Secretary will liaise with panel members, in particular the Chair, to confirm satisfaction of the conditions and recommendations and finalisation of the validation process;

e. The Secretary will take responsibility for submitting the final report to the University Collaborative Provision Committee.

f. The Partner Institution will send a final definitive version of the validation documentation to be retained by the ADQE office. The definitive document is the legally binding contract for each course.

g. Courses approved through this process of validation are to be delivered by the Partner Institution only and under no circumstances is the provision to be subcontracted to another institution through a separate agreement.

Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Office
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