



# **HANDBOOK FOR MEMBERS OF REVALIDATION PANELS IN PARTNER INSTITUTIONS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER**

**HANDBOOK FOR MEMBERS OF REVALIDATION PANELS FOR COURSES IN  
PARTNER INSTITUTIONS**

**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 offered in other institutions 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 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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Acting Head of Academic Office

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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 Belfast, Coleraine, Jordanstown, and Magee College, Londonderry. It now brands itself as Ulster University.

2 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”.

3 The Strategic Plan (2016) identifies four broad priority areas: civic contribution, academic excellence, global vision, and operational excellence. Excellence in teaching will provide students with a high-quality, challenging and rewarding learning experience that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to:

- demonstrate critical intellectual enquiry
- progress in their chosen career or entrepreneurial endeavour
- adapt to change
- become responsible global citizens making meaningful contributions to professional communities and wider society.

Student engagement and success are key. The student experience will be enhanced through the provision of well-designed, flexible, inclusive, relevant programmes and curricula.

4 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.

### **Academic Governance**

#### *The Senate*

5 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 chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and is composed of senior academic office-holders including the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Academic Operations and Portfolio Development, Academic Quality and Student Experience, and Research, with representation from academic staff in the faculties and students. The Senate works through a number of committees, which include the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

#### *Faculties and Schools*

6 The University organises its academic activity in four faculties: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment; Life and Health Sciences; Ulster University Business School. The activities of Faculties extend across the campuses. The academic staff within Faculties are grouped by cognate subject areas in 23 schools (departments in the Ulster University Business School). A doctoral college supports PhD researchers. A number of research institutes have been established.

7 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 Executive Dean of the Faculty chairs the Faculty Board. The three Associate Deans for Education, Global Engagement and Research and (Associate) Heads of Schools within each Faculty assist with the co-ordination of the work of the Faculty under the leadership of the Dean.

#### *Programme Management*

- 8 Each course is administered by a course committee, comprising staff who contribute significantly to the teaching of the course. The course committee is responsible for the organisation and effective management of the course. It is chaired by a course director. The delivery of individual modules is managed by module co-ordinators.

Further information on course management is contained in section E.

### **UNIVERSITY AWARDS**

- 9 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, credit points and level.

#### **Academic Year**

- 10 The academic session is organised into three semesters: autumn, spring and summer. Whilst the majority of programmes 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. Some programmes require extended dates of attendance. Full-time Master's require a full calendar year.
- 11 The first two semesters comprise 12 weeks of teaching, and a three week examination 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 the standard pattern.

#### **Qualifications and Credit Framework; Modular Structure**

- 12 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 the national 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**

- 13 The University expects courses leading to 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**

- 14 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 levels in 2002. The levels reflect those commonly in use in the rest of the University sector, and are now known as EWNI (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) levels. They were recommended in the higher education credit framework for England, published by QAA in August 2008. They are set out at Appendix 3.
- 15 The following equivalences for credit and qualification levels apply:

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

- 16 The levels encompass 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 courses. Level 2 is only used in Access to Higher Education courses, but at least 60 credit points in the final year must be at level 3.

### **Modules and Credit Points**

- 17 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 equate to one credit point.
- 18 Modules are either compulsory or optional within the programme structure. Some modules may 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.
- 19 Student performance in modules and the course overall is generally measured as percentage marks although some record performance on a pass or 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 course.

### *Module Size*

- 20 Taught modules may have any value in multiples of five credit points with a minimum size of 10 credit points but 20 is encouraged as the normal minimum size. A strong rationale is expected for smaller modules. If course teams intend to use different sizes they should take account of the overall study load on students.
- 21 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*

- 22 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 calendar year. Generally 60 credit points of study are undertaken in each of the autumn and spring semesters. This amounts to some 36 to 42 hours of study per week. Programmes of significantly longer duration comprise additional modules, taken during the summer semester.
- 23 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.

24 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). For full-time study of 60 credit points, a 15 week summer semester is used.

25 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)

26 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 the completion of at least 40 credit points in the other semester, this is permissible.

27 The study loads above represent normal maxima. Proposals for courses with a heavier load as part of their structure, require special consideration by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

*Module Teaching Patterns*

28 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 learning and teaching methods. A first year undergraduate teaching policy was approved in 2008. Courses which do not have written examinations may use the designated examination period in the semester for other activities.

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

29 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 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. Except for integrated Master's degrees, the lowest level permissible in postgraduate programmes and the MBBS is Level 6.

*Maximum at Lowest Level*

With the exception of the courses identified below, the integrated Master's and the MBBS 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 it is 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. In Honours degrees, particularly in Art and Design or for international students from countries where the school-leaving qualification does not equate to A Level standard, an integrated foundation year (Year '0') at Level 3 may be included. From 2016, the concept of 'extended' Master's degrees has been approved which allows additional study of at least 60 credits at Level 6 to be integrated at the start of the course.

### *Exemptions on the basis of study at Level 3 or Level 6*

- 30 Exemption should not be granted from level 3 modules in undergraduate programmes 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.

### **Use of Modules of a Level Higher than that typically associated with a Qualification**

- 31 With the exception of Honours degrees, the classification of undergraduate awards is determined exclusively by students' average performance in the modules studied at the highest level. (In Honours degrees Level 5 also contributes.) The inclusion in a programme structure of a module(s) from a higher level than that which would be typical of the qualification level for that programme would not normally be accepted given that, in longer programmes, this would lead to a classification based on a very low number of credits and, in all cases, would result in a classification based on study at a level higher than that associated with the qualification. A carefully articulated rationale for the inclusion of a higher level module(s) is required for consideration at validation and subsequently by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

### **Postgraduate Programmes**

- 32 From 2003 intake, in accordance with the national framework, all programmes 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. Except for integrated Master's degrees and the MBBS, the lowest undergraduate level which may be included is Level 6. The restriction on volume at this level is indicated above and in the University's Qualifications and Credit Framework at Appendix 1. 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.) The 'extended' Master's degree (see 28) fully integrates such a period.
- 33 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.

#### *Entry Standard*

- 34 The entry standard for Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes and 'extended' Master's degrees is a minimum of a non-honours degree (with 360 credits). For Master's degrees it is a second-class honours degree, or the equivalent standard in a Graduate Certificate or Diploma. This standard is a pass for Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma entry and 50% for Master's entry.

#### *Pass Mark*

- 35 In Level 4 – 6 modules in Integrated Master's degree courses and in Level 6 modules in extended Master's degrees, and from 2016/17 in Level 6 modules in other postgraduate courses, the pass mark is 40%. The pass mark in Level 7 modules is 50%. The standard of achievement required to progress to Level 7 in extended Master's degrees is 50%. An overall 50% standard must be met by candidates to be eligible for a postgraduate award.

### **Undergraduate Programmes**

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

#### *Level 4*

- 37 Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)

Normally comprising 120 credits at Level 4, with a maximum of 30 credit points at Level 3, this award replaced the former Diploma comprising 120 credit points at Level 4.



### *Level 5*

- 38 Foundation degree (FdA, FdEng, FdSc)  
Associate Bachelor's degree (AB)  
Advanced Diploma (AdvDip)  
Advanced Certificate (AdvCert)
- 39 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 worth 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.
- 40 The University has withdrawn the award of DipHE and no longer offers HNDs and HNCs of the Edexcel Foundation. The Foundation degree and Associate Bachelor's degree take their place.
- 41 The Advanced Diploma and Certificate comprise 120 and 60 credit points respectively, generally at level 5, with an entry standard of CertHE or equivalent.
- 42 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*

- 43 This Level comprises Honours degrees, Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Certificates and non-Honours degrees.
- 44 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 except in those courses which include an integrated foundation year). It has a two A level or equivalent entry standard. A dissertation/project is a normal expectation in the final level of an Honours degree. A period of work-based learning is also expected as an integral, compulsory part of the curriculum.
- 45 Graduate Diplomas and Certificates have a minimum entry requirement of a non-Honours degree. They comprise 120 and 60 credit points respectively, at Level 6, with a maximum of 30 or 20 credit points at level 3. They are based largely on undergraduate material and usually taken 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.
- 46 The non-Honours degree has 360 credit points, with at least 60 at Level 6 but with a maximum of 30 at Level 3 permitted. It requires two A levels or equivalent for admission. None is currently offered.

### *Other Undergraduate Qualifications*

- 47 The award titles of Certificate or 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*

- 48 The Diploma in International 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.

### **Titles**

- 49 Titles reflect the level of the course, through the generic award, and the subject content. The appropriate title for an award is usually self-evident. However, in some subject areas practice in the sector varies, and the choice between 'Arts' or 'Science' or whether to use a more specific practice-

based title is largely a matter of convention. For University awards there should be consistency within subject areas, including between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

#### *Naming Subjects in Titles*

- 50 The subject of study is named in the programme 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 programme. This weighting should be reflected at Levels 5 and 6 in undergraduate degrees.
- 51 The UK Quality Code proposes that 'Combined Studies' should be reserved for programmes involving study of more than three significant components. Within the University, the 'Combined Honours' designation may be used as a summary title where three subjects are selected from a range. Awards will specify the three subjects.

#### **Exit Awards**

- 52 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. Exit awards usually carry the same subject title as the main award.
- 53 In courses with staged stepping off and on points and associated awards (eg CertHE/AB/Hons Degree or Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/Master's degree), only one award is made to students during a continuous period of registration, that at the highest level when the student leaves.

#### **Web-supported Module Delivery**

- 54 Two broad definitions are used to describe modules delivered or supported online.

**Blended learning** – Although online participation is required, face-to-face interactions remain. Online participation may include all or some of the following:

- accessing key course documents;
- using online course material which contain major educational content;
- interaction and communication (synchronous and asynchronous) between staff and students and 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.

No Year 1 modules may be delivered fully online in full-time undergraduate campus-based programmes.

## **B UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE POLICY**

- 55 The Charter of the University enables it to join or co-operate with any other university, place of learning or other body in pursuit of its objectives. It may admit to the privileges of the University or recognise for any purpose any college or other institution or the employees or students thereof. Such arrangements allow the University to extend educational provision beyond its campuses and to respond to a demand for wider access to higher education. The University has formal procedures for the approval of new partner institutions and renewal of approval.
- 56 The University attaches overriding importance to serving the educational, economic, social and cultural interests of Northern Ireland. It has developed close links with the six regional colleges of further education, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, and other educational providers in Northern Ireland. The University has transferred much of its intermediate-level (level 5) provision to the Further Education (FE) sector in Northern Ireland to reflect regional requirements and

support for the community. In line with Government policy, the University in particular supports the development of Foundation degrees. Colleges in Northern Ireland are encouraged to work together in subject networks.

