

Validation Handbook

Collaborative Provision

Guidance notes to programme teams
in preparation for
the Validation of a new programme

Important Note:

There is an alternative Handbook for Home-based
Validation Events.

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1 Introduction

This handbook applies to all forms of collaborative provision. The handbook is aimed at programme development teams and all other academic members of staff who may be involved in the validation of a new programme of study. It is also a source of guidance for external consultants and all validation panel members. This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the guidance document '[How to approve new Collaborative Partners and Programmes](#)', which can be found on the [AQ HertsHub site](#).

1.1 Why is it necessary to carry out a Validation of a programme?

It is necessary to formally validate our programmes of study (i) to be sure that the standards of the awards given by the University of Hertfordshire are in line with sector expectations as articulated in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education; and (ii) to ensure an excellent student experience.

To achieve the above, the University must be satisfied that the proposed programme:

- Reflects [Subject Benchmark statements](#) and/or relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
- Satisfies the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
- Is appropriate in the light of student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities;
- Reflects the University's academic drivers and initiatives;
- Is sufficiently resourced in terms of both the availability of staff and physical resources;
- Reflects current research and practice in the application of knowledge in the relevant discipline(s), technological advances, and developments in learning and teaching.

2 The Validation process

2.1 An overview of the Validation process

Before any steps are taken, the School Executive Group (SEG) will first need to agree any proposal for the validation of a new programme within the School. If this involves a new collaborative partner, a proposal will also need to be made to approve the partner. Guidance on how to do this is given in the document '[How to approve new Collaborative Partners and Programmes](#)', which can be found on the [AQ HertsHub site](#).

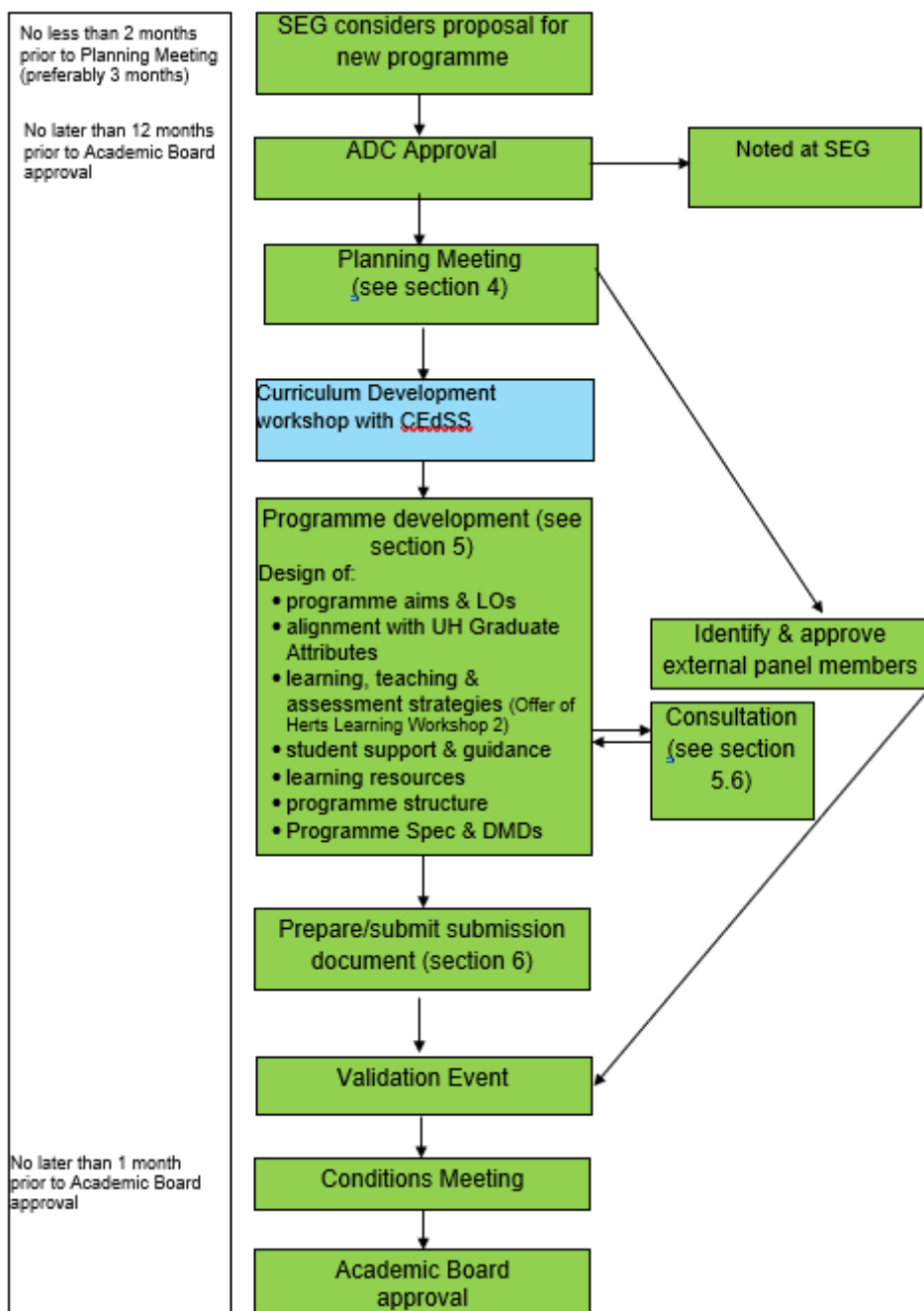
The proposal for the validation of a new programme will be sent to the Academic Development Committee (ADC). If approved by ADC, the Dean of School will put in place a programme development team which will be responsible for leading the validation, with a remit including:

