University of Hertfordshire **UH**

Revalidation Handbook

Guidance notes for programme redevelopment teams for Collaborative Provision, in preparation for Revalidation

Important Note:
There is an alternative Handbook for Home-based periodic Review Events.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

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

The term revalidation refers only to collaboration provision. UH-based programmes undergo periodic review and there are some differences between periodic review and revalidation in terms of the documentation and process required.

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

All academic programmes are required to undergo revalidation no longer than every six years. The process 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 our [Academic Quality website](#)). Revalidation is essential to ensure that a programme remains coherent in the light of incremental changes.

The purpose of revalidation 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;
- changes at the partner institution and changes to the UH-Based programme in the case of franchises;
- 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 revalidation process

2.1   An overview of the revalidation process

The programme development team has the following remit for a revalidation :

- analysing the existing programme through the Initial Analysis
- Undertaking appropriate consultations throughout the process;
- revising the programme, as necessary;
- producing any necessary documentation; and
- presenting the redeveloped programme at a revalidation 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 revalidation process they need to focus on.

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 then culminate in a revalidation event, where any changes to the programme will be formally approved.

2.2 A diagrammatic summary of the Revalidation Process

No less than 2 months prior to Planning Meeting (preferably 3 months)

School initiates Revalidation → Note at SAC and ADC

Re-development team identified
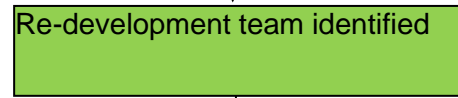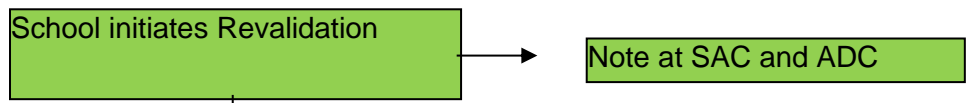
The Initial Analysis should be submitted **at least two weeks prior** to the Planning Meeting

Initial analysis of the existing programme -approved at the Panning Meeting (Part 1) (see section 3) ⇄ Consultation (see section 3 + the Academic Quality website
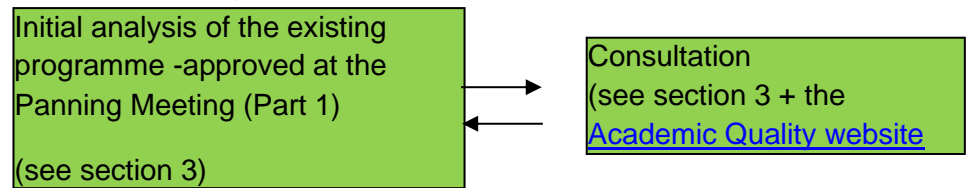
No later than 3 months prior to Academic Board approval.

Planning Meeting (see section 4) → Seek ADC approval for any new award title(s) (see section 3.5)

Programme re-development (see section 5). Review of:

- programme aims & LOs
- alignment with UH Graduate Attributes
- learning, teaching & assessment strategies
- student support & guidance
- learning resources

Identify & approve external panel members

⇄ Consultation (see section 5 + the Academic Quality website

Prepare/submit Periodic Review documentation (section 6)

No later than 1 month prior to Academic Board approval

Revalidation event

Conditions Meeting

DEADLINES

Academic Board
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5
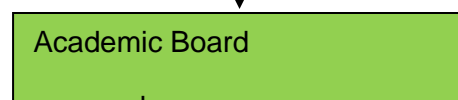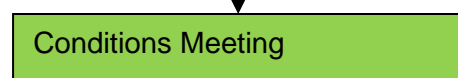
3 Initial analysis of the current programme and consultation

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).
- currency and appropriateness of 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 section 3.1);
- changes to the UH-based programme or changes at the partner (see section 3.7);
- the continuing availability of staff and physical resources (see section 3.8).

The Initial Analysis template is available for University staff from the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance SharePoint site.

3.1 Student life-cycle analysis

At the outset, you need to analyse programme management data, for the previous three academic years to help you to decide whether changes to your programme are necessary. Your Collaborative Partnership Leader will be able to advise you on the data you will be expected to produce.

3.1.1 Entry qualifications and student demand

Entry Qualifications

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

A record the programme's recruitment trends over the past 3 years.

3.1.2 Student retention – specifically the non-continuation rate

If the drop-out rate exhibits an upward trajectory 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 student surveys or module data may reveal.

