

# Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook

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# Section 1: Quality Assurance Principles and Academic Governance

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The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework has been developed to guide colleagues on the processes that help assure and enhance the academic student experience. It takes account of external reference points such as the UK Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Quality Code, the Office for Students On-going Conditions of Registration and the European Standards Guidance. The handbook also provides transparency to applicants and students on the University's quality assurance processes.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook should be read in conjunction with the Handbook of Academic Regulations, Education Strategy, Employability Strategy, Academic Regulations for Research Degrees, Research Degrees Handbook, and University Framework for Research Student Representative Handbook.

## Quality Assurance Principles

- 1.1 The principles that underpin the University of Westminster's approach to quality assurance are:
- **Responsibility** – the quality assurance processes are designed to recognise the shared responsibility for the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the University's academic provision, they recognise the involvement of academic staff, School/College ownership of its portfolio of courses and modules, students and other stakeholders, working in partnership through membership of College and University committees, groups and Panels;
  - **Accountability** – Whilst there is a shared responsibility for academic quality and standards, and quality enhancement, the roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees will be clearly stated in the Quality Assurance Framework;
  - **Proportionality** – quality assurance processes are designed to be proportionate to the risk attached to the activity they are assuring. Documentation requirements seek to ensure that students and other stakeholders can get clear and accurate information about programmes of study which lead to an award of the University of Westminster, and clarity to the University's partners with respect to the maintenance of the academic standards of the University's awards;
  - **Consistency** – the quality assurance framework strives towards consistency rather than standardisation. There are agreed quality assurance processes but with some flexibility for Colleges to determine how they will meet the intended outcomes of the process. The Quality and Standards Office provides a co-ordinated approach to quality assurance across the Colleges to promote consistency.
  - **Communication** – quality processes are clearly communicated to colleagues and students with good practice being identified and shared across the

University to aid quality enhancement. The quality assurance framework is based on peer review and should involve a constructive dialogue between all those involved in the processes.

## Academic Governance

1.2 Academic Governance supports effective implementation and monitoring of quality assurance processes to ensure the student academic experience is at the heart of decision making.

### 1.2.1 The Court of Governors

The composition of the Court of Governors is set out in the [Articles of Association](#). The Court of Governors is responsible for confirming to the Office for Students that the On-going [Conditions of Registration](#) have been fulfilled. This is achieved through the academic governance structures and reports to the Court of Governors.

### 1.2.2 Academic Council

Academic Council is responsible for ensuring the academic standards of the University, and is the final arbiter in all matters relating to validation, approval, re-validation and monitoring. Academic Council may designate a specially constituted committee, sub-group or panel to act on its behalf in matters relating to validation, approval, review or monitoring and may delegate some of its powers of decision to that body.

Academic Council is responsible for general issues relating to:

- the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University, including criteria for the admission of students;
- the appointment and removal of internal and external examiners;
- policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students;
- the content of the curriculum;
- academic standards and the validation and review of courses;
- the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles;
- the procedures for the exclusion of students for academic reasons;
- consideration of the development of the academic activities of the University and the resources needed to support them and the provision of advice thereon to the Vice-Chancellor and to the Court of Governors;
- provision of advice on such other matters as the Court of Governors or the Vice-Chancellor may refer to Academic Council.

1.2.3 To assist in meeting its obligations and responsibilities, Academic Council may establish such committees as it considers necessary to enable it to carry out its responsibilities provided that each establishment is first approved by the Vice-Chancellor and Court of Governors.

1.2.4 Responsibility for the conduct of quality assurance processes is delegated by Academic Council to specific post holders and formally constituted groups. Executive responsibility for Academic Quality is held by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), who is both a member of the University Executive Board (UEB) and of Academic Council. Formal responsibility for the academic regulations, and the accountability of the proper conduct of the University's quality assurance processes for taught courses and research degrees, is held by the Academic Registrar, who is Clerk to Academic Council. The following committees play a key role in upholding the quality assurance process across the university.

### 1.2.5 **Teaching Committee**

The Teaching Committee is a sub-committee of Academic Council. Its primary focus is to develop, for Academic Council approval, and in respect of the University's taught course provision, strategies, policies and regulations relating to learning, teaching, assessment, quality assurance and enhancement, and to have oversight, on behalf of Academic Council, of academic standards and of the academic experience of taught students.

### 1.2.6 **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**

The Partnership Scrutiny Committee is a joint sub-committee of the Teaching Committee and University Executive Board. Its primary focus is to provide strategic oversight of academic partnership activity, ensuring partnerships are mutually beneficial and enhance the University's academic activities and reputation. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of strategy, policy and processes for the quality assurance and enhancement of collaborations with other institutions and organisations.

### 1.2.7 **Student Voice Forum**

The Student Voice Forum is a sub-committee of Academic Council. Its primary focus is to promote student engagement and sense of community and to review, monitor and enhance student satisfaction and all aspects of the student experience.

### 1.2.8 **Research Committee**

The Research Committee is a sub-committee of Academic Council. Its primary focus is to develop and monitor the University's research policy and strategy.

### 1.2.9 **Graduate School Board**

The Graduate School Board is a sub-committee of Academic Council. Its primary focus is the University's management and monitoring of research degree provision and progression. This is achieved by supporting comprehensive early career researcher development and the promotion of a strong culture of theoretical, practice-based and professional-doctoral research.

### 1.2.10 **Portfolio Planning Committee**

The Portfolio Planning Committee is a joint sub-committee of Academic Council and University Planning Committee. Its focus is to consider the development of the University's academic portfolio, to approve proposals for new courses and to encourage and support curriculum innovations.

Responsibility for the initial consideration of new course proposals or significant changes of content or changes to the title of the award is held by the Portfolio Planning Committee. Authority for the detailed consideration of the proposals and their validation or non-validation, is delegated to the Course Validation Standing Panel.

### 1.2.11 **Course Validation Standing Panel**

The Course Validation Standing Panel has delegated responsibility from Academic Council for considering, advising on, and ultimately formally approving the proposed content and structure of new courses.

### 1.2.12 **College Teaching Committee**

College Teaching Committee includes the development of college policies and procedures to ensure the effective implementation of university strategies relating to and learning, teaching assessment, quality assurance and enhancement in respect of its courses. The College Teaching Committee has oversight of the College Continuous Improvement, student feedback, College Validation and review outcomes, and overview of external examiners.

### 1.2.13 **Apprenticeship Board**

The Apprenticeship Board reports to the University Teaching Committee. Its focus is to consider the University's provision for Apprenticeships, with respect to Education and Compliance and the relationship between employers and the University. It has oversight to ensure the University meets the requirements of external regulations, has effective safeguarding arrangements and to review feedback from learners and employers.

1.2.14 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) has been given a university-wide responsibility for Quality Assurance and is Chair to the Teaching Committee and Co-Chair to the Student Voice Forum. The Deputy Vice Chancellor will normally be involved in all Quality Assurance processes, including approval of External Examiner nominations, except where there is a conflict of interest.

1.2.15 Oversight of the Continuous Improvement of all taught courses and modules, is delegated by Academic Council to the Teaching Committee, which reports to Academic Council.

1.2.16 The audit and monitoring processes for research degree candidates are undertaken by the Graduate School Office for report to and consideration by the Graduate School Board, which reports to Academic Council.

## 1.3 **Awards of the University**

1.3.1 A full list of the University's awards is given in the Handbook of Academic Regulations and the Academic Regulations for Research Degrees.

## 1.4 **Collaboration with other awarding bodies and with other institutions**

1.4.1 The University will act jointly with professional associations and with other awarding bodies to make available courses leading to recognised awards of such associations and bodies.

1.4.2 The University may permit other institutions to offer courses leading to an award of the University. Such programmes of study will be validated and approved by the University in accordance with the Quality Assurance Framework. More detailed process information is available in section 11.

## 1.5 **Terminology**

1.5.1 The term '**programme of study**' is used to denote an approved set of modules by which a student may obtain a specified award of the University.

1.5.2 The term '**course**' is used to denote a subject or one or more discipline-based sets of modules having a single or closely-related focus, leading to a common award and being administered as a single structure.

1.5.3 The term '**module**' is used to denote a discrete study element within a course.

1.5.4 The term '**course programme**' is used to denote a larger grouping of courses.

1.5.5 Each student of the University will therefore follow a programme of study which will be composed of a number of modules within a course or course programme.

- 1.5.6 The term '**academic programme**' is used to denote in the widest sense academic activities relating to a course, a subject or a discipline within the University.
- 1.5.7 A taught programme of study is the approved curriculum leading to a specified and named award of the University as followed by an individual student; the programme may be identical with a course or may be one of several standard routes within a larger course programme. The University will admit students to its courses on a full-time, part-time, mixed-mode or distance-learning basis as appropriate. All programmes of study will conform to the University's academic regulations and requirements. Throughout this Handbook, the term course is used to denote either a single course or a larger course programme with a number of standard routes.
- 1.5.8 Research degree candidates are normally referred to be on a programme of research.

## 1.6 **Approval and monitoring of the University's programmes of study definitions**

### 1.6.1 **Validation**

Validation is the process of judgement reached by the Course Validation Standing Panel, acting with delegated authority from Academic Council. The Panel including internal peers and external advisers make a judgement based on the documentation provided as to whether a course designed to lead to an award of the University meets the requirements for that award, as determined by the principles and regulations of the University and relevant external reference points.

### 1.6.2 **Approval**

Approval is the outcome of a validation process where a proposed course scheme has been judged to meet the University's requirements. It is the formal act of the Panel's approval on behalf of Academic Council to confirm that a proposed course scheme meets the University's requirements and relevant external reference points.

### 1.6.3 **Curriculum and Assessment Check-in**

Curriculum and Assessment Check-in is the process where the curriculum, its quality and academic standards, is critically appraised at intervals by a group including internal peers and external advisers to confirm that academic programmes being reviewed remain academically current and that any courses associated with that programme continue to meet the University's requirements.

### 1.6.4 **Continuous Improvement Process**

The Continuous Improvement Process is the regular, normally annual, process by which each of the Colleges and Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation critically appraise the operation of its taught courses and its academic programmes and ensures that appropriate academic standards are maintained. The outcomes of this process are reviewed on behalf of Academic Council by the Teaching Committee. Meetings with student representatives and subject area meetings with external examiners contribute to a culture of ongoing continuous improvement. It is anticipated that reflections lead to curriculum updates through the Course and Module modification process and other deliberate learning and teaching focused changes.

In addition, the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub-Committee will meet annually to consider a matrix of student experience and outcome data requiring deliberate actions as deemed appropriate. One possible outcome is the requirement to conduct a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Event.

Such events are designed to enable a discussion based on the curriculum and data with a group of peers, including external specialists with an expectation that a panel meet with course representatives.

## 1.7 **Setting and maintaining academic standards**

- 1.7.1 The University is dedicated to supporting its students to attain the highest levels of achievement of which they are capable. To this end, it provides adequate and appropriate facilities to ensure the continuing quality of its courses.
- 1.7.2 The University subscribes to the principle that the quality of the staff, their qualifications and experiences and the caliber of leadership at all levels are of paramount importance. Colleges and Schools have a responsibility to ensure that the quality of staff involved in teaching and assessment is appropriate. In addition, Colleges and Schools are expected to have oversight of the overall balance of its teaching teams.
- 1.7.3 The University expects its colleagues to demonstrate a commitment to personal, academic and professional development, and to engage in a variety of scholarly and professional activities appropriate to their subject specialism, and in relation to developments in teaching and learning in Higher Education, with a view to maintaining and updating their expertise.
- 1.7.4 In respect of the validation of a course the University will seek to ensure that both the teaching and support staff are adequate in number and appropriately qualified for the objectives of the course to be fulfilled.
- 1.7.5 The University will formally agree policies for staff development and research and will actively promote staff development and research to support teaching and learning. The Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation supports Colleges in providing academic development opportunities, resources and good practice. This includes through PRESTige which provides opportunities to enhance teaching practice and gain recognition for teaching experience.
- 1.7.6 The University will provide the physical resources needed to sustain the course.
- 1.7.7 Responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards in the University lies with Academic Council. Academic Council may delegate the execution of its policies to committees, sub-groups and panels as may from time to time be determined by Academic Council. (Also, refer to section 2 which details the external reference points).
- 1.7.8 **Course regulations**  
Each designated course or pathway, leading to a specified and named University award will be approved in accordance with the academic regulations of the University. Course specific regulations may exceptionally apply. To ensure university oversight, these can only be approved by Academic Council, a clear rationale and proposed specific wording of the regulations will be expected. The Quality and Standards Office can provide guidance on the process.
- 1.7.9 **Validation (new courses)**

### Aims

The overall aim of the University's validation of new courses is to:

- set academic standards of the University's academic programmes; including reference to any subject benchmark statements, relevant external agency academic regulations and policies and codes of practice.
- assure and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities ensuring it provides an educational challenge.
- stimulate curriculum design and development by requiring staff to evaluate proposed courses with external peers, ensuring they are coherent and the approach to assessment is varied, effective, relevant and reliable
- secure for students a high quality of educational and academic experience
- assess the quality and standards of the University's academic programmes.
- Ensure the principles of course design and assessment are embedded within courses and provide opportunities for student consultation.

**1.7.10 The University's Curriculum and Assessment Check-in and Internal Scrutiny Panels processes will:**

- maintain academic standards of the University's approved academic programmes; including reference to any subject benchmark statements, relevant external agency academic regulations and policies and codes of practice.
- ensure the quality of student learning opportunities in each subject area provides an educational challenge and make enhancements as deemed appropriate.
- stimulate curriculum design and development by requiring staff to evaluate proposed courses ensuring they remain coherent and up to date, with an approach to assessment that remains varied, effective, relevant and reliable
- assess the quality and standards of courses in operation as demonstrated by the curriculum's alignment with internal and external requirements, feedback from students, reflections in the Continuous Improvement Reports and the reports of the external examiners;
- ensure there is ongoing student evaluation and consultation opportunities through meeting with student representatives.

**In addition, a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Event will:**

- Consider a broad matrix of student experience and student performance data alongside the curriculum content and other key documentation providing discussion points for enhancements.
- Consider the rationale for any changes that have been proposed to enhance student experience and student outcomes.

**1.7.11 Course and Module Modifications**

Following the Validation of a course it is acknowledged that courses, and modules will require modifying to respond to advances in the academic discipline, research, improved technology enhanced learning opportunities, student feedback, Professional Statutory Body and external examiners reports. To ensure the approved course outcomes are maintained and avoid 'validation drift' the University operates a proportionate course and module modifications process.



#### 1.7.12 **External Examiners**

The University will appoint an appropriate number of External Examiners to each of its designated course subject areas and Progression and Assessment Boards. This will ensure that the assessment process is conducted in a manner which provides parity of judgement for the designated courses and that the standard of the University's awards are maintained in accordance with national standards (refer to section 9).

External Examiners are required to report annually on the issues related to assessment and the quality of the subject or course as revealed through the assessments.

An overview report is provided annually to the Teaching Committee and Academic Council.

#### 1.7.13 **Student Voice**

The University has a variety of mechanisms to help ensure the Student Voice feeds into academic governance and the ongoing improvement of its courses. This includes Course Representatives, Student Module Evaluations, School Community Representatives, Student Panel Advisers and representation through the University governance processes.

#### 1.7.14 **Assessment Boards**

For every stage of assessment for each validated course leading to a University award, there will be one or more Assessment Boards whose constitution and terms of reference accord with the approved regulations for the course and which includes the external examiner(s) appointed by the University. Assessment Boards will work in accordance with the University Academic Regulations.

#### 1.7.15 **Monitoring**

All courses leading to a University award will be subject to a continuous improvement process to ensure the academic health of the courses between formal review. This will be informed by appropriate evidence base including course reflection and performance indicators. An overview report is produced annually.

#### 1.7.16 **Course Management**

In respect of its designated courses leading to specified and named awards the University will establish:

- a) clear channels of accountability from course teams to Academic Council;
- b) executive and administrative structures which support the collective processes of academic policy-making and sustain academic leadership;
- c) arrangements for staff and students to contribute in an informed way to the formation of academic policy and priorities;
- d) effective communication which fosters internal inter-relationships and the transmission of good practice.

The University will appoint a suitable member of the academic staff to be the leader of a designated course of the University. The responsibilities of a Course Leader will include:

- a) ensuring that the course meets its specified aims and learning outcomes;

- b) ensuring that the course is conducted in accordance with its approved regulations;
- c) administration of the course in respect of academic matters;
- d) the provision of documentation in respect of the monitoring and review process.

## 1.8 Curriculum Oversight and Course Design

### 1.8.1 Curriculum Principles

In designing curricula, the University expects course teams to consider and apply the following principles:

- Being informed and enriched by research and professional practice.
- Being inspired by and providing opportunities for interdisciplinary exploration and innovation.
- Embedding the development of skills and knowledge relating to employability, Equality Diversity, and Inclusion, education for sustainability and social responsibility aligned to graduate attributes.

### 1.8.2 Curricula are informed by the University's Education Strategy.

All curricula can evidence how they embody the defining characteristics of the University of Westminster, as emphasised in our vision and mission, by:

- An appropriate range of teaching and assessment methods is used to engage students throughout their course, encourage them to develop progressively as independent learners, and support them in the achievement of graduate attributes.
- Module/course delivery makes appropriate and effective use of diverse methods and technologies to build and develop information and digital literacies where appropriate.
- The curriculum is inclusive, taking account of students' needs and experiences. The curriculum is informed by industry expectations and professional requirements, where relevant.
- The curriculum is underpinned and informed by academic expertise, research, and scholarly activity.

### 1.8.3 The Curriculum Framework includes links to key curriculum policies, expectations on the balance of core/option/electives at each level, assessment tariffs where applicable, inclusion of formative assessment, the number of course outcomes at each level and requirements for module learning outcomes. Any exceptions are approved by the Chair of the Teaching Committee or nominee.

### 1.8.4 To provide a coherent learning experience and one that is built around the course and its learning outcomes, students will normally be provided with a series of core and option modules at each level. These will support knowledge and skills development and successful progression through the course. Student choice for the number of module options will be identified, limited by the course learning outcomes, any PSRB restrictions, and resources (infrastructure and staffing).

## **Course Learning Outcomes**

- 1.8.5 Every approved course will have stated aims and intended course learning outcomes which the curriculum, structure, teaching and learning and assessment strategy are designed to fulfil. Where available, benchmark statements should be referred to.
- 1.8.6 The aims will include the development to the level required for the award of a body of knowledge and skills appropriate to the field of study and reflecting academic developments in that field: these are course-specific aims.
- 1.8.7 The course learning outcomes will include knowledge and understanding, specific skills (professional and personal) and key transferable skills appropriate to the field of study, identifying the ways in which these will be developed and evaluated.
- 1.8.8 The outcomes will be linked to graduate attributes in order to make clear to students how they can be effective members of a competitive work force.
- 1.8.9 Undergraduate requirements to ensure course and assessment design oversight
  - Level 4: 100 credit core, with 1 free choice: either a Westminster elective or an option. All students should normally have the opportunity to take a Westminster elective unless there are Professional Body accreditation requirements that prevent this.
  - Level 5: 80 credit core with 2 free choices (either 2 options; or 1 option + 1 Westminster elective)
  - Level 6: 80 credit core with 2 free choices (as for Level 5)

Any exceptions are approved on behalf of the University Teaching Committee.

## **1.9 Principles of Assessment**

- 1.9.1 One purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the course's learning outcomes and achieved the standard required for the award they seek.
- 1.9.2 External examiners will make their judgements on student performance in relation to the assessment regulations approved for the course.
- 1.9.3 Assessment should be meaningful, appropriate, and designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have met the course's learning outcomes.
- 1.9.4 The assessment schedule should allow students to build on and demonstrate knowledge and skills at progressive levels.
- 1.9.5 Students may demonstrate they have achieved the learning outcomes of individual modules through in-module assessment activity or a synoptic assessment activity.
- 1.9.6 Learning outcomes (at the level of module, Level 4, 5 or 6, or course) only need to be assessed once.

- 1.9.7 For Undergraduate Programmes the University has agreed an assessment tariff which sets out the maximum limits for assessment by credit volume. This helps to ensure clear oversight of the assessment strategy and student effort. The assessment tariffs are available in the Curriculum Framework, any exceptions require approval by the Chair of the Teaching Committee or nominee.
- 1.9.8 Each programme of study should include a variety of assessment types at each academic level. Course Teams should take a holistic approach to curriculum design which considers assessment across levels and not just within modules.
- 1.9.9 Assessment will reflect the individual student's achievement in fulfilling course learning outcomes, and at the same time relate that achievement to a consistent national standard of awards. It will be carried out by competent and impartial examiners, and by methods which enable them to assess students fairly.

## 1.10 **Research Degrees of the University**

### **Overview**

- 1.10.1 In respect of supervised programmes of research, the University may award the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or named Professional Doctorate in accordance with Academic Regulations for Research Degrees, as may be supplemented by Programme Specific Regulations in the case of a Professional Doctorate.
- 1.10.2 *Scope:* Programmes of research may be proposed in any field of study subject to the requirement that the proposed programme is capable of leading to scholarly research and to its presentation for assessment by appropriate examiners.
- 1.10.3 *The MPhil award:* The MPhil award is made to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field in line with the FHEQ Level 7 qualification descriptor, and has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.10.4 *The PhD and Professional Doctorate Awards:* A doctoral award is made to a candidate who, having critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic resulting in an independent and original contribution to knowledge and/or practice and demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen field in line with the FHEQ Level 8 qualification descriptor, and has presented and defended a thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of the examiners.
- 1.10.5 Academic Council has delegated authority to the Graduate School Board to act on its behalf in matters relating to research degrees, as outlined above.

# Section 2: New Course Development and Approval

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- 2.1. This section considers the process and principles for new courses seeking approval and subsequent validation. The process has been written in accordance with Office for Students on-going Conditions of Registration, European Standards and Guidelines and the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education. The section applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses; Research degrees with a taught component (e.g. MRes or Professional Doctorate).
- 2.2. The University will publish a Commissioning Brief annually to ensure that new course development is aligned to the University's strategic aims and identified opportunities. The brief will be intelligence-led drawing on market intelligence, employer insights, resource considerations, academic expertise and the perspectives of students and alumni. Colleges wishing to develop new courses to respond to the Commissioning Brief must submit a Course Proposal Business Case for consideration by the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC).

Note: Specific definitions of modes of study exist for external bodies', further advice is available from Quality and Standards.

