



# Programme Development and Validation

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## Procedure

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# Programme Development and Validation

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# Programme Development and Validation

## 1. Introduction

This document sets out the procedures for the design, development and approval of University of the Built Environment programmes and modules that lead to an academic award or the award of credit by the institute. The document also sets out the procedure for approval of apprenticeship programmes.

The procedure is designed to meet the core practice set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to enable providers to demonstrate delivery of *'high-quality student experience, enabling students to succeed in their studies and progress their personal and professional goals'*.

More extensive guideline documents are available for validation panellists and programme teams preparing for validation; links to these documents are contained in [section 12](#).

## 2. Definitions

**Validation** is the process by which the University evaluates whether new or revised programmes or modules meet institutional and national academic standards and whether the content and delivery will provide University of the Built Environment students with a good quality learning experience.

**Periodic review and re-validation** is the process by which the University undertakes a review at set intervals of the quality and standards of a programme. Periodic review enables the University to take a broader review than through annual programme review and involves consideration of the continuing validity and relevance of the programme. Periodic review is followed by consideration of any changes to the programme and re-validation where the programme is approved for delivery for a further set period of time. Please refer to the Programme Monitoring and Review, and Programme Amendment and Discontinuation Procedures for further information on this.

**Apprenticeship approval** is the process used by the University to assess a new apprenticeship programme to ensure that it meets relevant apprenticeship standards and that there are appropriate mechanisms planned to support and monitor apprentice progress.

## 3. Key principles

The following key principles apply to all provision offered by the University and must be satisfied by any new programme. All provision must be:

- Designed to link to the University institutional strategy, Learning and Teaching Strategy and Widening Participation Strategy and support the object of its Royal Charter;
- Designed to ensure that threshold academic standards are consistently set and maintained;
- Designed to deliver the highest quality learning opportunities for students;
- Sufficiently supported in terms of financial, human and physical resources to ensure effective delivery;
- Provide equal opportunities for students and aim to provide resources that celebrate a diverse student community.

The University ensures that student voice is considered as part of the programme development and validation process.

## 4. Purpose of validation

The University is responsible for the quality and standards of all provision leading to award or credits made in its name. The purpose of validation is therefore to ensure that the academic standards of the University awards are maintained and meet relevant national academic standards. The validation process also reviews the quality of learning opportunities to ensure that they are appropriate for students to achieve the academic standard of the required award.

Validation involves the critical evaluation of the proposal to ensure that:

- Academic standards are appropriate to the level of the award.
- Learning resources are appropriate and relevant to the type, level, and volume of learning to be undertaken.
- The aims and learning objectives of the programme are achievable.
- The curriculum reflects the aims and learning outcomes.
- Learning outcomes reflect the level and credit value of the module.
- Assessment methods are appropriate to the learning outcomes and the diversity of the University's student cohort.

# 5. Authority for programme and module validation

The Academic Board retains ultimate authority for the approval of all programmes and modules leading to a University of the Built Environment award or credit. It, however, delegates the detailed scrutiny and approval of new programmes and modules to a validation panel. The validation panel will decide whether a programme should be approved and if it should be subject to conditions and recommendations. Validation panels are convened especially for each event with the size and composition of the panel reflecting the scale and complexity of the event. The approval of the composition of validation panels rests with the Director of Academic Quality.

Academic Board also fully delegates the detailed scrutiny and approval of apprenticeship programmes to an apprenticeship approval event.

Where a programme has a condition attached, Academic Board delegates authority to the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (QSEC) to monitor and approve the resolution of any such conditions.

# 6. Programme development

The development of any new programmes must take into account internal and external reference points including:

- University of the Built Environment Learning and Teaching Strategy and Widening Participation Strategy.
- University of the Built Environment Learning Design Centre resources.
- QAA Qualifications Framework.
- [Office for Students \(OfS\) Sector Recognised Standards \(opens a new window\)](#)
- UK Quality Assurance Agency for High Education Characteristics Statements.
- Credit Frameworks.
- UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Subject Benchmark Statements.
- Relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory competencies and relevant apprenticeship standards.

