

The Periodic Review Handbook

Guidance notes for UH-based
programme redevelopment teams,
in preparation for Periodic Review

Important Note:

There is an alternative Handbook for UK and
Overseas Collaborative Re-Validation Events.

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1. Introduction

This handbook is aimed at UH based programme development teams and all other academic members of staff who are involved in the Periodic Review of their programme of study. It is also a source of guidance for external consultants and Periodic Review panel members.

It is important to note that there are some significant differences between Periodic Review of UH based programmes and revalidation of collaborative provision whether the partner is in the UK or Overseas. There is a separate Revalidation Handbook for all collaborative provision.

1.1 Why is it necessary to carry out a Periodic Review of programmes?

All academic programmes are required to undergo Periodic Review no longer than every six years.

Periodic Review allows a programme team to 'take stock' and to decide whether major changes to a programme are required. Some on-going changes may have been appropriately undertaken as part of the cycle of annual monitoring or by using the substantial or minor revisions processes (see Appendix B). Periodic Review is essential to ensure that a programme remains coherent and educationally challenging in the light of incremental changes.

The purpose of Periodic Review is also to assess the continuing validity and relevance of a programme in the light of the following:

- management data relating to all aspects of the programme;
- external changes, such as changes to Subject Benchmark statements or relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements;
- changes in student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities;
- new University academic drivers and initiatives;
- the continuing availability of staff and physical resources;
- current research and practice in the application of knowledge in the relevant discipline(s), technological advances, and developments in learning and teaching.

2. The Periodic Review process

2.1 An overview of the Periodic Review process

Before embarking on Periodic Review, the Dean of School will put in place a programme development team which will be responsible for leading the Periodic Review, with a remit including:

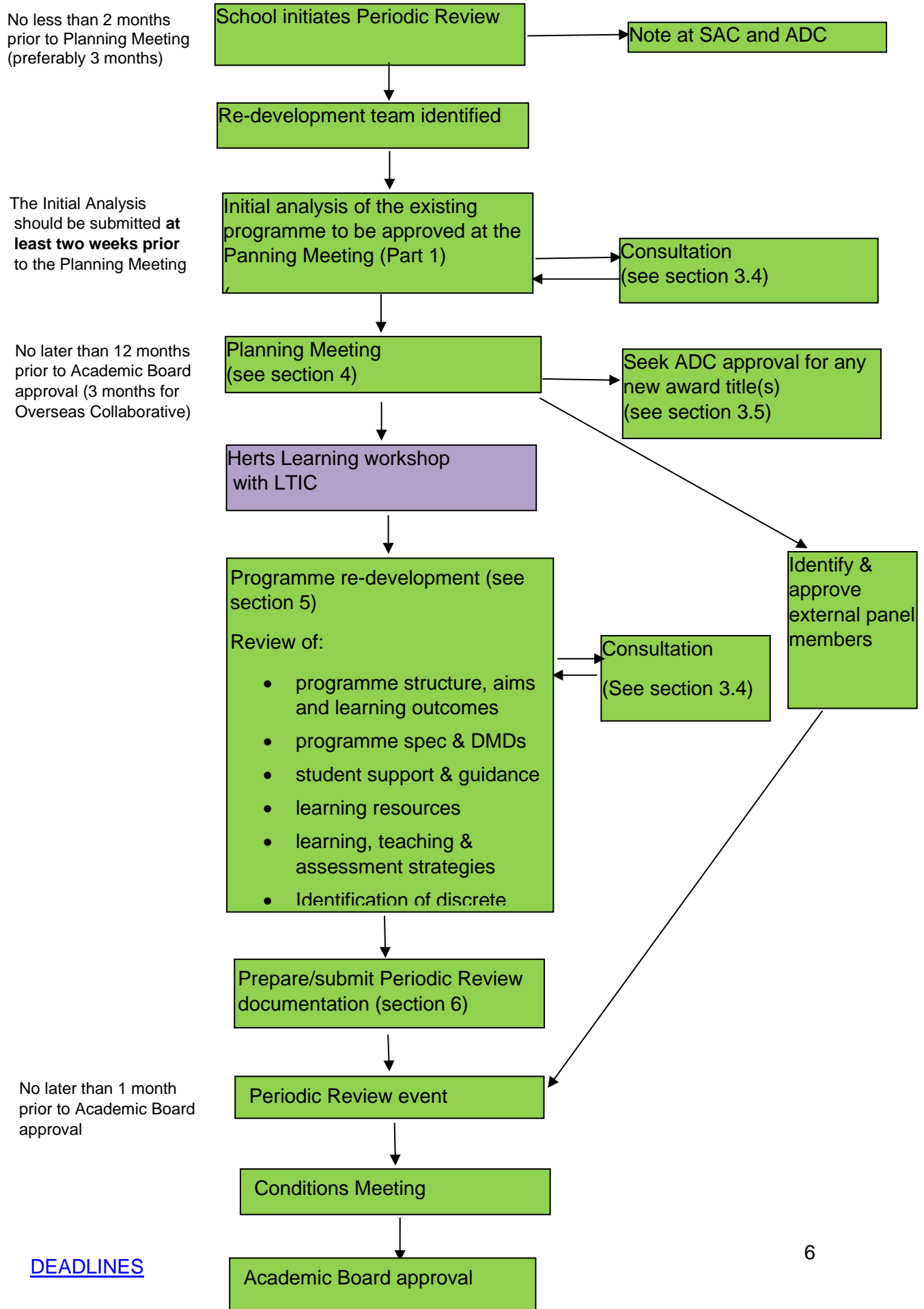
- analysing the existing programme;
- making appropriate consultations throughout the process;
- re-developing the programme, as necessary;

- engaging with Herts Learning workshops and developing the programme in accordance with Herts Learning principles
- producing any necessary documentation; and
- presenting the redeveloped programme at a periodic review event.

