



## Teaching Quality Handbook

### Part 3a

# Programme Validation and Review

(June 2017)

**This section outlines the policies and procedures for new programme developments, programme review and validation, programme management, changes to provision and programme termination.**

#### Version Control

Version	Created by	Date approved by Academic Board	Summary of changes
June 2017	Asst Registrar QAE	17/07/2017	Changes to reflect organisational restructuring

## **Part 3a: Programme Validation and Review**

### **1. New Programme Development**

#### **Stage 1: Programme proposal**

- 1.1 Programme development may arise from a variety of sources: individual staff initiatives; School Advisory Boards; industry organisations; other academic institutions. It is the responsibility of the Centre Head to respond to such initiatives by forming a **Programme Development Team (PDT)** to undertake the work of preparing a programme proposal.
- 1.2 Where programme development is across Centres then one of the relevant Centre Heads shall take the lead by agreement.
- 1.3 A PDT should normally consist of:
  - The proposed Programme Manager.
  - At least one member of staff from the same Centre.
  - One member of staff from another Centre.
  - The Centre Head (optional).
  - Where possible, an appropriate external advisor (e.g. a member of the School Advisory Board, industry representative, an academic from another HEI, etc.).
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of the PDT to prepare a Concept Note and outline business plan for consideration by Education Committee. A Concept Note must be completed for all new awards, or specified credit towards an award [e.g. stand-alone module(s)], of the University. A template for the Concept Note can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
- 1.5 The template is based on [Chapter B1 Programme Design and Approval](#) of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education. All sections must be completed electronically by the proposed Programme Manager, in conjunction with the PDT. The final section of the form is for completion by the Centre Head.
- 1.6 It may not be practical to establish a full PDT at the Concept Note stage. Therefore it is left to the discretion of the Centre Head to decide the appropriate membership. If Education Committee approve the proposal for further development a full PDT will be required.
- 1.7 In preparing their proposal, the PDT will be expected to consult sufficiently widely both within and outside the University to ensure that it is fully aware of both the demand for the proposed programme and the existing provision for such a field of study elsewhere. Meetings should be convened and conducted in such a way as to ensure full participation of the members and outside advisers. Records must be kept of all meetings for presentation along with any documents or

material used in deliberations to the Validation and Review Panel during the next stage of the process.

- 1.8 Guidance on completing the Concept Note template can be provided by the Assistant Registrar, Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement if required.

### **Stage 2: Academic Board**

- 1.9 Once completed, the Concept Note must be emailed to the Academic Registrar at least **5** working days prior to consideration by the Academic Board. A full list of Academic Board dates for the coming year is available on the University intranet.
- 1.10 Academic Board will consider the proposal and, if satisfied, will approve further development and identify a provisional start date.
- 1.11 If Academic Board is not satisfied it may reject the proposal or return it to the PDT with comments for amendments to be resubmitted for a subsequent Board meeting.
- 1.12 Once a proposal has been accepted the Centre Head is responsible for:
- Establishing a full PDT.
  - Nominating to Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) external advisor(s) to sit on the Validation and Review Panels .
  - Preparing a full Business Plan setting out potential student numbers, income streams, resource requirements (to include staff, rooms, library, ICT), impact on existing provision and risk analysis for approval by the Director of Finance. This should be submitted at least one month prior to the validation meeting. A template for the Business Plan is available from the [Template Centre](#).
- 1.13 Academic Board may request a six-month interim report on development progress from PDTs for all new provision.

### **Stage 3: Validation and Review Panel**

- 1.14 AQSC may ask the Validation and Review Panel to consider specific aspects of the proposed programme during the validation process. The Assistant Registrar QA and E may meet with the programme team during the (re)validation process to advise on key aspects of preparation and the expectations of both parties (Validation and Review Panel and programme teams).
- 1.15 AQSC will ask the Validation and Review Panel to agree dates for the validation meetings which may comprise an initial internal meeting to review the submitted documentation and identify areas for further development or clarification prior to the main validation meeting. The Validation and Review Panel will inform the PDT of their deadline

for document submission, which will normally be 10 working days prior to the meetings.