# Programme Development and Validation

Development of new programmes and modules will involve a range of University teams. Ownership of the preparation of new academic awards and modules for validation rests with the Head of School with input from the Digital Learning and Engagement team. At the module development stage, ownership of the process transfers to the Digital Learning and Engagement team in collaboration with the School of the Built Environment.

## 7. Stages of the Procedure

The University operates a proportionate approach to programme validation and approval which is based on an assessment of the risk inherent in the nature of a particular proposal. The University operates different processes based on the type of provision being proposed. The diagram below details the types of provision that can be approved and the stages in the process that are required. For each type of programme approval, the appropriate processes set out below should be followed. The Director of Academic Quality is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate approval route is followed.

Where the programme requires validation of both an academic award and an apprenticeship programme, the apprenticeship programme approval can be combined with the academic validation as long as the additional apprenticeship programme documentation is provided, and the panel composition is amended to ensure that there is appropriate expertise to consider the wider apprenticeship programme element as part of the academic validation.

## Programme Development and Validation

<b>UNIVERSITY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT STAGES OF THE APPROVAL PROCESS</b>							
		SLT Approval	Academic Case Approval by Academic Board	Internal Scrutiny Event	Academic Validation Event	Apprenticeship Approval Event	Application for Centre or Qualification Approval or for Approval to Deliver an Apprenticeship
1	<b>Full Programme Validation</b> Validation of a new academic award (without apprenticeship provision).						
2	<b>Full Apprenticeship Programme Validation</b> Validation of an apprenticeship programme that includes a new academic award.						
3.a	<b>Framework Validation</b> Validation of additional modules to be added to an existing programme. This may include the addition of a new route or award.						
3.b	<b>Apprenticeship Programme Framework</b> Validation of additional modules to be added to an existing programme and an apprenticeship route. This may include the addition of a new route or award.						
4	<b>Validation of a single module/microcredential</b> Validation of a single module or micro-credential which carries academic credit but is not associated with a full programme of study or award.						
5.a	<b>Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to an existing Award with an integrated EPA</b> To add an apprenticeship route to a University programme with an integrated EPA.						
5.b	<b>Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to an existing Award without an integrated EPA</b> To add an apprenticeship route to a University programme without an integrated EPA.						
6	<b>Approval for apprenticeship programme including delivering another provider's content</b> Approval for the University to introduce a new apprenticeship programme which includes another provider's content and award.						
7	<b>Approval for Apprenticeship Support</b> Approval for the University to provide the apprenticeship support only. The award and delivery are undertaken by another provider(s).						

\*Where approval is sought for both an academic award and apprenticeship programme the processes of Academic Validation and Apprenticeship Approval can be combined.

# Programme Development and Validation

## 7.1 Prior to Validation

The diagram below provides a flowchart of the key stages prior to validation. Please see the table in section 7 above to identify the steps required depending on the type of programme to be validated.

### 7.1.1 Executive Team approval

All programme proposals require initial consent by the Executive Team which comprises an evaluation of the business case.

In preparing a case for consent for a new academic award, the author(s) (normally the Head of School or Programme Leader) of the proposal will complete a standard **Form Ai Business and Academic Case Approval** proforma ([see Appendix A](#)). In the case of the addition of an apprenticeship route to a validated programme, the author(s) (normally the Head of School or Director of Apprenticeships) of the proposal will complete a **standard Form Aii Business and Academic Case Approval for the Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to a Validated Programme** proforma ([see Appendix A](#)). For programmes that require only business case approval only Part A of the form is to be completed.

The business case approval will set out specific information relating to the following:

- Alignment with University's strategic vision and confidence in the identified market.
- Detailed market information.
- Resource implications, including their scale and timing.
- Financial viability, requiring completion of a finance template appended to the proforma.
- Potential risks.

