Programme Approval and Management Policy

Academic Quality Services

Contents:

1. Introduction

1.1   This policy explains the University's approach to:

- Programme validation

- Programme review

- Programme modification

- Programme revalidation

- Programme intake suspension and closure

1.2   This policy should be read in conjunction with the associated procedures and guidance for programme approval and management activities.

2. Scope

2.1   The aim of this policy and its associated procedures is to guide decision-making within the university with respect to programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, intake suspension, and closure.

2.2   This policy applies to all provision within the University's taught academic portfolio that leads to the award of academic credit, including apprenticeships, credit-bearing short courses and taught academic provision delivered at DMU Leicester, DMU London, DMU Dubai, and in collaboration with UK and Transnational Education (TNE) collaborative partners.

2.3   This policy and its associated procedures are designed for use by:

- Internal stakeholders involved in programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, intake suspension, and closure activities.

- External stakeholders involved in programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, intake suspension, and closure activities.

- Members of the University's deliberative structures with respect to their consideration of proposals and outputs from programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, intake suspension, and closure activities.

3. Glossary

3.1   **Programme** – the collection of modules leading to an academic award.

3.2 **Module** – a standalone learning package with defined content, learning outcomes and assessment task(s).

3.3 **Programme validation** – the processes for approving a new programme for inclusion in the University's taught academic portfolio.

3.4 **Programme review** – the processes for reviewing existing programmes in the University's taught academic portfolio.

3.5 **Programme modification** – the processes for making curriculum changes for existing programmes in the University's taught academic portfolio.

3.6 **Programme revalidation** – the processes for re-approving existing programmes in the University's taught academic portfolio.

3.7 **Programme intake suspension** – the processes for suspending recruitment to existing programmes in the University's taught academic portfolio.

3.8 **Programme closure** – the processes for withdrawing and closing programmes in the University's taught academic portfolio.

4. Responsibilities

Academic Board

4.1 The University's Academic Board is responsible for overseeing the scholarly activities of the University. This responsibility includes oversight of procedures for the award of qualifications and academic titles, oversight of the academic standards and quality of the University's taught academic provision, and oversight of the content of the University's curriculum.

Academic Portfolio Committee

4.2 The University's Academic Portfolio Committee is responsible for the strategic development and oversight of the University's academic portfolio, including non-standard provision and provision delivered through collaborative partnership, and the implementation of programme intake suspension and closure procedures and their outputs. In this context, the committee has responsibility for the initial approval of new programme proposals at institutional level and for the institutional-level approval of programme intake suspensions and closures.

4.3 **To note:** the Strategic Portfolio and Investment Committee also has responsibility for the initial approval of new programme proposals that require significant investment by

the University, and the University Leadership Board also has responsibility for the approval of programme intake suspensions and closures where such closures will result in the removal of a subject area from the University's taught academic portfolio.

Academic Quality Committee

4.4   The University's Academic Quality Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the University's Programme Approval and Management Policy and the outputs of programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, programme intake suspension, and closure procedures.

Academic Quality Services

4.5   The University's Academic Quality Services team are responsible for the development and maintenance of the Programme Approval and Management Policy and for managing programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, programme intake suspension, and closure procedures.

Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee

4.6   The University's Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of collaborative partnerships, including the approval and development of each collaborative partnership's taught academic provision.

Education Committee

4.7   The University's Education Committee is responsible for approving programme and module exemptions from the University's standard block delivery model for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

5. General principles/Policy statements

5.1   **Programme validation**

The University is committed to the development of a taught academic portfolio that is clearly aligned to the University's strategic plan and offers high-quality, relevant, and market-attractive programmes which lead to a positive student experience and credible, recognised, and positive student outcomes.

In this context, the purposes of programme validation are:

- To ensure that programmes of study and their associated learning experiences are effectively planned, academically appropriate and fit for purpose, and cognisant of institutional and national requirements and guidance.

- To ensure that programmes are congruent with relevant external reference points, such as (but not limited to) the Office for Students B Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Skills England, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.

- To generate definitive programme information for relevant stakeholders, including that which is required for publication in the public domain.

The University adopts a staged approach in its programme validation procedures, comprising:

- Stage 1 – Initial Programme Proposal and Financial Viability Assessment

  At institutional level, initial consideration will be given to the market for the proposed programmes and its strategic fit in relation to the University's strategic plan and existing (and planned) taught academic portfolio. Therefore, initial programme proposals must demonstrate that there is a market demand for the proposed programme, that the programme aligns with the University's strategic objectives, and that the proposed programme complements existing (and planned) provision within the University's wider taught academic portfolio.

  An institutional review of the financial viability and sustainability of the proposed programme will be undertaken. Following initial approval of the initial programme proposal and financial viability assessment, programmes may be marketed as 'subject to validation'.