- designing all aspects of the programme;
- making appropriate consultations throughout the process;
- producing any necessary documentation;
- presenting the new programme at a validation event.
- completing any post-event tasks.

Ideally, the development process starts at least 18 months before the first delivery of a programme, to enable sufficient time to properly undertake all of these activities.

SEG initiates the formal process of validation by sending a proposal to ADC. The School Academic Committee (SAC) then organises a **Planning Meeting** ([See section below](#)) where details of the validation process will be discussed and agreed. The consequent programme development process will then culminate in a Validation event at which the programme will be formally approved.

2.2 A diagram showing the Validation process



[DEADLINES](#)

3 First Stages of Programme Development

3.1 Initiating the development

Proposals for a new programme or award title are usually initiated by Schools, but in the case of collaborative provision or substantially new provision it could also be by the Office of the Vice Chancellor or a collaborative partner. The University encourages any innovative proposals for programmes from staff. New ideas should be raised with the Dean of School, for further discussion within the School, prior to preparation of the necessary paperwork for formal School and ADC approval ([see section 3.3](#)).

- Ideally, the development process starts at least 18 months before the first delivery of a programme, to enable sufficient time to
- establish the market for the programme,
- develop the programme itself,
- consult and
- undertake the approval processes.

Additionally, for all UK provision the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) requires all HE Providers to give students clear, accurate and timely information so they can make an informed decision about what and where to study. To this end the University needs to provide up front, intelligible, unambiguous and timely information about the courses it is offering including those that are subject to validation and periodic review.

3.2 Choice of award title(s)

In the case of Franchise programmes, the award title(s) would normally be the same title(s) as the home programme. In any case, one of the first tasks of the Development Team is to consider the award title(s) offered as part of the programme. In particular:

- Is the award title(s) attractive? It would be advisable to ask employers, about the suitability of any proposed new title, as part of the consultation process.
- How does the title compare to those used at competitor institutions? (The Department of Marketing and Communications can advise on appropriate data).
- Are there any PSRB influences on the title(s)?

Details of all of the approved categories of awards (University Certificate, BSc Hons, MA, etc.) are presented in [UPR AS11 \(Schedule of Awards\)](#). UPR AS 11 contains importance guidance so it is important that you read it carefully. For example, the UPR contains guidance about joint honours, combined honours, sandwich awards, study abroad and dual awards.

Award titles available within a programme are approved by the UH Academic Development Committee (ADC), as part of initial approval to develop. The approved award titles are as they would appear on an award certificate.

The choice of whether to use FDA or FDS for Foundation Degrees, BA or BSc for undergraduate degrees and MA or MSc for Masters degrees should be based upon:

- the proportion of quantitative or scientific method modules in the programme;

- the traditional conventions of the discipline and programme under development;
- current usage in the sector in the United Kingdom for similar programmes.

The University's recommended practice is that simple award titles should be used wherever possible. They should convey to employers the knowledge, understanding and skills expected from a person holding such a qualification. Of course, the subject matter of a programme must justify the award title.

The programme development may consist of more than one course, and so more than one award title. Care should be taken to ensure that the different awards are easily differentiated. The use of brackets in award titles should be avoided wherever possible (for details see further UPR AS11).

In the case of a group of new award titles (or the addition of a new award title to an existing group) with a high proportion of common modules, there should be adequate differentiation between award titles. Typically, this should entail:

i for awards of **480** credits and above:

- at least **60** credits of differentiation, at least **30** credits of which must be at the level of the award;

ii for awards of **300** to **465** credits:

- at least **45** credits of differentiation, at least **30** credits of which must be at the level of the award;

iii for awards of **135** to **285** credits:

- at least **30** credits of differentiation at the level of the award.

iv for awards up to **120** credits:

- at least **15** credits of differentiation at the level of the award.

