University of Hertfordshire UH

Validation Handbook

Guidance notes to programme teams in preparation for the Validation of a new programme

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1. The validation process

1.1. Overview of the validation process

Before any steps are taken, the School Executive Group (SEG) will first need to agree any proposal for the validation of a new programme within the School. The proposal will then be sent to the Academic Development Committee (ADC). If approved by ADC, the Dean of School will put in place a programme development team which will be responsible for leading the validation, with a remit including:

- designing all aspects of the programme;
- making appropriate consultations throughout the process;
- producing all necessary documentation;
- presenting the new programme at a validation event;
- completing any post-event tasks.

Ideally, the development process starts at least 18 months before the first delivery of a programme, to enable sufficient time to properly undertake all of these activities.

A diagram showing the validation process with a timeline can be found on the next page.

1.2. Diagram showing the Validation process

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

No later than 12 months prior to Academic Board approval

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│ SEG considers proposal  │
│ for new programme       │
└─────────────────────────┘
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             ▼
┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐
│  ADC Approval   │───────▶│  Noted at SAC   │
└─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘
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             ▼
┌─────────────────┐
│ Planning Meeting│──────────────┐
│ (see section 3) │              │
└─────────────────┘              │
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             ▼                   │
┌─────────────────────────┐      │
│ Curriculum Development  │      │
│ workshop with CLASS     │      │
└─────────────────────────┘      │
             │                   ▼
             ▼         ┌──────────────────────┐
┌─────────────────────────┐   │ Identify & approve   │
│ Programme development   │   │ external panel members│
│ (see section 4)         │   └──────────────────────┘
│ Design of:              │              
│ • Programme aims and LOs│   ┌──────────────────┐
│ • Alignment with UH     │◀─▶│ Consultation     │
│   Graduate Attributes   │   │ (see section 4   │
│ • Learning, Teaching and│   │ + Apx C)         │
│   Assessment strategies │   └──────────────────┘
│ • Student support &     │
│   guidance              │
│ • Learning resources    │
│ • Programme structure   │
│ • Programme Spec & DMDs  │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Prepare/submit submission│
│ documents (section 5)   │
└─────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────┐
│ Validation event│◀──────────────┘
└─────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────┐
│ Conditions meeting│
└─────────────────┘
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             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Academic Board approval │
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No later than 1 month prior to Academic Board approval

DEADLINES

2. First stages of programme development

2.1. Initiating the development

Proposals for a new programme or award title are usually initiated by Schools. The University encourages any innovative proposals for programmes from staff. New ideas should be raised with the Dean of School, for further discussion within the School, prior to preparation of the necessary paperwork for formal School and ADC approval (see Academic Development Committee approval below).

All proposals for new programmes and titles must be supported by the School Executive Group as part of future academic provision. In the case of a joint development with a substantial input from two or more Schools, both Schools must support the proposal before it can be submitted to ADC.

Ideally, the development process starts at least 18 months before the first delivery of a programme, to enable sufficient time to:

- establish the market for the programme;
- develop the programme itself;
- consult;
- undertake the approval processes.

Additionally, for all UK provision (with the exception of degree apprenticeships) the Competition and Markets Authority (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 is offering including those that are subject to validation.

2.2 Choice of award title(s)

One of the first tasks in the development process is to consider the award title(s) offered as part of the programme. In particular:

- Is/are the award title(s) attractive? It would be advisable to ask employers 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)?

Details of all of the approved categories of awards (University Certificate, BSc Hons, MA, etc.) are presented in UPR AS11 (Schedule of Awards), as well as guidance on, for example, what constitutes joint honours, combined honours, sandwich awards, study abroad and dual awards.

The choice of whether to use FDA or FDSc for Foundation Degrees, BA or BSc for undergraduate degrees and MA or MSc for Master's degrees should be based upon:

- the proportion of quantitative or scientific method modules in the programme;
- the traditional conventions of the discipline and programme under development;

- current usage in the sector in the United Kingdom for similar programmes.

The University's recommended practice is that simple award titles should be used wherever possible. They should convey to employers the knowledge, understanding and skills expected from a person holding such a qualification. Of course, the subject matter of a programme must justify the award title.