For the approval of apprenticeship programmes the following additional information is also required:

- Employer and industry consultation including information around who is delivering the standard currently, which employers are engaged and where applicants are likely to come from.
- Consideration of the sustainability of external financial support available to employers under the apprenticeship such as the funding cap set by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

## Programme Development and Validation

- Consideration of End Point Assessment (EPA) such as whether it is integrated or external, organisations that deliver the EPA, costs and requirements.
- Details of any changes required to the validated University of the Built Environment award (in the case of the addition of an apprenticeship route to a validated programme).

The proposal will be considered by the University Executive Team, which will come to one of the following decisions:

- i. Recommend approval of a proposal.**
- ii. Defer a decision pending further information from the proposer.**
- iii. Decline proposal and recommend that no further action is taken.**

Deferred decisions may require further meeting(s) to be convened for continued review and result in one of the recommendations listed above.

In the event that an academic case is not required, the Executive Team can also approve at this point for the programme to be marketed with the inclusion of the caveat that the programme is subject to validation.

For apprenticeships, following approval of the Business Case by the Executive Team, the Director of Apprenticeships or Head of School assumes responsibility for preparation of documentation and for presenting the rationale for the new apprenticeship programme. AQU will convene the initial meeting with the Director of Apprenticeships or Head of School and other relevant staff, to confirm the date for the event and target dates for completion of documentation.

### 7.1.2 Approval of academic case

For programmes that also require academic case approval the academic case section (Part B) of the **Form Ai Business and Academic Case Approval** or **Form Aii Business and Academic Case Approval for the Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to a Validated Programme** proforma ([see Appendix A](#)) also requires completion to provide the academic justification. The academic case approval carries equal weight to the business case approval in determining whether to proceed with the proposal.

# Programme Development and Validation

The academic case may replicate some of the content presented to the Executive Team where appropriate (e.g. with regard to its relationship to the objectives of the current University of the Built Environment business plan, the potential market (with evidence) for students (both UK-based and international), including an appraisal of competitor programmes in other Higher Education Institutions, and potential benefits), but will also provide more extensive commentary on:

- The objectives of the programme or award and its accessibility to a range of potential learners.
- Its strategic fit in terms of the University's academic offer, including international attractiveness.

The academic justification set out in the **Form Ai Business and Academic Case Approval** or **Form Aii Business and Academic Case Approval for the Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to a Validated Programme proforma** will be reported to the Academic Board for review and sign-off. As with the evaluation by the Executive Team, the proposal may be:

- i. Recommended for approval.**
- ii. Referred back to the proposer(s) for further information.**
- iii. Declined, with no further action to be taken.**

In the case of both the business and the academic rationale, care must be taken in compiling the documentation to distinguish between different proposed programmes in those cases where several are being brought forward together for potential validation.

On approval of the academic case, the Academic Board can also authorise for the programme to be marketed with the inclusion of the caveat that the programme is subject to validation.

## 7.1.3 Preparing for academic validation

For programmes that require academic validation the following preparations are required.

### 7.1.3.1 Validation documentation

The following documentation is required for academic validation. The programme documentation should be prepared with reference to the resources available in the [AQU SharePoint \(opens new window\)](#).

# Programme Development and Validation

## Programme rationale

The programme rationale provides an overview of the programme(s) being proposed, including the programme, coherence and intellectual integrity of the award(s), structure, aims, learning outcomes, means of assessment, consultation with staff, students, employers external examiners and PSRBs, support structure and resource availabilities.

The programme rationale must be set out on the **Form Bii Rationale (Apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship combined) Template**; ([see Appendix A](#)).

## Programme specification

The programme specification includes information on programme aims and learning outcomes, admission criteria, programme structure and modules, PSRB accreditations, mapping to relevant national academic benchmarks and against professional body requirements.

The information should be set out on **Form C Programme Specification Template** ([see Appendix A](#)). A separate programme specification template must be completed for each award scheduled for validation.

