**Section C**

**Validation of New Courses**

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## Forms and Templates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| C1 | Validation/Substantive Review/Articulation Agreement Panel Nomination Form |
| C2  | Table of Modules Contributing to a Course for the Module Directory |
| C3 | Application for exemption or variant to the Academic Framework (AF) |
| C4  | Programme Specification Template |
| C5 | Module Descriptor Template |
| C6 | Faculty Documentation Check |
| C7 | External Subject Expert Scrutiny Report |
| C8 | Faculty Conditions Check |
| C9 | Chair’s Approval of Conditions Form |
| C11 | Indicative module summative assessment map |
| C12 | External subject expert report |
| C13 | External industry expert report |
| C14 | Resources Document |
| C15 | Validation Planning Meeting Agenda and Notes Template |
| C16 | Academic Framework and Regulations - Key Points Checklist |
| C17 | Briefing Document Template |
| C18 | Module Delivery Dates |
| C19 | Staff Development Document Template |
| C20 | Online Delivery Milestones Template  |

##

## Guidance Notes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CG (i)  | Producing documentation for validation events |
| CG (ii)  | Completing module descriptors and module guides |
| CG (iii) | Module Set Up – Funding and Reporting |
| CG (iv) | Validation documentary requirements matrix |
| CG (v)  | Placement and work-based learning guidelines |
| CG (vi) | Validation criteria  |
| CG (vii) | Guidance for writing the course handbook (for collaborative provision) |

##

## Abbreviations in this section

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AF | Academic Framework |
| CMMP | Course and Module Modification Panel |
| CMS | Curriculum Management System |
| EC | Education Committee |
| FLT | Faculty Leadership Team |
| HoQAE | Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| HECoS | Higher Education Classification of Subjects |
| KU | Kingston University |
| L&T | Learning and Teaching |
| LTEC | Learning & Teaching Enhancement Centre |
| OfS | Office for Students |
| PMG | Portfolio Management Group |
| PSRB | Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| QAPCC | Quality Assurance Portfolio Change Committee |
| QAE | Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| RFC | Regulatory Framework Committee |
| SDLT | School Director of Learning and Teaching |
| SITS | Kingston University’s Student Record System |
| SVC | Student Voice Committee |
| UKVI | UK Visas and Immigration |

## Definition

### Validation

1. The University reserves the term ‘validation’ for its procedures for approval of a new course leading to an award of the University and with an approved course title. Validation is triggered after approval for the development of a course by Portfolio Management Group (see section A). Subsequent changes to a course in validation are then made through the approval of change procedures (see section A and G). See section H for further details relating to the validation of Masters Awards by Learning Agreement.

## Purpose

1. Validation is an academic procedure. The overall aim of validation is to ensure that proposed new courses are likely to be delivered to appropriate standards and quality, within the University’s approved regulations and underpinned by adequate physical and human resources. Validation also ensures that students will receive a high-quality student experience. Some of the key issues addressed by validation include:
* determining that aims and learning outcomes are set at levels appropriate for the standard of the award(s) concerned;
* ensuring that the curriculum is appropriate for the identified market for the course and builds upon the prior experience of likely entrants;
* ensuring coherence and currency of the curriculum;
* checking that appropriate resources (including human resources) are available to support delivery of the curriculum;
* ensuring that learning, teaching, and assessment strategies are appropriate and fit with the University’s [Town House Strategy](https://kingstonuniversity.sharepoint.com/sites/TownHouseStrategy) and that best practice in the subject(s) concerned is being appropriately integrated and built upon;
* ensuring that national guidelines such as subject benchmark standards, the OfS regulatory framework including sector recognised standards, etc. are appropriately considered;
* where appropriate, ensuring compliance with PSRB requirements;
* ensuring the curriculum and delivery takes full account of a wide range of University policies and strategies (e.g., the University’s Academic Framework, Admissions, Fairness in Assessment, Access, Participation & Inclusion, etc);
* ensuring courses fit within the academic regulations and testing the validity of any variations from standard regulations ([Academic Regulations](https://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/policiesandregulations/#blockid25684));
* ensuring accurate documentation is in place, including programme specifications and module descriptors.

### Principles of Validation

1. Validation is intended to focus on academic issues related to a new course rather than matters of structure and regulations. Of particular interest will be the way in which the course is constructed to provide coherent, up-to-date, and appropriate curriculum content, offer appropriate choices, reach clearly stated standards, prepare students for employment, meet the needs of employers (including key skills development), and provide an appropriate quality of student experience (including resources, student support and guidance, etc.).
2. In most cases, proposers of new courses will present documentation in standard formats. In those few instances where proposers of new courses consider it justifiable to seek approval for variations in, or additions to, standard academic regulations and arrangements, the validation should test whether these are essential (final approval of such variations will be by RFC). Any such variations are likely to be as a result of external requirements, for example, to seek accreditation by PSRBs. Faculties should consult with QAE prior to the submission of documents for validation, particularly if there are proposals for variations to the standard academic regulations.

