

3 Programme validation, review and modifications

3.1 Table

Step	Action
1	FLT / PDC / APQC approves proposal
2	Programme goes through validation
3	Programme runs
4	If modification is required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme / Module Modification • Return to FLT / PDC / APQC – Approved Proposal
5	Review (must occur within 6 years)

3.2 The difference between a validation and review event

3.2.1 Definitions

Validation/Validation event: the process by which the University ensures that any programme (or group of programmes and associated modules) is academically sound and may be offered to students.

Review/Revalidation event: the process by which an approved programme (or group of programmes and associated modules) is considered for re-validation. A successful review results in the re-validation of a programme or programmes for a further period, subject to meeting any conditions set. Any modules not aligned to specific programme(s) must be reviewed every six years in an event from the relevant subject area.

The only time an event will be classed as a validation is when it is considering a completely new programme which has not been developed from anything currently existing and with no history. All other events will be classified as reviews, with the appropriate documentation, i.e. EME data and the inclusion of students.

Approval: The outcome of a validation or review event may result in the granting of approval for the programme. This enables the programme to be offered, subject to meeting any conditions set and having appropriately considered and addressed any recommendations.

Distance education: A programme is defined as Distance Education if there is no requirement for the students to be in attendance on campus or other physical site for learning or teaching activities, or to access resources. All teaching, materials, and support are delivered at a distance and most likely online.

A programme which requires irregular attendance during an academic year (for example once a month, a defined week within the year e.g. summer school, to undertake assessment) would still be considered Distance Education.

3.2.2 Definitions: Collaborative programmes

Joint programme – a University programme, or part thereof, leading to a qualification of the University, designed, delivered and assessed jointly with a Partner Institution (or Institutions) and quality assured by the University.

Franchised programme – a University programme, or part thereof, leading to a qualification of the University, designed, assessed and quality assured by the University but delivered at and by a Partner Institution.

Validated programme – a programme of study, developed, assessed and delivered by a Partner Institution, awarded by and ultimately quality assured by the University.

Please see Section 5 for guidance surrounding use of Partner Regulations.

Please refer to the Guidance 5iv – Collaborative Programmes Comparison Table, which details the different types of collaborations:

[Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook \(LQEH\) | Middlesex University London \(mdx.ac.uk\)](#)

3.3 Programme Validation and Review

3.3.1 Timing and expenses

No validation event for a programme due to start in September or January should occur after the preceding May or October respectively, unless by approval of the Director of Academic Quality Service. This applies to all variants of validation procedure at programme level, as detailed later in this chapter. Similarly, programme and module changes must be approved before the preceding May (for a September start) and October (for a January start). For programmes that have intakes outside of these times, changes should be approved three months in advance of the next intake. Any proposed change should normally only be applicable from the next intake (please see [APS28](#) for guidance on consulting students and Guidance 3xxvi).

There are fees and expenses associated with validation and review events of joint, franchised and validated programmes for Collaborative Partners. Further information can be obtained by contacting the relevant Quality Enhancement Manager in AQS.

3.3.2 Procedure

3.3.2.1 Preparation meeting for a validation or review

AQS will meet with the relevant programme team members to discuss arrangements for the event, including the timetable for preparation, documentation required, External Assessor criteria etc.

Guidance on designing a curriculum is available in Guidance 3xii, and a template for the programme specification in Appendix 3f and for the module narrative in Appendix 3l.

Any formal Validation or Review should be preceded by a Faculty preparation meeting/process to discuss draft documentation and/or mock event.

3.3.2.2 People involved in a validation or review event

The Validation or Review Panel usually comprises the following members (see Guidance 3v for information on the roles and responsibilities of each member):

- **Chair and a University representative**

Please note that:

- Both should normally be a senior member of staff familiar with University procedures.
- Either the Chair or the University Representative must have experience of working actively with students in a learning, teaching and assessment capacity.
- Both the Chair and the University Representative can be from the same Faculty as each other although every effort should be made to use a Chair and a University Representative from different Faculties
- The Chair should not be from the same Faculty as the programme which is being validated.
- The University Representative can be from the same Faculty as the programme which is being validated although he/she must be from a different department.

