

AIDE-MEMOIRE FOR EVALUATION AND REVALIDATION

This Aide-Memoire consists of questions and prompts to assist both course/subject teams in their preparation of course/subject documentation, and panel members in their consideration of the appropriateness of the course or undergraduate honours subject strand(s), or provision within a subject revalidation unit, to the University's objectives, viability of provision, and the standards for the award(s).

The questions and prompts are set out in the order of presentation of validation documentation. They supplement the topics identified in the Guidelines for evaluation and revalidation panels. **They are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.** Some questions are those used by QAA academic reviewers and commended to institutions in the QAA Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review. Certain questions will be more valuable to external subject experts, others to internal University members conversant with University policies and processes. All will assist course/subject teams in preparing their documentation.

Strengths, good practice, innovation and other aspects for commendation should be emphasised.

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION		
A	INTRODUCTION	This section is essentially contextual. Academic Planning Sub-Committee has already considered questions of demand and viability before permitting the proposal to proceed, and monitoring of the Academic Plan should ensure that only viable courses are presented for revalidation. Do you have a clear view of why the course(s) are provided? Do the subject/course aims and objectives fit with the University's strategic aims and objectives? Does it satisfy the general criteria identified in 4 of the Guidelines? If a course is only available full-time, why has part-time mode been discounted?
COMMENTS		
SECTION B: COURSE/SUBJECT PROVISION		
B1	Programme Specification(s)	Are these clearly and fully presented? Is there a clear relationship between the intended learning outcomes and the aims of the course/subject strand (including for any proposed pre-final exit awards)? Do the teaching, learning and assessment methods relate to the outcomes? Are the programme learning outcomes written at the final level of the award? Are they correctly mapped in the matrix? (Detailed comments on the specific outcomes, assessment methods and criteria should be made under B2 and B4.) Is the summary information on course structure consistent with that in the rest of the documentation? Are the summary statements about student support, admissions and the regulation of standards consistent with University policy and practice and with regard to regulations in the course regulations in section B3? (Exemplars available at Staff Development's website under 'Resources for Teaching and Learning'.)
COMMENTS		
B2	Commentaries	
B2.1	REVALIDATION - recent and proposed changes	Have recent changes to the course/subject strand been clearly explained and justified? Is the rationale for proposed changes clear and are the changes appropriate?
B2.2	Progression, Coherence, Choice (within the programme) Structure diagrams	Is there coherence within the course/strand? Are the choice of modules and their level and the sequence in which taken appropriate? Is academic progression and integration between and within levels in the programme evident? Is there sufficient underpinning? Are adequate and meaningful opportunities for choice provided? Are the expectations for any exit points adequately addressed? Do they represent coherent programmes of study? Are modules located in the appropriate semester and year?