- 2.3. PPC has responsibility for ensuring that the proposal is considered in terms of fit to the Commissioning brief, resources (including staffing, estate, and other overheads), market demand and fit with the University strategy and, where appropriate, approve it.
- 2.4. The aims of the course approval are:
- To ensure that it is compatible with other courses and the University's strategy;
  - To ensure that there is a market for the course;
  - To ensure that the necessary learning resources are available.
- 2.5. To ensure that new courses have the appropriate time for course development and marketing, giving the best possible chance of success, deadlines are agreed each year, these are normally expected to be at least 18 months in advance of the start date.
- 2.6. Course Proposal Business Cases will include a rationale of how the proposal responds to the Commissioning Brief; how the identified market will be met; the vision and coherence of the course and projected numbers and associated costs.
- 2.7. When considering a course proposal business case, the committee will:
- a) review the proposals for new course provision as part of the integrated planning process;

- b) satisfy itself that the financial, academic rationale and quality aspects of new course proposals included in the College plan have been considered and signed off and recommend that the course may either proceed to course development or require additional information;
  - c) develop a University-wide portfolio perspective to ensure the avoidance of duplication of course provision across Colleges;
  - d) review trends in student surveys, recruitment and progression for existing courses within the School where applicable;
  - e) receive and approve proposals for changes to existing award titles in the context of the existing university and College portfolio; considering External Examiner comments and student feedback.
- 2.8. Once PPC has approved a course, the detailed academic case will be made through a submission to the Course Validation Standing Panel (CVSP). Approval is required for all new named awards by PPC on behalf of Academic Council.

## College Course Development before the submission of documentation<sup>1</sup>

- 2.9. After PPC approval the Head of College will establish a formal course development team to prepare each new course for validation. All Course Leaders should hold full-time or fractional contracts of employment with the University; Visiting Lecturers cannot normally be appointed as Course Leaders. It is recommended that responsibilities are clearly designated to identify issues relevant to the proposal and to identify a realistic timescale for the validation.
- 2.10. Once a course team has been established a compulsory guided intensive course design process will be followed. The process will be led by the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation and will include expertise from relevant Professional Service Departments, employers and students and alumni. Separate workshops will be convened for course and module development.
- 2.11. A Programme Specification and related documentation should be developed in conjunction with the Quality and Standards Office as part of the course design process (refer to section 5 for a full list of documents).
- 2.12. Two external adviser nominations should be submitted to the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards or nominee for approval as soon as possible following PPC approval (refer to 2.36-2.39). Independent external comments are crucial, however important Home Office right to work checks are required in advance, so prompt nominations are critical to the timeliness of the process.
- 2.13. The Head of College must ensure that course development is informed by consultation and is responsible for ensuring any necessary external consultations with other Colleges, employers, subject specialists, professional bodies and external examiners are undertaken. The course leader designate must ensure that the course conforms to the requirements of the University and of any external validating and professional bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Non-collaborative provision

- 2.14. All courses are expected to comply with the principles and aims of course design and assessment as outlined in Section 1.

## Reference Points

- 2.15. Internal References (links may not be available externally).

[Education Strategy](#)  
[Academic Regulations](#)  
[Curriculum Framework](#)  
[Strategic Framework for Employability](#)  
[SEEC Level Descriptors](#)

- 2.16. There are a range of external reference points for course teams to consider when undertaking curriculum design for validation or in designing new modules.

The [Office for Students](#) is the regulator for higher education in England. They protect the interests of students in a variety of ways, including through the regulation of quality and standards. Each degree awarding provider is registered with the OfS and expected to ensure the quality and standards of its courses, through meeting the on-going conditions of registration. The quality and standards requirements cover academic experience, resources support and student engagement, student outcomes, assessment and awards and sector recognized standards,

The [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ) is based on the premise that qualifications should be awarded on the basis of achievement of outcomes rather than years of study. Qualification descriptors set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. These are embedded into the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Frameworks set out in the Handbook of Academic Regulations.

[The QAA Quality Code](#) provides guidance on maintaining quality and standards in Higher Education Institutions. The University takes the guidance set out in the Code into account when developing its own policy and procedures in the relevant areas. Programme Specifications also form part of the Academic Infrastructure and the QAA provides guidance to institutions on producing specifications.

[European Standards Guidance for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG) were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005 and revised in 2015. The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance relating to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. The University of Westminster processes have been mapped to the ESG expectations.

[Subject Benchmark Statements](#) (SBS) provide a means for the course team and the wider academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of degrees in a specific subject area. They set out expectations about the standards of awards. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject. Interdisciplinary awards may need to reference more than one SBS.

Note: Ofsted and ESFA regulate our apprenticeship provision and place requirements on these courses. These requirements are set out in our apprenticeship documentation and are communicated to colleagues as appropriate.

## **Professional Body Accreditation**

- 2.17. Courses seeking professional body accreditation must consider any requirements of the relevant external body in their curriculum content and design and make those requirements clear when presenting their course(s). Where the external requirements need Course Specific Regulations to be approved by Academic Council this may need to be achieved concurrently. All published documentation must make clear the PSRB accreditation is still subject to approval until written confirmation from the PSRB has been received in writing by the College and the Quality and Standards Office informed.
- 2.18. If a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requires a validation event, differing documentation may be required (for example the Course Handbook). Should additional elements be required the Quality and Standards Office will work with the Course team and the PSRB to incorporate them into the validation event. In joint University/Professional or Statutory Body Panels, external advisers normally hold full membership to the panel.

## **Curriculum Design**

- 2.19 All proposed new courses are expected to undertake a Curriculum and Assessment Workshop. The workshop(s) are normally delivered by the Centre for Teaching and Innovation (CETI), focusing on the key principles of course and module design.

## **Documentation**

- 2.20 A Programme Specification and related documentation should be developed in conjunction with the Quality and Standards Office. The Programme Specification and Module Descriptors are the definitive descriptions of a course and set out the intended learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve, the level of study, the credit allocation of the course and modules and the teaching and learning strategies to enable students to achieve them. They are the key documents in course validation, as well as being an important source of information for students.
- 2.21 The academic level of any course is determined by its aims, learning outcomes, syllabus content, its assessment methods and assessment criteria for judging student achievement and in line with the FHEQ. Academic levels 4, 5, and 6 correlate to the first, second and third years of a full-time three-year undergraduate honours degree, level 7 to Master's degrees.
- 2.22 The curriculum's structure and content must explicitly support the subject-specific title of the award. The general award title, for example, whether it is an Arts or a Science award, will be determined by the relevant external subject benchmarks, and subject content relative to cognate courses within the University. Courses would normally be validated with either an Arts or a Science award; these would not normally be presented as alternatives with the same course content, but rather distinct courses with distinctive course outcomes.
- 2.23 All validated awards must have clear subject specific course outcomes, which inform the definition of aims and learning outcomes for each module.



- 2.24 Where a course is a named pathway within a wider course the pathway must have academic coherence both at the point of initial validation and subsequently through the addition and/or deletion of individual modules.
- 2.25 Care must be taken to ensure clarity of definition in learning outcomes of Level 7 postgraduate modules, especially in terms of higher-level analytical skills and the expectation of students' abilities to sustain advanced independent critically evaluative work, which also underpins much Level 6 undergraduate work.

### **Documentation sign-off**

- 2.26 The Associate Head of College (Education and Students) should sign-off the documentation before it is submitted by the Course team to the two approved External Subject Advisers for comment (refer to 2.36).
- 2.27 Following feedback from the External Subject Advisers the following documentation should be submitted to the Course Validation Standing Panel:
- i) Programme Specification
  - ii) Module Descriptors for new modules
  - iii) Module Descriptors for current modules that will be included in the new course
  - iv) Proposal for any course specific regulations
  - v) Teaching staff details (short CVs)
  - vi) External Subject Adviser Reports and the Course team's response to them; (refer to 2.36-2.39)
  - vii) Portfolio Planning Committee submission (for information)
  - viii) Course Validation Covering Template.
  - ix) Online course materials (distance learning courses only, refer to 2.46-2.49)
- 2.28 CVSP meets several times a year on dates published in advance. For a proposal to be considered by the Standing Panel, the Course team must submit all paperwork at least three weeks before the date of the meeting. The Standing Panel will only consider proposals with a complete set of documentation, submitted by the paper deadline.
- 2.29 Courses will not be advertised 'subject to validation' unless approved by the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), in all such cases any such advertising will be confined to minimal overall planned content, making clear any course structures and approval is pending.

### **Course Validation Standing Panel Roles and Responsibilities**

- 2.30 The Course Validation Standing Panel (CVSP) has delegated responsibility from Academic Council for considering, advising on, and ultimately formally approving the proposed content and structure of new courses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For collaborative partnerships see Collaborations Section

- 2.31 The approval of proposed new courses is considered in the light of both academic and planning criteria, including a consideration of the resource implications of any proposal. In doing so CVSP will scrutinise and give formal approval to the detailed structure and module descriptors for new taught and research programmes, reporting decisions for noting at Academic Council.
- 2.32 The terms of reference and indicative membership are agreed by Academic Council. This includes representation from each College (as nominated by the Head of College), Students and Academic Services, Quality and Standards, the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation, Representatives from the Student Union, two Student Representatives and two academic external members.
- 2.33 Panel Chairs are nominated on behalf of each Head of College. Panel Chairs will not normally consider any proposals being proposed by their own College or School.
- 2.34 The following principles underpin the aims of the course approval and validation process:
- Academic rigour – through this process the university seeks to ensure that its courses are well-designed, academically coherent and intellectually challenging, and that they are informed by research and capable of enriching the student experience; proposers of new courses are responsible for making sure that proposals are drawn up with due consideration of the appropriate internal and external references
  - Proportionality – the process for approval and validation will reflect the level of risk involved in activity so that process is flexible and responsive to discipline needs. Documentary requirements will also be commensurate with the level of risk;
  - Peer Review – validation is underpinned by academic and professional peer review by internal colleagues and external subject advisers.
- 2.35 Representatives from the course team proposing the new course are expected to attend the meeting to speak in support of the proposal and answer any queries raised by the Standing Panel.

## **Independent externality**

- 2.36 During validation, the course structure, content and learning, teaching and assessment methods of all new proposed courses will be scrutinised by two independent subject specialists, known as external advisers. Independent External advisers are approved by the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards or nominee, following the submission of an external adviser nomination from the Course team, approved by the Associate Head of College (Education and Students).
- 2.37 External advisers will be subject specialist advisers who comment on a number of set questions, including the appropriateness of the curriculum, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the level of the proposed course in relation to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), the appropriateness of principal members of staff involved in the delivery of the programme (usually evidenced in the form of a Curriculum Vitae) and how the course prepares

graduates for employability. External advisers are advisers to the validation standing panel, as such CVSP will consider the reports and the response from the proposing Course team.

In all cases:

- External advisers must not be either current or recent (i.e within the previous six years) External Examiners at the University, member of staff, a student or member of the College Employability Board. Any other connections with the University or course teams are expected to be declared on the nomination form.
- Direct reciprocation must always be avoided, the general principle that academics, senior administrators and practicing professionals are prepared to give their time to contribute constructive criticism to course provision is central to the UK's quality assurance processes in Higher Education (HE). The nominating course representative and the Associate Head of College attests to this independence in nominating and signing the nomination form.
- External advisers must report on the proposed new course's alignment with external reference points and the coherence of the curriculum with its subject area(s).
- Comments from two externals are normally required. One of these must be an external adviser with the appropriate academic experience, course teams are however encouraged to include an external adviser from industry, commerce or professions who can explicitly consider the course in terms of its employability, graduate attributes, links with industry and specific/transferable skills.
- The Head of College may also consider that the University should not draw external advisers from institutions identified as being in direct competition with the University of Westminster in the subject area concerned: in this context direct competition normally implies geographical proximity.
- For distance learning courses (refer to 2.46-2.49)

2.38 External advisers to Panels convened at the University of Westminster receive a standard fee in recognition of their contribution to the Validation; they will be required to provide the appropriate documentation in advance of undertaking their duties in accordance with the Home Office right to work requirements.

2.39 In addition, the membership of CVSP includes two external senior academic members of staff at another UK higher education institution who provide additional assurances that proposed new courses have fully considered external reference points such as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and that the course structure and learning, teaching and assessment methods are sound.

## **Course Validation Standing Panel decisions**

2.40 If the validation standing panel is satisfied with the academic case for a proposal and that the resources required for its delivery are sufficient to ensure the quality of the provision, it will report its approval to Academic Council. CVSP may attach conditions or recommendations to its consideration of proposed new courses. Confirmation and evidence that these conditions have been met will be required

before reports are made to Academic Council. In considering the proposal CVSP can determine if the response to condition or recommendations can be considered by Chair's action.

2.41 Course Approval may be:

- without time limit (6 years) approval and in line with the Curriculum and Assessment Check-In schedule for provision within the rest of the School.
- for a specified period (up to six academic sessions)
- CVSP may decide that the academic case has not been made, or that there are insufficient resources for the course which cannot reasonably be addressed by setting conditions. The decision of CVSP will in such cases be Non-approval, possibly with encouragement to resubmit after suggested revision. This decision will be reported to Academic Council and PPC.

2.42 Following CVSP approval a Course Handbook must be produced and submitted to the Quality and Standards Office at least 6 weeks prior to the course commencing. Any inconsistencies noted from the signed documentation may lead to the course being referred back to CVSP. Examples may include academic regulations, discrepancies in the modes of study or other issues deemed to cause a significant student experience or publication of information issue.

## **Course Records**

2.43 Course level information: The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for the accurate set up and maintenance of all courses in the Student Records System to ensure the title and modes of delivery (including if the course is part time day, part time evening, part time mixed mode, distance learning or block mode) accurately reflects the agreed validated course. In doing so an appropriate course code is allocated for the new award title, which also includes the duration and start date. This information links to the public facing web page and other external information. This will normally be done at the point of final approval by CVSP or Chair and officially communicated to applicable departments.

2.44 It is the responsibility of the course leader or equivalent to ensure that the programme specification, course web pages and any associated course materials only reflect approved course information.

2.45 It is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Office to ensure the student record system accurately reflects the module titles, summative assessment types, percentage weightings and qualifying marks in line with the approved module descriptors. The Quality and Standards Office communicates the creation of the new modules to a wide group of stakeholders.

## On-Line Learning and Distance Learning

- 2.46 In the case of a distance learning course, the Course Validation Standing Panel must assure itself that the provision of the study materials for the first calendar year of course operation is at an appropriate standard. It is considered important that the course team understands the student facing materials required to ensure the effective student learning experience prior to implementation of a distance learning course. The full content and material for at least two modules must therefore be scrutinised by the Standing Panel and its external advisers.
- 2.47 At least one external adviser with experience of distance learning delivery is normally expected, alongside a subject specialist. Both externals must provide scrutiny of, and comment on, the content of the materials and their delivery. Internal advisers from other parts of the University, for example Virtual Learning specialists and course leaders with experience of distance learning, may be asked to attend the CVSP meeting.
- 2.48 The aim of the scrutiny of the materials in addition to the standard course documentation is to ensure that they are technically accurate, user friendly, and that course teams have an opportunity for feedback prior to delivery of the modules. In giving feedback, the adviser should look for:
- recognition of knowledge and skills of the user suitability of style
  - relevance of items covered
  - coverage at the appropriate level of all relevant items
  - clear presentation of text features (activities, assignments, feedback, projects)
  - variety of activities, assignments and projects to support students' active learning currency of content.
- 2.49 CVSP will assure itself that the intended on-line learning activities, when combined with the face-to-face contact opportunities (where applicable), will enable the overall delivery of the course learning outcomes. In addition, CVSP must be satisfied that the way in which the course team intends to manage the on-line learning activities matches the need to deliver the learning outcomes with the resources available.

# Section 3:

## Curriculum and Assessment Check-in, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh and Internal Scrutiny Events

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### Principles

- 3.1. The importance of a cyclical review process that facilitates a deliberate opportunity for a holistic reflection of the curriculum is recognised.
- 3.2. It is conversely recognised that changes should be appropriately implemented as the need is identified rather than await a cyclical process. It is therefore expected the modifications process is utilised to ensure courses and modules are regularly reviewed and kept up to date and:
  - i) reflect feedback from various stakeholders' including students, the course team, external examiners and industry experts as appropriate.
  - ii) respond to actions identified through the ongoing continuous improvement processes as deemed appropriate.
  - iii) respond to internal strategies and external academic standards requirements.
- 3.3 Colleges and Schools have a responsibility to ensure the portfolio of courses and modules within their remit are appropriately updated.
- 3.4 The cyclical approach should consider subject areas collectively. This recognises the importance of a holistic approach, shared modules, the inter-disciplinary nature of the curriculum and sharing good practice.
- 3.5 It is recognised that a risk-based approach is appropriate.

### On going continuous improvement summary

- 3.6 Each year there are several processes that contribute to the ongoing continuous improvement of courses.
  - module leaders are required to reflect on their modules, including student feedback through a module leader report.
  - course leaders in turn then reflect on the module leader reports and course matrix of data as part of their annual course leader report.

- each course must have a formal process for consulting with and gathering feedback from students with agreed action points (refer to section 8).
  - Subject Area meetings are expected with external examiners (Level 5 and above, refer to section 9)
  - Each year the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub Committee considers a matrix of data and reports and identifies appropriate actions (refer to section 7).
- 3.7 The above processes are expected to result in deliberate actions to improve the student experience for example modifications.

### **Definition of each process**

- 3.8 Curriculum and Assessment Check-in is a 6 yearly cycle where the university 'checks-in' on the subject area's curriculum and its approach to assessment. At this time, course teams should take a holistic view across the subject area, sharing good practice and making modifications as required. It is expected that course teams have been modifying their courses throughout the 6-year cycle. The Panel of peers will view the approved curriculum. The Panel are focussed primarily on the approach to curriculum and assessment and will provide recommendations to the School to take forward as deemed appropriate by the School/College.

Refer to 3.11 – 3.22

- 3.9 Internal Scrutiny Events are reserved for apprenticeship degrees, collaborative partners and specific Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies where a detailed course team discussion on the curriculum and proposed changes is required. The approval of such an event will be agreed by the Deputy Registrar Quality and Standards, and the remit of such panels will be approved by the Chair of the Teaching Committee or nominee.

Refer to 3.37 – 3.41

- 3.10 Learning Teaching and Assessment Refresh Events are a risk-based outcome of student experience and performance data discussions undertaken by the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub Committee. They require a meeting between the Panel, including external advisors and Course Teams and are focussed on the enhancement of the curriculum, the approach to learning and teaching alongside consideration of the matrix of data. There is an expectation that changes are proposed through the processes and approved by the Panel.

Refer to 3.42 – 3.53

### **Curriculum and Assessment Check-in overview of the process**

- 3.11 The stages of curriculum and assessment check-in are as follows:
- i) Quality and Standards maintain an overall 6-year schedule of all Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) subject areas/Schools.
  - ii) Ongoing continuous improvement processes lead to modifications of the curriculum as required.

- iii) Prior to a Curriculum and Assessment check-in year, deliberate more detailed discussions to determine if further changes to courses are required is expected to take place within the School. Where modifications at a course or module level are thought to be needed these should be submitted by the published modification deadlines.
- iv) A minimum of two external advisors should be nominated by the School
- v) A Panel is appointed by Quality and Standards
- vi) Quality and Standards provide the panel with a curriculum pack
- vii) The Panel including external advisors meet with the appointed Course/School Student Representatives to gain feedback of the curriculum and overall learning and teaching experience.
- viii) Following the meeting with course representatives, the panel including external advisors have a discussion and agree draft recommendations, to be approved by the Chair(s) and Quality and Standards.
- ix) A non-mandatory meeting with the internal panel and course or School team can be facilitated following the dissemination of the recommendations.
- x) A required meeting facilitated by Quality and Standards takes place with Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation.
- xi) A workshop takes place normally focussed on the themes of the curriculum and assessment recommendations.
- xii) Modifications are submitted as thought required by the School.

### **Curriculum and Assessment Check in Timings (CA Check-in)**

- 3.12 Curriculum and Assessment Check-ins takes place on a six-yearly cycle. It enables the university to verify over a particular timeframe that academic standards are being maintained and the approach to the courses and modules being taken by the School aligns with internal and external expectations. For example, the Education Strategy, Curriculum Framework and compliance with the Office for Students B conditions and Quality Frameworks. Further information is available in Section 2 of the handbook.
- 3.13 The CA Check-in is expected to take place on a calendar cycle aligning with the considerations of published information for applicants and students. Where possible the recommendations of the Panel will be provided prior to September annually allowing the Course Team sufficient time to make modifications if required.

Example: A course in the 2026 calendar year CA Check-in cycle is being considered for September 2027 implementation. Therefore, where possible any recommendations are provided to the course team by September 2026 so if the course team would like to take forward any structural modifications by the November structural modification deadline they can do so.

Note: For the 2025 cycle it is recognised that due to the shorter planning time for those course teams that adapted timelines will be required.



### **School/Course team processes prior to a year check-in**

- 3.14 CA Check-In is simply that, a check-in. It is the university touching base with the School or College to confirm that the curriculum and assessment strategies for the subject area are meeting expectations to ensure the continuing improvement of the student experience.
- 3.15 Schools should ensure opportunities for holistic course discussions take place annually as part of existing continuous improvement processes e.g. subject area meetings, meetings with students, course team discussions. However, it is recognised that Curriculum and Assessment Check-in is a key opportunity to have a more detailed holistic discussion taking a 'programme audit' approach. For example, the number of summative or formative assessments, assessment tariffs, assessment deadlines, the variety of assessment, the approach to authentic assessment, assessment and feedback times.
- 3.16 It is anticipated that the outcome of the holistic discussions is to ascertain if modifications may be required before the published modifications deadlines.

### **Documentation to be considered by the Curriculum and Assessment Panel**

- 3.17 The CA check-in is a process that focusses on the approved curriculum. No further documentation is required by the course team and only the already approved curriculum will be considered by the panel.
- 3.18 The Quality and Standards Office will lead on providing all documentation to the panel. The following documentation is expected:
- i) the latest approved version of all Programme Specifications
  - ii) modules owned by the School/subject contained within the programme specifications. This includes any and all modules associated with the courses owned by the school, as well as any standalone elective modules, study abroad modules and any other credit bearing modules.
  - iii) modules from outside the school contained in the programme specifications (for oversight of the course but largely for information).
  - iv) summary of assessments as available in E Vision.
  - v) the last three years of Continuous Improvement Process Course Leader reports and relevant external examiner reports

### **Curriculum and Assessment Check-In Panels**

- 3.19 Panels will convene to consider the documentation against the internal policies, strategies and external academic standards expectations. The Panel will meet course representatives studying on the courses. The Panel can only set recommendations to the school.
- 3.20 Curriculum and Assessment Check-in Panel members are expected to provide comments in advance of the meeting with students or the panel. This reflects that the process is largely based on the approved curriculum already approved for students and is therefore taking place via correspondence, except for the meeting with students and rounding up prior to decisions.

## **Chair**

- 3.21 Meetings will be Co-Chaired to balance a recognised need for College accountability as well as the importance of the role of sharing approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The role of the Chair is to manage and direct the Curriculum and Assessment Check-in.
- 3.22 The Head of College is expected to nominate one lead Chair derived from within the College, normally an Associate Head of College (Education and Students or External Relations). Quality and Standards will appoint a second Chair from outside the College, to encourage the sharing of good practice university wide and provide additional support to the lead Chair.