- 57 Proposals for collaboration with institutions abroad are subject to very critical scrutiny to ensure compatibility, especially where the institution concerned may not be familiar with the conventions of the United Kingdom higher education system, and where the institution is in the private sector. Where the institution is subject to the authority of a government department or agency, the University requires evidence that that department or agency has no objection to the proposed link.
- 58 The University expects the language of instruction and assessment in awards of the University in overseas institutions to be English.
- 59 The University must ensure that the academic standards of a particular course and the resources available to deliver it meet the University's criteria for the award in question. The processes and procedures of programme evaluation and review, external examining and moderation for validated activity are integrated with the University's own quality assurance procedures.
- 60 The University must also give careful consideration to the impact of such developments on its own academic and corporate plans and on the use of its resources. There should be clear educational advantages for both partners and any proposal should work in support of the University's objects and strategic plans. The University would not normally expect to be involved in collaborative work in subject areas where it does not itself have interest or expertise.
- 61 The University has a set of Principles for Collaborative Partnerships. These expect all activity to align with the priorities of the University's Strategic Plan, be risk-assessed, bring benefit to the University, and be sponsored by a Faculty and linked to Faculty priorities and portfolio development. Courses must be financially sustainable and should not have an adverse effect on existing provision.
- 62 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has published the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education. Institutions should be familiar with its content. The Code includes advice and guidance about the assurance of quality in Partnerships. The University endorses the Code and has incorporated relevant aspects into its own procedures.

### **Types of Collaborative Arrangements**

- 63 The University operates a range of partnerships in relation to its course provision. This handbook covers two types:
- a) *Validated courses*, developed and taught by a partner institution. Students belong to the partner institution. Within this category 'subject networks' may be developed where a number of partners collaborate to offer the same course.
- In 2020/21 there were over 5,500 students on validated courses.
- b) *Franchised courses*, developed by the University and taught by a partner institution with the same content, structure, delivery and assessment as the home course at the University. The students belong to the University.

### **Terminology**

- 64 *Validation* is the overall process whereby the University evaluates and approves a programme of study offered by an institution *recognised* to lead or contribute to a qualification of the University. Initial approval of a course proposal is achieved through the *evaluation process*. Approved provision is termed *validated* if developed by an institution and offered to its own students who are Associate Students of the University. It is *franchised* if it replicates a University course and is offered to Affiliate Students who belong to the University. At the end of the period of approval the programme is *revalidated*. institution which offers franchised courses may be designated an *Affiliate College* of the University, at the time of institutional approval.

## **Status of Students**

- 65 Students on franchised courses belong to the University as Affiliate Students. Those studying abroad are known as Ulster University Overseas Students, a sub-category of Affiliate Students. They have rights in the University to use University resources and facilities including borrowing and access rights in the University's library, right of access to the University's virtual learning environment and other electronic study skills support; access to off-campus counselling services; and right of appeal and complaint to the University. They have limited membership of the University's Students' Union which gives them the right to Union representation if they need to invoke a University procedure. They are entitled to membership of the University's sports centre, subject to payment of the appropriate charges by the individual student. They are subject to University rules and regulations (including disciplinary regulations and rules on the acceptable use of computers) but also those of the partner while using its facilities. While students have the same borrowing rights in the University Library as afforded to other registered University students and are provided with remote electronic access to the electronic information resources covered by licence agreements, it is the responsibility of the partner institution to provide the necessary information resources to support students in their studies unless the University explicitly undertakes to provide these resources as set out in the Contract for Services Agreement. The University's resources should not normally be used to substitute for these.
- 66 Students of other institutions studying for awards of the University under validation arrangements are students of the institution; they are not members of the University, but have the status of 'Associate Student'. Associate students are accorded the following rights and privileges of the University: borrowing and access rights in the University's library; membership of the University's sports centre (upon payment of the appropriate charge); right of appeal and complaint to the University following completion of the internal procedures of the partner institution. Associate students are not eligible for membership of the Students' Union, and may not avail of University bursaries, prizes or other financial packages offered by the University nor of the services of the Employability and Careers and Student Support departments. They are subject to University rules and regulations while using University facilities or on University premises. Access to the University's library resources is not intended to substitute for the information resources of the partner institution.

## **Assurance of Standards**

- 67 The Senate is responsible for ordering the academic affairs of the University. The Academic Planning Advisory Group considers the appropriateness of proposals for planning new programmes of study by the University and under collaborative arrangements with other educational institutions in the context of the University's mission, collaborative, international and other strategies and its Academic Plan, and makes recommendations to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee. This Committee keeps under review, advises and makes recommendations to Senate on standards for awards, and determines the approval of courses in accordance with these standards. The Committees work through sub-committees and panels and consult with Faculties in conducting their business.
- 68 The University has in place various structures and processes designed to assure the standards of taught programmes. There are common University regulations for all awards and specific course regulations must conform to these regulations. The regulations specify minimum thresholds with regard to entry requirements, duration, assessment and award. The University's qualifications and credit framework sets out minimum requirements in terms of credit points and levels for each award and makes explicit the relationship between awards within an overall hierarchy. The University's programme approval and review system, the appointment of external examiners and accreditation by appropriate professional and/or statutory bodies contribute to the assurance of standards.
- 69 The University aims to ensure that the academic standards of a particular course and the resources available to deliver it meet the University's criteria for the award in question, whether it is delivered by the University or another institution.
- 70 It applies the same principles of quality assurance to validated and franchised provision as it does to its own provision. The processes associated with course evaluation and revalidation, monitoring and external examining follow closely the University's own procedures. Additional support and liaison is, however, provided at Faculty level. These arrangements are described in the following sections.
- 71 Since students attending validated courses at other institutions are not registered students of the University, the institutions are not expected to adopt all the University's own procedures in every matter, for example in respect of student discipline, library borrowing arrangements, or methods for

obtaining student feedback. Nevertheless, the University expects that adequate arrangements are in place, and requires evidence of these. Students on franchised courses are affiliate members of the University. Arrangements follow those of the University except where local variations are exceptionally and explicitly approved.

### **Principles of Standards Assurance and Quality Management**

72 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 objectives 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 mandatory requirements of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* and to satisfy the expectations of other external statutory or regulatory bodies.

73 In relation to **standards** the system seeks to ensure that:

- the academic standards of programmes of study are appropriate to their related awards;
- the University's programme structures accord with the requirements of the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (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.

74 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, statutory and regulatory 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.

75 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 INSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL AND APPROVAL OF NEW PROGRAMMES**

- 76 All partner institutions are subject to formal institutional approval involving due-diligence review and institutional recognition visits and re-approval processes. The suitability of a proposed partner is reviewed through consideration of such matters as the institution's history, mission and values, operating environment, financial viability, regulatory framework, management and organisation structures, administrative processes, current provision, existing and proposed collaborative arrangements, quality assurance, recent internal audit reports, learning resources and student welfare. All institutions are expected to undergo re-approval within a five-year cycle.
- 77 A proposal for the introduction of a new course from an external institution is submitted to the Academic Planning Advisory Group. It is accompanied by an assessment from the relevant University faculty. The Advisory Group reviews the proposal in the context of the University's strategic aims and objectives, its corporate and academic plan, paying particular attention to demand, proposed intake size, progression opportunities, employment prospects, and resource needs. The Advisory Group makes a recommendation to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee whether planning should proceed.
- 78 If approval to proceed to planning and evaluation is granted, the institution is required to prepare a detailed course proposal. An evaluation panel, comprising internal University and external members, is established. The panel discusses the detailed course submission with the course planning committee and makes recommendations regarding approval to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

## **D REVALIDATION**

### **Revalidation Units**

- 79 Each programme is assigned to a revalidation 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 re-approval process, taking account of commonality in disciplines and to allow a subject overview to be presented. Some units comprise both University and partner college provision. In some cases, programmes may be re-validated on an individual basis. Revalidations may be organised in conjunction with relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
- 80 The unit may comprise the provision offered by a 'subject network'. In a network the same validated programme operates at a number of different partner institutions. Networks have arrangements for the management and oversight of the network. This is typically achieved through a subject network 'committee' where representatives from each of the partner institutions involved meet with the relevant University staff on a regular basis. Such oversight seeks to ensure a consistent student experience regardless of which location a student enrolls in the course.

### **Revalidation Cycle**

- 81 Each unit or sub-unit is allocated to a particular revalidation year within a quinquennial cycle. New programmes are assigned to a particular unit or sub-unit as part of the initial approval process. This determines their period of approval.

### **Purpose**

- 82 Revalidation follows a regular five-year cycle. At the end of the period of approval, in the designated year, the programmes within the unit are presented afresh for revalidation by a University panel. On occasion, a new course proposal which derives 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 nor is viability considered in detail. However the panel does meet with students to obtain their views directly. No detailed statistical profiles are provided. Such matters are addressed through the annual monitoring process. 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:

- it accords with the University's purpose and core strategic aims;
- the academic structure and content are appropriate (and in the case of a franchised course that it accords with the structure and content of the home course);
- the course is presented 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 (and the home course for a franchised course);
- the available resources are sufficient to enable the stated aims and objectives to be met for the proposed number of students;
- there is evidence of reasonable employment prospects and progression opportunities.

83 Reports from external examiners and a meeting with students assist the panel in making their judgement.

### **Revalidation Preparation**

84 A revalidation preparation form is sent to the Dean of the associated University Faculty at least 12 months before the revalidation event is scheduled to take place. This allows the Faculty to confirm those courses to be included. A revalidation unit co-ordinator is nominated. The co-ordinator is responsible for managing the provision of documentation and acts as a single point of contact for the Academic Office and other central departments. Duties are set out at Appendix 4. Partner institutions are expected to maintain close liaison with the Unit Coordinator and the Faculty Partnership Manager, if different. In particular for franchises, there is expected to be close liaison between the course team for the home course and the team in the institution, both at course and module level. The relevant Faculty shares full information on the curriculum and assessment strategy, tasks and scheduling. It supports the institution in the understanding of the course and its delivery methods and any changes which are being introduced at the time of revalidation.

### **Establishment of Revalidation Panel**

85 The Academic Office convenes a revalidation panel for each subject unit or sub-unit. The panel consists of an (Associate) Dean or Head of School of a Faculty not associated with the course (Chair), the Associate Dean or nominee from the associated Faculty, one University member from another Faculty and a minimum of two subject-specialist external members. Other internal members include a representative from the associated Faculty and a senior member of staff from another Faculty who is experienced in curriculum development, quality assurance and collaborative activity.

86 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 institution, eg through having recently acted in an advisory capacity, as an external examiner, or having been a member of staff. Employer representatives may be appointed in addition.

87 The date of the meeting is arranged in consultation with the unit co-ordinator who liaises with partner institutions. The meeting is serviced by the Academic Office.

### **Production of Documentation**

88 Revalidation documentation should be presented in accordance with the sample outlines at Appendices 5 and 6. The document includes a programme specification for each course and sample assessment schedules.

89 The team is expected to ensure that, in preparing the submission, full account is taken of the University's criteria for the planning of programmes [Appendix 7 a/b], its scheme of academic awards and the relevant regulations for these awards, the University's modular and credit framework and the national Benchmark Standards for the Subject ([qaa.ac.uk](http://qaa.ac.uk) under the Quality Code). Where applicable, the particular requirements of Access programmes and the benchmark statement for Foundation degrees should be met. A course may be modelled closely on the curriculum of a course offered by the University, but it may be appropriate to make variations or to develop a distinct programme.

