



HANDBOOK FOR MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY REVALIDATION PANELS

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UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

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FOREWORD

This handbook is designed to assist members of University revalidation panels. It describes the processes and quality assurance arrangements which apply in the revalidation of courses and outlines other aspects of the University's quality assurance procedures from the submission of an outline proposal to formal approval, together with ongoing monitoring.

The term 'course' is used to refer to an integrated programme of study leading to a named award. An undergraduate Honours 'subject' may be offered as an integrated Single Honours degree or as Major, Main or Minor strands which, in combination with strands from other subjects, lead to Honours degree awards. There is no expectation of integration between subjects. The term 'programme' encompasses courses and subjects and is used in a generic sense. Programmes (courses and Honours subjects) are grouped into 'subject units' for the purpose of annual monitoring and revalidation.

The handbook derives its authority from the University's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations as well as the operational procedures which have been approved by the relevant University committees.

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A THE UNIVERSITY

1 The University of Ulster was founded in 1984 by Royal Charter as a result of a petition from The New University of Ulster and the Ulster Polytechnic. The University is based on four campuses, at Coleraine, Jordanstown, Belfast, and Magee College, Londonderry. It has over 25,400 students and more than 3,600 staff.

The University's Objects and Vision

2 The objects of the University, deriving from its Charter, are:

“to advance education through a variety of patterns, levels and modes of study and by a diversity of means by encouraging and developing learning and creativity, for the benefit of the community in Northern Ireland and elsewhere; to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge and culture through teaching, scholarship and research, and to make available the results of such research; and to promote wisdom and understanding by the example and influence of corporate life.”

3 The University's Vision is to lead in the provision of *Professional Education for Professional Life*, in a context which envisages the University focusing and deepening its contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland and its global standing. The University has agreed the following statement of the expected qualities of its graduates.

University of Ulster graduates will demonstrate:

- subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice;
- flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving;
- self-confidence, global citizenship, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability;
- effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback.

4 The Corporate Plan 2011/12 – 2015/16 sets out two corporate goals and associated objectives for excellence in both teaching and learning and in research. The goal for Teaching and Learning is to deliver high quality, flexible, student-centred programmes of study that are intellectually challenging, and which provide our students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to gain stimulating and fulfilling employment and to contribute to the advancement of their chosen profession, and to enable those graduates who have the ability and who seek to do so to undertake advanced study and/or research in their chosen subject.

5 The University's Teaching and Learning Strategy articulates the specific commitments to help realise the Vision set out in the Corporate Plan. Four strategic aims are identified:

- to enhance the quality of the student learning experience;
- to target, recruit, support and retain a diverse range of students;
- to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery;
- to promote employability through the integration of academic theory and relevant professional and vocational practice.

6 Cross-cutting aims are:

- to provide a supportive environment, in which teaching is recognised, valued and rewarded, for all those who teach and support learning in the University;
- to enhance the quality of the physical and social learning environments for students and staff.

Academic Affairs

The Senate

- 7 The Senate has responsibility for the ordering of the University's academic affairs in teaching and research and for the regulation and supervision of the education of its students. The Senate is composed mainly of academic staff, with provision for representation of non-academic staff and students. The Senate works through a number of committees, including the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Academic Development and Enhancement Committee.

Faculties and Schools

- 8 The University organises its academic activity in six Faculties (Art, Design and the Built Environment; Arts; Computing and Engineering; Life and Health Sciences; Social Sciences; Ulster Business School). The activities of Faculties extend across the campuses. The academic staff within Faculties are grouped by cognate subject areas in schools (or departments). Each Faculty also has a research graduate school and there are 16 research institutes. The Access and Distributed Learning Division of the Teaching and Learning Department has overall responsibility for the standards and management of certain centrally delivered courses and modules.
- 9 Each Faculty has a Board which advises and reports to Senate on all matters relating to the organisation of education, teaching and research in the Faculty, including curricula and examinations and on the progress and conduct of its students. The Dean of the Faculty is Chairman of the Faculty Board. The Heads of Schools within each Faculty assist with the co-ordination of the work of the Faculty under the leadership of the Dean. Associate Deans and Heads of School may be appointed.

Course and Subject Management

- 10 Each course is administered by a course committee, comprising staff who contribute significantly to the teaching of the course. Members of the course committee may be drawn from a number of Schools and Faculties. The course committee is responsible to the Faculty Board for the organisation and effective management of the course. The course committee is chaired by a Course Director. The delivery of individual modules is managed by module co-ordinators.
- 11 The course committee puts in place, in accordance with University and Faculty policies, arrangements for student support and guidance, in particular
- student induction and transition, and monitoring attendance
 - studies advice and access to staff
 - student consultation.
- 12 The University has endorsed Guidelines on Student Induction and a policy on student transition for undergraduate students. A protocol on attendance and guidelines for student notification of absence have been developed. The University issues all students with a University Handbook. In addition, a course handbook, deriving from the evaluation document, is issued to students and supplemented as appropriate by detailed module information. Indicative contents lists for this information have been approved by the University. Advisers of studies are appointed for all students, and students are expected to be informed of arrangements for access to staff outside scheduled teaching. In full-time courses, formal staff/student consultative committees are established and/or students are represented on the course committee. In part-time courses, an appropriate method of consultation is developed (eg meetings, email circulations, web discussion groups) and feedback provided. There is guidance on good practice and a role description for student representatives. An accredited short course module became available to them in 2008.
- 13 The course committee is responsible for the ongoing administration of the course including, where applicable, placement in accordance with the University's Policy for Good Practice, and study abroad, in accordance with a University protocol. In addition, the course committee must fulfil University quality assurance procedures with respect to the course and associated modules.

- 14 The course committee (excluding student members) with the external examiner(s), becomes the Board of Examiners for the course and as such determines the assessment results and academic progression of students, and makes recommendations for awards to Senate.
- 15 For certain provision, these course-based arrangements are adapted to take account of the subject-focused development of undergraduate Honours degree provision. Subject-based management, encompassing Single Honours, Major, Main and/or Minor strands in an undergraduate subject, is the responsibility of a Subject Committee and Subject Director, with a campus Co-ordinating Group, comprising Subject Directors led by a Director of Combined Studies, addressing cross-subject matters (see 57 below).

UNIVERSITY AWARDS

- 16 The University's award-bearing programmes are modular in structure and are delivered in semesters. The minimum criteria for awards (certificates, diplomas, degrees at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels) are specified in terms of entry qualifications, duration and level.

ACADEMIC YEAR

- 17 The academic session at the University is semester-based and students are assessed in modules. All award-bearing programmes (full-time and part-time, undergraduate and postgraduate) are accommodated within the modular structure.
- 18 The academic session is organised into three semesters: autumn, spring and summer. Whilst the majority of courses are taught in the first two semesters, there are opportunities in some for students to use an intensive summer semester to vary the pace of their study, or to bridge the gap between a lower level course and the corresponding stage of a related degree course at the University. Full-time Master's require a full calendar year.
- 19 The first two semesters comprise 12 weeks of teaching, three weeks of assessment and a vacation period. The spring semester includes an additional one-week revision period. The intensive summer semester is eight weeks in length. The full summer semester follows a standard pattern.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDIT FRAMEWORK; MODULAR STRUCTURE

- 20 The University has adopted a modular structure and a credit framework for the delivery of its courses. The University's current Qualifications and Credit Framework (Appendix 1) replaces the frameworks in use from 1992 to 2001 and from 2002 to 2008. For each University award, the Framework identifies the minimum credit volume, the range of credit levels for modules contributing to the award, the minimum credit points required at the highest level and the maximum permitted at the lowest level within the range, and the pass mark used. The place of the award in QAA's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) is also identified. Other expectations (entry qualifications, duration, progress, consequences of failure and classification) are specified in award and course regulations. Templates for course regulations are maintained by the Academic Office.

Qualifications and Generic Qualification Descriptors

- 21 The University expects its awards to meet the generic outcomes for the relevant qualification described in the FHEQ (Appendix 2). Further information on the FHEQ is available at QAA's website. Each specific course has its own aims and learning outcomes set out in a programme specification.

Credit Levels and Generic Credit Level Descriptors

- 22 Modules are assigned a particular level. The level is an expression of relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and student autonomy. The University formally adopted the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) level descriptors to describe the new levels in 2002. The University's levels reflect those commonly in use in the rest of the university sector. These are now known as EJNI (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) levels. They have been recommended in the higher education credit framework for England published by QAA in August 2008. They are set out at Appendix 3.

The following equivalences for credit and qualification levels apply:

<u>University Credit Levels (2009)</u>	<u>University Credit Levels (to 2008)</u>	<u>FHEQ (2008)</u>	<u>FHEQ (to 2008)</u>
1	A	-	-
2	A	-	-
3	A	-	-
4	1	4	Certificate
5	2	5	Intermediate
6	3	6	Honours
7	M	7	Master's
8	D	8	Doctoral

- 23 The levels encompass the post-16 education systems across both the further and higher education sectors and start at Entry level. Entry level and level 1 are not used in University programmes (with the exception of a particular introductory level 1 Mathematics module in Access to Higher Education courses). Level 2 is only used in Access Diplomas, but at least 60 credit points in the final year of such courses must be at level 3.

Modules and Credit Points

- 24 A module is a component of a programme with its own approved aims, learning outcomes and assessment methods. Each module is usually taught and assessed within a semester. Modules may be delivered across the academic year and assessed in semesters 2 or 3 ('long-thin' modules). Credit points and a credit level, appropriate to the module's content and learning objectives, are allocated in accordance with the overall requirements of the award. Credit points are a notional expression of student effort hours (inclusive of class contact, practicals, fieldwork, private study, assessment). Notionally 10 hours of student effort equates to one credit point.
- 25 Modules are either compulsory or optional within the programme structure. Some modules may in addition be described as 'core', requiring students to meet a threshold standard in both the coursework and examination assessment elements in order to pass the module.
- 26 Student performance in modules and the programme overall is generally measured in percentage marks (although some record performance on a pass/fail basis). The University confers its qualifications on students who complete modules amounting to the specified number of credits at the appropriate levels for the award in accordance with course regulations, and achieve the specified standard of performance to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme of study.

Module Size

- 27 Taught modules may have any value in multiples of 5 credit points. There is a minimum size of 10 credit points in award-bearing courses. Short courses may have a value of 5 points. If course teams use modules of different sizes, they should ensure that they take account of the overall study load on students.
- 28 Periods of placement, which are assessed in relation to the learning objectives of the programme, may carry credit points. The placement may be integrated with an existing module or considered equivalent to taught modules. The allocation of credit points should not be made mechanistically in relation to the time spent on placement but should be related to the learning objectives of the module; there may be periods during placement when the student is gaining experience, which does not contribute to the fulfilment of intended learning outcomes.