Note: Quality and Standards retain an approved list of trained Chairs.

## **Learning, Teaching and Quality representatives**

- 3.23 Learning, Teaching and Quality representatives are also appointed to Panels to provide further insight on the values, strategies and policies of the university and to facilitate the dissemination of good practice. Learning, Teaching and Quality representatives will normally be balanced from both within the College (but not School) and representation from another College or CETI.
- 3.24 **A Student Adviser** will be appointed as set out in section 8 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. They will be full members of the Curriculum and Assessment Check-in Panel.
- 3.25 **Quality and Standards Adviser**  
The Quality and Standards Adviser is responsible for ensuring the latest published course documentation is circulated to the Panel, liaising with the course team as appropriate. The Adviser will also act as the Secretary organising the meeting with student representatives, liaising with the external advisors as appropriate, supporting the Chair, preparing the draft report for approval by the Chair, outlining recommendations and areas of good practice for circulation. The Quality and Standards Adviser will also circulate the report to the Course team and facilitate a meeting with CETI following the circulation of the approved recommendations.

## **External Subject Advisers**

- 3.26 The role of the External Subject Advisers is to provide appropriate subject expertise to the Panel, within the wider context of Higher Education, and business or industry. External Advisers should evaluate the documentation in the context of external reference points with reference to academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and employability. External advisors act as advisors to the Panel.
- 3.27 Each subject area curriculum and assessment check is expected to have a minimum of two external advisors, one academic and one industry expert. Any exceptions e.g. no industry advisor is expected to be approved by the Lead Chair based in the College.

## **Meeting with Course Representatives**

- 3.28 Quality and Standards will be responsible for contacting the Course Representatives (or School Representatives who are students on the courses being considered) to invite them to attend a meeting with the Panel, including external advisors. The

meeting is aimed at providing feedback from students on the delivery of the curriculum through the approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The invite will be extended to students who are not course or school representatives to ensure where possible all courses and modes of study are represented.

Note: The course team will normally be asked if they would like to invite any alumni to the meeting. This is strongly encouraged to ensure the employability perspective is considered.

### **Meeting with the Course Team**

- 3.29 A meeting with the course team is not normally required. The course team have the right to request a meeting with the Chair following the circulation of the recommendations.
- 3.30 In some cases, the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee, taking a risk-based approach, may require the course team to meet with the full panel. This need will depend on the risks identified by the Sub Committee and where a fuller discussion with peers is thought to be particularly beneficial. All such decisions will be notified well in advance of the CA Check-In cycle.

### **Decisions**

- 3.31 Following the meeting with course representatives/students the Panel Chair will agree recommendations to take forward as deemed appropriate by the School.
- 3.32 Curriculum recommendations are normally derived from the courses and modules owned by the School but may extend beyond that for consideration e.g. with other Schools, most commonly where modules are shared.
- 3.33 All decisions will be communicated by Quality and Standards in the form of a report of the discussions and formal recommendations. A summary of all recommendations will be made available to the Teaching Committee and Planning Portfolio Committee Portfolio Sub Committee.

### **Meeting with CETI and workshop**

- 3.34 Following the circulation of the recommendations, a meeting with the relevant course leaders and CETI is normally required. This is a deliberate cyclical opportunity for all subject areas to have an appropriate workshop or curriculum development opportunity. The discussions with CETI will normally be facilitated by Quality and Standards and reflect on the panel recommendations to determine whether the existing portfolio of workshops or a more targeted approach would be most beneficial. It is envisaged in some cases that following the workshop or curriculum development opportunity future actions including modifications may be required.

### **Curriculum and Assessment Check-in What happens next?**

- 3.35 Following the Panel recommendations to the College or School, it is for the College or School to determine if, how and when those recommendations will be actioned within the context of wider ongoing Continuous Improvement discussions.
- 3.36 Quality and Standards will keep an annual overview of recommendations which is available upon request to the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee when considering the matrix of data.

## **Internal Scrutiny Events**

- 3.37 Internal Scrutiny Events are normally reserved for courses with apprenticeship provision and awards delivered at a collaborative partner.
- 3.38 Some courses approved by a Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body may also require an internal scrutiny event, where there are explicit requirements not covered by the CA Check-in process. The approval of such an event will be agreed by the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards in line with the specific requirements of the PSRB or external body. The membership and remit of such panels will be approved by the Chair of the Teaching Committee or nominee, in some cases this may involve the PSRB being included as advisers to the panel.
- 3.39 Internal Scrutiny events are cyclical review events similar to CA Check-in. However, the event can consider proposed changes to the curriculum and student data as deemed appropriate. Internal Scrutiny events can set conditions, recommendations and requirements.
- 3.40 Additional documentation to that required for Curriculum and Assessment Check-In will normally be required (for example, mapping to PSRB requirements). The documentation required will vary depending on the event and be confirmed by Quality and Standards well in advance of deadlines.
- 3.41 The deadline for Colleges to submit documentation to Quality and Standards internal scrutiny panels will be 4 weeks in advance of the event.

## **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Events (LTA Refresh Event)**

- 3.42 The standard expectation for all courses is a Curriculum Assessment Check-in. However, taking a risk-based approach the Portfolio Planning Portfolio Sub-Committee may require a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Event, this is one amongst a wide range of other actions that may be appropriate. Refer to section 7 for more information on the role of PPC in Continuous Improvement Processes.

### **What is a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Event?**

- 3.43 A Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Event can be required by the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee as part of the risk-based approach to consider both the curriculum and matrix of data, leading to a more detailed event or meeting which includes a discussion between the Panel and the Course Teams. Additional reflective documentation is also required by the course team.
- 3.44 **Summary of LTA Refresh Event Process**
- i) The PPC Portfolio Sub Committee meeting considers a range of data e.g. student experience, student outcomes and first sit data. Based on the data a Refresh Event is one of several possible actions that may be required. Refresh events for individual courses will not normally be considered, the approach is at School/Subject area level. The Sub Committee can normally only recommend a maximum of three Refresh events per calendar year.
  - ii) Where the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee agrees a Refresh event this will be communicated by the PPC Secretary or nominee. The Refresh event is expected to take place over a calendar year.

Example: Following the release of Graduate Outcomes/NSS/PTES data a PPC Portfolio Sub Committee meeting takes place in September/October 2025. Any decision to require a Refresh event would be taken forward between January – December 2026, for September 2027 implementation.

- iii) A required course design or appropriate workshop is normally expected to take place prior to the event unless one has recently taken place.
- iv) At least two external advisor nominations are required (refer to 3.50 – 3.53), this should normally include at least one academic and one industry-based advisor.
- v) Curriculum changes can be submitted as part of this process, rather than being required through the modifications process. This enables a fuller holistic discussion on proposed changes. Curriculum changes are not required as part of the process, recognising modifications may have been made recently, this is a decision for the Head of School or nominee.
- vi) A meeting is arranged to include the Chairs, Course Team and School representatives, Learning, Teaching Quality Representatives and external advisers. This will include a meeting with course representatives (or School representatives from the courses being considered) and where possible alumni.
- vii) The Panel can set conditions, recommendations and commendations.

#### **Documentation to be considered.**

- 3.45 The Course Team(s) are expected to provide a short-written submission on how the LTA Refresh event addresses the data (refer to section 6) and provide staff CV's for all course leaders, module leaders and other key staff.
- 3.46 Changes to the curriculum can be submitted for consideration by the Panel (programme specifications and modules). Where this is the case the Course Teams must provide an accompanying communication of changes document for applicants and students. The deadline for all documentation to be signed off within the School for submission to Quality and Standards will be 4 weeks before the event.
- 3.47 Quality and Standards will provide the data, three years of Course Leader Continuous Improvement reports, assessment summaries available in E Vision and relevant external examiner reports. Additional documentation can be provided by the course team as required.

#### **LTA Refresh Panels**

- 3.48 The Panels for Refresh events are the same as for Curriculum and Assessment Check-in (refer to 3.19 – 3.22). However, in addition it is noted that the Head of College or Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), may be considered as one of the Chairs.

#### **LTA Refresh Event Decisions**

- 3.49 The LTA Refresh Panel can make conditions that are required to be signed off by the Chair. All conditions and recommendations will be included in a report provided by the Quality and Standards Office. The report will be made available to the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee. The Panel will normally also decide when the next Curriculum Check in cycle should take place.

## **Independent Externality- External Subject Advisers all processes**

- 3.50 The role of the External Subject Advisers is to provide appropriate subject expertise to the Panel, within the wider context of Higher Education, and business or industry. External Advisers should evaluate the documentation in the context of external reference points with reference to academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and employability. External advisors act as advisors to the panel.
- 3.51 Each subject area curriculum and assessment check in should normally have a minimum of two external advisors, one academic and one industry expert. Any exceptions are to be agreed by the Chair.
- 3.52 External Advisors are expected to complete comments in writing in advance of the meeting with students/panel.

In all cases:

- External advisers must not be either current or recent (i.e. within the previous six years) External Examiners at the University, member of staff, student or member of the College Employability Board. Any other connections with the University or course teams are expected to be declared on the nomination form. All Panels should include one External adviser with appropriate academic experience. Course teams are however also encouraged to include an External adviser from industry, commerce or professions who can explicitly consider the course in terms of its employability, graduate attributes, links with industry and specific/transferable skills. For distance learning courses, an external with experience of online provision is expected.
  - Direct reciprocation must always be avoided, such examples include if a Course Leader were an external examiner at an institution, reciprocal arrangements would include an external advisor from that same subject area or department. The general principle that academics, senior administrators and practicing professionals are prepared to give their time to contribute constructive criticism to course provision is central to the UK's quality assurance processes in Higher Education. The nominating course representative and the Head of College attests to this independence in nominating and signing the nomination form.
  - The Head of College or nominee may also consider that the University should not draw external advisers from institutions identified as being in direct competition with the University of Westminster in the subject area concerned: in this context direct competition normally implies geographical proximity.
- 3.53 External Advisers to Panels convened at the University of Westminster receive a standard fee in recognition of their contribution; they will be required to provide the appropriate documentation in accordance with the Home Office right to work requirements.

Note: External Advisory Board members are linked to each College or School. With the agreement of the Chair, cyclical review nominations can be derived from this pool of individuals where there are no other conflict or reciprocal arrangements and where there is an assumption there is another academic external with no conflicts of interest. Note for validation this is not permitted.

**For internal users, diagrams are available of the following processes and timelines:**

### **Curriculum and Assessment Check in**

1. May: annually the calendar year Curriculum Check in cycle is published by Quality and Standards. For example, in May 2024 the calendar for January – December 2025 processes.
2. October/November: briefing sessions led by Q&S
3. November: structural modification deadline if required to approve any course level changes within the College.
4. External advisor nominations submitted by the college or School  
Concurrently the Head of College and Q&S appoint internal Co-Chairs and LTQ Reps
5. January – May:
  - the Panel are sent the last published programme specifications and modules with a template to complete and submit prior to a meeting with students
  - The panel including external advisors meet course representatives
  - Following the student meeting the panel agree recommendations
  - Chair approved recommendations circulated to the School alongside a short report on the comments of the panel and summary of discussion with students
  - An optional meeting with course team representatives can be arranged with the Panel Chairs or Q&S
  - Q&S facilitate a workshop planning meeting with CETI
  - CETI run a workshop
  - School or College take forward changes as deemed appropriate
  - Recommendations are available to the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee when considering the data annually.
  - Modification overviews are available to PPC as required

### **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Events**

1. Approximately November: PPC Portfolio Sub Committee considers data annually, November meeting with Schools to discuss the portfolio
2. Actions are agreed by PPC one of which may be an LTA Refresh Event
3. Approximately January: Q&S Briefing session arrangements with course teams (can also be included in the workshop below)
4. A workshop planning meeting takes place with CETI
5. A curriculum design workshop takes place with CETI
6. Course team work on proposed changes to be considered by a panel
7. External advisors are nominated by the School or College
8. internal Co-chairs approved by the head of College and Q&S
9. Date agreed for a Panel meeting to discuss the proposed changes and reflections
10. documentation is submitted one month in advance of an event
11. Panel meeting takes place, including a meeting with course representatives and panel meeting with the course team
  - Conditions/recommendation/commendations are agreed as deemed appropriate by the Panel, and approved by the Co-Chairs, a deadline is set prior to November to address any conditions.
  - Q&S provide a report summarising the events discussions and decisions
12. Panel reconsider the changes and approve curriculum changes
13. Admissions, web teams, registry, timetabling and other key stakeholders advised of the changes.

14. Students and applicants informed.
15. PPC Sub Committee and the Teaching Committee receives a summary of Refresh Reports as appropriate

### **Internal Scrutiny Panel**

Collaborative, PSRB or external event cycle

1. In consultation with the College, Q&S establish which PSRBs or external agencies may explicitly require a bespoke event.
2. The Deputy Registrar Q&S approves the establishment of an Internal Scrutiny Panel
3. The College and Q&S agree required documentation based on the needs of the event.
4. A workshop planning meeting takes place with CETI
5. A CETI workshop takes place
6. Course team work on proposed changes and reflections
7. External Nominations are submitted by the School
8. A panel is established by Quality and Standards as deemed appropriate
9. A date is agreed for an event
10. Draft Documentation is submitted one month ahead of the event
11. A meeting takes place
12. Conditions/Recommendations/Commendations are agreed by the Panel and approved by the Chair, including a deadline by November each year
13. Quality and Standards provides a formal report
14. Sign off expected by mid-December for September implementation.
15. Admissions, web teams, registry, timetabling and other key stakeholders advised of the changes.
16. Students and applicants informed.



# Section 4: Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body Accreditation and recognition

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- 4.1. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation is a general term used to describe organisations which are authorised to accredit, recognise, endorse or approve named awards in the context of a particular subject area, discipline or profession. They are a diverse group of professional and employer bodies, regulators with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. The University of Westminster has a large and diverse group of PSRBs who approve, recognise or accredit a wide range of our courses.
- 4.2. PSRBs are an important feature of the University's Employability Strategy and are also a valuable independent quality assurance and enhancement resource. PSRB status forms part of the Consumer Law through the Competition and Markets Authority and has required reporting processes through the Office for Students.
- 4.3. PSRBs normally accredit a course(s) for a specific number of years after which they return to review and re-accredit for the next period. Quality and Standards must be informed of any upcoming accreditation visits as soon as they are known (refer to section 3).
- 4.4. PSRBs' diverse nature, expectations, processes, requirements differ greatly, and therefore there is no single approach to PSRB events or quality assurance processes.
- 4.5. Each PSRB should have a nominated contact within the College. A central register of all accreditations is held by the Quality and Standards Office. This is updated annually in consultation with the nominated college representatives. There is however an expectation that college representatives inform Quality and Standards of any decisions in a timely manner throughout the year.

## **Accreditation**

- 4.6. The process of each accreditation can differ greatly dependent on the PSRB. However, such bodies normally have a periodic review and re-accreditation process for which they normally provide detailed guidance on the format for the presentation of documentation. This may correspond closely with the University's requirements in terms of course documentation. However, evidence of continuous improvement and of student achievement may need to be formatted separately to accord with PSRB requirements.
- 4.7. The first point of contact between the University and a PSRB is located within the College which holds responsibility for the courses which are the subject of accreditation. Normally this would be the Head of College, Head of School or Course Leader. Where the requirements of the accreditation are expected to be within the college or by correspondence the Associate Head of College (Education and

Students) and the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards must still be informed that the process is being undertaken.

- 4.8. Preparation for PSRB visits is normally organised by the College-based contact with the PSRB and the Director of College Operations or nominee.
- 4.9. Where a Re-accreditation Panel with responsibility outside the College is required, this must be communicated to the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards and the Vice Chancellor's Office as soon as possible. This acknowledges that a number of PSRBs expect the attendance of a member of the University Executive, therefore determining availability of the appropriate staff and agenda must be done as soon as possible.
- 4.10. Arrangements should be made by the Head of School and Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards or nominee to brief all University representatives involved, as well as students and external examiners.
- 4.11. The draft documentation, together with the PSRB criteria and guidelines, must be drafted by the College. Normally this stage of preparation is conducted through the College Office, and the submission is checked for consistency of presentation and up-to-date references to University and College policies and procedures.
- 4.12. The final draft documentation should be submitted simultaneously to the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards.
- 4.13. A planning meeting with those required will normally take place to prepare for the event. This should make clear the PSRB process, remit and individuals' roles on the day.
- 4.14. The draft report or final email decision of the PSRB panel should be submitted to Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards or nominee for collation and drafting of the formal response on behalf of the University.
- 4.15. All PSRB accreditation and review reports or decision-making notifications should be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office for consideration by the University Teaching Committee and College Teaching Committee.
- 4.16. No new courses that are pending PSRB accreditation should include a PSRB status until a decision has been made regardless of the status of other linked courses in the subject area.

#### **Joint Internal Scrutiny Event and Accreditation**

- 4.17. In some cases, the PSRB may require attendance at the Internal Scrutiny event. In such cases the Quality and Standards Office will work with the Course team, Vice Chancellor's Office (where required) and the PSRB to incorporate the PSRB elements into the event. In the case of joint University/PSRB Panels, external advisers normally hold full membership to the panel.

#### **Change in status**

- 4.18. Any changes to the status of a professional accreditation must be reported to the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards as soon as a preliminary decision has been communicated by the PSRB. Where a loss, or partial loss of accreditation, recognition or membership has taken place an action plan will be required. This includes if the decision to not seek re-accreditation is with the University.

- 4.19. The College action plan must be completed promptly in consultation with the appropriate Associate Head of College (Education and Students), Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards, Assistant Registrar (Compliance and Development), and Director of College Operations or nominee.
- 4.20. The following constituency will be informed of the decisions, impact and process to be followed.
- Global Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing Communications  
For communication with applicants, updating web pages and externally published course information.
  - Head of College/Director of College Operations  
To advise continuing students of the changes
  - Strategic Planning and Performance  
The nominee with responsibility for external returns
  - Teaching Committee Secretary  
To report to the Teaching Committee
  - Portfolio Planning Committee Secretary  
To report to the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub-Committee

#### Other considerations

- 4.21. In some cases, PSRBs allow their logo to be used in associated course advertising; where this is the case the College representative is responsible for making clear the requirements, limitations and expectations. It is expected the written guidance from the PSRB is disseminated appropriately to help ensure any advertising is not misleading.

# Section 5: Course and module modifications

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- 5.1 Following the Validation of a course there is an expectation that courses and modules will over time require modifications to respond to advances in the academic discipline, research, improved technology enhanced learning opportunities, student feedback, changes in internal policy, Professional Statutory Regulatory Body and external examiners feedback. It is anticipated such actions are identified through the continuous improvement process.
- 5.2 To ensure the approved course outcomes are maintained, avoid 'validation drift' and to ensure appropriate actions identified through the continuous improvement process, the University operates a proportionate course and module modifications process.
- 5.3 The modifications process recognises that there is a balance between the transparency of information provided to applicants and students and the need for curriculum, assessment and learning outcomes to be continuously enhanced in line with best practice and ensuring courses are kept up to date. Those proposing and approving the modifications do so based on a shared responsibility and shared goal for improving the quality of the course in the interests of staff, students and applicants. A holistic approach to the curriculum and assessment is expected through all modifications.
- 5.4 Those proposing and approving the changes have a shared responsibility to ensure that the impact on the learning outcomes, assessment rationale, assessment criteria have been articulated to national expectations, for example appropriate level learning outcomes. In proposing changes, it is expected that consideration of the potential impact at course level is considered by the course leader or equivalent e.g. course outcomes, Professional Body expectations, subject benchmarks, and Franchise (at collaborative partners) implications prior to submission.
- 5.5 Changes to award titles and proposals for additional named awards must be submitted to and be approved by the relevant University Committee; these cannot be approved by the modification process.

## Types of modifications

- 5.6 Modifications are concentrated on the approved published curriculum, namely programme specifications and module proformas. In addition, the information may also be linked to the applicant and student information through the Student Records System.
- 5.7 Taking a risk-based approach there are four categories of modification, minor, major, structural and exceptional retrospective, this is to ensure proportionality in the approval process.
  - i) **Minor modifications:** will normally be expected to have no impact on the overall published programme specification for example course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements and are normally a single or very small number of changes to modules, these are usually proposed by Module Leaders.

- ii) **Major modifications:** are normally more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may be affected. This category requires additional evidence than required for a minor modification. Such modifications are normally expected to form one coherent clear proposal. Further examples are outlined in this section.
- iii) **Structural changes:** are those that impact on the overall course structures of an award, course outcomes or overall philosophy of a course. In addition, refer to the scheduled hours and pre-requisite information in this section.
- iv) **Retrospective changes:** in highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Teaching Committee Chair or nominee. It is anticipated that these will be exceptionally rare and, in all cases, will be reported to the Associate Head of College (Education and Students) and Head of School.

### Proportionality

- 5.8 The modification process aims to be proportionate with different evidence and approval requirements for structural, major and minor modifications.
- 5.9 Module proformas contain critical information for students, however, also have an impact on the overall course information provided to applicants and students. Recognising this the below categories are aligned to the structural modification process, which is considered higher risk.
- i) **Scheduled hours changes:** the University scheduled hours form part of the expected published information for which applicants can reasonably be expected to use to inform their decision to come to the University of Westminster over competitor courses. This information is expected to be published by all Higher Education institutions by the Competition and Markets Authority in advance of the *applicant* cycle. It is therefore expected that scheduled hours cannot normally be changed unless through a structural modification which has an earlier deadline.
  - ii) **Pre-requisites, dis-requisites, and co-requisites:** The inclusion of modules which must be passed before another module can be undertaken can impact completion and progression decisions for students and therefore have wider impacts, including on the matrix of data. Taking a risk-based approach, such changes are deemed to be structural.

Note: The modifications table provides full details of the approval mechanism, a summary of the information and evidence required and examples.

### Deadlines

- 5.10 The University will set deadlines each academic year for the consideration of proposals. The deadlines take account of the opportunities for student feedback, staff reflections, discussions with external examiners and to allow for a rigorous approval process, whilst balancing the need for other necessary requirements which help improve the student experience e.g. timetabling and the communication of accurate published information to both applicants and continuing students impacted by the changes. All deadlines apply to the full approved submission and supporting evidence.

- 5.11 There is an expectation that major and structural changes will be submitted no later than mid-November, allowing for appropriate communication to applicants, students and key stakeholders. Minor modifications are anticipated to be possible until later in the academic cycle to allow for student feedback and subject area meetings.
- 5.12 The principles outlined for modification deadlines should also apply to non-standard starting courses e.g. January start courses should where possible allow for student feedback following one semester of teaching. Extra attention should be given to transitional arrangement for part time and January starters, where possible student consultation should also include these representative groups.