90 Course teams should take account of the University's curriculum design framework. In summary, modules should normally be 20 credit points or more, and have no more than four learning outcomes and two items of assessment. A sound rationale should support variations from these principles. The

University has Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning (Appendix 8). An Assessment Handbook gives guidance, including generic assessment criteria by level.

- 91 Institutions are expected to be aware that the University seeks to ensure that, in addition to the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge and skills, undergraduate degree students develop their personal transferable skills as an integral part of their academic programme. These skills and other generic qualities are embodied in 'graduate qualities' and teams should take account of the expectations set out in the statement at Appendix 9. The University emphasises the place of Employability in provision (Appendix 10).
- 92 An electronic copy of the document is lodged in the Academic Office for distribution to members of the panel, at least **four weeks** before the panel meeting, (three weeks for single course events). Institutional approval of each college's contribution to the submission is indicated by the relevant director's signature on the title page. The Faculty may have its own process for formal review before submission.
- 93 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, and other relevant information. Reports on Library and IT provision from the University's central departments are provided. The revalidation panel also receives the last two annual reports from external examiners (module responsibilities of external examiners are mapped within the revalidation document) in order to provide a context for discussion. Assessment rubrics are also received.
- 94 Members of the panel are requested to make initial comments on the document, using Form CA7 (Appendix 13). These are made available to other panel members and the subject team in advance of the meeting. The Faculty Partnership Manager provides preliminary comments on the nature of the Faculty's engagement with partner institutions and in the preparation of documentation, and any recommendations regarding adjustments to approved maximum cohort sizes. The meeting is serviced by a representative of the Academic Office who provides briefing notes on key points and standards and regulatory matters.

### **Inspection of Resources**

- 95 Where appropriate, specialist resources (library, equipment, laboratories etc) may be inspected. This normally takes place at the start of the panel meeting. Where provision is spread across a number of locations, arrangements are made for separate preliminary inspections by the external members of the panel, guided by the designated revalidation unit co-ordinator, wherever possible. Written reports using Form CA8 (Appendix 14) are provided for the panel. Where several sites are involved (potentially in subject networks) it is not always possible for externals to visit all locations. If an inspection is not possible, a report is provided by the Faculty Partnership Manager, in consultation with University subject experts.
- 96 Exceptionally, relevant central University departments may be asked to provide reports on resource matters, for example if a new campus location is proposed.

### **Panel Meeting**

- 97 A typical agenda and programme are given at Appendix 15. The programme is based on a one-day event. The actual duration depends on the extent of provision. The agenda and programme are discussed in advance with the 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. Where courses operate within a subject network, the arrangements for the management of the network are explored.
- 98 The meeting takes place on one University campus or in one institution. The revalidation unit co-ordinator, senior representatives from each institution, course directors and module co-ordinators are required to meet with the panel. Other staff may attend, but are not required to do so. The Faculty Partnership Manager is in attendance throughout the meeting unless also acting as unit co-ordinator. The Panel meets with a representative group of students, including class representatives in full-time courses or in other courses where this is a form of student consultation. Notes of guidance are provided to students (Appendix 16). For a multi-site unit, if external panel members meet separately with students at other locations as part of a preliminary visit, they are asked to identify issues raised and points of commendation in a CA8(s) report (Appendix 14).



99 For a franchised course, the Panel will note that the course structure and curriculum are the same as those for the course at the University which will itself have been recently revalidated. It will consider any variations which may exceptionally be proposed. Discussion of the curriculum with the staff responsible for its delivery should demonstrate that they have a clear understanding of the revised programme, its objectives and the integration between its component parts, and teaching and assessment methods.

100 The panel is expected to conduct a critically constructive and independent assessment of the provision within the unit. At the end of the meeting, the chair of the panel reports to the unit co-ordinator and institutional representatives the panel's conclusions and recommendations, and any conditions of approval, with any adjustments to approved minimum and maximum cohort sizes (there is a guideline minimum of 15 (full and part time combined), to ensure the quality of the student experience, with the maximum related to the resources provided), and the proposed period of approval, which is normally for a further five years.

#### **Report of Revalidation Panel**

101 A report of the meeting, when confirmed by the chair, is circulated to members of the panel, to the (Associate) Dean and revalidation unit co-ordinator, Faculty Partnership Manager and the institutions. Recommendations for approval are considered by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee, under delegated authority from Senate.

102 Where the Faculty or partner institutions find difficulty in meeting the conditions specified by the panel, it is expected to report accordingly, giving reasons, within four weeks of receiving the panel's report. Otherwise, the unit co-ordinator should submit to the Academic Office, within six weeks of the event (four weeks if held in May or later), the final version of the revalidation documentation, incorporating such amendments as are required for approval and 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 and Final Approval**

103 The revalidation process is concluded when the chair of the panel certifies by signature on the title page that the final documentation is satisfactory. Provision is normally approved for a period of five years in accordance with the revalidation schedule. Ongoing approval is subject to satisfactory outcomes in the annual monitoring process. Where a particular course within a unit is not approved for the normal five year period, it may be subject to a separate individual revalidation.

### **E COURSE MANAGEMENT**

104 The arrangements for administration of the course are expected to be consistent with University practice.

#### **Course Committee**

105 A course committee for the course is established. Terms of reference and membership are given at Appendix 17. The course committee is responsible for the ongoing administration and effective management of the course. For franchised courses, there is cross-representation (usually the course director) between the University and institution course committees.

#### **Course Director and Module Co-ordinators**

106 A course director and module co-ordinators are designated. Duties and responsibilities of course directors are given at Appendix 18.

#### **Student Advice and Consultation**

107 The course committee is expected to put in place, in accordance with institutional, 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

The University has developed guidelines for student induction and a policy on transition for undergraduate students, as well as a protocol on attendance and guidelines on notification of absence.

- 108 Students should be provided with institutional level information. A course handbook, deriving from the revalidation document, is also issued and supplemented as appropriate by detailed module information.
- 109 Students should be made aware of arrangements for access to staff outside scheduled teaching. The course committee should ensure that, for full-time programmes, there is a staff/student consultative committee (which reports to the course committee) or student representation on the course committee. The use of both means is considered best practice. Such committees should meet at least once each semester and there should be at least two student members for each year group on the committee. Substantive items relating to teaching and learning including the external examiner's report and course committee's response should be included on the agenda for meetings. The University considers commendable the practice of students chairing and minuting consultative committees.
- 110 For part-time courses, if a formal consultative committee is not feasible, course committees should develop appropriate methods of consultation, eg email consultation, online discussion board, meetings with students, outcomes of discussions with advisers of studies or module tutors. A summary of issues raised must be formally minuted at course committee meetings and appropriate feedback given to students.
- 111 In addition, the course committee should give consideration to the allocation to each student of an adviser of studies, drawn from the teaching staff of the course, in accordance with the code of practice at Appendix 19. This is a requirement for franchised courses.

### **Conduct of Examinations and Assessment**

- 112 The University is concerned that the security of assessment is adequately safeguarded. Arrangements for the conduct of examinations are expected to be comparable to those operating in the University and set out in the University's Regulations Governing Examinations in Programmes of Study. Institutions are required to use 'anonymous' marking in connection with written examinations and are encouraged to do so, where appropriate and practicable, for coursework. They must have arrangements for dealing with plagiarism and other forms of cheating. The timing of common examinations for network and franchised courses must be synchronised.

### **Boards of Examiners**

- 113 A board of examiners is constituted to determine the academic progress of students and make recommendations to Senate regarding final awards. The Board comprises internal examiners and external examiner(s). A representative from the Faculty attends the meeting.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

- 114 The institution is expected to have appropriate arrangements for considering requests for review of decisions and for dealing with complaints. Having exhausted internal procedures, Associate Students may appeal or complain to the University. For University students on franchised courses, the University's procedures are used.

## **F COURSE MONITORING AND REVISION**

- 115 Institutions have their own processes for quality assurance. These may include the review and evaluation of individual modules. The following University-level arrangements apply.

### **Faculty Partnership Managers**

- 116 Faculty Partnership Managers provide a focus for the development, monitoring and enhancement of collaborative arrangements at Faculty level. Duties and responsibilities are given at Appendix 5. The Partnership Managers meet in a Collaborative Partnerships Forum which includes representatives from the Northern Ireland Further Education colleges.

### **External Examiners**

- 117 The University appoints, on the recommendation of the associated Faculty, one or more external examiners for each programme. For franchised courses, the same external as for the home course is normally used. The external examiner is provided with a handbook by the University and receives a course document and other relevant material from the course director. The external examiner is required to provide an annual report to the University on the operation of the programme and the quality of the students' work, course delivery and assessment. A copy of this report is provided to the institution, and the Faculty for action and response.

### **Module Monitoring**

- 118 The University has a module monitoring process for its own provision. This process is based on an initial analysis of statistical data about student progression and achievement with comparisons to internal and external benchmarks. Those modules identified as 'outliers' as a consequence of this exercise are subject to more detailed scrutiny which may involve seeking student evaluation and feedback. Action plans for improvement are developed as required. This system is used for franchised courses. Institutions are encouraged to use similar arrangements for validated courses.

### **Annual Review**

- 119 The University undertakes centrally the annual review of validated courses offered by partner institutions in order to monitor the quality of provision and the performance of students. The University through a process called 'Continuous Assessment of Quality Enhancement' (CAQE) reviews programme performance using a range of quantitative and qualitative methods and associated KPIs. If courses do not meet baseline expectations, programme teams are required to review the datasets, explore issues and develop action plans for approval by the associated faculty. If these are not satisfactory, a quality review panel will be convened which will lead to revised action plans, advancing of revalidation or programme suspension.

For franchised courses the University's own Programme Management System and internal CAQE processes are used.

### **Course Revisions**

- 120 Proposals to make minor amendments to the structure, content or regulations of the programme are submitted to the relevant sub-committee of the associated Faculty Board for consideration and approval. The external examiner and students should be consulted as appropriate. Proposed changes to the course title, mode of attendance, aims and objectives, location, intake size and resources (human and physical) approved to support the programme require the additional approval of the University.

For each new partner institution, a special monitoring and review visit is undertaken during the first semester after the second intake to the first new approved programme. Institution level re-approval is undertaken on a five yearly cycle. In addition to course-based monitoring the University uses a process of 'themed audit' to conduct generic reviews. These may involve partner institutions.

## **G ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE UNIVERSITY**

- 121 Detailed guidelines are provided to the institution, covering the following:

### **Agreement**

A formal agreement is signed by the head of the institution and the Vice-Chancellor when the conditions specified in the revalidation report are met and satisfactory copies of the course document are received. The agreement sets out the respective duties and responsibilities of the University and the institution.

### **Financial Arrangements**

The University levies annual fees on institutions for each course and for each student enrolled. The institution is informed of the appropriate financial arrangements in advance of course approval. A one-off licence fee is charged and a fee is set for each approved course and for each student enrolled on the course, for each year of the course.