- **Professional statutory and/or regulatory body representative(s)** Co-Chair as appropriate

- **One/two External Assessors** using the criteria in Guidance 3viii

Please note that:

- Two External Assessors will normally be required.
- Events where only one External Assessor will be required include franchise events, events where the programme being validated / reviewed is a maximum of 60 credits and validation / review by Faculty committee

- **Student representative** (normally for in-house events only)

- **Officer**

In addition the following attend the Validation or Review events for meetings with the panel:

- **Senior faculty staff (as required)** – the Academic Dean of Faculty and/or the relevant Deputy Dean (and other(s), such as the Head of Department and Director of Programmes as relevant). If the proposal is heavily cross-curricular, senior staff from the other Faculties are also involved.
- **Programme team** – the team usually includes: the Director of Programmes, Programme Leader and members of the teaching team to represent each module. If relevant: a representative from each overseas campus at which the programme is delivered and any relevant support staff or industry experts as appropriate.
- **for review events**, the panel will also meet with **students**, who should represent a cross-section of the current cohorts including overseas campuses and where possible, alumni of the programme.

and for collaborative events

- senior staff and the Principal (or representative) of the institution (as appropriate)
- programme team, including the University and Institution Link Tutors.

3.3.2.3 Documentation

For a list of documents required for each type of event, see Guidance 3iii.

3.3.2.4 Distribution of documentation

Documentation should be submitted to the Officer four weeks in advance of the event. Papers are made available no later than two weeks before the event is to be held. The relevant Deputy Dean or Chair may postpone the event if there is a serious delay in the papers being distributed or if, upon receipt of the papers, they deem the documentation to be unacceptable for the event to proceed.

The mode of distribution will be by electronic means.

3.3.2.5 The validation or review event

A validation event may cover one or more programmes in cognate areas and review events are normally arranged by cognate groups of programmes where possible. It is important to ensure an appropriate balance between the size of the provision to be scrutinised and the length of the validation and/or review in order that the panel may have sufficient time to consider all aspects in detail.

The following is a list of meetings which are likely to occur:

- private panel meetings
- meeting with students and alumni (for reviews)
- tour of facilities/online demonstration of resources (if appropriate)
- meeting with senior staff (for collaborative events only)
- meeting with the programme team(s) and support staff
- report back to relevant staff
- and other meetings as required by relevant PSRBs

Middlesex programmes which are not taught/assessed in English must follow the conditions listed in Guidance 5iii.

3.3.2.6 Apprenticeship programmes

Apprenticeship programmes will be validated and reviewed via the standard validation and review processes, with the addition of a mapping document to the documentation, to demonstrate mapping to the apprenticeship standard (see Appendix 3j).

Where existing programmes are updated to apprenticeship programmes, approval may be via Faculty Committee and the mapping document will be required to identify the mapping to the apprenticeship standard and identifying any changes required to meet the standard (see Guidance 3xxiv). An appropriate External Assessor must be appointed to consider the mapping to the apprenticeship standard. They will comment on the proposal via correspondence and their comments will be considered by the Faculty Committee.

3.3.2.7 MU Overseas campuses

Validation and Review events for MU overseas campuses can take place via the standard V&R processes as part of an in-house event or via the process outlined in Section 3.5. The overseas campus are required to participate in the event via videoconference.

3.3.2.8 Franchised programme validations and reviews

A programme may be franchised to a partner at any point during the validation cycle. Therefore at a franchised validation it may not be possible to make changes to the content of the programme which may be running elsewhere in the UK or overseas. The event would focus much more on administrative, resourcing and learning experience matters and should not contain conditions in relation to the academic content of the programme.

For franchised programmes, reviews will be held as follows:

- All franchise partners will feed into the periodic Review of the in-house programme and any changes made to the programme will be expected to be implemented at the franchise partner according to the same timescale (subject to local government approval).
- As well as being part of the periodic in-house review, franchise partners will also be reviewed on their own six yearly cycle. The franchise partner review may be brought forward to align with the in-house review (if appropriate).

3.3.2.9 Validated and Joint Partner Reviews

Validated and Joint partners follow the same six-yearly cycle of reviews as in-house programmes.

3.3.2.10 Method of Event

In order to decide the method of a validation or review event, a risk assessment will be undertaken and a decision made by the Academic Quality Service and the Faculty concerned. The following sets out the guiding principles that will be followed:

Type of event	Method: Online vs in person
Validation of new in house or collaborative programme	In person at the location of delivery
Review of inhouse programme	Online
Review of collaborative programme	Possibly online; case by case agreement

Factors to be assessed to determine the format of the event for collaborative partners will include the experience of delivery in the subject area, need to review specialist resources or new sites, concerns raised via Educational Monitoring and Enhancement Reports or University Link tutors, language of delivery, maturity of partnership and time lapse since any previous on-site event. Other factors may also be considered. Where there is an external regulator requirement for an event to be delivered in a particular way, the University remains fully supportive of this.

Where a collaborative programme is running on more than one site and it is an in person review event, the review can be held at the main partner site, but key programme and teaching staff from all sites must attend the review event. Documentation will include resource statements from each of the sites offering the

programme. Arrangements should be made for students from all sites to contribute to review events.