## Module descriptors

Module descriptors set out module aims and learning outcomes, a breakdown of notional learning outcomes, assessment methods and provide indicative module content and learning resources.

The information should be set out on **Form D Module Descriptor Template** for all modules going forward for validation ([see Appendix A](#)).

## Academic and Programme Regulations

The Academic and Programme Regulations set out the module credits and how credit is achieved, maximum period of registration, interruption of study, assessment, extensions and late penalties, number of attempts, academic compensation, and awards.

The custodianship of the Academic and Programme Regulations rests with AQU; the Programme Team should work with AQU to ensure that new awards are incorporated into these regulations.

# Programme Development and Validation

## **Apprenticeship Programme Rationale (apprenticeships only)**

The apprenticeship programme rationale must include a summary of the business case, evidence of relationship and consultation with employers, details of the proposed on- and off-the-job training and assessment arrangements, details of how apprentice progress will be monitored and managed including support agreements and information on how compliance with the 20% off-the-job training requirement will be achieved.

The rationale should be set out on the **Form Bi Rationale (Apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship combined) Template** ([see Appendix A](#)).

## **Mapping documentation to relevant apprenticeship standards (apprenticeships only)**

A mapping document must be completed to evidence how the proposed apprenticeship programme meets the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standards and the knowledge, skills and behaviours and details of the End Point Assessment (EPA).

### **7.1.3.2 Convening the validation panel**

It is the responsibility of the Director of Academic Quality to determine the composition of the validation panel based on the scale and complexity of the proposed event. Validation panels normally comprise of a chair who is either external to University of the Built Environment or a senior member of the University staff who has not had any involvement in the preparation of the validation proposal or documentation; an appropriate number of external members drawn from further or higher education institutions (in line with the academic level of the awards proposed) or industry, an internal academic not associated with the proposal, a representative from AQU and a student or recent alumnus member. The secretary will be from AQU.

The Programme Team should request for the nominated panellist(s) to complete **Form H External Panel Member Details Form** ([see Appendix A](#)).

The Programme Team should also work with AQU to identify an appropriate student or alumni panellist and request for them to complete **Form I Student Alumni Panel Member Details Form** ([see Appendix A](#)).

Once the panel is proposed and nomination forms received, the details of the panel is submitted to the Director of Academic Quality for approval.

# Programme Development and Validation

## 7.1.4 Internal scrutiny event

For validations that include a completely new academic award, an internal scrutiny event is required. This event is normally held approximately six weeks in advance of the academic validation event and the panel is made up of appropriate University of the Built Environment staff arranged by AQU. Responsibility for the composition of the internal scrutiny panel rests with the Director of Academic Quality.

The internal scrutiny event will:

- Review the logic and content of the proposals.
- Review the evidence of engagement with employers (where relevant), students and alumni and other key stakeholders.
- Identify potential problem areas (in rationale/documents etc.).
- Enable individual responsibilities for leading on topics to be finalised.

As part of the event, **Form G Internal Scrutiny Checklist** ([see Appendix A](#)) is completed by the event secretary to make recommendations relating to any changes that should be made to the proposals and associated documentation.

The Programme Team must review the Internal Scrutiny Event Checklist and respond to any recommendations made by the internal scrutiny panel.

## 7.1.5 Academic validation documentation sign-off

The documentation prepared for academic validation should be submitted to the Academic Lead for sign-off as approved for validation purposes. To confirm the sign-off of the documentation the Academic Lead will complete **Form F Sign-off for Validation Documentation** ([see Appendix A](#)). As part of the sign-off process the Academic Lead will consider the responses to the recommendations made by the internal scrutiny panel.

The Academic Lead has the authority to recommend further amendments and if necessary postpone the event if the scale of amendment required is not possible within the timescales prior to the planned validation event.

## 7.2 Academic validation

The programme approval event will typically include consideration of the following:

- Consideration of the rationale, programme structure and coherence.