		<p>Are modules correctly designated as compulsory or optional? Does the study load, by mode, meet the University's norms? Taking account of module sizes, is the overall structure and workload balanced and reasonable?</p> <p>How flexible is the part-time mode? Are the modules shared with other programmes?</p>
COMMENTS		
B2.3	Transfer (to and from other programmes of study and opportunities for progression to further study)	<p>Are adequate and meaningful opportunities for transfer to and from other programmes of study provided?</p> <p>Has the articulation been clearly addressed?</p>
COMMENTS		
B2.4	Work-based learning, supervised work experience (placement) (See also placement modules and Employability.)	<p>Are there appropriate opportunities for meaningful work-based learning, related to the objectives of the course and any professional or regulatory requirements? Is the placement assessed at its assigned level? Is there adequate preparation for, and monitoring of, placement in accordance with the University's Guide to Good Practice? Are the learning outcomes further developed in subsequent study? What are the arrangements for moderation and external examining? How are the specific requirements of students with disabilities addressed?</p>
COMMENTS		
B2.5	<p>Teaching, Learning and Assessment (including support for students)</p> <p><u>Teaching and Learning</u></p>	<p>Does this section provide an analytical overview of approaches which would demonstrate the effectiveness of strategies in promoting student learning?</p> <p>Is there evidence of compliance with University, Faculty and School policies in relation to teaching and learning, in particular the Teaching and Learning Strategy, the guiding principles therein and the guidelines for first year teaching, and the development of Graduate Qualities?</p> <p>Are the strategies effective in promoting student learning and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?</p> <p>Are the teaching and learning methods varied? In undergraduate courses are they responsive to the range of entry qualifications? Do the induction and transition processes meet the expectations of the University's Guidelines for the former and policy on the latter? How are issues of retention addressed? Are the arrangements for induction effective? Do they include skills self-assessment?</p> <p>Does the attendance policy support student learning, particularly in year 1 of undergraduate courses, where attendance is a key requirement for success. How is attendance monitored? Is it effective?</p> <p>How are HE study, writing and referencing skills developed? Is the development of academic skills (including learning to learn in higher education) embedded as an integral and integrated part of the first year full-time undergraduate curriculum as a minimum? How does induction and the first year curriculum support transition?</p> <p>What approaches are adopted for large groups, small groups, practical sessions? How is student participation achieved? Are there opportunities for students to reflect on and take responsibility for their own learning? Is there evidence of compliance with University policy on Personal Development Planning? Is use made of group-work and e-learning? If not, would they be beneficial?</p> <p>Are all learning outcomes equally achievable by disabled students? Guidance is available from Equality & Diversity Services' website at 'Staff Guidance Documents'.</p> <p>For undergraduate healthcare and social work courses, are the DHSSPS guidelines (2007) for Safe, High quality Health and Social Care in Curricula addressed?</p>

	<p><u>Assessment</u></p>	<p>Is there evidence of compliance with the University/Faculty/School policies in relation to assessment?</p> <p>Is there a range of assessment methods? Is the range appropriate and the load equitable across the provision? Are they appropriate to the learning outcomes? Will they be effective in judging achievement? Do the assessment criteria enable examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement (mark bands) for the level of the module and the award?</p> <p>Does the assessment strategy have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities? Does the assessment strategy in year 1 of undergraduate courses explicitly promote the effective adoption of tertiary learning habits and standards? Does it include early and regular evaluation of student performance and explicit assessment of learning to learn and subject-relevant study skills in the first year in accordance with University policy?</p> <p>Note that course/subject teams are expected to provide an exemplar assessment schedule to show in each semester/year the types of assessment, weighting and the indicative timing/submission of tasks.</p> <p>Does the assessment strategy give confidence that achievement of the intended learning outcomes will be tested and measured?</p> <p>Does the strategy provide adequate safeguards of validity and reliability and fairness?</p> <p>The assessment of individual student performance in group work is a concern. How does the strategy for the assessment of groupwork ensure adequate recognition?</p> <p>Is best practice, as referenced in the University's Assessment Handbook, adopted? What approaches are taken to such matters as moderation (including for placement), double marking and anonymous marking of coursework?</p> <p>Do the assessment criteria meet the University's generic level criteria as stated in the Assessment Handbook?</p> <p>Are the deadlines for submission of assignments across the course manageable for students?</p> <p>What feedback arrangements are in place? Are they clearly articulated at course and module levels? Are they prompt? Are they appropriate and effective for the type of assessment and student group?</p> <p>Is there evidence that the University's Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning are being addressed?</p> <p>How are the requirements of students with disabilities and others with particular needs, as recognised under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order, addressed?</p>
COMMENTS		
B2.6	Research/Scholarship informed curriculum and teaching	The Teaching and Learning Strategy states that the University aims to provide courses which are scholarship-informed and where appropriate research-informed, and taught and supervised by those engaged in research and/or scholarship. Is there evidence of this?
COMMENTS		
B2.7	Creativity, Innovation and Good Practice	<p>Is there evidence of creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery?</p> <p>This should take account, as appropriate, of course, school, faculty, University and national initiatives. Consider engagement with the University's Centre for Higher Education Practice, the Higher Education Academy, Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.</p> <p>Consider the Key Supporting Objectives under Strategic Aim 3 of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy, and the associated action plans.</p>