## The Academic Framework (AF)

1. The AF model allies a robust and enabling framework to a set of key features that define the Kingston offer. At the heart of the AF are a set of Curriculum Design Principles that establish headline academic and pedagogic values and approaches for all courses within the Kingston portfolio.  The principles are intended for use by course teams and validation panels.  They are informed by the University’s Town House Strategy, sector-wide best practice and by the OfS regulatory requirements. The Curriculum Design Principles are expressly designed as a minimal set of headline statements. They can be used by course teams as a guide to what to build into the curriculum and have been specifically designed to free them from imagined QA constraints around assessment or delivery patterns.
2. The [Academic Framework (AF) Handbook](https://canvas.kingston.ac.uk/courses/311/pages/the-academic-framework-home-page) provides advice and practical suggestions based on best practice at Kingston University and elsewhere and has been produced to aid course teams in the development of new curriculum for validation.
3. The Handbook covers the key features of Kingston University’s Academic Framework (AF) including advice on how to design course level assessment; how to get the most out of learning technologies; how to embed academic and employability skills in the curriculum; how to meet the minimum expectations of the Kingston University Personal Tutor Scheme; and how to engage students in formative assessment.
4. All course teams involved in validation or revalidation of their courses are advised to access the [Academic Framework Toolkit](https://canvas.kingston.ac.uk/courses/311/pages/toolkit)  for further information.
5. Requests for exemptions or variants to the AF should be discussed with the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (HoQAE) in the first instance. Requests are considered by the Education Committee (EC) on form C3.

## Criteria

### ‘**High’ and ‘low’ risk validation criteria**

1. The University operates a single University-level procedure for course validation. However, within this single procedure, some consideration is given to the level of ‘risk’ of each proposal. The validation process is the same for ‘low’ and ‘high’ risk proposals in all respects, with the exception that, for those proposals considered to be lower risk, the approval of the course (i.e., validation) could be processed via the faculty’s Course and Module Modification Panel or a panel consisting of fewer members as listed in paragraph 56. The external input may also be provided via correspondence. A risk assessment is made on a case-by-case basis by the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement based on the information contained in the relevant A2 forms, taking account of the suggested criteria which are listed below.
2. High risk proposals could include:
* new courses proposed by UK and overseas collaborative partners;
* new qualifications within the University (e.g., the first Foundation Degree in a faculty);
* new subjects within the University (for example a course in a new HE Cos code or one with 50% or more new modules);
* additions of new modes of delivery to existing courses such as blended learning;
* an extension of existing provision to a new academic level;
* significant cross-faculty developments.
1. Low risk proposals could include:
* developments in existing subject areas where courses are constructed of less than 50% new modules;
* developments with existing collaborative partners where the majority of the modules are already in existence;
* additions of new modes of delivery to an existing course such as part-time and ‘with Professional Placement’ modes.
* addition of new pathways where the changes to the existing course are minimal.
1. If significant changes are being made to an existing course which the faculty believes warrants re-approval, the changes would be implemented through a revalidation of the existing course. The process for a revalidation is identical to that for a validation except form A2c is used and the proposal is presented to QAPCC for approval to proceed to revalidation. For further information on what changes may require re-approval see sections A and G of the AQSH.
2. The definition of a ‘new’ module requires careful interpretation in the validation planning process. New module codes and titles can be triggered by relatively small changes in a module and some PSRBs may require separate identification of modules the same as, or similar to, those in other courses.

### Provision delivered using blended learning

1. The University is responsible for ensuring that courses designed to be delivered using blended learning meet appropriate academic standards and provide student learning experiences equivalent to those for students studying similar courses that are predominantly delivered in-person at the University.

#### Definitions

1. The Academic Framework states that, subject to validation, taught courses may be taught in a range of formats including, but not limited to:
* In-person delivery
* Online synchronous delivery
* Online scheduled asynchronous delivery
* Other distance learning formats
1. Blended learning is an approach to learning and teaching that integrate on-campus, off-campus and online delivery modes. Courses that make use of blended learning will include a combination of in-person (on or off campus) and online delivery.