In addition, the University seeks reimbursement for such costs as it may incur in connection with the design, evaluation, monitoring, review, examining, assessment and general supervision of the course. These include travel and accommodation expenses of the external examiner.

**Student Recruitment, Admission, Registration and Enrolment, Data Provision, Examinations and Conferment of Awards**

Subject to the overall authority of the University, the institution is responsible for the recruitment, admission and registration of students and for their teaching, examining and discipline. Students on validated courses are students of the institution; they are not members of the University but have limited privileges as Associate Students. Students on franchised courses are full members of the University and the University exercises these responsibilities in liaison with the institution.



# **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	40	Associate Award. 50% pass mark until 2015/16.
Diploma in International Academic Studies	5	120	3, 4, 5	90	30	40	Associate Award. 50% pass mark until 2015/16.
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	More at Level 3 if includes integrated foundation year.
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.
Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery	7	780	5, 6, 7	190	175	40	50% at Level 7. New award from 2021.
Integrated Master's Degree	7	480	3, 4, 5, 6, 7	120	30	40	50% pass mark at Level 7 (from 2003 intake). More at Level 3 if includes integrated foundation year.
Postgraduate Certificate of Professional Development	7	60	7	60	-	50	Award framework for short course modules.
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	6, 7	40	20	50	40% pass mark in Level 6 modules from 2016/17.
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	6, 7	90	30	50	40% pass mark in Level 6 modules from 2016/17.
Master's Degree	7	180	6, 7	150	30	50	40% pass mark in Level 6 modules from 2016/17.
Extended Master's Degree	7	240	6, 7	180	-	50	From 2016/17. 40% pass mark in Level 6 which forms preliminary stage. 50% required to progress to Level 7.
Professional Doctorate	8	540	7, 8	420	120	50	From 2010.

FHEQ = Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, third edition 2014

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 (EWNl) 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 adopted in 2008/9 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.

The University ceased to offer DipHEs and Edexcel HNDs and HNCs from 2008, and the Diploma in Area Studies and the Diploma in Industrial Studies from 2011.

## **QAA: Framework for Higher Education Qualifications**

The UK Quality Code contains the following generic descriptors of Higher Education qualifications in the Framework. 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 should 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 institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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### **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, 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 of Higher Education may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

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### **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 the 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 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 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 holder 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 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 graduate certificates or graduate diplomas.

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**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 degree 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).

First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science comprise an integrated programme of study and professional practice spanning several levels. While the final outcomes of the qualifications themselves typically meet the expectations of the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7, these qualifications may often retain, for historical reasons, titles of Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery, Bachelor of Dental Surgery, Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine or Bachelor of Veterinary Science. The use of the title 'Dr' by medical doctors is a historical abbreviation of the profession; it does not indicate a qualification at doctoral level.

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**Descriptor for a higher education qualification 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 both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, and innovation in 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 that include the name of the discipline in their title (for example EdD for Doctor of Education or DClínPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in providing a contribution to (professional) knowledge. The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctorates awarded on the basis of original research. Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.

## **SUMMARY OF EWNI GENERIC CREDIT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS**

(Source: NICATS Manual: 2002 and HE 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 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 and accepting full accountability for outcomes.

**Table of generic level descriptors**

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

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

## **DUTIES OF REVALIDATION UNIT CO-ORDINATOR**

Each 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 Revalidation 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, Library, external panel members, the Faculty Partnership Manager 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.



### COURSE REVALIDATION DOCUMENT (PARTNER INSTITUTIONS)

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION (SUBJECT AND PROGRAMME CONTEXT)	A	<p><b>Introduction</b> (Subject and Programme Context)            Title page <i>to identify provision (in accordance with template)</i>            Course/Subject Committee membership <i>(for revalidation of single course) (also identify members of course/subject planning committee)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A brief summary of the rationale, origins and (if applicable) relationship with other courses in the School/Faculty/subject</li> <li>• Projected intakes for next five years with minimum/maximum cohort numbers with a brief commentary on market research including international markets where relevant</li> <li>• Contextualised Research and Analysis – to include how standards and quality indicators inform curriculum (re) design</li> <li>• Stakeholder Engagement – to include a brief summary of consultation with e.g. PSRBs, employers, alumni, students; and</li> <li>• Identification of graduate qualities</li> <li>• A brief commentary on academic excellence and research-based teaching which shows how discipline research, impact and professional activity of the course team inform the programme design</li> <li>• A summary of revisions and innovations in programme design based on the analysis from contextualised research, stakeholder engagement and past enhancements</li> </ul>
SECTION B: THE PROGRAMME(S)  PROGRAMME DESIGN COMMENTARIES	B1	<p><b>Brief Commentaries</b> differentiated by subject, course, level, campus, institution, as appropriate, on the following matters, related to University and Faculty/institution policies and strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject/Course philosophy agreed by the team</li> <li>• Course structure(s), academic progression and internal coherence and opportunities for student choice within the programme(s). Transfer to and from programmes</li> <li>• Student support and guidance, induction, development of study skills</li> <li>• Information literacy skills and digital capabilities</li> <li>• Learning and teaching strategy - to include key approaches and delivery methods</li> <li>• Assessment strategy and exemplar assessment schedule(s) and arrangements for feedback</li> <li>• Employability and enterprise – to showcase examples of effective practice e.g. curricular, co-curricular, extra-curricular, work-based learning, outward mobility</li> </ul>
PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION(S)	B2	<p><b>Programme Specification(s)</b> <i>(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.)</i></p>
PROGRAMME REGULATIONS	B3	<p><b>Regulations</b> <i>(in accordance with standard template.)</i> A link to the standard template with a statement of specific requirements and proposed departures or full set(s) may be provided.</p>
MODULE DESCRIPTIONS	B4	<p>Module descriptions <i>(in accordance with standard format.)</i> Modules should be indexed and grouped by level <i>(or course if limited commonality)</i>.</p>
SECTION C: RESOURCES <i>available to the course(s)/subject</i>	C1	<p><b>Resources (physical)</b>            Specialist rooms/facilities/equipment/resources required beyond the standard provision should be clearly identified and detailed. Library resources should specifically identify whether they are already held by the Library. For revalidation, dedicated resources for particular courses should be clearly identified.</p>
	C2	<p><b>Resources (staff)</b>            Summary statement and brief CVs for all staff <i>(with particular reference to more recent activities.) (CVs should be no longer than one or two pages each. These staff form the course or subject committees.)</i>            For revalidation, a summary matrix indicating which staff contribute to which courses or subject strands should be provided.            Information on the use of part-time lecturers, postgraduate teaching assistants and demonstrators.</p>
SECTION D: SUBJECT NETWORK OR FRANCHISE MANAGEMENT <i>(if applicable)</i>	D	<p>Commentary on the arrangements for the operation of the network or relations between the University course committee and franchised course committee.</p>
<p>IN ADDITION: reports from University departments on Library and IT resource matters are provided centrally to the evaluation panel and exceptionally for revalidation, for example if a new location is proposed; external examiner reports for the last two academic years are also provided to the revalidation panel. The Faculty Partnership Manager provides a statement on the nature of the Faculty's engagement with each institution in the preparation of documentation and any recommendation regarding adjustment to the approved intake sizes.            Assessment rubrics should be provided as a supplementary document by the team.</p>		



## **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 Strategic Plans, Learning and Teaching Strategy, academic policies and guiding documents, and policy on equality of opportunity.

### **2 AWARD AND STANDARDS**

Establish that the programme is compatible with the principles incorporated in the overall modular course structure of the University, its scheme of awards and its qualifications and credit framework. 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.

### **3 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 learning opportunities should be developed.

### **4 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 10).

### **5 GRADUATE QUALITIES**

For undergraduate degrees, ensure consistency with the qualities expected of a University of Ulster graduate, in accordance with the statement at Appendix 9.

### **6 DEMAND**

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

### **7 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.

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

## CRITERIA FOR THE PLANNING OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Course proposals should:

- a) be consistent with the broad objectives of the University, the expectation of the generic programme specification for Access Diplomas (see Academic Office website), and possess the following key features, in that they:
  - facilitate entry to Higher Education
  - are designed and taught to meet the needs of mature students (namely aged 19 years and over at the commencement of the course)
  - cater for those without conventional entry qualifications who do not yet feel ready for direct entry to Higher Education
  - meet the needs of specific groups in the community, identified as under-represented in Higher Education, and therefore facilitate the implementation of equal opportunities policies
  - offer a curriculum which recognises the strengths and prior experiential learning of mature students and which values their diversity of culture
  - provide a planned programme of studies, or an organised educational experience which is an alternative to the courses provided by other educational, vocational or professional examining authorities
- b) show evidence of demand for the course and of opportunities for progression to further study;
- c) show evidence that adequate resources will be available to allow the course to proceed;
- d) demonstrate that there will be a satisfactory framework within which the course will be organised and managed;
- e) fulfil the criteria for an Access Diploma award of the University, with 120 credits (1200 student effort hours). At least 60 credit points in the final year must be at NICATS Level 3. There may be one introductory Mathematics module at Level 1.

Courses are taken over a period of two years part-time or one year full-time study.

The content of a programme depends on its nature and subject area but the crucial difference between Access and other provision at this level is an emphasis on learning skills as well as content, on 'learning to learn' as well as learning 'facts'. Students are encouraged to integrate learning skills with discipline knowledge.

The aim of Access provision is to develop transferable skills which can be used by the student who will enter Higher Education for the first time, and there is usually a core consisting of study skills, communication skills, literacy, numeracy, information technology and tutorial support.

All Access courses are expected to meet GCSE equivalence in English. They may also provide a GCSE standard of competence in Mathematics. The former NICATS project developed standard modules in Mathematics at this level, whose GCSE equivalence has been approved by the University, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Assessment usually encompasses both coursework (essays, seminar presentations, etc) and timed seen or unseen written examination papers, as a process of student assessment and as a preparation for study in higher education.

## **PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK FOR LEARNING**

### **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 tasks, not just demonstrating learning through the tasks
3. Deliver timely learner-related feedback information that helps students to self-correct and communicates 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 had 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.

## **GRADUATE QUALITIES**

The following statement of the expected qualities of graduates reflects Ulster's aspiration to be the leading provider 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 the resolution of problems
- 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. The following guidance has been endorsed by the Committee to assist course teams.

### **Guidance**

The University includes the above Statement of Graduate Qualities in the national Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) document which is available to all students commencing undergraduate degrees at the University from 2011/12. The document is developed over the student's undergraduate career and it may be released to third parties with the permission of the graduate student.

It should be borne in mind that there are many qualities that a university graduate might expect to have. In essence this statement tries to encapsulate those qualities that characterise an Ulster graduate. As they apply to any Ulster graduate they are generic and aspirational until they are related to specific discipline areas. The challenge for faculties is to articulate the graduate qualities as they refer to each programme or subject area.

The purpose of the Statement of Graduate Qualities is two-fold.

