

# A guide to Programme (course) validation for student panel members

This guide is intended to support student representative members of a validation panel.

For forms, templates, and further guidance, please contact:

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## Contents

<b>Section 1: Validation and the role of student panel member</b>	<b>2</b>
What is validation and revalidation? .....	2
What makes a 'good' student panel member? .....	3
What are your responsibilities as a student panel member? .....	3
Who else is on the panel? .....	4
What documentation will I need to review? .....	5
Before the validation event .....	5
On the day of the validation event .....	6
Possible outcomes of the validation .....	6
After the validation event .....	7
<b>Section 2: FAQs for devolved validations/revalidations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 3: FAQs for Education 2030 (re)validations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Section 4: Who should I contact if I have questions?</b>	<b>8</b>

## Section 1: Validation and the role of student panel member

### What is validation and revalidation?

**Validation** is the process by which a new programme is considered and approved. The programme team draft programme documentation, this is circulated to the validation panel for their review and an event is held to consider and approve the proposed programme.

**Revalidation** is the process by which a current programme is reviewed following a significant change. This may be due to:

- The number of changes staff want to make to a programme
- The requirements of external bodies (these are called Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)).

The programme team draft programme documentation, this is circulated to the validation panel for their review and an event is held to consider and approve the proposed programme.

There are four main types of validation you may act as a panel member on:

<a href="#">Devolved validation or revalidation</a> (DMU-based programmes)	<a href="#">Education 2030 validation</a>	Collaborative provision (also known as non-devolved) validation or revalidation*	Apprenticeship validation or revalidation**
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\*Please see separate collaborative provision guidance for further information on these events.

\*\*Please see separate Apprenticeships guidance for further information on these events.

- Arrangements for the event itself and the level of scrutiny involved will depend on how 'high risk' the new programme proposal is seen to be.
- For more information on the different validation event types, see below.

### What is considered at validation?

- The rationale (reason) for the new programme
- The programme curriculum, its design, content, delivery and assessment
- The appropriateness of the standards set for the level of the award
- The suitability of human, physical and other learning resources to support the programme
- The student experience offered by the new programme including opportunities for employment and further study for its graduates
- The way in which the programme facilitates the widest possible access to ensure that all students can maximise their potential
- + any Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements (where appropriate)

## What makes a 'good' student panel member?

Student panel members are key to ensuring that the student voice is considered as part of assessing new (or amended) programmes. Student panel members should:

- Bring and share good practice (from your own experience as a student)
- Engage with the process and with student voice (e.g. from acting as a course rep)
- Be independent – acting impartially
- Be a critical friend – do not be afraid of asking questions!
- Provide relevant contributions

As the student panel member, you may have a very different perspective to other (generally academic) panel members – and that is ok. Do not be afraid to raise a question or an issue which no one else has thought of. It can seem daunting in a formal situation with a number of (often senior) staff members. Be reassured that all panel members are there to support you and by raising questions/issues you are making a valuable contribution to the validation process.

## What are your responsibilities as a student panel member?

1. Review validation documents and provide comments; focus on the student handbook (where provided) and the main validation document
  - Areas you may wish to look at:
    - The student experience on this programme/these programmes
    - The suitability of the programme design
    - How placements are offered and whether there is sufficient support to students (where applicable)
    - The assessment types (range, number of assessments, reassessment)
    - The feedback from students; what does it tell you about the programme?
    - Student representation on the programme
    - The opportunities students have to give feedback on their programme.
    - Personal tutoring opportunities for students on the programme
    - How students are supported on their programme
    - Student resources on the programme
    - Employability on the programme
    - Any other University-wide initiatives (e.g. EDI, Decolonising DMU, Sustainability) and how they are evident in these programmes
  - For sample questions to give ideas of what you are looking for, please see the student rep prompts – pick and mix sheet.
  - Identify any commendations and areas of good practice.
  - Providing comments in advance of the event (see below on page 5)
2. Attend on the day of the validation event (where possible):
  - ask questions on the day and contribute to panel discussions and decision making. You are a full panel member and your contributions are valued.
3. Review the validation report once completed by the servicing officer.

