

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

1. Validation processes ensure that the University programmes are viable, meet appropriate academic standards, internal and external quality standards and regulations and enable students to meet the required learning outcomes. Validated programmes may also, in some instances, need to meet the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (or PSRB).
2. The purpose of the validation process is to assure quality, promote best practice and add value by enhancing the quality of the proposal.
3. The Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes describes the process of securing approval for new programmes and changes to existing provision where these involve significant amendments that cannot be implemented under the terms of the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes. It is designed to follow the precepts and guidance contained in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, specifically Chapter B1 – Programme design, development and approval [2013] (2015)*.
4. This Code should be read in conjunction with the Programme Development Manual (PDM).

The Validation Process

5. The validation of new programmes and revalidation of existing programmes will follow a four-stage process. Revalidation of a programme will be required should any of the following be proposed;
 - (i) any changes involving more than one third of the programme/subject in any one year or one half of the total programme/subject in the period between periodic reviews;
 - (ii) changes in the mode or medium of delivery or the addition of a new mode or medium of delivery: e.g. a change from full-time to part-time mode or the reverse, the introduction of distance learning, e-learning or web based delivery;
 - (iii) the addition of the new pathways or options to the programme/subject where the options constitute more than one third of a level;
 - (iv) a change to the title, aims or outcomes of the programme /subject;
 - (v) a proposal to change the pattern on delivery from semesters to terms or whole year delivery or the reverse.

(For further information please see the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes.)

The validation process gives consideration to the following themes;

- (i) The rationale for the new programme;
 - (ii) The programme curriculum, its design, content, delivery and assessment;
 - (iii) The appropriateness of the standards set for the level of the award;
 - (iv) The suitability of human, physical and other learning resources to support the programme;
 - (v) The student experience offered by the new programme including opportunity for employment and further study by its graduates;
 - (vi) The way in which the programme facilitates to widest possible access to ensure that all students can maximise their potential.
6. It is anticipated that a validation of a new programme should normally be completed a minimum of 6 months prior to the commencement of the new programme. Best practice and key legal provisions indicate that revalidation of existing programmes should also be commenced within a timescale that ensures prospective and current applicants are aware about the revised programme prior to enrolment or the start of delivery.
7. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions on which a swift response to demand is necessary, for example, when there is demand from an employer or other organisation for bespoke provision. However, the Academic School in which the programme will be located should be mindful of the need to allow time for students to be recruited to a new programme and for applicants to the programme to be informed.
8. It will be assumed that the programme will conform to the University's regulations with regard to modular structure, credit and levels, assessment, progression and awards. (See [University Awards and Credit Framework](#) and [the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students](#): Any departure from this outline will be regarded as exceptional, and a clear rationale should be provided in each case, e.g. the need to conform to the requirements of professional accreditation. Such variations can only be accepted where they demonstrably lead to outcomes which are equally, or more, stringent than those imposed by the University regulations. Any anticipated variations should be highlighted at each stage of the process outlined below.

Collaborative Provision

9. Any programmes validated by Bishop Grosseteste University for use by partner organisations will make use of this Code. Partner institutions are not permitted to make changes to Bishop Grosseteste University provision, but may comment on the provision in Annual Monitoring Reports and periodic reviews. Requests to the University for adaptation to programmes can be submitted by partner institutions, but these may only be considered after agreement by the Portfolio Management Group and the Quality Assurance Committee.
10. It is expected that all partner organisations, as outlined in the Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision, will have already been cleared and accepted by a memorandum

of cooperation, participated in an institutional approval process and have a partnership agreement signed by the Vice-Chancellor before beginning validation exercises.

Stage 1: Programme Viability

11. Before a new programme of study is introduced or revalidation of an existing programme is undertaken, approval for the proposal in principle should normally be obtained from the relevant School Board.
(For further details on what constitutes a major change in a programme, please see the [Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes](#)).
12. The School Board will seek to establish the fit of the proposal with the strategic aims of the School in terms of determining the academic purpose of the programme, and give consideration to the physical, human and learning resource requirements within the context of business planning. A draft version of the Programme Viability Document will be considered at the board for submission to the Portfolio Management Group.
13. All proposals must have the support of the relevant Head of School (or, exceptionally, an appropriate senior academic manager in the case of provision which is not located in a School). Programme proposals that are supported will be considered by the Portfolio Management Group, which reviews each submission in terms of its fit with the University strategy and considers the commercial and academic viability of the programme. Proposals that are considered viable by the Portfolio Management Group will be recommended to progress to full programme development. (See the Programme Development Manual for details of the Programme Viability Document template and guidance documentation.)
14. Any subsequent change to the resources required to operate the programme will be re-submitted to the Portfolio Management Group for approval.
15. Programme development teams are advised that, in order that institutional deadlines are met, proposals aiming to recruit for the next admissions cycle should normally be submitted to Portfolio Management Group in sufficient time. Specifically, this should allow a six month period between final validation approval and the start of the academic year in which the programme is to be introduced (as per point 1). For example:

Programme Validity Document – March 2017
Validation process complete – February 2018
Programme delivery start – 18/19
16. Once Portfolio Management Group approval has been granted and the programme of study (i.e. programme/short-course) is accepted onto the institutional portfolio, then the relevant departments are notified.
17. The programme may be included in the next edition of the University prospectus and publicised in other ways provided that it is made clear that it is offered 'subject to validation'. The academic team will need to work with the Planning, Information and

Intelligence team, and the Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing department to provide the necessary information in order to meet compliance requirements.