As well as approving the title of the final award, titles of any interim awards need to be approved at the validation event.

It is essential that the programme learning outcomes to be achieved by a student to be awarded a particular named award are identified in the programme specification.

It should be noted that 'generic' learning outcomes for unnamed awards are published on the University's Corporate Governance website and programme specification templates provide a URL link against any unnamed awards identified.

3.3 Academic Development Committee approval

Prior to their submission to the University's Academic Development Committee (ADC), all proposals for new programmes and titles must be supported by the School Executive Group as part of future academic provision. In the case of a joint development with a substantial input from two or more Schools, both Schools must support the proposal.

Initial approval must be sought as early as possible in the programme development process from the [Academic Development Committee \(ADC\)](#). In the case of a new partner the School

needs to complete a proposal paper on form ADC2a. In all cases the School needs to submit form ADC2b to propose a new programme for ADC consideration by the advertised deadlines.

The signed forms ADC2a (for a new partner) and ADC2b together with a completed resources template and a completed risk assessment needs to be sent to the clerk of ADC and copy the email submission to the relevant Academic Services Officer (AQ) linked to the School, to alert Academic Services and the relevant Associate Director of Academic Quality of the development.

All forms as well as the relevant deadlines can be found on HertsHub:

[Academic Development Committee \(ADC\) - forms and deadlines \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Initial approval is given for the stated award title (plus associated exit awards) and any subsequent proposal to change the award title must be approved by ADC before final approval may be ratified.

Approved developments will be added to the validation and periodic review schedule and a **planning meeting** (see below) organised by the Academic Services Officer (AQ).

4 The Planning Meeting

4.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Planning Meeting is to agree with the Associate Director of Academic Quality:

- the precise steps to be taken to complete the validation process;
- the timescales involved;
- the persons who will need to be consulted and those who will be involved in the various stages of the process, together with their responsibilities;
- documentation to be provided for the event;
- submission date;
- event date.

The meeting will discuss key aspects of the programme e.g. mode(s) of delivery, awards to be made etc. and the various internal and external drivers which will impact upon the programme design.

Either at, or following, the Planning Meeting (at a date and time arranged at the Planning Meeting itself), key members of the programme development team will meet with the Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) and a member of the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre, to discuss curriculum design and learning, teaching and assessment practice.

The Planning Meeting is attended by the following staff:

- (i) the Associate Dean of School Education and Student Success (Chair);
- (ii) the development team leader;

- (iii) the collaborative partnership leader;
- (iv) the relevant Associate Director from the Academic Quality team in the Centre for Education and Student Success;
- (v) the Clerk to the Validation event (from Academic Services);
- (vi) a Programme and Curriculum Advisor (from Academic Services).

A [template for the Planning Meeting](#) is available from the [Academic Quality SharePoint site](#).

4.2 The programme development team

The Chair and members of Programme Development Team are identified at the Planning Meeting. A senior member of academic staff such as the Programme Leader at the home programme or the designated Programme Leader at the partner institution leads the team. It should have appropriate representation to meet programme development needs. This is likely to include staff representing the major disciplines involved in the programme, and, on an occasional basis, representatives from Library and Computing Services (LCS) etc. The Associate Dean of School (Education and Student Success) and the Head of Curriculum have the right to attend committee meetings and will be available for consultation throughout the development process.

5 Programme Design

5.1 External Drivers

The programme should be designed to ensure (i) that the standards of the awards given are in line with sector expectations as articulated in the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#); and (ii) lead to an excellent student experience.

The University requires that the proposed programme satisfies the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland \(FHEQ\)](#). FHEQ is designed to ensure a consistent use of qualification titles. Its main purposes are (i) for employers, schools, parents, prospective students, etc. to understand HE qualifications; (ii) to assist students to identify potential progression routes (iii) to assist Universities, external examiners & QAA reviewers, by providing points of reference. FHEQ informs these 'stakeholders' what the holders of the named qualifications have achieved, and the skills they would bring to a job. The HE qualifications awarded are at five levels: Certificate, Intermediate, Honours, Masters and Doctoral (see [External Reference Points](#)).

FHEQ is used to exemplify the outcomes of the main qualification at each level and demonstrate the nature of change between levels. The descriptors are an essential reference point in determining the intended programme learning outcomes. However, they are generic level descriptors and so should be used in association with other external reference points such as QAA Subject Benchmark statements and professional body statements in order to develop programme-relevant learning outcomes.

