University of Suffolk

PROCEDURE FOR THE VALIDATION OF NEW COURSES

1. Introduction to the validation process

1.1 The validation procedure allows for a proposed new undergraduate or taught postgraduate course at the University of Suffolk to be examined by an acknowledged group of experienced peers including internal and external academics, employer representatives and normally a student representative. The course validation procedure is aligned with the expectations, practices, advice and guidance within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

1.2 This procedure applies to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision within the University leading to a recognised award of the University of Suffolk, and to short courses worth more than 60 credits. Separate procedures exist for the validation of new courses at partner institutions; for the approval of new credit-bearing short courses worth 60 credits or less; for the approval of non credit-bearing provision; and for the approval of Higher National awards at regional partner colleges.

1.3 The University Senate is ultimately responsible for the validation of new undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses for delivery within the University.

1.4 The purpose of the validation process for a new course is to ensure:

a) an appropriate rationale for the introduction of the course, including market demand, compatibility with the existing curriculum portfolio, sustainability and graduate employability (this is considered at the initial approval stage, as outlined in Section 3)

b) course content is current and engaging and provides students with opportunities to gain relevant knowledge, skills and experience within the discipline area (demonstrating an inclusive approach in all aspects of the course design is an important part of this, for example in terms of covering a broad range of viewpoints and perspectives)

c) underpinning learning, teaching and assessment strategies allow for the provision of a high quality, inclusive learning experience, pitched at an appropriate level and reflecting the diversity of the student body

d) equivalence in academic standards with comparable courses across the UK higher education sector

e) alignment with all relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code, QAA subject benchmark statements, and any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) requirements and/or professional standards (for higher and degree apprenticeships, this should also include compliance with associated apprenticeship standards, assessment plans and funding rules)

f) course documentation (including handbooks) provide a clear, accurate and accessible summary of the course for students and other stakeholders, reflecting the requirements of relevant consumer protection legislation

g) appropriate staffing

h) appropriate resourcing (including relevant and up-to-date reading lists, and use of technology-enhanced learning where suitable)

i) compliance with internal academic regulations.

1.5 While the validation process is ultimately designed to ensure that the proposed new course is of an appropriate quality and academic standard to warrant a University of Suffolk award, an important element of the process is enhancement of the proposal through constructive discussion and debate with internal and external experts. All discussions as part of the validation process are therefore expected to be conducted in the spirit of a 'critical friend', with an emphasis on securing ongoing enhancement.

2. Timescales

2.1 Sufficient time and resource should be allocated to enable thorough scoping of the academic and business case for the proposed new provision, and for subsequent detailed course design and development work. This is vital in terms of ensuring that new courses are viable from both an academic and financial perspective and reflect the principles of good, inclusive course design.

2.2 In addition, a sufficient marketing lead-in time is important in terms of securing a viable initial cohort of students. Course teams should note that the undergraduate prospectus deadline is normally two years in advance of the academic year to which the prospectus relates; thus, a proposed new undergraduate course with an anticipated start date of September 2021 should normally be submitted for initial approval via the Course Proposal Form in autumn 2019, in order to be included in the 2021 entry prospectus.

2.3 As an approximate guide, course teams should allow themselves at least ten months for completion of the full course design, development and approval process, broken down as follows:

Scoping, liaison with relevant stakeholders and development of academic and business case	6 weeks
Completion and approval of Course Proposal Form	6 weeks (dependant upon meeting schedules)
Course design work in liaison with relevant internal and external stakeholders (including Developmental Engagement meeting)	12 weeks
Review of draft documentation and final submission	4 weeks
Panel consideration of documentation prior to validation event	2 weeks

Validation event	
Response to validation panel conditions or recommendations	6 weeks
Approval of response by validation panel chair	2 weeks

2.4 Where course teams have the capacity to conduct initial scoping and course design work in a shorter timeframe (for example in order to introduce a new course in response to a strong business need or employer demand), this can be accommodated. However, the validation event must normally be scheduled to take place at least three months before the course is due to commence, so that there is adequate time to respond to any conditions set by the validation panel and secure final approval.

