

PROCEDURE FOR THE VALIDATION OF NEW COURSES

1. Associated Policies/Processes

Course Development, Modification, Review and Closure Process

Assessment Guidance for Staff

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Personal Tutoring Policy

Student Communication and Publishing Procedure

2. Introduction to the validation process

1. The validation procedure allows for a proposed new level 4 & 5 credit bearing course at the to be examined by an acknowledged group of experienced peers including internal and external academics, employer representatives and a student representative. The course validation procedure is aligned with the expectations, practices, advice and guidance within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
2. The Higher Education Steering Board is ultimately responsible for the validation of courses for delivery within the College.
3. This process is predicated on courses having been given the appropriate authorisation for development through the course proposal process.

2.1. Purpose of Validation

4. Newham College is not an Awarding Body as such we deliver programmes that are validated by recognised awarding bodies, for example City and Guilds or Pearsons. This process seeks to ensure that;
 - a. the College has a coherent method of providing oversight to those courses that we offer;
 - b. it is congruent with the College HE Strategy including market demand, compatibility with the existing curriculum portfolio, sustainability and graduate employability (this is considered at the initial course approval stage,
 - c. from the outset the course is well-organised;
 - d. we have sufficient resources in place, including human resources;
 - e. alignment with all relevant external reference points, including the [UK Quality Code](#), and any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
 - f. there is a robust and effective assessment methodology in place (where we are responsible for this) and that it is equivalence in academic standards with comparable courses across the UK higher education sector;
 - g. underpinning learning, teaching and assessment strategies allow for the provision of a high quality, inclusive learning experience, pitched at an appropriate level and reflecting the diversity of the student body;
 - h. that there is a definitive course specification that provides details for the College and students of what the course entails in totality.

5. While the validation process is ultimately designed to ensure that the proposed new course is of an appropriate quality and academic standard to warrant an award, an important element of the process is to ensure that we create a definitive record/course specification of the course. This becomes source of information to students and wider stakeholders for the purposes of marketing and academic review. It can only be changed within the scope of the Course Development Modification, Review and Closure Process. All Course Handbooks will use the course Specification as their 'base' document as will Unit/Module Handbooks.

6. Particular care should be taken to ensure that any information within the Course Proposal Form and Website Information Form that will be published once initial approval has been secured is complete, accurate and fit-for-purpose. The expectations are set out in the Students Communication and Publishing Procedure. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) publication [*UK Higher Education Providers – Advice on Consumer Protection Law \(2015\)*](#) is also a useful point of reference in terms of understanding the College's legal responsibilities in communicating with both current and prospective students.

2.2. Timescales

7. Sufficient time and resource should be allocated to enable thorough scoping of the academic and business case for the proposed new provision, and for subsequent detailed course design and development work. This is vital in terms of ensuring that new courses are viable from both an academic and financial perspective and reflect the principles of good, inclusive course design.

8. Where course teams have the capacity to conduct initial scoping and course design work in a shorter timeframe (for example in order to introduce a new course in response to a strong business need or employer demand), this can be accommodated.

3. The Course Validation Process

3.1. Documentation

9. The validation documentation provides the formal record of the course(s) to be offered to students, and should include:

- a. Awarding Body Course Specification, for example, Pearson Education Ltd;
- b. Course Specification/definitive course record;
- c. Student Course Handbook;
- d. where relevant, any additional student handbooks covering particular aspects of the course, for example work-based learning or professional practice;
- e. staff CVs;
- f. feedback from student(s), external academics and/or other external stakeholders consulted on curriculum development.

3.2. Timescales for submission of documentation

10. In certain circumstances, for example when a course team is inexperienced in the validation process, an internal pre-validation event may be held to prepare the course team and identify ways in which the proposal can be enhanced. This process will incorporate the documentation review process outlined above. The pre-event will normally be held at least three weeks before the final validation documentation submission date to enable any final adjustments to be made.

11. A final version of all relevant documentation must be submitted to the Validation Panel in an agreed electronic format at least 10 days in advance of the validation event. A longer timescale may be required where PSRBs are involved.

3.3. The Panel

12. The validation panel includes a range of representatives who are able to judge the academic integrity of the course in relation to relevant internal and external reference points. Within the panel as a whole there should be sufficient understanding of the subject matter and academic context to enable the panel to make a sound judgement. Panel members should not have been involved in the detailed development of the course.

Panel membership for proposed new courses typically comprises:

- a. Chair, a member of academic or academic-related staff;
- b. at least one external academic subject expert, by report, if appropriate;
- c. at least one employer representative, by report if appropriate;
- d. PSRB representative(s), where relevant;
- e. at least one member of academic staff;
- f. student representative on an equivalent level course;
- g. Learning Services representative.