The University therefore requires that the proposed programme reflects the following External Reference Points:

- any relevant [Subject Benchmark statements](#);

- any relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements (see [External Reference Points](#));
- the [SEEC credit level descriptors](#) as a reference point for identifying module learning outcomes at each academic level;
- the [QAA Characteristics Statement Foundation Degree](#), where relevant;
- the [QAA Master's Degree Characteristics](#), where relevant.

5.2 Aims and learning outcomes

Programme aims

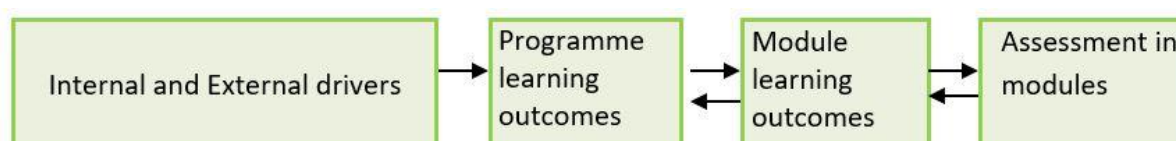
Programme aims are aspirational (yet achievable) goals for students to work towards. Unlike learning outcomes, they are not usually measurable. There should be 2-3 programme-specific aims to provide an opportunity to identify what is distinctive about the programme.

Your programme aims should be in line with the [UH Graduate Attributes](#). You may also consider the [Herts Learning principles](#).

Programme Learning Outcomes

Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) are threshold-level statements of what successful students will have achieved as a result of receiving their award. They are not a wish list or a statement of the programme content. Neither are they simply an aggregation of the module learning outcomes – they are more than the sum of their parts.

In designing the programme learning outcomes, you should consider how they align with the internal and external drivers, as well as Module learning outcomes, and these in turn should show clear alignment with the assessment criteria for the module, which are tested with appropriate assessment tasks. In designing these, you should consider which programme learning outcomes are assessed in which modules:



Well-designed programme learning outcomes:

- reflect relevant [external drivers](#);
- are clear to staff, students and external examiners;
- relate to the programme aims.

The programme learning outcomes should also reflect the following internal drivers. The programme must:

- be developed in accordance with the [University Strategy 2025-2030](#);
- be in line with your School's Business Plan;
- reflect the [Herts Learning](#) approach;
- support the attainment of the [UH Graduate Attributes](#).

Programme learning outcomes are usually defined in the following categories:

- knowledge & understanding;
- intellectual (or cognitive) skills;
- practical skills;
- transferable (or key) skills.

You should ensure that the programme learning outcomes are not too generic but explicitly reflect any professional and/or statutory regulatory body requirements and relevant Subject Benchmark statements.

As the development process progresses you will need to consider whether all the module learning outcomes for the modules allow programme learning outcomes to be achieved and whether they are set at the right level. The [SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education](#) have been developed to complement FHEQ. They should be used to locate the level of a module and to inform the formulation of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the specific level.

Definition of generic learning outcomes for unnamed exit awards

Note that 'generic' learning outcomes for unnamed awards have been published on the University's Corporate Governance website, to enable Programme Specifications to provide a URL link against any unnamed awards identified.

5.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

Learning and teaching strategies are devised to enable the module and programme learning outcomes to be achieved. Assessment strategies are devised to enable them to be tested, promote effective learning and to encourage learning behaviours.

Learning and teaching strategies

The learning and teaching strategy adopted should foster inquiry, critical thinking and curiosity through inclusive, intellectually challenging courses, and the Submission Document should set out how this will be achieved.

Information about the University's approach to Learning and Teaching can be found on the [Learning, Teaching and Academic Quality website](#) and on the [Guided Learning Journey](#) module in Canvas (Herts login required).

Involving employers, professionals and alumni in programme delivery

The submission document should outline those areas where relevant external input in the delivery or support of the programme occurs (e.g. guest speakers; alumni mentoring or buddying schemes; seminars or workshops with professional or industry partners; industry-based dissertation projects or projects linked to professional partnerships and organisations etc).