3. Initial proposal to proceed to publicity and validation

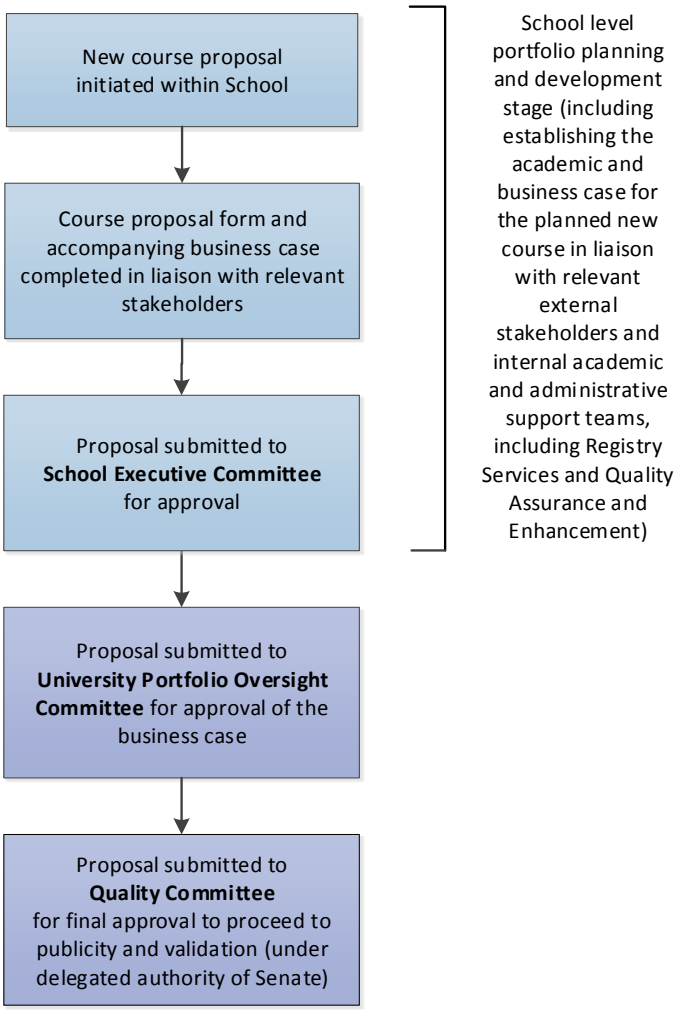
3.1 Within University of Suffolk academic schools, portfolio development plans should be kept under regular review through established planning processes, in order to agree priorities for investment in portfolio development for the relevant planning period.

3.2 Initial proposals for new courses go through agreed planning and consultation procedures prior to being presented to the Quality Committee for final approval to proceed to publicity, full course design and validation. A flowchart showing the initial approval process is provided below. The purpose of this initial approval stage is to allow the University to be assured of the quality and viability of the proposed new course before it proceeds to the full course design and validation process and to permit initial publicity relating to the award.

3.3 As part of established planning cycles, proposals for new courses should normally come forward at three points in the academic year, to coincide with the autumn, spring and summer term meetings of the Quality Committee where final approval to proceed to full validation is secured.

3.4 Early discussions with other academic schools and with relevant professional support departments (including Registry Services, External Relations, Finance and Planning, Learning Services and Quality Assurance and Enhancement) are important in terms of establishing whether the proposed course complements existing academic provision, is viable, is in alignment with the University strategic plan and does not have any implications in terms of existing academic regulations, policies and procedures. These discussions should be initiated as part of routine school level planning processes as outlined above, before too much time and resource is invested in putting together a more detailed initial proposal.

Course approval process flowchart:
Initial approval to proceed to publicity and validation
(University of Suffolk courses)



3.5 There are two aspects to the approval process at this stage:

i) Approval of the business case by the Portfolio Oversight Committee, based on a recommendation from the School Executive.

ii) Approval of the initial proposal from an academic perspective, which is undertaken by the Quality Committee.

3.6 Approval of the business case and the academic case is normally undertaken sequentially, but can be undertaken concurrently in circumstances where it is necessary to complete the validation process in a shorter timeframe (for example when introducing a new course in response to employer demand). In such circumstances, approval by the Quality Committee may be conditional upon securing Portfolio Oversight Committee sign-off of the business case.

3.7 The Quality Committee acts under delegated authority from Senate in granting permission to proceed to publicity and full validation, reporting to Senate on any decisions made. The proposed course should not be publicised (in the prospectus or through any other medium) until Quality Committee approval has been obtained.

