

QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK 2018/19**SECTION C: VALIDATION****Contents****C1: VALIDATION PROCESS**

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C1 VALIDATION PROCESS

Introduction

Principles

C1: The Academic Quality Committee (AQC) is responsible for the approval of new courses to assure the academic standards and quality of student learning opportunities on those courses. This approval is with particular reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, positioning in relation to the FHEQ and veracity of course stage data related to learning, teaching and assessment. It fulfils this function through:

Validation: the process by which thorough scrutiny is given to a new course, including (at both unit and course level) its curriculum, aims, learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

Timing of validation

C2: Validation of a new course can only take place after approval to proceed has been given by the Academic Planning Committee (APC)¹ or the OCA Strategic Development Group (OCA SDG)², which will scrutinise initial proposals for alignment to the Academic Strategy and will consider student number planning and marketing information. APC or OCA SDG will also approve Section A of the Programme Specification (which details the material course information) for onward distribution to offerees by Admissions³ for CMA purposes. Approval is also required from the Leadership Team, which will consider proposals for new courses in light of strategic and resource issues (see [Section B](#)).

C3: Once approved, it is important to hold the validation event as early as possible in the academic year. This is to enable enough time after validation for the course team to meet any conditions and recommendations set by the Panel.

C4: Any courses approved by APC or OCA SDG which have not had a successful validation event⁴ may be marketed but only with the proviso “*subject to validation*” on all marketing material.

Collaborative Provision

C5: Validation of courses delivered in collaboration with a partner institution will not take place until after an Institutional Approval Event (see [Section J](#)), which may take place on the same day immediately prior to the validation event.

Documentary Requirements

C6: The Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive is responsible for oversight

¹ On behalf of UCA

² On behalf of OCA

³ UCA or OCA as applicable

⁴ A successful validation means approval by the panel on the day of the event

of the preparation and submission of all required documentation in support of a new course proposal, including oversight of any documentation prepared by a collaborative partner institution.

- C7: Any documentation submitted for validation must first be approved by the relevant School Board of Studies/OCA Curriculum Quality Committee (OCA CDC), following detailed scrutiny to assure the quality of the documentation, including its alignment with University policy and regulations and its clarity in defining the nature of the specific proposal. The scrutiny of the documentation must be undertaken by a designated meeting of the School/OCA CQC comprising the Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive (Chair), the proposing Course Leader(s), at least one other Course Leader, the Library & Student Services representative and Senior Quality Officer⁵.
- C8: The approved documentation must be provided to Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QAE) at least three weeks in advance of the event to ensure timely distribution of paperwork to the panel.
- C9: All courses must present standard documentation as described in this section and [Annex 5](#) of the Quality Assurance Handbook.

Outline Process

- C10: On behalf of AQC, QAE will convene a Panel to consider the course(s) being submitted for validation. The Panel will consider the documentation submitted for approval. The Panel will normally attend a validation event in order to discuss the proposals, tour the facilities and meet with the course team⁶.
- C11: For validation events for collaborative courses, the Panel will additionally meet with senior managers from both the University and the partner institution to discuss liaison arrangements, quality assurance, resources and student support.

Validation Panel

Constitution

- C12: A Validation Panel will be constituted as follows:
- A Validation Officer from QAE will be assigned to the validation event to oversee the process and ensure compliance with the University's regulations, policies and procedures;
 - Panels will normally be chaired by a Head of School or equivalent deputy not connected to the School of the course(s) under consideration;
 - Panels will comprise sufficient external expertise to cover the subject area(s) under consideration. All Panels must have at least two external Panel members.

⁵ The relevant Assistant Campus Registrar and OCA (where applicable) may also attend if so required.

⁶ Where AQC determine that a tour is not appropriate and the proposal comprises over 70% of existing units, this panel may be conducted by correspondence.

External members can be academic or professional/industry-based but there must be at least one academic from within the sector on the Panel;

- Panels will have at least one internal academic member from outside of the School within which the course(s) sits, if possible they will be Course Leaders for courses which will be validated or reviewed the following year;
- Where appropriate, representatives from Professional departments will be invited to sit on Panels as internal members;

C13: External members are normally nominated by the proposing School Board of Study⁷/OCA CQC and should not normally have had any association with the University⁸ within the last five years. For the purposes of validation, 'association' is normally defined as having:

- been a member of staff⁹, a Governor or a student of the University or partner institution;
- had a close relationship (as a relative, partner or close personal friend) with a member of staff or student within the subject submitting the proposal;
- been an External Examiner for the University's academic provision.

C14: The Panel Chair will consider the appropriateness of the external Panel members and the balance of the Panel before the final Panel membership is confirmed. The final Panel membership will be approved by the Chair of AQC.

C15: In addition to this, the Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive or their nominee for the course(s) under consideration is entitled to attend all meetings of the Panel, as an observer, at the discretion of the Chair.