Assessment

In order to ensure Assessment methods support meaningful learning, the University values assessment for learning practice that:

- Engages students with the grading criteria
- Supports personalised learning
- Ensures feedback leads to improvement
- Focuses on student development
- Stimulates dialogue
- Considers student and staff effort

In developing the assessment strategy, the following questions should be considered as it is drafted:

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure students engage with the grading criteria and marking schemes? (e.g. ensuring that grading criteria for all assessments are available to students; using scheduled activities to introduce the criteria to students, using the criteria as part of a strategic approach to self and peer assessment; activities that involve students in the development of criteria)

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure the assessment strategy supports personalised learning? (e.g. a programme ethos that enables choice, where appropriate, in such aspect as the topic or methods of assessment and the means by which feedback is given; a means of coordinating the overall assessment experience of students ensuring that they experience a range of assessment methods during their studies)

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure that feedback leads to improvement? (e.g. policies and staff development that will ensure feedback is prompt, makes sense to students, provides guidance on how to improve and enables students to demonstrate how they learned from their feedback)

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure assessment focuses on student development? (e.g. embedded activities that encourage and support self-assessment and reflection; assessments that are designed to engage and motivate students through, for example, relevance, topicality and authenticity)

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure that assessment and feedback practice stimulates dialogue? (e.g. opportunities for students to discuss their work with staff on a one-to-one basis; opportunities for students to discuss feedback with their peers; measures to help form effective study groups amongst students; opportunities for dialogue before and after submission)

What steps will be taken at programme level to ensure that student and staff effort related to assessment is appropriate? (e.g. assessment should require an appropriate level of effort from the students but not overburden them. Programmes should ensure that the assessment strategy ensures that staff have adequate time to provide useful feedback in ways that support learning)

The Assessment Landscape

Programmes are asked to produce an assessment landscape so that it is possible for both staff and students to see the type, frequency, pass criteria and timing of assessments in the modules that make up the programme. The assessment landscape will also identify how the assessments within each module satisfy the module learning outcomes. The assessment

landscape will be considered as part of the validation process. Thereafter it should be reviewed by the programme team on an annual basis as part of a continuous approach to enhancement, and in the context of feedback from students, external examiners and other relevant stakeholders. To ensure the assessment methods indicated in the assessment landscape support meaningful learning, the University values assessment for learning practice that:

- Engages students with the grading criteria;
- Supports personalised learning;
- Ensures feedback leads to improvement;
- Focuses on student development;
- Stimulates dialogue;
- Considers student and staff effort.

Grading Criteria

The programme must have in place School or Programme level Grading Criteria that reflect the University Grade Descriptors (see [UPR A14](#), section D1.1).

Academic Writing Skills and Academic Integrity

Programme teams should ensure that Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategies develop academic integrity in students and that these skills are embedded in the curriculum. It is not sufficient to provide only induction or bolt-on sessions about plagiarism, contract cheating, artificial intelligence tools or other academic misconduct issues. Academic writing skills should be embedded in modules and reflected in assessments and grading criteria. Increased expectations concerning academic writing skills should be reflected at higher levels of study. Programmes with international students will require a greater level of support for academic writing skills and for ensuring students understand fully what does and does not constitute academic integrity.

Ethics Approval – Studies involving the Use of Human Participants

The development team should give consideration as to whether student assessments may require ethics approval as assessments involve studies using human participants (see [UPR RE01](#)). It will be important to ensure that staff supervising student work, and also the students, are all trained as to when ethics approval is needed and the process for gaining approval. If unsure about any aspect of ethics approval, the development team should seek advice from the Chair of the relevant Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (ECDA):

Health, Science, Engineering and Technology ECDA, hsetecda@herts.ac.uk
Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities ECDA, ssahecdca@herts.ac.uk

Because of the potential legal liability of the University arising from a failure to seek ethics approval, the consequences of a breach of ethics protocols can be very serious for students, including suspension and exclusion from the University. Staff who fail to supervise and advise students appropriately may face disciplinary action.

Equality considerations

Direct discrimination in higher education is unlawful on grounds of sex; gender identity; race, ethnicity, nationality, national or ethnic origin; disability; sexual orientation; religion or

belief. Indirect discrimination on the above grounds, and direct and indirect age discrimination, are also unlawful unless objectively justifiable.

Programme designers should:

- ensure only programme requirements which can be objectively justified are included;
- consider resources, materials, modes of delivery, teaching methods, assessment to ensure these are inclusive of all students;
- identify any ways that we can positively promote race, gender and disability equality.

A programme team should not wait until a disabled person applies for a programme before thinking about what reasonable adjustments they could make. Instead they should continually be anticipating the requirements of disabled people or students and the adjustments they could be making for them when designing the curriculum including study opportunities outside the University (field trips, study abroad, work placements, etc.) and learning equipment and materials such as laboratory equipment, computer facilities, class hand-outs, etc. Guidance on accessibility is available through the [Guided Learner Journey](#) module on Canvas (Herts login required). More personalised support is available from the CEdSS Learning and Teaching Specialists and Educational Technologists.