Study Load

- 29 One hundred and twenty credit points represent the normal workload for a full-time programme of study in the standard academic year and 180 credits for study across a full academic year. Generally 60 credit points of study are undertaken in each of the autumn and spring semesters.

This amounts to some 36-42 hours of study per week. Programmes of significantly longer duration comprise additional modules, taken during the summer semester.

- 30 In part-time programmes, a maximum of 90 credit points may be studied in the two-semester academic year and 135 in the calendar year (notionally 30 hours per week) with no more than 45 credit points in any semester.
- 31 The special, intensive eight-week summer semester allows study of modules amounting to 40 credit points (50 hours per week) (full-time) or a maximum of 20 points for part-time studies (25 hours).
- 32 This guidance is summarised below:

Study load in credit points	Normal full-time (notional hours per week)	Part-time maximum
Academic year (30 weeks) (2 semesters)	120 (40)	90 (30)
Calendar year (45 weeks+) (3 semesters)	180 (40)	135 (30)
Intensive summer semester (8 weeks)	40 (50)	20 (25)

- 33 Unequal study load between semesters should not be a feature of course design for full-time courses (and should preferably be avoided in part-time courses, but may occur because of module sizes). Individual students may seek, taking account of the optional modules available within their programme, to take a heavier load in one semester than in the other. Subject to fulfilment of the requirements for the year, as expressed in course regulations, and in the case of full-time students to study of a minimum of 40 credits in the semester, individual students may be permitted to vary the study pattern or to take additional modules.

Module Teaching Patterns

- 34 The balance between lectures, seminars, tutorials, projects, laboratory and fieldwork etc is not regulated. There are conventions within subject areas and common patterns are often followed on a weekly basis. Course/subject teams should take account of the needs of student groups in considering the disposition of various teaching and learning methods. A first year undergraduate teaching policy was approved in 2008.

Use of Modules at Pre-HE Level in Undergraduate Programmes, and Undergraduate Modules in Postgraduate Programmes

- 35 The 2002 Framework introduced some latitude in the specifications for awards. This is mainly because ab initio study may not be easily accommodated within the expectations of the usual level. Consequently some modules are permitted at a lower level than would normally be expected in an HE qualification. The following restrictions apply:

Lowest Level

Except for Access Diplomas, the lowest level permissible in undergraduate programmes is level 3.

The lowest level permissible in postgraduate programmes is level 6.

Maximum at Lowest Level

With the exception of Access courses, Foundation and Associate Bachelor's degrees, the maximum volume at the lowest level is:

- in programmes with 120 or more credit points: 30 credit points
- in programmes with fewer than 120 credit points: 20 credit points
- in Foundation and Associate Bachelor's degrees: 40 credit points

Access to Higher Education courses are usually made up entirely of modules at levels 2 and 3, with at least 60 credit points at level 3. An introductory mathematics module at level 1 may be used.

Exemptions on the basis of Study at Level 3 or Level 6

- 36 Exemption should not be granted from Level 3 modules in undergraduate courses and level 6 modules in postgraduate programmes except where relevant study has been successfully completed as part of another programme at the **same** qualification level. For example, a student should not be exempted from a first year degree module on the basis of a GCE A level in the subject as the latter qualification serves to meet the admission requirements. Programme design should ensure that alternative modules are available for students who do not need to take such foundation modules.

Postgraduate Programmes

- 37 From 2003 intake, in accordance with the QAA framework, all courses using Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma or Master's award titles must be postgraduate in level. These awards comprise a minimum of 60, 120, 180 credit points respectively. The lowest undergraduate level which may be included is level 6. The restriction on volume at this level is indicated in 35 above and in the University's Qualifications and Credit Framework at Appendix 1.
- 38 Programmes which are postgraduate in time and intended as conversion programmes should be presented as Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas, with a minimum 60 or 120 credit volume respectively. A level 7 dissertation does not form part of such programmes (see below: undergraduate programmes - level 6).

Entry Standard

- 39 The entry standard for postgraduate courses is a minimum of a non-honours degree (with 360 credits) for Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas, and of a second-class honours degree for Master's degrees, or the equivalent standard in a Graduate Certificate or Diploma. This standard is a pass for Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma and 50% for Master's entry.

Pass Mark

- 40 Except for levels 4-6 in Integrated Master's degrees, the pass mark in all postgraduate courses is 50%.

Postgraduate Certificates

- 41 Except where presented as stand-alone qualifications, Postgraduate Certificates are generally not entry points. Instead, they may be awarded to students who successfully fulfil the objectives of the award, but do not complete or proceed to the Postgraduate Diploma/Master's stage.

Master's Dissertations

- 42 A 60 point dissertation is a common feature of Master's degrees. It is not a requirement. Only those dissertations achieving a mark of 70% and above are required to be deposited in the University's Library.

Integrated Master's Courses

- 43 The University offers the MEng, MPharm and MSci, and from 2010/11 MBiomedSci, in this category. Integrated Master's courses are first degrees with postgraduate outcomes at the final level. Hence they are categorised as Master's level qualifications. The pass mark is set at 40% in the undergraduate level modules and 50% in the level 7 module. The minimum number of level 7 credit points is 120, not 150 as in other Master's programmes.

Undergraduate Programmes

- 44 Within the three main qualification levels, the following awards are available. The pass mark in all is 40%.

Level 4

45 Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)

Normally 120 credits at level 1, with a maximum of 30 credit points at level A. This replaces the former Diploma comprising 120 credit points at level 1.

Level 5

46 Foundation degree (FdA, FdEng, FdSc) Associate Bachelor's degree (AB) Advanced Diploma (AdvDip) Advanced Certificate (AdvCert)

47 The Foundation degree and Associate Bachelor's degree comprise a minimum of 240 credit points, usually at levels 4 and 5, but with a maximum of 40 credit points at level 3. The Foundation degree is intended for vocational areas of study. It must include at least 40 credit points of work-based learning. Following a Foundation degree, the associated Honours degree is completed in up to two further years of full-time study, or the equivalent part-time in a '2 + bridging + 1' model. The bridging element ranges from 0 – 120 credit points depending on the curriculum match. A pass standard is required for students to be eligible to progress to the related Honours degree, but initial offer and admission standards are determined by the availability of places.

48 The University has withdrawn from provision of the DipHE award and no longer offers HNDs and HNCs of the Edexcel Foundation. The Foundation degree and Associate Bachelor's degree take their place.

49 The Advanced Diploma and Certificate comprise 120 and 60 credit points respectively, generally at level 5, with an entry standard of CertHE or equivalent.

50 The minimum general entry requirement for the CertHE, Foundation degree and Associate Bachelor's degree is one GCE A level and three GCSEs or acceptable alternative qualifications.

Level 6

51 This level comprises Honours degrees, Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Certificates, and non-Honours degrees.

52 The Honours degree has a minimum of 360 credit points (with at least 120 at level 6, and a maximum of 30 at level 3). It has a two A level/equivalent entry standard. Normally a dissertation/project is expected in the final level of an Honours degree. It may be omitted where the associated outcomes are met elsewhere in the programme.

53 Graduate Diplomas and Certificates have a minimum non-Honours degree entry requirement. They comprise 120 and 60 credit points respectively, generally at level 6, but with a maximum of 30 or 20 credit points at level 3 permitted. They are based largely on undergraduate material and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline. They replace postgraduate conversion courses. A Foundation degree or Associate Bachelor's degree is insufficient for admission to the Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate.

54 The non-Honours degree has 360 credit points, with at least 60 at level 6 and a maximum of 30 at level 3. It requires two A levels or equivalent for admission.

Other Undergraduate Qualifications

55 The award titles of Certificate and Diploma are available for courses of 60 or 120 credit points respectively, which do not fulfil the minimum requirements for other awards. Access to HE courses, comprising 120 credit points at levels 1 to 3, use the title 'Access Diploma'.

Associate Awards

- 56 The Diploma in Industrial Academic Studies and the Diploma in Professional Practice or Professional Practice (International) are associate awards available for integrated periods of study abroad or placement respectively, lasting at least 25 weeks in Honours and non-Honours degrees. These awards are not made independently of another qualification.

Honours Degree Modular Framework

- 57 In addition to the provision of integrated Single Honours degrees, the University's modular framework for Honours degrees allows the combination of certain subjects. These subjects are offered as one or more of the following:

- a) as a **single honours course** (modules amounting to 120 credit points in the subject at each of levels 5 and 6);
- b) as a **major subject strand** (modules amounting to 80 credit points in the subject at each of levels 5 and 6);
- c) as a **main subject strand** (modules amounting to 60 credit points in the subject at each of levels 5 and 6);
- d) as a **minor subject strand** (modules amounting to 40 credit points in the subject at each of levels 5 and 6).

- 58 Greater flexibility may be built into level 4 (or 3) to facilitate delayed and informed choice by allowing students to select up to three subjects at that level.

- 59 Honours degrees are therefore available as:

Single Honours;

Major/Minor Honours (two-thirds/one-third weighting of two subjects);

Joint Honours (equal weighting of two main subjects);

Combined Honours (equal weighting of three minor subjects).

- 60 There is no integration between subjects in combined programmes, although there is internal coherence and progression within each subject strand.

Titles

- 61 The award titles available are recorded in the Schedule to Ordinance XXXI. The range has been expanded beyond 'Arts', 'Science' and 'Engineering' to incorporate specific subject awards particularly for practice-based courses, in keeping with national conventions.

- 62 The subject of study is named in the course title after the award. The University has adopted the QAA guidance that qualification titles should reflect their subject focus. Titles should not normally combine more than three subjects. Where subjects have approximately equal weight they are joined by 'and' ('X and Y' or 'X, Y and Z': two main subjects or three minor subjects.) In major/minor combinations, the minor subject is linked to the major subject by 'with'. This applies where the minor subject represents one quarter or one third of the course. This weighting should be reflected at Levels 2 and 3 in undergraduate degrees.

- 63 QAA has proposed that 'Combined Studies' should be reserved for courses involving study of more than three significant components. Within the University, the 'Combined Honours' designation may be used as a convenient summary title where three subjects are selected from a range. Awards will specify the three subjects.

Exit Awards

- 64 Each award bearing course requires a statement of overarching aims and objectives, representing a coherent programme of study for a course or subject strand. This also applies to interim 'exit' awards, which are not made simply for the accumulation of credit. Students who leave without completing the requirements for a named award may receive a transcript of their studies.

Web-supported module delivery

- 65 Three broad definitions are used to describe module delivery which is supported by the web:
- **blended learning** – although online participation is required, face-to-face interactions remains.