#### Blended Learning Typology

1. The University has developed a blended learning typology, based on the percentage of the scheduled learning and teaching hours delivered using online learning:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **% of scheduled L&T hours delivered online at each level** | **Definition** |
| Category 1 | 0-20% | Primarily in person |
| Category 2 | 21-40% | Blended – predominantly in-person (UKVI approval needed for international students) |
| Category 3 | 41-99% | Blended – predominantly online (Home students only) |
| Category 4 | 100% | Fully online |

1. Draft guidance circulated by the UKVI indicated that international students would not be permitted to register for courses which delivered 41% or more of the scheduled learning and teaching hours via online learning. Course specific approval would need to be sought from the UKVI if courses delivering 21-40% of the scheduled learning and teaching hours via online learning wished to recruit international students.
2. While the final position of the UKVI has not been made available, the University has taken this draft guidance into account. The internal processes will be reviewed and modified once the final UKVI policy has been published.
3. The categories, as defined in the table above, will be used to ensure that appropriate quality assurance processes are applied to provision that makes use of online learning.

#### Validation requirements for blended learning

1. Once approved by PMG, provision that will deliver up to 20% of the scheduled learning and teaching hours via blended learning (category 1) will be subject to the University’s standard validation processes. Additional requirements will apply for provision that will deliver 21% or more of the scheduled learning and teaching hours via blended learning (categories 2-4).
2. For provision that will deliver 21% or more of the scheduled learning and teaching hours via online learning, the Key Course Contact will need to provide the following (in addition to the standard validation documentation):
* Confirmation that the standard KU Canvas template will be used for delivery of the modules. *Note: if the standard KU template is not going to be used, a rationale for this should be provided. Additionally, a demonstration of all the content for one module that includes online learning and the outlines for other modules must be provided*
* A completed plan detailing the dates/milestones for the development of the Canvas modules for online modules (see template C20)
* Evidence that those involved in delivering the online learning have received appropriate staff development to ensure that they have the skills and capabilities to deliver online content in a manner that fosters collaborative learning, or will have done so before commencing the programme.

### Criteria for the Validation of New Courses

1. All validations should be considered against core criteria which are provided in Guidance CG (vi). Additional criteria apply to validations of new subjects and courses offered by collaborative partners or by blended learning. The most up-to-date guidance notes and templates relating to validation paperwork must be used to ensure that all core validation criteria are considered during the validation process.
2. Guidance CG (vi) guides validation panel members in their analysis of proposals for validation and assists them in making judgements on validation outcomes. Validation panels should use Guidance CG (vi) to formulate their agenda for discussion with the subject team.

## Schedule

1. When planning new courses, faculties should allow sufficient time for the course team to engage in collective and creative design thinking to develop innovative and well-structured courses and have access to appropriate curriculum development support.
2. A permanent member of staff from the faculty should be identified in the A2/A2b/A2c form as the ‘key course contact’, to lead and co-ordinate the development and subsequent implementation of the course. They must co-ordinate the completion of all the steps in the Course Development and Validation process, including gaining relevant approvals from the QAPCC/PMG (see Section A of the AQSH), completing due diligence requirements where required (see Section B of the AQSH), producing the documentation for validation and meeting any conditions of validation (all conditions must be fulfilled by the specified deadline before a course can be approved and it can commence).

### Course Development

1. The following steps should be followed for all course developments, including provision to be delivered by partner institutions on a validated or franchised arrangement. These steps have been designed to ensure that course teams are effectively supported and have access to the range of support packages available during the course development phase of the validation process.

### Introduction to Validation and Curriculum Design Workshop

1. The key course contact should attend an Introduction to Validation and Curriculum Design Workshop prior to commencing the validation process, wherever possible. This Workshop will provide generic information and advice on the validation process and the curriculum design support options available during the development phase. The workshop will be led by LTEC and QAE and held about 5 times per academic year.

###

### Planning Meeting

1. Following approval by the PMG (new courses) or QAPCC (revalidations) for the course to proceed to validation, a planning meeting will be scheduled by QAE in collaboration with the key course contact. The meeting will be chaired by the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and will include the key course contact, Head of Department, Head of LTEC (or nominee), a QAE representative, University Liaison Officer, and other relevant staff from partner institutions (for collaborative provision). The SDLT and Head of School will also be invited.

### Purpose of the Planning Meeting

1. The Planning Meeting is designed to develop an action plan which outlines and confirms the following:
* Key elements of course curriculum design, clarifying the support required from Professional Services teams as outlined in the A2/A2b/A2c form and the timeline for this support.
* the administrative arrangements relating to the validation process, agreeing:
* dates for the validation event;
* the format of the validation event (events are normally held on-site; if an online event is requested, the key course contact should discuss this with QAE);
* panel composition;
* deadlines for submission to QAE of a completed C1 form (panel nominations);
* validation documentation required;
* deadline for submission of validation documents to QAE;
* date of the Internal Scrutiny Meeting;
* faculty staff and members of course teams who will attend the validation event;
* which member of FLT (Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) or nominee) will attend the first private panel meeting and the panel meeting with the course team;
* any variants required from the academic regulations and/or framework;
* any PSRB involvement in the event;
* programme for the validation event.
1. At the end of the Planning Meeting, the QAE representative will create the planning meeting notes confirming the above points. Any subsequent changes to the planning notes must be agreed with QAE, who will need to assess the impact of the changes being requested.