5.4 Student Support and Guidance

The Programme Development Team need to design an effective student support system for students on the programme. The support system should take into account students on different modes of study and the different profiles of students e.g. it will be important to consider the needs of part-time and/or mature students in providing opportunities for students to develop academic, personal and professional skills. Student support covers:

- academic tutors;
- personal tutors;
- programme leaders
- year tutors
- placement tutors;
- student/programme handbooks and other hand-outs;
- support material on the VLE;
- programme induction;
- study skills support and student "surgeries";
- any central student support & guidance services;
- careers education and professional development.

5.5 Resources

The human and physical resource needs of the programme need to be considered as part of the development process. The Programme Development Team will need to consider:

- academic staffing (review of staff fte, existing staff expertise, additional staff expertise required, staff development activity required, etc.) The composition of the programme team should ensure that there is an appropriate balance of research, professional, business and pedagogic expertise;
- support staffing (administrative, technical);
- physical resources (laboratories, equipment, software, hardware, etc.), with additional resource requirements identified;
- learning resources (review of existing and additional requirements of books, journals, online resources, etc.);
- any other resource issues (investment in a distance learning mode, field trips, external input into the programme, work-related learning costs, StudyNet development, etc.).Stakeholder feedback on the proposals

5.6 Stakeholder feedback on the proposals

During the development process, consultation with the relevant stakeholders in the programme must take place. Professional / Industrial Advisory Groups will be one source of feedback. The submission document should set out the responses to the feedback given by relevant employers and any other stakeholders in the provision, such as service providers / commissioners and service users, where appropriate.

If agreed at the planning meeting, the views of at least one independent expert (called an interim consultant) must be obtained during the final stages of development/review. Interim consultants should be external experts with a relevant professional/industrial/academic background. When you engage an interim consultant, it is important that you provide them with a clear statement of the areas on which you want advice. Failure to do this may result in vague and unhelpful feedback. If the interim consultant's background is academic, they should be asked to advise on matters including:

- the proposed aims and learning outcomes of the programme;
- the currency and contemporary nature of the programme;
- the outline structure and content of the programme, with reference to its coherence, future employability, etc.;
- a focused aspect of the programme, for instance an individual award title or subject area;
- the extent to which local, national and international factors have been considered;
- issues of teaching, learning and assessment strategy;
- the way in which external reference points have been considered.

If the interim consultant is from a business, professional or industrial background you may have more limited areas about which you can realistically seek advice and your requests may need to be more specific.

In the case of most franchised collaborative provision, such consultation will not be required as the programme will have already been approved during validation/review of the equivalent programme delivered at UH.

The interim consultant / external advisor should be qualified to provide authoritative advice relating to the programme's content and delivery. However, objectivity and a measure of independence is also required. The following list should be used as guidance in selecting interim consultants / external advisors:

- Subject expertise:
- Familiarity with current developments in the subject area concerned;
- Reputable expertise and standing in the field/discipline area;
- Understanding of current practice and developments in teaching, learning and assessment in HE;
- For professional or vocational programmes, an awareness of the standards which need to be maintained within the profession/discipline.

Independence

There are limitations on who can act as an interim consultant:

- Former members of staff may not be appointed, unless a period of at least two years has elapsed since their departure
- Members of staff of Partner Institutions are ineligible;
- They may not concurrently hold appointment as an external examiner at the University. However, former external examiners may be appointed.

Academics within the discipline at other HE institutions with experience of teaching on a similar programme may be appropriate but consultants drawn from a relevant business or professional background may be more suitable. Interim consultants / external advisors are paid a nominal fee depending on the work they carry out for the programme development.

6 Preparing for the Validation event

6.1 Preparation of documentation for the event

A range of documentation is required for the validation event and this will have been discussed at the Planning Meeting. The main document is the [Validation Submission Document](#), which includes the following appendices:

Appendix 1a: Minutes of the Planning Meeting

Appendix 1b: Course Fact Sheet(s) (Undergraduate UK Consortium College Only)

Appendix 2: Programme Specification(s) (*Please liaise with the Programme and Curriculum Advisor to produce downloads of final drafts from the Course Management System provide downloads of final drafts from the Course Management System*)

Appendix 3: Definitive Module Documents (*Please liaise with the Programme and Curriculum Advisor to produce downloads of final drafts from the Course Management System provide downloads of final drafts from the Course Management System*)

Appendix 4: Programme Information: If the partner will use Canvas, you need to create a General site in Canvas using the module planner. See 6.3 below. In case Canvas won't be used a Programme Handbook will need to be produced.

Appendix 5: A list of modules, including: reading lists (which can be supplied with or without Talis hyperlinks), lists of software packages and any special physical resources. Provide example information from modules running in the first semester of delivery including links to modules sites on CANVAS (please provide these in a format that is accessible by the panel, alternatively you can send screen shots or request to demonstrate CANVAS modules as part of the approval process).

