

REVALIDATION AND VALIDATION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

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PROCESS OVERVIEW

PROCESS AIMS

Lancaster University's validation and revalidation processes and procedures for the approval of awards made in its name by the Associated Colleges are designed to comply with the requirements of the QAA Code of Practice: Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval; Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review; Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others. These processes and procedures enable the University to:

- secure the academic standards of those awards and qualifications made in its name by the Colleges, and
- assure the quality of the learning opportunities available to students studying on those programmes leading to an award of the University.

The University seeks, through these procedures, to secure equivalence with its own awards and qualifications.

PROCESS STAGES

The process for revalidation and validation of programmes is divided into a number of stages:

Stage 1 – Business Planning Schedule: the purpose of this stage is for the University and College to agree on a schedule of programmes for revalidation and validation in the following academic session to enable timely and careful scrutiny of proposals.

Stage 2 – Outline Planning Permission: the purpose of this stage is to give outline planning approval for revalidation/validation proposals. This stage gives the College authority to advertise a new programme for recruitment purposes (subject to validation).

Stage 3 – Full Proposal Consideration: this stage involves the submission of the full Programme Document and consideration of this and related documentation at the revalidation/validation event.

Stage 4 – Final Approval: this stage incorporates the post-event procedures, culminating in the notification to Senate that a programme has been approved for revalidation/validation.

PROCESS PROCEDURES

STAGE 1: BUSINESS PLANNING SCHEDULE

The **Business Planning Schedule (BPS)** stage involves the submission by the College of a schedule of those programmes it wishes to revalidate/validate in the following year. The University will provide to the College, by the end of January, a list of those programmes coming to the end of their period of validation for use as the basis of its BPS. The BPS submitted by the College will include a rationale explaining how the proposals align with College strategy.

A draft of the BPS must be submitted by the College by the end of February. The draft is considered by the Partnership Management Group at its March/April meeting. Approval of the BPS is given by the University's Regional Partners Teaching Committee (RPTC).

Following approval of its BPS the College should move to Stage 2 of the process.

STAGE 2: OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION

Outline Planning Permission (OPP) forms must be completed for all programmes listed in the BPS. Separate forms exist for **OPP revalidation proposals** and **OPP validation proposals**.

Submission of the OPP proposal

For programmes undergoing **revalidation**, the OPP must be submitted by the relevant member of College staff to the University **by 31 May**. For programmes undergoing **validation**, the OPP form must be submitted to the University **by 31 July**. Submission of forms before the start of the next academic session is required in order to enable the necessary consultation and planning to take place in good time. Forms should be submitted to the College Contact in the Academic Quality Standards and Conduct Team (AQSC) at the University. AQSC will endeavour to gain Faculty approval for all OPPs within three weeks of submission.

OPP forms for **revalidation** must be accompanied by evidence of **consultation** with students, external examiners and the Programme Consultant. For OPP proposals for **validation**, Programme Consultants for an existing Foundation Degree must be consulted

over the development of a linked Honours top-up programme. For other new programmes where Lancaster University already has existing validated programmes in a cognate subject area, the College may wish to consult informally with the relevant Programme Consultant. For new programmes being developed in entirely new subject areas, the University will identify a Programme Consultant for the programme following approval of the OPP.

Approval of the OPP proposal

Initial consideration of the OPP proposal is given by the AQSC College Contact who will then forward the proposal to the relevant Faculty representative of RPTC for approval. AQSC will notify the College representative once this approval has been given.

Approval by the University of the OPP proposal gives authority for the College to advertise new programmes for recruitment purposes (such advertisement should be “subject to validation”) and to proceed to the next stage of the process (Stage 3).

STAGE 3: FULL PROPOSAL CONSIDERATION

Events dates and deadlines for documentation

Once the OPP proposal has been approved, AQSC will liaise with the College to agree the event date and the date for submission of the full proposal. The date for **submission of the proposal documentation will be three working weeks prior to the event date** to give the Panel time to read this and related papers. (Please note, where Christmas and holiday periods fall within these weeks it is expected that documentation will be submitted earlier to allow for this).