Ideally, the development process starts at least 18 months before the delivery of the revised programme, to enable sufficient time to properly undertake these activities. The process is initially evidence-driven, to allow the School to clearly identify what aspects of the Periodic Review process they need to focus on. Additionally, with the exception of degree apprenticeships, the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) requires all HE Providers to give students clear, accurate and timely information so they can make an informed decision about what and where to study. To this end the University needs to provide up front, intelligible, unambiguous and timely information about the courses it offers including those that are subject to validation and periodic review. For undergraduate programmes this means that, in addition to a programme specification, the University requires a Course Fact Sheet to be produced to ensure that essential information is available for applicants. The Course Fact Sheet is not required for the Panel Event.

The School Academic Committee (SAC) then initiates the formal process of review by organising a Planning Meeting where the scale of the review necessary will be discussed and agreed. The consequent programme re-development process will involve at least one Herts Learning Workshop and will culminate in a Periodic Review event where changes to the programme will be formally approved.

2.2 A diagrammatic summary of the Periodic Review process



3. Initial analysis of the current programme and consultation

Prior to the Planning Meeting and before the programme team decides what changes, if any, should be made to the programme to ensure its continuing validity, it is necessary to carry out an initial analysis of:

- management data relating to all aspects of the programme (for the previous three academic years) (see section 3.1). Key data is available on Tableau under Periodic Review. You can access this via <https://visuals.herts.ac.uk>;
- currency and appropriateness of each module's approach to teaching, learning and assessment approaches (see section 3.2);
- changes in QAA / Office for Students (OfS) and/or PSRB expectations (see section 3.3);
- changes in student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities (see sections 3.1.1 and 3.4);
- new internal (University) drivers and initiatives (see section 3.7);
- the continuing availability of staff and physical resources (see section 3.4)

The Initial Analysis template is available for University staff from the [Centre for Academic Quality Assurance SharePoint site](#). There are different templates for undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

3.1 Student life-cycle analysis

At the outset, you need to analyse programme management data, most of which is available on Tableau, for the previous three academic years to help you to decide whether changes to your programme are necessary. You are recommended to use the Portfolio Review dashboard. You can access this via <https://visuals.herts.ac.uk>.

For collaborative provision, not all the data sources will be relevant / available. You should ignore sections that are not applicable. Collaborative provision data is not available on Tableau. Your Collaborative Partnership Leader will be able to advise you on the data you will be expected to produce.

Entry qualifications and student demand

Entry Qualifications

Where appropriate, the University measures the average UCAS tariff for students entering the programme each year. From the data available from Academic Registry and provided to the Dean of School, identify the average UCAS tariff for students entering the programme over the past 3 years.

If qualifications on entry have either (i) been consistently around or below the University stated entry requirement for the programme for all 3 years, or (ii) the trend data exhibits a downward trajectory, and this has reached (or is approaching) the UH programme threshold (if relevant), then the programme review team needs to analyse the possible reasons for this and agree on how to address it.

The programme team should consider the impact of any changes to the student admissions profile over the past 3 years. For example, consideration should be given to changes in the balance of home and overseas students and/or part-time and full-time students. If the proportion of non-tariffable students entering the programme is high, then state so as this may affect any actions proposed at the Planning Meeting.

Student Demand

From the data available from Academic Registry and provided to the Dean of School, record the programme's recruitment trends over the past 3 years.

Student retention – specifically the non-continuation rate

For undergraduate programmes, the University defines the student non-continuation rate as the percentage of students that have dropped out of their programme of study between Level 4 and Level 5 or Level 5 and Level 6 (and Level 6 and Level 7 for an integrated masters). (NB. Students who are repeating the year, resting or have transferred to another programme within UH, are not included in the non-continuation rate.

For postgraduate programmes you should consider the withdrawal data for the programme. One year of data will be available on Tableau from the end of October 2023.

The CEP Action Plan guidance sets out the relevant benchmarks against which judgements should be made. If the non-continuation rate has either (i) been consistently around or below the UH benchmark for all 3 years, or (ii) the trend data exhibits a downward trajectory, and this has reached (or is approaching) the UH Benchmark, then the programme review team needs to analyse the possible reasons for this and agree on how to address it.

Reasons could include (i) problems with identified modules on the programme, (ii) entry requirements, (iii) various student experience-related matters that evidence such as NSS, the cohort survey or SVQ data may reveal.

Programmes teams should consult Tableau to look at the RAG rated continuation data for your programme. If the continuation rate is RAG rated red the programme review team will need to comment as explained above for the drop-out rate.

The University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) contains KPIs around the drop-out rate for certain groups of students. You are asked to consider Black Male drop-out rates for your programme.

Outcomes of the review should input into the appropriate section of the Periodic Review document.

Awards

The University measures student achievement by the proportion of students who achieve 'good' awards (i.e. undergraduate 1st and 2:1 awards or foundation degrees and postgraduate Distinction and Commendation awards). From the data presented in Tableau, identify the level of achievement for students on the programme over the past 3 years. Awards should be analysed overall and based on student ethnicity. The CEP Action Plan guidance sets out the relevant benchmarks against which judgements should be made.