- It acts as a framework on which evidence can be accumulated on the qualities. A sample evidence base is set out below demonstrating where the student's experience can be applied.
- It also acts as a guide for course teams to develop further opportunities to evidence the qualities.

Tying the Graduate Qualities into course evaluation and revalidation as well as into the HEAR document process is designed to ensure that the Graduate Qualities are properly embraced and articulated and not seen as a 'lip-service' exercise.

Articulation of the graduate qualities through the subject disciplines is not a new concept. Emphasising them at a programme-of-study level helps to make them more transparent and more explicit; course teams and students are more conscious of them, more alert to looking for opportunities to express them.

In articulating the Graduate Qualities in an evaluation or revalidation document it is not envisaged that the course team provide a tick-box mapping exercise but it should provide a narrative at the course level and use examples from modules in defending their approach. Value is seen in the review and reflection entered into by the course teams as they explore the Graduate Qualities and facilitate students meeting them.

The Graduate Qualities have been written with the nominal degree graduate in mind but as they are generic, they should also inform and be considered by other levels of qualifications.

(The University adopted in 2015 a set of principles underpinning the student learning experience for its own students. These cover the Ulster Learning Model, Employability, Internationalisation, Digital Literacy, Research/Teaching Nexus, and Ethics and Sustainability, and support the achievement of the Graduate Qualities.)

### **Evidence that the Graduate Qualities have been achieved.**

Examples below are only indicative and are not meant to be an exhaustive list of the sources of evidence. As an exercise, faculty groups or subject disciplines might wish to concentrate on a graduate quality that does not easily lend itself to articulation and discuss how evidence could be demonstrated with the spirit of the graduate quality.

#### **Subject-specific knowledge and skills informed by current research and professional/vocational practice.**

Evidence will come from the Subject Benchmark Statements and specific PSRB requirements.

The student can point to learning outcomes at programme level and within specific modules. In particular, students can refer to the input from research active staff in the final year.

#### **Flexibility, creativity and an entrepreneurial approach to the resolution of problems.**

The student can point to examples within modules where creativity, complex problem solving and innovation could be demonstrated.

#### **Self-confidence, global citizenship, appreciation of sustainability matters, ethical leadership and a commitment to life-wide learning, professionalism and employability.**

Relevant examples and evidence could be garnered from exchange programmes, Study USA and Erasmus, placement, visiting speakers, work with multi-national corporations; as well as the curriculum and learning and teaching and assessment methods in appropriate modules.

Evidence from the student's engagement with Tutoring in Schools, Science Shop, mentoring, corporate social responsibility, sponsorship and volunteering activities and participation in clubs and societies.

Students could provide evidence of employability from placement reports and employers, programme-specific KIPTs, student project, seminars and workshops and examples of working as an individual or in a team.

QAA and HEA have published guidance in education for sustainable development (2014) at [qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources](http://qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources), or search for Sustainable Development.

#### **Effective collaborative working, communication skills and the capacity for reflective practice, including the ability to give and receive feedback.**

The student can point to areas where skills such as teamwork, presentations, analysis, critical evaluation and argument have been developed throughout their course; input and accreditation by professional bodies; placement and choices within a programme.

## EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### 1. Ulster's Employability Strategy

Ulster's (2018-2023) Employability Strategy [employability.ulster.ac.uk/strategy/](http://employability.ulster.ac.uk/strategy/) is premised on the belief that the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes for employability is best embedded within the curriculum and supported with access to impactful co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.

The Staff Employability Portal provides detailed guidance and resources to assist internal programme teams with embedding Employability and Enterprise in the curriculum. The following is a reduced version of the internal statement on employability.

#### **The key drivers for employability include:**

##### **Embedding Employability in the Curriculum**

Embedding employability is about providing the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements and attitudes to enable graduates to make successful transitions and contributions, benefitting them, the economy and their communities. Employability is relevant to all students, and at all levels of study so includes both undergraduate and postgraduate provision. To be addressed effectively, employability should be embedded into all learning and teaching processes and practices – particularly in the curriculum – and considered throughout the student lifecycle, from the very start of a student programme through to the completion of their studies.

All stakeholders, including academic staff, students, employability services, students' unions, and employers, have a role to play in embedding employability and should be involved in doing so via a collaborative, partnership approach.

#### **Embedding employability is important to:**

**Students:** with the rise in tuition fees, students are investing in their future careers and are more focussed on how the institution can support them to enhance their immediate employment prospects and longer term employability.

**Employers:** employers have specific needs in terms of graduate knowledge, skills and attributes which should inform the curriculum, HE business engagement and employability support in HE.

**Institutions:** excellence in graduate employment and employability enhances an institution's reputation and global standing, influencing student recruitment and engagement with employers.

**UK economy:** graduate employability is a government priority as it is vital to the UK's economic growth (regionally, nationally and internationally) and supports both social and cultural development.

##### **Employer Engagement**

Ulster University recognises the centrality of employer engagement in the design and delivery of the curriculum, enhancing student employability and responding to local and national demand for skills.

##### **Work Experience**

Work Experience is increasingly valued by employers, with 59% of employers rating it as one of the most important factors when recruiting graduates (CBI/Pearson, 2017). Work experience complements the development of transferable skills and positive attitudes to work. It also improves a student's opportunity to gain a professional/managerial job on graduating (BIS, 2013b).

Integral to providing students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to take on challenging graduate level jobs are the opportunities afforded to our students to undertake work-based and/or work-related learning either as an integral part of their course of study as a coterminous award, or short-term internships.



## Widening Participation

Ulster University is a sector leader in widening access to higher education, with the institution consistently attracting students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Institutional data and wider research highlight that students from Widening Participation (WP) backgrounds are significantly less likely to achieve positive employability outcomes compared to their non-WP counterparts.

All faculties and central departments must maintain and further develop support for WP students and graduates to ensure they have positive graduate outcomes.

## Entrepreneurship

Given the broad portfolio of Ulster's subject provision and the regional infrastructure of start-up, microenterprise and small business sectors, it is important that we adequately prepare students for alternative career options and develop their confidence to take entrepreneurial activity to the next level. Enterprising competencies, such as teamwork, creative thinking, problem-solving and commercial awareness, are essential skills that have been identified by employers as key priorities.

Embedding the delivery and assessment of enterprise competencies in the curriculum will be useful to those in employment, or those who become self-employed and work on a freelance or consultancy basis.

## 2. Employability and Employment

Enhancing employability is a priority and our ambition is to be a sector leader in the provision and support of student and graduate employability.

The University acknowledges the distinction between employment and employability. Whereas **employment** is generally understood to mean having a job or being self-employed, **employability** means possessing the skills and qualities which will facilitate and enhance one's chances of gaining a job or self-employment.

The University adopts the Advance HE view of employability as: 'providing opportunities, to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements and attitudes to engage graduates to make a successful transition and contribution; benefitting them, the economy and their communities' (HEA 2015).

Employability is therefore not simply about getting a job but embraces the development of:

- 1 Employability skills and attributes;
- 2 Career planning and management skills;
- 3 A capacity of deep learning, reflection and action planning; and
- 4 A positive attitude towards lifelong learning.

## 3. The University's Framework for Employability

The complexity of employability and the variety of effective and legitimate approaches taken to embed it in our curricula underscore the fact that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Embedding and enhancement have to be undertaken with reference to curricula context, and without prejudicing the subject specific and disciplinary dimensions of learning.

The University has developed an innovative and comprehensive employability framework that can be woven into the fabric of the curriculum, the students' learning experiences, and our co-curricular and extra-curricular provision. The framework creates an ecosystem of multiple, interconnected employability activities which faculties, schools and programmes can use to plan, develop and deliver their own student-centred approaches to employability.

The Framework for Employability is supported by an Engagement model and Academic Support model [employability.ulster.ac.uk/strategy/](http://employability.ulster.ac.uk/strategy/) (pages 13-15).

## 4. Go Global (Outward Mobility)

As the UK seeks to boost trade links around the world, outward student mobility has never been more important. Outward mobility benefits individuals, universities, society and the economy, with many universities offering degrees with placements abroad, ranging from a few weeks to an entire year.

Gaining international experience as a student at Ulster can have a significant impact on future career plans.

Graduate employers increasingly seek recruits with multicultural awareness, adaptability and awareness of global business networks; international work-based learning experiences enable students to develop and document these highly transferable skills which are proven to increase employability.

The University's Employability Strategy 2018-2023 affirms our commitment to increasing the opportunities for Ulster students to access international work experience, through internships, placements and work-related learning, and where appropriate, for these experiences to be assessed and accredited.

By encouraging our students to experience different work environments, people, cultures and organisations, they will not only develop their technical and professional skills but will also develop a global mindset to excel in a competitive graduate job market.

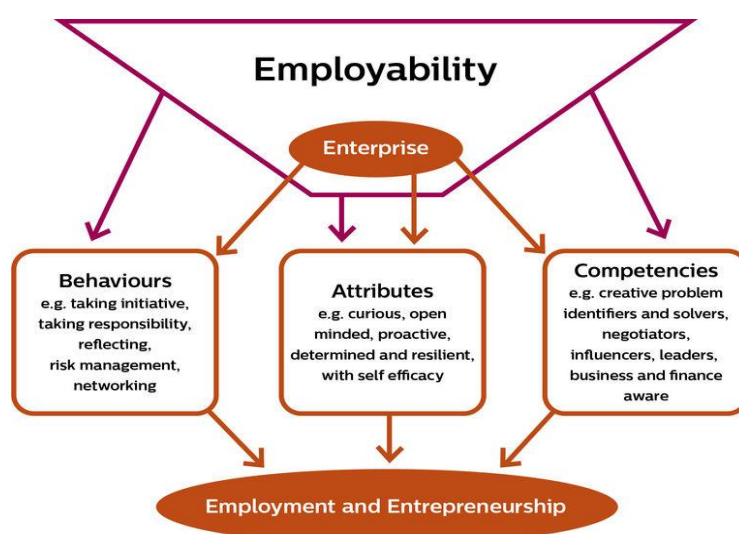
## 5. The relationship between Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

There is an overlap between the broad set of skills, attributes and competencies that contribute to graduate employability and the characteristics of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. These are not the same, for example a small or micro business may value and utilise enterprising and entrepreneurial qualities more highly than a larger business or company, although a research and development department within the same company may also seek out these competencies. Hence the potential career trajectory of the student has a part to play.

An effective approach to Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education has a significant impact on learning to learn, and therefore the future success of the individual student. It prepares them for a rewarding professional life and acts as a significant vehicle to deliver against the institutional aims for graduate employment, employability and future success.

Employability support within the University covers a vast array of interventions and activities, both in the curriculum and beyond. These interventions may also support Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. However, an effective approach needs to go much deeper than these kinds of activities alone and collaboratively we need to develop a broader more coordinated range of activities that build year on year.

The diagram below illustrates the relationship between enterprise and employability/entrepreneurship. Career paths may reflect these interconnections.



### Discovering synergies between enterprise and employability (credit: Higher Education Academy)

For additional support and guidance on Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education please refer to [gaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources](http://gaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources) or search for this topic.

