QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES FOR TAUGHT COURSES AND RESEARCH AWARDS

SECTION B: VALIDATION

1 The Validation of Courses

A flowchart illustrating the validation process can be found in Appendix B.

The development of courses might range from a development requiring the validation of a range of new modules to a relatively minor variant of an already validated course. The development of courses should be notified to the Registry who, on behalf of the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee, will determine whether they are:

i) developments requiring a University validation event; or
ii) developments to be validated at School level.

1.1 Types of Validation events

There are three basic types of validation event:

a University event;
a School event;

or a School event which has been enhanced by a representative of the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee as a member of the panel.

The type of validation event held is determined by a number of factors:

- the level of the course;
- the structure;
- whether the proposal represents a new Subject area;
- the amount of new or substantially revised material to be considered (notionally one third or more of the credits for the course would require a University event); and the level of risk associated with the proposed development.

In support of the above principles the following aspects of risk are considered:

- the validation history of the course and team;
- the professional context of the course and team;
- the degree of novelty and innovation in the proposed changes;
- the experience of the school/subject/team;
- the impact of the change on the overall course structure across all levels;
- the extent of shared or cross-disciplinary delivery.

1.2 Documents Required for Validation

The following is the minimum documentation required for the validation of a new course or route and is subject to additions depending on the nature of the event and risk factors. Documentation should be submitted to Registry for distribution to the validation panel three-weeks before the date of a University validation event:

i) planning and resource approval documentation, including:

a) a statement from the Dean confirming that the new course will be accommodated within the existing space allocation of the School or that refurbished space within the School will be provided and has been costed and agreed by the Director of Estates and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor;
b) a statement from the Director of Computing and Library Services confirming all necessary computing and library facilities and resources are available;
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2 Role of School Boards in Validation

2.1 It is the responsibility of School Boards to ensure that documentation prepared by Course Committees, Course Leaders and Module Leaders fulfils the defined requirements and is in an appropriate form to be presented to a validation panel established by the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee. School Boards must also be satisfied that the design and delivery of courses and modules are compatible with the Teaching and Learning Strategy and any other institutional policies which the Senate may from time to time adopt and that there has been relevant consultation with Disability Services on the implications of assessment types and delivery methods.
2.2 Documentation to be submitted for a University validation should first be subject to scrutiny by a panel within the School independent of the proposing team, and a written record of this should be made available to the University validation panel. If any conditions have been set there should also be written confirmation that the Chair of the School event has seen and approved the revised documentation prior to its submission to the University event.

3 Appointment of Validation Panels

3.1 University validation exercises are conducted by a validation panel appointed by the University's Teaching and Learning Committee, which includes in its membership persons with relevant expertise from both within and outside the University. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) or nominee on behalf of the Committee appoints chairs of validation panels. At the appropriate time the Registry, in consultation with the chair of the panel, prepares a draft membership for each panel on behalf of the University's Teaching and Learning Committee.

3.2 University validation panels will normally comprise 50% internal and 50% external members, excluding the chair, who is an internal appointee, and the registry representative. Internal membership comprises a subject expert (normally from the School seeking validation approval but who will not have had any previous involvement with the course) and a representative from another School. External membership normally comprises two external members: one from industry, commerce, public service or the professions; and one from the higher education sector. CVs for the proposed external panel members must be approved by Registry on behalf of the PVC (T&L) in advance of a formal invitation being extended.

The external panel member from the higher education sector should not only be academically qualified and experienced in a field directly related to the course under consideration, but should also have knowledge of current trends and practices within quality assurance in UK HE. This would normally be demonstrated by recent involvement in quality assurance events, either within their own UK institution or having been an external panel member at a validation event at another UK institution. They should not have had any close involvement with the University of Huddersfield for at least the preceding three years.