3.8 When initial approval to proceed is confirmed, all references to the proposed new course (including any information given to prospective students, whether verbally or in writing) must make clear that the proposal is subject to validation.

Course Proposal Form and business case

3.9 Information on the proposed new course is submitted to relevant committees for approval via a Course Proposal Form and Website Information Form which are available on the course approval, modification and review pages on the University website. The Portfolio Oversight Committee will also require a business case (produced in liaison with the Finance and Planning Department and signed by the relevant Dean of School and the Director of Finance and Planning) and a Market Research Statement (completed by External Relations).

3.10 The Course Proposal Form and Website Information Form should be completed in liaison with relevant administrative support teams, including:

- External Relations (with input from the Market Research and Development team)
- Finance and Planning
- Registry Services
- Learning Services
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

3.11 Particular care should be taken to ensure that any information within the Course Proposal Form and Website Information Form that will be published once initial approval has been secured is complete, accurate and fit-for-purpose. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) publication *UK Higher Education Providers – Advice on Consumer Protection Law (2015)* is a useful point of reference in terms of

understanding the University's legal responsibilities in communicating with both current and prospective students.

3.12 The Course Proposal Form, Website Information Form, business case and market research statement should be submitted to the relevant committee secretary at least ten working days before the meeting at which the proposal is to be discussed. The forms must include a form number in order to facilitate tracking: this should be obtained from the Validation and Exams team (validation@uos.ac.uk) before the proposal is presented to the relevant School Executive Committee for consideration.

4. Course design and development

4.1 Once initial approval to proceed to publicity and full validation has been granted, course teams are expected to engage in detailed course design and development work in preparation for a validation event. This is a crucial stage in the process, and it is important that sufficient time and resource is allocated to this task to ensure the development of a high quality, coherent course with up-to-date content that optimises student engagement.

4.2 The course design process is expected to be a collaborative exercise, with input from:

- all members of the course team (with a nominated lead)
- relevant professional support services (including Registry Services, Learning Services, Quality Assurance and Enhancement and, for apprenticeship provision, the Apprenticeships Business Development Manager)
- relevant external stakeholders (including employers and, where relevant, PSRB representatives)
- external academic advisers (where agreed as part of the initial approval process or where deemed valuable to supplement existing internal expertise)
- students (where the proposed new course builds on existing academic provision).

4.3 To facilitate this stage in the process, a Developmental Engagement meeting will be scheduled by the Validation and Exams team, ideally at an early stage in the course design process. This should involve the course team, peers and key University stakeholders (such as Learning Services, Careers, Registry Services, Quality Assurance and Enhancement and, where relevant, student representatives and the Apprenticeships Business Development Manager). It may also be helpful to invite employer representatives or other external stakeholders. The purpose of this meeting is:

- to facilitate critical discussion of the proposed course and the team's development plans
- to encourage course teams to effectively engage with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and associated priorities, including those relating to student progression, inclusive learning, employability, digital literacy and technology-enhanced learning

- to identify support that would benefit the course team and how this might be provided
- to confirm arrangements for the completion of the documentation and preparation for the validation event.

5. The course validation process

5.1 For most courses, the validation process involves a validation event where a panel of internal and external experts meet to discuss and approve the proposed new course, based on:

- their prior consideration of a standard set of course documentation compiled by the course team; and
- meetings with the course team and, where relevant, students during the event.

5.2 This standard course validation process is summarised below. Appendix A outlines differences to standard procedures that apply in certain circumstances, including

- where paper-based validations are used as an alternative to a face-to-face event
- approving courses involving significant online delivery
- approving higher or degree apprenticeships
- approving an alternative mode of delivery for an existing course
- using validated modules in new course proposals.