### Curriculum Design Support

1. Course teams will have access to a range of support packages provided by various Professional Services teams; the nature of the support required should be agreed in the action plan from the Planning Meeting. See also LTEC’s curriculum development support package [here](https://canvas.kingston.ac.uk/courses/311/pages/support-for-curriculum-design-for-re-validation?utm_source=Kingston%20University&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=13894563_LTEC%20May%202023&dm_i=47U,89T43,PE4P7I,XZV35,1)
2. The support available will:
* Focus the course team on the process of curriculum design and development.
* Provide the course team with an opportunity to consider how they will design and deliver a curriculum which supports the learning and positive graduate outcomes of all students and is informed by best and innovative practice; including advice and guidance on the Academic Framework, on embedding the development of Graduate Attributes in the curriculum and effective implementation of the Inclusive Curriculum Framework.

### Producing the Validation Documentation

1. After the Planning Meeting the key course contact will manage the production of the validation documents, ensuring that all the actions agreed at the Planning Meeting are completed. Adequate time must be allowed for this to ensure the relevant support packages are accessed and informs the development of a high-quality curriculum. The documentation should be reviewed by the SDLT, and revised in response to their comments, prior to submission for review by the Internal Scrutiny Panel. The majority of the validation documentation will need to be submitted via the University’s online Curriculum Management System (CMS).

### Internal Scrutiny Meeting

1. Prior to submission of the documents to the validation panel, the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) should lead an internal scrutiny of the documents. This will take the format of an Internal Scrutiny Meeting. The meeting will be organised by the QAE team and chaired by the Associate Dean (L&T) or Head of School; relevant members of the course team should be in attendance
2. Documentation will also be circulated to relevant teams in Academic Registry (such as Student Record and Returns, Timetabling etc.), Student Development and Graduate Success (for Future Skills requirements) and Student Recruitment and Admissions (such as the UKVI team) to check for any issues arising from the proposed course structure. If any issues are identified, relevant members of staff will attend the Scrutiny Meeting to advise the course team.

### Purpose of the Internal Scrutiny Meeting

1. The Internal Scrutiny Meeting should be held in advance of the agreed date that the validation documentation is due to be sent to QAE, normally at least 4 weeks prior (however this timeframe will need to be condensed for more imminent events). This is to allow time for the course team to access any additional support from the KCEP support team and to make any amendments to the documentation identified at the meeting.
2. The purpose of the Internal Scrutiny Meeting is to ensure that the course team have appropriately implemented the action plan agreed at the planning meeting including the support needs from LTEC and the KCEP support team.
3. In addition, the Internal Scrutiny Meeting should ensure that draft validation submissions:
* conform to the format specified at the Planning Meeting;
* address the standard validation criteria (see Guidance CG (vi));
* conform to an acceptable standard of presentation;
* conform to university regulations or that any proposed variations to regulatory norms are clearly identified;
* address any issues raised by relevant stakeholders (such as QAE, Academic Registry, Admissions etc.);
* confirm which member of staff or body is responsible for checking that amendments required from the Scrutiny Meeting have been incorporated in the final validation submission;
* agree a deadline for submission of the amended validation submission for checking by the nominated member of staff or body;
* ensure that arrangements are in place for the Dean, or agreed nominee, to sign the faculty documentation check (form C6).

### Validation Panel Chair’s right of attendance

1. The chair of the validation event has the right to attend the Internal Scrutiny Meeting.

### Submission of validation documentation

1. The key course contact should ensure that:
* documentation is submitted to QAE, mostly via the CMS, by the date agreed at the Planning Meeting (normally four weeks in advance of the validation event);
* any amendments identified at the Internal Scrutiny Meeting have been completed;
* the validation submission is accompanied by a completed faculty documentation check form (C6).
1. An extension to the submission deadline will normally only be given in exceptional circumstances. In instances where documentation is received fewer than ten working days before the event, the advice of the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Chair of the event will be sought and will normally result in postponement of the event.

