



## **Teaching Quality Handbook**

### **Part 3b**

#### **Collaborative Programme Validation and Review**

**(November 2014)**

**This section outlines the policies and procedures for  
new programme developments, programme review**

**and validation, programme management, changes to provision and programme termination in relation to collaborative provision.**

## **Part 3b: Collaborative Programme Validation and Review**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This part of the Teaching Quality Handbook outlines the University policy and procedures for collaborative provision. A collaborative programme is one that leads to an award, or to specified credit towards an award, of the University that is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation or individual.
- 1.2 The University Policy for Collaborative Provision is available from the [Policy Centre](#).
- 1.3 The RAU is ultimately responsible for the academic standards and quality of all awards granted in its name. Generally, policies and procedures follow that of internal RAU awards and as such this document has many similarities to Part 3a of the Handbook. There are, however, some important considerations and differences in relation to collaborative provision. Furthermore, other issues may arise since each collaborative programme is likely to be distinctive and further advice may need to be sought.

### **2. Aims and Objectives**

- 2.1 There are a variety of reasons why Schools may wish to undertake collaborative provision. When considering potential collaborative opportunities, Schools should have regard for the following points:
- (i) The University is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.
  - (ii) Any collaborative arrangement must be within both University and School strategic plans, and must operate on a sound financial footing.
  - (iii) Arrangements for assuring quality and standards should be as rigorous, secure and open to scrutiny as those for programmes provided wholly by the RAU.
  - (iv) The academic standards of all awards made under a collaborative arrangement must be equivalent to those of comparable awards for programmes delivered by the University itself, be compatible with any relevant benchmark information recognised in the UK and appropriately located within the FHEQ.

### **3. New Programme Development: Collaborative Provision**

#### **Stage 1: Concept Note**

- 3.1 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

Dean of School to respond to such initiatives by forming a **Programme Development Team (PDT)** to undertake the work of preparing a programme proposal.

- 3.2 Where programme development is across Schools then one of the relevant Deans shall take the lead by agreement. Where a programme development is across institutions the Dean of the relevant School is still required to take the lead in the process.
- 3.3 A collaborative PDT should normally consist of:
- The proposed RAU Link Tutor.
  - The proposed operational Programme Manager from the partner institution.
  - At least one other RAU member of academic staff.
  - At least one other member of academic staff from the partner institution who is likely to be involved in the programme.
  - The Dean of School (optional).
  - Where possible, an appropriate external advisor (e.g. a member of the School Advisory Board, industry representative, an academic from another HEI, etc.). In the case of work-based learning developments, e.g. foundation degrees, engagement with employers at this stage is key and they **must** be fully consulted and represented on the PDT.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the PDT to prepare a Concept Note and outline business plan for consideration by Academic Board. 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 a Concept Note for a collaborative programme can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
- 3.5 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 PDT. The final section of the form is for completion by the School Dean.
- 3.6 It may not be practical to establish a full PDT at the Concept Note stage. Therefore it is left to the discretion of the Dean of School to decide the appropriate membership. With collaborative provision however, it is essential that all partners are represented at this stage and in the case of work-based learning initiatives that there is employer involvement. If the Academic Board approves the proposal for further development a full PDT will be required.
- 3.7 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 Board (VRB) during the next stage of the process.

- 3.8 In the case of foundation degrees it is suggested that PDTs consult the additional guidance available on the QAA ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)) website, particularly in relation to the role and function of employers. Further information on foundation degrees can be provided by the Assistant Registrar Quality Assurance and Enhancement (Assistant Registrar QA and E) if required.
- 3.9 Guidance on completing the Concept Note template can be provided by the Assistant Registrar QA and E if required.