6. Validation documentation

6.1 The validation documentation provides the formal record of the course(s) to be offered to students, and should include:

a) Course validation document providing a summary of the proposed new course and associated learning, teaching and assessment strategies (where the proposal relates to converting an existing course into a higher or degree apprenticeship, a separate proposal document is available)

b) Student course handbook (including module specifications)

c) Definitive course record

d) Where relevant, any additional student handbooks covering particular aspects of the course (for example work-based learning, professional practice or study abroad)

e) For higher or degree apprenticeships, an employer handbook outlining how the course will be delivered and managed from an employer's perspective

f) Mapping of course and module learning outcomes for each award presented for validation (including exit awards)

g) For higher or degree apprenticeships, mapping of the course against the relevant apprenticeship standard and a copy of the template to be used for recording the outcomes of the initial needs assessment process

h) Staff CVs

i) Feedback from external academics and/or other external stakeholders consulted on curriculum development

j) Where relevant, course handbook for HE level feeder programmes (e.g. Foundation degree course handbook for a proposed new Honours degree progression route).

6.2 Templates for all key documents are available on the course approval, modification and review pages on the University website. Further guidance on producing validation documentation is also available on the website and from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team. The Course Administration Team and the Validation and Exams Team within Registry Services are able to provide support to course teams in terms of collating and formatting validation documentation.

6.3 Care should be taken to ensure that all documentation is subject to thorough proof-reading to remove any inconsistencies, errors or inaccuracies prior to validation. This should be overseen by the relevant Dean of School or nominee.

Timescales for submission of documentation

6.4 The Validation and Exams team will notify course teams of key milestones and deadlines in the validation process, including deadlines for submission of documentation. At least seven weeks prior to the validation event, a draft version of the documentation should be submitted to the Validation and Exams team (validation@uos.ac.uk) for review by a member of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team, and by Learning Services in relation to resource lists within module specifications. As a result of this review, feedback will be provided to the course team with suggestions for improvement or enhancement where appropriate.

6.5 Should this review raise significant concerns, the Head of Quality Enhancement or nominee will consult with the Chair of the validation panel to decide upon an appropriate course of action, which may include cancellation of the validation event should the documentation have significant omissions and/or require significant revisions that cannot be undertaken within an appropriate timeframe.

6.6 In certain circumstances, for example when a course team is inexperienced in the validation process, an internal mock validation event may be held to prepare the course team and identify ways in which the proposal can be enhanced. This process will incorporate the documentation review process outlined above. The Quality Committee identifies the need for a mock event when considering the initial Course Proposal Form. The mock event will normally be held at least two weeks before the final validation documentation submission date to enable any final adjustments to be made.

6.7 A final version of all relevant documentation must be submitted to the Validation and Exams team (validation@uos.ac.uk) in an agreed electronic format at least three weeks in advance of the validation event. A longer timescale may be required where PSRBs are involved.

6.8 For the validation event, a briefing pack is sent to members of the validation panel in hard copy at least two weeks in advance of the event. The validation pack typically includes:

- a list of panel members
- an agenda for the validation event
- guidance notes for panel members
- course validation document and course handbook
- travel information for relevant panel members
- fee claim forms / guidance for external panel members

6.9 All other documentation is provided electronically via a file sharing site.

7. Validation panels

7.1 The validation panel includes a range of representatives who are able to judge the academic integrity of the course in relation to relevant internal and external reference points. Within the panel as a whole there should be sufficient understanding of the subject matter and academic context to enable the panel to make a sound judgement. Panel members should not have been involved in the detailed development of the course. Panel membership is subject to approval by the Chair of the Quality Committee.

7.2 Panel membership for proposed new courses typically comprises:

- Chair (a member of University of Suffolk academic or academic-related staff)
- at least one external academic subject expert (selected by the University in liaison with the relevant academic school)
- at least one employer representative (nominated by, but not closely associated with, the course team)
- PSRB representative(s), where relevant
- at least one member of University of Suffolk academic staff (where possible from a cognate discipline area but outside the relevant academic school)
- student representative (from outside the subject area under consideration and on an equivalent level course, i.e. undergraduate or taught postgraduate)
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement representative
- Learning Services representative.

7.3 All validation panels will be serviced by a member of the Validation and Exams team or a senior University administrator.

7.4 In the absence of any panel members on the day of the event, the decision as to whether the validation event should proceed is at the Chair's discretion. Normally, at

least half of the panel should be present, including the Chair and the external academic subject expert(s).

7.5 A peer from the University or one of its partner institutions may be invited to attend a validation event as an observer to facilitate the observer's staff development and the sharing of good practice, subject to the agreement of the Chair.