The external panel member from industry should currently (or have been very recently) employed at a middle or senior manager level within a sector directly related to the course under consideration. They should be able to evaluate the module and course learning outcomes in terms of the employability of successful graduates from the course in their own sector. Where they feel reasonable adjustments to the course would improve the employment prospects of graduates, they should be able to give constructive feedback to the panel. They should not have had any close involvement with the University of Huddersfield for at least the preceding three years.

3.3 It is the responsibility of the Registry, when the draft membership of a University validation panel is available, to ensure that none of the external members has had close involvement with the University in the previous three years.

3.4 Enhanced school validation events are conducted by the School Teaching and Learning Committee, or Accreditation and Validation Panel (where separately constituted) enhanced by a member of academic staff from another School acting on behalf of the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee. The Pro Vice-
4 Guidelines for Validation Panels

4.1 Validation panels are composed of experienced members of University staff and where relevant external members who must be allowed to exercise their professional judgement as to matters which should be the subject of discussion during a validation event. The University expects, however, that panels will take note as a matter of course of:

i) the relevance of course aims, learning outcomes, structure, and assessment;
ii) the relevance of module aims, learning outcomes, content, and assessment (including confirmation appropriate consultation with Disability Services has taken place);
iii) the outcome and delivery of the course and modules, including the use of C&IT;
iv) the inclusion and progression of PDP through the course and modules;
v) the relationship of staff expertise (research, consultancy/teaching) and staff development to the course under consideration;
vi) the physical resources available to the course;
vii) the alignment of the course with the University Teaching and Learning and Assessment and Feedback Strategies

A proforma/checklist is provided for panel members as a prompt of the above.

4.2 Panels are encouraged to identify strengths as well as weaknesses in the course(s) and modules under consideration.

4.3 Panels will be advised of any general institutional regulations or policies affecting the design and delivery courses and modules and will be asked to ensure compliance with those regulations or policies.

4.4 Panel members shall be provided with, and will be expected to familiarise themselves with:

i) the validation section of the Handbook for Quality Assurance Procedures for Taught Courses and Research Awards;
ii) the University Teaching and Learning and Assessment and Feedback Strategies;
iii) validation documentation as identified in 1.2 above;
iv) the draft programme and administrative arrangements;
v) any other relevant documentation that has been supplied.

4.5 It is the responsibility of the Registry to ensure that external members have an accurate perception of the University’s procedures in relation to validation.

4.6 It is the responsibility of the chair, in consultation with the course leader and the Registry, to draw up a draft programme for a University validation event.

4.7 It is the responsibility of the chair of the School Teaching and Learning Committee, or Accreditation and Validation Panel (where separately constituted), in consultation with the UTLC representative, to draw up a draft programme for an enhanced school event.
4.8 In drawing up an agenda for discussion on the day, panels shall indicate any issues which require the attention of members of the senior management or colleagues responsible for central services.

4.9 Where panels are required to divide up to conduct concurrent discussions it shall normally be the case that at least two members will be involved in any one area of discussion.

4.10 Where matters arise which relate to named postholders it is expected that panels will involve such postholders in discussions.

4.11 If panel members are requested to provide specialist reports as appendices, they should be notified in advance of an event and be asked to endeavour to return such reports within 28 days of an event. Such reports will normally be the responsibility of more than one member of a panel.

4.12 While oral reports on events may be made by the chair of a panel to representatives of course committees, the definitive report is as presented to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee.

4.13 The reports which panels produce must provide an indication of the nature of the discussions and of the views of the panel on issues relating to the course(s). Where the panel stipulates conditions which must be complied with and/or recommendations which must be carefully considered, these must be clearly defined in the report.