Online participation may include any or all of the following:
 - accessing key course documents;
 - using online course material, which contains major educational content;
 - interaction and communication (synchronous and asynchronous) between staff and students or among students;
 - online assessments (formative or summative).
 - **fully online** – There is no face-to-face on-campus component. All content, activities and interactions are integrated and delivered online. The assumption is made that the student may never attend a campus throughout the duration of the module.
- 66 No Year 1 modules may be delivered fully online in full-time undergraduate campus-based programmes. The introduction of fully online level 5 or 6 modules in full-time undergraduate campus-based programmes may be proposed through the validation process or be approved by the Faculty.

B PRINCIPLES OF STANDARDS ASSURANCE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- 67 The University aims to operate an integrated system of standards assurance and quality management and enhancement which makes an effective contribution to the achievement of the University's Vision and which underpins the academic planning process. The system must be sufficiently robust to maintain the defined standards of the University's awards, to satisfy internal quality management and enhancement objectives, to comply with the published sections of the QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education, and to satisfy the expectations of other external statutory or regulatory bodies.
- 68 These Principles have been approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Research Degrees Committee.
- 69 In relation to **standards** the system seeks to ensure that:
- the academic standards of the programmes of study are appropriate to their related awards;
 - the University's programme structures accord with the requirements of national Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) and all awards conform to the approved structure;
 - the standards of awards are kept under review to ensure the continued validity of the award and that student achievement is commensurate with these;
 - standards are externally benchmarked and validated through, *inter alia*, the input of external examiners and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and by reference to relevant national subject benchmarks;
 - the learning resources provided are sufficient to support students in achieving the award for which they are registered.

70 In relation to **quality** the system seeks to ensure that:

- the processes in place for programme approval, monitoring and review are working effectively;
- the views of students, staff, academic subject peers, employers and professional and statutory bodies are fully integrated into the process of programme planning, development and change;
- appropriate quality management arrangements are in place to ensure that all aspects of learning resources are working effectively in support of student learning;
- timely and appropriate action is taken where change is necessary or where matters of concern have been identified;
- excellence in teaching is recognised and rewarded;
- excellence in research and the support of research study is promoted;
- good practice and innovation are recognised and promulgated.

71 The key operating principles of the system are that:

- all formal processes are linked to the appropriate point in the management structure at which decisions can be taken about the specified action required within the timescale identified;
- all issues raised through the formal processes and any action taken are recorded and reported appropriately;
- formal processes are applied rigorously to all programmes of study and subjects, including provision in partner institutions;
- the implications of the quality processes for Faculties are the subject of consultation before implementation and the effectiveness of processes is reviewed regularly.

C NEW PROGRAMME APPROVAL

Approval for Planning

72 A proposal for the introduction of a new course or of Major, Main and Minor undergraduate Honours subject strands within the University, or for major revisions, is submitted by the Faculty Board to the Academic Planning Sub-Committee of the Academic Development and Enhancement Committee (ADEC) using Form CA1. (For proposals from other educational institutions, a separate set of procedures applies.)

73 In completing the form the Faculty is asked to refer to the University's objects and the strategic aims and objectives as set out in the corporate plan, to the Teaching and Learning Strategy, to the criteria for the planning of courses, the University's scheme of academic awards, the regulations pertaining to these awards, the University's modular and credit framework, and to relevant national guidance.

74 The Sub-Committee reviews the proposal in the context of the University's academic courses plan, paying particular attention to level and location, employment prospects, demand, proposed intake size and resource needs. The Sub-Committee advises the ADEC, which makes recommendations to the Senate, whether planning should proceed.

Planning and Evaluation

75 The course or subject planning committee is encouraged to seek advice internally and externally and indeed is under an obligation to do so in certain subject areas. Account is taken of the national benchmark standards for the Subject and the generic Qualities of a University of Ulster Graduate.

- 76 The Dean and Faculty Board are expected to monitor the resource implications of proposals and ensure that appropriate staffing, physical and recurrent budget resources are available through the development of the Faculty's academic plan.
- 77 An evaluation panel, comprising internal and external members, is established for each course whose outline curriculum has been approved. The panel discusses a detailed course submission, the evaluation document, with the course planning committee and makes recommendations regarding approval through the Course Approval Sub-Committee to the Teaching and Learning Committee which is responsible for standards and quality. Once a course is approved, a course committee is formally established and a Course Director appointed (Subject Directors and Committees for subject-based provision. Where a new course derives substantially from existing provision, it may be exempted from an evaluation meeting.

D REVALIDATION

Subject Units

- 78 Each course and undergraduate subject strand is assigned to a revalidation subject unit or sub-unit, following its initial approval. These are normally groupings of cognate programmes agreed by the Faculty for the purposes of the efficient organisation of the quinquennial re-approval process, taking account of commonality in modules and resources and to allow a subject overview to be presented. Sub-units reflect discipline and/or campus provision and/or distinguish between undergraduate and postgraduate level. Some units comprise both University and partner college provision. In some cases, courses may be revalidated on an individual basis. Revalidations may also be organised in conjunction with relevant professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies.

Purpose

- 79 Revalidation follows a regular five-year cycle. At the end of the period of approval, in the designated year, the courses and subject strands within the unit are presented afresh for revalidation by a University panel. Proposals for new courses, subject strands or pathways leading to named awards, which derive substantially from existing provision, may also be considered within the unit, if approval for planning and evaluation has been granted. The revalidation exercise is not a periodic review and there is no requirement for a detailed critical self-appraisal of the operation of the courses during the preceding period. No detailed statistical profiles are provided nor is viability considered in detail. Such matters are addressed through the annual monitoring process in the updating of the academic plan. The Panel meets with students to obtain their views directly. The primary purpose of revalidation is the re-affirmation of the standards set for the awards and the courses within the unit and their continuing currency and relevance to the University's objects. It aims to ensure that for each award-bearing course and undergraduate subject strand:

- it meets the University's purpose and strategic aims;
- the academic structure and content are appropriate;
- the proposed award is in accordance with the University's scheme of qualifications; it conforms to the modular and credit framework of the University, and the University's general regulations for the award in question;
- the standard and student workload are comparable with those of other programmes leading to the same award nationally;
- the available resources are sufficient to enable the programme aims and objectives to be met;
- there is evidence of reasonable employment prospects and progression opportunities.

Reports from external examiners assist the panel in making a judgement about whether intended learning outcomes are being obtained by students and the programme specifications are being delivered.

Revalidation Preparation

- 80 A revalidation preparation form is sent to the relevant Dean at least 12 months before the

revalidation event is scheduled to take place. This allows the Faculty to confirm those courses and undergraduate subject strands to be included. A subject unit co-ordinator is nominated. The co-ordinator is responsible for managing the provision of documentation from the Faculty and acts as a single point of contact. Duties are set out at Appendix 4. The Staff Development Unit offers support to teams preparing for revalidation.

- 81 In preparing for revalidation the subject team is expected to take account of the University's strategic aims and objectives as set out in the corporate plan, the Teaching and Learning Strategy, the criteria for the planning of courses (Appendix 5), the generic Qualities of a University of Ulster Graduate (Appendix 6), and the University's Guiding Principles for Teaching and Learning and the Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning (Appendix 7) and relevant national guidance including benchmark statements. An Assessment Handbook gives guidance, including generic assessment criteria by level. The University's expectations for Employability (Appendix 8), Entrepreneurship Training (Appendix 9) and for Personal Development Planning (Appendix 10) should also be addressed.

Establishment of Revalidation Panel

- 82 The Academic Office convenes a revalidation panel for each subject unit or sub-unit. The panel generally consists of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Chair), one University member from a Faculty other than that from which most of the teaching in the subject unit emanates, and a minimum of two external subject-specialist members. Owing to the non-availability of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, a Dean or Associate Dean or Head or Associate Head of School may be asked to chair a revalidation panel for a subject unit outside his or her Faculty.
- 83 Internal members are drawn from a pool of nominated staff which includes Heads of School, course and subject directors and other academic staff with curriculum development and quality assurance responsibilities or interests and following a pilot in 2010/11, a Students' Union Officer. A briefing seminar is provided for them.
- 84 External members, as academic subject experts, are proposed by the relevant Faculty. They should be sufficient in number and have sufficient expertise to cover the full range of provision External members should not have been closely associated with the Faculty, eg through having recently acted in an advisory capacity, as an external examiner, or having been a member of staff within the last five years. Staff in the unit should not be closely associated with the institutions of nominated externals, for example through an external examiner appointment.
- 85 Invitations are issued to persons nominated to serve on the panel. The date of the meeting is arranged in consultation with the subject unit co-ordinator and the Dean. The meeting is serviced by the Academic Office.
- 86 Special arrangements are made, where possible, with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies to organise joint revalidation events.

Documentation

- 87 Members of the panel receive a copy of the Guidelines for Evaluation and Revalidation Panels (Appendix 11), an Aide-Memoire (Appendix 12), the appropriate national subject benchmark statement(s) and other relevant information.
- 88 Revalidation documentation is expected to be prepared by the subject team in accordance with the sample outline at Appendix 13. It includes programme specifications for each course or undergraduate honours subject. Module descriptions follow the template at Appendix 14, it takes account of the matters at 81 above. In preparing the assessment strategy, reference shall be made to the University's generic guidance and assessment criteria (contained in the University Assessment Handbook) and an exemplar assessment schedule should be included.
- 89 Information may be presented in a single bound document or in separate sections. It is expected to be well indexed and easy to follow. It should avoid unnecessary duplication and be presented in a

soft binding, printed double-sided. The documentation is reviewed by the Faculty, and Faculty Board approval of the submission is indicated by the Dean's signature on the title page.

- 90 Copies are lodged in the Academic Office for distribution to members of the panel, at least **four weeks** before the panel meeting. Where units comprise a single course documentation is submitted **three weeks** in advance to assist those members of the panel engaged in preliminary inspections.
- 91 Members of the panel are requested, time permitting, to make initial comments on the document, using Form CA7 (Appendix 15). These are made available to the panel members and the subject team in advance of the meeting.
- 92 Academic Office briefing notes, identifying key issues and standards and regulatory matters, are provided to the chair of the panel. These are made available to the other members of the panel and the Faculty on the day of the meeting. In order to provide a context for discussion, revalidation panels receive the last two reports from External Examiners.

Preliminary Inspection of Resources

- 93 Specialist resources, equipment and laboratories available to the subject are normally inspected at the start of the panel meeting. Where provision is spread across a number of campuses or other locations, arrangements are made wherever possible for separate preliminary inspections by the external members of the panel, guided by the subject unit co-ordinator. Form CA8 (Appendix 16) is used to record views. The Learning Resource Centre is not visited except at the request of external panel members. Reports on Library and central IT facilities are not sought from Information Services Department as no issues have been raised in their reports over a number of years and programme monitoring processes ensure that resource matters are addressed.