Guidance and Training

C16: Panel members receive a briefing paper about the process.

C17: Briefings for new Chairs will be arranged as required by QAE prior to the first event.

Preparation for Validation

C18: QAE agrees the date for each validation event with the relevant Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive and provides AQC with a schedule of events. QAE then prepares the following schedule of deadlines for the course team and Campus Registrars/OCA Registrar:

⁷ At the discretion of QAE, nominees may include external members of previous panel events (including the previous event of the course). External members nominated from the same institution (i.e. UAL) will not be permitted.

⁸ University includes OCA

⁹ Member of staff is defined as a permanent or sessional member of staff employed for more than 80 hours per annum.

Schedule of Deadlines¹⁰:

Action		QAE deadline	Responsibility
Planning and pre-School scrutiny			
Initial planning meeting with the Course Leader to advise on relevant quality process, regulatory and documentary requirements ¹¹	by	(event – at least 21 wks)*	Senior Quality Officer
Liaise with Learning & Teaching and Library & Student Services on curriculum design and reading lists	by	(event – at least 20 wks)#	Course Leader
Provide first draft of event documentation for review by Head of School and copy in Senior Quality Officer	by	(event – at least 10 wks)#	Course Leader
Identify and secure external Panel members for the event, send CVs to the Validation Officer	by	(event – at least 8 wks)	Course Leader
Send final draft event documentation ¹² for School scrutiny ¹³ approval to Senior Quality Officer	by	(event – at least 7 wks)*	Course Leader
Identify and secure internal Panel members	by	(event - 7 wks)	QAE
Panel confirmed by Chair of Panel and Chair of AQC	by	(event - 6 wks)	Validation Officer
School scrutiny meeting (event – at least 5 wks)*			
Scrutinise and approve event documentation for onward distribution to Campus Registry	by	(event – at least 5 wks)*	School scrutiny
Post School scrutiny meeting			
Ensure final approved event documentation is appropriately formatted and updated to include correct unit codes	by	(event – at least 4 wks)*	Campus Registry
Email final approved event documentation to Validation Officer, Course Team and Head of School	by	(event – at least 3 wks)	Campus Registry
Book catering for event	by	(event - 2 wks)	Validation Officer
Send event documentation to Panel	by	(event - 2 wks)	Validation Officer
Date of event – insert date of event			
Draft report of event to be approved by the Chair and circulated to the Panel for comment	by	(event + 1 wk)	Validation Officer
Circulate approved report to Course Team	by	(event + 1 wk)	Validation Officer
Submit completed response to Panel outcomes and Appendix A issues to Validation Officer	by	(event + 3 wks)	Head of School/Course Leader

**Timescale indicated is approximate and a date is subject to agreement between the Head of School*

¹⁰ For UCA courses only. An adapted version will be created for OCA courses.

¹¹ Further planning meetings may be agreed. Course Leader to refer to: QAH for quality process: [Section C](#) for new courses and [Section H](#) for existing courses; Common Credit Framework for Taught Programmes 2018/19 for regulatory; and [Annex 5 QAH](#) for documentary requirements.

¹² The final draft documentation for submission to the School scrutiny must be proof-read by the Course Leader for errors and consistency in language

¹³ This is a designated meeting of the School comprising the Head of School (Chair), proposing Course Leader(s), at least one other Course Leader, the LSS representative and Senior Quality Officer. The relevant Assistant Campus Registrar may also attend if so required.

*and Senior Quality Officer (remove * once date is agreed)*
#Timescale indicated is approximate and a date is subject to agreement between the Course Leader and Senior Quality Officer (remove # once date is agreed)

C19: Panel members are asked to complete a pre-event questionnaire, indicating any particular areas of enquiry they wish to pursue at the event. The Validation Officer will collate these and (when available) circulate to the panel, Course Leader, Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive. Indicative agendas and guidance notes can be made available to stakeholders on request.

The Event

C20: Normally, no more than two courses should be considered in one day for each validation event. The scheduling of these events will be discussed with the Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive and QAE.

C21: The Panel will receive a briefing from the proposing team (normally the Course Leader and the Head of School/OCA Principal and Chief Executive) at the start of each event to set the context for the proposal and to confirm the resources for the course(s).

C22: In the course of the event, the Panel will have the opportunity to tour the learning environment¹⁴, to meet with the course team(s) and to have private discussions to formulate the outcomes.

C23: The Panel's remit is to consider:

- the academic appropriateness of the proposed programme of study, with reference to:
 - sector practice
 - professional or industry requirements
 - currency of curriculum
 - employability
 - the Creative Education Strategy, inclusivity of curriculum, assessment criteria and education for sustainable development
 - veracity and appropriateness of Course Stage data (i.e. learning and teaching strategies and assessment strategies);
- the appropriateness of the learning environment and proposed facilities¹⁵;
- alignment of the proposals to the UK Quality Code, with specific reference to Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ;
- alignment with the UCA regulatory context¹⁶;
- alignment with the requirements of professional and statutory body requirements (where appropriate).