3.1.3 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). Identify the level of achievement for students on the programme over the past 3 years. The CEP Action Plan guidance sets out the relevant benchmarks against which judgements should be made.

Reasons for a downward trajectory could include (i) problems with identified modules on the programme, (ii) entry requirements, (iii) various student experience-related matters that other evidence such as student surveys or module data may reveal.

3.1.4 Student employability

Where the numbers students achieving employment exhibits a downward trajectory, then the programme review team needs to analyse the possible reasons for this and agree on how to address it.

3.1.5 Student Feedback data

Poor results in student feedback questionnaires over the last three years should be considered. For example, in relation to module feedback, if the percentage agree score for an individual question in the most recent questionnaire is less than is less than 50%, or two or more questions have a score of less than 60%, an action should be generated.

3.1.6 Workplace Experience and Placement Learning

The University would like to see students on all programmes being offered opportunities for placements of other similar experience. You should provide details of the percentage of students on your programme who have completed any of these activities.

3.2 Learning, teaching and assessment strategies

Identify areas of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment in the programme and outline scope for enhancement. You should reflect here on whether the current learning and teaching strategy is appropriate and up to date. You should also evaluate the current assessment landscape. Consideration should be given to:

- relevant results of your consultation;
- developments in disciplinary pedagogy and technology-enhanced learning.

In addition, you should comment on:

- 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)

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 any 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.

With respect to consultation with students, you 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 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; and manageability of student workload

- support and guidance;

- organisation of the programme, including student voice;

- 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?

- 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 AMER Action Plan/ CEP or the collaborative operational delivery plan

Significant on-going issues arising from the AMER Action Plan or the collaborative operational delivery 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 at the partner institution which need to be considered. The programme development team will consider all new internal drivers that have been put in place since the last Revalidation /initial Validation of the programme, including changes to the UH-based provision (for franchises) 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 revalidation

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 Summary outcome of Initial Analysis

Having carried out the initial analysis, summarise (in bullet points) the major areas you consider the development team should need to focus on. This is really important as the revalidation panel will focus on these points and how the team addresses them in the re-development.

3.12 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 (Appendix A) 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 revalidation 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;

- the relevant Associate Director from CAQA;

- the Associate Dean of School AQA (Chair);

- the School Administrative Manager (or nominee);

- the Clerk to the revalidation event (from Academic Services).

The Planning Meeting will agree the:

- event date;

- panel membership;

- documentation to be provided for the event;

- submission date;

- programme of meetings for the event.

The meeting will also provide some check-list guidance to the development team leader as to key matters that must be taken into consideration during the review process and on the

completion of the revalidation document, the template for which is on the Centre for Academic Quality Assurance StudyNet site.

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) School link person must be a member of the programme development team where (i) the programme is to be delivered online and/or (ii) where the development involves a new pedagogical approach and/or (iii) 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. Outside these circumstances, it may be helpful to invite your LTIC School link person 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.

5.2 Programme Aims and Learning Outcomes

5.2.1 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 to provide an opportunity to identify what is distinctive about the programme. If you have changed your award title(s), you may also need to make changes to the programme aims.

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

5.2.2 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:
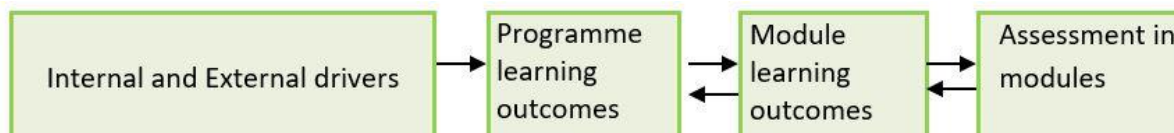
5.2.2.1 Well-designed programme learning outcomes:
- reflect relevant external drivers;
- are clear to staff, students and external examiners;
- relate to the programme aims.

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

- be in line with your School's Business Plan;
- 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.

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

5.2.4 External Reference Points
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.

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 revalidation.

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 assessment criteria at the specific level.

5.3   Learning, teaching and assessment

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

5.3.1   Learning and Teaching strategies

The learning and teaching strategy adopted should foster inquiry, critical thinking and curiosity through inclusive, intellectually challenging courses, and the revalidation document should set out how this will be achieved by:

- Outlining which specific Learning and Teaching innovation and research has been drawn upon to develop curricula and assessment which support and enhance independent student learning (i.e. describe the pedagogic models which have influenced the design of the programme; e.g. Problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, etc.).