COMMENTS		
B2.8	Standards	<p>What has the team's approach been to fulfilling the relevant generic benchmark standards? Are these met?</p> <p>Does each course meet the criteria for its associated award as defined in the University's qualifications and credit framework, reflecting the specification in the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications?</p> <p>Are the relevant PSRB requirements addressed? If applicable, is fitness to practise achieved?</p> <p>Have any concerns raised by external examiners been addressed?</p> <p>If necessary, have the reasons for particular entry standards, requirements or competences been explained? (See also B3 regulations.)</p>
COMMENTS		
B2.9	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies	Are there appropriate working relations between the course/subject team and the relevant PSRBs? Do they inform course design and development?
COMMENTS		
B2.10	Employability	Has the team adequately addressed the points in the University statement on Employability in relation to the following: (B2.10.1 – 6)? (For revalidation, has the online Employability Development Opportunities Review Tool (EDORT) been used to review employability – DEL funded programmes?)
COMMENTS		
B2.10.1	Graduate Qualities	Are graduate qualities appropriate to employment prospects of students identified? Do they relate to the University's statement? Are these integrated into both teaching and learning and assessment procedures?
COMMENTS		
B2.10.2	Widening Participation	What support is provided to all students, including non-traditional entrants, to maximise their career potential?
COMMENTS		
B2.10.3	Work-based Learning	How does this help students improve their employability skills?
COMMENTS		
B2.10.4	Personal Development Planning	How does Personal Development Planning support the development of key qualities for employability and career development, as well as supporting subject-related learning?
COMMENTS		
B2.10.5	Entrepreneurship Training	Are the level 5/7 entrepreneurship module(s) used? If not, has the team identified clearly its approach to how students will be able to achieve the specified learning outcomes? Are the skills associated with entrepreneurship closely aligned with employability?
COMMENTS		
B2.10.6	Career Opportunities, Development and Progression	Are student and employer needs (regionally, nationally and internationally) and, as appropriate, government policy on skills adequately reflected? How do students gain the self-promotional and career management skills aspects of employability critical for graduates securing and maintaining employment? Is there evidence that relevant and worthwhile careers will be available to new graduates? Will the course support the career progression of students currently in employment? Will there be sufficient opportunities for the projected cohort? Are there opportunities for further studies, within or outside the University? Has there been adequate consultation with employers, the professions and other interested bodies?
COMMENTS		
B3	Regulations	Do course regulations accord with the requirements of the University's award regulations? (www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice under Regulations)