## Validation

### Nomination of the validation panel Chair

1. QAE maintains a list of trained Chairs from which panel Chairs for specific events are selected. QAE will identify the panel Chair and seek their agreement to participate. QAE runs training events for validation panel Chairs, and Associate Deans are requested to nominate members of staff from their faculty for training. Typically, staff nominated for training will:
* be at an appropriate level of seniority - usually Principal Lecturer/ Associate Professor or above - with an ability to demonstrate leadership, assertiveness, and diplomacy (these skills are particularly important if any difficulties arise at the validation);
* be familiar with the University’s quality assurance processes;
* have experience of chairing formal meetings;
* have experience of serving on university and/or faculty-level committees or boards.

### Shadow Chairs

1. Trainee Chairs should shadow a more experienced validation Chair at a validation event, prior to being added to the list of approved validation Chairs. Where appropriate, shadow Chairs can take the role of an internal panel member at the event being shadowed.
2. At events where a shadow Chair attends, the following best practice should be observed:
* the shadow Chair should receive and read all advance paperwork, referencing the criteria Guidance CG (vi) for validations;
* the shadow Chair should attend all meetings of the event but will be ‘in attendance’ rather than a member of the panel (unless they are an internal panel member);
* the Chair of the event should spend some time after the event with the shadow Chair discussing how the event went and to talk through any issues or questions which the shadow Chair may have.

### Validation Documentary Requirements

1. The nature and format of the documentation required for a validation will be agreed at the Planning Meeting.
2. See Guidance CG (iv) for a matrix summarising the core documentation that must be provided by faculties when validating new courses.
3. QAE will provide validation panels with the following additional documentation:
* The undergraduate or postgraduate academic regulations as applicable
* The QAA UK Quality Code and relevant subject benchmark statements
* OfS Sector Recognised Standards
* Kingston University Academic Framework

### Subject Benchmark Statements

1. Subject Benchmark Statements will be provided to the validation panel as part of the standard validation documentation and can be downloaded from the [QAA website](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements).
2. The QAA has worked with the sector to produce characteristics statements that describe the distinctive features of a qualification at a particular level within the [Qualifications Frameworks](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks)[​](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources). They describe the qualification in terms of its particular purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes, but do not include subject level detail. They are intended to serve purely as guidance and reference points.

### Institutional Agreement

1. An institutional agreement must be completed for each new collaborative partner two months before the course start date (see section B). Where this has not been completed before validation, it will be an automatic condition of approval.

### Panel nominations

1. Validation panels should comprise sufficient breadth of experience to cover all parts of the provision under consideration.
2. Validation panels will normally be constituted as follows:
* Chair (nominated by QAE)
* External panel member with relevant academic expertise (see criteria set out in form C1)
* External panel member with industrial/professional expertise relating to the subject area (see criteria set out in form C1)
* PSRB representative(s) (if appropriate) (if a PSRB representative forms part of the panel, it may not be necessary to have a second, additional panel member with industrial/professional experience)
* Panel member from a School unrelated to the provision under consideration
* Student panel member (nominated by QAE)

QAE panel member

1. Validation panels for low-risk or franchise (of existing University provision) proposals will normally be constituted as follows:
* Chair (nominated by QAE)
* External panel member with relevant academic expertise (see criteria set out in form C1), this could be a current KU external examiner
* PSRB representative(s) (if appropriate)

Panel member from a School unrelated to the provision under consideration QAE panel member

1. Validation panels considering provision to be delivered by an international collaborative partner (validated provision only) can include one external panel member from the country the provision will be delivered. One external must be from the UK or have sufficient experience and knowledge of delivering and assessing higher education courses in the UK.
2. Where a higher or degree apprenticeship course is presented for validation, it is recommended that the external panel members have sufficient expertise between them to comment on the capacity of the new course to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard.
3. Low-risk proposals which are agreed by the Head of QAE to be processed through the faculty’s Course and Module Modification Panel (CMMP) will normally require a report to be completed by an external panel member for consideration by the CMMP. A validation panel will not be required to be convened for these proposals.
4. Any variations to the panel compositions stated above must be agreed with the Head of QAE and noted in the Planning Meeting notes.