Revalidation events will normally take place in the **Michaelmas term** and validation events in the **Lent Term**; however there will be some flexibility in this arrangement in order to: (a) accommodate the scheduling of proposals in cognate areas; (b) ensure new programmes can be validated where a January start has been agreed; (c) provide some balance of workload between the two terms.

Events will **not** normally take place in the Summer term; it is expected that the schedule will have been completed by the end of the Lent term.

Panel membership, roles and responsibilities

Members of the University Panel will include the Chair, at least one Subject Specialist, and an AQSC representative. An External Assessor from another institution who has specialist subject knowledge will also be a member of the panel. The University will determine membership of the Panel. The **Panel’s task** is to consider the proposal and make a recommendation to the University on the revalidation or validation of the programme(s). All members have a responsibility to review the full proposal; however individual members have specific responsibilities as follows.

- Chair: to manage the agenda for the day; guide the Panel in its deliberations and consideration of the issues; and provide formal feedback to the College and the Panel's decision.
- Subject Specialist: as an expert in the subject area, to provide guidance on the curriculum and other subject-related issues, and to consider the programme in comparison with Lancaster University standards
- AQSC representative: to provide guidance on procedures and regulations and on the University's requirements for revalidation/validation.
- External Assessor: as an expert in the subject area, to provide guidance on the curriculum and other subject-related issues. To offer independence and objectivity to the decisions taken and provide a basis for comparability of academic standards across the higher education sector. To verify that threshold academic standards are set by rigorous reference to national reference points and in accordance with the degree-awarding body's regulations. To contribute to enhancement, by providing additional perspectives. To provide expertise on current developments both in the subject area and in learning and teaching practice.

External representatives' attendance at events

There may be occasions when the College feels it would be beneficial for external representatives (e.g. employers, sector representatives) to be present at a validation/revalidation event in order that the panel can question them directly about the benefits of the programme. This is particularly the case where work-based learning is a feature of the programme. The College must make nominations for such representation to the University prior to the event, and these will be subject to the University's agreement. External representatives will be present at the meeting with the programme team only. Where a programme being revalidated has a work based learning element then it is expected that the Panel would meet with employers and a separate meeting will be scheduled within the agenda.

Role of the Programme Consultant

Revalidation

For revalidation, the Programme Consultant must be consulted by the College. Evidence of consultation at the OPP stage must be provided at the end of the OPP form. Whilst the Programme Consultant is not required by the University to provide comment on the Programme Document, it is expected that the College will continue to consult with the Programme Consultant in the development of the full proposal. AQSC will also liaise with the Programme Consultant prior to the revalidation event to establish if there are any matters which he or she feels need to be explored by the Panel on the day or by AQSC in advance. The Programme Consultant's annual reports will, in addition, be made available to the Panel as part of the documentation considered for revalidation of a programme.

Validation

For Validation, the University will identify a Programme Consultant upon approval of the OPP. The Programme Consultant would support the team in the development of the programme for the Validation event.

VALIDATION PROCEDURES

Aim of validation

The overall **aim of a validation event** is to determine whether or not a proposed new programme fulfils the requirements of the University with regard to the academic standards of the award and the quality and standards of the learning opportunities available to students.

Agenda for the event

The **Validation Agenda** template should be used, which may be adjusted according to the number of programmes being considered. AQSC will agree the agenda with the College once the date for the event has been confirmed.

Documentation for Validations

For a Validation proposal, the following documentation must be provided by the College by the due submission deadline (three weeks prior to the event date). Documentation should be provided in both hard copy and electronic format.

- College Strategy document and any supporting documents
- Programme Document
- Internal validation minutes

The **Guidance on Documentation for Validation** document gives details on the information to be provided in the Programme Document.