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

- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 Academic Board will consider the proposal and, if satisfied, will approve further development and identify a provisional start date.
- 3.12 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 future Board meeting.
- 3.13 Once a proposal has been accepted, the Dean of School is responsible for:
- Establishing a full PDT.
  - Nominating to VRB / Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) external representative(s) to sit on the VRB.
  - 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 Chief Executive. This should be submitted to the Academic Registrar at least one month prior to the validation meeting. A template for the Business Plan is available from the [Template Centre](#).
- 3.14 Academic Board may request a six-month interim report on development progress from PDTs for all new provision.

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

- 3.15 AQSC may ask the VRB to consider specific aspects of the proposed programme during the validation process. The VRB Chair and Assistant Registrar QA and E (secretary) may meet with the programme team once (for 1-2 hours) at the start of the (re)validation

- process to advise on key aspects of preparation and the expectations of both parties (VRB and programme teams).
- 3.16 AQSC will ask the VRB to agree dates for the validation meetings which will 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 VRB will inform the PDT of their deadline for document submission, which will normally be 10 working days prior to the meetings.
- 3.17 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 VRB.
- 3.18 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 VRB on time.

#### Initial stage meeting:

- 3.19 Whilst the initial meeting does not normally involve external representation on the VRB, the VRB 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 in conjunction with the minutes of the initial validation meeting.

#### Final stage

- 3.20 The main validation event 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.
- 3.21 All internal members of the PDT will normally be required to present their proposals and deal with any questions. A senior member of the School management must join the PDT for the main validation. Feedback will be given to the PDT at the end of the review process.
- 3.22 The VRB is required to provide all PDT leaders with the opportunity to observe a different programme's final validation for developmental purposes; they are not permitted to observe the VRB's internal deliberations.
- 3.23 The VRB 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.

- 3.24 The VRB is permitted to postpone the final stage involving the external academic advisor:
- i) in instances where the VRB is presented with documentation that the VRB determines, ratified by the AQSC Chair, is incomplete and/or does not address sufficiently the matters raised by the VRB at the initial meeting stage.
  - ii) until after a second initial stage (internal) meeting has been held in instances where the VRB is presented with a proposal at the second (final) stage that the VRB determines, ratified by the AQSC Chair, differs significantly from that considered by the VRB at the initial meeting.

#### External academic advisors to the VRB:

- 3.25 The AQSC will agree the external representatives required for the VRB (for details of VRB membership and terms of reference please refer to Teaching Quality Handbook Part 2: Management of Academic Quality and Standards).
- 3.26 The Dean of School responsible for the programme undergoing (re)validation must nominate to the Chair of the VRB external representative(s) to sit on the VRB for the final (re)validation meeting. The secretary of the VRB 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.
- 3.29 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
- 3.30 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.
- 3.31 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.

- 3.32 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.
- 3.33 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.
- 3.34 External panel members are:
  - Provided with copies of all documentation relating to the programme / institution in question approx. 10 working days prior to the meeting.
  - Invited to attend and contribute to the VRB meeting 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 VRB annual review process.
  - Invited to submit written comments to the Chair of the VRB should they so wish.
- 3.35 External members are requested to make comments on the draft minutes and any final report arising from the VRB event prior to these being presented to the University's AQSC. Any modifications recommended by AQSC to the VRB's conditions and recommendations will be referred back to the VRB Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.



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

Documentation required:

- 3.37 In addition to the Concept Note the VRB will also require from the PDT:
- (i) A full 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 Academic Board, 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.
  - (v) Curriculum Vitae of all staff involved with the management and delivery of the programme.
  - (vi) A draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the partner institution(s), a template for which can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
  - (vii) If students are to be based anywhere other than the Royal Agricultural University at any point during their studies, supporting documentation regarding the specific resources available for this programme as well as copies of student handbooks, information on student support services, etc. should also be provided.