Stage 2: Programme Development

18. On receipt of permission to proceed, Quality will liaise with the academic colleague tasked with programme development to ensure that appropriate advice is available to the School from Professional Support departments (e.g. in relation to marketing, data, learning resources and placements).
19. The draft programme documentation (consisting of the Programme Viability Documentation, Programme Specification and Module Specifications) will be subject to an iterative and developmental process of review. . The draft documentation will be subject to quality assurance and viability checks by professional services departments. Any queries will be raised with the lead academic for the programme. Queries highlighting the requirement for additional resources, above those included in the proposal to Portfolio Management Group, will be highlighted.
20. The Head of Quality and Regulatory compliance will check the documentation's compliance with the University's regulations with regard to modular structure, credit and levels, assessment, progression and awards. Any variances in compliance with the University's regulations will be highlighted to the lead academic and Head of School.
21. The Head of School (or their nominated representative) will chair and manage a Stage 1 Validation event to determine if the documentation is ready for a University Validation event. The staff at the event will include the presenting team, and an advisory panel consisting of, a minimum of two members of academic staff who are not from the programme area of the presenting team, a student representative, and representation from Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT), Planning, Information and Intelligence (PII), and Quality.. The external input should also be sort either via attendance at the Stage 1 Validation event or it should be made clear at the event how the external input has been obtained. External input should be suitable to the programme concerned and sufficiently independent of Bishop Grosseteste University to provide input as an objective critical friend, e.g. [see list of potential sources of external input from QAA Quality Code Chapter B1, page 13](#).
22. Administrative support will be provided through the Schools Administration Team.
23. Although the process is developmental, the Chair shall have the power to set conditions which must be met to secure the approval of the proposal.
24. The review process is complete when the Chair, Head of Quality and Regulatory Compliance and lead academic responsible for the programme are able to confirm that they are satisfied that the documentation is ready to progress to University Validation event and that any concerns have been addressed and conditions have been met. On the recommendation of the chair of the Stage 1 Validation event and in discussion with the lead academic for the programme, the relevant Head of School will determine if the documentation is to progress to University Validation.

25. A representative of Quality will provide help throughout the process and will attend the Stage 1 Validation event to provide further advice.

Stage 3: University Validation

26. The proposed programme will be subject to scrutiny during a University Validation event, which will provide an opportunity for panel members to explore the documentation and issues arising from it with the programme team. The purpose of the University Validation panel is to ensure the programme is coherent, in terms of structure and intellectual integrity, and that the proposed assessment methods are appropriately aligned with the programme content, learning outcomes and learning and teaching activities.
27. The University Validation event will be chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor or their nominee. In addition to the Chair, the panel will normally consist of at least two members of academic staff of the University who are not members of the team responsible for the programme under consideration and who have not been involved in its development to-date. The Student Union will nominate a student representative as a panel member.
28. The panel will also include an external representative approved by the Head of School according to the instructions provided by Quality (e.g. as regards impartiality). In the case of a programme undergoing revalidation, the external member should be an experienced academic with expertise in a relevant discipline or professional area. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a second external member from a relevant business or other organisation with specific knowledge of an area of employment which students would typically enter on completing their studies.
29. The University Validation event will be attended by the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager or a nominee who will advise on matters of University regulation.
30. At the conclusion of its meeting with the proposing team, it will be open to the University Validation panel to make one of the following decisions:
 - (i) to approve the proposal (with or without recommendations for modification). All programmes approved under section (i) will be subject to a periodic review after a specified period. This period will normally be 5 years (see the Code of Practice for the Periodic Review of Academic Provision);
 - (ii) to approve the proposal for a specified period (normally up to five years), subject to conditions (with or without recommendations for modification);
 - (iii) to approve the proposal in principle for a specified period of up to five years, but with a requirement for major revision;
 - (iv) to reject the proposal.
31. The University Validation panel will identify a timescale by when the programme team must address any conditions and/or respond to any recommendations.

Stage 4: Programme Approval

32. The outcome of the University Validation event will be summarised in a Record of Decision, which will outline progress by the programme team towards implementing any conditions and responding to any recommendations. The chair of the panel will indicate that they agree that the conditions have been met before the documentation is forwarded to the Quality Assurance Committee. The Quality Assurance Committee will consider the Record of Decision and if satisfied that the conditions and/or recommendation are addressed, will submit it for approval by the Academic Enhancement Committee.
33. After the Academic Enhancement Committee has accepted the recommendation from the Quality Assurance Committee and it has been confirmed that all conditions have been met, the outcome of the Validation event will be reported to the next meeting of Senate. Exceptionally, the Academic Enhancement Committee may determine that the programme should be subject to periodic review during an interval shorter than the usual five years.
34. Once Senate has endorsed the decision of the Academic Enhancement Committee, the validation process is complete and the programme can be marketed without the caveat of 'subject to validation'. The University's Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing department will be informed so that the relevant marketing and promotional activities can be undertaken.
35. Documentation will be version controlled and processed to the Definitive Document library, responsibility of the document being assigned to Quality. A signed hard copy will be the authoritative source of information regarding the programme.
36. All subsequent changes made to the programme and its provision will be expressed with reference to these definitive documents, and no changes to documentation can be made except by adhering to the relevant University Codes of Practice. All information issued to students in handbooks providing details of modules and their assessment must conform to the authoritative, Quality-held programme and module specifications exactly and in all respects. Any changes approved through the relevant Code of Practice will be recorded and details appended and/or incorporated. The Programme Specification will provide a summary of information concerning the programme for use by stakeholders and will be published separately.