GUIDANCE ON PROGRAMME DOCUMENTATION
FOR VALIDATION/REVALIDATION (revised June 2015)

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1. INTRODUCTION

VALIDATION

The aim of a validation event is to consider a proposal for a new programme, or programmes, and determine whether or the proposal meets the requirements of the University with regard to the:

- **academic standards of the award(s);**
- **quality and standards of the learning opportunities** available to students;
- **validity and relevance of the programme(s)**.

A satisfactory outcome will lead to the validation of the programme for five years.

REVALIDATION

The aim of a revalidation event is to review a currently validated programme and consider whether or not it continues to meets the requirements of the University with regard to the:

- **academic standards of the award(s);**
- **quality and standards of the learning opportunities** available to students**;**
- continuing **validity and relevance of the programme**.

A satisfactory outcome will lead to the revalidation of the programme for a further five years.

Monitoring and review of a programme will be carried out by the College as part of the process for bringing a programme for Revalidation. In addition, revalidation provides an opportunity for the College to propose any minor/major amendments to the programme.

Documentation

For validations and revalidations, the following documentation will be received:

- Programme Document
- Internal validation/revalidation minutes
- College Supporting Information and Documents

Electronic <u>and</u> hard copy documentation must be submitted to the University **at least three working weeks in advance** of the date of the event. (Please note that the three week deadline is non-

negotiable, and where Christmas and holiday periods fall within these weeks it is expected that documentation will be submitted earlier to allow for this). The University cannot guarantee that an event will proceed as scheduled if the documentation is not submitted by the due deadline. It is the College's responsibility to ensure that the documents submitted have been through the internal review processes and are of the desired standard, having been fully checked and proof read.

2. COLLEGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS

College Supporting Information and Documents should be provided for the re/validation panel. These will outline **College-level policies and procedures** which apply to all or a number of its programmes and, which whilst not programme-specific, have a direct impact on/relevance to the programme in question. These might include: Scholarly strategy; teaching hours; work-based learning; College resources; student support mechanisms; staff development and scholarly activity; HE in FE and the differences in how this is approached; assessment regulations.

3. DEFINITIVE RECORD (PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION)

Expectation A2.2 of Part A of the QAA Quality Code (Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards) requires that:

'Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni'.

Many institutions (including Lancaster) refer to the definitive record as a Programme Specification and this must be provided for all programmes presented for re/validation. It may be included as a section in the Programme Document (see section 4) or as a separate document.

It is likely that the College will have its own template for Programme Specifications developed to conform to this guidance.

> **Whilst the relevant QAA Benchmark Statements should be used to inform Programme Specifications, components of these Statements should not simply be transposed into the Programme Specification.**

As a minimum, the Programme Specification should include the following information:

- FHEQ level
- Subsidiary exit awards (see below)
- Relevant subject benchmark statement(s)
- External accreditation
- Educational purpose (programme aims) (see below)
- Programme learning outcomes (see below)
- Programme structure and requirements including number of credits, minimum and maximum programme length, modules and credits, details of work based learning/compulsory placement
- Learning and teaching, including, where appropriate, the integration of work based learning
- Assessment, including, where appropriate, the integration of work based learning
- Assessment regulations

Subsidiary exit awards

A subsidiary exit award is, where approved, an award which can be made in acknowledgment of credit for elements of study which have been successfully completed even though the intended target (substantive) award has not been achieved.

The QAA require that the criteria for subsidiary exit awards and their learning outcomes should be defined at the point of approval (see below)

Educational purpose (programme aims)

Chapter B1 (Programme Design, Development and Approval) of the QAA Quality Code states that:

'Programme design and development begins with determining the intended purpose(s) of the programme within the context of the higher education provider's strategic approach. These may include personal, professional, vocational and/or academic development; preparation for knowledge creation and research; or preparation for specific or general employment.'

Therefore, the educational purpose (programme aims) should be clearly and succinctly articulated. It is expected that the educational purpose is referenced against National Subject Benchmarks and/or Professional Body Requirements/Sector Endorsed Frameworks. Module aims and learning outcomes should be detailed in the module specifications - see below.

Programme learning outcomes

Chapter B1 (Programme Design, Development and Approval) of the QAA Quality Code states that:

'Once the purpose of the programme has been established, programme design considers which intended learning outcomes are necessary to achieve that purpose and how students are enabled to achieve these. This takes into account the knowledge, understanding and skills which students are intended to gain, and the level of knowledge, understanding and skills which they are expected to have on entry to the programme'.