Panel Meeting

- 94 The face-to-face meeting allows ready clarification of queries and provides first hand evidence to support confidence in the capabilities of the team responsible for delivery. A sample agenda and provisional programme for the meeting are given at Appendix 17. The sample programme is based on a one-day event. The actual duration will vary depending on the extent of provision. The agenda and programme are discussed in advance with the Dean and the subject unit co-ordinator. Arrangements are varied where partner college courses are included within a unit or sub-unit which mainly comprises University provision. The agenda and programme may be altered to take account of the additional requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
- 95 The meeting takes place on one campus. The Dean, Head of School, subject unit co-ordinator, course and subject directors and module co-ordinators are required to meet with the panel. Other staff may attend, but are not required to do so.

The Panel meets with a representative group of students, including class representatives in full-time courses in other courses where this is a form of student consultation, notes of guidance are provided to students (Appendix 18).

- 96 The panel is expected to conduct a critically constructive and independent assessment of the provision within the subject. At the end of the meeting, the chair of the panel reports to the Dean, Head of School and subject unit co-ordinator the panel's conclusions and recommendations, and any conditions of approval.

Where provision is spread across a number of campuses or out centres and external members visit these locations, meetings may be arranged with students. Externals are asked to read brief comments, including matters of commendation and issues which might need to be discussed in their CA8 report.

Report of Revalidation Panel

- 97 A report is prepared which includes:
- Overview of main characteristics of provision
 - Conclusion on creativity, innovation and good practice

- Conclusion on currency and validity
- Conclusion on quality and standards
- Forward-looking recommendations for action to remedy any identified shortcomings, and for the enhancement of quality and standards.

- 98 When confirmed by the chairman of the panel, is circulated to members of the panel, to the Dean and Subject Unit Co-ordinator and forwarded to the Course Approval Sub-Committee. Following consideration of the report, the Sub-Committee makes recommendations regarding approval to the Teaching and Learning Committee. A recommendation for a short period of approval is made to Senate.
- 99 Where the Faculty finds difficulty in meeting the conditions specified by the panel, it is expected to report accordingly to the Sub-Committee, giving reasons, within four weeks of receiving the panel's report.
- 100 Otherwise, the Faculty should submit to the Academic Office, within three months of receipt of the report, and no later than the end of May:
- a) bound copies of the final version of the revalidation documentation, incorporating such amendments as are required for approval;
 - b) a brief paper indicating how the recommendations and conditions have been addressed, the nature of the amendments made and page-referencing their location within the document.

Conclusion of Revalidation Process

- 101 The revalidation process is concluded when the chair of the panel certifies that the final documentation is satisfactory. Provision is approved for a period of five years in accordance with the revalidation schedule. Ongoing approval is subject to satisfactory outcomes in annual monitoring. Where a particular course within a subject is not approved for the normal five-year period, it may be subject to a separate course-based revalidation.
- 102 Copies of the revised revalidation documentation are lodged in the relevant campus library and the Academic Office.

E REVISIONS TO EXISTING PROGRAMMES

- 103 Where it is proposed to revise the structure, content or regulations of an existing course or honours subject, details are submitted to the Faculty for consideration and approval using Form CA3. Proposed changes in the following areas require further consideration by a University-level committee before final approval is given: title, location, mode, aims and objectives, revisions which have implication for central resources.
- 104 Where the revisions are so substantial that the programme should be evaluated as if it were a new proposal, an evaluation is organised.

F MODULE REVIEW

- 105 There are two aspects to module review, the Student Survey on the Quality of Teaching and the Module Monitoring process.
- 106 The Student Survey gathers feedback, at module level, on teaching and the quality of the student experience at the point of delivery. The survey questionnaire comprises 14 closed questions (statements) on the student's learning experience covering module delivery, assessment, feedback, learning resources, the tutor and, if appropriate, placement. In addition there are two open questions used to capture student opinion on what they felt was particularly good about the module and what, if anything, they would seek to improve. The Survey is administered on-line and reports are quickly available to module teams and also senior Faculty staff.

- 107 Each semester, the Module Monitoring process provides an analysis of statistical data about student progression and achievement to the Head of School who identifies modules worthy of further review on account of student performance which is significantly higher or lower than expected. These modules are subject to detailed scrutiny, through a process determined by the Head of School, and an action plan developed. This is monitored by the course/subject committee and Head of School.

G ANNUAL MONITORING

- 108 Following a pilot in three faculties, a revised process for annual monitoring – the ‘Programme Management System’ – replaced the former Annual Subject Monitoring process in all Faculties with effect from 2010/11. The System’s methodology relocates responsibility for the ongoing review of programmes and enhancement of the student learning experience into the hands of the academic staff delivering the programme, that is the course or subject team. Rather than operating an annual one-off exercise, Course/Subject Committees now consider quality indicators (including statistical data, external examiner reports, professional, statutory and regulatory body and employer engagement, student feedback and National Student Survey (NSS) results) on an ongoing basis as and when they are available.
- 109 Existing committee structures within the Faculty and University permit the flow of issues and good practice from Course/Subject Committees to the appropriate decision-making point. Annual monitoring activity is embedded within Course/Subject Committee activity and the minutes of their meeting across the year provide Faculty management and the University with information on the operation of course monitoring.
- 110 The revised process does not remove responsibility from the Faculty and University for oversight of quality monitoring. However, the focus of their responsibility is shifted to ensure the effective operation of Course/Subject Committees and effectiveness of debate and communication through the Committee structures. The University is also responsible for considering practice across Faculties and a sub-committee of the Academic Development and Enhancement Committee identifies a selection of courses for close review during the year following consideration of the quality indicators, including external examiner reports.

H COLLABORATIVE PROVISION AND OUTCENTRES

- 111 The University may develop in partnership with other institutions collaborative provision whereby:
- a) a programme is jointly planned and delivered with another institution. A joint course which may lead to a joint award where the other institution has such authority, required broadly equal academic contributions from each partner;
 - b) a module or modules of a University programme are contributed by another institution. This may involve off-campus delivery at an outcentre;
 - c) the University delivers a programme, in whole or in part, at an outcentre;
 - d) an institution is approved to deliver to its students a course leading to an award of the University, under a validation arrangement.

Formal agreements are drawn up to govern these arrangements.

In category a) joint evaluation of the proposal is conducted where possible. Under b) relevant staff from the institution are members of the University’s course committee and Board of Examiners. Arrangements under a – c are considered in accordance with the procedures described in this handbook.

APPENDICES

**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER
QUALIFICATIONS AND CREDIT FRAMEWORK [2009]**

AWARD	QUALIFICATION LEVEL (FHEQ)	MINIMUM OVERALL CREDITS	TYPICAL RANGE OF LEVELS	MINIMUM NO OF CREDITS AT HIGHEST LEVEL	MAXIMUM NO OF CREDITS AT LOWEST LEVEL	PASS MARK %	OTHER REQUIREMENTS/ COMMENTS
Access Diploma	-	120	1, 2, 3	60	10	40	
Certificate of Personal and Professional Development	-	60	3, 4	-	60	40	Award framework for short course modules.
Certificate	4	60	3, 4	-	60	40	At least 40 at 4 for FHEQ.
Diploma	4	120	3, 4	-	120	40	At least 90 at 4 for FHEQ.
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	3, 4	90	30	40	
Diploma in Professional Practice/ Professional Practice (International)	5	60	5	60	60	50	40% for progress to next stage 50% for award.
Diploma in International Academic Studies	5	120	3, 4, 5	90	30	50	40% for progress to next stage 50% for award.
Foundation Degree	5	240	3, 4, 5	100	40	40	Must include 40 credits of work-based learning at Level 5.
Associate Bachelor's Degree	5	240	3, 4, 5	100	40	40	
Advanced Diploma	5	120	3, 4, 5	90	30	40	
Advanced Certificate	5	60	3, 4, 5	40	20	40	
Non-Honours Degree	6	360	3, 4, 5, 6	60	30	40	
Honours Degree	6	360	3, 4, 5, 6	120	30	40	
Graduate Diploma	6	120	3, 4, 5, 6	90	30	40	Graduate entry.
Graduate Certificate	6	60	3, 4, 5, 6	40	20	40	Graduate entry.
Integrated Master's Degree	7	480	3, 4, 5, 6, 7	120	30	40	50% pass mark at Level 7 (from 2003 intake).
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	6, 7	40	20	50	
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	6, 7	90	30	50	
Master's Degree	7	180	6, 7	150	30	50	
Professional Doctorate	8	540	7, 8	420	120	50	From 2010.

FHEQ= Framework for Higher Education Qualifications designed by Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, second edition 2008.

The highest level in a range is typical: modules from higher levels may contribute to lower level awards, eg an Advanced Diploma may include level 6 modules. The minimum and maximum number of credits relate to a course with the minimum overall credits. Some degrees may include an additional foundation level comprising level 3 modules. The HE credit levels used by the University are those specified in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) credit guidelines. They are identified by a sequence of numbers from 4 to 8. Levels below Higher Education are also used as indicated. The levels correspond to those used in the University's two earlier frameworks as follows: 1, 2, 3 = A; 4 = 1/B; 5 = 2/C; 6 = 3/D/M1; 7 = M/M2; 8 = D.

QAA: FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

The QAA provides the following descriptions of Higher Education qualifications in the second edition of the Framework (2008). The descriptors are in two parts: the first being a statement of outcomes, the achievement of which is assessed and which a student should be able to demonstrate for the award of the qualification; the second is a statement of the wider abilities that a student could be expected to have developed. Each descriptor identifies a particular qualification at that level which should meet the descriptor in full. The descriptor can also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at that level.

There are five levels of higher education qualifications awarded by universities and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 4: Certificate of Higher Education

Certificates of Higher Education are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study;
- an ability to present, evaluate, and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work;
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments;
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment;

and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

Holders of a Certificate of Higher Education will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately, and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. The Certificate may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 5: Foundation Degree

Foundation degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed;
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context;

- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study;
- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis;
- effectively communicate information, arguments, and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively;
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations;

and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. They will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6: Bachelor's degree with Honours

Bachelor degrees with Honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline;
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline;
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline;
 - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline;
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge;
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects;
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be

incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem;

- communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;

and will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;
 - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holders of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements, and to communicate them effectively.

Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.

Bachelor's degrees with honours form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typically, learning outcomes from these programmes would be expected to be achieved on the basis of study equivalent to three full-time academic years and lead to awards with titles such as Bachelor of Arts, BA (Hons) or Bachelor of Science, BSc (Hons). In addition to bachelor's degrees at this level are short courses and professional 'conversion' courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline, leading to, for example, graduate certificates or graduate diplomas.

Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7: Master's degree

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline;
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;

- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations;
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Much of the study undertaken for master's degrees will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research, or a mixture of both. Longer, research-based programmes often lead to the degree of MPhil. The learning outcomes of most master's degree courses are achieved on the basis of study equivalent to at least one full-time calendar year, and are taken by graduates with a bachelor's degrees with honours (or equivalent achievement).

Master's degrees are often distinguished from other qualifications at this level (for example, advanced short courses, which often form parts of continuing professional development programmes and lead to postgraduate certificates and/or postgraduate diplomas) by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. Master's degrees – in comparison to postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas – typically include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.

Some master's degrees, for example in science, engineering and mathematics, comprise an integrated programme of study spanning several levels where the outcomes are normally achieved through study equivalent to four full-time academic years. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 in full, such qualifications are often termed 'integrated master's' as an acknowledgement of the additional period of study at lower levels (which typically meets the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6).

Descriptor for higher education qualifications at level 8: Doctoral degree

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;

- a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;

and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.

Holders of doctoral degrees will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees will have the qualities needed for employment that require the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.

Doctoral programmes that may include a research component but which have a substantial taught element (for example, professional doctorates) lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (eg EdD for Doctor of Education or DClinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge. The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.

Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualifications descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires the study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.

SUMMARY OF EWNI GENERIC CREDIT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

(Source: NICATS Manual, 2002 and the Credit Framework for England, 2008)

The level descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those which follow. Levels 4-8 are relevant to HE learning.

Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

ENTRY LEVEL - employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts, and carry out directed activity under close supervision.

LEVEL 1 - employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.

LEVEL 2 - apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine; and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.

LEVEL 3 - apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements selecting from a considerable choice of procedures in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.

LEVEL 4 - develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

LEVEL 5 - generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 6 - critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilising specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; and accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

LEVEL 7 - display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision-making including use of supervision.

LEVEL 8 - make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.

Table of generic level descriptors

Level	Intellectual skills and attributes	Processes	Accountability
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas with dependency on ideas of others. • Exercise basic skills. • Receive and pass on information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate mainly in closely defined and highly structured contexts. • Carry out processes that are repetitive and predictable. • Undertake the performance of clearly defined tasks. • Assume a limited range of roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out directed activity under close supervision. • Rely entirely on external monitoring of output and quality.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension. • Demonstrate a narrow range of skills. • Apply known solutions to familiar problems. • Present and record information from readily available sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show basic competence in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts. • Utilise a clear choice of routine responses. • Co-operate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible actions. • Carry restricted responsibility for quantity and quality of output. • Operate under direct supervision and quality control.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas. • Make comparisons. • Interpret available information. • Demonstrate a range of skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine. • Co-ordinate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake directed activity with a degree of autonomy. • Achieve outcomes within time constraints. • Accept increased responsibility for quantity and quality of output subject to external quality checking.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories. • Access and evaluate information independently. • Analyse information and make reasoned judgements. • Employ a range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills. • Select from a considerable choice of procedures. • Give presentations to an audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in self-directed activity with guidance/evaluation. • Accept responsibility for quantity and quality of output. • Accept limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base. • Employ a range of specialised skills. • Determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities. • Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, selecting or presenting information, methods or resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake self-directed and a limited amount of directive activity. • Operate within broad general guidelines or functions. • Take responsibility for the nature and quantity of outputs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined but often unfamiliar problems. • Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet specified quality standards.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level. • Command wide ranging, specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills. • Formulate appropriate responses to resolve well defined and abstract problems. • Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of technical, professional or management functions. • Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review, consolidate, and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge. • Utilise highly specialised technical or scholastic skills across an area of study. • Utilise research skills. • Critically evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of situations. • Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills. • Demonstrate expertise in highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and/or research skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity. • Design and apply appropriate research methodologies. • Communicate results of research to peers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate command of methodological issues. • Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept accountability in related decision making including use of supervision.

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DUTIES OF SUBJECT UNIT CO-ORDINATOR

Each subject unit or sub-unit has a Co-ordinator who is appointed by the Dean of the Faculty and has overall responsibility within the Faculty for the Revalidation of the unit/sub-unit. The Co-ordinator acts as a central contact person for liaison with the Academic Office and other departments.

The main duties of the Subject Unit Co-ordinator are:

- 1 To consult with the Dean regarding completion of Revalidation preparation form (CA6) and its return to Academic Office.
- 2 To liaise with the Subject Team, Heads of School, Course/Subject Directors, Module Co-ordinators and other teaching staff of the University and external institutions regarding planning, preparation and arrangements for the Revalidation event.
- 3 To liaise with the Academic Office regarding joint validation arrangements and requirements.
- 4 With the approval of the Dean, to liaise with PSRB(s) regarding joint validation arrangements and requirements.
- 5 To support arrangements for site visits through liaison with the Academic Office, Information Services, external panel members and Faculty Heads of Collaborative Courses and other staff, as appropriate and to co-ordinate the programme for these visits.
- 6 To co-ordinate the preparation and submission of the requisite documentation for consideration by the Revalidation panel.
- 7 To co-ordinate the Faculty's response to the Revalidation panel's report and provision of final documentation for approval.

CRITERIA FOR THE PLANNING OF PROGRAMMES

Proposals should:

1 GENERAL

Be consistent with the broad objectives of the University as contained in the Charter and as interpreted in its core strategic aims, development plans, academic policy documents, the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the guiding principles therein (Appendix 7), and policy on equality of opportunity.

2 PERSONAL

Meet the requirements of students for personal and intellectual development and enable them to prepare for, or further, their careers or studies. Where appropriate work-based opportunities should be developed.

3 COMMUNITY

Aim to satisfy the community interest as regards professional, commercial, industrial and similar requirements. Programmes should enhance student employability by reflecting student and employer needs regionally, nationally and internationally, and as appropriate government policy on skills (see Appendix 8).

4 DEMAND

Show evidence of demand. Proposals should be relevant, student-centred and client-focussed. They should be offered in modes which facilitate participation.

5 RESOURCES

Specify the minimum resource requirements which would allow the programme to proceed; demonstrate that the programme is a justifiable use of resources both in relation to the University and the community.

6 AWARD AND STANDARDS

Establish that the programme is compatible with the principles incorporated in the overall modular structure of the University, its scheme of awards and its qualifications and credit framework (Appendix 1). Proposals should meet the national benchmark standards for the subject and the expectations of relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Wherever possible fitness to practise or recognition by a professional body should be achieved.

7 GRADUATE QUALITIES

For undergraduate degrees, ensure consistency with the qualities expected of a University of Ulster graduate, in accordance with the statement at Appendix 6.

For all provision, ensure the development of entrepreneurship training and the promotion of entrepreneurship (Appendix 9).

Course teams should demonstrate that courses continue to meet these criteria at revalidation.

GRADUATE QUALITIES

The following statement of the expected qualities of graduates reflects Ulster's vision of leading in the provision of professional education for professional life.

University of Ulster graduates will demonstrate:

- subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice
- flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving
- self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability
- effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback

Approved by Teaching and Learning Committee, June 2011 (revised October 2011). This statement replaces one adopted in October 1998.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: TEACHING AND LEARNING

In promoting the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2008/09 - 2012/13), the University acknowledges its key role in enhancing the experience of University of Ulster students. The Teaching and Learning Strategy, therefore, embodies a number of guiding principles which the University advocates and upholds for students studying at the institution, namely:

- that the learning and teaching opportunities afforded to students should challenge students intellectually, encourage reflective learning, and enable them to take their place and be at ease with 'diverse others' locally and internationally;
- that the learning and teaching is designed to develop the subject-specific and generic transferable skills necessary for academic success, future employment and active citizenship;
- that students should appreciate the importance of demonstrating high standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct in every aspect of their studies, research and professional practice;
- that the learning and teaching environment and the delivery of programmes and research student training are as supportive and inclusive as is reasonably possible;
- that it encourages approaches to teaching and assessment that foster student engagement, together with an awareness and understanding of the skills and attributes that they already possess and are developing;
- that curricula, teaching, learning and assessment methods take account of the diverse learning support needs of the student body;
- that in valuing lifelong learning deep approaches to learning are fostered which enable students to continue to grow, and develop on graduation into their chosen careers;
- that value is attached, and encouragement given, to scholarship in teaching, and the scholarship of teaching with staff integrating their own research and professional practice into all aspects of curriculum delivery, leading to research informed teaching and evidence-based effective pedagogic practice;
- the creation of an atmosphere that provides a safe environment for experimentation and risk-taking for curriculum development, for teaching and assessment practices and for students;
- that in welcoming and celebrating the diversity of its staff and student body the University will endeavour to ensure that for all programmes of study, both classroom based and on-line, these guiding principles will apply.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK FOR LEARNING

The University has adopted (June 2011) the following statement.

Assessment and Feedback for Learning should:

- 1 help to clarify, from the early stages of a programme, what good performance means (goals, criteria, standards);
- 2 encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks which recognise the importance of learning from the tasks, not just demonstrating learning through the tasks;
- 3 deliver timely learner-related feedback information that helps students to self-correct and communicate clear, high expectations and professionalism;
- 4 provide opportunities for students to act on feedback and close any gap between current and desired performance through complementary and integrated curriculum design and pedagogic practice;
- 5 ensure that all assessment has a beneficial, constructive impact on student learning, encouraging positive motivational beliefs, confidence and self-esteem;
- 6 facilitate the development of self- and peer-assessment skills and reflection on learning, to enable students to progressively take more responsibility for their own learning, and to inspire a lifelong capacity to learn;
- 7 encourage interaction and dialogue around learning and professional practice (student-student, lecturer-student and lecturer-lecturer) including supporting the development of student learning groups and peer learning communities.

The implementation of these principles will influence curriculum design, delivery and educational practice, such that students and staff become co-creators and collaborators in learning.

EMPLOYABILITY

Over the past few years there has been a move away from perceiving employability as a bolt-on marginal and optional activity towards a more integrated approach to valuing employability in the curriculum. The definition of employability, developed by the HEFCE's Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT), fits in well with the University aims for supporting student learning.

'A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" ESECT 2002.

These achievements, identified by ESECT, have academic value in their own right and are necessary for academic success. In promoting these achievements the University is contributing to student employability. The rationale for including 'Employability' as one of the key 'themes' as part of the evaluation or revalidation exercise is as follows:

- Employability is a key government policy objective for Higher Education
- Faculties, as part of their teaching and learning strategy, will have to address explicitly the issue of employability
- Course programme's contribution to employability can be highlighted
- Helps to identify how approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, that are implemented, are consistent with enhancing employability
- Helps to value explicit approaches to promoting employability such as work-based learning, personal development planning and career management provision.