- 1.16 Awards of 120 credits or less, relating to an individual approved Concept Note, can be validated on a modular basis by AQSC, using the New Module Approval template, but validation of any final FHEQ award (60 credits or more) up to and including 120 credits will be undertaken by the Validation and Review Panel.
- 1.17 A programme of (re)validation meeting dates is available on the University [intranet](#). Programme Managers should be aware of these dates and are responsible for ensuring that the relevant documentation is completed and submitted to the Validation and Review Panel on time.

Initial stage review of paperwork:

- 1.18 Whilst the initial review does not normally involve external representation on the Validation and Review Panel, the Validation and Review Panel is permitted to reserve the right to invite external comments on programme documentation at this initial stage. The Assistant Registrar QA and E will provide PDTs with one annotated copy of the submission documentation detailing typographical errors.

Final stage:

- 1.19 The main validation will normally be held some 8 weeks following the internal meeting, will involve appropriate external representation, and will subsequently make recommendations to AQSC on programme validation, specifying any conditions to be met.
- 1.21 All internal members of the PDT will normally be required to present their proposals and deal with any questions. A senior member of the Centre management must be informed of the main validation feedback that will be given to the PDT at the end of the review process.
- 1.22 The Validation and Review Panel is required to provide all PDT leaders with the opportunity to observe a different programme's final validation for developmental purposes.
- 1.23 The Validation and Review Panel is permitted to review the appropriateness, within any overall programme award, of previously approved modules, which may be shared with other programmes, and to make recommendations to AQSC regarding any changes required.
- 1.24 The Validation and Review Panel is permitted to postpone the final stage involving the external academic advisor:
- i) in instances where the Validation and Review Panel is presented with documentation that the Validation and Review Panel determines, ratified by the AQSC Chair, is incomplete and/or does not address

sufficiently the matters raised by the Validation and Review Panel at the initial review stage.

ii) until after a second initial stage (internal) meeting has been held in instances where the Validation and Review Panel is presented with a proposal at the second (final) stage that the Validation and Review Panel determines, ratified by the AQSC Chair, differs significantly from that considered by the Validation and Review Panel at the initial meeting.

#### External academic advisors to the Validation and Review Panel:

- 1.25 The AQSC will agree the external representatives required for the Validation and Review Panel (for details of Validation and Review Panel membership and terms of reference please refer to Teaching Quality Handbook Part 2: Management of Academic Quality and Standards).
- 1.27 The Centre Head responsible for the programme undergoing (re)validation must nominate to the Assistant Registrar QAE an external advisor(s) to sit on the Validation and Review Panel for the final (re)validation meeting. The Assistant Registrar QAE will then contact the individual to ascertain their availability and willingness to act in this role, and to secure a copy of their CV for submission to the AQSC for approval.
- 1.28 Individuals should hold appropriate qualifications and possess experience suitable to enable them to make appropriate judgements on the quality and relevance of the provision. It is therefore likely that an external academic advisor will have direct involvement in an academic programme of a similar level (e.g. Master's, Foundation Degree) and subject area. Ideally, individuals will also have experience of the validation of similar programmes.
- 1.29 The appointment of an external academic advisor will not normally extend beyond 3 years after retirement and candidates must provide sufficient evidence of continuing involvement in the academic area in question, and with current developments in HE teaching, learning and assessment.
- 1.30 To avoid potential conflicts of interest (e.g. caused by close involvement with the University which might compromise objectivity), and to ensure that external academic advisors remain impartial in judgement, individuals will not be appointed if they are any of the following:
- i. former staff or students of the University, unless a period of 5 years has elapsed and all students taught by or with the candidate have completed their programme(s).
  - ii. a member of a governing body or committee of the University or one of its collaborative partners, or a current employee of the University (including External Examiners) or one of its collaborative partners.