Criteria for the appointment of validation panel chairs

7.6 The University will establish a pool of validation panel chairs. Chairs within the pool should:

a) be a member of University of Suffolk academic or academic-related staff with continuing, substantive involvement in course delivery and/or in the management of learning, teaching and assessment

b) have appropriate experience and demonstrable competence in chairing meetings

c) have knowledge and understanding of University of Suffolk quality assurance and enhancement processes

d) have undergone relevant training on chairing course validation events.

7.7 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement team will liaise with Deans of School to agree potential candidates for inclusion in the pool of validation panel chairs.

7.8 In allocating chairs to particular validation events, independence and impartiality will be a key consideration. The Chair should be from a different academic school to the proposed new course.

Criteria for the appointment of external panel members

7.9 External academic panel members are identified and appointed by the University and should be able to demonstrate:

a) appropriate competence and experience and continuing active involvement in the relevant subject discipline(s)

b) relevant academic and/or professional qualifications, normally to at least the level of the qualification being presented for validation, and/or extensive practitioner experience where appropriate

c) knowledge and understanding of relevant external reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality

d) competence and recent experience relating to the design and delivery of programmes of study within the relevant subject discipline(s) to at least the level of the qualification being presented for validation

e) for higher or degree apprenticeships, preferably familiarity with delivery of apprenticeship programmes.

7.10 Employer representatives on the panel are nominated by the course team and appointed by the University and should:

a) be an employer or professional representative of the sector in which graduates might be expected to work

b) be of an appropriate level of seniority or have significant recent professional experience within the relevant field

c) possess sufficient experience within the sector to be able to comment on the relevance of the course for those wishing to gain employment in the sector.

7.11 Where relevant, external panel members may also need to satisfy additional criteria set by PSRBs.

7.12 The appointment as an external panel member of anyone in the following categories or circumstances is not permissible:

a) anyone who has been involved in the design and development of the proposed new course or is intended to be involved in subsequent course delivery

b) a member of the governing body of the University of Suffolk or its partner institutions

c) a current employee of the University of Suffolk or its partner institutions

d) a current or former external examiner appointed to a course at the University of Suffolk or its partner institutions, unless a period of five years has elapsed since the appointment ended

e) anyone teaching on a course where a current employee of the University of Suffolk or its partner institutions is appointed as the external examiner for the course

f) anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with a member of the team involved in designing and delivering the proposed new course

g) anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative activities (including research) with a member of staff involved in the design or delivery of the proposed new course

h) former staff or students of the University of Suffolk or its partner institutions, unless a period of five years has elapsed since their employment ended or they completed their studies

i) anyone associated with the sponsorship of future students on the course or in a position to significantly influence the employment of such students.

Responsibilities of the panel

7.13 It is the duty of the validation panel to:

- critically examine the validation documentation and undertake discussion with the course team and other relevant stakeholders in order to make a collective judgement as to the quality and academic standard of the proposed course

- decide, under the delegated authority of Senate, whether the proposed course should be validated.

7.14 A checklist setting out guidance for validation panel members (including a separate guide for student panel members) is available on the course approval, modification and review pages on the University website. This guidance is sent out to all panel members with the validation documentation.

8. The validation event

8.1 A course validation event normally takes place over a half day or full day depending on the size and nature of the award(s) being validated. In addition to private meetings of the validation panel, a meeting with the course team is a key part of the event. A meeting with students on related programmes may also be appropriate where there is significant overlap in modules or where there is potential for direct progression. Normally, a tour of facilities and specialist resources is included. An example of a typical agenda for a validation event may be found on the course approval, modification and review pages on the University website.

8.2 The course team meeting with the panel should consist of key members of staff who will be involved in the delivery of the proposed course, normally up to a maximum of ten (with the approval of the validation panel Chair required if this maximum is to be exceeded).

8.3 During a private meeting of the panel at the start of the validation event, the Chair will:

- explain the purpose and nature of the event (including confirming the course titles, awards and modes of study to be considered by the panel)
- invite panel members to introduce themselves
- confirm the day's agenda
- explain the validation process, the responsibilities of the panel and the possible outcomes of the event.

8.4 The Chair will then invite panel members to identify lines of enquiry suggested by the course documentation, in order to enable the Chair to construct agendas for the panel's meetings with students (where appropriate) and with the course team, and to identify any particular questions relevant to the tour of facilities/resources.