### Completing the C1 Panel Nomination Form

1. The key course contact must submit final nominations for internal/external members on form C1 by the deadline agreed at the Planning Meeting. Enough information needs to be provided on the C1 form for QAE to determine that the necessary expertise will be available and that there are no conflicts of interest.
2. The key course contact is responsible for checking the availability of both the internal and external nominees for the event before completing and returning the C1 form. They should also ensure that the rationale for nomination is articulated as fully as possible in order to determine the appropriateness of the nominee and the balance of expertise across the panel. If necessary, further confirmatory information could be sought. The form should be signed by the relevant Head of School and the Dean of the faculty or nominee.
3. The faculty should bear in mind the following criteria when considering nominations for external members of the panel:
* the experience of panel members should be demonstrably appropriate to evaluate the validation submission;
* for the validation of courses delivered through work-based learning, panel members should have both work-based learning and subject experience;
* a panel member should have experience of UK HE;
* a panel member should not, within the last five years, have been a member of staff, governor, student, or near relative of a member of course staff;
* a panel member should not be associated with the design and/or operation of the provision under consideration;
* a panel member should not have a close association with the course in a management role;
* a panel member should not, within the last five years have been an external examiner at the University (not applicable for low-risk or franchise validations);
* normally a panel member should not be used more than twice within a three-year period;
* a panel member should not be a member of staff from a partner institution.
1. QAE is responsible for checking nominated panel members against the criteria for membership. QAE and/or the validation panel Chair have the right to reject the nomination of a panel member if it does not meet the criteria for membership. In exceptional circumstances, e.g., courses in niche subject areas, panel members nominated who do not meet one or more of the criteria listed above may be considered, subject to approval by the Head of QAE.
2. QAE is responsible for formally confirming arrangements with approved panel members. They will also be responsible for providing panel members with guidance material on the process and their role.
3. The University pays a fee to external panel members involved in validations (for details of current fee levels, see Introduction, guidance (iii)).

### External input for lower risk proposals

1. If the Head of QAE agrees that the proposal meets the criteria to be considered ‘lower risk’ (see Criteria), externality may be incorporated into the validation process via correspondence. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Head of QAE.
2. The key course contact should nominate at least one External Subject Expert from outside of the University to consider each proposal. The External Subject Expert is typically a subject expert drawn from HE, industry or the profession, or an individual with relevant professional statutory or regulatory body expertise to comment on the provision under consideration. External examiners employed by the University could be considered as External Subject Experts.
3. An appropriate External Subject Expert should be nominated using the current criteria, see form C1.
4. External Subject Experts must be sent all relevant documentation three weeks before the scheduled validation event and their comments must be returned using report template C7 in sufficient time to inform the deliberations of the panel (normally one week before).
5. External Subject Experts are paid a one-off fee to undertake this work (for details of current fee levels, see Introduction, guidance (iii)).

### Student validation panel members

1. A student representative will normally be invited to join the validation panel. Students are included as full and equal members of the panel, with the same remit as other members.
2. The student panel member will normally be a trained Inclusive Curriculum Consultant who is not from the same faculty as the provision being validated. The recruitment, selection and training of student panel members is managed by QAE in collaboration with LTEC. QAE are responsible for allocating suitable and trained student representatives to validation panels.
3. Exceptionally, if a suitable student panel member could not be appointed, or the appointed student panel member was unable to attend the event and a suitable alternative could not be appointed in time, the validation event can continue to proceed as planned.
4. Student panel members are not required for international validation events (i.e., events held abroad).

### Collaborative Partner observer

1. For collaborative validation events a representative from the collaborative partner can be invited to join the panel for staff development purposes. This would only be appropriate in situations where a representative who was independent of the subject team could be nominated. If a collaborative partner representative is nominated, they will attend as an observer, rather than as a replacement for one of the other panel members.

## The Validation Event

### Purpose of the validation event

1. The purpose of the validation event is to provide opportunities for the panel to consider the proposal for approval. The considerations of the panel are based on the material contained in the validation submission documentation and on the responses of course team and senior staff to the questions of panel members. The questions of the panel will be derived from the validation criteria contained in Guidance CG (vi) in addition to any other issues of concern identified in the private panel meeting and during the course of the event. The primary outcome of the validation event is a set of conclusions which will indicate whether the proposed provision is approved, and whether approval is subject to conditions, recommendations, or a combination of both.
2. The purpose of the validation event for franchise (of existing University provision) proposals is to satisfy the panel that the collaborative partner has the necessary resources, facilities and expertise to deliver the programme. Such events should not focus on programme content as this is already validated.

### Validation panel’s identification of key areas to explore

1. The Validation Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the panel, will normally confirm the programme before the event, allowing sufficient time to discuss and set the agenda in the first private panel meeting. Any feedback received from the panel members prior to the meeting will be circulated to the panel, course team(s), Associate Dean, Head(s) of School and Head(s) of Department normally 48 working hours before the start of the event.

### Role of the panel Chair

1. At the first private meeting of the panel, the Chair should:
* introduce panel members to each other;
* outline the purpose of the meeting and whether any professional accreditation is involved;
* outline the possible outcomes;
* remind the panel of any background information on the provision under consideration;
* set the agenda, taking account of any feedback received from the panel prior to the meeting;
* ensure that, as far as possible, there is fair division of time and contribution between all panel members, including the student panel member;
* agree the ordering of discussion items;
* invite individual members to take the lead on their discussion items with senior staff/course team on individual topics;
* ensure that provision is made for further private meeting(s) of the panel if felt necessary.
1. During the event, the Chair should:
* clearly indicate the purpose of the validation, the purpose of each meeting and outline the agenda;
* ensure that all the issues previously identified by the panel, or the team are covered, bringing in members as appropriate;
* ensure that all represented parties have been given adequate opportunity to contribute to discussions (for example individual Module Leaders);
* check in private panel meetings that no important items have been omitted from the discussions;
* keep notes for the final conclusion;
* guide the panel in reaching conclusions (including conditions, recommendations, and the identification of best practice), clarifying for members the possible alternatives open to them.