- iii. anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved with the provision. This may include anyone closely (personally or corporately) associated with the sponsorship (financial or otherwise) of a student on the provision and anyone closely associated with placements or training forming part of the provision.
- iv. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the provision.
- v. anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the provision.

All formal arrangements involving third parties are subject to the RAU Policy and Procedures Relating to Bribery and Corruption.

- 1.31 An external academic advisor will not normally be appointed from an institution in which members of the programme team are simultaneously serving as External Examiners for cognate programmes.
- 1.32 An external academic advisor will not normally be appointed for more than one programme within 3 years, unless there are grounds for doing so due to a significant degree of congruence between the programmes involved. Furthermore, an external academic advisor will not normally be permitted to act in the same capacity for the subsequent revalidation of a programme(s) and neither would a colleague from the same institution faculty / department, nor would such a colleague normally be permitted to act as external academic advisor for the University for any other programmes within 3 years.
- 1.33 External panel members are:
  - Provided with copies of all documentation relating to the programme / institution in question approx. 10 working days prior to the review.
  - Invited to attend and contribute to the Validation and Review Panel review as a full member of the team and to offer a perspective from outside the institution(s).
  - Invited to provide feedback on the validation process they have been involved in, as part of the Validation and Review Panel annual review process.  
Invited to submit written comments to the Chair of the Validation and Review Panel should they so wish.
- 1.34 External members are requested to make comments on the draft report and any final report arising from the Validation and Review Panel event prior to these being presented to the University's AQSC. Any modifications recommended by AQSC to the Validation and Review Panel's conditions and recommendations will be referred back to the Validation and Review Panel Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.

- 1.35 The fulfilment of (re)validation conditions by programme teams must be signed off by both the AQSC and Validation and Review Panel Chairs. Consultation with the external academic advisor and Validation and Review Panel members regarding the signing-off of validation conditions is permitted where necessary.

Documentation required:

- 1.36 In addition to the Concept Note the Validation and Review Panel will also require from the PDT:
- (i) A completed New Programme Proposal Document, the template for which can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
  - (ii) A complete Programme Specification, including all Module Reference Sheets, containing information as approved by the Education Committee, and making full reference to the appropriate QAA subject benchmarks and FHEQ. A template for the Programme Specification can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
  - (iii) [Module Handbooks](#) for any new modules commencing in the next academic year requiring approval as part of the programme validation.
  - (iv) A rationale, to contain details on outline lecture content and assessment, for any new level 5 and 6 modules requiring approval as part of the programme validation.

**Stage 4: Validation and Review Panel summary report**

- 1.37 The Validation and Review Panel will report its findings and recommendations to the AQSC using the report template, which can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
- 1.38 The AQSC will determine whether or not the proposed programme should receive validation and the period for that validation (normally six years). Validation will run from the start of the relevant academic period (normally from October); when a revalidation takes place in the penultimate year of a validation period, the revalidated programme will commence from the start of the relevant academic period of that penultimate year. Any modifications recommended by AQSC to the Validation and Review Panel's conditions and recommendations will be referred back to the Validation and Review Panel Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.
- 1.39 The AQSC will report its decision to the Academic Board and Centre Head. It will be the responsibility of the Centre Head to ensure that any conditions for validation which have been identified are met, by way of revised documentation showing tracked changes being submitted to AQSC, prior to the July AQSC meeting, before the programme begins. Any recommendations must be considered and responded to in the first Annual Programme Manager's Report following validation. It is the

responsibility of the Centre Head to provide evidence to the AQSC on how the conditions of validation have been met **prior to commencement** of the programme.