The programme development may consist of more than one course, and so more than one award title. Care should be taken to ensure that the different awards are easily differentiated. The use of brackets in award titles should be avoided wherever possible (for details see further UPR AS11).

In the case of a group of new 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.

As well as approving the title of the final award, titles of any interim awards need to be approved at the validation event.

It is essential that the programme learning outcomes to be achieved by a student to be awarded a particular named award are identified in the programme specification.

It should be noted that 'generic' learning outcomes for unnamed awards are published on the University's Corporate Governance website and programme specification templates provide a URL link against any unnamed awards identified.

Partner's Awards

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

2.3 Academic Development Committee approval

Initial approval must be sought as early as possible in the programme development process from the Academic Development Committee (ADC). In order to do this the School needs to complete a proposal paper on form ADC1 for ADC consideration by the advertised deadlines. This requires the recommendations from the Insight Manager (Marketing & Communications) and the Finance Manager for the School. The signed form ADC1 together

with a completed resources template and a completed risk assessment needs to be sent to the clerk of ADC and copy the email submission to the relevant Academic Services Officer (AQA) linked to the School, to alert Academic Services and CAQA of the development.

All forms as well as the relevant deadlines can be found on HertsHub:

[Academic Development Committee (ADC) - forms and deadlines (sharepoint.com)](sharepoint.com)

ADC has agreed that in approving Bachelors programmes (with and without honours) it should be regarded that the Committee's approval includes approval of the offering within those programme of award titles with the adjuncts (Sandwich), with a Year Aboard and Study Abroad as defined in UPR AS11. The programme specification must, of course, identify the award title and the adjuncts to be offered and that these adjuncts are permissible subject to successful completion and assessment of the activities required.

Initial approval is given for the stated award title (plus associated exit awards) and any subsequent proposal to change the award title must be approved by ADC before final approval may be ratified.

Approved developments will be added to the validation and periodic review schedule and a planning meeting organised by the Academic Services Officer (AQA).

2.4 The grouping of awards into programmes

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) 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', in order to reduce the administrative burden, as this results in many problems including meaningless or over-complex Programme Specifications, unhelpful CEP action plans and performance statistics, cumbersome Programme Boards, with different programme regulations for different students.

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 CAH code);

- 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 Action Plan 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.);
- 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.

3. The Planning Meeting

3.1. The purpose and attendance requirements

The purpose of the Planning Meeting is to agree with the Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance:

- 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;
- a date for the Herts Learning Workshop to be attended by the proposed programme team (see section 3.2);
- documentation to be provided for the event;
- submission date;
- event date;
- programme of meetings for the event.

The meeting will discuss key aspects of the programme e.g. mode(s) of delivery, awards to be made etc. and the various internal and external drivers which will impact upon the programme design.

The Planning Meeting is attended by the following staff:

(i) the development team leader (and author of the Initial Analysis if different);

(ii) the collaborative partnership leader (collaborative provision only);

(iii) the relevant Associate Director from CAQA;

(iv) the Associate Dean of School AQA (Chair);

(v) the Programme Academic Quality Administrator;

(vi) the Clerk to the Validation event (from Academic Services).

A template for the Planning Meeting is available from the CAQA SharePoint site.

3.2 Herts Learning considerations

'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 first stage of the development of the programme is to discuss and develop learning, teaching and assessment strategies that are aligned to the Herts Learning principles. At the Planning Meeting, a date will be confirmed for the programme team to have a curriculum development workshop with the Centre For Learning, Access and Student Success (CLASS).

3.3 The programme development team

The Chair and members of Programme Development Team are identified at the Planning Meeting. A senior member of academic staff (an Associate Dean of School or the existing/designated Programme Leader) leads the team. It should have appropriate representation to meet programme development needs. This is likely to include staff representing the major disciplines involved in the programme, and, on an occasional basis, representatives from Library and Computing Services (LCS), Careers, Employment and Enterprise, etc. The Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) has the right to attend committee meetings and will be available for consultation throughout the development process.

The member of staff from the Centre For Learning, Access and Student Success (CLASS) assigned to the School must be a member of the Programme Development Team.

4. Programme Design

4.1. External Drivers

The programme should be designed 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.

