

Introduction

1. These guidance notes have been prepared for both internal and external panel members. They aim to provide guidance and background information on the nature of Kingston University's validation procedures and the role of panel members.
2. Peer review is the principle underpinning the validation process.
3. If you are an external member of the panel, you have been invited to attend the event because of your experience in one or more of the following:
 - professional experience in the subject area
 - as an employer of graduates and diplomates in the area
 - as an experienced academic in the subject area at a similar level of work
4. Panel members, particularly those with a professional/industrial background, are invited to consider whether the field under consideration will produce graduates and diplomates who can satisfy the needs of industry, the professions and public service areas. Whilst internal panel members probably will not have relevant subject expertise, you will have experience to comment as educationalists on issues such as level, the appropriateness of teaching and learning and assessment methods and the articulation of learning outcomes.
5. Irrespective of the role played by each panel member, all members are equal. The strength of the panel is in the diversity of members' backgrounds and, although the process may be unfamiliar to you, you are encouraged to participate fully in the debate and to draw upon your own particular experience and expertise.

Validation – the purpose

6. Validation is an academic procedure. The overall aim of validation is to ensure that proposed new fields are likely to be delivered to appropriate standards and quality, within the University's approved regulations and underpinned by adequate physical and human resources. Validation also ensures that the quality of the student experience potentially is as good as possible.
7. Validation is intended to focus on academic issues related to a new field rather than matters of structure and regulations. Of particular interest will be the way in which the field is constructed to provide coherence, up to date and appropriate curriculum content (informed, particularly for postgraduate programmes, by our own high quality staff research), offer appropriate choices, reach clearly stated standards, prepare students for employment/meet the needs of employers (including key skills development) and provide an appropriate quality of student experience (including resources of all sorts, student support and guidance, etc).

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Validation – what happens prior to the event?

- 8 The main events leading up to the validation event can be summarised as:
- a) Following approval by Academic Directorate for a new programme, a validation planning meeting is held to organise and agree the main elements of the validation event.
 - b) The field is then developed and documents are prepared and usually submitted initially for an internal Faculty Scrutiny. The purpose of this is to ensure that the documentation conforms to an acceptable standard of presentation, coherence and completion and that issues raised at the planning meeting have been addressed. If a Professional Body is involved, the documentation should also meet their requirements.
 - c) Documentation is submitted to Academic Quality and Standards at least three weeks prior to the event for distribution to the panel. In addition to the field team's submission, the panel will receive:
 - a programme for the day
 - a list of panel members
 - a link to relevant subject benchmark statements (mainly only undergraduate fields)
 - a link to QAA Code of Practice on Collaborative Provision (collaborative events only)
 - a link to University undergraduate or postgraduate modular regulations
 - a map of the site and an expenses claim form (for external panel members only)

Documentation

- 9 It is a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirement that institutions produce a programme specifications for each field. Programme Specifications are intended to be documents that provide students, parents, employers and external agencies with the key features of the programme. Most of the headings contained within the programme specification have been defined by the QAA.
- 10 Prior to the event you will receive the following:
- Programme specification for each field to be considered
 - Module directory
 - Resources document (which describes the physical and human resources to support the field)
 - Liaison document (for collaborative provision only – this describes the management arrangements between Kingston University and the partner)

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- Other paperwork as appropriate, and as prescribed by the validation planning meeting

Membership of the panel

- 11 The panel for a standard validation event will normally comprise the following:

The Chair

This is a member of University staff not associated with the Faculty proposing the field. The Chair will be an experienced panel member and will have undertaken University training for panel chairs.

An internal representative from the Faculty proposing the field

This will be a member of staff from the sponsoring Faculty who is not associated either with the curriculum development or the delivery of the proposed field.

An internal representative from another Faculty in the University

At least two external panel members

Depending on the nature of the proposal, it is expected that there will be one academic representative and one representative from the professions/industry. The validation planning meeting will determine the number and type of externals required for the event.

- 12 It is the responsibility of the Faculty to submit panel nominations to Academic Quality and Standards who will confirm the nominations and send all relevant information and documentation to the panel.
- 13 No person who has been associated with the design and/or operation of the field may be a panel member. No individuals who have been, within the last five years, employed by the University, including in an external examiner role, may be an external panel member.

What the panel might wish to consider

- 14 To help guide your reading of the field documentation and to highlight possible issues which you may wish to discuss with the field team, a suggested checklist and some proposed agenda headings are provided in guidance CG(ii). This list is by no means prescriptive and there may be other areas that have not been covered that you may wish to raise with the field team.
- 15 Please bear in mind that all fields within the University sit within either the Undergraduate Modular Scheme (UMS) or the Postgraduate Credit Framework (PCF) which provide the regulatory and structural framework for all fields. The UMS and PCF have been approved by the University's Academic Board. As a

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consequence panels are encouraged not to stray into discussions and debate about the regulatory underpinning of the fields being considered.