Reasons for not achieving University Benchmarks could include (i) problems with identified modules on the programme, (ii) entry requirements, (iii) various student experience-related matters that other evidence such as NSS, PTES, the cohort survey or SVQ data may reveal.

Programmes teams should consult Tableau to look at the RAG rated awards data for your programme. If the awards data is RAG rated red the programme review team will need to comment as explained above for the drop-out rate.

The University is looking to close the awarding gap for BAME students and the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) contains School KPIs around the closing of the gap. You are consequently asked to report on 'good' awards by ethnicity.

Outcomes of the review should input into the appropriate section of the Periodic Review document.

Student employability

The University measures student employability by the proportion of students who are in employment (full-time or part-time) or further study 15 months after graduation. This data is taken directly from the HESA's Graduate Outcomes data and is available on Tableau. The CEP Action Plan guidance sets out the relevant benchmarks against which judgements should be made.

Where the numbers students achieving employment at or below the UH average and either (i) this has consistently been the case for all 3 years, or (ii) the trend data exhibits a downward trajectory that has reached (or is approaching) the UH Benchmark limit, then the programme review team needs to analyse the possible reasons for this and agree on how to address it.

Home programmes teams should consult Tableau to look at the RAG rated graduate outcomes data for your programme. If the graduate outcomes data is RAG rated red the programme review team will need to comment as explained above for the drop-out rate.

Student Feedback data

The University routinely conducts student feedback questionnaires as detailed below:

- the NSS for students studying at level 6 (and at level 7 integrated masters);
- the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES);
- Student Voice Questionnaires (SVQs).

The results of all these surveys are reported on in the CEP Action Plan by exception reporting where benchmark standards have not been achieved.

NSS/PTES

Both NSS (undergraduate) and PTES (postgraduate) are RAG rated. In the case of the NSS the RAG rating for programme teams is against the relevant subject CAH2 area. If in the most recent survey (NSS or PTES) any section is RAG rated red you should comment on the result and consider whether an action is appropriate. It may also be appropriate to specify an action in response to individual questions that are RAG rated red and themes in the student comments.

Placement Learning

Please provide number and % of students who have undertaken a placement as part of their programme of study. Placement learning requires University oversight and governance. This only includes opportunities that are a planned and integrated part of a student's programme of study at the University. Programme Specifications must clearly identify any requirements for placement learning, whether compulsory or optional. The associated arrangements for management and assessment of placement learning are matters for the programme

concerned. Where the programme includes a sandwich placement, or a period of study abroad, programme teams are strongly encouraged to offer the students an additional and separate qualification in line with the UPR Schedule of Awards (UPR AS11 2.4 and 2.5).

Further information and guidance about developing placements can be found at <https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/Learning-and-teaching-resources-and-support/SitePages/Workplace-Learning.aspx>

Value Added Data (Home undergraduate only)

Value added data aims to measure the 'learning gain' of students during their programme of study at the University. It considers a student's entry qualifications against their exit award. This data is available for UK domiciled students for 2015/16 onwards. If the value-added score (VA) is 0.95 or more for a particular group of students (e.g. BAME, Asian, Black, White etc) no action is required.

3.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

You should only comment in this section on specific aspects of the learning and teaching experience at module level.

You should comment on module failure rates:

- modules where the post referral failure rate has been above the University thresholds particularly if this is in each of the last two years. The thresholds are 30% at Level 0, 20% at Level 4, 15% at Level 5 and 10% at Levels 6 and 7;
- modules where the first-time failure rate is below the University thresholds, particularly if this is so in each of the last two years. The thresholds are a pass rate of 70% and below (Level 0 and Level 4), 75% and below (Level 5) and 80% and below (Level 6 and Level 7)

You should also comment on the most recent module level student feedback (SVQ results):

- the response rate for any modules with less than a 30% response rate should be listed, together with comments as to why the response is so poor; and
- red RAG rated percentage agree scores for individual questions in the most recent SVQ; and
- themes in the student comments that require action to be taken.

3.3 External changes

In deciding whether changes should be made to your programme you will need to consider:

- any conditions and/or recommendations emerging from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) approval of the programme, or changes to PSRB requirements;
- any changes to relevant QAA Subject Benchmarks (NB. It is a University requirement that the programme learning outcomes meet the expectations of the relevant Subject Benchmarks);
- any changes to employment opportunities (was the programme developed to serve a niche in the employment market which no longer exists?);
- any changes in the availability of placement learning opportunities.

NB. At this stage you are not expected to decide precisely how you are going to respond to the external changes you have identified.

3.4 Consultation

Consultation on the operation of the existing programme with the relevant stakeholders should include the following:

- current students;
- past graduates of the programme (the rationale for this requirement is that students who have completed the programme (and experienced employment) will be able to provide a different prospective to current students);
- the programme committee//staff-student liaison meetings;
- relevant employers or major stakeholders in the provision, such as service providers and service users, where appropriate. This may be through the School's Professional/Industrial Advisory Group. In the case of Foundation Degrees, employer involvement will be particularly key, not only to demonstrate that the programme content is suitable, but also to establish demand;
- teaching staff, including other Schools involved in teaching;
- franchise partners, where relevant. The minimum involvement of franchise partner staff teams in the Periodic Review of Home programmes should be such that the staff in the partner institution(s) are fully aware of the changes to be made, they have had an opportunity to put forward their views on the operation of the current programme and, at a later stage, the intended changes to the programme as well as being given the opportunity to put forward their own suggestions for change. See Appendix C and the Collaborative Working Practices Handbook for further detail;
- parties with whom there are articulation agreements including HIC.