Risk-based approach to collaborative provision:

- 3.38 A risk-based approach is adopted towards institutional and programme revalidation based on the principles of balancing robustness, rigour and due diligence with proportionality and reduction of unnecessary burden. Such an approach will help to achieve better regulation by tailoring a single review method to the individual circumstances of collaborative partners as appropriate and directing efforts where they are most needed.
- 3.39. To ensure transparency, the following criteria will be applied by AQSC in determining validation period durations for collaborative partners and associated provision:
- i) for collaborative partners with an established track record with the RAU of successfully assuring quality and standards, the period between institutional review and revalidation of provision is set at six years. Institutions and programmes which have undergone at least two

consecutive successful reviews with limited conditions (e.g. an updated programme specification or MoA) will be granted a six year validation period.

ii) for collaborative partners with a shorter track record with the RAU of assuring quality and standards, the period between institutional review and revalidation of provision is set at three years.

However, the validation period for partners may be reduced if:

- a. new areas of provision are proposed;
- b. there is a change of status to the partner, e.g. organisational change, change in ownership, change in significant activities or staffing changes;
- c. partners are assessed as being high risk in any one category in the risk assessment appended to the Concept Note.

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).

#### Institutional review:

- 3.40 An institutional review of the partner institution(s) will normally be required for awards of 60 credits or more if the collaboration is for franchised or validated provision, joint programme delivery or off-campus delivery by non-RAU staff, with a new partner institution with whom the University does not have an up-to-date MoA.
- 3.41 Institutional review of partner institution(s) is not required for the award of credit in collaboration with partners involved in sandwich placements, work-based learning, off-campus delivery by RAU staff, exchange programmes, articulation agreements and third-party enhanced delivery.
- 3.42 For awards over 120 credits institutional review is likely to involve a visit to the partner institution by the VRB. The nature (desk-based review or review visit) and intensity (size of review team) of institutional review visits for awards of 60-120 credits will be determined by the VRB on the basis of the risk assessment appended to the Concept Note. Institutional review visits for awards less than 60 credits, and assessed as being low risk, will be undertaken by the Link Tutor. The Link Tutor must produce a report that provides assurances that resources are available at the partner institution to deliver the module(s) to the required standard. If a collection of modules reaches 60-120 credits the Link Tutor report will be submitted to the VRB for consideration in conjunction with the risk assessment appended to the Concept Note, so that the VRB can determine any additional information and visits required prior to programme approval. In the case of international provision it may not be necessary for the entire VRB to visit the partner institution but it will normally be appropriate for a minimum of three VRB members to be involved. AQSC will determine

what is acceptable and appropriate on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the VRB.

- 3.43 If an institutional review is deemed necessary the following information will be required from the partner institution for consideration by the VRB, through completion of an Institutional Review of Collaborative Provision Report available from the [Template Centre](#):
- (a) Evidence that the educational objectives of the partner organisation(s) are compatible with those of the Royal Agricultural University.
  - (b) Evidence of the public and legal standing of a prospective partner organisation or agent in their own country.
  - (c) Evidence of the standing of a prospective partner organisation or agent in the UK in the light of the experience of other UK institutions and from public documents such as reports of the QAA and its predecessor bodies on collaborative arrangements with UK institutions.
  - (d) Evidence of the financial stability of a prospective partner organisation.
  - (e) Evidence of the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide human and material resources to operate the programme successfully.
  - (f) Evidence of the ability of the prospective partner organisation to provide an appropriate and safe working environment for students on the programme.
  - (g) In the case of international collaborative or Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL) arrangements (including e-learning), the ability of the Royal Agricultural University to operate within the legislative and cultural requirements of that country and, at the same time, address the points of reference offered by the UK's Academic Infrastructure.

*Items (e) and (f) above are likely to be the main focus of the VRB institutional review visit, although this evidence may also be used to determine any additional documentary information required in advance of the visit.*

#### **Stage 4: VRB report**

- 3.44 The VRB will report its findings and recommendations to the AQSC using the report template, which can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
- 3.45 The VRB will report separately on the institutional review using the template that can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#).
- 3.46 A programme cannot be recommended for validation unless the Institutional Review Report confirms the suitability of the proposed organisation as a collaborating partner based on the evidence provided. AQSC will determine whether or not this is the case.
- 3.47 The AQSC will also determine whether or not the proposed programme should receive validation and the period for that validation (see paragraph 3.39). 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 VRB's conditions and recommendations will be referred back to the VRB Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.