Meeting between the panel and students (where appropriate)

8.5 The agenda for the panel's meeting with students will typically include:

- introductions of all present, noting the course / mode / level of study of each student
- students' general perceptions of the strengths of their course
- general perceptions of changes they might wish to be made to enhance their course
- perceptions of learning, teaching and assessment activities (including marking and feedback)

- experiences of work-based learning (where relevant)
- general course organisation, communication and management
- perceptions of available facilities and resources, including teaching accommodation, library resources, IT resources and the VLE
- what students intend to do after the course and how well-prepared they feel
- where there is potential for students to progress onto the proposed new course, students views of the planned development.

8.6 Guidance for students involved in this meeting is available on the course approval, modification and review pages on the University website.

Meeting between the panel and the course team

8.7 For the meeting with the course team, the Chair is encouraged to group issues and questions raised so that discussions follow a focused sequence, normally covering:

- the context, philosophy and rationale
- course structure, aims and learning outcomes
- learning and teaching strategies and rationale (including use of technology-enhanced learning)
- recruitment and admissions (including recognition of prior learning)
- assessment strategy and coherence across modules
- questions relating to specific modules
- the student experience (including support mechanisms)
- staffing and resources
- course management and arrangements for ongoing quality enhancement
- the student handbook.

8.8 The Chair will normally identify a panel member to lead questioning in each specific area. There may be some areas where the panel has identified no issues and has no questions. The agenda for the meeting with the course team may be revised in the light of the meeting with students (where relevant) and/or the tour of facilities and resources.

8.9 The Chair will normally commence the meeting with the course team by:

- explaining the purpose and nature of the validation event
- inviting all present to introduce themselves
- explaining the validation process, the responsibilities of the panel and the possible outcomes of the event.

8.10 At the outset, the course team may give a short presentation or introduction to the course. The Chair will then outline the agenda for the meeting and invite relevant panel members to lead on particular lines of enquiry. The Chair is responsible for highlighting positive aspects of the course and for ensuring that issues are raised in a constructive but critical manner in order to enhance the proposed new course. The validation panel should conduct its discussions in the spirit of being a ‘critical friend', but should also be

aware of its role in judging whether, and the extent to which, the course meets requirements to achieve validation.

Concluding meeting of the panel

8.11 The Chair will normally commence the final private meeting of the validation panel by asking each of the panel members to give a view on whether the proposed course should be:

a) validated outright with no conditions, requirements or recommendations (in which case no further action by the course team is required)

b) validated with conditions and/or requirements and/or recommendations (in which case the course team must provide evidence that the conditions and/or requirements have been met and must respond to any recommendations within the agreed timescales)

c) not approved.

8.12 In exceptional circumstances the panel may recommend suspension of the validation process whilst the course team undertakes a major revision to the proposal.

8.13 If the outcome is successful, the panel will also determine the period of validation, which for most courses is five years.

8.14 A unanimous decision of the panel is normally required for the conclusion of the validation event, but in the event that an individual panel member disagrees with the majority decision, then the Chair of the validation panel will make the final decision.

8.15 Where the panel decides to validate the proposed new course, they will proceed to identify and formulate commendations, conditions, requirements and/or recommendations, giving due consideration to clarity of wording.

- Commendations allow the panel a chance to congratulate the course team on aspects of exemplary practice (i.e. practice that significantly exceeds normal expectations). A particular focus here should be on exemplary practice that has the potential to be transferable to other courses.

- Conditions are those issues that must be addressed to the satisfaction of the validation panel before the course commences

- Requirements are those issues that must be addressed by an agreed date after course commencement to the satisfaction of the Quality Committee (note: requirements should only be used in exceptional circumstances where the issue cannot reasonably be addressed prior to course commencement)

- Recommendations are those issues where action is desirable and should be considered with a response provided.

8.16 The course team is then invited to return to receive feedback. The Chair will explain the overall outcome of the event and will notify the course team of any conditions, requirements, recommendations and/or commendations. A deadline will be identified (typically six to eight weeks after the event) by which any conditions must be met and recommendations responded to, and the Chair will identify whether the course team's response will be considered by correspondence or, in exceptional circumstances, by a conditions meeting.