Appeals against Validation and Review Panel recommendations:

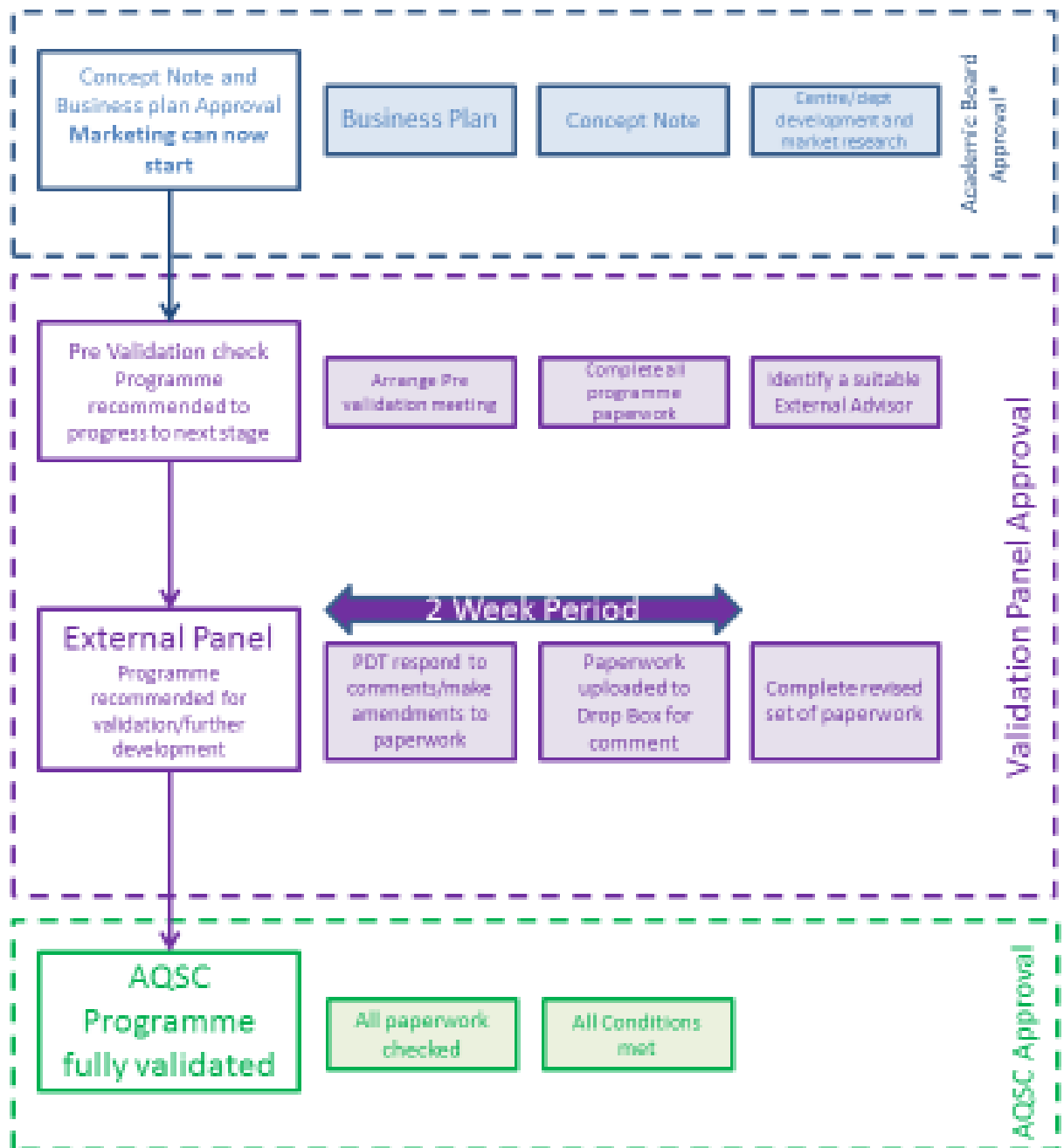
- 1.40 A PDT or Programme Management Group (PMG) may appeal against the (re)validation recommendations of the Validation and Review Panel on one or more of the following grounds:
  - a. That the judgement reached by the Validation and Review Panel is unsound or inappropriate on academic grounds;
  - b. That there had been irregularities in the conduct of, and procedures followed by, the Validation and Review Panel, contrary to those specified in the TQH Part 2, Part 3a or Part 3b, and of such a nature as to raise reasonable doubt regarding the soundness of the Validation and Review Panel's recommendations;
  - c. That one or more members of the Validation and Review Panel were prejudiced or unreasonably biased in his, her or their judgement(s);
  - d. That new evidence is now available that could not have been provided at the time of the (re)validation meeting.
- 1.41 Any such appeal must be made in writing and submitted to the Chair of AQSC normally at the same time as the final report from the Validation and Review Panel on the (re)validation event is received.
- 1.42 Should this not be possible, the Chair of AQSC must receive the written appeal within one month of publishing its decision (through the AQSC minutes) in support of the Validation and Review Panel's recommendations.
- 1.43 Appeals received outside this timeframe, and without strong justification for their late receipt, will not be considered.
- 1.44 Where an appeal is made, the Chair of AQSC shall determine whether the alleged grounds satisfy any of points a-d above before asking the full Committee to consider the appeal at its next meeting. If the Chair determines that the appeal does not satisfy any of points a-d above, the appeal shall be dismissed.
- 1.45 AQSC reserves the right to hear the appellant (i.e. proposed or existing programme manager or their nominee) in person, in conjunction with their written appeal, and to invite other persons to provide verbal or written information relevant to the appeal. If the Committee finds the appeal is well founded, it shall either:
  - (i) Determine the case there and then;
  - (ii) Refer the case back to the Validation and Review Panel for reconsideration with, or without, recommendation.
- 1.46 Any modifications recommended by AQSC to the Validation and Review Panel's conditions and recommendations will be referred back