### Role of validation panel members

1. The panel should evaluate the provision under consideration and the responses of senior staff and the course team in relation to the validation criteria contained in Guidance CG (vi).

### Outcomes of validation

1. The possible outcomes of all validation events are as follows:
* Approval with identifications of best practice
* Approval with recommendations
* Approval with conditions
* Approval with conditions and recommendations
* Non-approval

### Periods of Approval

1. If a course is approved by the validation panel, it will normally be in perpetual approval thereafter. Courses will not be required to be submitted for re-approval but will be subject to the Kingston Continuous Enhancement Programme (KCEP) processes (see section D). However, approval of a new course may be time-limited if there are concerns. How time-limited validations are followed up will depend on the concerns and a validation panel may be reconvened. Advice should be sought from the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement in the first instance.

### Conditions and recommendations

1. Conditions are issues that the course team is required to address, to the satisfaction of the panel, before the course can commence. Conditions must only be set to address immediate concerns relating to the course being able to meet any of the OfS ongoing conditions of registration. Where gaps are identified which would enhance the course and the students learning experience, these should be set as recommendations
2. A standard set of ‘technical’ conditions will be included at all validations. This will include a condition that an external examiner(s) has been identified and approached to facilitate timely approval and induction.
3. Panels often also make recommendations which usually relate to aspects of the course or its delivery that will need to be reviewed, or suggestions that the panel make that would enhance the course. The progress of recommendations is monitored through KCEP.
4. Conditions and recommendations should be communicated orally by the validation Chair to senior staff and the course team in the final meeting of the event (the feedback meeting), as part of the validation panel’s conclusions. In formulating and communicating conditions and recommendations of approval, the validation panel should bear in mind the following:
* Conditions and recommendations should be clearly and precisely articulated (contextual information and observations can be included in order to assist understanding);
* Normally, conditions should be fulfilled well in advance of the start of the proposed provision. In rare instances, conditions may be set that apply to later parts of courses, in which case the conditions must be met by an appropriate specified date.
1. The panel should indicate clear deadlines for the fulfilment of conditions. This should normally be within six weeks of the validation event but may need to be sooner than this (i.e., three to four weeks) if the validation takes place late in the academic year.
2. Exceptionally, the validation panel may impose conditions which can only be met after the proposed start, but only in cases where the condition concerned does not have a direct bearing on the experience of the students.
3. For validations involving collaborative partners, it should be a condition of the validation that the Institutional Agreement (with its accompanying administrative and financial schedules) and the Liaison Document are formalised and signed prior to the commencement of the course(s), where this has not been done prior to validation.
4. It should be made clear who will be responsible for considering the response to any conditions. Only in exceptional circumstances or in the case of minor amendment should approval be delegated solely to the Chair of the panel.

### Non-approval

1. In the event that the validation panel does not feel able to approve the provision, this should be communicated orally by the Chair to senior staff and the course team in the final meeting of the event (the feedback meeting), as part of the validation panel’s conclusions. The validation panel should agree the main points to be reported in this respect, which should cover:
* the main reasons for non-approval;
* any suggestions as to how the course team might overcome these shortcomings;
* the recommended timescale for any resubmission;
* recommendations on the way in which a resubmission should be considered (for example, reconvened panel, new panel etc).

### Appeal against a validation decision

1. An appeal against the decision of a validation panel should be submitted to QAE within one week of the circulation of the conclusions of the validation panel. Appeals should take the form of a letter from the Dean of the faculty setting out the reasons why an appeal is considered necessary. Appeals will be considered as soon as possible after their submission. In the first instance, the appeal will be directed to the Chair of the panel. If a disagreement concerning a validation decision cannot be resolved by further discussion between the validation panel and the faculty, then the appeal will be heard by the Chair of the Education Committee. The decision of the Chair of the Education Committee will be final.

Best Practice

1. Best practice refers to a process or way of working that makes a particularly positive contribution to academic standards and the quality and/or enhancements of the students’ learning opportunities. In identifying elements of best practice, the panel's focus should be on exemplary aspects which have the potential to be transferable to other courses, not on things that subject teams ought to be doing as a matter of course.