The programme learning outcomes should be stated and the level of each outcome should be detailed. Design of the programme outcomes should take into account the knowledge, understanding and skills students are expected to gain and they should be referenced against National Subject Benchmarks and/or Professional Body Requirements/Sector Endorsed Frameworks.

Learning outcomes for any subsidiary exit awards should be defined. Where a subsidiary exit award is at a different FHEQ level from the substantive award then clearly the learning outcomes for the subsidiary exit award have to be explicitly aligned to the different FHEQ level.

Entry requirements

The following information about entry requirements **may be included**, but is not required, **within the Programme Specification**. If not included in the Programme Specification however, it must be provided elsewhere within the Programme Document:

- general entry requirements;

- specific entry requirements ;
- requirements for work placements (where relevant);
- requirements for CRB checks (where relevant);
- any <u>programme-specific</u> admissions procedures.

<u>Note</u>: Entry to Lancaster University Honours-level programmes which top-up to Foundation Degrees is available only to those students who have successfully achieved the relevant Lancaster-validated Foundation Degree (with certain exceptions). Please refer to the University's Guidelines for the **Design of Foundation Degrees and Honours top-up years** *for further details.*

> **College-level admissions policies and procedures, including procedures for applicants with a disability, may be specified in an appendix or College Document.**

Progression opportunities

Information about progression opportunities **may be included**, but is not required, **within the Programme Specification**. If not included in the Programme Specification however, it must be provided elsewhere within the Programme Document. This information should cover the opportunities for students to progress into:

- further education (including Masters level education for students graduating from a Bachelors programme);
- training/continuing professional development (where relevant);
- employment.

4. PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

The **Programme Document** (including the programme specification) is the overall definitive record of the programme for the period of its validation, and should be kept as such by both the College and the University. Any amendments to the programme approved during the period of validation (e.g. module amendments) are kept by the University with the Programme Document to form an integral record, and the College should also ensure an integral record is kept.

The Programme Document should describe the programme clearly and succinctly but include sufficient detail as appropriate for the Panel to be able to form a clear judgement on the proposal. The College is responsible for the quality of the Programme Document, both in terms of the information it contains and its presentation. It should be noted that the quality of the Programme Document has a direct bearing on the event itself, as a Panel is likely to ask more questions where there is a lack of clarity about any aspect of the programme.

The information to be included in a Programme Document, as described below, provides a guide to the information which must be included. Colleges may use their own templates for the production of Programme Documents, provided that the information described below is incorporated and presented in a logical manner.

CONTENT OF PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

Cover Sheet

The cover sheet of the Programme Document must include the following information:

- full programme title(s);
- programme streams (where relevant);
- date of production;
- draft/version number.

A full numbered list of contents, with page numbers and full details of appendices, must also be provided.

Rationale

A short rationale for the development of the programme should be provided. Information on this should include:

- alignment with the College's strategy and benefits for the College;
- location of the programme within the School portfolio of programmes;
- market demand for the programme from employers, including local needs;
- market demand for the programme from prospective students;
- national developments in the subject area;
- external reference points, such as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), Sector Skills Councils, representative employer organisations etc.

Where a programme is being presented for revalidation, the rationale must include:

- a summary of programme monitoring and review discussions;
- how these have influenced the programme being presented for revalidation;
- a summary of any changes that are being proposed for the programme as a result.

> **Please include evidence of engagement with stakeholders and any market research undertaken to assess demand for the programme.**

Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body requirements

Where relevant, information should be provided on the requirements of PSRBs for:

- separately awarded qualifications by an external body;
- programme accreditation leading to entry to a profession or other regulated occupation.

> **Where successful completion of the programme, or elements of the programme, enables a separate external qualification to be awarded (which may be dependent on separate assessment) a map of the modules against the requirements of the external qualification should be provided (this may be included in an appendix).**

Programme design and structure

This section should be used to **summarise how the programme has been put together and the factors which have influenced curriculum design and content, including the programme learning outcome mapping**. The section should consider the following areas (where relevant):

- **academic and occupational guidelines** and how they have been used as reference in structuring the programme;
- any **work based learning** included in the programme and why this has been included in the programme design ((nb: the section on Teaching, Learning and Assessment should provide the detail on the delivery and management of work based learning);
- information on how any relevant **PSRB requirements, Sector Skills Council Frameworks, NOS,** and any **embedded qualifications** have been taken account of.