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- Appropriateness of the teaching, learning and assessment and student support.
- Resourcing.

Apprenticeship approval events will also consider the following:

- Compliance with the apprenticeship standard and the knowledge skills and behaviours and confirmation of the required or proposed EPA arrangements.
- Proposed delivery and management of the on and off the job training and how apprentice progress will be tracked and managed.
- Details of the proposed apprenticeship programme duration, key milestones and achievement dates.
- Arrangements for apprenticeship programme monitoring and review.

Depending on the scale of the proposal the event will either involve meetings or be completed by correspondence. If the event involves meetings the panel will meet with representatives of the Executive, apprenticeship (if appropriate), academic and support teams and will also meet with current University of the Built Environment apprentices or recent alumni where appropriate.

### **7.2.1 Event agenda**

Validation events are normally timetabled over one or two days depending on the scale and complexity of the event. The following meetings usually form part of the validation event:

- A private meeting of the panel to confirm the agenda and identify issues arising from the documentation.
- Presentation outlining programme proposal.
- Meeting(s) with relevant members of the Executive and with the programme team.
- A meeting with students on a similar existing programme by conference call or webinar (where appropriate).
- A private meeting of the panel to agree its recommendations.
- Feedback to the programme team and other representatives of University of the Built Environment.

# Programme Development and Validation

## 7.2.2 Conduct of event

As part of the validation event, the panel will meet with representatives of the student and alumni community where appropriate to do so e.g. they have studied on similar or predecessor programmes to the programme under consideration

Following deliberation, the panel will come to one of the following conclusions:

- i. Approve the proposals without conditions or recommendations.**
- ii. Approve the proposals either with conditions and/or recommendations.**
- iii. Not to approve the proposals in their present form, with reasons.**

Issues that have not been discussed at the event will not be identified as conditions or recommendations unless a further discussion is held with the programme team before the report is circulated. Conditions should only be imposed to rectify significant deficiencies in the programme. More minor issues can be dealt with by recommendations.