### **Approval process**

- 5.13 Modifications, including the appropriate evidence, are considered and approved on behalf of the College Teaching Committee and submitted to Quality and Standards for further comments or approval. The proposals are formally agreed by Quality and Standards where possible. In addition, a College Teaching Committee subgroup is expected to meet following the deadlines to consider any complex proposals and to provide a summary and audit opportunity for the Chair of the College Teaching Committee.
- 5.14 Approval by the College Teaching Committee Chair or Head of School or nominee is normally expected, the below exceptions apply:
- i) Where structural course changes are occurring to a course validated within the last year, the proposal should normally be considered by the relevant University Validation Panel (UVP) Chair or a member of the Course Validation Standing Panel (CVSP).
  - ii) Where 50% or more of the course structure is changing. Structural modifications are normally considered to be 'modifying' a course or group of courses. Where 50% or more of any course structure associated with the modification is proposed to change a University Panel Chair from outside the School may be required to approve the modification. In addition, this may trigger a meeting with the course team, with the understanding further documentation may be required.
- 5.15 Credit-bearing modules which are not part of a University of Westminster award but may be considered a course for the students, should be approved by the College Teaching Committee Chair. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.
- 5.16 The addition of a new Westminster Elective to the portfolio of modules should be considered by a University Panel Chair with experience in interdisciplinary teaching activity and a panel representative from another College. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.
- 5.17 The Quality and Standards Office are expected to formally communicate approval of any changes to the relevant College and Registry staff. In addition, it is important that communication with Marketing, Communication and Development (where applicable) takes place to ensure the accuracy of published information e.g., on web pages, prospectuses, course promotions. Records will be kept by the Quality and Standards Officers on behalf of the College Teaching Committee.

- 5.18 Following approval of modifications, it is the responsibility of the Course Leader or nominee to ensure students, and the external examiner are informed of the changes. Students should be informed at the earliest opportunity following approval. In the case of structural changes communication should be explicitly to applicants and those students affected.
- 5.19 Changes to modules which take account of individual students' disability needs are also expected, in such cases these are normally approved by the Disability Learning Support Unit on a case-by-case basis known as the Reasonable Adjustment. In the case of Collaborative partners this decision making will be the responsibility of the partner institution.

#### **Annual updates requiring no modification**

- 5.20 The updating of reading lists is expected on a regular basis to modules to remain up to date. Updates are expected through the university's reading list systems, more information is available through the Academic [Engagement Librarians](#).
- 5.21 The updating of Module Leaders is anticipated, module proformas deliberately do not include module leaders in the final student published version to ensure they remain accurate. Students can access module leaders through E Vision and Blackboard. Any updates should be provided to registry offices.

**Schedule hours explanation:** The definitions of schedule hours are influenced by external agencies such as Office for Students (OfS) and the UKVI. They may have important implications which are subject to audit; any queries should be directed to Quality and Standards in the first instance.

Note: hours that are delivered online must be clearly listed in the module proforma. Online hours for full time and part time students may have important implications. Any queries should be referred to Quality and Standards in the first instance.

Types of changes	Summary	Examples	Approval required	Other action required
Scheduled hour change with no change to the <b>total</b> scheduled hours.	<p><b>Changes to student learning and teaching hours table</b></p> <p>Module proformas should be updated through the modification process where there has been an adjustment to the hours between <b>differing types</b> of teaching methods as described in the indicative student learning and teaching hour's table, but where there is crucially <b>no change to the total hours of non-independent study.</b></p> <p><b><u>Online hours</u></b>            Note: any hours that are as standard delivered online must be included in the published module proforma. It is expected all modules include some on campus delivery unless linked to a distance learning course. A course overview of the broad level of online hours is expected. Further guidance is available via Quality and Standards. Any move to more online hours within a module may require further information at a course level.</p>	<p>An example is a move from 20 hours of lecturers to 18 hours of lectures and 2 hours of seminars, i.e., there is no change to the overall scheduled time.</p> <p>Example 20 hours delivered on lecturers on campus moving to 18 on campus and 2 online. This may require additional endorsement to ensure the course level online hours are appropriate.</p>	Minimum approval required, although this should be logged as a minor modification to ensure the published module proforma is accurately published to students.	Minor modification



Types of changes	Summary	Examples	Approval required	Other action required
Undergraduate standard hours	<p>For undergraduate courses the University has approved that a standard module will normally be a maximum of 48 scheduled hours. However, exceptions are permitted. This may also be in line with subject sector comparisons.</p> <p>For undergraduate modules that exceed 48 hours this must be approved by the Head of School (or equivalent), this is to ensure the resourcing is appropriately identified at an early stage.</p>	<p>An undergraduate module with 49 total scheduled hours or above.</p> <p>No threshold exists for postgraduate modules.</p>	Head of School approval	Not applicable however the Head of School can reasonably be expected to ensure College resources have been considered
Changing the total scheduled hours	<p>Where the <b>total</b> scheduled hours are changing, this has the potential to impact on the courses total published scheduled hours, which is published to applicants. Any changes in scheduled hours at module level is considered a structural modification, it will in addition require the holistic overview by the Course Leader to ascertain the course level impact.</p> <p>Where changes are taking place across multiple modules the Head of School is expected to take an overview.</p>	Module changing from 48 hours scheduled activity to 44 hours scheduled activity.	By the College Teaching Committee and endorsed by Quality and Standards by the published deadlines.	Student consultation is normally required.

## COURSE AND MODULE MODIFICATIONS PROCESS

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL AND ACTION REQUIRED
<p><b>MINOR MODULE MODIFICATION</b></p> <p>Minor modifications will normally be expected to have no impact on the published programme specifications for example overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements. Examples of these types of modifications are provided.</p> <p>The potential impact of ‘minor changes’ on course outcomes is however recognised. An example might be the removal of a presentation on a core module, that may result in a course outcome aligned to ‘verbally communicating’. The course leader or equivalent is expected to ensure minor modifications are not impacting on the overall course outcomes. Where the course outcomes are changing, please refer to major modifications.</p>	<p>Changes to Module Learning outcomes, assessment methods, assessment weightings, qualifying marks or sets, assessment criteria, the way the module is delivered (teaching and Learning methods).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A brief and clear explanation describing the proposed changes, and the date from which they would be implemented. E.g., change from exam to coursework.</li> <li>2) Academic rationale E.g., the academic purpose for the change from exam to coursework.</li> <li>3) Updated Module Proforma</li> </ol> <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader reflects upon the currency of the reading list. If updates are required these should be communicated to the <a href="#">Academic Engagement Librarians</a> Team at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Module Leader</li> <li>2) Course leader or Head of School or Nominee(s)</li> </ol> <p>In signing the course leader or equivalent is also confirming there is no impact on the overall course outcomes.</p> <p>Where the module is core across more than one named award it is expected that consultation on behalf of each course has taken place to ensure course outcomes are not impacted.</p> <p>Approval on behalf of the College Teaching Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3) Endorsed by the Quality and Standards Office.</li> <li>4) Communication to students by the course leader or nominee</li> </ol>

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED
<p><b>MAJOR MODIFICATION</b></p> <p>Major modifications are more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may be affected. This category requires additional evidence over and above that required for a minor modification. Such modifications are normally expected to form one clear proposal.</p> <p>In addition, a change of module title is considered a major modification as the information is contained in the programme specification and course web pages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive changes to assessment, learning outcomes, across current modules.</li> <li>• Changes to overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy.</li> <li>• Module Title changes</li> <li>• New cohort start date e.g. January start</li> <li>• The addition of an already approved option module with no associated removal of another module.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A very brief explanation outlining what the changes are, normally from the course leader or equivalent and when they will be implemented.</li> <li>2) Academic Rationale – this describes in more detail the academic purpose of the changes.</li> <li>3) Updated Module proforma(s)</li> <li>4) Updated Programme Specification if appropriate (module title changes will require an update to all applicable Programme Specifications).</li> <li>5) Consultation with students where appropriate, determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment. This is normally expected to be through the course committee, student representatives or evidence from student surveys.</li> <li>6) External Examiner consultation where appropriate; determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, with the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment.</li> <li>7) PSRB reports or guidance where appropriate.</li> </ol>	<p>Approval is as per minor modifications</p>

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED
		<p>8) In the case of a new cohort start date, a statement from the course leader should explain the expected module running order including the final dissertation submission, this may impact on the normal duration of the course. Assurance is expected to be given that the same course including all options modules are available to both cohorts.</p> <p>9) Where an already approved option module is being added to a course with no associated removal of a module, no further evidence is required other than the updated programme specification. The addition must still be approved by Head of School or nominee. Course team discussions with Registry and Timetabling will be required following approval.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader(s) reflects upon the currency of the reading list. If updates are required these should be communicated to the Academic Engagement Librarians Team at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Where an accumulation of minor modifications results in significant changes across a named award in one academic year the Chair of the College Teaching Committee can ask for the above information to be provided. In determining if the changes are extensive the overall course structure number of credits involved, extent of the course outcome changes will be considered.</p>	

## STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLES	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED.
<p><b>STRUCTURAL CHANGES</b></p> <p>Structural changes are those that impact on the structure of the course, although other instances apply. Structural modifications are considered to require more evidence.</p> <p>The only exception is where an additional already approved option module(s) is being proposed, such modifications can be dealt with under the major modification process as the published expectations of students are not being impacted.</p>	<p>Changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• core and option modules, including the removal of a named option module.</li> <li>• credit value</li> <li>• credit level</li> <li>• mode of study</li> <li>• The approval of new module(s) on a named award.</li> <li>• Changes to pre- or co requisite requirements</li> </ul>	<p>The required evidence is as per a major modification; however, an updated Programme Specification, student and external examiner consultation are requirements.</p> <p>All new modules must be considered by an appropriate external examiner.</p> <p>Where a mode of study is being introduced or changed this must be approved by the Head of College or nominee, a statement from the course leader will be required to confirm how students on the new mode of study will be supported.</p> <p>Pre-requisite requirements impact on module registration, progressions decision and can have an impact on completion rates, submissions are strongly encouraged to be submitted as soon as possible. Module Leaders and Course Leaders with pre-requisites should cross reference academic regulations 5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.1.5.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader(s) reflects upon the currency of existing reading list and creates one online for any new modules. If updates are required these should be communicated to the <a href="#">Academic Engagement Librarians</a> Team at the earliest opportunity to ensure the timely availability to students.</p>	<p>Approved by the</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) College Teaching Committee (including the Chair)</li> <li>2) Approved</li> <li>3) Endorsed by Quality and Standards.</li> </ol> <p>The scrutiny of the proposal(s) will normally take place by correspondence however a meeting may be required for more complex proposals.</p> <p>Communication to students and applicants must take place providing the rationale and reasons for the change.</p>
<p><b>Credit bearing short courses</b></p> <p>New credit bearing short course/modules</p>	<p>A new 20 credit module to be delivered to an external group of students or to be available to students as a “module buyer”.</p>	<p>Module Proforma(s) Comments from an external examiner or independent examiner advisor from the relevant subject discipline</p>	<p>College Teaching Committee Chair. If it is deemed appropriate and proportionate by the Chair a meeting may be required. Please note</p>

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLES	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED.
with no named award or associated structure.		<p>Confirmation of the academic lead for students and continuing improvement processes.</p> <p>Confirmation from the relevant Director of College Operations or nominee to confirm the administrative requirements have been addressed.</p>	some proposals may require approval by the Portfolio Planning Committee.
<p><b>Westminster Electives Portfolio</b></p> <p>The additional of one or more Westminster Plus Electives to the portfolio of modules available on courses across the University.</p>	A new module or existing module being added to the portfolio	<p>A new module will require external examiner comments. In addition, the Teaching Committee approves the inclusion of the module in the wider suite of modules available across the University annually.</p> <p>A statement as to how the module fits into the Westminster Distinctiveness and contributes to the Employability Strategy or graduate attributes will be expected as part of the modification. Such modules will not be permitted to have any pre-requisites and will normally not require any previous subject specialist knowledge.</p>	University Teaching Committee
<p><b>Retrospective exceptional modifications</b></p> <p>In highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Quality Review Committee Chair or nominee.</p>	Examples may include urgent external examiner comments identified after the start of term.	The evidence is the same dependent on the type of modification being proposed; in addition, confirmation of what has been published in the course handbook may be required.	University Teaching Committee Chair or nominee.

# Section 6: Course Documentation

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- 6.1 The course documentation that applicants access help inform students on their journey through the course cycle from why they should come to the University of Westminster, through to graduation. It is therefore important that through the course validation, cyclical review and modifications processes that these documents reflect accurate information, which is then considered for approval. Documentation published to applicants and students should meet digital accessibility requirements. Course documentation will also inform published information and external government returns.

## Programme Specification

- 6.2 A Programme Specification is a concise description of the course. They should be written for prospective and current students and are published externally on the University webpages as part of the course information. The document differs from marketing material in that it must also meet external benchmarks and internal expectation and is subject to formal approval. The University's standard format considers external guidance on the setting of appropriate outputs for students at the course level. Programme specifications can include several linked differing awards, this is encouraged to show applicants the differences between similar cognate groups of courses and to avoid duplication.
- 6.3 The primary users of the Programme Specification will be applicants, current students, external examiners, professional bodies, potential employers of graduates and external auditors. The document is also published in E Vision for students and all staff and will also be used to ensure accuracy of information on the Student Record System for external reporting, informing the course details on the web and prospectuses e.g. duration of the course, September start, mode of study and approved course structure.
- 6.4 A Programme Specification is required for the purpose of validation and ongoing re-approval processes; including course level modifications (including module title changes) made as part of the course modifications process.

## Course Handbook

- 6.5 The Course Handbook is the main reference for students in navigating the overview of their course and overall university experience. It is expected that this document is reviewed annually to ensure that the information remains accurate and up to date. Any changes to course structures, modules, and academic regulations will be expected to have followed the appropriate process, annual operational updates are expected. Courses are encouraged to include relevant course specific information which will help students navigate their course. A template is available from the Quality and Standards Office.
- 6.6 Where a group of awards form a cognate group of courses, it may be judged more appropriate to produce the Course Handbooks collectively in a single document to avoid duplication. Colleges may also choose to provide common student support information in a College handbook or School handbook.

## **Module Proforma/Descriptor**

- 6.7 The Quality and Standards Office publishes a template for all modules known as the module proforma. All module syllabuses must be published in the agreed template and published to students. The module proforma must articulate the module accurately and be published as approved by a validation, cyclical review or as part of a modification. The information in the approved module proforma is added to the Student Records System, which is published to students online, the information is also used to inform external returns to the Office for Students. A guide to completing the module proforma is available from Quality and Standards.
- 6.8 Where a group of courses with several named award pathways is to be considered, it may be judged more appropriate to present the module syllabuses in a separate Module Handbook, giving an overview of all modules.
- 6.9 In addition to the Module Proforma/Descriptor module leaders are expected to make available to students a module handbook with more localised practical information such as assessment questions, deadlines etc.

## **Reflective statement (for Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Events)**

- 6.10 In the case of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh events required by the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub Committee, reflection of the data and curriculum is required.

### **6.11 Opening statement (indicative 1000 words)**

This statement should provide a holistic overview of the School or Cognate Subject area being considered.

The opening statement should be an open and honest narrative of what is working and what is not, including a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision since the validation/revalidation or last holistic modification. The opening statement should act as an executive summary for the suite of courses being considered and for the rest of the document.

### **6.12 Course reflections (indicative 1000 words per course)**

Course teams should consider what is the School or subject area matrix of data, particularly the areas of risk raised by the PPC Portfolio Sub Committee. How does it compare with the sector benchmarks? What actions have been taken in recent years following the Continuous Improvement processes? What risks have been identified through and what associated actions are you taking to improve?

It is equally important that Course teams consider what is working well. Where data is above the sector benchmark What are the key strengths of the provision? What has worked well? What is considered good practice in the way the provision is delivered? Are there employer or international links?

Reflection should provide an overview of how each course has operated, what are the student outcomes, their satisfaction and their employment outcomes. What changes are happening within the subject area? What new skills will your graduates need and how have modifications been used to ensure the curriculum has been kept up to date?



What is being fed back through various student consultation (Student Module Evaluations (SME), course and School reps, NSS/PTES survey results). Course teams should ensure that students are involved in any proposed course level changes.

How does the provision consider the student experience and academic support for students?

How is the provision taking due regard of inclusive curriculum initiatives? Have the course team completed the [Being Westminster: Inclusive Course Design checklist and reflected the results in the curriculum?](#) In addition, workshops are required as part of the validation and cyclical review processes.

There should be an outline of the changes that are being made to the provision as part of the process, and reasons given for these changes (student feedback, External Examiner comments, changes to the market, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, and changes to staffing, resources and the discipline). There should also be a reflection on what is staying in the provision and why it is being retained?

If the course is linked to collaborative arrangements, then you could also review how the changes may affect collaborative links e.g. franchise partners, progression agreements.

#### 6.13 **Documentation for other cyclical review processes**

In the case of Curriculum and Assessment Check-in no additional 'new' documentation is normally anticipated from the course team, it is the current curriculum that is being reviewed.

In the case of the Internal Scrutiny Panel additional documentation is anticipated as deemed appropriate. This may include:

- PSRB mapping
- Mapping to apprenticeship standards (apprenticeships)
- Employer engagement (apprenticeships)
- End point assessment Plan (apprenticeships)

#### **Communication of Changes**

- 6.14 The communication of changes clearly articulates to the panel the planned changes for Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh Events, as well as serving as the final drafts to be communicated to applicants and students. It is important for example if a mode of study is being withdrawn this is clearly articulated so the necessary action can be taken to ensure accurate published information and communication to applicants and current students, likewise, changes of module titles, new modules, modules being replaced will be communicated to applicants and registry in order to make changes in the system. The accuracy of these documents is therefore crucial. This document is required as advised by Quality and Standards

and will depend on the scale of the changes being proposed through cyclical events or modifications.

# Section 7: Continuous Improvement

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## Continuous Improvement Process Purpose and Overview

- 7.1 The Continuous Improvement Process is the cornerstone of quality assurance processes. It gives Modules and Courses the opportunity to reflect upon the teaching, learning and operation of a course using data and other sources of information that become available. The process aims to identify successes and good practice, which could be shared throughout the institution, and to identify areas requiring resolution or further development.
- 7.2 The purpose of the Continuous Improvement process is to maintain and enhance the quality of Westminster's taught courses through the consideration of data and the experience of delivering the course, and to:
- (i) review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment strategies of taught courses and consider the planning of any consequent changes to the modules and/or courses;
  - (ii) ensure that any particular academic course issues are reflected upon, along with the steps taken to resolve them;
  - (iii) monitor and evaluate how feedback from students obtained through internal and external surveys e.g. National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Student Module Evaluation (SME), have been considered and appropriate action taken as required;
  - (iv) consider any relevant external comments on the wider aspect of the course, including those of External Examiners and, where appropriate, Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and employers;
  - (v) identify any trends in student continuation, completion and good honours rates, particularly with respect to identifying if more could be done to support certain groups of students in meeting the learning outcomes of their courses.
- 7.3 In addition to the Continuous Improvement Process, the university has an expectation of a culture of ongoing continuous improvement. For example, it is expected that all courses facilitate a student feedback process twice a year, using course representatives who are trained and feedback regularly via Student Voice systems and engagement with subject area meetings with external examiners at level 5 and above.

## Responsibilities

- 7.4 Each Module Leader is responsible for producing a Module Leader report that considers student outcomes and evaluations and provides an overview of the marking and moderation process for that module. These will form part of the evidence base for Continuous Improvement reports.

- 7.5 Each Course Leader is responsible for producing a Continuous Improvement report that considers an overview of Module Leader reports, External Examiner reports, analysis of course data, overview of staffing and actions to respond to issues identified through the process.
- Note: Where the course is concurrently undergoing refresh, the reflection can instead be undertaken as part of this process. This does not apply to Curriculum Check- In (no reflection or data is required), apprenticeship provision or where an annual process is required by the PSRB. Quality and Standards will advise if a report needs to be completed.
- 7.6 Course Leaders and Heads of School for Apprenticeship provision are required to complete a Self Assessment Report. In addition, the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) Portfolio Sub-Committee may request a Head of School Continuous Improvement report as an outcome of its review of the matrix of data based on the level of risk identified (refer to 7.15).
- 7.7 A Continuous Improvement report should be produced for closing courses with fully enrolled students.
- 7.8 Each School and College is responsible for ensuring that the Continuous Improvement process is completed for modules and courses. This should be done through the College Teaching Committee.
- 7.9 The Quality and Standards Office will produce a University level report identifying trends and actions for consideration.
- 7.10 Strategy Planning and Performance is responsible for the generation of statistical reports which form part of the evidence base for Continuous Improvement. Specified other parts of the evidence base will be supplied by other Professional Service departments.

## Timescales

- 7.11 In order to expedite the resolution of any issues, all Continuous Improvement processes are to be completed when data sets become available. The timescales for the completion of each section of the Continuous Improvement form will be provided to colleagues when the release dates of relevant data sets are known.
- 7.12 Completed Continuous Improvement reports are to be uploaded to the SharePoint site in advance of the published deadlines.
- 7.13 The outcomes of Continuous Improvement processes are normally considered by the Teaching Committee by the March meeting (refer to section 1).

## Matrix of data

- 7.14 A matrix of data is available to support Continuous Improvement. The data will be risk rated to reflect its position in relation to externally published threshold standards.
- 7.15 The templates for Continuous Improvement reports will ask Course teams to reflect on their course data and outline actions for enhancement.

- 7.16 The PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee will review the matrix of data for all taught courses at the University and make additional requests of course teams or Schools where needed to improve student experience and outcomes.

## Student Engagement with Continuous Improvement

- 7.17 The University values student input into our quality assurance processes as a key contribution to work to enhance the student experience, course delivery, student focus and the general well-being of the University community.
- 7.18 Student Feedback is incorporated into the Continuous Improvement process through:
- (i) Consideration of course NSS or PTES survey results;
  - (ii) Consideration of student module evaluations; Appropriate student feedback from surveys for collaborative partners.
- 7.19 Colleges are encouraged to consider completed Continuous Improvement reports at School and College level committees that include student representation.

## Continuous Improvement Process

- 7.20 **Modules**  
The Module Leader report will be produced after the module has run and will form part of the evidence base for the appropriate Continuous Improvement report.
- 7.21 The Module Leader report will provide an overview of the operation of the module, a reflection on module completion and achievement metrics against the available data sets and a consideration of student module evaluations. The report will also outline any changes planned to the module.
- 7.22 The Module Leader report will outline the approaches taken to marking, moderation and external examiner scrutiny for the module.
- 7.23 For modules delivered for Study Abroad/Exchange or credit bearing Short Course purposes, a Module Leader report should be produced.
- 7.24 Module leader reports may be made available to external agencies such as the Office for Independent Adjudication.
- 7.25 **Courses**  
The Continuous Improvement report will consider an evidence base comprising:
- (i) Module Leader reports;
  - (ii) External Examiner reports;
  - (iii) Data set.
- 7.26 The Continuous Improvement report will include sections related to student experience, employability and outcomes linking the relevant data sets. Where data is not available, courses are expected to make full use of Student Module Evaluation reports and external examiner reports.

