Programme Revalidation Policy and Procedure

This is a defined Policy and Procedure which all Faculties are required to follow.

1. Introduction

1.1 This document describes the policy and procedure for revalidating programmes of study and covers;

- Any taught undergraduate and postgraduate programme leading to a University of Southampton award.
- Research degrees with a taught component (e.g. Engineering Doctorate).
- Programmes developed with Partner Institutions are subject to the partner approval procedures detailed in the Collaborative Provision Policy.
- Major changes planned outside of the normal validation cycle or where it multiple changes have been made which, in the opinion of the Associate Dean (Education and Student Experience) adds up to a major change.

2. Principles

2.1 Programmes are validated for a defined period only (normally a maximum of five years)

2.2 Where a validation is proposed beyond the five year period of approval, the Faculty concerned must present the rationale for this and request an extension of the period of validation from Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).

2.3 In good time before this validation expires, programmes must again undergo revalidation in accordance with the procedures set out in this document, to assess their continuing validity and relevance in the light of:

- the relevance of the programme to Faculty and University education and research strategies;
- the effect of changes, including those which are cumulative and those made over time, to the design and operation of the programme;
- 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 teaching and learning;
- changes to external points of reference, such as subject benchmark statements;
- relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Boards' (PSRB) requirements;
- changes in student demand, employer expectations and employment opportunities;
- data relating to student progression and achievement;
- student feedback, including the National Student Survey (NSS) or other student survey tool relevant to the programme.

2.4 At the first meeting of AQSC each academic year Faculties will submit their programme revalidation plans for the coming academic year. Once received, these will be disseminated by the Secretary of AQSC to Directors of Professional Services in the spirit of improved communication and planning.

3. Advice and Assistance

3.1 Programme Leads[1] should consult their Faculty Academic Registrar (FAR) for advice on revalidation arrangements, the timescales to be followed and the support available.

3.2 Further advice relating to the programme revalidation policy and procedure should be directed to the Quality Standards and Accreditation Team (QSAT).

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[1] This role may be undertaken by the Programme Lead or the Director of Programmes where the structure of programmes/Faculties makes this more suitable.

4. Timing

4.1   The actual length of the lead in time is impacted by both internal and external drivers relating to publication of information for students and applicants.

4.2   The Rollover and Publication of Programme and Module Information for students and applicants Policy states that all programme information will go live in week 29.

4.3   The timeline for revalidation of programmes involving educational collaborations (particularly high-risk international partnerships) will take longer if the partner approval is due for renewal. Please see the University Collaborative Provision Policy for more information and discuss with the Collaborative Provision Advisor in QSAT.

5. STAGE 1 – PROGRAMME EVALUATION

> **The purpose of Stage 1 is to collect the information to help confirm the continued strategic fit and viability of the programme(s). The evaluation will consider whether it continues to perform well (as defined by the University/Faculty performance indicators and criteria).**

5.1   The Programme Lead will complete an evaluative report on the operation of the programme since the last validation.

5.2   The report will reflect on the performance and operation of the programme(s) over the validation period using of evidence and information from the following sources:
   o   annual programme and module reports;
   o   external examiner reports;
   o   reports from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
   o   NSS or other student survey tools relevant to the programme;
   o   staff and student feedback from module and annual programme reports staff/student liaison committees, focus groups,
   o   minutes of Faculty committees that consider modules;
   o   feedback from former students and their employers if available;
   o   careers practitioners[2] Employability Exchange, DHLE/LEO outcomes;
   o   statistical data[3]

5.3   The Programme Lead will use the evidence, and a draft of the Evaluative report to work with the Faculty Finance Manager to review:
   • The student numbers on the programme by year and how these compare to the original targets
   • The factors that may limit capacity on the programme
   • Whether there are any anticipated specific learning resource requirements, placements or software arising from any change to the programme.

5.4   If the Programme Lead identifies any marketing aspects that are not performing as expected, the Programme Lead will use the evidence, and a draft of the Evaluative report to work with the with the Faculty Senior Marketing Manager to review:
   • Target numbers not being achieved/declining over the last 3 years
   • Entry requirements not being met
   • Number of applications dropping
   • Quality of applications dropping (lots of applications, few offers)
   • Unexpected change in mix of UK/EU/IO students
   • Low conversion rate of applicants
   • Programme title is not relevant/understood across audiences
   • Programme awareness/understanding is low
   • If postgraduate –the pricing is not in line with competitor group

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[2] Each academic unit has a designated Careers Practitioner(s), who can offer expertise around careers and employability. We would recommend a conversation in preparation to complete this template. The Employability Exchange provides access to key information including labour market reports and a developing good practice centre.

[3] The Faculty CQA team will extract the relevant information from the Faculty and Programme Performance Applications, League tables, Graduate Destinations (DLHE) Qlikview Apps.

5.6 If the Programme Lead identifies other aspects that they would like advice or support the following list of internal stakeholders may be a useful starting point.

