

Validation of Postgraduate Programmes Policy and Procedure

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1. Policy Statement

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that development of educational programmes within the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) adhere to the ICR's academic standards and that coherent programmes of study are developed in keeping with the focus of the aims and objectives of the ICR's research strategy.

1.2. The ICR's Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for validation of educational programmes. The responsibility for the management of the validation process is devolved to the Validation Panel. The Validation Panel will be convened by the Academic Dean when a proposal for a new programme is put forward by a Division or Divisions.

2. The Validation Panel - Terms of Reference

2.1. The Validation Panel is responsible for considering programme development within the Institute. Specifically its remit with regard to new programmes is to:

- ensure the academic rigour and currency of the programme;
- ensure the programme aims and objectives support those of the ICR including the Learning and Teaching Strategy;
- consider existing provision within the ICR;
- verify that appropriate and sufficient physical and staffing resources are available for the delivery of the programme during the period between launch and first periodic review;
- ensure the programme has academic equivalence with other programmes of a similar level elsewhere in the University of London and nationally;

- ensure that relevant external reference points on standards and quality are considered including the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and the QAA UK Quality Code, and subject benchmark statements, where relevant;
- consider level of award, student progression and student attainment;
- consider how the intended learning outcomes of the programme will be demonstrated and assessed and ensure that the award level and title reflects the intended learning outcomes of the programme;
- consider the potential needs of students with protected characteristics and ensure that the intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, learning environments and assessment methods do not create unnecessary barriers;
- verify the intended audience and marketability of the programme and consider potential competitors;
- consider the coherence of the programme as a whole, in terms of its logic in structure and intellectual integrity, and the alignment of its assessment methods with its content, learning outcomes and learning and teaching activities.
- recommend the rejection of unviable programmes;
- require appropriate amendments to proposals.

3. Procedure for Approval of New Programmes [Validation]

3.1. All postgraduate degrees are awarded by the University of London, and are subject to the University Ordinances, the ICR Regulations and any course specific regulations.

3.2. Initial approval must be sought from the Academic Dean and the Executive Board prior to the submission of a full proposal. A brief proposal should be submitted, including overall aims and objectives, a justification and an expected commencement date of entry for the first cohort. The Executive Board will approve, if appropriate, the required resources for a full validation exercise.

3.3. New programmes cannot be advertised without the permission of the Academic Board. Therefore the validation process must begin not less than one academic year in advance of the expected commencement date of entry.

3.4. Programmes may be developed by individual Divisions or collaboratively between Divisions. Programmes may also be developed under a collaborative partnership with a similar institution [see section 4: Collaborative Partnerships and/or Professional Recognition]. In all cases a programme leader must be identified, who will have responsibility for the management of the programme for the duration of its approval. Programme leaders are encouraged to consider whether any current students might be in a position to contribute views. The programme leader however does not have to be responsible for the production of the validation document. The Division[s] will prepare a validation document addressing the management and delivery of the programme. The document should be structured as prescribed below and must investigate each point in detail identifying how it can satisfy these requirements:

3.4.1. Resources – Divisional Resources Available and Required

- Staffing [to include a complete list of staff CVs] both academic and administrative staff
- Physical and virtual learning resources, including accommodation and consumables, library, IT etc
- Likely sources of funding and proposed fee structure

3.4.2. Programme Details

- Title and award of the programme and pathways
- Identified Programme Leader
- Rationale including how the course fits with the both the ICR and the Division's academic strategy and the ICR Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Aims and learning outcomes, transferable skills
- Admissions policy, including entry requirements
- Contact hours, mode and pattern of attendance
- Structure diagram
- Teaching, learning and modes of delivery
- Student progression and exit points
- Level aims and learning outcomes
- Required learning resources and any IT issues
- Assessment strategy
- Module syllabuses, where relevant, specifying individual aims and learning outcomes
- How inclusive approaches to learning have been incorporated
- Student support (for example student welfare, induction and admissions arrangements and supervisory and feedback arrangements)

3.4.3. Appraisal and Viability

- A report of programme development, to include consultation with students, employers and professional bodies [stakeholders]
- External expert comments
- Marketing/expected take up
- Likely financial viability
- Contingency plan, in particular in respect of teaching responsibilities, should the programme leadership need to change.

3.4.4. Programme Specification

- A provisional programme specification giving a concise description of the intended level and learning outcomes of the programme and the means by which they will be achieved.

3.4.5. Collaborative Agreement

- Where a collaborative partnership is proposed, a draft Memorandum of Agreement should be included.

3.4.6. The validation document must also provide any other information requested by the Academic Board, the Academic Dean or the Executive Board.

3.5. The validation document must be authorised and signed by the appropriate Head of Division[s] before submission to the Registrar. The Registrar will notify the Academic Dean who will convene a Validation Panel.

3.6. The Validation Panel

3.6.1. Membership (to be appointed by the Academic Dean)

- A Deputy Dean who has not been involved in the programme development (Chair);
- Two members of senior faculty have not been involved in the programme development and ideally two, but at least one of whom has experience of designing and / or teaching or examining for a similar postgraduate programme. Additional more junior members of academic staff with relevant experience may be appointed ;
- At least two expert external advisers (see 3.6.2 below);
- A student representative
- A senior member of the proposed partnership institution or professional governing body [where a collaborative arrangement or professional recognition is sought].

3.6.2. Expert Advisers

The programme proposers must provide names and addresses of appropriate external experts. At least one should have substantial current experience in the subject area and can advise the Panel on the programme content, and at least one should have relevant current expertise in learning and teaching practices. They may include for example staff within the ICR from a different Department with relevant professional expertise; staff from other Higher Education providers; contacts made through partnerships or research collaborations, contacts from relevant sector networks; former students or students studying in cognate areas; former external examiners.