- 7.27 Cognate groups of courses may be covered by the same Continuous Improvement report. Groupings of courses will be confirmed by Quality and Standards in consultation with the College and grouped on the basis of significant sharing of modules across the provision.
- 7.28 Continuous Improvement reports will be provided to the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee as part of the evidence base for portfolio review.
- 7.29 **Risk-Based Approach**  
The University will take a risk-based approach to its Continuous Improvement processes. As the focus of these processes are to respond to data as it becomes available the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee will meet to review the matrix of data and make any additional requests of courses or Schools. The Sub-Committee will be chaired by the PPC Chair and attended by the Associate Heads of College with representatives from the UWSU, Quality and Standards and Strategy, Planning and Performance.
- 7.30 The review of data will consider its position against externally set threshold standards. If a course falls below those threshold standards it may be asked to respond in a wide variety of ways. For example, additional reflective questions within the Continuous Improvement report, production of an action plan for monitoring by the College Teaching Committee, undertake a workshop, appoint an industry facing external examiner to contribute to the employability strategy, conversation with the Head of School for monitoring by the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee or the College Teaching Committee. The list of actions is not considered exhaustive. In determining the action to be taken the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee will consider the distance of the management information from the threshold standard and the number of management information indicators that are below the threshold standard. It will also take account of performance compared with previous years.
- 7.31 For high risk courses the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee may require a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh event. Such events allow a group of peers, including external advisors to consider the curriculum and data. Please refer to section 3.
- 7.32 Quality and Standards will inform courses that have been identified for additional action by the PPC Portfolio Sub-Committee.
- 7.33 **Collaborative Provision**  
Provision delivered at partners through a validation or franchise is subject to annual monitoring and will complete a template relevant to their provision. It is recognised that data sets, such as the NSS and Graduate Outcomes, differ for collaborative provision.
- 7.34 **University**  
The Quality and Standards Office will provide a report to the Teaching Committee and Academic Council on the outcomes of the Continuous Improvement process including any issues requiring attention at University level. The Continuous Improvement process is summarised in the Annual Quality Report to the Court of Governor's to ensure that the Office for Students On-going Conditions of Registration have been met.

# Section 8: Student Voice

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This section should be read in conjunction with other resources available on the [University website](#).

## Responsibility of teaching staff

- 8.1 Teaching staff hold the primary responsibility for educational quality and good academic standards at the University of Westminster. The design and delivery of modules provide the framework for the student experience. Continuous self-monitoring of delivery is central to the achievement of good quality delivery. Collaboration between colleagues at School level enhances the ongoing review process.

## Heads of School

- 8.2 Each College is organised on the basis of complementary disciplines within the overall subject of its title. Each subject specialist team is organised into a School; some are single subjects, others represent cross-disciplinary subjects.
- 8.3 Responsibility for providing management and leadership for the teaching and research staff within these subject specialist units lies with the Head of School. Specifically, this encompasses management of academic quality of delivery, and monitoring student achievements, within the University's framework of policies and processes for quality assurance.
- 8.4 The generic job description of the Head of School includes responsibilities for managing and monitoring the quality assurance of courses, modules and other educational programmes provided by the School, and to ensure the provision of academic and pastoral support for students studying programmes in the school. Heads of School are members of the College Executive Group.
- 8.5 The Head of School's specific responsibilities for taught courses will reflect the scale and character of the courses, but would normally encompass:
- **Assessment**  
(including liaison with internal and external examiners, and arrangements for the scrutiny of all draft coursework and examination requirements)
  - **Monitoring and review**  
(including the aggregation of student feedback for analysis by the course teaching team; supporting the continuous improvement process; and coordinating the preparation for course cyclical review, external review and/or re-accreditation).

## Course Leaders

- 8.6 Within the Statutes and Principles of the University approved by Privy Council in 1992, the appointment of a member of staff as leader of the course or named award programme is specified, with the responsibility of ensuring that:

- the course or programme meets its specified aims and objectives;
- it is conducted in accordance with the appropriate regulations and academic administrative requirements.
- it meets the requirements of the University's Education Strategy;
- documentation is provided for monitoring and review.

8.7 The role of the Course Leader may vary within and between Schools to reflect the level and mode of the course. However, the responsibilities of the Course Leader would normally encompass:

- **student induction and support;** including course-specific induction, organisation of elections for student representatives and arrangements for student voice activity; and overseeing the effectiveness of the Personal Tutorial System for students registered for named awards within the course scheme in consultation with the School Senior Tutor.
- **course definition;** keeping an overview of the consistency between subject-specific aims and learning outcomes and the aims and learning outcomes for core and subject-specific option modules; ensuring that assessment criteria for each module are published for reference by students, teaching staff (Part-time as well as Full-time), external examiners and external accrediting agencies; and updating and circulating the Course Handbook, in accordance with the requirements specified in Section 6.

## Course representatives

8.8 Course representatives will be elected annually by their peers at the beginning of each academic year for undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Course Representatives are expected to collect feedback from students on their course and present this feedback to course leaders at contact points throughout the academic year. Such activity can take place at Course or Module level. At least two contact points per semester are expected and the format of these events should be determined jointly by course representatives and course leaders. Contact points can allow for digital methods of communication, which can be more inclusive of the diverse student population. Whatever the format, the primary task is to consult actively and provide timely feedback on the outcome. Details of the student voice activity are expected to be available on the course Blackboard site.

8.9 A summary of agreed action points and progress against them should be made available to all students on the course and the Students' Union (SU). This can be submitted by the course representatives or Course Leader or nominee. The Course Leader is responsible for ensuring this is available.

Note: [A template](#) is available from the UWSU

8.10 Any urgent issues are not expected to wait for a student voice activity. The Students' Union work with Course Representatives and Course leaders to determine how urgent issues are raised outside of formal interactions with Course Representatives. Appropriate course management structures should be used. In addition, Course leaders can refer concerns about matters unrelated to learning and teaching (e.g. estates issues, library resources etc.) directly to the appropriate service as soon as they are made aware.



- 8.11 For other urgent issues course leaders can refer these to senior colleagues who work with the Students' Union to find an appropriate solution. All students can channel their comments through their tutor or another member of teaching staff, but the view the elected course representative(s) puts across is much more likely to be seen as presenting the case of the student group as a whole. Constructive criticisms of the way the course is run or the facilities available may be reported to the College Teaching Committee, and University-wide issues highlighted in this way are likely to be followed up at a senior level precisely because it is recognised that they provide an overview of student opinion.
- 8.12 All course representatives are expected to undertake training provided jointly by the Students' Union and Quality and Standards.
- 8.13 All course representatives are expected to adhere to the University Student Code of Conduct and Academic Representative Code of Conduct. Where expectations are not met the Students' Union will hold discussions with Quality and Standards and can jointly decide to remove a student from representing the student body. In addition, such action may also be the result of any Student Code of Conduct decisions

### **School Community Representatives**

- 8.14 School Community Representatives will also be appointed. School Community Representatives will meet with the Head of School at least every semester and provide feedback on behalf of the Course Representatives. A minimum of two (one Undergraduate and one Postgraduate) and a maximum of four School Community Representatives will be appointed for each School, one of which must be a postgraduate student. School Community Representatives will be appointed jointly between the Quality and Standards Office and the SU through an interview process. School Community Representatives will sit on the College Teaching Committees and the Student Voice Forum and are expected to complete regular reports on their activities.
- 8.15 All School Community Representatives are expected to undertake training provided jointly by the Students' Union and Quality and Standards.
- 8.16 All School Community representatives are expected to adhere to the University Student Code of Conduct and Academic Representative Code of Conduct. Where expectations are not met the Students' Union will hold discussions with Quality and Standards and can jointly decide to remove a student from representing the student body. In addition, such action may also be the result of any Student Code of Conduct decisions

### **Consultation**

- 8.17 Each course must have a formal meeting process for consulting with and gathering feedback from student and staff representatives and this should be advertised to students on the course's BlackBoard site. Consultation by group e-mail can be very effective. Whatever the format, the primary task is to consult actively and provide timely feedback on the outcome. A summary of agreed action points and progress against them should be made available to all students.
- 8.18 In addition to the formal meeting process students can comment through a Student Voice platform, sharing feedback and ideas for change.

- 8.19 If general student comment highlights a problem, potential or actual, it should be reported to the Course Leader (without identifying the individual source of the comments) by a student representative; the Course Leader may be in a position to resolve the matter or may need to refer it to the Head of School, Head of College, or manager of the relevant service, for resolution. If comments relate to the approach taken by individual staff members, they should always be referred to the Head of School, who will meet the students concerned and later with the staff member. If it is not possible to resolve the issue, the Head of College will be asked to convene a further meeting with the staff member to identify appropriate action. Any such meetings, with staff or students, will remain confidential as far as possible.
- 8.20 Aspects of study not covered by student representatives are:
- personal problems of individual students
  - academic difficulties of individual students
  - allegations of unfair or inappropriate treatment by staff or other students.

These sorts of issues should be handled confidentially (as private concerns) and, with the advice of the Course Leader, they should be referred to the appropriate staff member such as the student's Personal Tutor, the Head of School, the Head of College, the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU), or the Wellbeing and Advice Service.

- 8.21 Student voice activities are not the appropriate process for dealing with potential student complaints about an individual member of staff; the University has a student complaints procedure for this purpose, details of which are available on the [University website](#).

## **Student Surveys**

- 8.22 All students are invited to complete a Student Module Evaluation (SME). Satisfaction scores and comments are made available to the Module Leader to share with the module teaching team. It is expected that the Module Leader will reflect on the outcomes of the SME in their Module Leader Report and identify necessary modifications or enhancements from the SME feedback. Both qualitative and quantitative module results will be made available, beyond the module teaching team, to the relevant academic managers in the College as determined and formally agreed with the Deputy Vice Chancellor by the Head of College. Quantitative SME data will be provided to Colleges to enable this information to be reviewed and considered by appropriate University, College, School and subject groups.
- 8.23 The annual National Student Survey (NSS) is a census of all UK students in their final year of an undergraduate course. The results are available on the [Office for Students Website](#).
- 8.24 Postgraduate students receive an equivalent questionnaire. International students receive several tailored surveys throughout their studies. The satisfaction scores and comments from internal and external student experience surveys will be made available to the relevant academic managers in the College as determined by the Head of College. Colleges are required to identify actions for improving the student experience and to monitor their effectiveness in partnership with the Teaching Committee.

8.25 Student Voice is represented through the academic governance of the University. The Student Voice Forum is Co-Chaired by the President of the Students' Union and includes all School Community Representatives on its membership. In addition, University committees such as Academic Council, Teaching Committee, College Teaching Committees and Court of Governors have University of Westminster Students' Union representation.

8.26 **Cyclical Review Processes**

In addition to the annual processes Curriculum Assessment Check-ins, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Refresh events and Internal Scrutiny Panels will normally involve the panel meeting privately with a group of students. Normally a Student Advisor from an independent College forms part of the Panel. Student Panel Advisors are appointed by the Quality and Standards Office, normally drawn from the pool of School Community Representatives or by an expression of interest from experienced and trained course representatives. Note: For Collaborative provision please refer to Section 11.

# Section 9: External Examiner Involvement

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## Requirements for External Examiner

- 9.1 The main purposes of External Examining are:
- to verify that standards are appropriate for the award elements which the External Examiner has been appointed to examine
  - to assist in the comparison of academic standards across higher education awards and award elements
  - to ensure that assessment processes are fair and operated in line with University Regulations.
- 9.2 External Examiners must be appointed to take part in:
- **Assessment** of all modules at Undergraduate Credit Levels 5 and 6 and Postgraduate Credit Level 7; External Examiners are appointed to Credit level 3 and 4 for discrete programmes leading to a University award and where the modules in question form part of a course delivered in collaboration with another institution.
  - **Progression and award** of all final University of Westminster awards and all decisions on exclusions based on academic performance.
  - Consideration of course and module modifications as appropriate
- 9.3 **Subject Area**  
External Examiners are appointed to provide subject area expertise. The size of the team should be such that each External Examiner has a reasonable and broadly equitable workload in terms of modules or subject areas covered and student numbers for each. Occasionally the appointment of one External Examiner to a Subject Area will be sufficient. Each approval term covers up to four academic sessions, in exceptional circumstances this may be extended by one further year.
- Note: From 2021/22 new External Examiners only will be appointed for five years, with the understanding that extensions will be very rare.
- 9.4 **Module Board**  
External Examiners will be involved in the confirmation of module marks for a group of modules not owned by a single academic department. The External Examiner should have familiarity with modular or credit accumulation schemes and expertise in the assessment process.
- 9.5 **Progression and Award Board**  
Chief External Examiners are appointed from the existing pool of Subject Area external examiners; they should normally have been a Subject Area External Examiner at the University of Westminster for at least one year. One Chief External Examiner will normally be appointed to a School-based Progression and Award Board. They will be involved in progression and award decisions for all final awards and decisions to exclude a student from a course on academic grounds.

Familiarity with course coverage and degree outcomes (rather than detailed subject knowledge) is required. The Chief External Examiner should have experience of modular or credit accumulation schemes and expertise in assessment.

- 9.6 Where an External Examiner is appointed to a Subject Area and subsequently to a different Board, for example a Module Board and/or Progression and Award Board, the total period of service should not exceed four years (or in the case of externals appointed from 2021/22 five years).
- 9.7 Where possible External Examiners for franchised or other collaborative courses should be the same individuals as those appointed to the equivalent course (or set of modules) taught at the University.
- 9.8 External Examiners (Industry consultation) may be appointed for subject areas or individual courses identified as at risk by the Portfolio Planning Committee Portfolio Sub-Committee in relation to employability data (such as below benchmark for highly skilled Graduate Outcomes data for three years). The role would **not** align to Progression and Award Boards or marking processes. It would instead formalise a link between industry and the course team, with a particular focus on curriculum and work-based learning opportunities for students.

## Procedures for Approval of External Examiners

- 9.9 The Head of College is responsible for securing and submitting External Examiner nominations (in consultation with the Head of School and the Head of any other College which shares responsibility for the subject or course). Approval of nominations should be sought in the semester before the External Examiner must be involved in the assessment process.
- 9.10 Nominations for Module Board External Examiners should be made by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education).
- 9.11 All nominations must be made on a standard form available from the Quality and Standards Department's SharePoint site. All sections of the form must be completed in full. Incomplete forms will be returned to the Head of College or Head of School. A summary curriculum vitae (six pages or less) must accompany each nomination.
- 9.12 While the agreement of the individual should be sought for a copy of the CV and for submission of the nomination, no commitment to an approval can be made prior to the formal decision at University level being made. In no circumstances should a nominee be involved in assessments or progression and award decisions unless notification of the approval has been given by the Quality and Standards Office. Approvals cannot be made retrospectively.
- 9.13 The UK Visas and Immigration Office requires all universities to undertake identity checks on all those paid via staff payment system including External Examiners, to ensure that they are eligible to work in the UK. For this reason, a photocopy or scan of the passport of each nominee for External Examiner must be submitted along with the nomination form to the Quality and Standards Office.

- 9.14 Once appointed, all External Examiners must complete the required right to work checks for employment records. External Examiners may be required to bring their passport when they first visit the University as part of the College induction for verification or complete an online right to work check depending on their nationality and what kind of permission they have to work in the UK.
- 9.15 Decisions are normally made within a month to six weeks of a nomination being submitted but if extra information is required a final decision may take longer.

## Criteria for Approval of External Examiners

- 9.16 Criteria for approval relate both to the individual nominee and the combined expertise of all External Examiners within the Subject Area. However, the overriding criteria for all nominations are that the proposed External Examiner possesses the necessary subject expertise at the appropriate level (Subject Areas) and an understanding/experience of credit accumulation (Module Boards and Progression and Award Boards), and, that they are wholly independent of the internal examining team and the Head of College and Head of School.
- 9.17 Within each Subject Area there should be:
- prior experience of both internal and External Examining at the relevant level;
  - a gender balance where possible and representation from a range of ethnic backgrounds where possible;
  - representation from industry, commerce or professional practice (where appropriate) alongside academic membership;
  - a spread in the host institutions of the External Examiners; normally only one External Examiner will be drawn from a particular institution or organisation except where a clear declaration and rationale is made at nomination.

In the case of a Subject Area which has only one External Examiner, these criteria apply to successive appointments.

- 9.18 To be appointed, External Examiner nominees must demonstrate:
- knowledge and understanding of agreed reference points for quality and standards;
  - competence and experience in the fields of study to which they will be appointed;
  - relevant academic and/or professional qualifications at least to the level of the qualification being examined, and/or practitioner experience, where appropriate;
  - competence and experience relating to the design and operation of a variety of assessment tasks;
  - appropriate standing and credibility in the field of study with academic and/or professional peers;
  - familiarity with the standard expected of students to achieve the module outcomes at the appropriate level;
  - fluency in English and fluency in the language of delivery and assessment if the course is not delivered in English;
  - meeting applicable criteria set by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, where appropriate;
  - awareness of current developments in the field of study;
  - experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

9.19 A nominee will not be appointed if:

- they are a member of a governing body or committee of the University of Westminster or one of its partners, or a current employee of the University of Westminster or one of its partners;
- they have a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of staff or student involved in the course;
- they are required to assess colleagues who are recruited as students to the course;
- they are, or know they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the course;
- they are or have been significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the course or modules;
- they are former staff or students of the University of Westminster unless a period of five years has elapsed, and all students taught by or with the External Examiner have completed their course;
- there are reciprocal arrangements involving cognate programmes at another higher education provider;

Note: reciprocal arrangements are where a member of staff at the University of Westminster is an external examiner at another institution and an external examiner is nominated from that same University. In such cases a “reciprocal arrangement” is not possible within the same group of programmes. Members of staff are expected to declare external examiner positions to the Head of School.

- they will succeed an External Examiner from their home institution or department;
- there are other External Examiners in the team from the same department of the same higher education provider.

9.20 An External Examiner may be reappointed in exceptional circumstances but normally only after five years or more has elapsed since their last appointment.

9.21 External Examiners must normally hold no more than two External Examiner appointments for taught programmes/modules at any point in time.

9.22 Lack of prior experience of External Examining does not preclude approval so long as other External Examiners in the relevant Subject Area do have such experience. Where a sole External Examiner is required, lack of previous External Examining experience should not prevent approval if the nominee has significant and relevant internal assessment experience. In addition, induction can be provided by making an early approval and so providing a period of overlap with the outgoing, experienced examiner.

9.23 External Examiners (Industry Consultation) are not required to have prior experience of external examining, the same level of knowledge of agreed reference points for quality and standards or competence and experience relating to the design and operation of assessment tasks.

## Exemptions to Criteria for Approval of External Examiners

In certain subject areas the requirement for gender balance in the examiner team may be difficult to fulfil, or the requirement of representation from practitioners may not be relevant. If these circumstances are judged to apply the responsible Head of College may present a reasoned case for a standing exemption to the particular criteria to the Quality and Standards Office. Other criteria will be waived only where exceptional circumstances have been fully demonstrated.

## Applications for Extension and Changes in Responsibilities of External Examiners

Requests for extension to an External Examiner's term of approval must be made on the standard extension request form and supported by a statement from the Head of College. An extension into a fifth year will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. For External Examiners appointed from 2021/22 for 5 years, extensions are unlikely to be approved unless for example, if a course is due to be discontinued, it may be inappropriate to make a replacement nomination for one year only.

- 9.24 Any amendment to an External Examiner's terms of approval (such as a proposed move to a new Subject Area or Board, perhaps as part of a general reorganisation of coverage of Boards, or other revision of responsibilities from that stated in an examiner's approval letter) requires formal approval from the Quality and Standards Office who will act in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

## Approval of Nominations of External Examiners

- 9.25 A detailed consideration of the nomination will be undertaken with reference to the criteria for approval, noting the External Examiners currently and previously approved to the Subject Area or Board. The Quality and Standards Office will request further information where necessary.
- 9.26 Recommendations are made in writing, with a copy of the nomination form, and are sent to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) on behalf of the University Teaching Committee, for a decision. Any conditions of approval will be agreed at this stage.
- 9.27 Notification of approval will be sent to the Head of College, the Subject Leader, and the relevant College Office with a copy of the approval letter. In cases of non-approval, the Quality and Standards Office will on behalf of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) write to the Head of College to explain the reasons for non-approval. Conditions of approval will be highlighted on the memorandum signifying approval.

## Approval of External Examiner Nominations by Professional Bodies

- 9.28 Where a course is required to have external examiners approved by a Professional Body, for example for a course accredited by that body, approval must be sought only after a nomination has been agreed by the University.
- 9.29 All such submissions to professional bodies are made by the Quality and Standards Office on the advice of the Head of College or Head of School concerned and require the approval of the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards.



- 9.30 It is particularly important to make such nominations well in advance of the proposed date of the first Subject Area or Board meeting which the External Examiner should attend to allow sufficient time for the required two stages of consideration.

## Briefing External Examiners

- 9.31 If a nomination is approved, a letter giving details of the approval is issued by the Quality and Standards Office to the approved candidate accompanied by a direction to the online Handbook of Academic Regulations and the general guidance note on External Examining at the University.
- 9.32 The Head of College/Head of School (in association with the Course Leader) is responsible for ensuring that new External Examiners are briefed on the specific subject area or course(s) which they will consider, and their role in relation to the internal examiners.
- 9.33 Subject Area and Module Board External Examiners must receive full details of the syllabuses and assessment procedures for every module within the remit of the Board or Subject Area to which they have been appointed, with briefing on which modules are their special responsibility. They should also receive briefing on the courses to which these modules contribute (where many courses have common modules, it is best to provide a précis of details of these courses, rather than sending each External Examiner an unwieldy set of course documents). University Validation Panel reports and reports from outgoing External Examiners should also be made available.
- 9.34 External Examiners should be invited to the relevant Subject Area meeting(s). Such meetings are the University's expected forum for a holistic discussion of the curriculum, feedback and moderation processes. Subject Area meetings also enable a group of External Examiners in the same team to meet as a group at least once a year. The Subject Area meetings normally take place towards the end of the teaching year ahead of the Progression and Assessment Board and enable discussions that can feed forward into the next academic year. External Examiners are expected to attend Subject Area meetings (in person or virtually) at least once a year. Further information is available in Section 14 of the Academic Regulations.
- 9.35 New Chief External Examiners must be provided with all course and award specific assessment regulations (including details of foundation certificate programmes where these are part of the course scheme).
- 9.36 The advantage of early approval is that good induction can be provided, e.g. attendance at an Assessment Board as an observer and/or a more informal meeting with staff and students.
- 9.37 As well as providing an initial briefing it is important to inform External Examiners of subsequent changes to module or course content and/or assessment regulations. Where changes are made across the whole institution, for example in University Assessment Regulations, the Quality and Standards Office will provide updates.
- 9.38 Where External Examiners are appointed to a collaborative partner based overseas the Head of College is responsible for ensuring the expected University Health and Safety process is undertaken prior to each trip, including ensuring the required travel insurance process has been conducted.