to the Validation and Review Panel Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.



## Validation Process Overview



If you have any questions about the process please contact [quality@rau.ac.uk](mailto:quality@rau.ac.uk)

\*required for new programmes only

## Timescales

- 1.47 On average it is expected that the entire process, from the initial idea through development to the programme commencing, will take at least 12 months. However, in order to take advantage of new initiatives and markets this timescale is only a guide. There are some key dates Centres should be aware of:

### DATES TO REMEMBER....

For a new programme to begin in **OCTOBER**, it is essential that the validation meeting takes place before the preceding **EASTER**, with the Validation and Review Panel report containing recommendations for validation to be submitted to AQSC for their **MAY** meeting. A full list of AQSC meeting dates is available on the University intranet. The Centre Head should then confirm any conditions have been met, with details of how, at the **JULY** AQSC meeting. If these dates are not met a programme will not be validated for an October start date and will **not** be eligible to recruit (but see paragraph 1.49 below).

- 1.48 Please bear these dates in mind when thinking about new programme development activity. Any queries should be directed in the first instance to the Assistant Registrar QA and E.
- 1.49 Under exceptional circumstances AQSC may permit an extension to the deadlines stipulated above for new programme validations. AQSC will consider the merits of permitting an extension on an individual validation basis, as required.

## 2. Programme Management

### Introduction

- 2.1. The Centre Head responsible for a particular programme will appoint a Manager for each programme of study, who should normally be an experienced member of academic staff and may teach modules or part modules or may have specific expertise in the disciplines relevant to the programme.
- 2.2. Where a programme of study covers more than one academic year, Year Manager(s) will normally be appointed for each year of study in addition to the Programme Manager. Such appointments will be made by the Centre Head in which the programme is offered, and will be subject to annual review.
- 2.3. A **Programme Management Group (PMG)**, comprising the Programme Manager, Year Managers where appropriate, the Centre Head, relevant teaching staff and elected student representatives from each cohort year, have responsibility for monitoring delivery of the programme of study during the academic year.
- 2.4. Visiting lecturers, guest speakers and consultants who are not considered RAU employees, collaborative provision staff who are not listed within an MoA/signed agreement, and staff not employed on academic contracts, are prohibited from assuming the role of Programme Manager or Module Leader for any RAU approved provision.