- 3.48 The AQSC will report its decision to the Academic Board and Dean of School. It will be the responsibility of the School Dean 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 (re)approval of the partner institution and/or before the programme begins. For institutional reviews, any recommendations must be considered and responded to within 12 months following (re)approval. For programme (re)validations any recommendations must be considered and responded to in the first Annual Programme Manager's Report following validation. It is the responsibility of the Dean of School to provide evidence to the AQSC on how the conditions of validation have been met **prior to commencement** of the (re)approved partnership and/or of the programme.

Appeals against VRB recommendations:

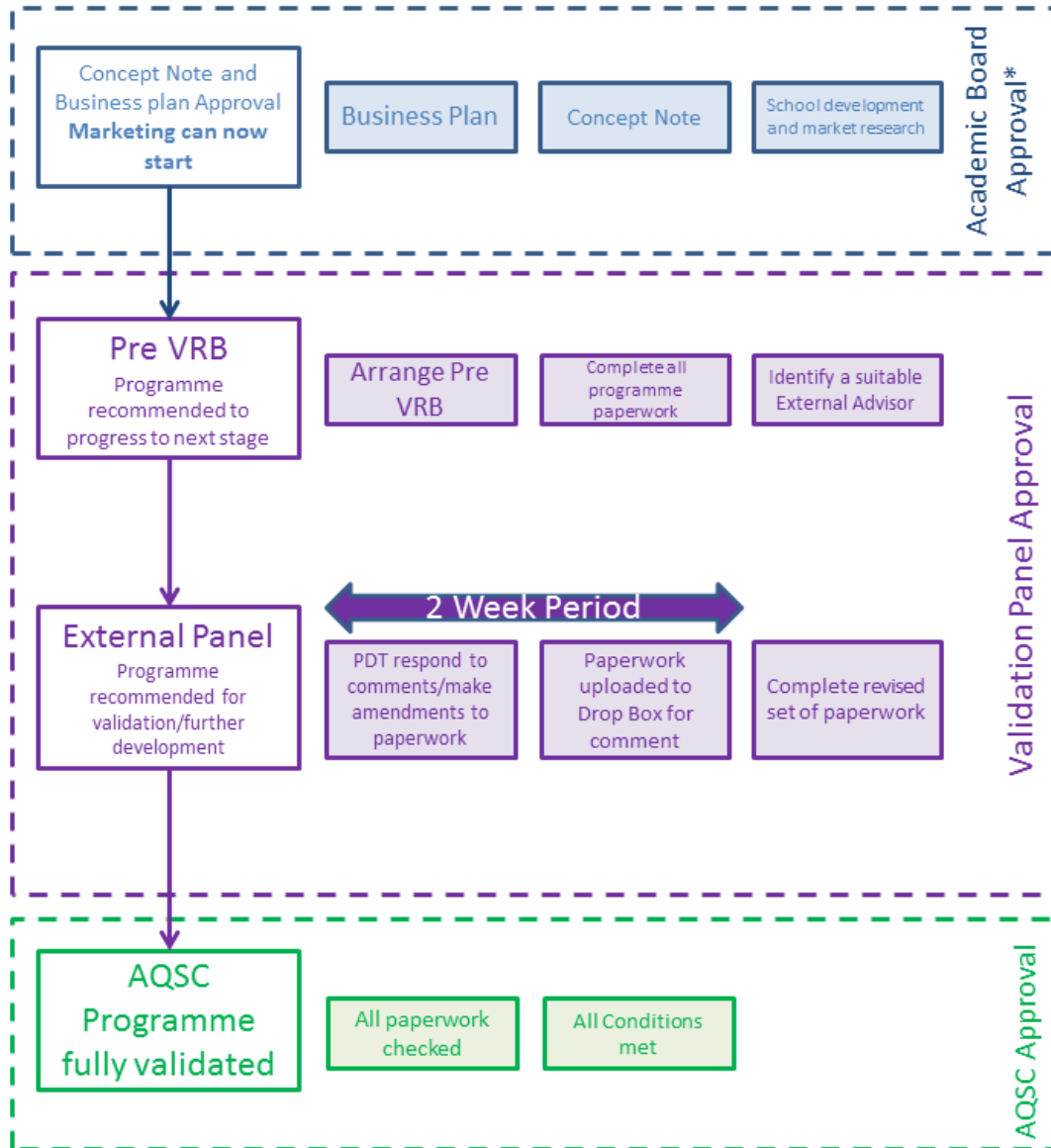
- 3.49 A PDT or Programme Management Group (PMG) may appeal against the (re)validation recommendations of the VRB on one or more of the following grounds:
- a. That the judgement reached by the VRB is unsound or inappropriate on academic grounds;
  - b. That there had been irregularities in the conduct of, and procedures followed by, the VRB, 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 VRB's recommendations;
  - c. That one or more members of the VRB 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.
- 3.50 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 VRB on the (re)validation event is received.
- 3.51 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 VRB's recommendations.
- 3.52 Appeals received outside this timeframe, and without strong justification for their late receipt, will not be considered.
- 3.53 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.