With respect to consultation with students, you (or the partner, for collaborative programmes) should seek the opinions of students studying at each level of the programme. You should extend your consultations beyond student representatives, for example, by setting up focus groups. The matters on which you seek opinion from students and alumni should include:

- the currency of the content of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the programme in developing employability skills;
- suitability of the programme, in terms of employment prospects;
- learning, teaching and assessment methods;
- support and guidance;
- organisation of the programme;
- physical resources.

NB. At the Initial Analysis stage, the consultation is about the operation of the existing programme. At the development stage, you will be required to consult with all stakeholders about the finalised proposed changes (see [section 5.6](#)).

3.5 Appropriateness of award title(s)

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

(NB see also section 5.1 - early action may be needed if award titles are to be changed as a proposal will need to be put to the Academic Development Committee.)

3.6 Any other significant issues arising from the CEP Action Plan

Significant on-going issues arising from the CEP Action Plan including those issues contained in external examiners reports (e.g. unresolved resource limitations, standards issues etc).

3.7 Internal changes

In addition to external changes, there may be changes in policies, strategies or procedures at University or School level which need to be considered. The Programme development team will consider all new internal drivers that have been put in place since the last Periodic Review/Initial Validation of the programme and take these on board as part of the development process.

3.8 Resources

You should comment on staff changes and on physical resources e.g. facilities and equipment available including library resources.

3.9 Accreditation

The University aims for as many of its programmes as possible to have accreditation. Provide details of existing accreditation arrangements. Comment on whether (i) the accreditation requirements are up to date and (ii) whether there are further opportunities for the programme to gain accreditation.

3.10 Summary of changes since the validation or last periodic review

It is important that you provide a sufficiently detailed summary of the changes to the programme since the validation /last periodic review to enable panel members at the review event to be able to read the submission document alongside the initial analysis and to understand what changes have been made.

3.11 Outcome of the Initial Analysis

Having carried out an Initial Analysis of the operation of current programme with appropriate consultations, you should be able to summarise the initial issues arising from the analysis, using the Initial Analysis template which will then be presented at of the Planning Meeting (see 4.1) for approval by the Associate Dean of School AQA and the Associate Director from CAQA. **Your Initial Analysis should be sent to the Clerk (Academic Services Officer) at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the Planning Meeting for acceptance by the Associate Director AQA attached to your School and your Associate Dean of School.**

The purpose of the first section of the Planning Meeting is to:

- approve the Initial Analysis. The meeting will decide whether the Initial Analysis is sufficiently robust and comprehensive; and
- determine the steps to be taken to complete the review process taking account of the scope and significance of the issues arising out of the operation of the current programme as documented in the Initial Analysis, the extent of the changes proposed and any PRSB considerations.

Please note - If the Initial Analysis is not accepted, the Planning Meeting will be deferred until such times as a satisfactory Initial Analysis has been completed.

In the event of the Initial Analysis document requiring further work before a re-scheduled Planning Meeting, the document should be re-submitted to the Associate Dean of School (AQA) and the Associate Director for approval normally within two weeks of the date of the original Planning Meeting.

4. The Planning Meeting

4.1 Purpose and attendance requirements

The Planning Meeting is divided into two sections. The first section is a discussion of the Initial Analysis document. The second section is the planning for the Periodic Review event, which takes account of the conclusions of the Initial Analysis approval.

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

The Planning Meeting is attended by the following staff:

- the development team leader (and author of the Initial Analysis if different);
- the collaborative partnership leader (collaborative provision only)
- the relevant Associate Director from CAQA;
- the Associate Dean of School AQA (Chair);
- the Programme Academic Quality Administrator
- the Clerk to the Periodic Review event (from Academic Services).

The Planning Meeting will agree the:

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

4.2 The programme development team

The Chair and members of the programme development team are identified at the Planning Meeting. A senior member of academic staff (e.g. an Associate Dean of School or the existing/designated programme leader or equivalent in partner institutions) chairs the committee. The programme development team should have appropriate representation to meet programme development needs. It is likely to include staff representing the major disciplines involved in the programme.

Normally the Student Administrator (AQ or Programme) will attend the programme development team meetings and the following staff should be invited to attend at least one programme development team meeting for an item addressing their area of activity:

- the Marketing and Recruitment Officer/Marketing Manager;
- representatives from Library and Computing Services (LCS);
- representatives of the School Engagement Team from Careers and Employment.

The Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC) Specialist linked to your School must be a member of the programme development team where (i) the programme is to be delivered online and/or (ii) where the NSS scores or any other measures including SVQ scores, suggest that regular input from LTIC would be beneficial to the development of the programme.

The Herts Learning workshops that are part of the periodic review development process will include both the LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialist and Educational Technologist linked to your School, in addition to the relevant Information Manager from LCS. They can be consulted with throughout the process to discuss specific aspects of the programme development.

There is an expectation that students will be involved in the development process.

Students may be members of the programme development team, and/or the proposals may be taken to student focus groups or other student fora. It is also important that teaching staff are consulted about the proposals at appropriate points in the development process.

Where the programme is also franchised, representation from each partner is expected (see Appendices C and G). The Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) (ADoS(AQA)) and the Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) both have the right to attend programme development meetings and will be available for consultation throughout the development process.

5. The Programme re-development process

The outcome of the Initial Analysis Meeting will determine which of the following matters set out in this section you should focus on during the development process.

5.1 Award titles

One of the first tasks of the programme development team is to consider the award title(s) offered as part of the programme.