4.2. 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.
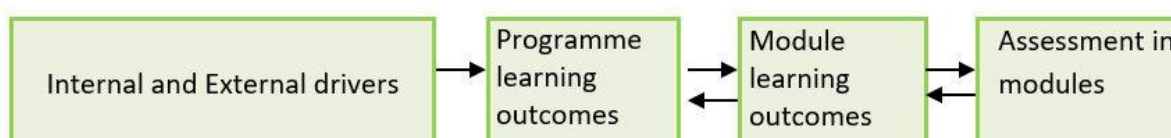
Programme Aims

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 (PLOs) 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 designing 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.

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.

As the development process progresses you will need to consider whether all the module learning outcomes for the 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 should be used to locate the level of a module and to inform the formulation of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the specific level.

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.

4.3. Herts Learning

The first stage of the development of the programme is to discuss and develop learning, teaching and assessment strategies that are aligned to the Herts Learning principles. At the Planning Meeting, a date will have been confirmed for the programme team to have a curriculum development workshop with the CLASS.

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

- Programme Leader
- Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality)
- Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching / Student Experience)
- Development team
- Students, from other of the School's existing programmes
- Members of the wider programme team, if possible
- Learning and Teaching Specialist linked to the School

- Educational Technologist linked to the School
- Information Manager linked to the School

During the development process the whole programme team will discuss the learning, teaching and assessment approach. Teams will use their reflections from the toolkit to inform the further stages of development, which will be clearly articulated in the submission document. A second Herts Learning workshop is available to assist with this, if the development team wishes it.

Support with developing specific activities associated with the principles, for example, use of authentic assessment, personalised learning, technology enhanced learning and inclusive teaching is available from the CLASS team and can be provided in a follow-up to the workshops.

4.4. Other Learning, Teaching and Assessment Considerations

Involving employers, professionals and alumni in programme delivery

The submission 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 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 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 only induction or bolt-on sessions about plagiarism, contract cheating, artificial intelligence tools 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 https://herts.instructure.com/courses/15480 (Herts login required). More personalised support is available from the LTIC Learning and Teaching Specialists and Educational Technologists.

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 validation.

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.

4.5. 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 Personal Tutoring can be found here:

Personal Tutoring Toolkit

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.

4.6. Resources

The human and physical resource needs of the programme need to be considered as part of the development process. The Programme Development Team will need to consider:

- academic staffing (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);
- physical resources (laboratories, equipment, software, hardware, etc.), with additional resource requirements identified;
- learning resources (review of existing and additional requirements of books, journals, online resources, etc.);
- any other resource issues (investment in a distance learning mode, field trips, external input into the programme, work-related learning costs, VLE development, etc.).

4.7. Stakeholder feedback on the proposals

During the development process, consultation with the relevant stakeholders in the proposed programme must take place. The School's Professional / Industrial Advisory Group will be one source of feedback. It is important that feedback is sought about the currency and educational challenge of the course content. The submission document should set out the responses to the feedback given by relevant employers and any other stakeholders in the provision, such as service providers / commissioners and service users, where appropriate.

In addition, 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. This advice must include the currency and educational challenge of the course content. 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;
- the educational challenge offered by 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.

The interim consultant / external advisor 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 lists 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

There are limitations on who can act as an interim consultant:

- 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. Preparing for the Validation event and afterwards

5.1. Preparation of documentation for the event

A range of documentation is required for the validation event and this will have been discussed at the Planning Meeting.   The main document is the **Validation Submission Document**, which includes the following appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Programme Specifications: Word template until December, then directly into Document Management system
- Appendix 2 - Programme Information: you need to create a General site in Canvas using the module planner. See 5.3 below.

- Appendix 3 – Definitive Module Documents Herts Learning Tagged DMD template until December, then directly into Document Management system
- Appendix 4 – Module information for each module that will run in the first semester after validation, including reading Lists, details of software packages and any special physical resources for all modules. The Planning Meeting may require further information to be included. Link to generic LCS video: Getting started Guide for 2020 - YouTube
- Appendix 5 – The Assessment Landscape
- Appendix 6 – Resources statement and staff CVs. Staff CVs must be included with the resources statement and should provide detailed information about the HE teaching experience of staff
- Appendix 7 – Minutes of the Planning Meeting
- Appendix 8 – Minutes of the meetings of the Development Committee
- Appendix 9 - Herts Learning Toolkit reflection document
- Appendix 10 - Feedback from all stakeholders consulted during the programme development, together with feedback from any interim consultant and the Programme Development Team's response to this feedback.
- Appendix 11 – Full ADC Submission and minute (Chair of the Panel and Associate Director (AQA) only).