## **GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION AND REVALIDATION PANELS FOR PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY PARTNER INSTITUTIONS**

### **1 COURSE APPRAISAL**

A critical but constructive and detailed appraisal of the course proposal or provision within a revalidation unit/sub-unit is to be carried out. The unit is a set of cognate courses grouped together 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 information.

Panels should consider the individual merits of each course in accordance with the criteria at 2 and 3 below, and address generic subject-wide matters such as the broad aims of provision, overall learning and teaching and assessment strategies, and the efficient use of resources.

A report of the meeting is prepared. Recommendations for approval are considered by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

### **2 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.

### **3 THE PARTICULAR COURSE**

The 'subject network' is the University's preferred model of collaboration in Northern Ireland, with partners collaborating in the development of a single course which is offered at a number of locations. The capability of each institution to deliver the course, as well as the co-operative arrangements for its management and the assurance of comparable standards through the operation of the network, should be considered.

Validated course proposals have been developed by the partner institution. Franchised courses adopt the curriculum of an identical course at the University. Consequently, for the latter proposals, panels pay particular attention to the course team's understanding of the curriculum, teaching and assessment methods, rather than the curriculum itself apart from

exceptional variations, and its capacity to deliver the course, effective relations with the home course team to ensure compatible standards and student experience, and the adequacy of resources.

With regard to each course, please consider:

- a) the appropriateness of its aims and learning outcomes within the context of the University's objectives, strategies and overarching guidance (see 4 – 7);
- b) the standards set with regard to the following:
  - i) the admission requirements;
  - ii) the structure and levels of the course including its academic progression and internal coherence, and its compatibility with the principles incorporated in the overall qualifications and credit framework of the University and its modular course structure;
  - iii) the relevance and currency of the syllabuses for the different components of the course; the extent to which they are informed by research or scholarship and taught by staff engaged in research or scholarship; the extent of consultation with industry, commerce and professions or other interested bodies;
  - iv) the forms, quality and management of the learning and teaching processes, including arrangements for the first year in undergraduate courses, group work and independent learning, and placement or study in other institutions where available;
  - v) the assessment strategy (including feedback), 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;
  - 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.

#### **4 UNIVERSITY OBJECTS AND STRATEGIC PLAN**

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 Strategic Plan (2016) identifies four broad priority areas: civic contribution, academic excellence, global vision, and operational excellence. Excellence in teaching will provide students with a high-quality, challenging and rewarding learning experience that equips them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to:

- demonstrate critical intellectual enquiry
- progress in their chosen career or entrepreneurial endeavour
- adapt to change
- become responsible global citizens making meaningful contributions to professional communities and wider society.

Student engagement and success are key. The student experience will be enhanced through the provision of well-designed, flexible, inclusive, relevant programmes and curricula.

Courses at partner institutions should align with these priorities.

## **5 CURRICULUM DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

The University supports an integrated curriculum design framework. For modules, there is a norm of a minimum size of 20 credit points, and typically no more than four learning outcomes and two items of assessment in a module. (An item may include more than one component, but the overall item will have a single mark.) The typical assessment load is 2000 words (or equivalent) per 10 credit points. These norms are not limits and course teams should present a sound rationale to depart from them.

There are guiding resources for writing learning outcomes and reading lists, designing assessment and associated briefs, criteria and rubrics, and equivalence for different types of assessment. General guidance on assessment is also contained in the University's Assessment Handbook which includes Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning.

Panels are asked to discuss with course/subject teams their approach to curriculum design.

## **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, 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

The team's approach to the development of such qualities and skills at a level consistent with the award should be explored.

## 7 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 learning and teaching and assessment and student support. Staff are obliged to anticipate the requirements of disabled students so that they are not placed at a disadvantage and to make reasonable adjustments. These may include adjustment to the form or conditions of assessment. The University’s Admissions Policy reflects these principles.

## UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

**AIDE-MEMOIRE FOR EVALUATION AND REVALIDATION (PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTIONS)**

This Aide-Memoire consists of questions and prompts to assist panel members in their consideration of the appropriateness of the course or subject, or courses or subject within a revalidation unit, to the University's objectives and the standards for the award(s). It is also available to course/subject teams to aid their preparation, for the event.

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 draw on chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Validated courses are developed by partner institutions and delivered to their own students who are Associate Students of the University, while franchised courses adopt the curriculum which has already been developed by the University and the partner institution offers it to University students. Consequently, for the latter, panels focus on the course team's understanding of the curriculum and its ability to deliver it. Certain questions will be more valuable to external subject experts, others to internal University members conversant with University policies and processes.

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

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION (SUBJECT AND PROGRAMME CONTEXT)		
A1	Rationale and Origins	<p>This section should make clear whether the course(s) being presented are 'validated' or 'franchised' in accordance with the University's definitions. Academic Planning Advisory Group 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.</p> <p>Do you have a clear view of why the course(s) are provided? Do the course(s) fit with the University's strategic aims and objectives? Do they satisfy the general criteria identified in the Guidelines?</p> <p>If a course is only available full-time, would part-time mode be feasible?</p>
COMMENTS		
A2	Projected intakes	
COMMENTS		
A3	Contextualised Research and Analysis: Standards and Quality Indicators	<p>What has the team's approach been to fulfilling the expectations about standards set out in the relevant subject benchmark statement? 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? 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> <p>How have quality indicators (course, learner, employability analytics) informed curriculum (re) design?</p>
COMMENTS		
A4	Stakeholder Engagement:	How have appropriate stakeholders been involved in programme(s) design and development? Are student and employer needs (regionally, nationally and internationally) and, as appropriate, government policy on skills adequately reflected? Is there evidence that relevant and worthwhile careers will be available to new graduates?
	PSRBs	Are there appropriate working relations between the course/subject team and the relevant PSRBs?
	Graduate Qualities	Has the team identified appropriate attributes and skills, including critical thinking,

	Academic Excellence and Research-based Teaching	<p>which meet the University's broad expectations as set out in the Statement of Graduate Qualities and their discipline reference points? Are these integrated into learning and teaching and assessment processes? How will graduates be able to demonstrate them?</p> <p>The Learning and Teaching Strategy expects courses to be underpinned by current and appropriate discipline-specific and pedagogic research and scholarship (and professional activity where appropriate). Is there evidence of this?</p> <p>Has there been participation in curriculum development activity (e.g. Advance HE/ Higher Education Academy projects or with the University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice or Office for Digital Learning)?</p>
COMMENTS		
A5	Revisions (Revalidation only) and Innovations	<p>Is the summary of recent and proposed revisions sufficient? Is the rationale for proposed changes clear and are the changes appropriate? (Revalidation only).</p> <p>Is there evidence of creativity and innovation in curriculum design and delivery? This should take account, as appropriate, of course, school, faculty, University and national initiatives and identified stakeholders' needs. Consider engagement with the Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice, Office for Digital Learning, Jisc and Advance HE/Higher Education Academy.</p>
COMMENTS		
SECTION B: THE PROGRAMME(S)		
B1	Programme Design Commentaries	
B1.1	Subject/Course Philosophy	<p>Is it evident that the course philosophy is 'owned' by the team? Is it visible in the design of programme(s) and modules?</p> <p>How are global citizenship, education for sustainable development, internationalisation integrated into the design of the programme(s)?</p>
COMMENTS		
B1.2	<p>Course Structure, Progression, Coherence, Choice</p> <p>Structure diagrams</p> <p>Transfer (to and from other programmes of study and opportunities for progression to further study)</p>	<p>Is there coherence within the course? Are the choice of modules and their level and sequence 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?</p> <p>If needed (multiple entry points, pathways), are there diagrams to illustrate sequencing of modules? Are modules located in the appropriate semester and year? Are modules correctly designated as compulsory or optional?</p> <p>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? Has a sound rationale been given for modules smaller than 20 credit points?</p> <p>How flexible is the part-time mode?</p> <p>Do franchised courses follow the structure of the University course?</p> <p>Are the modules shared with other programmes?</p> <p>Are adequate and meaningful opportunities for transfer to and from other courses available?</p> <p>Has the articulation been clearly addressed?</p>
COMMENTS		
B1.3	Student support and guidance Induction Study skills	<p>Are the learning and teaching methods varied? In undergraduate courses are they responsive to the range of entry qualifications?</p> <p>How has the course team facilitated opportunities to build communities and foster a sense of belonging? Does the strategy clearly articulate the induction process for each level? Does induction effectively support the transition into, through and beyond HE?</p> <p>How are the specific requirements of students with disabilities and others with particular needs, as recognised under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order, addressed and supported? Do Advisers of Studies and other staff engage with student support professionals?</p>



		<p>Do the expectations for attendance support student learning, particularly in year 1 of undergraduate courses, where attendance is a key requirement for success. How is attendance monitored? Is monitoring effective? How are issues of retention addressed?</p> <p>Do the induction and transition processes meet the expectations of the University's guidance? Are the arrangements for induction effective?</p> <p>Does the development of study skills include self-assessment skills? Are there opportunities for students to reflect on, and take responsibility for their own learning?</p> <p>How are HE study, writing and referencing skills developed? Is the development of academic skills (including learning to learn in higher education and enquiry and information literacy skills) 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?</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 HE 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>
<b>COMMENTS</b>		
B1.4	Information Literacy and Digital Capabilities	<p>How are information literacy skills embedded and progressively developed across the programme levels? Has the Library been involved?</p> <p>Do the assessment tasks develop ICT proficiency and skills?</p>
<b>COMMENTS</b>		
B1.5	Learning and Teaching Strategy	<p>Does this section provide an overview of <u>key</u> learning and teaching pedagogy/approaches, which would demonstrate effectiveness in promoting student learning and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the effective delivery of the curriculum?</p> <p>Is there evidence of compliance with University, Faculty and School policies and priorities in relation to learning and teaching, in particular the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the guidelines for first year teaching, and the development of Graduate Qualities?</p> <p>Are the learning and teaching delivery methods varied, promoting inclusivity for all students? Do the learning and teaching methods make use of innovative learning technologies?</p> <p>What learning approaches and teaching methods are adopted for large groups, small groups, practical sessions? How is student participation achieved? Is use made of group work and e-learning? If not, would they be beneficial?</p> <p>For substantial fully online provision, is there a comprehensive digital learning course management plan, drawn up in consultation with the Office for Digital Learning to meet the Quality Precepts for Digital Learning?</p>
<b>COMMENTS</b>		
B1.6	Assessment Strategy	<p>Is there evidence of compliance with the University/Faculty/School policies in relation to assessment?</p> <p>In franchised courses, are the assessment requirements the same as in the home course?</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>Is there a range of assessment methods? Are they appropriate to the learning</p>