- 3.54 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 VRB for reconsideration with, or without, recommendation.
- 3.55 Any modifications recommended by AQSC to the VRB's conditions and recommendations will be referred back to the VRB Chair and, where appropriate, to the external representation, for consultation and confirmation.

## New Collaborative Programme Development Flow Chart

### Validation Process Overview



## Timescales

- 3.56 Guidance on timescales remains as outlined in Part 3a of the Teaching Quality Handbook, however it is worth bearing in mind collaborative provision, and particularly international collaborative provision, may take longer.
- 3.57 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 Schools 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 VRB 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 School Dean should then confirm that 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 3.59 below).

- 3.58 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.
- 3.59 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.

## 4. Collaborative Programme Management

### 4.1. Introduction

- 4.1.1. The Dean of the School responsible for a particular programme will appoint a Link Tutor who should normally be an experienced member of academic staff and have expertise within a discipline relevant to the programme(s).
- 4.1.2. The RAU Link Tutor will be supported by the partner organisation's Programme Manager, the Programme Committee, the Joint Board of Studies (JBS) and the module teams.
- 4.1.3. Visiting lecturers, guest speakers and consultants who are not considered RAU employees, and 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 Link Tutor, Programme Manager or Module Leader for any RAU approved provision.
- 4.1.4. The AQSC will convene annual QA meetings involving all Link Tutors and placement supervisors to assure a consistent and robust approach to collaborative provision management.

### 4.2. Roles and Responsibilities

#### 4.2.1. RAU Link Tutor

The role and responsibilities of a Link Tutor are outlined in a separate document available from the [Teaching Quality Handbook webpage](#) under 'related guidance' but can be summarised as follows:

- Convening and chairing Programme Committee and Joint Board of Study (JBS) meetings.
- Ensuring that the Programme Specification, Module Reference Sheets and Handbooks, as approved by Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), are produced and updated annually.
- Having delegated authority to respond to immediate problems or difficulties within the management of the programme.
- Liaising with the JBS, partner Programme Manager and visiting the partner organisation on a regular basis.
- Ensuring that the programme meets the RAU standards of quality assurance and enhancement and that everyone involved in the programme delivery appreciates their own personal role in achieving acceptable quality standards.
- Providing advice to the partner organisation on any opportunities for staff development at RAU in relation to this agreement.
- Submitting a Link Tutor report on the collaborative arrangement to AQSC by 30<sup>th</sup> June each year. A template for the Annual Link Tutor Report is available from the [Template Centre](#).