All validation panels will be serviced by a senior College administrator.

13. In the absence of any panel members on the day of the event, the decision as to whether the validation event should proceed is at the Chair's discretion. Quoracy is least half of the panel but must include including the Chair and the external academic subject expert(s).

3.4. Criteria for the appointment of validation panel chairs

14. Chairs should:

- a) be a member of academic or academic-related staff with continuing, substantive involvement in course delivery and/or in the management of learning, teaching and assessment;
- b) have appropriate experience and demonstrable competence in chairing meetings;
- c) have knowledge and understanding of quality assurance and enhancement processes including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- d) have undergone relevant shadowing on chairing course validation events.

3.5. Criteria for the appointment of external panel members

15. External academic panel members are identified and appointed by the College and should be able to demonstrate:

- a. appropriate competence and experience and continuing active involvement in the relevant subject discipline(s);
- b. relevant academic and/or professional qualifications, normally to at least the level of the qualification being presented for validation, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate;
- c. knowledge and understanding of relevant external reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
- d. competence and recent experience relating to the design and delivery of courses of study within the relevant subject discipline(s) to at least the level of the qualification being presented for validation.

16. Employer representatives on the panel are nominated by the course team and appointed by the College and should, normally, but not exclusively be selected from our strategic relationships with the LCIoT or Bart's NHS Health Futures:

- a. be an employer or professional representative of the sector in which graduates might be expected to work;
- b. be of an appropriate level of seniority or have significant recent professional experience within the relevant field;
- c. possess sufficient experience within the sector to be able to comment on the relevance of the course for those wishing to gain employment in the sector.

17. The appointment as an external panel member of anyone in the following categories or circumstances is not permissible:

- a. anyone who has been involved in the design and development of the proposed new course or is intended to be involved in subsequent course delivery;
- b. a member of the governing body;
- c. a current employee of the or its partner institutions;
- d. a current or former external examiner appointed to a course at the or its partner institutions, unless a period of five years has elapsed since the appointment ended;
- e. anyone teaching on a course where a current employee of the or its partner institutions is appointed as the external examiner for the course;
- f. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of the team involved in designing and delivering the proposed new course;
- g. anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative activities (including research) with a member of staff involved in the design or delivery of the proposed new course;
- h. former staff or students of the or its partner institutions, unless a period of five years has elapsed since their employment ended or they completed their studies;
- i. anyone associated with the sponsorship of future students on the course or in a position to significantly influence the employment of such students.

3.6. Responsibilities of the panel

18. It is the responsibility of the validation panel to:

- a. critically examine the validation documentation and undertake discussion with the course team and other relevant stakeholders in order to make a collective judgement as to the quality and academic standard of the proposed course;
- b. decide, under the delegated authority of the ADDQ Committee and the HE Steering Board, whether the proposed course should be validated.

4. The validation event

19. The course team meeting with the panel should consist of key members of staff who will be involved in the delivery of the proposed course, normally up to a maximum of five.

20. During a private meeting of the panel at the start of the validation event, the Chair will:

- a. explain the purpose and nature of the event (including confirming the course titles, awards and modes of study to be considered by the panel)
- b. invite panel members to introduce themselves
- c. confirm the day's agenda
- d. explain the validation process, the responsibilities of the panel and the possible outcomes of the event.

21. The Chair will then invite panel members to identify lines of enquiry suggested by the course documentation, in order to enable the Chair to construct agendas for the panel's meetings with students (where appropriate) and with the course team.

4.1. Meeting between the panel and the course team

22. For the meeting with the course team, the Chair is encouraged to group issues and questions raised so that discussions follow a focused sequence, normally covering:

- a. the context and rationale for the course;
- b. learning and teaching strategies and rationale, including use of technology enhanced learning;
- c. recruitment and admissions;
- d. assessment strategy and coherence across modules;
- e. questions relating to specific modules;
- f. staffing and resources.

4.2. Concluding meeting of the panel

23. If the outcome is successful, the panel will also determine the period of validation, which for most courses is five years. A unanimous decision of the panel is normally required for the conclusion of the validation event, but in the event that an individual panel member disagrees with the majority decision, then the Chair of the validation panel will make the final decision. Where the panel decides to validate the proposed new course, they will proceed to identify and formulate commendations, conditions, requirements and/or recommendations, giving due consideration to clarity of wording.

- a. commendations - a particular focus here should be on excellent practice that has the potential to be transferable to other courses;

- b. conditions are those issues that must be addressed to the satisfaction of the validation panel before the course commences;
- c. recommendations are those issues where action is desirable and should be considered with a response provided.