- Stage 2 – Internal Scrutiny of Validation Paperwork

  Programme development teams, supported by Academic Quality Services, will be required to develop draft validation paperwork for scrutiny and endorsement at faculty level prior to progression of proposals to University Validation Panel.

- Stage 3 – University Validation Panel

  University Validation Panels will consist of a desk-based review of validation paperwork and a validation event. The University Validation Panel seek to determine the appropriateness of the programme in the context of university and regulatory expectations.

  If the proposed programme is approved, subject to conditions, all conditions of validation must be met before the programme can be approved and delivery

commence. All recommendations should be responded to within a specified timescale, normally within the first year of delivery.

Once the programme validation has been granted, the 'subject to validation' caveat on marketing materials may be removed and programmes remain approved indefinitely, subject to required programme review, modification and revalidation activity.

5.2   **Programme review**

The University is committed to the continuous review and enhancement of its taught academic portfolio to ensure programmes continue to align with the University's strategic plan and continue to offer high-quality, relevant, and market-attractive programmes which lead to a positive student experience and credible, recognised, and positive student outcomes.

In this context, the purposes of programme review are:

- To provide a framework for programme teams to review and formalise existing enhancement and reflective practice, which is ongoing through the academic cycle.

- To offer a formal and coherent vehicle for the consideration of a range of existing data throughout the year to ensure continued compliance with relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and to drive continuous enhancement and improvement of the student experience.

- To allow reflection on performance and trends in relation to the Office for Students B3 benchmark data.

- To provide Faculties with detailed information to support decision-making in relation to programme development, delivery, and review, at both granular and strategic levels.

- To provide reassurance through institutional governance structures of continued engagement with enhancement activities that support the quality and value of programmes of study, aligning to the strategies and values of the University.

All programmes that have registered students will be reviewed annually at programme level in accordance with the standard academic cycle, regardless of the programme's start date or location of delivery, and will feed into school and faculty-level action planning. New programmes will be required to engage with ongoing programme review activity from the start of delivery but will submit their first annual review report once a full academic delivery cycle has concluded.

Data and intelligence gathered through annual review will be used to inform programme modification activity and any recommendations for further review activity, programme revalidation, programme intake suspension, and programme closure.

5.3   **Programme modification**

The University is committed to the continuous review and enhancement of its taught academic portfolio to ensure programmes continue to align with the University's strategic plan and continue to offer high-quality, relevant, and market-attractive programmes which lead to a positive student experience and credible, recognised, and positive student outcomes.

In this context, the purposes of programme modification are:

- To ensure the continued alignment of the aims and intended outcomes of the programme with the design and delivery of teaching and learning.

- To ensure the continued currency and relevance of the programme's curriculum.

- To ensure that the curriculum continues to be congruent with relevant external reference points, such as (but not limited to) the Office for Students B Conditions of Registration, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Skills England, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.

- To respond to and embed strategic initiatives and objectives.

Programme modifications fall into three categories:

- General housekeeping – typographical and presentation amendments and updates.

- Minor modifications – changes to programme and module content, changes to learning and teaching methods, and assessment changes.

- Major modifications – changes to programme and module aims and intended learning outcomes, changes to programme structures, and changes to module titles.

Programme teams are responsible for proposing programme modifications based on data and intelligence gathered through module and programme review activities, as well as stakeholder consultation.

Substantive or cumulative changes to a programme's structure, teaching, learning and assessment strategies, programme outcomes, or mode of delivery require programme revalidation activity.

A change to an existing programme award title may be permitted without requiring revalidation, subject to no other substantive changes to the programme being required.

Any changes to existing programmes must be cognisant of, and compliant with, consumer protection regulations and the University's contract with students, both in the context of student consultation on proposed changes and the timing of their implementation.

5.4   **Programme revalidation**

The University is committed to the maintenance of a taught academic portfolio that is clearly aligned to University's strategic plan and offers high-quality, relevant, and market-attractive programmes which lead to a positive student experience and credible, recognised, and positive student outcomes.

In this context, the purposes of programme revalidation are:

- To ensure that programmes of study and their associated learning experiences are effectively planned, academically appropriate and fit for purpose, and cognisant of national requirements and guidance.

- To ensure that programmes are congruent with relevant external reference points, such as (but not limited to) the Office for Students B Conditions of Registration for Quality and Standards, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Skills England, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements.

- To generate definitive programme information for relevant stakeholders, including that which is required for publication in the public domain.

The University adopts a staged approach in its programme revalidation procedures, comprising:

- Stage 1 – Programme Revalidation Requirement Identified

  A requirement for programme revalidation will normally follow (1) programme annual review activity and the identification of the need for significant programme enhancement activity, (2) the identification of substantive or cumulative changes to an existing programme through programme modification activity that materially changes the programme as it was originally validated, (3) the identification of a lack of programme modification activity over a five-year period and subsequent concerns regarding the continued currency and appropriateness of the programme, (4) changes to external regulation or the professional requirements of a programme, or a combination of the four.