The promotion of employability is a strategic aim of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy.

Areas covered under the key objective of employability include:

- a) **Graduate Qualities**
Faculties are required to identify graduate qualities appropriate to employment prospects of students, and to integrate these into both teaching and learning and assessment procedures.
- b) **Widening Participation**
Widening participation is more than just getting students into higher education, it also includes supporting them through HE and out into the world of work. This includes retention issues, student support and helping all students, including non-traditional entrants, to maximise their career potential.
- c) **Work-Based Learning**
The University has long recognised the importance of work-based learning in helping students improve their employability skills. (Industrial placement, professional practice education etc.)
- d) **Personal Development Planning**
PDP is a structured process to support students to become more effective, independent and autonomous learners, and to plan for career development. At the University it features in all undergraduate courses. (The system was piloted for postgraduate students in 2006/7 and is to be embedded in all courses.)
- e) **Entrepreneurship**
All Faculties have been asked to introduce exposure to entrepreneurship into their programmes as appropriate. Skills associated with entrepreneurship are closely aligned with employability.
- f) **Career Development**
The self-promotional and career management skills aspects of employability are of critical importance for graduates securing and maintaining employment.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING

The University aims to embed a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in every student and throughout every programme. Entrepreneurship is about managing change within social systems that adds value in some way to those living and/or working within them. It is not solely about commercial business development or new business start-ups.

Two generic 10-point modules at level 5, Entrepreneurship Awareness and Entrepreneurship Applied, and one generic 15-point module at level 7, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, provide one way for teams to meet the University's expectations. If one or both modules are not suitable, course/subject teams are required to identify how they will incorporate entrepreneurship into the curriculum. Course and subject teams within the Office of Science and Technology (OST) constituency must meet or exceed these outcomes. Teams outside the OST areas, which do not use the Entrepreneurship Awareness module, should demonstrate how they have interpreted the learning outcomes, but are not required to introduce all the outcomes (Teaching and Learning Committee, May 2004).

Senate (October 2002) has agreed that Entrepreneurship should not be a requirement in Minor Honours degree strands, as it will be met in the Major strand.

Further advice and guidance is available from Faculty Co-ordinators of Academic Enterprise.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Level 5 modules

The first level 5 module, *Entrepreneurship Awareness*, is designed to be a core module and focuses basically on knowledge transfer. It seeks to provide students with insights to problems and issues associated with establishing and managing the development of any innovative enterprise or project.

As a consequence of undertaking this module students will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- Define what entrepreneurship is, consider how everyone has the potential to be entrepreneurial, and explore the constituents of the entrepreneurial process.
- Identify steps required to research the potential for an innovative idea for the development of an existing enterprise, a new venture or a social change opportunity.
- Examine the key resources required to exploit an innovative idea or opportunity to develop an existing business, launch a new venture, or initiate a social enterprise.
- Identify the key steps required for exploiting an innovative idea or opportunity to develop an existing business, launch a new venture, or initiate a social enterprise.

Intellectual Qualities

- Recognise the central role of creativity and innovation in entrepreneurship, in the generation of new ideas and, where appropriate the core challenges of protecting those new ideas which have commercial/social value.
- Appreciate the significance within the entrepreneurial process of calculated risk-taking, attitudes to failure and tolerance of uncertainty.

Professional/Practical Skills

- Organise and utilise the components of the planning process in the development of an innovative project or the exploitation of a new opportunity to develop an existing business, launch a new venture, or initiate a social enterprise.
- Communicate and sell innovative ideas effectively.

Transferable/Key Skills

- Recognise the value and potential of innovative and entrepreneurial thinking for effective problem solving and change management.
- Recognise the core role of creativity and innovation in managing the entrepreneurial process effectively.

The second level 5 module, *Entrepreneurship Applied*, is designed to be an elective module and builds on the *Entrepreneurship Awareness* module. It seeks to expose students to some of the practical challenges involved in managing the entrepreneurial process. The learning outcomes for this module are that successful students will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- Demonstrate the ability to effectively apply project/venture planning competencies relating to progressing a social or community development, organisational change opportunity or setting up a new venture.

Intellectual Qualities

- Demonstrate evidence of creative and innovative thinking for the solution of entrepreneurial problem solving.

Professional/Practical Skills

- Demonstrate an ability to identify viable opportunities to problem solve, address an area of need or fill a gap in the market relating to progressing a social or community development, organisational change opportunity or setting up a new venture.
- Apply new project/venture planning competencies.
- Demonstrate an ability to manage key entrepreneurial resources.
- Operate as a member of a team.

Transferable/Key Skills

- Apply creative and innovative thinking.
- Demonstrate an ability to manage key resources.
- Communicate new ideas effectively, using a variety of media.
- Employ opportunity identification and analysis to the relevant discipline/subject area.

Level 7 module

The level 7 module, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, is designed to be an elective module. It seeks to expose students to the challenges involved managing the entrepreneurial process. It aims to present students, where possible working in teams, with an opportunity to undertake an entrepreneurial project in which their ability to evaluate and resolve problems and issues associated with entrepreneurial activity will be tested.

Successful students will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

- Critically analyse key theories of entrepreneurship in its various forms, the entrepreneurial process and environment.
- Within the context of the discipline/subject area, critically evaluate the role of the entrepreneur and his/her team in new venture creation, in the development of established organisations or in the development of an innovative project.
- Critically examine the components of a new project or venture plan and aspects of the planning process.
- Critically examine the role of creativity and innovation in opportunity identification and the challenges of protecting new ideas.

Intellectual Qualities

- Experiment with creative thinking techniques in seeking solutions to complex entrepreneurial problems, including new product/service development and/or the development of new processes/systems.
- Acquire an understanding of the importance of acting, thinking and behaving in an entrepreneurial manner in the discipline/subject area.

Professional/Practical Skills

- Integrate entrepreneurship theory and practice through the development of an effective, plan either to progress a new venture, to develop an existing organisation, a social/community development, or an organisational change opportunity.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively.

Transferable/Key Skills

- Critically examine and appreciate the importance of the resources needed to effectively exploit the potential of an entrepreneurial opportunity, including financial, human and physical resources.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: POLICY DOCUMENT

1 BACKGROUND

The concept for Personal Development Planning (PDP) springs from the Dearing review (NCIHE, 1997)¹ recommendation that institutions develop ‘a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development’ (recommendation 20).

Since that time Universities UK, SCOP, Quality Assurance Agency and LTSN have developed the HE Progress Files concept and policy. In a joint policy statement from these bodies the Personal Development Planning aspect of HE Progress Files has been defined as

‘a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their learning, performance and/or achievements and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.’²

This definition was endorsed by the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) in its “Personal Development Planning: guidance for institutional policy and practice in Higher Education” (CRA 2009). It has been further developed and supported through the QAA Toolkit for Enhancing Personal Development Planning³. The Teaching and Learning Strategy for the University recognises the importance of the underpinning aims of PDP and includes commitments to:

- encourage and facilitate teaching which progressively equips students to take responsibility for their own learning;
- facilitate students in reflecting on university and work-based learning in preparation for employment;
- provide structures and mechanisms for supporting lifelong learning;
- keep the University’s PDP policy under review through the terms of reference and activities of the PDP Forum.

2 PURPOSE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (PDP)

The primary purpose of PDP is to improve the capacity of students to understand what and how they are learning by making the outcomes of learning more explicit, and to encourage them to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning (QAA 2009³).

The key objective for PDP within the University of Ulster is to support students to become more effective, independent and autonomous learners through:

- taking responsibility for their own development during their time at university and beyond;
- recognising and availing of the opportunities for learning and personal development within and outside the formal curriculum;

¹ NCIHE 1997 Higher Education in the Learning Society. Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, HMSO 1997

² [Guidelines for HE Progress Files](#), QAA, February 2001.

³ QAA (2009) A Toolkit for Enhancing Personal Development Planning Strategy, Policy and Practice in Higher Institutions <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/pdp/pdp.asp>

- developing skills of reflection on their progress in achieving the learning outcomes that programmes have specified and on their personal and professional development;
- increasing the self-awareness of their skills, qualities, attitudes and capabilities;
- setting goals and planning actions to develop, monitor and review their own progress;
- compiling a record of learning experiences and achievements, with progress reviews, personal reflections and action plans and sharing these with third parties; and
- preparing for employment and professional practice by managing their own career development.

3 UNIVERSITY GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PDP

One of the many challenges in implementing PDP is reconciling the need for consistency across the University with the diverse Faculty, School and Programme activities and how PDP is facilitated within them.

The following guiding principles have been established to support a consistent but divergently applied approach to implementation:

- 3.1 PDP will feature in all award-bearing programmes in ways that facilitate achieving the objectives listed in section 2.
- 3.2 Customised PDP processes will be developed (with appropriate support from the PDP Forum) at Faculty and School level. Drawing on subject benchmarks, PDP processes will be embedded within individual programmes to reflect the needs of student cohorts.
- 3.3 PDP processes will build on existing good practice and, where appropriate, align to work-based learning, entrepreneurship, employability, retention and widening participation activities.
- 3.4 All designated students will have equal opportunity to access support for their PDP.
- 3.5 The ultimate responsibility for engaging with the PDP process will reside with the student and he/she will own the personal records arising from PDP.
- 3.6 Students will have opportunities to meet designated staff to plan their learning programme and review performance.
- 3.7 The University of Ulster Professional and Career Enhancement System (PACE) will support the recording of PDP outcomes. Additional appropriate mechanisms or systems may be used where there is a rationale to support this (for example, where these systems are supported by professional bodies).

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Students

In order to derive maximum benefit from PDP, students have the responsibility:

- a. participate fully in the PDP opportunities offered by the University in a range of learning contexts inside and outside the formal curriculum;
- b. ensure that they know how to recognise, value and reflect efficiently on their learning and achievements and plan their own personal, educational and career development; and
- c. create, with support, their own learning records, using the PACE System, or other suitable systems, to build a progressive body of information on the qualities and skills

they can evidence and which can be drawn upon to enhance employability or further study.