		<p>Are there any specific admissions requirements (academic, experience, age or competence)? Are they justifiable? (For age or non-academic competence, take account of Employment Equality (Age) Regulation (NI) Order 2006 and SENDO.)</p> <p>Do qualifications proposed for accreditation of prior learning/exemption match the content and level of the modules in question?</p> <p>Are there modules in which the threshold standard must be met in both assessment elements? Is this reasonable, eg core modules?</p> <p>Are any departures from University regulations proposed? For Honours degree classification is a departure from the 'exit velocity' principle proposed?</p>
COMMENTS		
B4	Modules (For each module)	<p>Does the module title adequately reflect the content? Is the credit level properly assigned? Does it match the summary in the programme specification? Is it reflected in the outcomes?</p> <p>Do the taught modules meet the University's acceptable sizes (any multiples of 5 from 10 credit points)?</p> <p>Do the credit points accord with the notional student effort hours (10 hours = 1 credit point)? Do the hours give an adequate breakdown between the different forms of teaching used?</p> <p>Is there a clear relationship between the module and course rationale, aims and learning outcomes?</p> <p>Are the design and organisation of the curriculum effective in promoting student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes?</p> <p>Does the curriculum embed the development of academic skills (including learning to learn in higher education) as an integral and integrated part of the first year (full-time) as a minimum? Are study skills explicitly assessed in accordance with University policy?</p> <p>Are the teaching, learning and assessment methods appropriate to the intended learning outcomes at the level of the module?</p> <p>Is the syllabus content appropriate for the objectives of the module and course? Will it encourage the achievement of the knowledge, understanding, skills and other qualities identified? Is it current and relevant? Is it informed by current research and scholarship (including the research interests of staff), the subject benchmarks, and any changes in the relevant occupational or professional requirements?</p> <p>In an Honours degree, is there a sustained project or dissertation module proposed? If not are the expectations of such study met elsewhere? Are the arrangements for project/dissertation supervision adequate? Is the suggested word-length appropriate?</p> <p>Is the assessment weighting between coursework and examination appropriate? Is the rationale for different assessment weightings between modules sound?</p> <p>Is sufficient information provided about the forms of assessment (eg duration and format of examination, length of assignment)? Are they appropriate for their diagnostic, formative and/or summative purposes? Does the assessment meet the University's Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning?</p> <p>Does the assessment of group work ensure that individual student achievement is recognised? The University expects that at least 25% of each student's assessment result in group work is based on his/her individual contribution in modules contributing to a final award, and significantly more where modules are wholly or mostly assessed by group work.</p> <p>Are the reading lists and other sources of information appropriate? Are the texts</p>

		current editions? Are they available in the Library? Are the texts appropriately identified as required or recommended reading? Is the amount of reading realistic?
COMMENTS		
C	RESOURCES	
C1	Physical	<p>Are the physical resources (general and specialist accommodation, laboratory equipment, library, IT) available sufficient to ensure the successful delivery of the course(s), for the cohort size?</p> <p>Is there a renewal/updating policy for equipment?</p> <p>Comment on the general appearance/condition of buildings and classrooms. Are there adequate study facilities for students?</p>
COMMENTS		
C2	Staff and Staff Development	<p>Are the staff sufficiently qualified and experienced to deliver the course successfully at its qualification level? Are the staff numbers adequate? What is the balance between full-time and part-time staff? Will part-time contracts allow sufficient time to undertake expected duties?</p> <p>Is adequate support provided for postgraduate teaching assistants, demonstrators and part-time lecturers and recognised teachers and their integration into the team? What arrangements are there for induction and mentoring of new staff? Have all recently appointed teaching staff received academic induction in line with University policy? http://staffdev.ulster.ac.uk/ Is there sound leadership in the course/subject and module teams? Are you confident that the staff can work together as an effective team?</p> <p>Is there evidence of research or scholarship in staff profiles?</p> <p>Is there adequate technical, administrative and other support staff?</p> <p>Is there a staff development plan? Will it contribute to the enhancement of teaching? What use is made of Peer Observation? How many staff have undertaken the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (or its predecessor), or are otherwise qualified in teaching in higher education? Is there evidence of participation in curriculum development (eg Higher Education Academy Subject Centre projects)?</p> <p>Is there engagement with the Centre for Higher Education Practice?</p>
COMMENTS		
INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATION		
Joint courses or networks		For a joint course or course which is delivered in a network of partners, how effective are the arrangements for its operation? Consider such matters as curriculum development, meetings of network members, staff development, assessment arrangements. Good practice includes forward planning with annual meetings including course directors and lead module coordinators built into a calendar of events; identification of lead module coordinators; possible meeting of module teams; common external examiner(s); internal cross moderation; common timing for shared examinations; common examination board as permitted by University; coordination of revisions; consideration of student views across all partners; common template for course handbook.
COMMENTS		
DOCUMENTATION		Is the documentation clearly presented and easy to follow? Is it generally free from typographical errors and spelling mistakes? Is the pagination and indexing accurate? Are relevant sections cross-referenced? Have the relevant University templates been used?
COMMENTS		

[Supplement for Foundation degrees not included.]