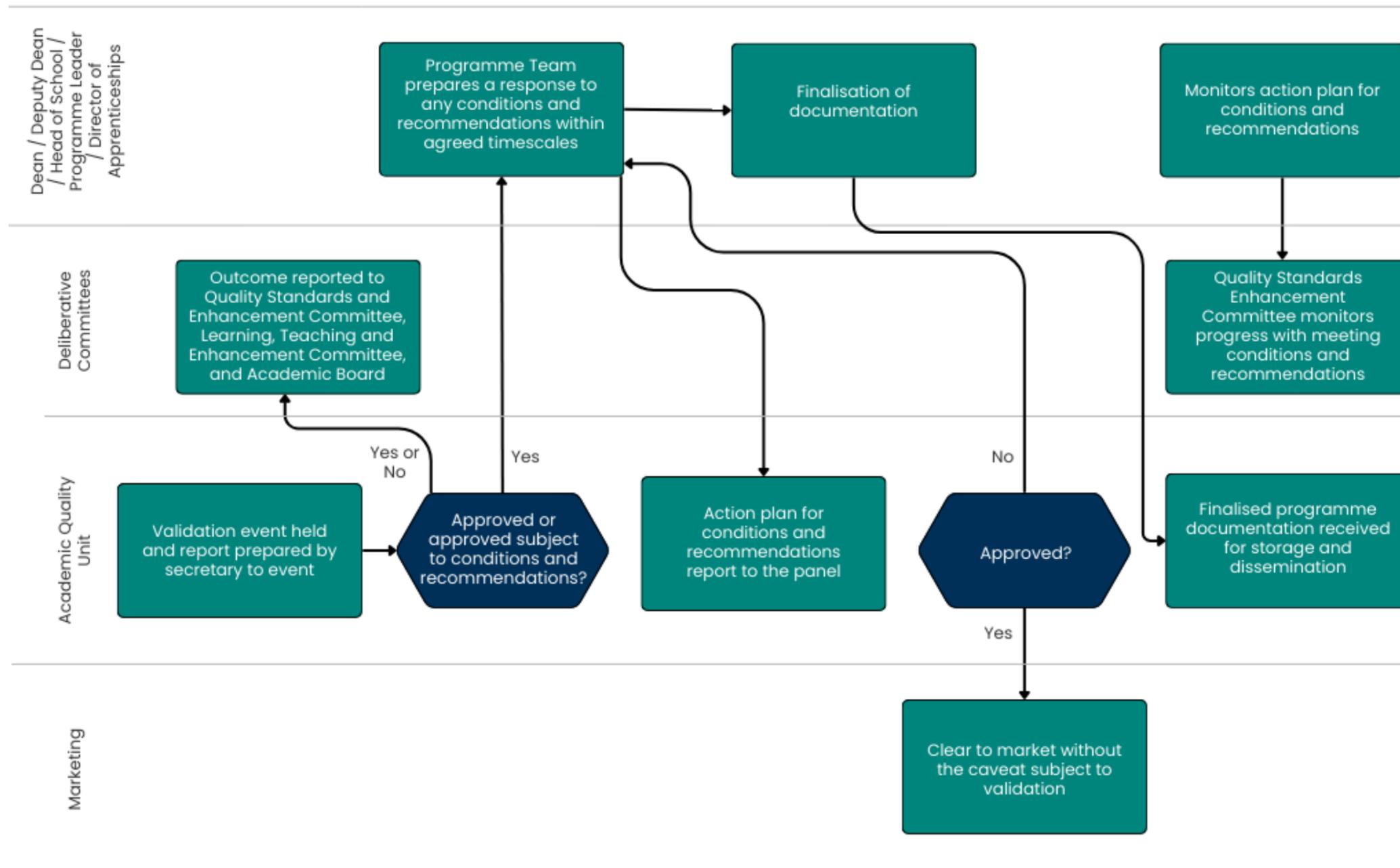
If the decision of the panel following scrutiny of the programme proposals is that the scheme should not be approved in its present form, reasons for that decision should be provided to the Programme Team so that they can determine how best to modify the proposal.

If the decision of the panel following scrutiny is to validate the programme proposals, the panel should specify the period for validation of the programme, which is normally for five years.

### 7.3 Process after academic validation

The diagram below provides a flowchart of the steps required after the academic validation event.

## Process after validation



## Programme Development and Validation

On conclusion of the event, a report summarising the proceedings, including the period of time covered by an approval and any conditions and recommendations laid down by the panel, will be prepared by the secretary to the event on behalf of AQU. The report will be prepared using **Form J Validation / Apprenticeship Approval Report Template** ([see Appendix A](#)), or **Form J Validation / Apprenticeship Approval Report Template** for apprenticeship programmes ([see Appendix A](#)). This will be circulated to all panel members for confirmation.

The purpose of the report is to:

- Record the panel's decision, confirming the award titles and including any conditions to be met or recommendations to be considered.
- Provide a commentary on the deliberations leading to those outcomes.
- Record the context of the meeting, the key issues raised and any commendations and/or areas of good practice highlighted by the panel.

When the report is prepared it should be circulated to the chair and following this the rest of the panel to ensure that it is a correct record of the decisions reached and a true reflection of the discussion at the event. The Programme Team and Executive staff at the event should then be given the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the report. Following fact checking the report should then be finalised.

The outcome of all validation events are reported to QSEC, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board. The outcome of apprenticeship approval events will also be reported to Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee.

The Head of School and Programme Leader are responsible for preparing a response to any conditions and recommendations laid down by the panel in accordance with the timescale imposed. The response to conditions and recommendations is prepared using **Form K Response to conditions and recommendations** ([see Appendix A](#)). The action plan will detail that appropriate changes have been made, conditions met, recommendations considered, and actions taken as appropriate. Where the recommendations require a longer timescale for compliance, the action plan should detail the tasks and timescales for completion and details of when a further evaluation will take place (for example as part of annual monitoring for the following academic year).