## Protocols for External Examiners

- 9.39 External Examiners should not be asked to take on responsibilities which are outside their original contract with the University as specified in the approval letter, unless this has been formally approved and the External Examiner has consented to the change.
- 9.40 Good notice should be provided of scheduled assessment dates and of days when attendance at the University will be required. Wherever possible provisional dates should be cross-checked before being finalised to avoid a clash of Subject Area meetings or Boards or other engagements. Campus Registries are responsible for notifying Board dates to External Examiners and once notified to External Examiners, dates should only be changed in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.41 Draft assignment briefs and examination papers, as well as papers to be set for deferred re-sits, must be sent to External Examiners with adequate time for checking. Within the overall time constraints of examination and Board schedules, every effort should be made to give External Examiners adequate time for review of marked scripts and other work.
- 9.42 The sampling methods used to decide which work will be sent to an External Examiner must be agreed with them in advance; the examiner has the right to request to see any assessed work.
- 9.43 The External Examiner may request any information relevant to their responsibilities from the University. Depending on the information's nature, such requests should either be addressed to the Head of School, Course Leader or to the Quality and Standards Office.

## Role of External Examiners

- 9.44 The University operates a Single Tier Assessment Board process (with the exception of some modules). The role External Examiners is outlined in [Section 13 of the Academic Regulations](#).

## Attendance at Boards

### **Module Boards**

- 9.45 External Examiners have the right to attend any Module Board for which they are approved to act but the Board will not be invalidated by the unavoidable absence of an external examiner provided that:
- sufficient expertise is judged by the Chair to be available to enable the board to fulfil its role;
  - the absent External Examiner has reviewed assessments for which they are responsible and has provided comments to the Board and has signified consent to the continuation of the Board in their absence;
  - the absent External Examiner endorses the recommendations of the Board in writing (or gives reasons for dissent);
  - where possible, the External Examiners present at the Board reflect the University's policy in respect of balance of academic and professional experience and gender.

### **Progression and Award Boards**

- 9.46 External Examiners must attend all Progression and Award Boards to which they have been appointed, this can include virtually, if the opportunity to contribute to discussions is possible. With the prior agreement of the relevant external examiner the following exceptions are permitted by correspondence:
- following referred or deferred assessment
  - where only intermediate awards are being considered
  - Where only Credit level 3 or 4 modules are being considered, except where a professional body may make such a requirement or where such modules compose a discrete award.

### **Procedures for External Examiners' Reports**

- 9.47 External Examiners are required to report annually after the last relevant Assessment Board or Subject Area meeting. However, they may submit additional reports at any time during the session. Reports should respond to the issues listed in the University's Report Guidance Note.
- 9.48 Reports must be returned within six weeks of attendance at a Subject Area or Board meeting to the Quality and Standards Office; reports received by other staff should be passed on immediately. In addition to reporting annually, the External Examiner is also invited to, at the end of their appointment, report on any changes or common themes which have emerged during the term of office.
- 9.49 All reports are acknowledged on receipt and published on the University's External Examiner information system.
- 9.50 The Head of College with academic responsibility for an Assessment Board or Subject Area is responsible for ensuring that a written reply is sent to each External Examiner and that appropriate action is taken in response to the points raised by the External Examiner. The task of writing responses may be delegated, for example to the Head of School or the Course Leader. These responses must be sent to External Examiners and the Quality and Standards Office no later than the end of the term following the Board meeting to which they relate.
- 9.51 The Head of College should identify any issues (e.g. on resources) which are outside their control and refer the report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- 9.52 Reports are discussed during the relevant continuous improvement process, and they are included by the Course Team in Course cyclical review process documents, with a commentary from the Course Team.
- 9.53 The Quality and Standards Office will conduct an annual audit of all External Examiner reports for the previous session along with the responses to them. A critical read will be undertaken to identify any general points, particularly on assessment procedures, issues of concern and to draw out aspects of good practice worth disseminating. The conclusions may lead to recommendations to Academic Council for changes to policy or guidelines on external examining.
- 9.54 The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for ensuring that External Examiners are reminded of the need to submit their reports promptly.

## Fees and Expenses for External Examiners

- 9.55 The fee due to each External Examiner is agreed at the point of formal approval and is stated in the contract. A supplementary fee may be paid for necessary attendance of more than two visits per year. Payment of the fee is conditional upon submission of the annual report, engagement with the Course team during the academic year and compliance with Home Office right to work checks. Fees are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.
- 9.56 Expense claim forms are provided to External Examiners, completed forms should be returned to the Quality and Standards Office.

## Termination of External Examiners Appointments

- 9.57 The University will consider the early termination of an External Examiner's contract where that External Examiner has demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to fulfil the standard responsibilities of the role or has behaved in a manner that does not meet normal expectations or places the reputation of the University at risk.
- 9.58 Submission for consideration of early termination should be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office. Grounds for such submission include:
- Non-submission of the External Examiner's annual report or submission of a report that does not meet the minimum standard required;
  - Non-attendance at the University during a session without provision of an acceptable cause;
  - Failure to fulfil the normal set of duties required of an External Examiner e.g., not responding to invitations to attend, remaining out of contact with a team or failing to return draft question papers or marked scripts;
  - Changes to their personal circumstances such as losing the UKVI designation of "right to work" or retiring from their post;
  - Where a conflict of interest has arisen during the term office and cannot be resolved by other adjustments or my mutual agreement;
  - Loss of professional standing due to misconduct at work e.g., fraud or being found guilty of a criminal offence.
- 9.59 External Examiners will be informed of the decision to terminate their appointment by the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards.

# Section 10: Course Closure

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- 10.1 This section sets out the process to be followed when a course is closed. It outlines the reasons that contribute to such a decision being made, the processes and governance in place to protect applicants and students. It should be read in conjunction with the University's Student Protection Plan.
- 10.2 The decision to close a course is assumed to be any degree title that will cease to be awarded. However, there are also similar factors to be considered where courses are identified as suspending recruitment (10.6) or where a mode of study has changed (10.7). This section also covers such scenarios. This recognises the student protection expectations required on all such decisions.

## Permanent Closure of a Course

- 10.3 The permanent closure of a course<sup>1</sup> normally involves the ceasing of recruitment for a course, but the continuation of the course for existing student cohorts. The University has an obligation to allow students to complete the courses they enrolled on. In exceptional cases the closure of both recruitment and the continuing cohorts may take place (refer to section 10.11.3), this will be clearly identified at the time of the proposed closure.
- 10.4 A College cannot close a course under its own authority. All course closures are subject to consideration by the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) and the Teaching Committee on behalf of Academic Council. The Portfolio Planning Committee has oversight of the University portfolio and authority to approve course closures recommended by the College. The Teaching Committee has responsibility to ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place to help safeguard the continued student experience.

## Criteria for Closure

- 10.5 Recommendations for the permanent closure of a course may be based on one or more of the following criteria:
- poor student recruitment;
  - poor student experience results;
  - inadequate resources;
  - financial non-viability;
  - changing market;
  - changing requirements within the subject discipline;
  - the introduction of a replacement course;
  - quality assurance risks.

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<sup>1</sup> assumed to be any award title

## Procedure for Course Closure

10.6 It is expected that course closures would normally be identified by the College through the Portfolio Review and would be initiated, wherever possible, in advance of standard recruitment cycles. It is however recognised that this is not always possible; where this is not the case a clear timeline will be agreed with the Director of Marketing, Communications and Development or nominee, recognising the applicant position of each course may be different. Colleges are expected to know the applicant position as early in the process as possible, noting for example there may be applicants holding deferred entry offers.

10.7 A notification of the intention to close a course should be approved by the Head of College by submission of the approved course closure form to the Chair of PPC or their nominee, the completed form should include:

- (i) the basis on which the decision has been reached;
- (ii) the risk assessment of the impact of any closure and evidence of consultation with relevant departments including Strategy Planning and Performance, Global, Recruitment and Admissions (Admissions statistics), Finance;
- (iii) the proposed arrangements for current students.

Note once a decision has been made by PPC, evidence that students have been informed of the decision will be required by the Teaching Committee including evidence of how the decision affects current students (10.5.5).

- (iv) an overview of the arrangements that will be used to inform applicants of the decision to close the course and details of other courses they may be offered;
- (v) Details of the quality assurance arrangements which are in place for the continued student experience for remaining cohort(s) where applicable, including the expected final course closure date;
- (vi) In the case of courses delivered jointly by more than one College, agreement must be reached by both, or all, Heads of College and the closure recommended by the host College.

10.8 The Portfolio Planning Committee has the authority to make the decision to close a course identified by a College. Following the decision, the following will be informed in writing:

- Head of College
- Head of School
- Director of College Operations
- Head of Registry Services
- Transnational Education Team
- Marketing and Communications
- Business Partners
- Strategy Planning and Performance
- Timetabling Manager
- Student Funding Team

10.9 The Human Resource impacts of a course closure are the responsibility of the College to take forward directly with HR in line with normal management led HR processes.

- 10.10 The Teaching Committee has remit to consider the ongoing student experience and quality assurance mechanisms in place once the PPC decision to close a course has been made.
- 10.11 In the case of quality assurance risks recommendations for either the suspension or permanent closure of a course may be made where serious concerns are identified and evidenced:
- as part of the integrated planning processes (including continuous improvement process)
  - by an External Examiner
  - by a Professional of Statutory and Recognition Body;
  - by the Office for Students (OfS)
- 10.12 In such cases the Head of College will be invited to make a written submission to the Teaching Committee. The Chair of the Teaching Committee will liaise with the Head of College and the Academic Registrar or nominee to make recommendations to Academic Council and University Executive Board (UEB).
- 10.13 Following the Planning Process and as part of the University Portfolio discussions the Portfolio Planning Committee can also make recommendations to close courses that may not have been identified by a College. These recommendations will still be based on the course closure criteria.
- 10.14 All course closures will be reported to Academic Council normally by way of the Teaching Committee and the Portfolio Planning Committee minutes.

## Suspension of Recruitment

- 10.15 Courses can temporarily suspend recruitment, this may be for a variety of reasons but are broadly the same as those of course closure (10.4), but there will be a plan to overcome the factors identified for recruitment in future years. In deciding to suspend recruitment, the college will consider the applicant position, including any deferred offer holders. Any course suspended for more than two years shall be considered permanently closed. Any decision to re-start the course after the two-year period will require PPC approval. If the period of validation exceeds the two-year suspension a review process will still be expected.
- 10.16 Before deciding to suspend recruitment to a course it is the responsibility of the Head of College to ensure that the College has consulted with the relevant recruitment and admissions offices to ensure the full applicants' position is known. The College must also ensure that the continuing student experience is carefully considered, particularly students who may have to retrieve a year. Deliberate steps to ensure retrieving students can integrate with other cohort years or courses will be expected.

## Mode of Study

- 10.17 The closure or change of a particular mode of study should be approved by the Head of College or nominee, noting the impact on any applicants and the continuing student cohort experience. The withdrawal of a mode of study (e.g. evening only) should be submitted in writing to Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards. Confirmation of the associated applicant numbers and continuing student experience (current students and applicants) will be considered, alongside the timeliness of the request. This recognises that applicants will have made decisions based on the existing published information. The risks associated with a change therefore need to be carefully considered and may require completion of a full course closure form.

## Title Change

- 10.18 Where a title change form has been completed for approval by PPC, and the course is continuing under a new name, all applicants must be told in writing of the change, the reasons for the change, and their options. Continuing students will normally be assumed to remain on their current title, however can have the option, if felt appropriate, to transfer to the new title. This will be made clear on the proposal to PPC. No associated course closure form is normally required.

## Communication and Arrangements for Continuing Students

### Course Closures Current Students

- 10.19 Current students will normally be expected to complete their designated period of registration as set out in the Academic Regulations. Current students should include students who have interrupted studies (within the timeframe permitted) but not yet completed the course. Where a course is being closed to new entrants only, the College arrangements should include the following:
- (i) Current students should be informed of the reasons for the course closure and their options in terms of completing the course they are registered on, transferring to another course within the University where this is feasible or transferring to another institution;
  - (ii) The academic standards of the courses throughout their remaining period must be maintained; this includes an expectation that arrangements are still in place for external examiners, student feedback opportunities and the continuous improvement process (annual monitoring for collaborative provision). Additional support may be required for some groups of students. For example, it is anticipated that additional personal tutoring, or more deliberate opportunities to engage with other courses may be appropriate for retrieving students.
  - (iii) The previously stated learning outcomes for the course must still be achievable by the current students. All proposed changes to the course structure will still be expected to undergo the same process, which includes student consultation and external examiner comments. In addition, the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards will be required to approve any modifications to courses identified as closing.
- 10.20 Communication relating to the closure of particular modes of study will follow the same principles outlined above.

## Communication and Expectations Prospective Students/Applicants

- 10.21 All communications with prospective students must be undertaken by Admissions to ensure compliance with agreed procedures. Applicants who have accepted offers should be contacted after the closure has been approved.
- 10.22 Applicants should be informed of the following:
- the reason for the closure
  - their options in respect of transferring their application to another course within the University



- the opportunity for one-to-one discussions with an appropriate member of staff
- their possible options with another institution

10.23 In exceptional circumstances the University may decide to close a course, including for either all or some continuing cohorts. This will normally be where there are significant concerns raised or where the expected duration of the course cannot be met by the College, all such cases will be referred to UEB. In such cases the University will ensure all efforts are made to find students' alternative providers on a case-by-case basis, ensure prompt communication of the decision, support available and expected financial compensation.

10.24 It is recognised that unforeseen circumstances often beyond the University's decision making may result in significant changes to the Universities ability to uphold its intended provision e.g. a serious fire. In such highly exceptional cases UEB will work with Professional Services to ensure clear, timely communication of alternative arrangements to students. The University will also, where possible, assist other OfS listed Higher Education providers facing similar issues.

# Section 11: Collaborative Provision

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## Introduction

- 11.1 Key priorities in the University's 'Being Westminster' strategy 2022-2029 and sub-strategies are reliant on sustainable strategic partnership working with stakeholders on a local, national and international level. Whilst the University will be engaged in a variety of collaborative and development activities, this section of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook focuses solely on **academic credit bearing** Transnational collaborative provision.
- 11.2 The policy and underpinning procedures have been written in accordance with Office for Students On-going Conditions of Registration, European Standards and Guidelines and the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education. It is also informed by the QAA's Characteristics Statement 'Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body' and sector good practice.
- 11.3 Collaborative credit bearing provision falls into a number of categories and models. A description of each of these models is provided in Annex 1.
- 11.4 The University is responsible for the academic standards of all awards or credit granted in its name. The quality of learning opportunities offered under the collaborative arrangement must be comparable with those offered across the University and enable students to achieve the appropriate academic standards for the award. This is in line with QAA Quality Code '[Key Practices](#)' which state:
- “ Where academic provision is delivered through partnership, all partners agree, understand, communicate and take responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of quality”*
- 11.5 In addition, the University is also responsible for awards marketed and advertised in its name which must adhere to Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines.
- 11.6 All proposals for new or extended partnerships are subject to formal approval processes. Individual members of University staff are not authorised to develop partnerships outside of formal processes.
- 11.7 The University takes a risk-based approach to each collaboration and both proposed and approved collaborations are managed in line with the assessed risk. To manage risk and secure quality and standards of collaborative provision there are a number of approval stages and governance control points.

## Notification of a proposed new collaborative partnership

- 11.8 Following the identification of a potential partner, initial discussion will normally take place at College or School level between the proposing team, the partner and if necessary relevant professional services. This culminates in a Collaborative Proposal which is presented to the College Executive Group (CEG) for approval.

- 11.9 For international proposals that involve more than one College the coordination role will be undertaken by the Director of Transnational Education who will ensure sign off from the relevant Heads of College. Cross-College UK developments will go to each relevant CEG for approval prior to being submitted.
- 11.10 The expectation is that the collaborative proposals will contain:
- Rationale for entering the partnership including alignment with strategic priorities.
  - Detailed proposal of the type of partnership.
  - A financial analysis of the development including proposed student numbers.
  - Market research identifying any reputational risk factors and market demand.
- 11.11 If approved by CEG the proposal form will then be submitted to the Partnership Scrutiny Committee (PSC) for approval to proceed to the next stage of development, due diligence. If approved the Collaborations Team will contact the partner to initiate due diligence.
- 11.12 Where approval is not given by PSC, the Associate Head of College (External Relations) will inform the prospective partner of the decision.

## Due Diligence Process

- 11.13 The due diligence process is a two-stage process, the first being desk-based research, followed by the second stage visit to the proposed partner's site(s).
- 11.14 The purpose of the due diligence process is to identify whether the proposed collaboration is in the University's best interests, aligns with the *Being Westminster 2022-2029 Strategic Plan*, and to analyse the level of risk in approving the partner.

## Due Diligence Report

- 11.15 Where approval is given, the PSC will instruct the Collaborations Team within the Quality and Standards department to undertake due diligence. This is not required for all collaborative models and is normally only undertaken for Transnational Education (TNE) proposals. The Partnership Scrutiny Committee will confirm the requirements for approved proposals.
- 11.16 The first stage will be a desk-based report and will cover:
- academic and/or professional reputation and having the ability to enter into the collaboration and deliver HE provision;
  - existing collaborative arrangements;
  - legal and financial standing;
  - compatibility of mission and aims with those of the University;
  - strategic fit;
  - existing QA systems and external QA and/or professional body reviews; and
- 11.17 Based on the above, the PSC will:
- Approve the report and authorise the due diligence visit to proceed (subject to Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) approval of the course proposal); or
  - Request additional information; or decide that the proposed partnership should not proceed. In this case, the College(s) will inform the prospective partner.

## Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC)

- 11.18 If the PSC approves the desk based due diligence, then prior to the due diligence visit taking place a submission to the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) should be made. This will outline the proposed collaborative provision in more detail, including the proposed course structure, demand and alignment to the University strategy. This is to ensure a university-wide strategic perspective on additions to the University portfolio.

## Heads of Agreement (HoA)

- 11.19 A draft HoA may be prepared by the Collaborations Team, where appropriate in liaison with College(s) and approved on behalf of the University by the PSC as part of the desk based due diligence stage.
- 11.20 The HoA confirms the intention of both parties to enter into a collaborative relationship, the nature of the University's quality assurance requirements and the agreed financial implications and requirements. It is supported by an outline of the proposed provision and the University award(s) involved.
- 11.21 The draft HoA should be sent to the partner prior to the due diligence visit and any negotiations need to be resolved before the visit. The due diligence panel does not have the authority to renegotiate the HoA. The HoA should be signed during the visit.

## Due Diligence Visit

- 11.22 The purpose of the due diligence visit is to establish that the prospective partner has:
- the academic standing to successfully deliver to the appropriate academic standards consistent with the QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and in line with the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, relevant subject benchmarks, Office for Students B Conditions, and the requirements of professional and statutory bodies as appropriate;
  - the resources (staffing and facilities) to sustain the proposed provision;
  - appropriate systems and resources (both physical and electronic) to ensure a high and equitable level of student experience;
  - systems and processes sufficiently compatible with those of the University to allow the two institutions to exchange data and work well together;
  - senior management commitment to the proposed collaboration; and
  - to investigate any issues raised during the desk-based stage.
- 11.23 The Deputy Registrar ( Quality and Standards), or nominee, will nominate a Panel to carry out the due diligence visit to the prospective partner sites(s). As a minimum, the panel should consist of:
- a Chair from the University's standing panel list;
  - an internal member of staff, independent from the College (or at a minimum, the subject area), from the University's standing panel; and
  - an advisor from the Quality and Standards Department.
- 11.24 Where relevant, additional members may be co-opted.

## PSC Consideration

- 11.25 The final due diligence report, which considers both the desk based and due diligence visit findings, will be presented to PSC and will include:
- a summary of the due diligence findings;
  - a risk assessment;
  - recommendations for PSC to discuss and consider; and
  - detail any action points which need to be finalised ahead of the validation or approval event, with clear roles and responsibilities identified.
- 11.26 Upon review of the report, PSC will take one of the actions below:
- approve the partner at institutional level and authorise the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), or nominee, to progress to the next approval stage; or
  - request more information; or
  - advise the Head of College(s) that it does not consider it to be in the best interest of the University to proceed with the proposed collaboration and request the Associate Head of College(s) (External Relations) to inform the prospective partner of this decision.
- 11.27 The decision reached by the PSC will be reported to the University Executive Board (UEB).
- 11.28 Relevant sections of the due diligence report will be shared with the validation or approval panel as part of the next stage of the approval process.

## Collaborative Provision Approval

- 11.29 Once the partnership is approved by PSC at institutional level, and by PPC for the planned provision, the next stage will be to approve the academic content, so the partner can deliver the proposed collaborative provision. The College(s), in liaison with the Quality and Standards department, will prepare for the validation or approval event.
- 11.30 The type of event will depend on the collaborative provision category and whether the course has already been validated by the University.
- 11.31 Where a course not offered by the University is to be validated for delivery by a Partner Institution the process detailed in paragraphs 11.35 – 11.55 should be followed.
- 11.32 Where a course has already been validated by the University as an existing part of the Westminster portfolio and is to be franchised to a partner institution the process detailed in paragraphs 11.56 – 11.68 should be followed.
- 11.33 Should a collaborative development require the approval of a partner to deliver an existing validated University course and for the University to validate an award written by the partner institution, this can be completed as one event. It may be necessary to rationalise the processes, roles and documentation to avoid duplication.
- 11.34 The event will normally be held at the partner's site; however, at the discretion of the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), or nominee, the event may take place at another location or via correspondence.