4.3. The course team's response

24. The course team should make a formal response to the panel's validation commendation, conditions or deadline, conditions and/or requirements have been met and addressing any recommendations that were made. This response should be submitted to the validating panel and presented through the ADQ Committee as part of the finalisation of the validation.

The course team's formal response should include:

- a. amended documents (using tracked changes to highlight any amendments), including definitive course record;
- b. a brief summary of how each condition and/or requirement has been met with reference to the amended documents;
- c. how each recommendation has been considered.

25. The course team's response to any conditions and/or recommendations is normally signed off by correspondence by the validation panel Chair, drawing on the advice of other panel members as appropriate. Exceptionally, a conditions meeting will be arranged at the time of the validation event to ensure that all conditions have been met and that recommendations have been considered, with membership as agreed by the panel Chair.

26. If it is decided that the conditions have been met and the recommendations adequately responded to, the Chair (acting under delegated authority of the ADQ Committee and HE Steering Board) will confirm that the validation process has been successfully completed and that the new course is validated.

27. If any condition or requirement has not been met by agreed deadlines or if further evidence is required, the Chair ADQ Committee in the case of requirements will request additional documentation to address the outstanding issues.

28. If the condition or requirement is not able to be met, the matter is referred to the ADQ Committee to determine an appropriate course of action. In such circumstances, protecting the interests of prospective and/or current students should be of paramount importance. It is vital that applicants and/or current students are consulted and kept informed of developments, so that they are clear about their options.

5. 12. Definitive course documentation

29. The Registry team maintains definitive course specification which incorporates all approved amendments to the original validation documentation as part of the course team's response to any conditions, requirements and/or recommendations. The Definitive Course Specification is published online and sent to applicants.

6. Panel Discussion Items

30. This appendix identifies those key areas that a validation Panel will address with the Course Team. This is not exhaustive.

7. Rationale and development of the provision:

Strategic position of the course - this will include consideration of:

- a. the alignment of the course with the HE Strategy;
- b. plans for ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the course.
- c. the potential market for the course.

Consideration of the curriculum documentation (Course Specifications, Module/unit Specifications) – this will include consideration of:

- a. Appropriateness of the stated academic level (against the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications).
- b. Appropriateness of educational aims.
- c. Appropriateness of indicative content (breadth/depth, relevance to Award/Module/unit Title).
- d. Appropriateness of both course and module/unit-level Learning Outcomes (level, number, category, alignment with assessment activities) – including the appropriateness of identified Learning Outcomes for Intermediate Awards.

8. Academic Standards

QAA Subject Benchmark Statements – this will include consideration of:

- a. The mechanisms by which the Course Team engaged with the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements

QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications – this will include consideration of:

- a. evidence of engagement with Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications and Subject Benchmark Statements;
- b. evidence of progression between academic levels on undergraduate courses and evidence of progression between undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

9. Student experience

Resources – this will include consideration of:

- a. the variety of learning resources available to students including resources such as laboratories, studios, exhibition spaces, IT equipment etc.
- b. accessibility of library resources (in terms of both physical and electronic resources) and support provided to staff and students by Library and Learning Services (LLS).
- c. the levels and rights of access to these resources by students at academic partners and mechanisms in place to ensure that they have access to appropriate levels of resources.

Staffing and staff development – this will include consideration of:

- a. staffing and staff development, specific to the course and/or generic;
- b. technical and administrative support available.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment – this will include consideration of:

- a. appropriateness of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and evidence for their consistent use across different sites of delivery.
- b. alignment of learning, teaching and assessment methods with national sector practice.
- c. the appropriateness of the skills being developed in the portfolio as demonstrated by the Learning Outcomes.
- d. evidence of how student feedback and consultation have informed approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- e. evidence that employability matters are integrated into approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- f. the variety of assessment types on offer (i.e. an appropriate range of assessment types to meet the needs of all students) including consideration of innovative forms of assessment.
- g. the involvement of externals in developing and delivering approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

Graduate employability - this will include consideration of:

- a. How graduate employability is embedded into the curriculum.
- b. Examples of the involvement of employers in the provision (e.g. guest speakers, visits to employers).
- c. Support from the Strategic Partnerships, LCIoT and Barts

10. Student Engagement

Student engagement in Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement processes – this will include consideration of:

- a. The extent to which students have been actively involved in and consulted about the development of the curriculum;
- b. Specific arrangements for on-going engagement.

11. Information for students

Marketing materials – this will include the consideration of:

- a. Confirmation of the processes for monitoring the accuracy of marketing materials.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion – this will include the consideration of:

- a. The extent to which curriculum documentation including indicative content, assessment design, resources lists and other information for students reflect the College's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.