If there is to be a change to the award title(s) Academic Development Committee (ADC) approval will be required. The Centre for Academic Quality Assurance Herts Hub site provides details of how to request this:

[ADC Guidance and Templates](#)

It should be noted that ADC approval is required for any partner's awards that articulate into later stages of a validated University top-up award.

NB. *Programme names* should not be confused with award titles; ADC approval is not needed to change a programme name.

Details of all the approved categories of awards (University Certificate, BSc Hons, MA, etc.) are presented in [UPR AS11 \(Schedule of Awards\)](#).

If you are thinking of changing any of your award titles it is important to consult UPR AS 11 which contains some importance guidance. For example, the UPR contains guidance about joint honours, combined honours, sandwich awards, study abroad and dual awards.

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

- i. for awards of **480** credits and above:
at least **60** credits of differentiation, at least **30** credits of which must be at the level of the award;
- ii. for awards of **300** to **465** credits:
at least **45** credits of differentiation, at least **30** credits of which must be at the level of the award;
- iii. for awards of **135** to **285** credits:
at least **30** credits of differentiation at the level of the award.
- iv. for awards up to **120** credits:
at least **15** credits of differentiation at the level of the award.

Important Notes

a) The grouping of awards into one programme

The Academic Development Committee approves new or amended award titles but does not become involved in (i) the titles of programmes or (ii) the groupings of awards into programmes. This responsibility lies with the School as Schools (in association with Academic Registry and the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance) who are in a better position to know which awards are sensible to group together into a programme. It is not appropriate to merge non-aligned awards together into 'super-programmes', to reduce the administrative burden as this results in many problems including meaningless or over-complex Programme Specifications, unhelpful AMERs and performance statistics, cumbersome programme boards, with different programme regulations for different students. Please see Appendix A.

b) Partner's Awards

It should be noted that ADC approval is required for any partner's awards that articulate into later stages of a validated University top-up award.

5.2 Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

In designing the programme, you should consider what the programme aims to achieve and what students will be able to do as a result of successfully completing the programme. These will be formulated as Programme Aims and Programme Learning Outcomes, given in the Programme Specification, a core document which provides information about the programme for prospective applicants, students and staff. Your choice of modules to offer on the programme should be based on consideration of how they contribute to the development of the Programme learning outcomes and achieving the Programme aims, reflected in the Module Aims and Module Learning Outcomes.

Programme Aims

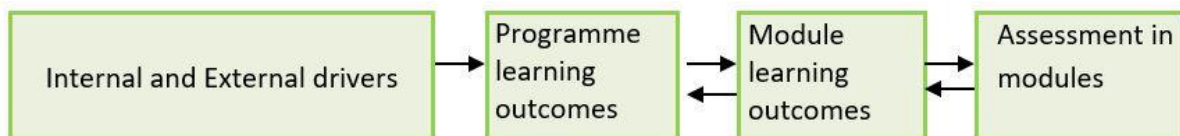
Programme aims are aspirational (yet achievable) goals for students to work towards. Unlike learning outcomes, they are not always measurable. There should be 2-3 programme-specific aims, which are an opportunity to identify what is distinctive about the programme.

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

Programme Learning Outcomes

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

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



Well-designed programme learning outcomes:

- reflect relevant external drivers;
- are clear to staff, students and external examiners;
- relate to the programme aims.

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

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

Programme learning outcomes are usually defined in the following categories:

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

Definition of generic learning outcomes for unnamed exit awards

Note that 'generic' learning outcomes for unnamed awards have been published on the University's Corporate Governance website, to enable Programme Specifications to provide a URL link against any unnamed awards identified. <http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-governance>

External Drivers

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

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

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

The University therefore requires that the proposed programme reflects the following [External Reference Points](#):

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

You should ensure that the programme learning outcomes are not too generic but explicitly reflect any professional and/or statutory regulatory body requirements and relevant Subject Benchmark statements. Consider whether the Subject Benchmarks or PSRB requirements have been revised since the original Validation/last Periodic Review.

Having considered any external factors which may require an alteration in your programme you will need to think about whether the programme learning outcomes need to be altered due to a change in the award title(s) or in the light of changes to programme aim.

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

Developing employability

The developing employability objective is intended to give our graduates the best chances of securing graduate employment. To support this aim, each programme should demonstrate; awareness of the typical employment profile of its graduates, opportunities to develop employability and career development skills. Consultation with the School Engagement Teams in [Careers and Employment](#) as part of the development process is important for ensuring that current labour market information informs the periodic review.

Placement learning requires University oversight and governance. This only includes opportunities that are a planned and integrated part of a student's programme of study at the University. Programme Specifications must clearly identify any requirements for placement learning, whether compulsory or optional. The associated arrangements for management and assessment of placement learning are matters for the programme concerned. Where the programme includes a sandwich placement, or a period of study abroad, programme teams are strongly encouraged to offer the students an additional and separate qualification in line with the UPR Schedule of Awards (UPR AS11 2.4 and 2.5). Further information and guidance about developing placements can be found here:

[Workplace Learning](#)

Placement learning requirements should satisfy the QAA expectations as identified in the [Quality Code](#) and for Foundation Degrees, the "UH Foundation Degrees – the Consortium Model.

Programmes can also support the employability development of their students by promoting their engagement in the Go Herts award, which recognises extra-curricular activities. More information about the Go Herts award can be found here:

[Go Herts award](#)

For further guidance, consult with your [LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialist](#).

5.3 Herts Learning

'Herts Learning' is the University's adoption of a blended and flexible pedagogy across every programme by 2025. It is a bold aim, but one which builds on our reputation as a gold-rated university for teaching excellence, as well as our history as an innovator and a centre for excellence in blended learning.