8.17 The Chair and Secretary will liaise to ensure that draft conditions, requirements and/or recommendations are circulated to the course team within five working days of the event.

9. The validation report

9.1 A report on the validation event will be produced by the Secretary in liaison with the Chair. The report summarises the panel's discussions and provides an official record of the outcome and any associated commendations, conditions, requirements and/or recommendations.

9.2 Once approved by the Chair, the draft validation report is circulated to the full panel for review before the final version is circulated to the course team, normally within four weeks of the validation event. The validation panel may not set further conditions or requirements after it has reported.

9.3 The validation report will be submitted to the Quality Committee for information. The Quality Committee reports to Senate on all courses that have been successfully validated (including confirmation of the agreed period of validation, which is normally six years).

10. The course team's response

10.1 The course team should make a formal response to the panel's validation report by the agreed deadline(s), evidencing how specific conditions and/or requirements have been met and addressing any recommendations that were made. This response should be submitted to the Validation and Exams team (validation@uos.ac.uk) by the agreed deadline, for onward submission to the validation panel Chair. Responses are monitored through the Quality Committee.

10.2 The course team's formal response should include:

- amended documents (using tracked changes to highlight any amendments), including definitive course record
- a brief summary of how each condition and/or requirement has been met with reference to the amended documents
- how each recommendation has been considered
- any other appropriate evidence.

11. Approval of course team's response and confirmation of validation

11.1 The course team's response to any conditions and/or recommendations is normally signed off by correspondence by the validation panel Chair, drawing on the advice of other panel members as appropriate. Exceptionally, a conditions meeting will be arranged at the time of the validation event to ensure that all conditions have been met and that recommendations have been considered, with membership as agreed by the panel Chair.

11.2 If it is decided that the conditions have been met and the recommendations adequately responded to, the Chair (acting under delegated authority of the Quality Committee and Senate) will confirm that the validation process has been successfully completed and that the new course is validated, subject to any requirements being adequately addressed by agreed deadlines. A course validation outcome form (provided by the Validation and Exams team) will be signed to evidence this. Confirmation of the completion of the validation process allows the 'subject to validation' statement to be removed from any course publicity material. The Quality Committee will maintain oversight of the course team's response to any outstanding requirements.

11.3 If any condition or requirement has not been met by agreed deadlines or if further evidence is required, the Chair (or the Chair of the Quality Committee in the case of requirements) will request additional documentation to address the outstanding issues. If the condition or requirement is not able to be met, the matter is referred to the Quality Committee to determine an appropriate course of action. In such circumstances, protecting the interests of prospective and/or current students should be of paramount importance. It is vital that applicants and/or current students are consulted and kept informed of developments, so that they are clear about their options.

12. Definitive course documentation

12.1 The Validation and Exams team maintains definitive course documentation which incorporates all approved amendments to the original validation documentation as part of the course team's response to any conditions, requirements and/or recommendations. The Definitive Course Record is published online and sent to applicants.

12.2 Definitive course documentation is stored within the relevant course file on MySuffolk.

Appendix A

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-STANDARD COURSES

1. Paper-based validations

1.1. In certain exceptional circumstances, course validations may take place via a paper-based exercise without a validation event. This may take place when, for example, a new pathway is introduced on an existing course incorporating a significant number of modules that have already been validated, or for a new credit-bearing short course worth more than 60 credits. The decision to proceed with a paper-based validation is taken by the Quality Committee.

1.2. For paper-based validations, panels are normally convened in the same way as for standard validation events and include external academic and employer representation.

1.3. Validation documentation is circulated to all panel members either electronically or in hard copy, and panel members are normally expected to return their written comments (via a standard template) by email to the validation panel Secretary within three weeks of receipt. The Chair will review all comments and decide, in liaison with the Secretary, whether any points need further investigation with the course team or further discussion with panel members. In some cases a virtual meeting of the panel, possibly involving the course team, may be appropriate to discuss any significant emerging themes.

1.4. When the panel's review of the validation documentation is complete, the Secretary will draft a validation report on behalf of the Chair, which will be circulated to all panel members for their approval before being passed to the course team, via the Validation and Exams team, for their response.

2. Approving courses involving significant online delivery

2.1. In addition to meeting the standard documentation requirements for a validation event, course teams should prepare learning and support materials to provide evidence to the validation panel about their capacity to develop and implement a successful and effective online programme. They should also provide details of their experience and expertise in terms of online delivery.