Issues to be considered by the Panel

In considering a Validation proposal, the Panel will review the following aspects with **Senior Management** and the **Programme Leader**:

- college strategy for the programme
- market demand/recruitment
- staffing
- resources

The meeting with the **Programme Team** will focus primarily on the following aspects (although the Panel may revisit some issues discussed with the Senior Management team):

- programme aims and outcomes
- programme structure and progression through the programme
- curriculum and modules

- teaching and learning strategy
- assessment strategy
- employer engagement/work based learning (where relevant)
- entry criteria

The kinds of questions a Panel may ask in the meetings are detailed in the **Panel Questions** document.

Panel decision and Conditions and Recommendations

In making a decision on the validation proposal, the Panel will make **one** of the following recommendations to the University.

- To validate** the programme as it stands for the following five years.
- To validate** the programme for the following five years **subject to** a number of Conditions (changes which must be satisfactorily addressed prior to the commencement of the delivery of the programme) and/or Recommendations (areas that the Programme Team are invited to review but which are not considered essential changes).
- To not validate the programme at this stage** (due to substantial concerns about one or more aspects of the programme, e.g. staffing/resources, academic content/coherence, etc. (The Panel will then advise the College as to whether or not a resubmission of the proposal is possible and, if so, the time-scale for resubmission.))

Reporting on the event

The College is responsible for providing a member of staff to take notes of the meeting and provide a draft report to the University. This should normally be provided within two weeks of the event. The University's **Validation Report Template** should be used. The University will provide a draft of the Panel's decision and any Conditions and/or Recommendations for incorporation into the report.

AQSC will circulate the draft report for consideration and approval by the Panel and forward the final version of the report to the College.

REVALIDATION PROCEDURES

Aim of revalidation

The overall **aim of a revalidation event** is to review a currently validated programme and consider whether or not validation may be renewed for a further five years, taking into account the following factors:

- the programme remains current and up-to-date
- the standards of the award are maintained

- student achievement is satisfactory
- there is a continuing demand for the programme
- there continue to be sufficient resources for programme delivery
- QA procedures continue to be implemented effectively for the programme

As part of the procedures for bringing a programme forward for revalidation the College will have carried out a Review of the programme. In addition, revalidation provides an opportunity for the College to propose any minor/major amendments to the programme. The Panel will meet with a group of students on the day to review the student experience and also meet with employers where relevant.

Agenda for the event

The **Revalidation Agenda** template should be used, which may be adjusted according to the number of programmes being considered. ASQSC will agree the agenda with the College once the date has been confirmed. The **Revalidation Agenda** incorporates elements which are additional to the basic agenda template; these elements are: (a) any matters arising out of the Periodic review of the programme conducted by the College, (b) a meeting of the Panel with students, preferably at least one student from each year of the programme (the College should consult with AQSC if there are likely to be difficulties with securing student attendance) and (c) a meeting of the Panel with employers where relevant.

Documentation for Revalidations

For a revalidation proposal, the following documentation must be provided by the College by the document submission deadline: (three weeks prior to the event date). Documentation should be provided in both hard copy and electronic format.

- College Strategy document and any supporting documents
- Programme Document
- Internal revalidation minutes (which should include a section on the Periodic Review discussions)

The **Guidance on Documentation for Revalidation** gives details on the information to be provided in the Programme Document. Please note it is expected that the introduction to the Programme Document will outline the outcome of the Periodic Review and the rationale for continuing with the programme.

In addition to the documentation provided by the College, the Panel will be provided with the following by AQSC:

- Report of any issues raised by the Programme Consultant to be discussed at revalidation
- Lancaster University's guidance documents on revalidation
- Last Annual Programme Review (which includes the External Examiner and Programme Consultant report)

Issues to be considered by the Panel

In considering a revalidation proposal the Panel will look at the programme itself (as described in the **Programme Document**).

The Panel will review any issues arising out of the programme through meetings with:

- Students
- Employers (where relevant)

The Panel will review the following aspects with the **Senior Management team and Programme Leader**:

- any matters arising out of the Periodic Review conducted by the College
- transitional arrangements for the programme
- college strategy for the programme
- market demand/recruitment
- staffing
- resources

The meeting with the **Programme Team** will focus primarily on the following aspects:

- programme aims and outcomes
- programme structure and progression through the programme
- curriculum and modules
- teaching and learning strategy
- assessment strategy
- employer engagement/work based learning (where relevant)
- entry criteria

The kinds of questions a Panel may ask in the meetings are detailed in the **Panel Questions** document.