The development of programmes through periodic review should focus on addressing issues identified during the initial analysis and the adoption of the [Herts Learning principles](#) in the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment.

At the Planning Meeting, a date will be confirmed for the programme team to have a [Herts Learning](#) workshop with the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC) to guide your use of the [Herts Learning reflective toolkit](#), which is available on HertsHub.

The Herts Learning workshop, will be facilitated by Associate Director of Learning and Teaching (Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre) and should include the following participants:

- Programme Leader
- Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality)
- Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching / Student Experience)

- Development team
- Students
- Learning and Teaching Specialist linked to the School, if possible
- Associate Director of Academic Quality linked to the School, if possible
- Members of the wider programme team, if possible
- Educational Technologist linked to the School, if possible
- Information Manager linked to the School, if possible

During the development process the whole programme team will discuss the changes and/or enhancements to be made to the learning, teaching and assessment approach. A second Herts Learning workshop is available to assist with this if the development team wishes it.

Development teams will use their reflections from the toolkit to identify changes and enhancements to the programme which will be clearly articulated in the submission document.

Support with developing specific activities associated with the principles; for example; use of authentic assessment, personalised learning, technology enhanced learning or inclusive teaching is available from the LTIC and can be provided in follow up to the workshop. Herts Learning team can be contacted at hertslearning@herts.ac.uk

5.4 Other learning, teaching and assessment considerations

Involving employers, professionals and alumni in programme delivery

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

The Assessment Landscape

Programmes are asked to produce an assessment landscape (Appendix 6 of the Periodic Review Submission Document) so that it is possible for both staff and students to see the type, frequency, pass criteria and timing of assessments in the modules that make up the programme. The assessment landscape will also identify how the assessments within each module satisfy the module learning outcomes. The assessment landscape will be considered as part of the periodic review process. Thereafter it should be reviewed by the programme team on an annual basis as part of a continuous approach to enhancement, and in the context of feedback from students, external examiners and other relevant stakeholders. To ensure the assessment methods indicated in the assessment landscape support meaningful learning, the University values assessment for learning practice that:

- Engages students with the grading criteria;
- Supports personalised learning;
- Ensures feedback leads to improvement;
- Focuses on student development;

- Stimulates dialogue;
- Considers student and staff effort.

Grading Criteria

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

Academic Writing Skills and Academic Integrity

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

Ethics Approval – Studies involving the Use of Human Participants

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

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

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

Equality considerations

Direct discrimination in higher education is unlawful on grounds of: sex; gender identity; race, ethnicity, nationality, national or ethnic origin; disability; sexual orientation; religion or belief. Indirect discrimination on the above grounds, and direct and indirect age discrimination, are also unlawful unless objectively justifiable.

Programme designers should:

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

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

More personalised support is available from the [LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialists and Educational Technologists](#).

5.5 Student Support and Guidance

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

The programme approach to personal tutoring should be at the heart of these considerations. Information about the University's Personal Tutoring Framework and the Personal Tutoring Handbook can be found here:

[Personal Tutoring Framework](#)

[Personal Tutoring Handbook](#)

Programme teams should be able to articulate the approach to personal tutoring taken on their programme. In addition to personal tutoring, other elements of student support should be included.

Student support covers:

- academic tutors;
- year tutors/programme leaders
- placement tutors;
- student/programme handbooks and other hand-outs;
- support material on StudyNet;
- programme induction;
- study skills support and student "surgeries";
- the University's central student support & guidance services;
- careers education and professional development – Careers/professional development should be embedded and supported in all programmes. The process needs to be substantial and give students access to on-going support. A key output is that students must be able to recognise and articulate their learning and their skills.

5.6 Resources

The human and physical resource needs of the programme need to be evaluated as part of the development process, in terms of (i) the suitability of the existing resource to support the current programme, and (ii) additional resource requirements to support any planned changes to the programme. The Programme development team may need to consider:

- Academic staff (review of staff fte, existing staff expertise, additional staff expertise required, staff development activity required, etc). The composition of the programme team should ensure that there is an appropriate balance of research, professional, business and pedagogic expertise;
- Support staffing (administrative, technical) to include the School Information Manager or appropriate LCS representative;
- Physical resources (laboratories, equipment, hardware, etc.);
- Learning resources (review of existing and additional requirements of books, journals, online resources, etc). The following evidence should be considered:
 - A completed and reviewed (by LCS) Talis reading list for each module within the programme (evidence of academic staff engagement with the required information resources to support the delivery of the programme; evidence that UH has reviewed the required resources and understood the resource implications – to include licensing, legal and regulatory requirements)
 - Benchmarked data (provided by LCS) showing the level of student engagement with information resources referenced on the relevant modular reading lists, and any wider reading undertaken as result of self-directed study (evidence of the engagement with and appropriateness of the recommended information resources – especially when reviewed against the allocation for self-directed study articulated in the module information);
 - Benchmarked data (provided by LCS) showing the level of student engagement with the Library Link-Up programme and online digital and information skills content;
 - An agreed list of the software packages required to support the programme delivery (as recorded in the LCS database) (evidence that the software requirements have been communicated to LCS, that cost and licensing issues are understood, and the software will be included in the UH PC image and PC labs as required).
- Any other resource issues (investment in a distance learning mode, field trips, external input into the programme, work-related learning costs, StudyNet development, etc).