## Programme Development and Validation

The response to the conditions and recommendations (including an associated action plan and details of any consequential amendments to the programme scheme) will be provided to AQU and will form the basis of the **Quality Enhancement Plan** ([see Appendix A](#)) submitted each year to the Programme Committee.

Approval of the response to conditions is essential before the validation can take effect; **the programme should not be marketed as validated until this approval has been received and the intended start date of the programme should be postponed if necessary.**

AQU is responsible for ensuring that a definitive set of programme documentation is stored on the central archive.

The action plan for implementing any response to recommendations is monitored by AQU, with updates reported to QSEC as necessary. The Programme Leader will report on the status of the action plan in the first round of annual monitoring and any remaining actions at this point will be transferred onto the **Quality Enhancement Plan** ([see Appendix A](#)).

## 8. Application for Centre and Qualification Approval

Some apprenticeship standards specify that one or more mandatory qualifications must be achieved as part of the on-programme element of the apprenticeship programme. The mandated qualification(s) may only be available via a third-party awarding organisation. Where this applies University of the Built Environment must seek centre approval and qualification approval to be granted by the awarding organisation before the qualification(s) can be delivered. When this is required the responsibility rests with AQU to work with relevant teams to prepare the centre and/or qualification approval application(s) and to ensure that appropriate internal quality processes are in place to meet the requirements of centre and qualification approval.

# 9. Application for approval as an Apprenticeship End-point Assessment Organisation

Where an apprenticeship programme has an integrated end-point assessment (EPA), University of the Built Environment must ensure registration on the Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR) is in place and that the University's delivery offer is updated with each relevant apprenticeship standard via the Gov.uk Apprenticeship Service Account.

# 10. Accreditation by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

Accreditation is a formal process of review undertaken by a PSRB normally as a distinct exercise from validation. The process of validation of the programme must normally be completed before accreditation is formally sought.

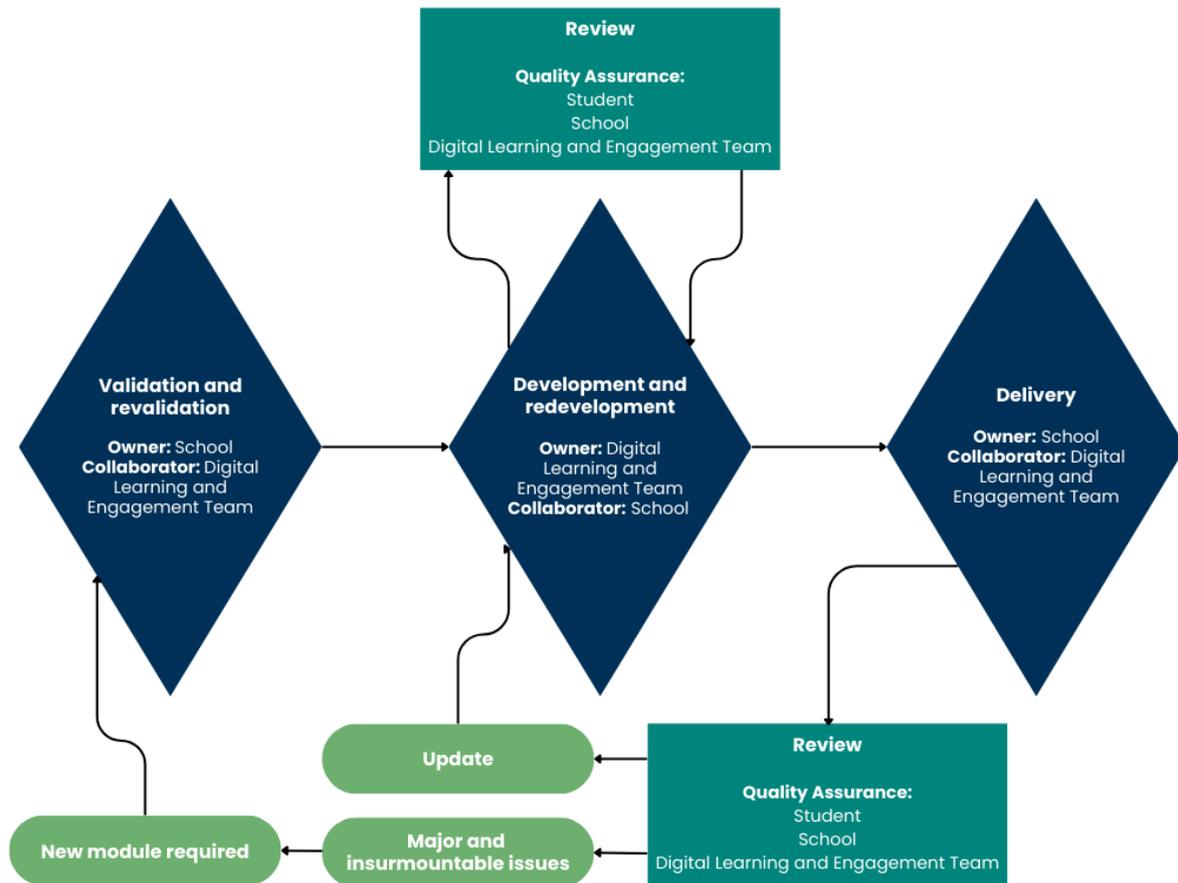
The attainment of certain competences and requirements for practice and membership of a profession is specified by a relevant professional body. Therefore, when reviewing a programme for accreditation, representatives of that organisation will determine whether the learning outcomes of the programme(s) and the means of achieving them embody the competences and requirements of that body.

