

Academic Regulations

Validation, Monitoring and Review

Section 13



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Validation, Monitoring and Review

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Section 13: Validation, Monitoring and Review

13.1 Purpose

This section of the Academic Regulations defines the regulations for the validation of courses, the monitoring of course performance, and annual and cyclical course review activities.

These processes ensure that appropriate academic standards are set and maintained and make available learning opportunities which enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved. These processes aim to enhance the quality of learning opportunities and to constantly improve the performance and satisfaction of our students.

The approach to establishing our processes of validation, monitoring and review is to separate each process whilst also establishing their inter-relationship and co-dependency. This reinforces a distinction between activities which focus on the course as the unit of review, the subject and the location of delivery.

The approach includes continuous course monitoring, course annual review and the taking forward of associated enhancement activities which are identified. These activities sit within a more formalised cycle of course validation, enhanced monitoring and review, subject review based on the relevant portfolio and a separate process to enable courses to be taught in other locations.

Within this approach we will maintain awareness of PSRB requirements and seek to establish where these meet the outcomes of assurance we would consider appropriate, avoiding any duplication.

The following regulations further explain the overarching approach:

- New Course Proposals
- Validation and Re-validation
- Monitoring, annual review and enhancement
- Modification
- Subject Review
- Approval of delivery of collaborative provision

13.2 General Principles of Monitoring, Annual Review and Enhancement

The purpose of monitoring, review and enhancement is to provide a flexible framework within which our university continuously monitors the academic standards of our awards and the quality of learning opportunities in order to:

- a) maintain threshold standards
- b) evaluate course performance and feedback to deliver enhancements to the quality of the learning opportunities
- c) provide evidence for cyclical monitoring and review of academic provision
- d) provide assurance to Academic Board and its committees that activities are being conducted consistently and effectively.

13.3 Process of Monitoring, Review and Enhancement

The process by which the continued health of each course is monitored, reviewed and enhanced on a continuous basis, taking account of core course information.

13.3.1 Elements of the process

The elements of the process comprise of:

- a) Opportunities for student engagement including meetings, individual and collective feedback
- b) Opportunities for Course Team reflection and action planning
- c) Executive summary produced by Course Director

13.3.2 School responsibility

It is the responsibility of each Dean of School to ensure that each course undertakes the process of monitoring, review and enhancement effectively, including the production of a course summary report and action plan.

Deans are further responsible for the provision of timely assurances to Academic Quality and Standards Committee of the conclusion of complete and effective monitoring, review and enhancement. This will support University academic assurances to our Board of Governors.

13.3.3 Use of data and other quality indicators

The University will provide data for use in monitoring, review and enhancement. The information provided will be from a variety of sources including:

- a) Student Survey and Employability outcomes
- b) Cohort statistics
- c) External Examiner Reports
- d) Module evaluation outcomes

13.3.4 Other Information

Other relevant information will be derived from within the School, for example matters raised by students; or from external sources, for example employers or Professional, Statutory or Regulatory bodies.

13.4 University Responsibility

13.4.1 University Quality Action Plan

Quality Assurances Services is responsible for maintaining an Action Plan overseen by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee drawing on the outputs of University monitoring and review prior to the Plan being received and ratified by Academic Board.

13.5 Modifications: General

13.5.1 Definition

A modification is a process which enables a course to respond to internal or external stimuli and adapt itself to meet the needs of its students, or external stakeholders. Modification may, in some cases, be approved at course level or, where the changes are more significant, at School level.

Substantial modification of a course may lead to revalidation.

13.6 Modification approval processes

13.6.1 Course level process

Changes which may be approved at course level normally include non-material course information in accordance with external expectations and University guidance for example:

- a) composition of scheduled learning and teaching activities
- b) specific assessment methods where the changes do not materially impact on published course information.

- c) changes to module learning outcomes where the effect is not to change the overall learning outcomes of the course.

13.6.2 Approving modifications: course level

Course level modifications must be approved in accordance with the University guidance and schedule issued by Quality Assurance Services and approved by the Head of Subject. Existing students must be advised of changes in line with our Student Consultation Framework.