5.7 If the evaluative report raises no concerns, there is no requirement to consult with internal stakeholders.

Stakeholder	Reason for contact	Contact details
Students	Experience of the programme, recommendations for enhancements to content or structure	Appropriate Faculty forum – e.g. SSLC or specific focus groups.
FAR or nominee of Faculty	Find out more: https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/about-saa/registry-faculty/index.page	Varies
FAR or nominee of partner Faculty (compulsory for joint programmes)	Find out more: https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/about-saa/registry-faculty/index.page	Varies
iSolutions (digital learning team)	For programmes where there is a desire to move to increased digital learning or electronic support	Digital-Learning@soton.ac.uk
Library	Advice relating to the resourcing of learning material, support for students. Each discipline has their own librarian.	Find out more: http://library.soton.ac.uk/home/contact
Institutional Research	The identification of new markets. Usually working at a strategic School/Faculty level to focus on overall development of the student offering.	inres@soton.ac.uk
International Office	Penetration of existing or identification of new international markets. To obtain market intelligence internationally in order to evaluate demand and success of programme in different markets. Advice on visiting particular countries or obtaining a country analysis.	
Student Services, (Enabling Services and First Support)	Advice relating to the equity of programmes and the particular needs of students likely to be attracted to the programme.	studserv@soton.ac.uk
Student and Academic Administration (timetabling/visas)	Advice relating to capacity within timetabling or UKVI rules relating to teaching locations. https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/about-saa/registry-faculty/curriculum-timetabling.page https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/about-saa/registry-faculty/visas.page	curriculum@soton.ac.uk, saavisa@southampton.ac.uk
Assistant Director SAA (Head of University Admissions).	Find out more at: https://www.southampton.ac.uk/studentadmin/about-saa/registry-faculty/roa.page	admissions.hub@southampton.ac.uk

5.2 At any time, the Faculty may also ask for input and advice from internal stakeholders where additional investigation is required. Performance criteria may also vary by discipline and

Faculty, and additional requirements can be requested by Faculty Executive Group (FEG) and/or Faculty Programmes Committee (FPC).

5.3 The Evaluative report (including feedback from internal stakeholders and the Programme Lead response) will be reviewed by the ADE who will make recommendations to the FEG.

<u>Documentation</u>
5.4 The following documentation is presented to FEG;

- Evaluative Report
- Draft Programme Specification

<u>Role of the FEG</u>
5.5 The FEG will use the information provided to it to consider whether:

- there is still a market demand
- student number trends are increasing, static or decreasing
- the programme continues to fit within the University /Faculty/Academic Unit portfolio
- progression and outcomes data is satisfactory
- the University is delivering a good student experience – NSS / DLHE etc
- there is a good academic rationale for the programme to continue;
- the University has the appropriate resources (including staffing) to support the delivery of the programme and to provide a high quality student experience;

<u>Outcomes</u>
5.6 Following consideration of the information provided FEG will make one of the following decisions:

- Approve the revalidation proposal
- Approve the revalidation proposal with conditions and resubmit to FEG
- Reject revalidation proposal and recommend programme for closure.

5.7 The decision of the FEG will be forwarded to the Secretary to AQSC for report to AQSC.

6. STAGE 2 – PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of Stage 2 is to facilitate the development of the programme specification, module profiles and programme related information.

6.1 Following approval by FEG, the Programme Lead should continue to update the programme information with any changes that need to be made.

<u>Validation Preparation</u>
6.2 In consultation with the ADE, the Programme Lead and the FAR should agree the timeline for the academic scrutiny of the programme, and, if required, the meeting of the Faculty Scrutiny Group (FSG).

6.3 If the programme involves a partner institution that is due for re-approval, the meeting of FSG and the Collaboration Approval Panel (Stage 3 of the Partner Renewal Process) may meet at the partner institution. It may be possible to run a combined panel for some arrangements depending on the expertise of individual panel members, however, the two processes should remain distinct and result in two separate reports, one focussed on the programme and one focussed on the partner.

Appointment of External Advisor
6.4 The Programme Lead, in consultation with academic colleagues, should nominate an External Advisor) to participate in the revalidation of the programme(s).

6.5 The nomination must be submitted to the ADE for approval. The External Advisor Policy, including the criteria for nomination and nomination form is available from the Quality Handbook.

6.6   The External Advisor must complete a [report](#) using the template available from the Quality Handbook. The comments and feedback from of the External Advisor must be recorded. The External Advisor will receive a response to their comments.

6.7   Where a single External Advisor would be unable to comment in an expert manner on all the disciplines involved in the programme, it is expected that additional External Advisor's should be appointed. Similarly, for joint honours or multi-disciplinary programmes there may be a requirement for more than one External Advisor so that the necessary expertise in all major disciplines is covered.

Academic Scrutiny
6.8   Revalidation is underpinned by academic and professional peer review by internal colleagues and external subject specialists. This takes the form of the Faculty Scrutiny Group (FSG).