4.2 Faculties, Schools and Programme teams

Faculties, Schools, Graduate Schools and Programme Teams have the responsibility to:

- a. Implementation
 - Develop at appropriate levels, in line with University policy, teaching and learning strategies which support the implementation of PDP processes appropriate to their subjects and students, influenced by subject benchmarks and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies.
- b. Information
 - Include information about PDP within their module handbooks, with clear indications of how a student can expect to encounter PDP within the programme.
 - Provide students with information on how their own evidence of learning might be eligible for accreditation.
- c. Opportunities and Support
 - Introduce students, during the programme, to PDP and explain its rationale.
 - Encourage and support students to engage in progressive and developmental PDP processes.
 - Integrate PDP into the student support structures and activities to allow staff and students to engage actively in reviewing student development.
 - Provide clear guidance and support on the use of the University of Ulster PDSystem, or alternate systems, and the records students are expected to maintain within the system.
- d. Development and Monitoring
 - Undertake with the support of the PDP Forum, regular reviews of the PDP processes and their effectiveness to support learning.

4.3 University

The University has the responsibility to:

- articulate its policy on PDP through the University prospectus, student handbooks and PDP Forum activities;
- ensure that the monitoring, review and development of PDP will be a feature of all University quality assurance processes (eg discussed explicitly as part of the (re)validation process, themed audit);
- continue the provision, development and support for the University of Ulster PDSystem as an interactive online tool for use by students and staff;
- provide staff development opportunities that enable teaching staff to provide effective PDP support to students;
- liaise with the Higher Education community and where appropriate professional bodies to ensure that its processes and systems are in keeping with employment and Lifelong Learning needs and expectations;
- support Faculties, Schools and Course Teams in liaising with external organisations (such as JISC, CRA, CETIS, QAA, HEA) to determine appropriately focused subject-based PDP activities.

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION AND REVALIDATION PANELS

1 COURSE APPRAISAL

A critical but constructive and detailed appraisal of the course proposal or provision within the subject unit/sub-unit is to be carried out and a report with findings and recommendations made to the Teaching and Learning Committee of the University through its Course Approval Sub-Committee.

2 UNIVERSITY OBJECTS AND VISION

The objects of the University, as stated in its Charter, are:

“to advance education through a variety of patterns, levels and modes of study and by a diversity of means by encouraging and developing learning and creativity, for the benefit of the community in Northern Ireland and elsewhere; to preserve, advance and disseminate knowledge and culture through teaching, scholarship and research, and to make available the results of such research; and to promote wisdom and understanding by the example and influence of corporate life.”

The University’s Vision is to lead in the provision of *Professional Education for Professional Life*, in a context which envisages the University focusing and deepening its contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland and its global standing.

The Corporate Plan 2011/12 – 2015/16 sets out two corporate goals and associated objectives for excellence in both teaching and learning and in research. The goal for Teaching and Learning is to deliver high quality, flexible, student-centred programmes of study that are intellectually challenging, and which provide our students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to gain stimulating and fulfilling employment and to contribute to the advancement of their chosen profession, and to enable those graduates who have the ability and who seek to do so to undertake advanced study and/or research in their chosen subject.

The University’s Teaching and Learning Strategy 2008 – 2012 articulates specific commitments to help realise this vision. Four strategic aims are identified:

- to enhance the quality of the student learning experience
- to target, recruit, support and retain a diverse range of students
- to promote and foster creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery
- to promote employability through the integration of academic theory and relevant professional and vocational practice.

Cross-cutting aims which support these key aims are:

- to promote a supportive environment, in which teaching is recognised, valued and rewarded, for all those who teach and support learning in the University;
- to enhance the quality of the physical and social learning environments for students and staff.

Specific objectives support the aims and annual action plans set out in more detail how these commitments are to be delivered, responsibilities for achieving them and key performance measures. The Strategy articulates guiding principles for the teaching and learning of students at the University.

3 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The University is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity. The Charter states that “persons shall not be excluded by reason of religious belief, political opinion, race or sex from admission as members ... of the University ... or any advantage or privilege thereof; preference shall not be given on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion, race or sex”.

The University’s Equality Scheme outlines its commitment to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland (1998) Act. Under the Act, the University must fulfil its objectives, as a teaching, research and examining body, within the provision of its Charter and Statutes, in a way which promotes equality of opportunity and good relations.

Section 75 of the Act requires the University, in carrying out all its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between persons with a disability and persons without, and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO) applies to all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment and student support. The University’s Admissions Policy states that the University strives to be an inclusive learning environment and it welcomes and encourages applications from persons with a disability. Staff are obliged to anticipate the requirements of disabled students so that they are not placed at a disadvantage and to make reasonable adjustments to support their studies. This may include adjustments to the forms or conditions of assessment.

4 SOME GENERAL CRITERIA

Programmes should aim to:

- a) meet the requirements of students for personal and intellectual development and as a preparation for, or furthering of, careers and for further study;
- b) satisfy the community interest as regards professional, commercial, industrial and similar requirements;
- c) alert the student to the interdependencies and social implications of fields of study;
- d) encourage rigorous and imaginative thinking and where possible a problem-solving approach to learning, consistent with the academic standard of the award;
- e) explore the basis for, and develop the capacity to make, value judgements and encourage an independent approach towards decision and action taking;
- f) provide opportunities for appropriate forms of expression and communication, including literary, numerate and artistic;
- g) permit the acquisition of technical, professional and practical knowledge suitable to the form and standard of the course and as may be required by external bodies;
- h) permit choice of content and sharing of components with students of other programmes;
- i) assist the student to relate the content of the programme to practical situations within the University or outside.

5 THE PARTICULAR COURSE

With regard to each course or Honours subject strand, it will assist the Course Approval Sub-Committee to have views on the following:

- a) the appropriateness of its aims and objectives within the context of the University's objectives and plans and the overall aims of the subject;
- b) the standards set with regard to the following:
 - i) the admission requirements;
 - ii) the structure and levels of the course or subject strand, including its academic progression and internal coherence, and its compatibility with the principles incorporated in the overall modular framework of the University and its system of awards;
 - iii) the relevance and currency of the syllabuses for the different components of the course or subject strand; the extent to which they are informed by research or scholarship and taught by staff engaged in research or scholarship; and the extent of consultation with industry, commerce and professions or other interested bodies;
 - iv) the forms, quality and management of the teaching and learning processes, including arrangements for the first year in undergraduate courses, group work and independent learning, and placement or study in other institutions where available (taking account of the guiding principles for teaching and learning set out in the Teaching and Learning Strategy);
 - v) the assessment strategy, methods and criteria, and their likely effectiveness as learning aids and in judging student achievement, in relation to the course or subject strand and module aims and intended learning outcomes (including feedback);
 - vi) relevant national benchmarks and codes of practice;
 - vii) the staff resources available and opportunities for development and the ability of staff to work together constructively;
 - viii) the adequacy of the provision and deployment of other resources, including accommodation, library, laboratory and computing, and student support and guidance;
- c) the steps taken to ensure the development of entrepreneurship;
- d) the achievement of employability; employment prospects and progression opportunities;
- e) strengths, creativity, innovation and good practice, and other aspects for commendation;
- f) the conditions and recommendations, if any, subject to which the course or subject strand is recommended for approval;
- g) for revalidation, whether intended learning outcomes are being achieved and programme specifications are being delivered.

6 GRADUATE QUALITIES

The University approved in 2011 a revised statement of the qualities expected of a graduate of the University of Ulster. They are expected to demonstrate:

- subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice
- flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to problem solving
- self-confidence, global citizenship, ethical leadership, and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability
- effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback

The course or subject team's approach to the development of such qualities and skills at a level consistent with the award should be explored in the context of subject benchmark standards.

7 ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING

The University aims to embed a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in every student and throughout every programme. Generic learning outcomes have been developed at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for Entrepreneurship. Two generic 10-point modules at level 5, *Entrepreneurship Awareness* and *Entrepreneurship Applied*, and one 15-point module at level 7, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, which incorporate these outcomes, provide one way for course or subject teams to meet the University's expectations. If the modules are not suitable, the team is required to identify how it will incorporate entrepreneurship into the curriculum.

8 THE SUBJECT UNIT OR SUB-UNIT (for revalidation)

The subject unit or sub-unit is usually a grouping of cognate courses and/or honours subjects agreed by the Faculty for the purposes of revalidation, in accordance with a five year cycle of approval. This grouping provides for efficiencies and economies in the organisation and presentation of material. The unit may match existing organisational structures in the Faculty.

Panels should consider the individual merits of each course or honours subject strand in accordance with 5, and address generic subject-wide matters such as the broad aims of provision, overall teaching, learning and assessment strategies, module duplication and the efficient use of resources.

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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)	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?

	Structure diagrams	<p>Are modules located in the appropriate semester and year?</p> <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? How are HE study, writing and referencing skills developed? How does induction and the first year curriculum support transition?</p> <p>Is the development of academic study 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?</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 under 'Staff Guidance Documents'.</p>

	<p><u>Assessment</u></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>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 group work 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	<p>The Teaching and Learning Strategy states that the University aims to provide courses which are scholarship-informed and where appropriate research-informed and which are taught and supervised by those engaged in research and/or scholarship.</p> <p>Is there evidence of this?</p>
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>

		Consider the Key Supporting Objectives under Strategic Aim 3 of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy, and the associated action plans.
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? 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	<p>Do course regulations accord with the requirements of the University's award regulations? (www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice under Regulations).</p> <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 course 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 study 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?</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>

		Are the reading lists and other sources of information appropriate? Are the texts 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	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? Is there a renewal/updating policy for equipment? Comment on the general appearance/condition of buildings and classrooms. Are there adequate study facilities for students?
COMMENTS		
C2	Staff and Staff Development	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? 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? Is there evidence of research or scholarship in staff profiles? Is there adequate technical, administrative and other support staff? 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)? Is there engagement with the Centre for Higher Education Practice?
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.]