3.6.3. Meetings

[a] The Validation Panel will meet to consider the submission of documentation for new programmes. At least one of each category of member must attend, including by video-conference etc, for the meeting to be quorate. The Registrar will act as secretary to the Panel.

[b] The Panel will be notified of dates, times and locations of the meeting by the Registrar. The Registrar will ensure that all Panel members are sent the appropriate documentation normally ten days in advance of the panel meeting.

[c] Representatives from the programme teaching team, including the identified programme leader or the Head of Division, will be required to attend the meeting to defend the proposal.

3.6.4. Format of the Meeting

[a] The Panel members will agree the format of the agenda and to ensure that all aspects are vetted.

[b] Programme representatives will be invited into the meeting to defend the proposal.

[c] Programme representatives will be asked to leave the meeting while the panel deliberates. The Panel may recommend one of the following outcomes to the Academic Board and Executive Board:

- i. Unconditional approval of a programme proposal.
- ii. Conditional approval of a programme proposal with conditions which must be met before advertising and recruitment can take place, or which must subsequently be met.
- iii. Reject a programme proposal.

[d] Programme representatives will be invited to return to the meeting for oral feedback. The Registrar (or nominee) will produce a validation report which will record decisions and any recommendations or conditions required prior to approval. The report will be sent to the programme representatives normally within seven working days of the Panel meeting. Programme representatives will normally have 14 working days to comment on the report.

3.7. The report along with a summary of how the conditions in 2.1 are fulfilled by the programme will be submitted to the next Academic Board for discussion and approval, and to the Executive Board for approval in respect of resources. Copies of the report are available on request to anyone who asks for one, though commercially sensitive information may be redacted.

3.8. Approval

3.8.1. Unconditional approval

The Chair of the Academic Board will confirm in writing unconditional approval and state the period of approval, normally not exceeding five years, until a periodic review (or exceptionally, revalidation) shall be required. Advertising and recruitment may take place once this confirmation has been received, along with confirmation of any necessary resources from Executive Board. The Division should provide a further copy of the validation document, signed by the Head of Division [s]. The Chair of the Academic Board will countersign the document. The Registry will retain one fully signed copy of the document and return a fully signed copy to the Division. The Division will then be responsible for producing any further copies required. The Head of Division retains responsibility for ensuring the contingency plan for leadership of the programme is kept up to date.

3.8.2. Conditional approval

A deadline will be set by which conditions must be satisfied before advertising and recruitment can commence. A condition may be a minor modification to the document or a major alteration. In the case of minor modifications, the Chair of the Academic Board may take chair's action in granting approval. Where major alteration is required, all Academic Board members must be consulted before unconditional approval is granted. When unconditional approval is granted, the procedure outlined in paragraph 3.8.1 will take place. Conditions may also be set which apply after the programme begins, or throughout the life of a programme. A deadline will be set for submitting to Academic Board a statement of how these conditions will be met, and how compliance with them will later be reported. A programme cannot be advertised until all conditions have been met and signed of as above. Conditional approval may then be granted, with the same procedure as paragraph 3.8.1, with a copy of the conditions, the statement of how they will be met, and the arrangements for reporting compliance signed by the Head of Division[s] and countersigned by the Chair of the Academic Board.

3.8.3. Rejection

Academic Board may reject a programme where it believes that the programme is unviable or unable to meet the conditions set out in paragraph 2.1. The programme proposers may appeal against the

decision of the Academic Board to the Chief Executive of the ICR. The decision of the Chief Executive is final. Where the Chief Executive finds in favour of the proposers, a new Validation Panel will be convened. There is no appeal against a decision by Executive Board not to allocate any necessary resource.

4. Collaborative Partnership and/or Professional Recognition

4.1 Collaborative Partnership

4.1.1. Where the Division [s] is seeking a collaborative partnership with another institution the Validation Panel and Academic Board must be assured that all Institute regulations and quality assurance mechanisms will be satisfied by the arrangement. Specific aspects of programme delivery and quality assurance may be substantively delegated to the partner where agreed by all parties, and in line with ICR and University of London Regulations; any such division of responsibilities must be clearly specified in the collaborative agreement. The Academic Board must also be satisfied that the partnership is made with an institution of appropriate standing in keeping with the Institute's academic standards and research strategy.

4.1.2. A senior member of the partnership institution will be invited to be a member of the Validation Panel where a collaborative partnership is sought.

4.1.3. As part of the validation process an official agreement must be drawn up, before advertising and recruitment can take place, to formalise:

- programme ownership and management;
- quality assurance arrangements;
- financial arrangements;
- intellectual property rights;
- length and termination of agreement.

Approval of an official agreement should not be given until all other internal ICR approval processes have been satisfied.

4.1.4. Any collaborative partnership must be ratified by the University of London.

4.2 Professional Recognition

4.2.1. Where professional recognition is sought as part of a programme award, the Validation Panel must be assured that all Institute regulations and quality assurance mechanisms will be satisfied. The Panel must also be satisfied that the professional body is of appropriate standing in keeping with the ICR's academic standards and research strategy.

4.2.2. A senior member of the professional body will be invited to be a member of the Validation Panel where professional recognition is sought.

5. Review of Existing Programmes

5.1. All taught course Programmes are subject to both annual and periodic review [see Annual Monitoring Process and Guidelines for Taught Course Periodic Review]. There is normally a formal periodic review every five years, unless a shorter approval period was set by the original Validation Panel [see paragraph 3.6.1 unconditional approval]. There is no requirement for revalidation under the periodic review procedure