## **New Course Approval (i.e. Validation) and Partner Approval to Deliver - Development Team and Documentation**

- 11.35 Following approval to proceed by PSC, a course development team will be established to prepare each new course for validation. In most cases the course(s) will be written by the partner institution and therefore it is the responsibility of the partner to produce a coherent and academically sound course and associated documentation.
- 11.36 When developing a new course, teams must ensure that proposals adhere to the University [Academic Regulations](#). There are also a range of external reference points for course teams to consider when undertaking curriculum design for a validation or in designing new modules.
- 11.37 The [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#) (FHEQ) is based on the premise that qualifications should be awarded on the basis of achievement of outcomes rather than years of study. Qualification descriptors set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. These are embedded into the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Frameworks set out in the Handbook of Academic Regulations.
- 11.38 [The QAA Quality Code](#) provides guidance on maintaining quality and standards in Higher Education Institutions. The University takes the guidance set out in the Code into account when developing its own policy and procedures in the relevant areas. Programme Specifications also form part of the Academic Infrastructure and the QAA provides guidance to institutions on producing specifications.
- 11.39 [European Standards Guidance for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG) were adopted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2005 and revised in 2015. The focus of the ESG is on quality assurance relating to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. The University of Westminster processes have been mapped to the ESG expectations.
- 11.40 [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) (SBS) provide a means for the course team and the wider academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of degrees in a specific subject area. They set out expectations about the standards of awards. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject. Interdisciplinary awards may need to reference more than one SBS.
- 11.41 The documentation that must be produced for an externally validated award is
- Covering document / overview describing the partnership and course development rationale;
  - Programme Specification;
  - Module Descriptors for new modules;
  - Module Descriptors for existing modules that will be included in the new course;
  - Draft course handbook;
  - Teaching staff details (short CV's);
  - Draft staff development plan;
  - Draft of the Administrative Annex from the contract;

- Copy of the non-confidential due diligence report (for information);
  - Copy of PPC submission (for information)
- 11.42 The Programme Specification and Module Descriptors are the definitive descriptions of a course and set out the intended learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve, the level of study, the credit allocation of the course and modules and the teaching and learning strategies to enable students to achieve them. They are the key documents in course validation, as well as being an important source of information for students.
- 11.43 The academic level of any course is determined by its aims, learning outcomes, syllabus content, its assessment methods and assessment criteria for judging student achievement and in line with the FHEQ (or international equivalent). All validated awards must have clear subject specific course outcomes, which inform the definition of aims and learning outcomes for each module.
- 11.44 Care must be taken to ensure clarity of definition in learning outcomes of Level 7 postgraduate modules, especially in terms of higher-level analytical skills and the expectation of students' abilities to sustain advanced independent critically evaluative work, which also underpins much Level 6 undergraduate work.
- 11.45 The role of the University academic staff is to act as external scrutiny for the partner team and to use their expertise in ensuring that the academic content, assessment and learning outcomes are of the appropriate level and standard for a University of Westminster award. It should be noted that formal externality from the University and the Partner will be present during the validation event (detailed from 11.47).
- 11.46 Documentation must be signed off by the relevant Associate Head of College(s), who must be satisfied that the proposed partnership provision meets all internal and external requirements and is sufficiently robust to be submitted to the validation panel.

## Partner Validation – Event

- 11.47 This event both validates the academic provision as well as approving the partner to deliver that provision. The focus of the validation event will be to determine if:
- the course is appropriate in terms of its level and content, and in the light of current practice and development in the discipline;
  - the course is pedagogically sound
  - the course is capable of enriching the student experience
  - the partner can deliver the course in such a way as to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the course;
  - partner staff have the appropriate experience and expertise;
  - confirmation that equipment and other learning resources are committed to the course, where relevant;
  - evidence that the respective responsibilities outlined in the contract, specifically the Administrative Annex, are understood and can be satisfactorily discharged;
  - show that clear communication channels are established between the University and the partner and identified strategic leads and Liaison Tutors from both parties;
  - there is a staff development plan in place, if required; and

- where relevant produce an action plan to minimise any identified risks.

## Validation Panel Membership and Remit

- 11.48 The Panel will be appointed and managed by Quality and Standards, in liaison with the College(s), using the University standing panel members.
- 11.49 The Panel should consist of, as a minimum:
- a Chair from outside the College(s) from the standing panel;
  - one Learning and Teaching representative from outside the proposing College(s) from the standing panel;
  - at least one independent external representative(s), with subject or industry expertise. This external's input may be undertaken via correspondence with approval from the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards);
  - a Quality and Standards Advisor and Secretary from Quality and Standards.
- 11.50 Where relevant, additional members may be co-opted.
- 11.51 The key members of the Partner responsible for managing and delivering the provision are integral to the approval process and will be expected to attend the event in support of the proposal, together with supporting members from the University College(s) including the Liaison Tutor(s).
- 11.52 The remit of the Panel is to:
- review the documentation;
  - check that the required criteria have been met;
  - reach a conclusion and determine any conditions and recommendations;

## Outcome of Validation Event

- 11.53 The Panel may recommend:
- approval with no conditions or recommendations;
  - approval with conditions and/or recommendations to be met within a specified time limit;
  - suspension of the process with conditions for recommencement; or
  - non-approval with feedback.

## Conditions and Recommendations

- 11.54 Where a Panel identifies conditions, they must be met and approved before final approval of the course will be given. The Partner (working in collaboration with the College(s)) is responsible for providing sufficient evidence to the Chair to satisfy the conditions. The Chair will sign off the conditions, or request further evidence or work, on behalf of the Panel working closely with the Panel Secretary. Exceptionally, if the Chair is unavailable then the Deputy Registrar (Academic Quality and Standards), or nominee, will sign off the response. This process can be completed via correspondence.
- 11.55 If recommendations are set by the Panel, then the course team will report actions in response as part of Annual Monitoring.



## **Existing University Provision (i.e. Franchise) - Partner Approval to Deliver - Development Team and Documentation**

- 11.56 The purpose of the development team is to manage the on-going development of the proposal and the required documentation, and to ensure that any recommendations from the PSC, PPC and due diligence report are taken into consideration.
- 11.57 The membership of the team should consist of the Liaison Tutors (UoW and partner), the Collaborations Manager and partner equivalent, and relevant professional services staff from both institutions.
- 11.58 For an event where the partner needs approval to deliver a course under the terms of a franchise arrangement the materials to be produced for the Panel, will include:
- Covering document / Overview document describing the partnership and course rationale
  - Programme specification;
  - All module descriptors;
  - Draft course handbook;
  - Draft staff development plan;
  - Course mapping documentation, where appropriate;
  - Teaching staff details (short CVs);
  - Draft of the Administrative Annex from the contract
  - Copy of the non-confidential due diligence report; and
  - Copy of PPC submission (for information).
- 11.59 Documentation must be signed off by the Associate Head of College(s), who must be satisfied that the proposed partnership provision meets all internal and external requirements and is sufficiently robust to be submitted to the approval panel.

## Partner Approval to Deliver

- 11.60 The focus of the event will determine if the proposed partner course team(s) can:
- deliver the course in such a way as to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the course;
  - ensure that partner staff have the appropriate experience and expertise;
  - confirm that equipment and other learning resources are committed to the course by both parties, where relevant;
  - evidence that the respective responsibilities outlined in the Contract, specifically the Administrative Annex, are understood and can be satisfactorily discharged by staff from both parties;
  - show that there are clear communication channels established between the University and the partner and identified strategic leads and liaison tutors from both parties;
  - illustrate that there is a staff development plan in place; and
  - where relevant produce an action plan to minimise any identified risks.

## Approval to Deliver Panel Membership and Remit

- 11.61 The Panel will be arranged and managed by Quality and Standards, in liaison with the College(s), using the University standing panel members.
- 11.62 The Panel should consist of, as a minimum:
- a Chair from outside the proposing College(s) from the standing panel;
  - one Learning and Teaching representative from outside the proposing College(s) from the standing panel;
  - one, or more, independent external representatives, with subject or industry expertise. This external's input may be undertaken via correspondence with approval from the Deputy Registrar (Academic Quality and Standards);
  - a Quality and Standards Advisor and Secretary from Quality and Standards.
- 11.63 Where relevant, additional members may be co-opted.
- 11.64 The key members of the Partner responsible for managing and delivering the provision are integral to the approval process and will be expected to attend the event in support of the proposal, together with supporting members from the University College(s) including the Liaison Tutor(s).
- 11.65 The remit of the Panel is to:
- review the documentation;
  - check that the required criteria have been met;
  - reach a conclusion and determine any conditions and recommendations;

## Outcome of Partner Approval to Deliver Event

- 11.66 The Panel may recommend:
- approval with no conditions or recommendations;
  - approval with conditions and/or recommendations to be met within a specified time limit;
  - suspension of the process with conditions for recommencement; or
  - non-approval with feedback.

## Conditions and recommendations

- 11.67 Where a Panel identifies conditions, they must be met and approved before final approval of the conditions will be given. The College(s) (working in collaboration with the Partner) is responsible for providing sufficient evidence to the Chair to satisfy the conditions. The Chair will sign off the conditions, or request further evidence or work, on behalf of the Panel. Exceptionally, if the Chair is unavailable then the Deputy Registrar (Academic Quality and Standards), or nominee, will sign off the response. This process can be completed via correspondence.
- 11.68 If recommendations are set by the Panel, then the course team will report actions around these as part of Annual Monitoring.
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## Notification to Course Validation Standing Panel (CVSP)

- 11.69 CVSP will receive confirmation from the Chair of the Panel, or exceptionally the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), or nominee, that all conditions have been met and that the partner has been formally approved to deliver the course for the agreed proposed start date.
- 11.70 Quality and Standards will keep a record of all partner approval reports and will report annually to Academic Council.

## Period of Approval

- 11.71 For new collaborative provision approval may be:
- Without time limit (6 years) approval
  - For a specified period (up to six academic sessions)
- 11.72 A Partnership review date will be set at the start of the relationship and this will be undertaken irrespective if there have been changes to the provision at the time the review date is reached.

## Exceptions

- 11.73 Exceptionally, as part of the course development and design process, a perceived requirement for a course to be exempt from parts of the Academic Regulations, Curriculum Framework or other academic policies and regulations may emerge. In such circumstances the request for an exception, with supporting evidence, should be submitted by the Associate Head of College (Education and Students) to the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), or nominee, who will consider requests and take action on behalf of the Teaching Committee. Where such an exception is sought, a course may not be presented to the validation panel until the outcome of the exemption request has been resolved.
- 11.74 A summary of approved exceptions is presented to the Teaching Committee annually.

## Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) and Collaborative Register

- 11.75 A draft MoC should be prepared by the Collaborations Team in conjunction with the College(s), the partner and other relevant stakeholders.
- 11.76 This is a legally binding document, signed by the Partner and the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) on behalf of the University. This confirms the respective rights and obligations of the University and the collaborative partner for the delivery and quality assurance of the agreed provision. A University template will be used for all collaborative activities detailing these responsibilities and agreed terms.
- 11.77 A MoC will remain valid for a period normally not exceeding five years.
- 11.78 Once the MoC has been signed by both parties the arrangement will be added to the University's collaborative register. If it is a new partner, then it will also need to be reported to the Office for Students as a 'reportable event'.

## Approval of a Proposed Addition to Provision within an Established Partner

- 11.79 All proposed additions will require a proposal, which will be submitted to PPC for approval.
- 11.80 Where a partnership already exists, if a due diligence process has been undertaken within the last 3 years or the resourcing requirements are not significantly different from existing provision then no further due diligence needs to be completed. However, should further evidence (such as student feedback or annual monitoring) suggest investigation should be undertaken then this will be carried out regardless of timeframe or provision. If this is the case, then this should be made clear in the PPC submission to ensure it is recorded for audit purposes. If this criteria has not been met, a desk based, and/or due diligence visit will need to be undertaken and submitted to PSC who will then:
- re-approve the partnership and authorise the Deputy Registrar (Academic Quality and Standards), or nominee, to progress to the next approval stage; or
  - request more information and/or a further report; or
  - advise the College(s) that it does not consider it to be in the best interest of the University to proceed with the proposed additional provision and request the College(s) to inform the partner of this decision.

## Monitoring and Review for Approved Provision

- 11.81 Quality and Standards will monitor the quality assurance and review of the contractual requirements of collaborative provision during the period of approval, in liaison with the College(s).
- 11.82 Quality and Standards will also manage the full partnership review before the end period of the agreement, in consultation with the College(s), partner organisation and relevant internal stakeholders.

## Strategic and Operational Overview

- 11.83 Each validation and franchise partner will have an Academic Development and Operational Group (ADOG). The quality and standards remit of the ADOG is to monitor and safeguard the standards and quality of the provision and the student experience. For partnerships which have provision across multiple Colleges a Partnership Board may be created to ensure collective and consistent oversight and corporate governance.

## Course Committees

- 11.84 As per the terms of the administrative annex within the Memorandum of Collaboration, course committee meetings should be held at partner institutions to capture student feedback. The minutes of these meetings will be reported to the Partnership Management Group and feed into Annual Monitoring.

## Annual Monitoring

- 11.85 **Modules** - The Module Leader report will be produced after the module has run and will form part of the evidence base for the Course Annual Monitoring report. The Module Leader report will provide an overview of the operation of the module, a reflection on module completion and achievement metrics against Annual Monitoring Measures and a consideration of student module evaluations. The report will also outline any changes planned to the module.
- 11.86 **Courses** - Annual Monitoring reports are required from each partner for all collaborative courses. Course Leaders are responsible for producing a Course Annual Monitoring report that considers an overview of Module Leader reports, feedback from student surveys (in place of NSS and PTES), External Examiner reports, analysis of management information, identification of good practice and an action plan to respond to issues identified through previous Annual Monitoring processes.
- 11.87 It is important that the Course Annual Monitoring report constitutes a collective reflection on the Course and not the views of a particular individual and should include information compiled from a range of other meetings held throughout the reporting period.
- 11.88 Partners that have collaborative provision which involves more than one College should have an Annual Monitoring meeting to consider the data at a holistic institutional level. Liaison Tutors, as the University representative for the provision under review, are expected to attend and play an active role in this process.
- 11.89 All Annual Monitoring reports should be submitted to the Quality and Standards Department, with franchise reports then being disseminated to the relevant College for review. Please refer to section 7 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

## Course/Module Modification

- 11.90 The expectation is that the course team, in conjunction with the Liaison Tutor, will seek to continually enhance the curriculum, course design and learning experience for students in the light of annual monitoring review, professional body or other stakeholders' requirements or changes in discipline or pedagogic practice.

- 11.91 Course and module modifications to franchised or validated provision will be processed in line with section 5 (course and module modification) of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.
- 11.92 Modifications to franchised provision must be formally initiated by the Westminster course team. Prior to submission for approval by the College Teaching Committee the partner should be consulted to ensure they are clear on the proposed changes and can deliver the modified course or modules.
- 11.93 Modifications to validated provision should be submitted directly to the relevant Liaison Tutor for onward approval on behalf of the College Teaching Committee. It is fully expected that partner institutions engage fully with the approval process as detailed in section 5 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

## Annual Review of Agreement

- 11.94 The Administration Annex within the contract will be reviewed annually by the Collaborations Team, Partnerships Team, relevant internal stakeholders and the partner.

## Suspension of Recruitment

- 11.95 As a result of low demand, short-term operational issues, adverse annual monitoring review or revalidation, a Head of College or Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) may request permission from the Chair of Partnership Scrutiny Committee to suspend recruitment to a course.
- 11.96 If approved, the Quality and Standards Office will inform relevant professional service departments and the partner so that University systems can be updated to reflect the suspension and relevant external bodies can be informed. The suspension will be reported to the next meeting of Partnership Scrutiny Committee.
- 11.97 Any students who have been offered a place must be informed and where possible offered a suitable alternative course.
- 11.98 Courses which have failed to recruit students must be officially suspended for that academic year. Courses can only be suspended for a maximum of two years, after which time they will be withdrawn.

## Withdrawal of a Course

- 11.99 When a College or Partner believes a course has come to the end of its life, it should be formally closed, and recruitment stopped. In most cases, this will coincide with the end date in the contract. The proposal to withdraw the course should be considered by PPC and submitted to the Teaching Committee for approval.
- 11.100 Exceptionally, it may be necessary to close a course prior to the end date and in these cases, the process is defined within the Memorandum of Collaboration. A Leaving Institution Working Group will normally be convened on behalf of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee to manage the closure process.

## Cyclical Review Process

- 11.101 All University awards are subject to an agreed cyclical review process. This includes course(s) delivered under collaborative arrangements, which will normally be subject to an Internal Scrutiny Event. See Section 3 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook for details.
- 11.102 In the case of franchise courses where the curriculum is fundamentally linked to the host course run in London, the University course team should consult with the partner(s) on any substantial planned changes. This will enable the partner(s) to properly plan for potential changes to the curriculum, however it must be made clear that the University course team and subsequent University decision is final. It is normally expected that a collaborative course Internal Scrutiny Event will be held shortly after the host course re-approval to ensure the partner can continue to deliver the provision as validated at the University.
- 11.103 The following documentation will be required to be produced for Collaborative Course(s):
- Programme Specification
  - Module Descriptors
  - Draft course handbook
  - Reflective Document
  - Schedule of Changes
  - Teaching Staff details (short CVs)
  - If appropriate an action plan to address enhancements or improvements to the course(s) should be provided.
- 11.104 It is the responsibility of the partner to produce the documentation in accordance with the expected templates, policies and timescales, working closely with the Liaison Tutor and Quality and Standards Office as appropriate. The Panel should normally expect the documentation to be submitted four weeks in advance of the event. The documentation must be signed off by the relevant Associate Head of College prior to submission to the Panel.
- 11.105 The revalidation event Panel will comprise:
- Chair from outside the proposing College(s) from the standing panel;
  - Learning Teaching / Quality Representative from the standing panel;
  - External Subject Adviser;
  - Quality and Standards Adviser.
- 11.106 A meeting with current students (and alumni if available) is an important part of the process.
- 11.107 The Panel will consider the ability of the collaborative partner to continue to deliver the proposed course. The Panel may attach conditions or recommendations, with confirmation and evidence that these conditions have been met being required before formal approval is granted and reported to Academic Council. The panel can determine if the Chair can act on its behalf to consider the response to the conditions/ recommendations.
- 11.108 Re-approval may be:
- without time limit (6 years) approval
  - for a specified period (up to six academic sessions)

- 11.109 Following the conclusion of the revalidation event, the Memorandum of Collaboration will be updated to take into account the outcome of the review process. This will be co-ordinated by Quality and Standards.

## Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

- 11.110 The College(s), in consultation with the Quality and Standards department, will inform any PSRB which has approved or recognised a course that it is the subject of a collaborative arrangement, of its proposal and of any final agreements, which involve the course. The status of the course in relation to PSRB recognition will be made clear to prospective students through the published course information.

## External Examiners

- 11.111 The University is responsible for the appointment and functions of External Examiners, which will be co-ordinated by the Quality and Standards department. For full details of the External Examiner role and remit, please refer to Section 9 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

## Certificates and Diploma Supplement

- 11.112 The University will have sole authority for awarding certificates and diploma supplements relating to courses delivered through collaborative arrangements.
- 11.113 The certificate and/or diploma supplement will record the principal language of instruction and assessment, only where this is not English. Where this information is recorded on the diploma supplement only, the certificate should refer to the existence of the diploma supplement.



## Annex 1: Main Categories of Collaborative Provision

- **External Validation:** A course not offered by the University is validated for delivery by a Partner Institution. The course could be designed and developed jointly with the University or wholly by the Partner Institution. The partner institution recruits their own students who must meet the agreed admission and language requirements. In some instances, the partner institution may be granted access to specific University resources and/or facilities for students, subject to conditions and charges. The University is responsible for the standards of awards and quality assurance of the approved provision. Students will receive an award from the University of Westminster
- **Flying Faculty:** A University programme is validated to be delivered or co-delivered by Westminster academic staff, often in block mode, at a partner institution. The University is responsible for the standards of awards and quality assurance of the provision. Students will receive an award from the University of Westminster.
- **Franchise:** The University, as the awarding institution, authorises the whole or part of one of its own validated course(s) for delivery by a Partner Institution. The partner institution recruits their own students who must meet the agreed admission and language requirements. In some instances, the partner institution may be granted access to specific University resources and/or facilities for students, subject to conditions and charges. The University is responsible for the standards of awards and quality assurance of the franchised provision. Students will receive an award from the University of Westminster
- **Dual Award:** The University works with another degree-awarding body to design a programme to include a joint curriculum, which will lead to two separate awards. The awards can be at different levels, e.g. at PhD level this could be an MPhil from one institution and a PhD from the other. The qualifications attest to the successful completion of both programmes, with separate programme outcomes.
- **Double Degree:** The University works with another degree-awarding body to jointly develop and deliver a single programme (either taught or research) leading to separate qualifications (and separate certification) being granted by both institutions. In some cases, the partner can agree to award the same qualification, but to issue a separate certificate. The volume of credit and assessment would be greater than that of a single award.

# Section 12: Good Practice in Assessment of Students

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12.1 This section aims to provide some general principles to course leads in designing and reviewing courses. It is not aimed at being exhaustive, further colleague guidance is available from the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation.

## Principles of Assessment

12.2 Assessment makes a judgement on the student's learning; the assessment enables students to demonstrate that they have:

- met all the learning outcomes for each module
- fulfilled the course outcomes of the course on which they are registered
- achieved the standard required for the award.

12.3 It allows colleagues to:

- determine the grading which will contribute to final degree classification or certification
- possibly ensure that the student is "fit to practise" (professional body requirements)
- indicate to potential employers or other educational institutions or organisations a student's strengths and weaknesses in specific subjects and in generic skills and abilities.

12.4 However, there are wider functions of assessment that are very important for students' learning. These are:

- the opportunity to provide feedback to students on their performance
- helping students remedy mistakes, and to develop and improve
- providing further opportunities for learning; these might be opportunities to work independently, to explore aspects of learning only possible outside the "classroom" e.g. archive-based research, work-based learning, "live" projects
- developing students understanding of processes of enquiry and research relevant to the subject
- providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their own learning approaches and abilities
- enabling students to develop a wider range of skills
- helping students determine their choice of options or subject specialisms.

12.5 There are also aspects of assessment that are helpful to the University in developing and enhancing its provision. These include:

- checking students' learning progression in order to evaluate our provision
- diagnosing the further support for learning that students might need
- indicating the academic standards of the learning achieved.

12.6 The following should be considered in the design of assessment at both course and module level:

- assessment should be designed as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, in module and course design, ensuring that students can learn through the assessment
- a holistic approach to assessment should be taken, assessment methods across a course should encompass a wide range of methods, fit for measuring the achievement of the learning outcomes and avoiding duplication of learning outcomes where possible.
- Courses are expected to be underpinned with an assessment strategy relevant to the subject area or course
- assessment requirements should be valid; what the students are asked to do should be appropriate to measure the learning outcomes of the module, and the delivery of the module should support the student in being able to complete the assessment (the principle of constructive alignment)
- Assessment tasks should be authentic and unless required by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body, examinations should be avoided
- the purpose of the assessment and how it will help students' learning must be transparent to students
- assessment should be free of bias in both design and marking
- assessment requirements should be designed to ensure that they do not give undue advantage or disadvantage to students from specific backgrounds, or those with particular disabilities
- assessment criteria, determined by the learning outcomes, should be given to students at the time the assessment task is set and should be used by all staff to inform their marking, and in providing feedback to students
- assessment workload should be realistic and comparable between modules at the same academic level and credit weighting

#### 12.7 Effective assessment may be achieved by:

- Explicitly providing advice to students on the assessment criteria and marking schemes
- The use of specific graded assessment criteria for each piece of assessed work
- Explaining in the Course and Module Handbooks how the chosen assessment methods support the students' learning and how they link to the learning outcomes
- Avoidance of over-dependence on standard 2000-3000-word essays and 2-3-hour exams in favour of a more authentic and diverse range of assessment formats chosen through a "fitness for purpose" analysis of what students must demonstrate to pass to each module, and how the work will encourage students' further learning
- Creative use of formative assessment, which ties in with the guided independent study, and avoidance of summative only assessments
- Explicit assessment of a variety of skills, which support learning and employability, including assessment of students' capability in the enquiry and research approaches characteristic of learning in that discipline
- Use of objective testing where appropriate to measure achievement of the learning outcomes, e.g. multiple-choice questions, numeric tests, matching/correspondence tests. This may be particularly helpful for online formative assessment
- Pacing assessment throughout the module to test different learning outcomes (some of which need to be demonstrated once only) to spread the marking load

- Using group work by students for assessment, particularly for formative assessment where peer assessment is used, and for summative assessment where reflection on the student's role in a group, and the development of teamwork expertise, is part of the specified learning outcomes of the module
- Involvement of students in identifying the assessment criteria, with or without attribution of marks to self or peers
- Using feedback sheets which relate to the assessment criteria and using statement banks of tutors' comments for the whole module group, so that students can compare comments
- Timely feedback mechanisms for performance in examinations, with reference to model answers where appropriate
- Good internal moderation processes for coursework, in line with University Academic Regulations and clear advice to students on who marks their work and the involvement of external examiners.