Comments submitted by the panel

- 16 Up to seven days before the event you may, if you wish, submit issues for discussion with the field team to Academic Quality and Standards. These may include areas of concern, matters that require clarification by the field team and omissions from the documentation.
- 17 Prior to the event, the Chair and the Validation Officer will meet to consider any comments received from panel members and if appropriate draw up a tailored agenda. If there are no substantive issues raised prior to the meeting, the chair will use the standard indicative agenda as a guide. Any draft agenda will be sent to the panel and the field team normally not later than 24 hours before the event. This allows the Chair to use the time in the initial private panel meeting more efficiently and provides the field team with an opportunity to prepare a considered response to the issues raised by the panel. Hopefully, this will produce more constructive discussions on the day.

The validation event

- 18 Initial consideration of the timetable for the event will happen at the validation planning meeting, and will identify the sequence of meetings for the day and consider the appropriate timing of each meeting to ensure that appropriate time is set aside to consider the provision fully.
- 19 A sample timetable will normally include the following:

Private meeting of the panel

The event usually commences with a private meeting of the panel to enable members to raise further issues arising from the documentation and to enable the chair to confirm the agenda for the day. The Dean of Faculty will normally sit in on the private meetings to provide the panel with any background/contextual information.

Tour of facilities

This will only take place for collaborative events and those fields with specific resources, such as studio or laboratory environments, and will be determined by the validation planning meeting. This will enable the panel to visit the facilities and to judge whether they are adequate to support the field.

Meeting with the field team

The meeting with the field team is normally the most important meeting because it allows the panel to discuss the proposal in detail eg. the content, structure,

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evidence of demand etc. It also allows the panel an opportunity to see how the field team operates as a team.

Private meeting of the panel

Having spoken to members of the field team, the panel has to judge whether the field is of an appropriate/sound academic standard and is fit to commence. The panel can make one of the following decisions:

Possible outcomes

- 20 The possible outcomes of all validation events are as follows:
- Approve the programme unconditionally
 - Approve the programme with recommendations that the panel feels would enhance the quality of the provision (recommendations are addressed by the field team through annual monitoring)
 - Approve the programme subject to certain conditions (normally conditions must be fulfilled within a specified period before the programme commences)
 - Approve the programme with both conditions and recommendations
 - Non-approval (this will normally involve the programme being referred back to the field team for further development and resubmission)
- 21 Once a field is in validation it can continue indefinitely, subject to Annual Monitoring and Internal Subject Review. However, a panel can, if it wishes, limit the approval to a defined period if this is deemed appropriate. A panel would be required to explain the rationale for such a decision. A team would need to seek re-approval at the end of the qualifying period.
- 22 After the final private meeting of the panel, the field team rejoins the panel for the feedback and the chair will summarise the conclusions of the panel. The chair will state whether the field is approved, from when it can commence, whether the approval is subject to conditions and recommendations and, if appropriate, the length of the approval.
- 23 If the field is subject to specified conditions, the chair will summarise who is responsible for approving the field team's response to the conditions and the date by which conditions should be met by the field team. Only in exceptional circumstances or in the case of minor amendment will approval be delegated solely to the chair of the panel.
- 24 It should be noted that the validation process at Kingston University allows validation panels to approve new modules as part of the validation event. Usually, the Chair of the event will ask panel members if they have any comments on new modules, or the coherence of all the modules as a whole, and any comments/suggestions received will generally feed into the validation

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conditions or recommendations. If there are no comments with respect to a particular module then it is considered to be 'validated'.

The report and subsequent follow-up

- 25 The conclusions of the event are produced within 48 hours of the event for approval by the Chair of the panel. These will normally be circulated to the Dean, Head of School, Field Director, Faculty Administrative Manager and Deputy Vice-Chancellor to enable the work on conditions to commence as soon as possible. The full report is normally written within 15 working days of the event and will normally be sent to the panel, Dean, Head of School and Field Director.
- 26 If there are specific conditions to be met by the field team, Academic Quality and Standards will circulate the field team's response for panel member's approval. The field is approved to run when the panel is satisfied that the field team's response has met the conditions of the validation.
- 27 The Academic Quality and Standards Review Group (AQSRG), which reports to the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), will consider all event conclusions and will draw any issues of quality or good practice to the University's attention.

Feedback from the panel

- 28 To assist the evaluation of the University's quality assurance procedures, an 'Evaluation of Validation Procedures Questionnaire' will be sent to each member of the panel with a copy of the report. This questionnaire has been designed to help us evaluate the effectiveness of the validation procedures at Kingston University. Any comments which would help us to improve the validation process would be most welcome.

Questions

- 29 If you have any queries about the validation procedures at Kingston you can contact Annie Sander (Assistant Registrar) by telephone on 020 8417 3656 or by e-mail at A.Sander@kingston.ac.uk who will be happy to discuss any queries you may have.