### 2.5. Roles and Responsibilities

#### 2.5.1. Programme Managers

The responsibilities of a Programme Manager are to:

- (i) Convene the meetings of the PMG and Programme Committee.
- (ii) Coordinate teaching input and agree timetable arrangements in each year of the programme.
- (iii) Be responsible for producing the Programme Specification and programme revalidation documents as approved by AQSC (see section 4 below).
- (iv) Present an Annual Programme Manager's Report to AQSC through the respective Centre Head (see section 2.5 below).
- (v) Have delegated authority to respond to immediate problems or difficulties within the management of a programme.
- (vi) Liaise with all members of teaching staff, including visiting lecturers.
- (vii) Ensure Module Leaders keep Module Reference Sheets up-to-date.

### 2.5.2. Year Managers

The responsibilities of a Year Manager are to:

- (i) Be responsible for resolving any issues relating to timetable arrangements.
- (ii) Coordinate assessment programmes throughout the year.
- (iii) Liaise with students/student representatives on issues of relevance to the programme, and to report such issues to the Programme Manager and, if appropriate, the Programme Committee.
- (iv) Present student results at the Examinations Board for the programme.

### 2.5.3. Programme Committees

The Programme Committee will consist of the following persons:

- (i) Programme Manager (Chair).
- (ii) Year Managers (where appropriate).
- (iii) Centre Head (ex officio).
- (iv) Academic staff representatives – those who have a significant responsibility for or input into the modules, which together comprise the programme.
- (v) Up to 2 student representatives for each year of the programme, elected by the relevant year group.
- (vi) Learning Resources representative (ex officio).
- (vii) Employer representatives where appropriate (ex officio).

Programme Committees are expected to meet a minimum of twice per academic year.

Terms of reference for Programme Committees are to:

- (i) Monitor the delivery of the programme, including recruitment, induction and retention of students, teaching and curriculum, assessment of progress and general programme administration.
- (ii) Monitor the appropriateness of assessment design, timing (to prevent bunching), weighting and required student effort in relation to the module levels and credit weightings and context of the programme.
- (iii) In addition to (i), to authorise the Programme Manager or Centre Head to permit minor variations from the programme as may be reasonable, for example extensions of student work submission times and/or topics for study visits. Programme Committees may not alter assessment methods, pass levels or curriculum content.
- (iv) Assume responsibility for general staff/student liaison for the programme, for arranging meetings between the Committee and students on the programme and for obtaining feedback from present and immediate past students on the programme in a format which enable cross-University comparisons to be readily made.

- (v) Submit minutes of its meetings to AQSC via the Academic Quality Support Officer as an annex to the Annual Programme Manager's Report. The AQSC may also require an additional report from the Programme Committee convenor on specific matters.

## 2.6. Annual Programme Review

- 2.6.1 All Module Leaders are required to complete a brief annual review of module activities and to pass such review to relevant Programme Managers to help inform Annual Programme Manager's Reports. A Module Leader Review Sheet template is available from the [Template Centre](#).
- 2.6.2 Where a module does not form part of a FHEQ award (60 credits or more), a Module Leader Review Sheet must be completed and submitted to AQSC by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year.
- 2.6.3 All Programme Managers are required to produce an Annual Programme Manager's Report for submission to the AQSC. Annual Programme Manager's Reports must be submitted using the agreed template, to the Academic Registrar by 1<sup>st</sup> September each year, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed by the AQSC in advance.
- 2.6.4 It is expected that all Annual Programme Manager's Reports should be discussed and considered at a Centre meeting prior to the submission date to enable cross-Centre matters to be identified and addressed and good practice shared. The Centre Head is responsible for ensuring all reports are submitted to AQSC by 1<sup>st</sup> September each year.
- 2.6.5 Annual Programme Manager's Reports are an important means of monitoring the effectiveness, validity and relevance of all programmes and will also be used for periodic review and revalidation purposes.
- 2.6.6 The template for the Annual Programme Manager's Report can be found in the [Template Centre](#). Further help or guidance can be provided by the Assistant Registrar QAE if required.
- 2.6.7 Following approval by AQSC, Annual Programme Manager's Reports, including all appendices, must be published to individual programme Gateway pages.