#### 4.2.2. Programme Manager (Partner Organisation)

The Programme Manager will be expected to:

- Produce and submit an Annual Programme Manager's Report and Periodic Review Report to the RAU.
- Coordinate teaching input and agree timetable arrangements in each year of the programme.
- Ensure the production of appropriate timetables and assessment schedules.
- Be responsible for the maintenance of student records.
- Liaise on a day-to-day basis with the Module Leaders and RAU Link Tutor as appropriate.
- Arrange staff development at the partner institution in relation to this agreement.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the meetings that they are required to attend.
- Report all assessment results in a timely manner.
- Ensure that accurate student information is passed to RAU Registry in a timely manner.
- Provide students with relevant RAU documentation.

#### 4.3. Programme Committees

The Programme Committee will consist of the following persons:

- (i) Link Tutor (Chair).
- (ii) Programme Manager (partner organisation).
- (iii) Academic staff representatives – those who have a significant responsibility for or input into the modules, which together comprise the programme.
- (iv) Up to 2 student representatives for each year of the programme, elected by the relevant year group.
- (v) RAU and partner institution Learning Resources representative (ex officio).
- (vi) 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), authorise the Link Tutor or School Dean 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 comparisons to be readily made.
- (v) Oversee day-to-day operation and management of the awards and the student experience.
- (vi) Ensure that operating procedures and practices conform to the procedures and agreed responsibilities of the collaborating institutions.
- (vii) Organise staff/student Programme Committee meetings.
- (viii) Contribute to the required Annual Programme Manager's Report for transmission to the relevant bodies within the RAU and the partner institution.
- (ix) Produce module timetables and assessment schedules.
- (x) Submit minutes of its meetings to AQSC via the Academic Registrar 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.

#### **4.4. Module Management**

- 4.4.1. Where module delivery is based primarily in the partner institution, all relevant staff will be considered as associate members of the relevant RAU School. Staff will be required to attend annual module development meetings at which content, delivery and assessment are discussed and at which the module documentation prepared for each module will be agreed and, if necessary, updated.
- 4.4.2. 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 the Annual Programme Manager's Report. A Module Leader Review Sheet template is available from the [Template Centre](#).
- 4.4.3. 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.
- 4.4.4. Assessments will be determined by the module teams described above and will be subject to scrutiny procedures consistent with those of the RAU. Moderation, in accordance with the RAU's procedures, will take place with the staff of the partner institution taking a full part in this as members of the module teams. Academic staff from the RAU will take responsibility for moderating samples of all modules taught by the staff of the partner institution.
- 4.4.5. Members of these module teams, i.e. staff teaching modules, will be expected to agree grades to be submitted to the relevant School Examination Board of the RAU.

#### **4.5. Joint Board of Study (JBS)**

4.5.1. A Joint Board of Study meeting will be held at the end of the academic year, which may take place immediately after the Examination Board, and will comprise:

- (i) The RAU Link Tutor (Chair).
- (ii) Dean of School at the Royal Agricultural University.
- (iii) Programme Manager (partner organisation).
- (iv) RAU and partner institution Admissions representative.
- (v) RAU Academic Registrar.

4.5.2. The roles and responsibilities of the JBS are to:

- (i) Review the operation and management of the modules, awards and the student experience.
- (ii) Ensure that operating procedures and practices conform to the procedures and agreed responsibilities of the collaborating institutions as specified in the MoA.
- (iii) Support the Link Tutor and the Programme Manager in organising staff/student liaison meetings and any other meetings from time-to-time required.
- (iv) Contribute to the required Annual Programme Manager's Report for transmission to the relevant bodies within the RAU and the partner organisation.
- (v) Support the RAU Link Tutor and partner institution Programme Manager in ensuring that the programme meets the RAU standards of quality assurance and enhancement and that everyone involved in the programme delivery appreciates their own personal role in achieving acceptable quality standards.
- (vi) Initiate and receive the outcome of audit relating to any subject specialism.

#### **5. Annual Programme Review**

5.1. 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 via the Link Tutor by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed by the AQSC in advance.