13.7 School Level Process

13.7.1 Definition

Changes which may be approved at school level normally include the following elements of material course information in accordance with external expectations and University guidance

- a) title of a module
- b) the addition or deletion of module(s) where the course learning outcomes are unchanged
- c) change to the planned length of the course
- d) course structure including pre-requisite modules
- e) the contextualisation of a course to be delivered by a collaborative partner*
- f) substantive assessment methods and weightings
- g) volume of scheduled learning and teaching activities

*The process of modification in a collaborative context will be proportionate to the provision under consideration.

13.7.2 Modifications: school level

Requests for approval of modifications should be made by the Course Director to the School Academic Committee.

Consultation

External examiners together with students and applicants likely to be affected must be consulted in relation to any proposal.

13.7.3 Approving modifications

Where modifications may constitute a change to material course information, approval will lead to:

- updated published course information
and
- communication with relevant students and applicants in accordance with our associated University procedures.

13.7.4 Limits on modifications

The following changes will trigger a validation:

- a) title of the course and/or the award to which it leads
- b) overall aims and learning outcomes of the course
- c) addition of pathways
- d) mode(s) of study
- e) awarding body
- f) the addition or deletion of module(s) where the course learning outcomes are changed

13.8 Reporting modifications

A report of approved modifications at all levels must be submitted to Academic Quality and Standards Committee and updated definitive documentation must be lodged with Quality Assurance Services.

13.9 General Principles of Validation, Cyclical Monitoring and Review

13.9.1 All proposed academic provision requires institutional approval before it can be included within the University's portfolio and advertised.

13.9.2 All courses leading to an award of the University must undergo a formal process of validation appropriate to the breadth and complexity of the proposal to be considered and be re-validated every six years or sooner if a validation panel stipulates an earlier review.

- 13.9.3 Course titles must conform to the usual expectations of higher education bodies, relevant professional bodies, students and employers about the level of knowledge and skills to be expected from a person holding such a qualification.
- 13.9.4 Course titles and awards which appear on certificates must be approved by, and may not be changed without the approval of, Academic Board.
- 13.9.5 Courses must be designed and operated in accordance with the University's Regulations, with attention to relevant external requirements.
- 13.9.6 Students and/or alumni will be consulted, as appropriate, in the design, development and validation of courses.
- 13.9.7 A system of peer review including panel members external to the University will be applied to the validation of all taught provision.
- 13.9.8 Taught courses will be subject to monitoring and review in accordance with our regulations.

13.10 Code of Practice for Validation, Monitoring and Review

13.10.1 Institutional Approval

- a) Documentation for Institutional Approval must, as a minimum, include the following information:
- the proposed title of the target award
 - the proposed structure of the award (e.g. course, short course)
 - the proposed mode(s) of delivery e.g. full time, part time, sandwich, distance etc.
 - the proposed start date for the first cohort
 - its congruence with the strategic direction of academic provision within the University
 - the market rationale
 - broad feasibility and costing projections, including requirements for academic and support staffing and the minimum number of anticipated students
 - Partnership information, where relevant.
- b) Institutional approval will confirm:
- the proposed title of the award
 - the proposed structure of the award

- the planned start date of the first cohort
 - the proposed provision may proceed to validation.
- c) Formal admission of students is authorised only if the following apply:
- the course has received institutional approval
 - the course is validated
 - the course is offered for delivery in the current academic year
 - in the case of collaborations, the financial and contractual agreement is current.
- d) When a new course proposal has been approved but is awaiting validation (or approval of delivery in a recognised institution) this should be made clear in any advertising.

13.10.2 Validation and Re-validation

The practice of re-validation is the same as validation unless specified otherwise below.

- a) All courses will be subject to revalidation within a 6 year period from the date of validation or sooner if the panel or university deems an earlier revalidation to be necessary.
- b) All validated courses leading to a target award will contain a series of contained awards at different levels unless specific provision is made to exclude these awards in the course specification. For courses leading to a final award of a degree with honours the contained awards are:
- Ordinary Degree
 - Diploma of Higher Education
- and
- Certificate of Higher Education

For courses leading to a final award of a Masters degree the contained awards are:

- Postgraduate Certificate
- Postgraduate Diploma

All contained awards are required to have discrete academic coherence and the title shall be the same as the title of the target award unless specified otherwise in the Course Specification.