Appendix 6: Assessment Landscape(s)

Appendix 7: Mapping of Professional Body requirements / benchmarks (if required)

Appendix 8: Evidence of stakeholder consultation during the programme development, including the stake holders' roles, dates and timeframes, notes of any meetings or other communication. Include the Programme Team's response to the feedback.

Appendix 9: Minutes of the Programme Development Team Meetings

Appendix 10: Resources statement and Staff CVs (Please remove all personal information i.e., date of birth, contact details for GDPR purposes).

Appendix 11: Full ADC submission and minute (where applicable) but only for the Chair of the Panel and the Associate Director (AQ).

Appendix 12: Stage 1 Visit Report (For Chair and Associate Director AQ only).

In addition, it is important that programme teams take note of any additional documentation requirements which are specified at the Planning Meeting.

All templates are available for staff on HertsHub in the Periodic Review/Validation section:

[Templates for Validation](#)

6.2 Preparation of the Programme Specification (PS) and Definitive Module Documents (DMDs)

The University has acquired a new cloud-based system, the [Curriculum System](#) (formerly Programme and Curriculum Management System, PCMS) for storing the information contained in Programme Specifications and Definite Module Documents. There will be a period of transition whilst we move away from using MS Word templates to using the Curriculum system. Please see the [Curriculum System tab](#) on the AQ HertsHub site for guidance on how to use the system.

Programme Specifications

Programme Specifications are used to inform students (present and prospective), graduates, employers, the University and external bodies about the learning outcomes from a programme and the means by which these outcomes will be achieved. Programme Specifications must meet the requirements set out by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), to ensure compliance. They are produced as part of the approval process for all UH programmes.

Definite Module Documents

For each module on the programme, a Definite Module Document (DMD) needs to be completed. As part of this, new module codes need to be requested from Academic Services (AS).

The DMD provides uniformity in the presentation of intended learning outcomes and related module details and ensures that all data required for validation of the module and for input to the Student Record System is captured and recorded. Once approved, it is signed off by the Associate Dean of School (Education and Student Success).

For examples of existing practices it is possible to view all existing UH DMDs by logging in as a guest to the DMD database.

Any new module codes, or substantial module revisions that require new module codes, need to be requested from AS by **the end of January** at the latest for delivery in the next academic session. The [AS guidance notes](#) identify which sections of the DMD (if amended) require a new module code.

6.3 Demonstration Programme Site in Canvas

If the partner is going to use Canvas, the following explains how to create a demonstration Programme site. Please follow the following steps:

1. Log in to the VPN
2. Go to <https://moduleplanner.herts.ac.uk/moduleplanner>
3. Scroll down to Managed General Purpose Websites
4. Check that a site with your proposed name does not already exist.
5. If not, click, 'Create New Website'.
6. Enter the name of your site. It is advisable to call it '[Proposed programme name e.g. BA (Hons) Business Administration] Demo Programme Site'.
7. Enter a description explaining that it is the demonstration programme site for the validation process of the proposed programme.
8. Select the School that you are from.

9. Select 'Only registered staff can add additional staff' and then click, 'Create New Website'.
10. Email hertslearning@herts.ac.uk and ask to be added as staff to the Demonstration Programme Site.
11. Once added, import the template programme site content to your new site and let CEEdSS know when you have done this.
12. Go back to Module Planner and add staff from the development team who will be contributing the adding of content to the site.
13. Commence work on the programme specific content of your site.

For support with any of the above, please refer to the relevant pages on our [Technology for Learning and Teaching](#) site.

Once the programme has been validated and has had a course code generated, you will be able to create the official programme site linked to that course code and then import all of the completed content from your demo site. You will then need to give students access to the proper site linked to the validated course code.

6.4 Module Guide Content Guidance

The [QAA UK Quality Code](#) requires the University to adhere to high standards in the provision of information to students. Module guides fulfil part of the University's obligations to provide students with information about their studies. The provision of such information is also in the spirit of commitments made in the published [Student Code of Conduct](#) (UPR SA01). Although the term module guide has been used throughout this page, it also refers to equivalent forms of documents or media sources used to convey all essential information about a module.

It is essential that module guides provide students with essential, accurate and up to date information about their module. However, in addition to an essential information set it is recognised that many guides will have particular requirements reflecting the specific needs of the nature of the module. This document identifies what information must be included in all guides irrespective of the module.