Panel decision and Conditions and Recommendations

In making a decision on the revalidation proposal, the Panel will make **one** of the following recommendations to the University:

- (a) **To revalidate** the programme as it stands for the following five years.
- (b) **To revalidate** the programme for the following five years **subject to** a number of Conditions (changes which must be satisfactorily addressed prior to the commencement of the next delivery of the programme) and/or Recommendations (areas that the Programme Team are invited to review but which are not considered essential changes).

- (c) **To not revalidate the programme at this stage** (due to substantial concerns about one or more aspects of the programme, e.g. staffing/resources, academic content/coherence, etc. (The Panel will then make a judgment as to whether or not revalidation of the existing programme can be extended for a maximum of one year or if the programme should be withdrawn until approved at a subsequent revalidation event.)

Reporting on the event

The College is responsible for providing a member of staff to take notes of the meeting and provide a draft report to the University. This should normally be provided within two weeks of the event. The University's **Revalidation Report Template** should be used. The University will provide a draft of the Panel's decision and any Conditions and or Recommendations for incorporation into the report.

AQSC will circulate the draft report for consideration and approval by the Panel and forward the final version of the report to the College.

STAGE 4: FINAL APPROVAL

The following procedures apply to both validation and revalidation proposals.

Amendments to the documentation

A response must be provided to the Conditions, Recommendations and Housekeeping requirements (including amendments to the proposal and documentation where required) **within six weeks of the event**. The revised programme document(s) should be submitted highlighting clearly in the body of the text where revisions have been made. In addition, a summary of the changes, with page numbers, should be provided in a separate document.

Following approval (see below), the College is required to submit a **final version of the documentation** to AQSC for record purposes, in the form of an electronic copy.

Final approval

It is the College's responsibility to ensure that Housekeeping requirements have been met and the summary of Housekeeping changes must be signed off by a member of the Quality team at the College.

The AQSC representative is responsible for providing an initial check on whether the conditions of the revalidation/validation have been met, and will advise the Panel members accordingly when circulating the revised documentation. The Panel will confirm whether or not the Conditions have been met. Following this, the programme will be submitted for **final approval** to the Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, who has delegated authority from Senate. A regular report will be made to Senate over the year detailing those programmes which have been approved.

Once final approval has been given, the AQSC representative will write to the College to confirm the approval of the programme, and a letter will be sent to the College Principal at the end of the year listing all programmes which have been approved.

If, following consideration by the Panel of the revised documentation, it is considered that there remain substantive issues with the programme which need further discussion, it will be referred to the RPTC for wider consideration (if there is not a timely meeting of RPTC due, it will be submitted to the Chair of RPTC).

Deadline for final approval

All programmes considered for validation and revalidation in the academic year must be given final approval by the University by the **end of May** in that year. It is the responsibility of the College to ensure that any conditions set by the Panel are fulfilled in a timely fashion so that the deadline can be adhered to.

DOCUMENTATION

- Business Planning Schedule
- Revalidation Outline Planning Permission Form
- Validation Outline Planning Permission Form
- Validation Event Agenda template
- Revalidation Event Agenda template
- Guidelines for the design of Foundation Degrees and Honours top-up years
- Guidance on Documentation for Validation
- Guidance on Documentation for Revalidation
- Panel Questions
- Validation Report Template
- Revalidation Report Template

RELATED PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

- Monitoring and Review Process
- Annual Programme Review
- Closure of Programmes
- Major Amendment Procedure
- Minor Amendment Procedure

EXTERNAL REFERENCES

- *QAA Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- *Framework for higher education qualifications*
- *Foundation degree benchmark statement*
- *University Guidelines for the design of Foundation Degrees and Honours top-up years*
- Sector Skills Council frameworks and statements of competencies
- Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Body requirements.