COURSE EVALUATION/SUBJECT REVALIDATION DOCUMENT (INTERNAL PROVISION)

Title page to identify provision (in accordance with template)

Course/Subject Committee membership (for evaluation/revalidation of single course) (also identify members of course/subject planning committee)

(Note: the sections may be presented in separate documents or in a single bound document. The document should be printed double-sided and presented in a soft binding.)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION	A	<u>Introduction</u> (A brief summary of the rationale, origins, demand and relationship with other courses in the School/Faculty/subject may be provided. Projected intakes for next five years should be given.)
SECTION B: COURSE/SUBJECT PROVISION	B1	<u>Programme Specification(s)</u> (For each course or undergraduate honours degree subject (with information relating to each strand), a summary statement of its main features and learning outcomes in accordance with standard template.)
	B2	<u>Commentaries</u> differentiated by subject, course, level, campus, institution, as appropriate, on the following matters, related to University and Faculty/institution policies and strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent and proposed changes (revalidation only) • Academic progression and internal coherence and opportunities for student choice within the programme(s) <u>Structure diagram(s)</u> (For each course or undergraduate subject strand by mode of attendance, a diagram indicating semesters, modules, their credit value and level, compulsory or optional status, pre- or co-requisites and whether modules are <u>C</u> urrent, <u>R</u> evised or <u>N</u> ew) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer to and from other programmes of study and opportunities for progression to further study (where applicable) • Work-based learning and supervised work experience/ placement (where applicable) • Teaching, learning and assessment strategies (to include student support/guidance arrangements and development of study skills, and exemplar assessment schedule and arrangement for feedback) • Research and/or scholarship-informed curriculum and teaching • Creativity, innovation and good practice • Standards • Relations with PSRBs • Employability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Graduate qualities - Widening participation - Work-based learning - Personal development planning - Entrepreneurship training - Career opportunities, development and progression
	B3	<u>Regulations</u> (in accordance with standard template). (For revalidation, a set of regulations for each award (which will be provided to students), or, where there is sufficient commonality, a single exemplar set by qualification, with variations stated eg entry requirements.)
	B4	<u>Module descriptions</u> (in accordance with standard format. Modules should be indexed and grouped by level (or course if limited commonality)
SECTION C: RESOURCES available to the course(s)/subject	C1	<u>Resources</u> (physical) Accommodation, library, laboratory, computing and other equipment for the course(s) (General resources need only be described briefly, but specialist resources should be detailed. Library resources should specifically identify whether they are available from the library catalogues. For revalidation, dedicated resources for particular courses should be clearly identified.) Maintenance and renewal plans
	C2	<u>Resources</u> (staff) Summary statement and brief CVs for all staff contributing to the subject unit (with particular reference to more recent activities). (These staff form the course or subject committees. CVs should be no longer than 1 or 2 pages each. For revalidation, a summary matrix indicating which staff contribute to which courses or subject strands should be provided.) Statement of how the teaching and research areas represented are of relevance to the subject Information on the use of part-time lecturers, postgraduate teaching assistants and demonstrators, and recognised teachers Information on staff development
IN ADDITION: reports from University departments on resource matters and career opportunities are provided centrally to the panel; external examiner reports for the last two academic years are also provided to the revalidation panel.		

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

COURSE EVALUATION/SUBJECT REVALIDATION

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS FORM

Form CA7

<p>COURSE/SUBJECT:</p> <p>DATE OF VALIDATION:</p>

Members of the panel are requested, time permitting, to provide preliminary comments on the submission. External members are asked to consider in particular the curriculum and its delivery. Please refer to the Aide-Memoire as appropriate. Comments are made available to other panel members and the course/subject team in advance of the meeting.

Please return the completed form or submit comments electronically to:@ulster.ac.uk
Academic Office, Room J410, University of Ulster, Cromore Road, Coleraine, BT52 1SA

Name:

Date:

Position:

1 INITIAL OVERVIEW

2 MATTERS ON WHICH THE COURSE/SUBJECT TEAM IS TO BE COMMENDED

3 MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CLARIFICATION

4 MATTERS OF CONCERN LIKELY TO REQUIRE SPECIFIC ACTION

Academic Office
June 2008

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

FORM CA8

COURSE EVALUATION/SUBJECT UNIT REVALIDATION

INSPECTION OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES REPORT

FORM CA8a)

INSTITUTION/CAMPUS: _____

COURSE/SUBJECT UNIT: _____

DATE OF VISIT: _____

PRESENT: _____ (Panel Members)

_____ (Faculty Link Person:
external courses)_____ (Course/Subject
Representatives)

(Panel members should note that for external courses the University's Information Services Department will provide a detailed report on general computing and library resources.)

1	ACCOMMODATION	
	Is the teaching and specialist accommodation adequate?	Yes/No
	Are the study facilities for students adequate?	Yes/No
	If No to any of the above, please give details. If Yes, please add comments, if desired.	

2	IT SERVICES	
	Are the IT resources and technical support adequate?	Yes/No
	Do the present level of availability and future commitments for IT laboratory services meet the requirements of the provision?	Yes/No
	Is the basic IT literacy training, eg email, web browsing, wordprocessing, presentation software, adequate?	Yes/No
	If No to any of the above, please give details. If Yes, please add comments, if desired.	
	Is new subject-specific software needed to support the course?	Yes/No
	If Yes, please specify:	

3	LIBRARY	
	Are the book and periodical stocks and other non-book media adequate and appropriate for the course(s)?	Yes/No
	Are the commitments to meet future needs adequate?	Yes/No

	Is electronic and remote access available? (External provision only.)	Yes/No
	Are opening hours adequate? (External provision only.)	Yes/No
	If No to any of the above, please give details. If Yes, please add comments, if desired.	

4	OTHER SUBJECT-SPECIFIC RESOURCES	
	Do adequate resources and equipment exist?	Yes/No
	Will additional resources be necessary?	Yes/No
	If No, identify any particular items. If Yes, please add comments, if desired.	
	Is there a maintenance/renewal/updating policy for equipment?	Yes/No
	Is this adequate?	Yes/No

5	OTHER FACILITIES (external institutions only)	
	Give general views on facilities for students, eg Catering, Childcare, Parking, Residences.	

**REPORT ON MEETING WITH STUDENTS
(Revalidation only – for separate multi-site visit)**

Form CA8b)

To ensure that student views are disseminated to both panels and course/subject teams, panel members are requested to provide brief comments on their meeting with students.

1 OVERVIEW

2 MATTERS OF COMMENDATION IDENTIFIED

3 MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE DISCUSSION WITH THE COURSE/SUBJECT TEAM

4 MATTERS OF CONCERN LIKELY TO REQUIRE SPECIFIC ACTION

SIGNED: _____

Date: _____
 (Panel members)

The completed form should be returned to the Academic Office representative prior to or at the evaluation/revalidation meeting.

Academic Office
 July 2011

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

SUBJECT/COURSE

A meeting of the Revalidation Panel to consider the above provision will be held on _____ at _____ in _____.

Date

AGENDA and PROGRAMME

1 MEMBERSHIP

To note that the membership of the Panel is as follows:

In attendance:

2 SUBJECT UNIT PROVISION/COURSE

To note the provision:

3 GUIDELINES FOR REVALIDATION PANELS

To receive the Guidelines for Revalidation Panels.

4 STANDARDS

To receive the QAA subject benchmark statement for [Subject].

To receive external examiners' reports for the last two years.

5 SUBJECT/COURSE DOCUMENTATION

To receive preliminary comments from members (CA7, CA8 reports).

To receive a report from the Career Development Centre.

To discuss the subject/course documentation (enclosed) and to consider inter alia:

Overview

Aims and intended learning outcomes

Course structures and coherence

Syllabuses and reading lists

Teaching, learning and assessment strategies and methods

(including support and guidance for students and the development of study skills, an exemplar assessment schedule and arrangements for feedback)

Research and/or scholarship informed curriculum and teaching

Standards

Regulations

Employability and Graduate Qualities

Physical resources

Staff resources and staff development

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To note strengths, creativity, innovation and good practice and other aspects for commendation.

To consider the Panel's conclusions on standards and recommendations regarding approval.

OUTLINE PROGRAMME OF REVALIDATION MEETING (ONE DAY EVENT – INTERNAL PROVISION)

- 9.30 am – 10.30 am **Introductions and Tour of Facilities (if required*)**
- 10.30 am – 11.30 am **Private meeting of Panel**
- To note the agenda and to identify issues which should be discussed with the Subject Unit team.
- 11.30 am - 12.00 pm **Meeting with Dean, Head of School and Subject Unit Co-ordinator**
- To consider how the subject unit provision fits within the Faculty's overall academic plans, and to discuss such matters, the Faculty and School teaching and learning strategies, staffing and other resources.
- 12.00 pm – 12.45 pm **Meeting with Students**
- 12.45 pm – 1.15 pm **Lunch**
- 1.15 pm – 4.00 pm **Meeting with Subject Unit Team**
- To discuss the Subject unit provision (see main agenda).
- 4.00 pm – 4.30 pm **Private meeting of the Panel**
- To note strengths, creativity, innovation, good practice and other aspects for commendation.
- To confirm the qualification level of each course.
- To confirm the credit value and level of all modules.
- To confirm course regulations.
- To finalise the Panel's conclusions and recommendations as follows:
- a) whether the Subject unit provision and its component courses/subjects remain current and valid, and should be approved;
 - b) whether intended learning outcomes are being achieved by students and the programme specifications are being delivered;
 - c) conditions of approval, if any;
 - d) recommendations for further consideration by the Faculty;
 - e) the date by which a response should be received.
- 4.30 pm – 4.45 pm **Meeting with Dean, Head of School and Subject Unit Co-ordinator**
- To communicate the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.

* May not include the whole panel.

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STUDENTS

REVALIDATION

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Background

The University of Ulster is committed to providing high quality courses, which meet national and international standards for the award and the subject. We expect our courses to be well organised and delivered, and to provide appropriate challenges to students. We want them to be current, relevant and student-centred and to enhance students' prospects for employment and further study.

The University has a range of processes to assure the quality of courses on a periodic as well as an annual basis. Generally courses are approved for a five-year period. In their final year of approval they must undergo 'revalidation', with the course or subject team presenting the course in the form of a detailed course document for discussion with a University panel. For certain courses revalidation is organised to coincide with accreditation by a professional or statutory body. Related courses are grouped together in revalidation units.

Purpose of Revalidation

The primary purpose of revalidation is the re-affirmation of the standards set for the awards and the courses within the unit and their continuing currency and relevance to the University. It aims to ensure that for each award-bearing course and undergraduate subject strand:

- it accords with the University's purpose and core strategic aims;
- the academic structure and content are appropriate;
- the proposed award is in accordance with the University's scheme of qualifications; it conforms to the modular and credit framework of the University, and the University's general regulations for the award in question;
- the standard and student workload are comparable with those of other programmes leading to the same award nationally;
- the available resources are sufficient to enable the stated aims and objectives to be met;
- there is evidence of reasonable employment and progression prospects.

Process

The panel considers documentation submitted by the course/subject team and has an introductory meeting with the Dean, Head of School and others to discuss how the provision fits within the Faculty's academic plans, and matters such as resources. A tour of facilities is normally undertaken by the panel. The panel meets with a representative group of students to discuss their views on the course provision, following which it has a detailed discussion with the course/subject team, during which it will clarify any issues arising from previous meetings and the submission.

The panel then meets privately to finalise its conclusions on whether the provision remains current and valid, to identify good practice and makes recommendations regarding the continuation of approval to the University's Teaching and Learning Committee.

Panel Membership

The panel normally consists of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor, an experienced University member of academic staff (from a different Faculty), and at least two external subject specialist members from other universities. Industry/employer representatives and those of relevant professional or statutory bodies may be involved.