## Who else is on the panel?

A validation panel is typically made up of the following staff members: \*

- Chair
  - Responsible for leading the discussions and ensuring that everyone gets a say.
  - A senior academic member of staff from another Faculty.
- External(s) panel members
  - Their role is to give independent subject-expertise on the programme(s) proposed
  - A member of staff external to the University (from a University of Industry)
- Non-faculty representative
  - An academic member of staff from another Faculty to provide another viewpoint and share best practice in relation to the programme(s) being considered.
- Library & Learning Services Representative
  - Responsible for advising on the resources as described in the validation documentation.
- Department of Academic Quality (DAQ) representative
  - Responsible for advising the panel on validation rules and regulations and making sure that the programme(s) are compliant with national and University requirements.
- Student representative
  - You are there to offer the wider student viewpoint and raise issues based on the validation documentation.
- Servicing Officer (from Faculty)
  - Provides administrative support for the validation, before, during and after the event. They will circulate the panel member comments sheet before the validation and collate the validation report following the event.

\*Please note that the panel membership may differ for Education 2030 and collaborative provision events. Please see separate collaborative provision guidance for further information on panel members.

## What documentation will I need to review?

The servicing officer will send you a pack of information, this will differ dependent on the validation. As a general guide, see the table below:

You should receive information on the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Basic programme information</b> – the award, modes of delivery and modules which make up the programme. This will also include the rationale for introduction of the new programme, projected student numbers and opportunities for employment/further study for its graduates</li><li>• <b>Information about resources</b> – physical spaces to be used; the staff (academic and professional services) who will teach and support the programme; learning resources such as library resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confirmation/evidence that the programme fits with national subject benchmarks and level descriptors – this is to ensure that the content of the programme is appropriate to the subject area and that the programme is set at the correct level of challenge</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Programme/student handbook information</b> – a draft of the handbook information provided to students when they start their programme (for instance, a copy of the VLE page information)</li><li>• Handbook information has now been transferred to the VLE and information has been streamlined and replaced by links to University web sites, where appropriate. Students should be signposted to <a href="#">DMU Base Camp</a> as their launch pad site which offers them support throughout their studies with us</li><li>• As a student representative you will be asked to comment specifically on the quality and content of this handbook information</li><li>• For Education 2030 programmes a programme/student handbook will not be provided as part of the documentation pack</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Programme and module specifications</b> – documents explaining the content, delivery and assessment of the programme and its modules. The documentation is also expected to include more detailed information on assessment, including an indicative student assessment timetable to show how assessment tasks are spread through the academic year</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence of external consultation and input into the new programme</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information about how technology will be used to enhance students' learning experiences</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information about how the programme promotes and supports equality and diversity within the student body.</li></ul>	

## Before the validation event

You should read through the pack of information and make comments on the panel members' comments sheet. You should pay particular attention to the **validation document** and **student handbook information**. You should use the comments sheet to feedback your comments to the servicing officer, identifying points on which you would like additional clarification and areas that you would like to pursue further with the programme team during the event.

### Panel members' comments sheet

- Minor issues raised by panel members on the comments sheet may be resolved by the provision of additional documentation or a brief explanation from the programme team.
- For other issues, panel members' comments are collated into an agenda of topics for discussion on the day of the validation event.

### On the day of the validation event

The event provides the opportunity for the panel to discuss specific points with the programme team and other representatives from the faculty. Validation events may be held virtually (on MS Teams) or in person and the servicing officer will let you know which format the validation will take. Student panel members are full panel members and will typically attend all the below meetings.

### Sample agenda

10:00 – 10:15	Arrival and introductions
10:15 – 10:30	Presentation from the programme leader to the panel
10:30 – 11:00	Private meeting of the panel to discuss lines of enquiry
11:00 – 12:15	Discussion between the panel and the programme team
12:15 – 12:30	Comfort break
12:30 – 13:15	Private meeting of the panel to devise outcomes
13:15 – 13:30	Feedback to the programme team on validation outcomes

### Possible outcomes of the validation

There are four main outcomes following a validation event:

1. Indefinite approval of the programme (with or without conditions, and/or recommendations)
2. Approval for a fixed period with or without conditions or recommendations.
3. Not approved – an invitation given to resubmit
4. Not approved – recommendation that the proposal be withdrawn.