5.7 Stakeholder feedback on the proposals

During the re-development process, consultation with the relevant stakeholders in the programme must take place concerning any developments/changes to the programme that have not already been discussed at the Initial Analysis stage. You are reminded that consultation with the relevant stakeholders should include the following:

- current students;
- the programme committee;

- relevant employers or major stakeholders in the provision, such as service providers/commissioners and service users, where appropriate. This may be through the School's Professional/Industrial Advisory Group. In the case of Foundation Degrees, employer involvement will be particularly key, not only to demonstrate that the programme content is suitable, but also to establish demand;
- teaching staff, including other Schools involved in teaching;
- Schools whose students may potentially be impacted upon as a result of any changes;
- franchise partners, where relevant. The minimum involvement of franchise partner staff teams in the Periodic Review of home programmes should be such that the staff in the partner institution(s) are fully aware of the changes to be made, they have had an opportunity to put forward their views on operation of the current programme and, at a later stage, the intended changes to the programme as well as being given the opportunity to put forward their own suggestions for change. See Appendix C and the Collaborative Working Practices Handbook for further detail;
- parties with whom there are articulation agreements including HIC.

If any proposals discussed with stakeholders at the Initial Analysis stage have not been changed you are not expected to consult with the relevant stakeholder again.

In addition, if agreed at the planning meeting, the views of at least one independent expert (called an interim consultant) must be obtained during the final stages of development/review. Interim consultants should be external experts with a relevant professional/industrial/academic background. **When you engage an interim consultant, it is important that you provide them with a clear statement of the areas on which you want advice. You must ask the consultant to comment on the currency of the content, the coherency of the programme and the educational challenge it offers.** Failure to do this may result in vague and unhelpful feedback.

If the interim consultant's background is academic, they should be asked to advise on matters including:

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

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

An interim consultant may be an external panel member at the periodic review event. However, the panel must include at least one new external panel member who has not been involved with the programme development process.

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

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

Subject expertise:

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

Independence:

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

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

5.8 Transitional Arrangements

It is important to think carefully about the transitional arrangements. For example, how will the new programme be rolled out across different years of an undergraduate programme? What impact will there be on staff and students including, for example, part-time, resting and sandwich students? In devising transitional arrangements the impact of the new programme on existing students' needs to be considered in the light of consumer protection law and the guidance of the [Competition and Markets Authority \(CMA\)](#).

It is important that the Periodic Review document explains clearly the course structure for current students.

6. Preparing for the Periodic Review event

6.1 Preparation of documentation for the event

The [Submission Document template](#) for the Periodic Review sets out precisely what documentation is required for a Periodic Review. It is vital that you select the right template as the requirements are different for validation and for collaborative provision. Ask your link person in Academic Services if in doubt.

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

The Submission document includes the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Initial Analysis
- Appendix 2 – Programme Specification(s)
- Appendix 3 - Programme Handbook(s)
- Appendix 4 - List of modules to view on Canvas and additional information
- Appendix 5 – Definitive Module Documents.
- Appendix 6 - Assessment Landscape(s)
- Appendix 7 – Mapping of professional body requirements / benchmarks
- Appendix 8 – Minutes of the Planning Meeting
- Appendix 9 – Feedback from all stakeholders consulted during the programme development, together with feedback from the interim consultant and the Programme Development Team’s response.
- Appendix 10 – Minutes of the Development Committee
- Appendix 11 - Herts Learning Toolkit reflection document
- Appendix 12 - Resources Statement
- Appendix 13 – pdf of the ‘live’ CEP Action Plan and External Examiners' reports (two years only)
- Appendix 14 – Validation or previous Periodic Review report
- Appendix 15 – Full ADC submission and minute (where applicable) but only for the Chair of the Panel and the Associate Director (AQA).

Appendix 4 should contain (i) reading lists for new modules; (ii) details of software packages and additional physical resources for existing and new modules. Check whether the Planning Meeting has agreed that information over and above this should be provided.

A key element of the periodic review process is a **critical evaluation** of the delivery of the programme(s) since it was last reviewed (or validated). The reader of the periodic review submission document should be able to easily identify the enhancements and changes to be made, for which a full justification should be provided. It will be necessary to provide the Panel with sufficient information about the existing programme to enable them to understand the rationale behind changes you propose.

The completed Submission Document should normally not exceed 12 pages (excluding figures, tables and pre-completed standard information).

It is important to understand that the Panel will be reading the primary sources for information about the programme (e.g. programme specification, Student Handbook and DMDs). You should not cut and paste sections of programme documentation into the periodic review document. Instead, cross-references to the relevant part of the programme documentation should be provided in the text.

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

Programme Specifications

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

The University has prepared guidance on the preparation of Programme Specifications, which is available from the CAQA forms and templates site on SharePoint:

[Programme Specifications](#)

The Programme Specification templates can be found here: [☐ 2023-2024 CFS & PS Templates](#)

Definitive Module Documents (DMDs)

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

Any new module and substantially revised modules will require new module codes. These need to be requested from Academic Services by **the end of January** at the latest for delivery in the next academic session. The [AS guidance notes](#) identify which sections of the DMD (if amended) require a new module code.

University guidance on the preparation of Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) and templates are available from the Reg-DMD SharePoint Site:

[DMD Template and Guidance](#)

It is possible to view all existing UH DMDs by logging in as a guest to the DMD database, for examples of existing practices. Those with access rights can also prepare and approve DMDs.

6.3 External Panel Members

For all programme periodic review events, the relevant School is required to nominate at least one subject expert from outside the University to serve as a member of the approval panel. The appointment of external panel members will require approval by the Deputy/Associate Directors Director of Academic Quality Assurance, linked to your School. It may be helpful to

have a second External Panel member from industry or business to ensure that the curriculum has a sufficient industry or business focus.