2.2. In particular, the course team should provide:

a) material illustrating the delivery of a sample mandatory module within the course (as it will be delivered to students)

b) a detailed plan for the core module to illustrate the tasks students and staff are expected to complete at various stages in the delivery and assessment of the module

c) an illustrative example of how induction and orientation will occur for the learners

d) a detailed description of the available support for online learners (including tutorial and pastoral care), developed in conjunction with appropriate support teams

e) a detailed action plan for the design and implementation of all elements of the curriculum to be delivered in the first year

f) a detailed staff development plan for all relevant members of the course team.

2.3. Early dialogue with digital learning specialists in Learning Services and with the Quality Enhancement Manager during the course design and development phase is strongly recommended.

3. Approving higher or degree apprenticeships

3.1. In addition to meeting the standard documentation requirements for a validation event, course teams should prepare materials to provide evidence to the validation panel about compliance with associated apprenticeship standards, assessment plans and funding rules. The validation process is intended to take a holistic view of the apprenticeship programme, including arrangements for conduct of end point assessment regardless of whether this is integrated or delivered by an external independent organisation.

3.2. Alignment with the University's Apprenticeship Framework should be considered as part of the course design and development phase and as part of the validation event.

3.3. In particular, the course team should provide information on:

a) mapping of the course and module content against the relevant apprenticeship standard and assessment plan

b) entry requirements, including details of how English and Maths will be delivered where students are permitted to enter the course without having the minimum required level of prior qualification, and diagnostic testing on entry

c) how recognition of prior learning will be dealt with, both in terms of individual assessments for entry and any progression arrangements with external organisations for entry with advanced standing

d) arrangements for undertaking initial needs assessments and training needs assessments

e) the structure and timing of delivery (course teams should highlight multiple intakes and delivery models where this is being proposed)

f) how the requirement for 20% off-the-job training will be met (including associated monitoring and recording mechanisms)

g) arrangements for student progress reviews and formal tripartite reviews with students and employers

h) arrangements for end point assessment, including how students will be prepared for this as part of their course and, if non-integrated, information on the end point assessment organisation

i) information on support mechanisms within the workplace, and the provision of guidance and training for those supporting students in the workplace

j) arrangements for managing employer relationships (including workplace visits by University staff) and gathering feedback on their experiences of the apprenticeship programme

k) information on staff development activity undertaken to prepare the course team for delivery and management of the apprenticeship programme.

3.4. Early dialogue with the Apprenticeships team during the course design and development phase is strongly recommended.

4. Approving an alternative mode or method of delivery for an existing course

4.1. In circumstances where a currently validated course is proposed for delivery via an alternative method (for example if a course currently delivered face-to-face is being considered for delivery online) or via an alternative mode of delivery (for example adding a new full-time or part-time delivery mode), the matter should be referred to the Head of Quality Enhancement for consideration of the most appropriate validation process and associated documentation requirements. Depending on the nature of the changes proposed to existing validated provision, this may involve a full validation event, a paper based event or completion of the course modification process.

5. Using validated modules in new course proposals

5.1. In certain circumstances, a course team may wish to use existing validated modules in new course proposals. This may be considered when, for example, a new pathway is being introduced on an existing course, or where a new course is being developed in a subject area where there is some overlap with existing provision.

5.2. The existing module must have integrity in the new course and there must be coherence in the student learning experience if students are on the same module but within different pathways. If this is not the case the course team may wish to modify and re-name the module to make it coherent.

5.3. Course teams should indicate clearly in their validation documentation where existing modules are being used in a new course proposal (e.g. with an asterisk in the summary of the course structure). The validation panel will normally accept that this is an approved module and concentrate on the newly designed ones, but will retain the right to ask questions about existing modules and to make recommendations for

changes. In doing so the panel will need to be cognisant of the implications for existing courses in which the module is used.

5.4. In exceptional circumstances the panel may decide that it has to set a condition relating to an existing module. Any such outcome will be closely monitored by the Validation and Exams team, in liaison with the Head of Quality Enhancement, in order to ensure that appropriate action is undertaken by the module leader and all leaders of courses in which the module is used through the course modification process.