5 Procedure for Progressing the Reports of Validation Panels and Notifications of Changes for Approval by the University Teaching and Learning Committee

5.1 The following procedure will be adopted for progressing reports of University validation panels:

i) the draft report is written and circulated to panel members for confirmation or amendment;

ii) the draft report is circulated to the Dean or nominee so that factual inaccuracies can be notified to the Registry. The Registry will correct such inaccuracies before the report is presented to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee;

iii) the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee will receive the report as approved by panel members. The Committee can either accept the report or refer it back to the validation panel for clarification. It cannot alter the report, although it may append comments;

iv) the report will be considered by the Course Committee and a response to any recommendations or conditions will be prepared. This response may lead to changes to the programme specification or supporting documentation;

v) the response will be presented to the chair of the validation panel for approval on behalf of the panel;

vi) the Dean will be responsible for ensuring that matters raised in a report are followed up, and for reporting to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee when any problems arise;

vii) it is expected that the implementation of any conditions and recommendations will feature in the subsequent annual evaluation reports of the Course Committee.
5.2 The following procedure will be adopted for progressing reports of new courses/routes validated at school validation events and all enhanced School validation events:

i) the School Board will determine procedures for progressing reports of School validation panels consonant with paragraph 5.1 above;

ii) the Dean will ensure that an approved report in the standard format is presented to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee;

iii) a signed statement from the chair of the School validation panel will be sent to the Registry to confirm that any conditions set have been met.

5.3 The following procedure will be adopted for notifying changes approved at a school validation event to:

i) course/route title;

ii) mode of delivery or attendance;

iii) new campus delivery location

A signed statement from the chair of the School validation panel will be sent to the Registry to confirm that any conditions set have been met.

6 Mechanism for Appeal Against the Outcome of a Validation Event

6.1 If the School Board believes there is cause for appeal against the outcome of a validation event it may appeal to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee clearly stating the grounds for appeal. The Committee will establish a small group of different composition to the original panel to consider the matter.

7 Changes to Validated Courses and Modules

7.1 Changes to Course Documents

Course teams may find it desirable or necessary to make changes to programme specifications. The University’s Teaching and Learning Committee has empowered School Teaching and Learning Committees, or Accreditation and Validation Panels (where separately constituted), to approve minor changes to existing courses. Confirmation of consideration of changes at course committee and by the external examiner must be included in the documentation submitted for approval. Confirmation of discussion and agreement with students affected by the changes in line with University guidance (including CMA implications) must be included in the documentation.

The chair of the school event is responsible for confirming the changes to existing courses do not raise issues which ought to have been referred to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee. In addition, the chair of the school event is responsible for confirming that resources (including C&LS resources) are in place for the proposed courses.

7.2 Changes to Module Documents

Module Leaders may find it desirable or necessary to make changes to module specification documents or to devise new modules for use within validated courses. The University’s Teaching and Learning Committee, or Accreditation and Validation Panels (where separately constituted), to act on behalf of School Boards:
i) to approve new modules;

ii) to make changes to existing modules (e.g. in the content or in the strategies for teaching and learning or for assessment). STLC/SAVPs should approve changes to the assessment of modules but any other changes could be signed off by Chairs of School Teaching and Learning Committees (or SAVPs where appropriate);

New modules which are intended for use in a new course which will be the subject of a University validation event will be submitted to the University validation panel for approval.

Confirmation of consideration of changes to modules at course committee and support from the external examiner must be included in the documentation submitted for approval. Confirmation of discussion and agreement with students affected by the changes in line with University guidance (including CMA implications) must be included in the documentation submitted for approval.

The chair of the school event is responsible for confirming the changes to existing modules do not raise issues which ought to have been referred to the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee. In addition, the chair of the school event is responsible for confirming that resources (including C&LS resources) are in place for the proposed courses.

7.3 Periodic Review of Validation Activity
The Registry will conduct an annual quality appraisal of SAVP activity for reporting to the University Teaching and Learning Committee. Schools should draw up an action plan in response to the review report. The review report and School action plan should be considered and discussed at the second SAVP meeting of each academic session.

8 Termination of Courses

8.1 Where courses are to be discontinued an exit strategy should be drawn up by the course team, which identifies all relevant information relating to the course closure. The exit strategy should be approved by the School’s Management/Executive Committee and monitored via the School Teaching and Learning Committee.