Criteria for External Panel Members

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

[Periodic Review/Validation/External Panel Members](#)

6.4 The Periodic Review Event

A formal Periodic Review / Re-Validation event is held at the culmination of the programme development process. Academic Services is responsible for organising all periodic review /re-validation events. The event will likely take between half a day and a day depending upon the complexity of the event. It would normally, but not necessarily, involve:

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

The Periodic Review Panel will be chaired by an independent Chair from another School and will normally be comprised of the School's Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance (ADAQA), at least one external panel member who will be the subject expert, a student/alumnus and a representative from the School. The Associate Director Academic Quality Assurance (Curriculum Management) is a member of the Panel and may attend the event or provide feedback to the Chair of the Panel ahead of the event. one or more of the event meetings.

The representative from the School could be an Associate Dean of School (AQA) / L&T, or another member of staff (such as a Programme Leader) who is not involved in the programme. In small Schools it may well be appropriate to ask a senior member of staff from another School to join the Panel. In the large Schools the representative selected would normally be from a different Department from the one responsible for the programme.

The submission document with appendices will be sent out for the Panel to read well in advance of the event and the Chair will draw up the meeting agenda(s) from themes emerging from the collated comments received from Panel members. The Associate Director AQA (Curriculum Management) will provide specific comments on Herts Learning on a separate form (HL1b). The comments from Panel members will be shared with the programme team. If the Panel is not satisfied that the programme's approach to learning, teaching and assessment are in accordance with Herts Learning principles, then changes may be required as a condition of approval (see section 6.5), or as a recommendation (see para 6.5) may be made for aspects of the programme to be reviewed under the Continuous Enhancement Process.

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

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

6.5 Post Event conditions and recommendations

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

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

At the conditions meeting a completed form AQ3 will also be signed off by the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance). Students may not be registered on the programme until approval has been confirmed in writing by the Vice Chancellor.

Appendix A – Grouping Awards into programmes and merging programmes

The following 'rules' should be followed in grouping awards into programmes and in merging programmes:

The final intended awards must all be at the same academic level (e.g. no MSc and BSc in the same programme);

The programme must not span more than one collaborative partner (apart from a Consortium programme), or UH and a partner (i.e. a programme should only be delivered by one partner (or UH));

The programme must be owned by only one School (although other Schools can contribute modules);

There must be at least 33% commonality in terms of shared modules (e.g. at least 120 credits for an Honours programme, at least 60 credits for a Masters);

There should be a natural 'affinity' between the award titles in a programme (typically defined by the level 1 JACS code: A, B, C, etc.);

There should be sufficient synergies in award Learning Outcomes to allow for a mostly common set of programme Learning Outcomes, yet with some distinction between individual award Learning Outcomes (NB. if the programme merger leads to major changes in programme Learning Outcomes, then a periodic review event is required to approve the changes);

The programme CEP must refer to data on all award titles (e.g. all module and programme External Examiner reports must be considered, performance data must be considered at award level, etc.);

Humanities Joint Honours programmes are exempt from these principles;

A written proposal should be made to Academic Services to merge programmes. The Academic Registrar (or the Academic Registrar (Academic Services)) and the Director of AQA (or the appropriate Associate Director of AQA) must sign off all such proposals.

Appendix B - Partner involvement in programme review and approval of changes to collaborative programmes

Background

This section summarises the process for review of programmes delivered at UH which are also franchised to partners, and the subsequent approval of programme changes at the partner.

For franchised provision, the University requires that the franchised version of a University programme is the same as that delivered by the University (with provision for a small amount of variation). It follows that, when a University programme changes, the franchised versions should also change. There are two ways in which programmes change:

Changes that may occur following a periodic review of the UH based programme, which are often significant;

Changes that occur year-on-year largely as a result of module evaluation or through programme evaluation in the CEP process.

Periodic Review of UH based programmes

In the context of periodic review:

- Staff teams at partner organisations delivering franchised programmes should always be involved whenever a UH based programme is reviewed;
- Major changes resulting from periodic review are normally introduced in franchised programmes simultaneously with the changes to the UH based programme (although in some instances it may be appropriate to delay the changes at partner organisations by a year);
- Major programme change resulting from periodic review, or at any other time, will not normally necessitate a revalidation of the franchised programme, subject to approval of the partner's ability to accommodate any necessary changes in staff or physical resources and teaching and learning practice. Full re-validation of a franchise will normally only take place when the period of validation expires (typically every 6 years).

Clearly, this approval process for revisions to franchised programmes is only reasonable if the partner has been fully involved in the periodic review. It is therefore necessary to define what 'involvement' means.

Involvement of partners in periodic review of UH based programmes

The minimum involvement of partner staff teams in the periodic review of UH based programmes should be such that the staff in partner organisations are fully aware of the changes being made, have had an opportunity to put forward their views on the intended changes, and have been given the opportunity to put forward their own suggestions for change.

Minimum Practice

- All programme development teams must include a representative from each franchise partnership;
- All documentation considered by and produced by the development team should be copied to the franchise partner representative;
- Partner representatives must have the opportunity to communicate their views by email;
- Committee agendas will have a standing item to consider franchise partnerships;
- Programme committees at partner organisations will consider programme review issues.

Preferred Practice

- Staff from partner organisations attend at least one development team meeting via MS Teams.

NB. Following the review of the UH based programme, any changes to the franchised programme are only required to be made when the franchise programme comes up for its scheduled revalidation.