- c) Course Development

Course development will normally be led by a Course Director who will ensure that the course is designed and developed with due consideration for:

- Education Strategy
- Assessment, learning and teaching approaches
- Academic Regulations and guidance on validation
- Relevant university policies
- External Reference points (e.g. Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Subject Benchmark Statements)
- Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (where relevant)

The Course Director is responsible for:

- Development of the proposal
- Preparation of validation documentation
- Compliance with the Academic Regulations
- Liaison with appropriate stakeholders including students
- Consideration of resource implications

In addition to the above, at re-validation, the Course Director is responsible for:

- Critically appraising the course; and
- Incorporating any enhancements, as appropriate

d) The Dean of School is responsible for approval of the validation documentation submitted to Quality Assurance Services in accordance with the agreed deadlines.

e) The Course Validation Panel will be appropriate to the quality assurance requirements of the course under consideration and will include:

- Chair (External to the School in which the course(s) resides)
- External Panel Members (at least one Academic from the subject area under consideration and external to our university and one external employer representative)
- Academic Panel Member (external to the School)
- Internal Panel Member (from the School)

Other panel members may be assigned as appropriate to the course(s) under consideration.

- f) The Validation documentation will be appropriate to the course(s) under consideration and will include, as a minimum:
- Course Specification
 - Module Specifications
 - Staff CVs
 - Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements (as applicable)
- g) Additionally, when the course(s) are due for re-validation Course Directors are asked to:
- provide a critical appraisal of the evidence informed by the annual review and evaluation of the course(s)
 - provide examples of best practice, as applicable
 - make an evaluation of modifications to the course
 - consider external examiner reports and other external reference points e.g. QAA Subject benchmark statements and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
 - consider module evaluations
 - consider management information
 - consider research within the subject area in relation to course content
- h) The Validation Panel may make the following decisions:
- to validate the course subject to conditions and/or recommendations
 - not to validate the course

Where the panel agree not to validate a course the Dean of School will decide whether the provision may be re-presented for validation or withdrawn from the university portfolio.

- i) The Validation Panel will establish that each course:
- is of a standard appropriate to the award offered
 - will be delivered to a standard appropriate to the award offered
- and
- has sufficient resources to support student learning

Quality Assurance Services will provide advice to the panel on areas of the proposal which require further consideration and/or approval.

- j) Quality Assurance Services will provide an oversight report on the outcomes of validation to Academic Quality and Standards Committee.

13.10.3 Enhanced Monitoring

- a) Enhanced monitoring is an opportunity to reflect on course progress and consider matters of academic standards, quality and course performance which have emerged since validation/re-validation, informed by KPIs and other relevant information.
- b) The Course Director and members of the course team will meet with a panel of peers, Chaired by the DVC Academic or nominee, to review course outcomes and planned enhancement.
- c) Outcomes will confirm how any recommendations from the most recent validation/re-validation and any actions for continuous improvement arising from course monitoring, annual review and enhancement and student feedback are being addressed by the Course Team.

13.10.4 Subject Review

- a) Subject review is the mechanism to facilitate a strategic discussion on the academic health and development of a subject area. Heads of Subject are required to lead a review to consider:
 - Course portfolio of the subject area
 - Pedagogic and curriculum developments
 - Research, enterprise and research informed teaching
 - Position, reputation and impact of the subject area informed by KPIs and other
 - relevant outcomes
 - Staffing and staff development
 - Resources
- b) Heads of Subject will present relevant information, in a five yearly cycle, to inform a discussion with DVCs (or their nominees) and the Dean of School.
- c) Outcomes from subject review are advisory and will be taken forward in the next validation cycle process or other mechanism, as appropriate.

13.10.5 Awards withdrawn from the University Portfolio

- a) Decisions to withdraw validated courses are taken from time to time as the University portfolio is reviewed. The School will take appropriate action to ensure:
 - Standards are maintained for any students remaining on the course

or

- Students are transferred to a suitable alternative course

Requirements for student consultation will be in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

- b) All withdrawals must have institutional approval.
- c) Academic Board shall withdraw validation of a course offered by the university or associated institution if there is evidence that the course is no longer meeting minimum acceptable standards.