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

All templates are available for staff on HertsHub in the Periodic Review/Validation section:

Templates for Validation

5.2. Preparation of the Programme Specification (PS) and Definitive Module Documents (DMDs)

The University has acquired a new cloud-based system, the Curriculum System (formerly Programme and Curriculum Management System, PCMS) for storing the information contained in Programme Specifications and Definite Module Documents. There will be a period of transition whilst we move away from using MS Word templates to using the Curriculum system. Please see Processes and Support for inputting and amending Programme and Curriculum information.docx for details on what this means for you. Below you will also find flowcharts of the approval processes for new DMDs and changes to existing DMDs, which need to be completed by the 31st of January 2025, as well as flowcharts of the approval processes for new Programme Specifications and changes to existing Programme Specifications, which need to be completed for home programmes by the 31st of March 2025. Please see the section Curriculum System above or click HERE for further information on the new Curriculum system.

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.

Please see [Processes and Support for inputting and amending Programme and Curriculum information.docx](#) for details on how to prepare your Programme Specification.

Definite Module Documents

For each module on the programme, a Definite Module Document (DMD) needs to be completed. As part of this, new module codes need to be requested from Academic Services (AS).

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).

For examples of existing practices it is possible to view all existing UH DMDs by logging in as a guest to the DMD database.

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.

Please see [Processes and Support for inputting and amending Programme and Curriculum information.docx](#) for details on how to prepare new DMDs.

5.3. Demonstration Programme Site

To create a demonstration Programme site, please follow the following steps:

1. Log in to the VPN
2. Go to https://moduleplanner.herts.ac.uk/moduleplanner
3. Scroll down to Managed General Purpose Websites
4. Check that a site with your proposed name does not already exist.
5. If not, click, 'Create New Website'.
6. Enter the name of your site. It is advisable to call it '[Proposed programme name e.g. BA (Hons) Business Administration] Demo Programme Site'.
7. Enter a description explaining that it is the demonstration programme site for the validation process of the proposed programme.
8. Select the School that you are from.
9. Select 'Only registered staff can add additional staff' and then click, 'Create New Website'.
10. Email hertslearning@herts.ac.uk and ask to be added as staff to the CLASS' Demonstration Programme Site.
11. Once added, import the template programme site content to your new site and let CLASS know when you have done this.
12. Go back to Module Planner and add staff from the development team who will be contributing the adding of content to the site.
13. Commence work on the programme specific content of your site.

For support with any of the above, please refer to the relevant pages on our [Technology for Learning and Teaching](#) site.

Once the programme has been validated and has had a course code generated, you will be able to create the official programme site linked to that course code and then import all of the completed content from your demo site. You will then need to give students access to the proper site linked to the validated course code.

5.4. External Panel Members

For all programme Validation 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 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 is available here:
External involvement in Validation and Review activity.

5.4. The Validation Event

A formal Validation event is held at the culmination of the programme development process. Academic Services is responsible for organising all Validation events. The event will likely take between half a day and a day and a half depending upon the complexity of the event. It would normally 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 students from the School;
- A meeting with the programme development team;
- A final private meeting to discuss outcomes, conditions, recommendations and commendations.

The Validation 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 or a recommendation may be made for aspects of the programme to be reviewed under the [Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP)](#) process.

No additional documentation is required to support the discussion. The purpose of the Validation 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.

The Panel will recommend approval (or not) to Academic Board at the conclusion of the event. If approval is recommended it may be subject to a number of standard requirements, conditions of approval and recommendations.

5.5. Post Event - Conditions and Recommendations

As soon as is practical after the Event, there will be a conditions meeting, chaired by the Deputy/ 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, definitive module documents and, if applicable, a Course Factsheet by the Associate Director of Academic Quality Assurance.

In addition, the Panel may impose conditions and/or make recommendations about the design or operation of the programme. 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 Planning process.

The purpose of the conditions meeting is for the panel to confirm that all standard requirements and conditions have been fulfilled. A completed form AQ4 will also be signed off by the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) and by the Associate Director of 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.