## Reports of validations

### Validation conclusions and reports

1. A written record of the conclusions of the event will be prepared within five working days of the event, confirming the Chair's verbal report.
2. The conclusions will contain:
* any areas of best practice (which has the capacity to be disseminated);
* any conditions attached to approval;
* any recommendations attached to approval;
* any restrictions to the programme having perpetual approval;
* the deadline for fulfilling conditions i.e., the date by which a response must be submitted;
* an addendum specifying any amendments required to ensure compliance with current University regulations and procedures. The Chair and Validation Officer will determine the most appropriate way to communicate the required typographical and regulatory changes to the course team. This may either be an addendum to the report or annotated documents;
* the format required for the response to conditions from the course team;
* who will be responsible for checking the response (Chair, etc.).
1. QAE will normally forward the conclusions to:
* panel members
* Chair of the Faculty Education Committee
* Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)
* Dean of the faculty
* Head of School
* Course Leader
* Collaborative partner (if appropriate)
1. The full validation report will normally be produced within 15 working days of the event and forwarded to the Chair for approval.
2. Where externality was incorporated into the validation process via correspondence, the report from the External Subject Expert must be appended to the validation report.
3. Once confirmed, the full report will be sent to all those who received the conclusions as well as the Chair of the Education Committee.
4. Reports will constitute documentary evidence of the degree of rigour and comprehensiveness with which the validation process has been conducted.

### Response to validation conditions

1. All conditions must be fulfilled by the specified deadline before a course can be approved and can commence.
2. The only exception to this rule is where validation panels have imposed a deadline for response beyond the proposed start date. Should exceptional circumstances arise which mean that a condition or conditions cannot be fulfilled before the proposed start date or next intake, a formal request for the deadline for the condition to be extended should be submitted by the Dean of the faculty to QAE for consideration by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education).

### Submitting responses to conditions arising from validation events

1. The response to validation conditions should be prepared and submitted to QAE for consideration by the panel members. The format and timescale for submission of a response will be specified in the validation report.
2. When organising follow-up work, faculties should ensure that arrangements are in place and that members of staff have been nominated to:
* produce the response to conditions;
* check and approve the response prior to its submission to QAE;
* act on any further work on the response required by panel members.
1. The response to conditions should consist of:
* a signed C8 form
* a covering paper identifying the location and nature of amendments within the body of the response to conditions, cross-referred to the relevant conditions
* validation submission documents, amended in line with conditions and re-submitted via the CMS.
1. The Chair of the panel has the right to reject incomplete responses to conditions or those which have not been accompanied by a clearly composed covering paper.
2. Where a validation panel concludes that the response to conditions is unsatisfactory in any respect, a revised response will be required.
3. Approval of the course will only be confirmed once the Chair and/or panel are satisfied with the response to the conditions of approval. QAE will inform all relevant stakeholders to confirm the approval of a course.
4. It is normally a requirement for any conditions of approval to be met at least 18 months (for UG courses) or three months (for PG courses) before the proposed start date of the course. The Head of QAE will report any outstanding validation activities to the QAPCC. Failure to respond to or meet conditions in a timely way may result in suspension of recruitment or the removal of validation.
5. Exceptionally, where the Chair and/or the validation panel members are not available to consider the response to the conditions of approval, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), or a nominee appointed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, may consider the response, and confirm the outcome of the validation i.e., approve or reject the response. This may arise where the response was received late and the Chair and/or panel members are not immediately available, but a decision is required urgently.

## Validation Follow-Up

1. The documentation outcomes of validation will be an approved programme specification and a module directory. The QAE team will arrange for the programme specification to be uploaded to the University’s external repository and for module descriptors to be stored in the central QAE repository. The approved versions of the programme specification and module descriptors will be made available in the CMS.
2. It is the responsibility of faculties to liaise with the Student Records and Returns team to ensure that new courses and new modules are recorded in SITS and that data relating to ‘Discover Uni’ have been captured, where required, confirming, or amending the information previously provided in the A2/A2b/A2c form. It is also the responsibility of faculties to ensure that module descriptors are made available in standard format to the rest of the faculty, and partner faculties and institutions, where appropriate.
3. The outcomes of validation will be reported to relevant stakeholders, including all those on the QAPCC distribution list.
4. Academic Council will exercise its responsibility for validation through receipt of the annual report from Education Committee.

### Feedback on the Validation Process

1. The conclusions from validation reports are considered by the Education Committee through the receipt of the annual Validation and Review report. The report identifies trends in the conditions/recommendations at validation events, draws any issues of quality or best practice to the University’s attention, and proposes amendments/ improvements to the validation procedures. If there are academic issues relating to teaching, learning or assessment, these will be referred directly to the Education Committee.