		What support is provided to all students, including non-traditional entrants, to maximise their career potential?
COMMENTS		
B2	Programme Specification(s)	<p>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)? Are the programme learning outcomes written at the final level of the award? Are they correctly mapped in the matrix? (Detailed comments on specific module outcomes, assessment methods and criteria should be made under B4.)</p> <p>Is the summary information on course structure consistent with that in the rest of the documentation?</p> <p>Are the summary statements about student support, admissions and the regulation of standards consistent with University policy and practice and the course regulations in section B3?</p>
COMMENTS		
B3	Regulations	<p>(Either full set(s) or a link to the standard template; a statement of specific requirements and proposed departures are provided.)</p> <p>Do course regulations accord with the requirements of the University's award regulations? (<a href="http://ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice">ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice</a> 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, e.g. core modules?</p> <p>Are any departures from University regulations proposed? Are they appropriate?</p>
COMMENTS		
B4	<p>Module Descriptions (For each module)</p> <p>CHERP has developed guidance on module design, including writing learning outcomes, reading lists, assessment briefs, criteria and rubrics. <a href="http://ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development">ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development</a></p>	<p>Does the module title adequately reflect the content? Is the credit level properly assigned? 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)? Has a sound rationale been given for modules smaller than 20 credit points (a curriculum design principle)?</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 and independent study?</p> <p>Is there a clear relationship between module rationale, aims and learning outcomes and those of the course?</p> <p>Are the design and organisation of the curriculum effective in promoting student learning and achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the fulfilment of Graduate Qualities and the Student Experience Principles including employability, global citizenship, education for sustainable development, internationalisation (see B1.1, 1.7)?</p> <p>Does the curriculum embed the development of academic skills (including learning to learn in higher education initial enquiring developed?) 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 learning and teaching and assessment methods appropriate to the intended learning outcomes at the level of the module?</p> <p>Is the curriculum 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 in accordance with University expectation, is there a</p>

	<p>Course teams upload in a supplementary document assessment rubrics.</p>	<p>sustained project or dissertation module? Are the arrangements for project/dissertation supervision adequate?</p> <p>Do the specific assessment criteria meet the University's generic level criteria as stated in the Assessment Handbook?</p> <p>Is the assessment weighting between coursework and examination appropriate? Is the rationale for different assessment weightings between modules sound? Are there more than two items of assessment? (An item may include more than one component (such as in a portfolio) but the overall item will have a single mark.) Has a case been made to depart from this curriculum design principle? Is sufficient information provided about the forms of assessment (e.g. duration and format of examination, length of assignment, summary assessment criteria/ marking scheme)? Is there equity and consistency in assessment, taking account of the University's workload equivalence guide for word counts (2018)? There should be approximately 2000 words (or equivalent) per 10 credit points. Are they appropriate for their diagnostic, formative and/or summative purposes? Does the assessment meet the University's Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning?</p> <p>Where a word limit is set, do penalties follow University's policy (2018)?</p> <p>Does the assessment of group work ensure that individual student achievement is recognised? The University expects that at least 25% of each student's assessment result in group work is based on his/her individual contribution in modules contributing to a final award, and significantly more where modules are wholly or mostly assessed by group work.</p> <p>What are the arrangements for moderation and external examining of work-based learning/placement?</p> <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?</p>
COMMENTS		
SECTION C: RESOURCES		
C1	Physical	<p>Are the physical resources (general and specialist accommodation, laboratory equipment, library, IT) available sufficient to ensure the successful delivery of the course(s), for the cohort size?</p> <p>Is there a renewal/updating policy for equipment?</p> <p>Comment on the general appearance/condition of buildings and classrooms. Are there adequate study facilities for students?</p> <p>Are the book and periodical stocks appropriate and accessible (opening hours; borrowing entitlements; electronic and remote access)? (Note in partner institutions, the University's central service departments will have made reports to the University as part of the initial approval of course planning; Library Services will also make detailed reports on partner institution proposals in accordance with a detailed checklist.)</p>
COMMENTS		
C2 C2.1	<p>Staff</p> <p>Summary and CVs <a href="http://ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development">ulster.ac.uk/cherp/academic-development</a></p>	<p>Are the staff sufficiently qualified and experienced to deliver the course successfully at its qualification level? Is there appropriate expertise? Is there evidence of research or scholarship in staff profiles?</p> <p>Are the staff numbers adequate? What is the balance between full-time and part-time staff? Will part-time contracts allow sufficient time to undertake expected duties?</p> <p>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? Is there sound leadership in the course/subject and module teams? Are you confident that the staff can work together as an effective team?</p> <p>Is there adequate technical, administrative and other support staff?</p> <p>Is there a staff development plan? Will it contribute to the enhancement of teaching? What use is made of Peer Observation and Peer-Supported Review?</p>

		How many staff have undertaken the University's Postgraduate Certificate and/or MEd in Higher Education Practice or are otherwise qualified in teaching in higher education?
COMMENTS		
C2.2	Summary matrix (revalidation)	Does the matrix match the information in module descriptions?
COMMENTS		
C2.3	Part-time staff, PTAs	Is adequate support provided for postgraduate teaching assistants and demonstrators and part-time lecturers and their integration into the team?
COMMENTS		
INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATION		
Network or franchise management		<p>Are there adequate arrangements for course committees to meet and to keep the curriculum under review and to consider other matters within their terms of reference? Is there a reasonable distribution of responsibilities among members of the course team?</p> <p>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 co-ordinators built into a calendar of events; identification of lead module co-ordinators; possible meeting of module teams; common external examiner(s); internal cross-moderation; common timing for shared examinations; common examination board as permitted by University; co-ordination of revisions; consideration of student views across all partners; common template for course handbook.</p>
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? Have assessment rubrics been provided?
COMMENTS		

Academic Office  
July 2019

## AIDE-MEMOIRE

## SUPPLEMENT FOR FOUNDATION DEGREES

<b>Relationship with other courses within the host institution (A)</b>	
1	If transfer into the course from existing provisions is planned, are the pathways clear and can admission be achieved in a way which does not weaken the academic integrity of the final award?
<b>Course Structure: Benchmarks and reference points (B2.8)</b>	
2	Where applicable has the course planning team taken account of: University of Ulster Qualifications and Credit Framework; Foundation degree Characteristics Statement; Subject Benchmarks; National Occupational Standards; Sector Skills Council Frameworks; HEFCE Prospectus.
<b>Course Structure: Curriculum (B1, B2.8, B2.9.6, B4)</b>	
3	Does the design and content of the curriculum reflect the core features of the Foundation degree qualification (employer involvement; accessibility; progression and articulation; flexible delivery)?
4	Does the curriculum take account of national occupational standards and subject benchmarks or has the curriculum drawn upon the relevant Sector Skill Council Foundation degree framework?
5	Is there balance and integration of employment-related skills and broad-based academic study and content?
6	Do the Learning Outcomes demonstrate the integration of Work-Based Learning/Work Related Learning with the academic and theoretical content?
7	How is employer confidence in the programme content and output to be assessed?
8	Are the progression arrangements governing admission on to programmes within the University (and, if appropriate, accreditation pathways for professional and vocational bodies) explicit and achievable?
9	Are the students adequately prepared for Work-Based Learning?
<b>Work-Based Learning (WBL) (B2.4)</b>	
10	Are you confident that sufficient placement opportunities of appropriate level and nature will exist to service the needs of all students on the programme?
11	Will individual Learning Contracts be established between the student, the institute and the employer to facilitate the operation and assessment of the WBL component?
12	Are the arrangements for the marking, moderation and external examining of the WBL component satisfactory?
<b>Learning and teaching and assessment (B2.5)</b>	
13	Does the learning and teaching strategy serve the core features of a Foundation degree (providing the knowledge, understanding and skills that employers need)?
14	Does the assessment framework address a range of employment-related skills (generic, key, technical, work-related)?
15	How specifically does the learning and teaching strategy tie together academic learning and WBL (eg do modules use actual case studies; undertake 'real' briefs/projects; is any of the student output seen/commented upon/marked by employers)?
16	Where employers are contributing to the delivery of the programme, how are these contributions designed and integrated?
17	Are employers involved in the assessment of students? If so, how are they prepared to fulfil the role? Are they available to respond to student queries which may arise at times and locations which are accessible to the students?
<b>Faculty Partnership Manager (C2)</b>	
18	Is the role of the Faculty Partnership Manager understood?
<b>Principles for the management of two-year three-semester part-time foundation degrees</b>	
19	Have the principles (annex) been addressed?

**COURSE EVALUATION/SUBJECT REVALIDATION****PRELIMINARY COMMENTS FORM****Form CA7****COURSE/SUBJECT:****DATE OF VALIDATION:**

Members of the panel are requested, time permitting, to provide preliminary comments on the submission. External members are asked to consider the curriculum and its delivery in particular. 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
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**UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER****COURSE EVALUATION/SUBJECT UNIT REVALIDATION****INSPECTION OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES REPORT FORM****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 new external courses/locations the University's central departments will provide detailed reports on general computing and library resources.)

<b>1</b>	<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	
	Is the teaching and specialist accommodation adequate?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Are the study facilities for students adequate?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	If No to any of the above, please give details. If Yes, please add comments, if desired.	
<b>2</b>	<b>IT SERVICES</b>	
	Are the IT resources and technical support adequate?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Do the present level of availability and future commitments for IT laboratory services meet the requirements of the provision?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Is the basic IT literacy training, eg email, web browsing, wordprocessing, presentation software, adequate?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	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?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	If Yes, please specify:	
<b>3</b>	<b>LIBRARY</b>	
	Are the book and periodical stocks and other non-book media adequate and appropriate for the course(s)?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Are the commitments to meet future needs adequate?	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Is electronic and remote access available? (External provision only.)	<b>Yes/No</b>
	Are opening hours adequate? (External provision only.)	<b>Yes/No</b>
	If no to any of the above, please give details. If yes Please add comments if desired.	



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

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

Academic Office  
July 2014

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

**Form CA8b)**

To ensure that student views are disseminated to both the panel and course/subject team, 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 2014

## **GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING TOURS OF FACILITIES IN PARTNER INSTITUTIONS**

The tour of partner institution resources is an essential part of the validation process. In an effort to ensure consistency in the approach taken by the Faculty Partnership Manager accompanying members of the validation panel the following checklist has been compiled.

- A visit to typical teaching accommodation and other relevant facilities in the area(s) used by the students concerned.
- A visit to the computing facilities available to the students.
- A visit to the library premises to enable the visitor to see what books are available. If books have recently been ordered that are not yet in the Library or the team intends to make purchases on confirmation of validation it is advisable to have a list of such books and the librarian briefed to indicate that they have been or are to be ordered.
- The student support facilities (counselling; careers; financial support) so that the visitor can see the sort of advice available to students and in particular to the type of (adult) learner who enters these programmes.
- The catering facilities might also be included – the opportunities such students have to sustain themselves during the day and/or evening. Visitors may want to know about out-of-hours provision if relevant.

Institutions should remember that the tour is their opportunity to show themselves off to best advantage and impress the visitor with their care, academic concern and support as well as the facilities and library and web support that are offered to students. Institutions may decide, where appropriate, to provide a presentation from subject experts, for example the Head of IT resources. This may be appropriate where an institution operates across a number of sites, and where students have access to facilities across sites in close proximity to each other.