The following information should also be included:

- A **diagrammatic structure of the programme**, incorporating levels and credit values, including a structure for part-time delivery if a part-time route is to be provided.
- A **table mapping the programme learning outcomes** against the individual modules contributing to the programme. This mapping should indicate where, in the modules, each of the learning outcomes are *delivered* and *assessed*.

> **The University has specific guidelines on the design of Foundation Degree programmes and their related Honours top-up programmes. Please refer to the document Guidance on the design of Foundation Degrees and Honours top-up years.**

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

This section is a key part of the Programme Document, and it should both:

(a) Summarise the learning, teaching and assessment **methods** employed, and the **strategies** which underpin them; and

(b) provide a rationale as to why these methods and strategies have been used.

> **This section should demonstrate clearly how learning, teaching and assessment methods and strategies support student progression through the programme.**
>
> **This section should also describe in a separate sub-section the learning, teaching and assessment of any work based learning which occurs within the programme (see sub-heading below).**

The following information must be provided in this section:

- A summary table showing, for each module, **indicative hours per student for the different types of learning and teaching activity** (including wholly independent learning). These should add up to the total learning hours for the module;
  (Note: within the sector, the expectation is that 1 credit is indicative of 10 learning hours; for example, the total learning hours associated with a 15-credit module (including independent learning) would be 150.)
- A **module assessment table**, summarising the assessment methods (including word-lengths and timings for any time-constrained assessments and presentations) and weightings (% contribution to the overall module mark) and indicative timings;
- **Student support mechanisms** which provide academic support and guidance to enable students, including those with special needs, to complete the programme successfully.

Work Based Learning

Where work based learning is a feature of the programme, in whatever form, information should be provided on:

- where the work based learning takes place within the programme;
- where, within the programme, the assessment of work based learning takes place;
- how work based learning opportunities are managed, monitored, and reviewed, and what particular arrangements there are for student support. (E.g. identification and quality assurance of placement opportunities; management arrangements; learning agreements; mentoring/supervision arrangements and support for employers.)

Equality Impact Assessment

Chapter B1 (Programme Design, Development and Approval) of the QAA Quality Code states that:

'Higher education providers promote inclusive practices in learning and teaching. The learning opportunities offered provide every student with an equal opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Through processes for programme approval, higher education providers take into account the entitlements of students with protected characteristics, including ensuring that intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, learning environments and planned assessment methods do not create any unnecessary barriers. The criteria to be considered in programme design and development, and tested in programme approval ensure that the needs of the range of students likely to engage with the programme are taken into account.'

An equality impact assessment statement should be included within the main body of the programme document which details how the entitlements of students with protected characteristics have been considered within the programme design and development.

Resources

This section should describe the resources available to support programme delivery, including:

- physical resources;
- e-learning resources;
- staffing (including any relevant technical support).

A list of staff against individual modules should be included, which should indicate their status (full-time; fractional; part-time hourly paid). The programme leader should also be identified. (CVs of individual staff must be provided as an appendix).

Where additional resources are required to support the programme, and/or new staff appointments are to be made, this information should be provided.

> **Whilst general College statements on resources, and policies for renewal and upgrade, may be included in an appendix, the resources section in the main body of the document must describe the <u>specific</u> and/or <u>specialist</u> resources available to the programme.**

Quality management and enhancement

This section should briefly outline the policies, processes, and procedures which underpin the quality management of the programme. The document may state what is in place and refer to full procedures within the College supporting documents. Areas of enhancement should be described here, including staff development and other enhancement activities.

5. MODULE SPECIFICATIONS

Colleges will have their own templates for module specifications; however these must include the following information:

- level ;
- number of credits;
- total learning hours;
- outline syllabus;
- LTA strategy (with reference to the learning outcomes);
- learning outcomes;
- contact hours detailed for different activities;
- methods of assessment (including word-lengths and timings for any time-constrained assessments and presentations) and weightings (% contribution to the overall module mark);
- select bibliography: this should cover all **core** and **secondary texts** to be used and key websites (where appropriate).

The LTA strategy, outline syllabus, learning outcomes, and assessment described in the module specification should demonstrate that the module is appropriate for its proposed level and credit value. The map of programme learning outcomes against modules provided in an earlier section of the document should indicate how the module contributes to programme learning outcomes.

6. APPENDICES

Appendices to the document should include:

- Professional/accrediting body guidelines (where appropriate);
- Academic CVs for all staff on the programme;
- Letters of support from employers (where appropriate)