## 2.7. Student Feedback

- 2.7.1 Students' views on programmes of study and the University are sought through the annual online National Student Survey (NSS) (final year foundation degree and honours degree students), and in-house Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) (all those not surveyed as part of the NSS) and views on specific modules may be sought via the Module Evaluation questionnaire, or equivalent.
- 2.7.2 Results should be incorporated into Annual Programme Manager's Reports and should inform (re)validation events.
- 2.7.3 Students also provide feedback through Programme Committee meetings, the minutes of which should be incorporated into Annual Programme Manager's Reports.

## **2.8. External Examiners**

- 2.8.1 External Examiners play an important role in the assurance of quality and standards in academic institutions. More information about the appointment, role and function of External Examiners can be found in Part 5 of the Teaching Quality Handbook.

## **3. Changes to Programme Provision**

- 3.1. If the need arises to make changes to a programme during the validation period a proposal must be communicated in the first instance to the Academic Registrar who will advise on the need for submission and approval by AQSC. It is expected that any proposal put forward will be done so using the Major Module Change Coversheet available from the [Template Centre](#) and will have the support of the Centre Head, the Programme Manager(s), the External Examiner(s), relevant academic staff and students (if appropriate), prior to submission to AQSC for approval. Consideration must have been given to library and other resources needed to support the revised programme. AQSC will consider the proposal from the perspective of the potential impact on the quality and standards of the provision in making its decision.
- 3.2. Up to one third of a programme's core modules, over the period of validation, can be changed through AQSC approval before an early revalidation is triggered. These include major changes within core modules and changes of core modules comprising a programme. However, in the academic year immediately following (re)validation no more than 10% of a programme's core modules can be changed through AQSC approval.
- 3.3. The process for obtaining approval for alterations to individual modules and what may constitute a major or minor change is outlined in Part 4 of the Teaching Quality Handbook.

## 4. Periodic Review

- 4.1. All academic programmes are validated for a period of 6 years (for arrangements regarding collaborative provision please refer to Part 3b of the Teaching Quality Handbook). The validation period for provision may be reduced if there is a change of status to the provision (e.g. stakeholder complaints, change in resource demands). All academic programmes will be subject to a periodic review after a period of 5 years, which will form the basis of revalidation for that programme.
- 4.2. In addition to revalidation, the purpose of periodic review is to:
- Evaluate the continuing effectiveness and validity of the programme in terms of its aims and stated learning outcomes.
  - Evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment methods.
  - Evaluate the success of students in attaining the specified learning outcomes.
  - Ensure all aspects of the programme remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the subject area.
  - Ensure appropriate actions are being taken to rectify any shortcomings.
  - Ensure areas of good practice can be identified and disseminated where appropriate.
- 4.3. The review builds very much upon the Annual Programme Manager's Reports, which should be used as a means of continually evaluating and developing the programme throughout the validation period. It also provides an opportunity to consider the future of the programme and to ensure that the Programme Specification continues to be aligned with any University-wide developments in strategy, policy and procedure.

### The Process

- 4.4 For periodic (quinquennial) review, exactly the same process applies as described under Stages 3 and 4 in section 1 above but with the following exceptions:
- i) The PMG is required to make it possible for the Validation and Review Panel to meet briefly with a representative sample of students as part of the main revalidation meeting.
  - ii) Any conditions of revalidation must be met, by way of revised documentation showing tracked changes being submitted to the first AQSC meeting in September before the next revalidation period can begin.
  - iii) Where the PMG leader has confirmed in writing to the Validation and Review Panel Chair that very few changes to a programme are proposed, an initial Validation and Review Panel review may not be deemed necessary.