Core Information should comprise:

- An introduction to the module, module leader, module team and professional staff (as appropriate) including contact details and preferred mode of contact.
- Academic Level and credits
- Aim(s) of the module.
- Learning outcomes of the module.
- Outline of the module content.
- Teaching and learning strategies adopted on the module.
- Plan of sessions (i.e. lectures, seminars, workshops, online activities.). This should include (when possible) dates, times, rooms and reading/activities that students have to engage in prior to the sessions. Any module specific attendance requirements must be clearly stated.
- Details of assessment (formative and summative, weighting of different components, guidelines on wordage, length of presentations, learning outcomes assessed, details of

submission/ resubmission requirements, dates of Boards of Examiners, appeal deadlines and the grading criteria and/or marking scheme to be used).

- How assessment feedback will be given for each element of assessment
- Details of learning resources to be used on the module: books (identifying essential reading); key journal articles, reports, and useful journals, databases/indexes and Internet resources.
- Additional sources of information, which may be useful to students and details of where they can be obtained.
- Useful links for example to School/Institution referencing guidelines, specific policies, UPRs as relevant

6.5 External Panel Members

For all programme Validation events, the relevant School is required to nominate at least one subject expert from outside the University to serve as a member of the approval panel. The appointment of external panel members will require approval by Deputy/ Associate Directors Director of Academic Quality Assurance, linked to your School. It may be helpful to have a second External Panel member from industry or business, to ensure that the curriculum has a sufficient industry or business focus.

[Criteria for External Panel Members](#)

External advisers must be qualified to provide authoritative advice relating to the programme's academic content and delivery. However, independence and objectivity are also an essential requirement. This gives confidence that the standards and quality of the programmes are appropriate. Further guidance is available here:

[External involvement in Validation and Review activity.](#)

6.6 The Validation Event

A formal Validation event is held at the culmination of the programme development process. Academic Services is responsible for organising all Validation events. The event will likely take a day or two days depending upon the complexity of the event. It would normally involve:

- An initial private meeting of the panel to finalise the activities for the event;
- A tour of the learning resources;
- A meeting with senior managers;
- A meeting with current or past students;
- A meeting with the programme development team;
- A final private meeting to discuss outcomes, conditions, recommendations and commendations.

The Panel will be chaired by an independent Chair from another School or by an Associate Director of Academic Quality (ADAQ) working with another School, and will normally be comprised of the School's Associate Director of Academic Quality (ADAQ), at least one external panel member who will be the subject expert and a representative from the School.

The representative from the School could be an Associate Dean (AQA), or another member of staff (such as a Programme Leader) who is not involved in the programme.

The submission document with appendices will be sent out for the Panel to read well in advance of the event and the Chair will draw up the meeting agenda(s) from themes emerging from the collated comments received from Panel members. The comments from Panel members will be shared with the programme team. If the Panel is not satisfied that the programme's approach to learning, teaching and assessment are in accordance with Herts Learning principles, then changes may be required as a condition of approval or a recommendation may be made for aspects of the programme to be reviewed under the [Continuous Enhancement Planning \(CEP\)](#) process.

No additional documentation is required to support the discussion. The purpose of the Validation event is to establish that members of the programme team have **a shared vision** and understand and are able to articulate, how they as individuals will put into practice in their teaching and assessment, the matters identified above. The Panel will expect members of the programme team to be able to explain how their module(s) **fit into the programme as a whole**.

The programme team may be allowed to make a short presentation, but this will be at the discretion of the relevant Associate Director and Associate Dean of School.

The Panel will recommend approval (or not) to Academic Board and the term for which the approval is fixed at the conclusion of the event. If approval is recommended it will be subject to a number of standard requirements, conditions of approval and recommendations.

6.7 Post Event - Conditions and Recommendations

As soon as is practical after the Event, there will be a conditions meeting, chaired by the Deputy/ Associate Director of Academic Quality. Assuming the Panel is happy to recommend approval of the programme to the Academic Board, approval will be subject to a number of standard requirements, namely (i) that external examiners for the programme are in place and (ii) approval of the programme specification and definitive module documents by the Associate Director of Academic Quality.

In addition, the Panel may impose conditions and/or make recommendations about the design or operation of the programme. Conditions must be satisfied by the date of the conditions meeting. In contrast, recommendations will need to be considered by the programme team at a later stage as part of the Continuous Enhancement Planning process.

The purpose of the conditions meeting is for the panel to confirm that all standard requirements and conditions have been fulfilled. A completed form AQ4 will also be signed off by the Associate Dean of School (Education and Student Success) and by the Associate Director of Academic Quality. Students may not be registered on the programme until approval has been confirmed in writing by the Vice Chancellor.

Appendix A – Acronyms and abbreviations

A [list of acronyms and abbreviations](#) can be found on HertsHub, the University staff Intranet..