5.2 It is expected that all Annual Programme Manager's Reports should be discussed and considered at a School meeting prior to the submission date to enable cross-School matters to be identified and addressed and good practice shared. The Dean of School is responsible for ensuring all reports are submitted to AQSC by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year.

5.3 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.

- 5.4 The template for the Annual Programme Manager's Report can be found in the RAU [Template Centre](#). Further help or guidance can be provided by the Assistant Registrar QA and E if required.
- 5.5 Following approval by AQSC, Annual Programme Manager's Reports, including all appendices, must be published to individual programme Gateway pages.

## **5.6 Student Feedback**

- 5.6.1 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) (first and second year, and postgraduate students) and views on specific modules may be sought via the Student Perception About Module (SPAM) questionnaire, or equivalent.
- 5.6.2 Results should be incorporated into Annual Programme Manager's Reports and should inform (re)validation events.
- 5.6.3 Students also provide feedback through Programme Committee meetings, the minutes of which should be incorporated into Annual Programme Manager's Reports.

## **5.7 External Examiners**

- 5.7.1 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.

## **6 Changes to Programme Provision**

- 6.1 If the need arises to make changes to a programme during the academic year 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 Dean of the School, 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.
- 6.2 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.

- 6.3 The process for obtaining approval for alterations to individual modules is outlined in Part 4 of the Teaching Quality Handbook.

## 7 Periodic Review

- 7.1 Collaborative academic programmes are normally validated for periods of between 3 and 6 calendar years (see paragraph 3.39) (for arrangements regarding internal RAU provision please refer to Part 3a of the Teaching Quality Handbook). All academic programmes will be subject to a periodic review during the final year of the validation period, which will form the basis of revalidation for that programme.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 For collaborative provision periodic review also provides an opportunity to:
- Review the current arrangements and make any changes as required.
  - Identify any outstanding/staff development issues.
- 7.4 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

- 7.5 For periodic (triennial) review, exactly the same process applies as described under Stages 3 and 4 in section 3 above but with the following exceptions:
- i) The Programme Management Group (PMG) is required to make it possible for the VRB 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 VRB Chair that very few changes to a programme are proposed, an initial VRB meeting may not be deemed necessary.

### Documentation required for Periodic Review

- 7.6 It is the responsibility of the Programme Manager (partner institution), the Joint Board of Studies and the PMG, to ensure that the Revalidation Proposal is completed, within the timescales set by the AQSC, and submitted to the VRB. The template for the Revalidation Proposal can be downloaded from the [Template Centre](#). The report should act as a summary review of the previous validation period of the programme and clearly setting out any changes required to the existing programme structure
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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.
- 7.9 Programme Managers should remember when compiling documentation that there will be an external panel member on the VRB who must be assumed to have no prior knowledge of the programme and limited knowledge of the Royal Agricultural University and/or the partner institution.

## 8 Programme Termination Policy

- 8.1 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 re-validation.
- (v) Repeated failure of the programme team and School to meet internal quality assurance requirements.
- (vi) A strategic decision to terminate a collaborative arrangement.

Decisions in respect of (i), (ii) and (vi) above will be initiated by Academic Board.

Decisions in respect of (iii) above may be initiated by either Academic Board or the individual School of study.

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

8.2 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.

8.3 The final decision to terminate a programme must be made by a full meeting of Academic Board.

### **Procedure for Closure**

8.4 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.

8.5 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 School 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) In the case of collaborative arrangements, the impact of the closure on the relationship and the status of any agreement.
- (viii) Details of any discussions with current students and staff on the impact of the closure.

8.6 The report must be submitted to a full meeting of Academic Board where the final decision to close will be made.

8.7 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. This procedure to apply for internal and collaborative programmes.

- (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.

8.8 In the case of collaborative provision, the Academic Registrar should confirm the decision in writing to the partner institution. The MoA will detail the procedure to be followed and the responsibilities of each partner in respect of programme closure.