- Highlighting specifically how the curricula and assessment incorporates students' engagement in research and inquiry (e.g. outline specifically where research-rich and informed teaching takes place in the curriculum and/or assessment including demonstrating how research feeds into the curriculum and outlining opportunities for student involvement in research activity as co-producers or active participants in research.

- Outlining and describing any initiatives which promote and encourage staff-student partnership in curriculum design, delivery and research (e.g. students as co-producers and active participants in learning and teaching activity; peer support initiatives; creation of learning activities or resources that require staff/student dialogues).

LTIC's School-facing Learning and Teaching Specialists can provide help here.

5.3.2   Assessment

To ensure assessment methods, support meaningful learning, the University values assessment for learning practice that:

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

- Stimulates dialogue;
- Considers student and staff effort.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These assessment for learning principles are synthesised (mainly) from the work of Gibbs and Simpson (2004), Nicol (2007) the NUS and the Weston Manor Group (2007).

5.3.3 Assessment landscape

Programmes are asked to produce an assessment landscape (Appendix 5 of the Periodic Review 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 validation/periodic review process but will need to be annually updated.

5.3.4 Grading Criteria

The programme must have in place School or programme level Grading Criteria that reflect the University Grading Criteria.

5.3.5 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. For example, academic writing skills should be embedded in modules and reflected assessments and assessment criteria. Increased expectations concerning academic writing skills should be reflected at higher levels of study.

5.3.6 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.

5.4 Student Support and Guidance

The Programme development team need to design an effective student support system for students on the programme. The support system should 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. Student support covers:

- academic tutors;
- personal 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";
- 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.

5.5   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 or research, professional, business and pedagogic expertise;

- Support staffing (administrative, technical) to include library representation;

- 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:

    o reading lists 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)

    o An agreed list of the software packages required to support the programme delivery (evidence that cost and licensing issues are understood, and the software will be included in PC labs as required).

- Any other resource issues (for example, investment in a distance learning mode, field trips, external input into the programme, work-related learning costs).

5.6 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 any 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.

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.

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.

Interim consultants should be external experts with a relevant professional/industrial/academic background. **When you engage an interim consultant, it is important that you provide them with a clear statement of the areas on which you want advice.** Failure to do this may result in vague and unhelpful feedback.

If the interim consultant's background is academic, they could be asked to advise on such matters as:

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

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

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

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.

5.7 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 revalidation document explains clearly the course structure for current students.

6 Preparing for the Revalidation event

6.1 Preparation of documentation for the event

The [Submission Document template](#) for the Revalidation sets out precisely what documentation is required for a revalidation event. It is vital that you select the right template as the requirements are different for home 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.

A key element of the revalidation process is a critical evaluation of the delivery of the programme(s) since it was last reviewed (or validated). The reader of the revalidation 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)

The University has prepared guidance on the preparation of Programme Specifications, which has been incorporated within the templates, available from SharePoint.

Programme Specifications are used to inform students (present and prospective), graduates, employers, the University and external bodies about the programme's learning outcomes and how these outcomes will be achieved. They are produced as part of the approval process for all UH programmes.

University guidance on the preparation of Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) together with a DMD template is also available from SharePoint.

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

6.3 External Panel Members

For all programme periodic revalidation 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. For certain programmes, it may be helpful to have a second External Panel member from industry or business to ensure that the curriculum has a sufficient industry or business focus.

Criteria for External Panel Members

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

Further guidance is available from the Academic Quality website.

7 The Revalidation Event

A formal Revalidation event is held at the culmination of the programme development process. Academic Services is responsible for organising all revalidation events. The event will likely take between a day and a two days depending upon the complexity of the event. Following the pandemic, not all these meetings will be face to face, and this can be discussed and decided at the Planning meeting stage. 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;
- 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.

From a reading of the documentation Panel members will submit their comments to the Chair of the Panel. These comments will be shared with the programme team prior to the event and will form the basis of the discussions at the various meetings.

The Panel will recommend approval (or non-approval) to Academic Board at the conclusion of the event. If approval is recommended, it will be subject to a number of standard requirements, and possibly conditions of approval and recommendations.

7.1 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 in completing the first annual monitoring report for the programme. 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