If a programme revalidation is not triggered by one or more of the above during a 5-year period, a programme 'health check' will take place to ensure that the programme's academic standards and quality of student experience remain appropriate and to identify any opportunities for further enhancements through programme modification or revalidation activity.

Academic Quality Services will work with faculty teams to identify those programmes requiring revalidation.

Following initiation of programme revalidation activities, Academic Quality Services will work with faculty teams to determine whether the programme should be marketed as 'subject to revalidation' until revalidation activities have concluded.

- Stage 2 – Internal Scrutiny of Revalidation Paperwork

Programme teams, supported by Academic Quality Services, will be required to develop draft revalidation paperwork for scrutiny and endorsement at faculty level prior to progression of proposals to University Revalidation Panel.

- Stage 3 – University Revalidation Panel

University Revalidation Panels will consist of a desk-based review of revalidation paperwork and a revalidation event. The University Revalidation Panel seek to determine the appropriateness of the programme in the context of university and regulatory expectations.

If the proposed programme is to be recommended for revalidation, all conditions of revalidation must be met before the programme can be re-approved and delivery commence. All recommendations must be addressed within a specified timescale, normally within the first year of delivery and addressed through annual monitoring.

Once the programme revalidation has been granted, any 'subject to revalidation' caveat on marketing materials may be removed and programmes remain approved indefinitely, subject to required programme review, modification and revalidation activity.

5.5 **Programme intake suspension and closure**

Programme intake suspensions and closures will normally be for one or more of the following reasons:

- Strategic – due to changes in university strategy in response to institutional priorities or changes in the external environment.

- Academic – due to a programme's declining contribution to the academic direction of the faculty or subject area, long-term failings in quality or standards, poor student retention on a long-term basis, or insufficient cohort sizes.

- Economic – due to the non-viability of a programme from a financial perspective.

- Market – due to a lack of demand for the programme from a market and graduate perspective.

Due consideration must be given to the potential impact programme intake suspensions and closures might have on existing students and applicants.

Programme intake suspensions will not normally be permitted for more than two consecutive academic cycles. If programmes are proposed to be suspended for more than two consecutive cycles, this will normally prompt programme closure or programme revalidation activity.

Proposals for programme closures will normally require completion of a risk analysis and teach-out plan to provide reassurances that students on-programme will be enabled to complete their studies.

Due consideration must be given to the University's regulatory reporting obligations, particularly if closure of a programme constitutes closure of a subject area or the triggering of measures under the University's student protection plan.

5.6   **Stakeholder Consultation**

Programme teams must consult with key stakeholders on programme validation, review, modification, revalidation, intake suspension and closure activity. Key stakeholders will normally comprise:

- Existing students

- Applicants and prospective students

- University staff

- Collaborative partner staff

- External examiners

- Employers

- Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB)

6. Monitoring and review

6.1   This policy and its application will be monitored by the University's Academic Quality Committee and Academic Quality Services team. A full review of the policy will take place every three years with policy revisions considered and approved by the University's Academic Board.

7.   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

7.1   Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are central to the curation of the University's taught academic portfolio, the quality of the student experience, and the University's compliance with its regulatory obligations. In this context, programme approval and management mechanisms will embed explicit requirements for equality, diversity and inclusion considerations to guide decision making. For instance, policies, procedures, and guidance for programme approval and management will support and require the decolonising of the University's curriculum and the provision of a high-quality academic experience and positive outcomes for all students (including those from underrepresented groups).

8.   Sustainability

8.1   Sustainability considerations are central to the curation of the University's taught academic portfolio and the University's financial, social, and environmental sustainability. In particular, policies, procedures, and guidance for programme approval and management support the financial strength of the University through the development and maintenance of market-attractive academic offers and enable the University to embed learning on Education for Sustainable Development within its curriculum.

9.   Related policies and standards/documentation

9.1   Office for Students Regulatory Framework, particularly the B Conditions of Registration for quality and standards and the C Conditions of Registration for the protection of student interests.

9.2   Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education, particularly the Advice and Guidance for Course Design and Development.

9.3 Quality Assurance Agency Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, Characteristic Statements, and Subject Benchmark Statements.

9.4 Skills England, as appropriate to the University's apprenticeship provision.

9.5 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements, as appropriate to the University's professionally accredited and regulated provision.

9.6 Other internal policies relevant to the quality assurance of the University's taught academic provision can be accessed here on the University's website: Academic Quality Services

10. Appendix A: List of Associated Procedures

10.1 This policy is implemented via the following associated procedures:

- Programme Validation Procedure
- Programme Review Procedure
- Programme Modification Procedure
- Programme Revalidation Procedure
- Programme Intake Suspension and Closure Procedure
- CPD Validation and Monitoring Procedure

11. Document and version control information:

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Policy number	PRAB08
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