The person in charge of the tour should devise a planned itinerary around the institution and send it to the relevant Partnership Manager in advance of the event. There should also be someone from the institution to take the visitors around whose name should be indicated in advance. The institution needs as well to suggest where the visitor should be taken on arrival.

It is probably wise to allow one and a half to two hours for the tour.

A CA8 is used to record the conclusions of the visit.

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

**REVALIDATION UNIT:**

A meeting of the Revalidation Panel will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

**AGENDA and PROGRAMME**

**1 MEMBERSHIP**

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

In Attendance: [The Faculty Partnership Manager is normally in attendance]

**2 REVALIDATION UNIT PROVISION**

To note the provision:

**3 GUIDELINES FOR REVALIDATION PANELS**

To receive the Guidelines for Revalidation Panels.

**4 STANDARDS**

To receive the UK Quality Code's Subject Benchmark Statement for [subject

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

**5 REVALIDATION DOCUMENTATION**

To receive a statement from the Faculty Partnership Manager (CA4).

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

To receive reports from central University departments on Library and IT and digital learning resource matters (CA10 reports).

[To receive a draft updated Contract for Services Agreement (franchised courses).]

To discuss the revalidation document, and to consider inter alia:

Overview, rationale, projected intakes, standards and quality, outcomes of stakeholder engagement in respect of graduate qualities, academic excellence and research-based teaching

Revisions and innovations

Subject philosophy

Course structures and coherence

Student support and guidance, and the development of study skills, information literacy and digital capabilities

Learning and teaching and assessment strategies and methods, and exemplar assessment schedules and arrangements for feedback

Employability and enterprise

Programme specifications and module descriptions

Regulations

Physical resources

Staff resources

**6 [SUBJECT NETWORK/FRANCHISE] MANAGEMENT**

To discuss the management of *the [subject network/relationship with University course]*.

**7 CONCLUSION 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) – COLLEGE-BASED PROVISION**

9.30 am – 10.30 am	<b>Introductions and Tour of Facilities*</b>
10.30 am – 11.30 am	<b>Private meeting of Panel</b>  To note the agenda and to identify matters which should be discussed with a) senior institution staff, b) students and c) the Revalidation Unit team.
11.30 am - 12.00 pm	<b>Meeting with Senior Institution Staff and Revalidation Unit Co-ordinator</b>  To consider how the unit's provision fits within the overall academic plans of the contributing institution(s) and the University; and to discuss such matters as strategy for HE provision, progression opportunities, staffing and other resources.
12.00 pm – 12.45 pm	<b>Meeting with students</b>
12.45 pm - 1.15 pm	<b>Lunch</b>
1.15 pm – 4.00 pm	<b>Meeting with Revalidation Unit Team</b>  To discuss the provision: (see main agenda)
4.00 pm – 4.30 pm	<b>Private meeting of the Panel</b>  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 to consider:  a) whether the provision within the Revalidation Unit remains current and valid and should be approved with minimum and maximum cohort sizes;  b) conditions of approval, if any;  c) recommendations for further consideration by the Faculty/institutions;  d) the date by which a response should be received.
4.30 pm – 4.45 pm	<b>Meeting with institution representatives and Revalidation Unit Co-ordinator</b>  a) To note that the requirements of the University's Ordinance on the Recognition of Institutions and the Recognition Agreement(s) apply.  To note that financial arrangements have been agreed.  To consider aspects of institutional administration and liaison with the University.  b) To communicate the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.

\* May not involve the whole panel

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REVALIDATION

## **INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS (PARTNER INSTITUTION)**

### **Background**

The University of Ulster is committed to providing high quality courses, which meet national and international standards for the award and the subject which delivered by the University itself or by partner institutions. We expect 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 course 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 relevant senior management of the institution to discuss how the provision fits within its 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 Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

### **Panel Membership**

The panel is normally chaired by a senior officer of the University and includes experienced members of academic staff from the University, a student representative, and at least two external subject specialist members from other universities. Industry/employer representative and those of relevant professional or statutory bodies may be involved.

### **Meeting with Students**

Members of the course/subject team will not be present at this meeting and individual views will not be attributed in any report of the meeting. The panel chair will introduce the panel members to you and may ask you to introduce yourselves.

The panel members will want to explore issues that they have noted from their reading of the

documentation provided or that have arisen in their discussions with staff and others. They will be particularly interested in your experiences and how well you believe the course is fulfilling its aims and preparing you for your future career or studies.

They may ask you about your general experience at the institution, and you will have an opportunity to raise topics that you would wish to mention.

The panel may seek your views on some of the aspects of your studies listed. (These topics include those which have been identified by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for its meetings with students.)

You are welcome to raise points not covered by the panel's questions.

Your contribution to the revalidation exercise is very much appreciated.

### **Curriculum Content and Organisation**

- reason for choosing course
- match between curriculum and expectations (for example, flexibility, choice, content)
- appropriateness of the curriculum content to the development of knowledge and skills
- relevance to prospective career/further study
- timetable and workload
- opportunities for practical and vocational experience, where appropriate.

### **Learning and Teaching and Assessment**

- range of teaching and learning methods experienced
- quality of teaching and contact with staff
- guidance and support for independent study
- understanding of assessment methods and criteria
- use of formative assessment
- feedback on assessed work.

### **Progression and Achievement**

- advice on progression
- attainment of intended learning outcomes
- awareness of qualities and skills acquired
- perceptions of 'added-value'
- career aspirations.

### **Support and Guidance**

- induction
- support during periods of practice, study abroad, work experience and other off-campus experience (if applicable).

### **Learning Resources**

- course materials provided
- library services (opening hours, practical access, user support, availability of stock)
- IT provision (opening hours, practical access, user support, availability of terminals)
- specialist equipment, including relevant software
- teaching accommodation, including laboratory or studio provision
- space for study or other independent learning, including practical projects
- catering, social areas.

### **Student Consultation**

- ways in which your views are sought
- representation on Staff/Student Consultative Committees or course/subject committees
- the degree to which your views are influential, with examples
- students' contribution to course development including preparation for revalidation.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE OF A COURSE COMMITTEE AT A PARTNER INSTITUTION

- a) To advise and report on:
  - i) all matters relating to the organisation of teaching, including curricula and examinations, in the course;
  - ii) the effective and efficient use of resources for the course;
  - iii) the progress and conduct of students on the course;
  - iv) the establishment of an effective form of consultation between staff and students on the course;
  - v) such other matters as may be determined.
- b) To submit to the University annual reports on the operation of the course, including reports submitted by external examiners.
- c) To consider evidence of extenuating circumstances presented by students in relation to performance in assessment in semester one, and to decide whether to permit them to take the assessment as for the first time.
- d) To consult with other course committees on matters of mutual interest or concern.

The membership of a course committee at an educational institution should include:

- a) all members of the teaching staff on the course;
- b) the Faculty Partnership Manager;
- c) the Dean of the associated Faculty of the University (ex-officio);
- d) at the discretion of the institution:
  - i) student representatives (subject to their exclusion from consideration of reserved business), the number and manner of appointment to be determined by the institution;
  - ii) co-opted members, subject to such terms and conditions as the institution may determine.

The membership of a course committee for a franchised course should also include the Course Director of the home course at the University and the relevant Head of School.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURSE DIRECTORS (PARTNER INSTITUTIONS)**

The Course Director will be responsible for the organisation and management of the course. In particular the Course Director will:

- 1 act as Chair of the Course Committee;
- 2 in consultation with senior management as appropriate, keep under review the provision of human and physical resources for the course;
- 3 in consultation with senior management as appropriate, ensure that a module co-ordinator is appointed for each course module;
- 4 ensure regular liaison with the Faculty Partnership Manager and other University staff as appropriate, including for franchised courses the Course Director of the course at the University;
- 5 ensure that the Course Committee carries out its functions and be responsible in collaboration with other members of the Course Committee for:
  - a) preparation of course publicity material;
  - b) ensuring that information held on the University module database is updated to take account of revisions which affect the modules taught in the course;
  - c) oversight of the selection of applicants;
  - d) the timetabling of the course;
  - e) arrangements for student induction programmes, including the preparation and distribution of course handbooks and other material to students;
  - f) ensuring that students are adequately informed of both general health and safety matters and those specific to their course of study and for communicating relevant information to them;
  - g) allocation of advisers of studies to students;
  - h) the regular review of student attendance and progress and presentation of reports on such matters to the Course Committee, including evidence of extenuating circumstances submitted by students in relation to performance in examinations and assessment in semester one;
  - i) implementation of the Course Committee's decision regarding the method of staff/student consultation;
  - j) consideration of requests for permission for late submission of coursework on behalf of the course committee;
  - k) collation of draft examination papers and collaboration with external examiners and the University in the approval and moderation of examination papers and other forms of assessment. (For franchised courses this is the responsibility of the Course Director of the University course);
  - l) confirmation of the examination timetable;
  - m) arrangements for meetings of Boards of Examiners and for the attendance of external examiners. (For franchised courses the University Course Director will lead on this);
  - n) arrangements for the preparation of students' results profiles for presentation to the Board of Examiners;
  - o) communicating to unsuccessful students the Board of Examiners' decisions about their performance and progress;
  - p) preparation for consideration by the Course Committee of a draft response to the report(s) of external examiner(s);
  - q) preparation and submission of appropriate documentation, for initial consideration by the Course Committee, for annual monitoring and revalidation and for proposed revisions to the course.

The Course Director may be required to participate in the registration and enrolment of students and associated administrative procedures.

The Course Director of a franchised course is a member of the course committee of the home course at the University.



**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADVISERS OF STUDIES**

- 1 Each registered student on a taught programme of study shall have an adviser of studies.
- 2 Advisers of studies are encouraged to attend induction programmes for new students and to establish contact with their students.
- 3 Advisers of studies will agree with their students the frequency and format of meetings which will normally take place at least once during each semester.
- 4 Advisers of studies have a responsibility to guide their students in matters regarding their choice of optional modules, curriculum content, assessment, progress, and study and examination skills.
- 5 Advisers of studies are encouraged to make themselves conversant with the academic and personal background of their students, and, as necessary, to consult other members of staff who teach or supervise them.
- 6 Advisers of studies are responsible for reporting on their students' progress in accordance with the procedures approved by the course committee.
- 7 Advisers of studies are also encouraged to act in a general advisory capacity and to assist their students in meeting the requirements of study for the course. Where necessary, they should seek, or advise their students to seek, guidance and assistance from the range of support provided by institution. They should make themselves conversant with the facilities and resources available.
- 8 Advisers of studies are responsible for referring to the course committee and/or the board of examiners, through the Course Director, information relevant to their students' progress or academic performance.

In May 2012, The Academic Development and Enhancement Committee endorsed guidance for the operationalisation of the Code for full-time undergraduate students. See Academic Office website, Policies under Advisers of Studies. This includes:

- a minimum of four timetabled meetings in year 1, some of which may be conducted in a group environment
- at least one individual meeting in year 1, semester 1, to include a discussion about interpreting and using feedback
- indicative timetables and agendas
- information for course/subject handbooks.