## Aims and Learning Outcomes

- 12.8 Each taught course leading to a named award of the University must have clear and simply stated Course aims and Course learning outcomes, which are informed by the QAA subject benchmarks and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and which are determined by the individual modules.

It is also appropriate to define the course aims and course learning outcomes for each academic level for undergraduate courses, where students are expected to progress through the levels sequentially.

- 12.9 Student attainment is described by the module learning outcomes, and these must identify the specific skills, knowledge, and attributes that a student will be able to demonstrate on successful completion of the module.
- 12.10 Module learning outcomes should be cross referenced to the aims of the overall subject and course scheme or named award.
- 12.11 The student will demonstrate achievement of the module learning outcomes through the assessment process. The learning outcomes hence describe the threshold level of achievement. Students who perform above this threshold level are recognised by the award of higher marks or grades.
- 12.12 The module learning outcomes specified in the Module proformas make what is expected of students on this module at this level visible for the students, all teaching team members (including part-time/Visiting Lecturers and guest speakers) and external examiner(s).
- 12.13 Learning Outcomes should be written with active verbs to facilitate the aligned definition of assessment criteria used to judge the students' performance. If the learning outcomes are not clear and specific it makes it much harder to develop appropriate assessments. It is also important that the learning outcomes reflect the level of study.

**Examples of active verbs suitable for this purpose are:**

State, Describe, List, Summarise, Select, Compare, Apply, Explain, Design, Construct, Plan, Develop, Formulate, Define, Justify, Explore, Analyse, Critically evaluate, Interpret.

**Weaker phrases which should be avoided include:**

to be familiar with, to have a grasp of, to appreciate, to understand, to acquire a knowledge of.

Bench-marked learning outcomes, i.e. those which assume progressive development relative to (prior) levels of attainment, should be avoided except where the module has pre-requisite requirements or where students are given diagnostic tests before starting the module; alternatively, they could be cross-referenced to the learning outcomes for the earlier level.

**Examples include:**

to develop further skills in, to improve techniques of,  
to demonstrate a better understanding of.

12.14 Learning outcomes should be realistically framed for the level of work and the credit-weighting of the module.

12.15 It helps students' learning processes if assessment tasks are staggered through the module. Assessments may judge different learning outcomes at different stages of the module; there is no need for each piece of assessment to judge all the learning outcomes, if overall the assessment covers all of the learning outcomes.

Staff [Guidance is available](#) from the [Quality](#) and Standards SharePoint pages.

## Assessment and Marking Criteria

12.16 The assessment criteria are determined by the learning outcomes for the module and hence will reflect the academic credit level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7.

12.17 General expectations of attainment at specific levels are defined within the QAA Framework of Higher Education Qualifications. This defines the descriptors for qualifications at each level which are included in the Frameworks for Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses in the Handbook of Academic Regulations.

12.18 Assessment criteria for assessed coursework should be given to students at the same time as the assessment task is set, and the assessment criteria must be provided to External Examiners.

12.19 Whereas learning outcomes identify what students should be able to demonstrate they have achieved at that point or on completion of the module, assessment criteria are statements which convey to the students, other staff and External Examiners the basis on which the work will be assessed. Assessment criteria can be expressed in a variety of ways. The main approaches are:

- Threshold criteria
- General criteria
- Graded criteria.

12.20 Threshold criteria are more detailed statements which expand on the learning outcomes to show what the student must do to pass the module. They relate specifically to the learning outcomes and the content of the module. This is the most useful approach at the module level and for the purposes of the Module Proforma.

12.21 **General criteria** are more general statements about what is looked for in a student's work such as:

- Demonstrates good use of literature
- Presented in the form of a scientific paper
- Presents a clear and logical argument.

These can be very useful for a course in identifying what is expected from the most common methods of assessment, but do not relate to individual modules and do not help students and markers to determine what will be the benchmark of success in any particular module.

12.22 **Graded criteria** provide a statement of the work required for each classification of performance (i.e. 80-100, 70-79, 60-69, 50-59, 40-49, 30-39, 0-29). Such criteria are used for specific items of assessment. Graded criteria should take account of the level of the work for example 70-79 at Credit Level 6 demands a different level of achievement from a 70-79 at Credit level 4.

12.23 The University has approved [Generic grade descriptors](#) for each level of study (3-7). These aim to:

- support academic judgement in relation to the standard of students' work across grade bands
- support the facilitation of feedback to students
- indicate to students the relative changes in demands as they progress through the levels of their course and onto postgraduate level
- provide a benchmarking tool to support the use of the full range of marks across the percentage grades from 0-100%
- support the development of specific grade descriptors using alternative forms which broadly link to the University descriptors
- provide a framework for each grade band, whilst not being exclusive criteria, the final grade being a matter of academic judgement

## Feedback

12.24 All modules are expected to follow the [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#). The policy outlines the expectation that both formative and summative feedback should be included in all modules, timelines, expectations for anonymous marking, examination feedback and other key expectations that help to engage students in a dialogue with colleagues to ensure there is a shared understanding of improved performance.

## Design of Assessment formats

12.25 good variety of assessment within a course is beneficial; it ensures that a range of skills and abilities can be assessed, it recognises the different learning styles of different students, and it ensures that students do not become bored by the assessment. The following chart indicates a range of possibilities although there are many more methods of assessment which can be used.

### TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

<b>Type of assessment</b>	<b>Range of skills, knowledge and abilities assessed</b>
<p>Examinations: Time constrained Unseen paper or pre-prepared answer or subject area Open or closed book Multiple choice answer/test</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work under pressure as reflected by the subject area graduate skills required (refer to authentic assessment).</li> <li>• Recalled knowledge</li> <li>• Numeracy/quantitative skills</li> <li>• Verbal language skills (oral examinations)</li> </ul>
<p>Essays, critical review, journal article</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and collation of information</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Organisation of material</li> <li>• Self-editing skills</li> <li>• Coherence of argument</li> <li>• Critical independent thinking</li> <li>• Written presentation</li> <li>• Ability to focus</li> <li>• Depth of subject knowledge</li> <li>• Breadth of perspective</li> <li>• Selection and attribution of sources</li> </ul>
<p>Reports (including laboratory reports), case studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and collation of information</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Organisation of material</li> <li>• Professionalism of presentation showing familiarity with report format</li> <li>• Awareness of end user(s)</li> <li>• Analytical and evaluative skills</li> <li>• Self-editing and writing skills</li> <li>• Quantitative skills</li> <li>• IT skills</li> </ul>
<p>Seminar presentations, papers and posters Video, audio tape, slide presentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral presentation skills</li> <li>• Developed use of body language</li> <li>• Interactive communication skills</li> <li>• Transferable skills for interviews</li> <li>• Use of audio-visual aids</li> <li>• Group work skills</li> <li>• Planning and time management</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Planning and organisation</li> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Editing skills</li> <li>• Interactive presentation skills</li> <li>• Imaginative breadth</li> <li>• Integration of image and text</li> </ul>

<b>Type of assessment</b>	<b>Range of skills, knowledge and abilities assessed</b>
Projects (individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and collation of information</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Application of knowledge</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Awareness of current professional practice</li> <li>• Research skills</li> <li>• Collation and organisation of material</li> <li>• Ability to focus</li> <li>• Oral and written communication skills</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Self-editing</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> <li>• Depth of subject knowledge</li> </ul>
Group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork and collaborative responsibility</li> <li>• Delegation</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> <li>• Accountability processes</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Application</li> </ul>
Logs, journals, diaries, minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation of material</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Self-critical awareness</li> <li>• Succinct, recording technique</li> <li>• Ability to focus</li> <li>• Reflective analysis</li> </ul>
Creative studio-based projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual skills</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Imaginative breadth</li> <li>• Knowledge of materials</li> <li>• Technical skill</li> <li>• Contextual knowledge</li> <li>• Visual aesthetics and expressiveness</li> <li>• Planning and organisation</li> <li>• Professional presentation skills</li> <li>• Progressive development of ideas and their realisation</li> <li>• Integration of theory and practice</li> </ul>



<b>Type of assessment</b>	<b>Range of skills, knowledge and abilities assessed</b>
Portfolio/collection of diverse material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progression and level of achievement</li> <li>• Application of theory</li> <li>• Self-editing skills</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> <li>• Organisation of material</li> <li>• Reflective analysis</li> </ul>
Dissertation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research skills</li> <li>• Selection and attribution of sources</li> <li>• Written presentation</li> <li>• Collation and organisation of material</li> <li>• Coherence of argument</li> <li>• Development of a hypothesis</li> <li>• Critical independent thinking</li> <li>• Breadth of perspective</li> <li>• Depth of subject knowledge</li> </ul>

## Authentic Assessment

12.26 The Education Strategy states that assessments should be varied, authentic and inclusive. Authentic assessment may be understood as assessment that requires students to use the same competencies, or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life.

<b>Assessment task</b>	<b>What are students required to do?</b>
Abstract	Students are required to write an abstract of a research paper/article within a specified word limit e.g. 300–500 words.
Annotated Bibliographies	Students produce a list of texts, primary sources and internet sites on specified or agreed topics to a particular referencing convention. They annotate these with a commentary, which could include an evaluation of what they have read.
Articles for different audiences	Students are asked to write on a particular topic(s) to an agreed length in a specific style e.g. a journal, newspaper or magazine.
Assessment stations	Developed in medicine, students move around a series of testing stations being assessed on a number of learning outcomes, each for a fixed period of time. Useful to assess a wide range of skills and knowledge.
Blogs	Students are required to keep an individual blog, e.g. to record their progress on a project; could be used as part of a group project exercise.
Book, website, journal article or programme review	Students write an account or present an oral presentation on designated articles or other programmes e.g. TV/radio. These often include an evaluative element to demonstrate depth of reading and level of understanding in concise formats.
Case studies	Students are required to work through a case study to identify the problem(s) and to offer potential solutions; useful for assessing students' understanding and for encouraging students to see links between theory and practice. Case studies could be provided in advance of a time-constrained assessment.
Concept maps	Students map out their understanding of a particular concept. This is a useful (and potentially quick) exercise to provide feedback to staff on students' understanding
Critical incident accounts / Journals / Blogs	Students working on placements keep diaries, journals or blogs in which they record their experiences. They can be asked to write about a critical incident in terms of context, what happened, the outcomes, how theoretical material they have learnt underpins the process and how they would do things differently in future.
Designing learning materials	Students prepare a learning package for a particular audience e.g. members of the public, school children etc. on a specified or agreed topic
Dissertation	Potential for sampling a wide range of practical, analytical and interpretative skills and to assess a broad application of knowledge, understanding and skills to other situations.
Essay	Students are required to write an essay on specified or agreed topics within given parameters e.g. word count, use of different literature sources etc.
Field Report	Students are required to produce a written/oral report relating to a field/site visit.

<b>Assessment task</b>	<b>What are students required to do?</b>
Grant Application	Students are required to submit a report as they leave the lab. Could be used with predesigned pro-forma to speed-up marking and feedback provision to students.
In-tray exercise	Students are provided with an initial dossier of papers to read, prioritise and work on, with a variety of tasks and new information given at intervals throughout the period of assessment. This simulates real practice where unknown elements and irrelevancies are often encountered.
Laboratory books/Reports	Students are required to write a report for all (or a designated sample) of practicals in a single lab book. You could inform students that a sample of lab books will be collected each week to mark any reports of labs done in previous weeks; this encourages students to keep their lab books up to date. Each student should be sampled the same number of times throughout the module with a designated number contributing to the assessment mark.
Learning logs	These are lists of activities and outcomes which students check off during a period of learning. For example, students could be asked to indicate competencies which they have practised to a specific level during a work placement
Make or design something	Students are required to make or design something, e.g. radio broadcast, video clip, web page etc; useful as a group work exercise
Media profile	Students are asked to use pictures or headlines from newspapers and magazines to illustrate the public perception/profile of a particular aspect of your subject area; useful as a group work exercise.
Mini-practical	This involves a series of mini practical sessions conducted under timed conditions which creates potential for assessing a wide range of practical, analytical and interpretative skills.
Multiple Choice Questions	Can be useful for diagnostic, formative assessment, in addition to summative assessment. Well-designed questions can assess more than factual recall of information but do take time to design.
Online discussion boards	Students are assessed on the basis of their contributions to an online discussion for example, with their peers; this could be hosted on a virtual learning environment (VLE).
Oral presentations	Students are asked to give an oral presentation on a particular topic for a specified length of time and could also be asked to prepare associated handout(s). Can usefully be combined with self- and peer-assessment.
Past written practical reports	Lab sheets given to students provide some of the write-up in full but leave sections such as error analysis, theoretical explanation etc. for the students to complete.
Patchwork tests	Students write a number of small pieces of work ('patches'), which they then have to later 'stitch' together in a reflective commentary. The patches and the tasks upon which they are based are discrete and complete entities in their own right, but they can help contribute to a holistic understanding of the module content.
Performance	Students are required to give some form of performance, e.g. concert
Portfolios/ e-Portfolios	Students provide evidence for their achievement of learning outcomes; these commonly incorporate a reflective commentary.

<b>Assessment task</b>	<b>What are students required to do?</b>
Problem sheets	Students complete problem sheets. This can be a useful way of providing students with regular formative feedback on their work and/or involving elements of self- and peer assessment.
Reflective diaries	Students record their learning over a period of time, interspersing narrative with a reflective commentary which could support the development of an action plan.
Research projects/ Group Projects	Potential for sampling wide range of practical, analytical and interpretative skills. Can assess wide application of knowledge, understanding and skills.
Role Play	Students write or give a presentation taking on a particular role, e.g. a journal reviewer or editor, consultant, art critic etc. This type of assignment could be paired up with a grant application exercise.
Selective reports/ Sampling reports	Students are asked to either write up only particular sections of a report each week, e.g. methods section or results section. Alternatively, students are required to write practical reports in full, but they are told in advance that only a percentage of the reports will be assessed.
Simulations	Text or virtual computer-based simulations are provided for students who are then required to answer questions, resolve problems, perform tasks and take actions etc. according to changing circumstances within the simulation. Useful for assessing a wide range of skills, knowledge and competencies

Adapted from Engage in Assessment, University of Reading

## Group Work

12.27 Assignments for students working in groups are beneficial at all academic levels but the inclusion of group work must be rigorously justified. The University recognises the value group assessment have in contributing to graduate attributes. However also recognises the need for courses to ensure there is a strategy and oversight at course level. It is therefore included here to help course designers consider some of the issues.

### **The advantages can include:**

- simulation of professional practice/real work situation
- development of a range of skills which would not otherwise be acquired individually
- sharing of student expertise/shared learning
- broadening of perspectives
- variation of learning methods away from lecturers, seminars, essays and examinations
- encouragement for organised use of learning time outside taught classes
- encouragement of social cohesion
- promotion of research/information collection.

**Disadvantages can include difficulties such as:**

- ensuring quality and equality of contribution, if appropriate
- balancing the range and abilities of each group
- justifying a common mark for all group members
- ensuring a similar level of staff support for different groups working in parallel or consecutively
- limited availability of student time.

12.28 The contribution of group work to the students' learning experiences should be included in the module learning outcomes. It is important that as well as undertaking working as a group, they also acquire an understanding of the dynamics of group work and that they can reflect on the contribution that they individually make to the process. This must be included in the learning outcomes, assessment methods and assessment criteria.

12.29 In using group work as part of the assessment you might consider the following aspects:

- Group size should be appropriate to the volume of the task, and the nature of the work. If there are too many students working in a group, it is more likely to result in “free-loading” by some individuals.
- Groups may be formed randomly (to mimic work situations), they may be self-selected, or members may be selected by the teaching team to ensure that each group is balanced to reflect the characteristics and abilities of the semester or year group. Although students may prefer to work in self-selected groups, they often learn more from the challenge of working with people they know less well; this aspect could be included in reflection which forms part of the assessment.
- Peer assessment within the groups is a highly effective learning device. However, it is better if the students set the assessment criteria from the start, and if they draw up a group contract from the outset, which identifies how the group will function, how any non-engagement by students will be dealt with and states the ground rules for behaviour within the group.

12.30 Such assessment by the group work may be used as a means of formative assessment, with self-evaluation by the students but without an allocation of marks, or as summative assessment.

12.31 It is essential that the marking system is made clear to the students from the outset.

12.32 The marking system may include allocation of a common mark to all group members, allocation of different marks according to individual contributions, or shared marks allocated by the group members following group evaluation of the completed assignment, with adjudication by the teaching team or staff member.

12.33 Individual students may submit a written statement on their contribution, or all group members may be asked to submit such statements.

12.34 Students may be given a viva/oral examination to verify their contribution to the group assignment if this is a stated part of the assessment strategy.

## Graduate Attributes and Higher Education Skills

- 12.35 Students need to develop a range of skills, to inform their current learning, their personal development, their future employment and their lifelong ability to study. These form an integral part of their study in Higher Education, to enhance their flexibility, adaptability and autonomy in learning. As such these skills should be included in the learning outcomes, and hence assessment, of the modules on any course. They are more likely to be effective if delivered as part of a course where students engage in work-related and work-integrated learning activities (such as live projects, work placements, real-life case studies, employer input etc.).
- 12.36 The [University Graduate Attributes](#) have been developed to help achieve this through the curriculum. They include:
- Critical and creative thinkers
  - Literate and effective communicators
  - Entrepreneurial
  - Global in outlook and community engaged
  - Socially, environmentally, and ethically aware
- 12.37 Graduate attributes should be considered at the inception of the curriculum design process. Course teams can contextualise the attributes within their own field, and thereby develop course and module learning outcomes which are not based solely on subject content.

<b><i>Our aim is that graduates from all our courses will...</i></b>	<b><i>To achieve this our curriculum development processes will promote the design of courses that empower our students to....</i></b>	<b><i>Transferable Skills Alignment</i></b>
<b><i>...be critical and creative thinkers</i></b>	Develop and maintain a deep and expansive understanding of the core concepts of their field, developed through critical inquiry and reflection.	<i>n/a</i>
	Pursue an active, problem-solving approach grounded in the thinking and criticality of their field.	<b>3</b>
	Creatively seek to make connections across their field, framing new lines of inquiry and adapting their understanding in unfamiliar settings.	<b>3</b>
	Make informed decisions based on rigorous research and critical analysis of relevant information.	<b>1</b>
	Reflect on their progress, identify gaps, and focus their ongoing personal and professional development as committed lifelong learners.	<b>8</b>
<b><i>...be literate and effective communicators</i></b>	Present arguments and explain ideas clearly in various formats as appropriate for a diverse range of intended audiences and respond to feedback received.	<b>5</b>
	Interpret and manipulate numerical data as appropriate to their field.	<b>1</b>
	Locate, evaluate, manage and synthesise information from a variety of sources, and make judgements as to the values that sit behind information sources.	<b>1</b>
	Harness the power of digital technologies for research, creativity, productivity, problem-solving and collaboration.	<b>9</b>
	Use the key technologies associated with their field effectively and with confidence.	<b>9</b>
<b><i>...be entrepreneurial</i></b>	Show openness to new ideas, embrace divergent thinking, and apply curiosity and imagination within the context of their field.	<b>3</b>
	Demonstrate awareness of how enterprises and organisations relevant to their discipline operate, and the impact of contemporary trends on such organisations.	<b>2</b>
	Recognise the importance of understanding and responding to the expectations of clients, customers and other stakeholders relevant to their field of practice.	<b>4</b>
	Manage time by prioritising activities effectively.	<b>7</b>
	Show initiative, resilience and adaptability in the face of change, and accept personal responsibility for actions.	<b>8</b>

<b><i>Our aim is that graduates from all our courses will...</i></b>	<b><i>To achieve this our curriculum development processes will promote the design of courses that empower our students to....</i></b>	<b><i>Transferable Skills Alignment</i></b>
...be global in outlook and community engaged	Work collaboratively and build positive relationships that help everyone achieve their goals.	6
	Engage with their field as it is conceptualised in the context of other locations and cultures.	n/a
	Respect diverse cultures, customs and values, being mindful of potentially competing needs of different communities.	4
	Embrace opportunities to work in diverse and complex teams both locally and internationally.	6
	Recognize the potential impact of economic, social and cultural differences when working within diverse communities, both locally and internationally.	5
...be socially, environmentally and ethically aware	Demonstrate critical awareness of issues of social justice, and how such issues relate to disciplinary and professional practice.	n/a
	Respect the fundamental imperative of ethical practice based on honesty and integrity.	8
	Understand sustainability as a dynamic concept and recognize the potential environmental, economic, social and cultural impact of practices related to their field.	2
	Contextualize problems within an ethical framework and evaluate competing interests.	3
	Recognise the finite nature of resources and systems and consider the needs of future generations in decision-making.	1

### TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

<b>1</b>	<b>Analysis and decision making:</b> Researching and analysing relevant information to make informed decisions
<b>2</b>	<b>Commercial Awareness: Awareness of how businesses operate, current trends and their impact on organisations</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Creativity and ability to solve problems:</b> Coming up with a new approach or improving existing processes
<b>4</b>	<b>Customer focus:</b> Demonstrating how you understand customer needs and deliver outstanding service or products
<b>5</b>	<b>Influence and communication:</b> Communicating effectively to suit the audience, both verbally and in writing
<b>6</b>	<b>Leadership and team-working:</b> Building positive relationships that help everyone achieve their goals
<b>7</b>	<b>Planning and organisation:</b> Structuring and prioritising activities or projects
<b>8</b>	<b>Self-Management: Taking personal responsibility and showing initiative to achieve goals</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Digital Capability:</b> Using a range of digital skills and competencies for learning and working