During the process of applying for accreditation, responsibility for liaison with PSRBs lies with AQU on behalf of the Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Students. Programme documentation and other information will be provided in accordance with the requirements of that body. Such material is subject to approval by AQU prior to submission. In some instances, the professional institution may wish to convene a meeting with representatives of University to discuss aspects of the programme; such meetings will take place in accordance with the institution's procedures.

## 11. Module Development

Development of new modules involves a range of University teams. Ownership of the preparation of new academic awards and modules for validation rests with the Head of School with input from the Digital Learning and Engagement Team.

On completion of the validation process development commences and responsibility transfers to the Digital Learning and Engagement Team to lead on the development of module content in collaboration with the School. At the point of delivery, responsibility then transfers back to the School working in collaboration with the Digital Learning and Engagement Team. Please see the diagram below.



## **12. Related policies and guidance**

[Briefing Document for Validation, Periodic Review and Re-validation Panel Members \(internal access only opens new window\)](#)

[Guidance for Programme Teams preparing for Validation, Periodic Review and Re-validation \(internal access only opens new window\)](#)

# Appendix A: Programme documentation templates

The latest versions of [templates \(opens new window\)](#) for the following documentation required in conjunction with the development and validation/revalidation of a programme of study are available in University of the Built Environment SharePoint.

**Form Ai Business and Academic Case Approval Template**

**Form Aii Business and Academic Case Approval for the Addition of an Apprenticeship Route to a Validated Programme**

**Form Bi Periodic Review and Rationale**

**Form Bii Rationale (Apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship combined)**

**Form C University of the Built Environment Programme Specification Template**

**Form D Module Descriptor Template**

**Form E University of the Built Environment Advanced Scholarship Form**

**Form F Sign-off for Validation Documentation**

**Form G Internal Scrutiny Checklist**

**Form H External Panel Member Details Form**

**Form I Student Alumni Panel Members Details Form**

**Form J Validation / Apprenticeship Approval Report Template**

**Form K Response to Conditions and Recommendations**

**Form L Quality Monitoring Plan**

**Form M External Examiner Nomination Form**