Typically, programmes are given the following specific outcomes following a validation (and these are discussed in a private panel meeting):

1. Conditions
  - These are actions points for the programme team to address issues of a serious nature, which must be resolved before the new programme can start.

2. Required actions
  - These are also serious issues that must be addressed to the satisfaction of the panel; however, they may have a longer completion date.
3. Recommendations
  - These are points for the programme team to think about in terms of the future development and improvement to the programme.
4. Commendations/observations
  - These can include commendations and recognition of good practice.

### After the validation event

- The outcome of the validation will be fully documented in a report, written by the validation servicing officer, which should be finalised and circulated within five weeks of the validation event.
- Panel members will be invited to provide comments on a draft before a final version is agreed.
- The report, once finalised, will be circulated to key university committees and individuals.
- The programme team will respond to the conditions/required actions set and these will be approved by the Chair of the validation panel. Once approved, students can start on the programme.

## Section 2: FAQs for devolved validations/revalidations

### When will I receive the validation paperwork?

You will receive a pack of information approximately three weeks before the validation event. Please complete the panel member comments sheet and return this to the servicing officer.

### How many programmes will be considered as part of the validation/revalidation?

Typically, you will be considering one programme as part of the validation/revalidation. The event may be longer dependent on the level of risk involved and whether there are any external body/PSRB (Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body) requirements. If this is the case the event may be longer and there will also be a PSRB representative on the validation panel.

### When will the panel meet to review the comments sheet and discuss key lines of enquiry?

The panel will meet as part of the validation event to review the document and decide on who will ask each question to the programme team.

## Section 3: FAQs for Education 2030 (re)validations

### What is an Education 2030 validation?

Education 2030 is a transformation programme intended to simplify the complexity of the University's systems and structures, to ensure parity across its programmes and to enable flexibility so that students can determine how and when they study.

Programmes are being revalidated to move to block delivery (moving from terms to semesters). Instead of students studying modules alongside each other across one academic year, they will typically study four blocks, one block (module) at a time. In order to



achieve this in a short timeframe, programme teams are recommended to undertake a sprint (or equivalent) activity to re-evaluate their curriculum and achieve block delivery.

#### How many programmes will be considered as part of the validation/revalidation?

Education 2030 events involve from one to (approximately) five programmes validated as part of one event. The event length may run from a half-day to a full-day event, depending on the programmes being validated and whether there are any shared modules.

#### When will I receive the validation paperwork?

Due to the tight timeframes as part of this transformation activity, you should receive the paperwork 10 working days before the validation event.

#### What will be included in the validation paperwork?

- There will not be student handbooks required as part of the documentation.
- There may be notes from the programme's sprint activity, or equivalent, to show the review activity that has taken place before the validation event.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Enhancing Learning through Technology checklists will be provided by School (not at individual programme level).

#### Who will be on the validation panel?

- There will be no library and learning services representative on the validation panel (their input should already have been considered as part of the sprint process/equivalent).
- If there are PSRBs involved in the programme, there may also be a PSRB representative on the validation panel.
- Education 2030 validations will take place virtually (on MS Teams or equivalent).

#### When will the panel meet to review the comments sheet and discuss key lines of enquiry?

The panel will meet as part of the validation event to review the document and decide on who will ask each question to the programme team.

### Section 4: Who should I contact if I have questions?

Please contact [Victoria.pooley@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:Victoria.pooley@dmu.ac.uk) if you have any questions about the validation process or would like a 121-training session.

Please contact [Kathryn.butler@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:Kathryn.butler@dmu.ac.uk) if you have any questions about collaborative provision validations or would like a 121-training session.

You are also welcome to contact the DAQ rep on your validation to help work through the paperwork together.

You can also contact [rebecca.thirlby@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:rebecca.thirlby@dmu.ac.uk) or [sgoddard@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:sgoddard@dmu.ac.uk), student voice leads within DAQ.

Additional validation resources are available on the DAQ website [here](#).