Validation Outcomes and Report

C24: The Panel will determine one of the following outcomes:

¹⁴ For UCA courses, this will normally be a physical tour. For OCA courses, this will normally be a virtual tour.

¹⁵ UCA courses only

¹⁶ As determined by the Validation Officer for the event and confirmed in the regulatory addendum of the report

- a) To approve the course for validation for a stipulated period (normally five years) with no conditions;
 - b) To approve the course for validation for a stipulated period (normally five years) subject to conditions that must be met to the satisfaction of the Panel within a determined timeframe. The course cannot enrol students until the Chair has confirmed that all conditions have been met in addition to any corrections to course documentation listed in the validation report;
 - c) To reject the proposal; any future submission must undergo the full validation process. APC must be informed that the course has not been validated;
- C25: In addition, where a Panel validates a course, it may make some recommendations to enhance practice; these recommendations are addressed through the Annual Academic Monitoring process.
- C26: Where good practice is identified, it will be formally noted within the outcomes as a commendation.
- C27: Where conditions are set, the Panel will need to agree who should consider the responses to outcomes. Where no major issues have been identified, this will normally be the Chair of the event.
- C28: A validation report summarising the outcomes (previously circulated to the Panel and approved by the Chair) will be sent to the course team within three weeks of the event. The report will be presented to AQC at its next meeting.
- C29: The course team will provide a response to the Validation Officer indicating how conditions have been addressed by the stipulated deadline in the validation report. The Validation Officer will seek final approval of the responses from the Chair.

Validation of Non Award-bearing Courses

- C30: It is possible to validate a short course (comprising credit-bearing units), a Year 0 for use with a three-year undergraduate degree or a stand-alone unit of up to 60 credits; these do not result in a University award, however should provide a transcript. These short courses and units require approval by AQC before the Head of QAE can confirm the appropriate approval route and notify AQC. AQC may require consultation with external subject experts, depending on the scale of the proposal.

Validation of Further Education Courses

- C31: For FE provision, the awarding body is responsible for validation of courses in accordance with its internal procedures. Before submission to the awarding body, documentation will first be considered at the School Board of Studies and provided to QAE. AQC will be notified of the outcome.

C2 PROCESS FOR VALIDATION OF COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS OVERSEAS

Scope

CP1: The process describes the University approach for validation of partner institutions overseas. UK based partner institutions follow the process as described in Section C of the University's Quality Assurance Handbook.

Timing of validation

CP2: Validation of a new collaborative partner (Institutional Approval and Course Validation) can only take place after the Business Case and Due Diligence for the partner has been approved.

Outline Process

Pre-validation Event Visit

CP3: A pre-validation event visit to the partner institution overseas will be undertaken. The pre-validation panel will be comprised as follows:

- One external with sufficient relevant expertise (academic and overseas delivery experience)¹⁷
Responsible for confirming the academic delivery resources and general student experience are broadly equivalent to HEIs in the UK and are appropriate for delivery in relation to FHEQ level and subject area of the higher education courses under consideration.
- One representative from UCA's Quality Assurance and Enhancement department (validation officer)
Responsible for ensuring that the visit meets the requirements of UCA validation policy and procedures, academic regulations and quality procedures and UK sector guidelines.

CP4: The purpose of the pre-validation event is to assess the suitability of the proposed institution. Therefore representatives will:

- undertake a tour of central resources at the site(s) (Library, IT, student support) and note the quality and accessibility of these resources to the proposed cohorts;
- undertake a tour of course specific resources at the site(s) noting appropriateness and availability of resources for the proposed subject area(s)
- if the provider already delivers existing courses, meet with representatives of current students on these courses to explore the general student experience with the provider.

¹⁷ The external member involved in the pre-validation event visit will be subject to approval by the Chair of the Academic Quality Committee.

A draft agenda is attached as appendix 1.

CP5: The UCA representatives undertaking the pre-validation event visit will meet to agree the contents of Form C3 Overseas pre-event visit report which is attached as appendix 2. The Validation Officer is responsible for ensuring completion of the visit report and reporting it into the subsequent UK based validation event.

Validation Event

CP6: A Validation event will normally be held in the UK with the collaborative partner normally participating via skype / remotely following the institutional approval process (see Section J of QAH) and standard validation process (see Section C of QAH).

CP7: The panel convened for the validation event will use the completed Form C3 Overseas pre-event visit report to provide evidence of resources and the student experience of the partner institution. Wherever possible the pre-validation visit panel will form part of the larger panel for the UK based validation event.