6.9   The Faculty Scrutiny Group will meet with members of the programme team. The composition of the programme team should be such that there would be suitable representation from subjects included in the programme. Attention should be paid to appropriate subject representation for joint programmes across disciplines or Faculties. It is recommended that representation should be a minimum of 3 members of the programme team in addition to the Programme Lead (e.g. Module Leads, Year Coordinators, Admissions Tutor, Specialisation representatives). A greater number of members of the programme team would be appropriate for joint programmes.

Documentation
6.10   The following documentation is required for Academic Scrutiny;

- Evaluative Report and overview of any proposed changes to the programmes
- Programme Specification
- Module profiles for all new modules and core and compulsory modules already approved.
- External Advisor report and response
- Internal Stakeholder reports and responses

Faculty Scrutiny Group constitution
6.11   The membership of a FSG must include as a minimum:

- Associate Dean (ESE) or nominee (Chair)
- AQSC representative (a member of academic staff external to the Faculty nominated by the Faculty and approved by AQSC).
- Student representative (normally from the same Faculty as the location of the programme, but may be a representative from the Students' Union where necessary)
- FAR or nominee
- External Advisor
- Member of staff with requisite expertise (compulsory for on-line/distance learning programmes)
- Member of FPC (only if a member is not already present)

6.12   Other members of staff with relevant expertise may be invited to join FSG as required, including those from professional services and the partner institution (for collaborative arrangements).

6.13   As a member of FSG, if a student is not able to attend the meeting of the FSG, s/he should be encouraged to give views on any programme changes through alternative means.

6.14   The member of FPC is a full member of FSG but will also be asked to confirm to FPC that the appropriate level of scrutiny has been given to the revalidation proposal.

6.15   The AQSC representative is asked to confirm on behalf of AQSC that the programme revalidation procedure has been followed appropriately.

6.16 Where appropriate, representatives from PSRBs may also be invited to participate in FSG, to enable both PSRB accreditation and University revalidation to take place simultaneously. In such cases, there may be requirements for additional documentation and/or for engagement with the programme team.

Role

6.17 The role of FSG, on behalf of FPC is to confirm;

- that the programme continues to meet threshold academic standards,
- that all elements and process have been completed appropriately,
- that any conditions set and/or amendments required by the FEG have been met
- that the comments of the stakeholders have been considered and addressed.

Outcomes

6.18 FSG will make one of the following decisions:

- Endorse the proposal to revalidate the programme and recommend approval by FPC.
- Endorse the proposal to revalidate the programme and recommend approval by FPC with conditions
- Require further work to the programme documentation and resubmit proposal to revalidate the programme to FSG.
- Reject proposal and close programme(s)

6.19 If further work is required, the Programme Lead will undertake this as necessary and revise the programme information to address any issues raised by FSG. If required (see above), s/he will submit this for further scrutiny or sign off by FSG.

6.20 Once finalised, FSG will agree the outcome of the academic scrutiny and make a recommendation to the FPC.

6.21 FSG will draw general conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. Confirmation and evidence that these conditions have been met will be monitored by the FPC. FSG will identify, where applicable, any general issues emerging from the discussion, including examples of good practice, which should be drawn to the attention of FPC.

6.22 A written report of FSG including any recommendations/commendations/conditions should be completed and submitted to FPC.

7. **STAGE 3 – PROGRAMME APPROVAL**

The purpose of Stage 3 is to record the approval of the programme by FPC and to manage the administrative elements of programme set-up and communication post approval. FPC receives the recommendation of FSG

Validation

7.1 FPC will receive the written report and the recommendation of FSG.

7.2 The member of FPC in attendance at the Scrutiny Group will confirm that an appropriate level of scrutiny was given to the proposal.

Outcomes

- Accept the recommendation of FSG
- Reject the recommendation of FSG

7.3 If a decision is taken to close an existing programme, the University's policy on programme closures must be followed, to ensure that appropriate provision is made for applicants, offer holders and current students.

Post Approval

7.4 The revalidation stage is completed after FPC has accepted the recommendation of FSG.

7.5 Once the Faculty decision has been taken and, where applicable, it is confirmed that any conditions have been fulfilled, the Secretary to FPC will notify the Programme Lead and the Secretary of AQSC.

7.6 The Faculty CQA team is responsible for ensuring that all necessary action is taken to update the programme(s) and associated modules within Banner.

7.7 The Curriculum and Timetabling Team (CTT) is responsible for the creation of programme and module codes.

7.8 The FAR, in conjunction with Faculty and Registry SAA Teams, will ensure that the programme has an accurate KIS.

7.9 The FAR, in conjunction with Faculty and Registry SAA Teams, will ensure that any new exemptions or variations to University Regulations are submitted for inclusion in the University Calendar.

7.10 The ADE will ensure that any actions arising from programme validations are included in the Faculty Action Plan and monitored via FPC.

7.11 The Secretary to AQSC will note the decision of FPC and will notify;

- Head of Faculty Finance
- Communications and Marketing (faculty and central)
- Institutional Research
- Library
- iSolutions
- Student Services
- Recruitment and Admissions Team (SAA)
- Curriculum and Timetabling Team (SAA)
- Head of Admissions
- AQSC

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