## Documentation required for Periodic Review

- 4.5 It is the responsibility of Programme Managers, in conjunction with PMGs, to ensure that the Revalidation Proposal is completed, within the timescales set by the AQSC, and submitted to the Validation and Review Panel. The template for the Revalidation Proposal can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#). The report should act as a summary review of the previous five years of the programme. A Revalidation Proposal, clearly setting out any changes required to the existing programme structure.
- 4.6 It is expected that Programme Managers will provide evidence of consultation with current/past students and external sources (e.g. employers). PMGs should consider the inclusion of student programme representatives as part of the team for revalidations.
- 4.7 In addition to completing the report, Programme Managers should also provide:
- Proposed Programme Specification, including Module Reference Sheets, for revalidation. This document must contain all tracked proposed changes for the forthcoming academic year.
  - [Module Handbooks](#) for any new modules or major changes to current modules, proposed as a result of the review process, commencing in the next academic year and requiring approval as part of the programme revalidation.
  - A rationale, to contain details on outline lecture content and assessment, for any new level 5 and 6 modules or major changes to current level 5 and 6 modules, proposed as a result of the review process, requiring approval as part of the programme revalidation.
- 4.8 Programme Managers should remember when compiling documentation that there will be an external panel member on the Validation and Review Panel who must be assumed to have no prior knowledge of the programme and limited knowledge of the Royal Agricultural University.

## 5. Programme Termination Policy

- 5.1 The need for programme closure may be required from time to time for a number of reasons. Principally, these reasons will relate to one or other of the following situations:
- (i) A strategic decision to cease programme provision.
  - (ii) A breach of the MoA.
  - (iii) Continued poor recruitment to a programme or pathway, i.e. less than six students averaged over a rolling four year period.
  - (iv) Concerns in respect of quality and standards of provision as a result of periodic review and/or revalidation.
  - (v) Repeated failure of the programme team and Centre to meet internal quality assurance requirements.

Decisions in respect of (i) and (ii) above will be initiated by Academic Board. Decisions in respect of (iii) above may be initiated by either Academic Board or the individual Centre of study.

Decisions in respect of (iv) and (v) above will be initiated by AQSC.

- 5.2 In all cases, the key priority will be to safeguard students currently registered on the programme and to ensure the quality of provision is maintained until completion of their studies.
- 5.3 The final decision to terminate a programme must be made by a full meeting of Academic Board.

### Procedure for Closure

- 5.4 The following procedure is to be followed in situations where a decision is made to close a programme of study where there are still students registered to study.
- 5.5 In all cases, an initial recommendation to close must be made to Academic Board, giving grounds for the closure. Academic Board, if it accepts the recommendation, will then request a proposal from the Centre of study setting out the following points:
- (i) Number of students currently registered.
  - (ii) Estimated final completion date for registered students.
  - (iii) Identification of alternative programmes which may be offered to students registered on the programme.
  - (iv) Number of staff affected by the closure and an identification of support requirements for such staff.
  - (v) Impact on existing learning support resources as a result of closure.
  - (vi) Details of any financial loss to the University.
  - (vii) Details of any discussions with current students and staff on the impact of the closure.
- 5.6 The report must be submitted to a full meeting of Academic Board where the final decision to close will be made.

- 5.7 Once a decision to close has been made by the Academic Board the following actions will be required:
- (i) Registry to inform all students currently registered on the programme, in writing, of the decision to close, the effective date of closure and any alternative study programmes available.
  - (ii) Registry to remove programme details from UCAS and other external databases.
  - (iii) Marketing to remove the programme from the prospectus and website, and to identify an appropriate statement for the website directing interested parties to alternative programme provision.