Where multi-site provision with a partner is complex or contains specialist resources, a resource visit may be required, as determined by AQS on a case-by-case basis. AQS will determine the Panel required.

3.3.2.12 Conditions, recommendations and length of approval

Once a new programme is validated, it is normally incorporated within the six-year Faculty review cycle, and is subject to the University monitoring and audit processes. Where an event approves the addition of a distance education delivery method or apprenticeship route to a programme previously validated as an on-site/blended programme, approval lasts until the date for review of the on-site/blended programme. However, a panel can request a shorter period of time before review – the reasons for this should be clearly recorded in the validation report.

The panel can set the programme team conditions and recommendations as the outcome of the validation or review event. We define these as follows:

Condition: an important matter which the Panel believes would currently, or could potentially, put quality and/or standards at risk and which requires urgent corrective action or requires preventative corrective action (possibly through a longer-term condition) or is a university requirement, before the programme can run.

Recommendation: a matter which the Panel believes has the potential, if addressed, to enhance quality and/or further secure standards. Recommendations do not have to be met in order for the programme to run although they do have to be considered and addressed.

The possible outcomes of the event are as follows:

- a. Approved with no conditions or recommendations
- b. Approved with no conditions but possibly recommendations*
- c. Approved with conditions **and possibly with** recommendations*
- d. Rejected and referred back for further work.

*b & c can be approved for less than the standard six years – the reason for a shorter time period should be clearly recorded in the validation report.

The deadline for responding to any conditions and recommendations set by the Panel will be agreed at the event, as will the process for signing off the response.

3.3.2.13 Memorandum of Cooperation for Collaborative programmes

Before a collaborative programme can be offered and students enrolled, the Memorandum of Cooperation must be signed, with the Partnership Agreement already having been completed and signed. This applies after both a validation event for a new programme and a review event for a revalidated programme. Once the conditions have been met and the Chair has signed Part A of Confirmation of a Validation or Review (Appendix 3e), the Officer will send the 3e part A to Academic Partnerships to obtain a signature from the University Executive or delegated nominee, who will sign part B to declare that all necessary parts of the MoC have been completed and signed by both Middlesex University and the partner institution.

The MoC, including its Annexes, is the contractual document governing the operation and management of the programme. No programme will be allowed to commence without a signed MoC and fully signed Confirmation of a Validation or Review form. In the case of a revalidation, no students can be enrolled on to the revalidated programme until the MoC and Confirmation of a Validation or Review form has been signed.

Where local authority/government approval is required to run the programme, it is the partner's responsibility to obtain said approval and before students enrol.

In all cases, the MoC must be signed no later than one month prior to the scheduled teaching start date of the programme. Academic Partnerships will contact partners if the MoC has not been signed by the scheduled date, to alert them to the need to have an agreement in place before students can be enrolled, and the implications of the failure to have a signed agreement in place.

Once both parts A and B of the Confirmation Form have been signed, the Officer can then circulate this to relevant colleagues. AQS retain a copy for University oversight.

3.3.2.14 Validation of a referred back proposal

If in the unlikely event a programme(s) is rejected and referred back for further work, the Programme Leader acts on the action list from the referred back validation or review event. The revised, resubmitted papers include a covering document which lists in detail the action taken by the team to strengthen the resubmitted proposal, including any consultancy or staff development undertaken.

The Panel for a resubmitted event should normally have one original External Assessor and one new External Assessor and either the Chair or the University Representative from the original event.

3.3.2.15 Closure of programmes

Validation approval will normally lapse if a programme does not recruit for two years in succession.

A list of programmes, both in-house and collaborative, which have not recruited for two years will be provided and considered at Faculty quality committee meeting and PDC meeting each academic year to confirm whether they should be closed.

The University Executive Team can also agree the suspension of programmes for specific entry points, based on application numbers.

The procedures to be followed in cases where the Faculty determines a programme should be closed that do not fall in to one of the above categories are set out in Section 2.3.1.

3.3.2.16 Validation of programmes to run at new sites of approved institutions

For existing and new programmes at a new site, the overall purpose of validation remains as outlined in 3.1 - 3.3 and to ensure that arrangements at the new sites are sufficient for the successful delivery of the programme(s), including ensuring that adequate programme-specific resources are available to support the proposal.

The site visit will always require site approval documentation (see section 5, 5.3.4.1). For Validation documentation, normally a programme handbook at least will be required, but please refer to your event Officer for guidance.

3.3.2.17 Validation of PG Cert 60 credit point module with established validated partner

The purpose of the validation is to validate the programme title and subject content only, where the model comprises a PG Cert 60 credit module, and where the model has been previously validated by a full validation event. This process can only be used for established MU partners, delivering validated named PG Certs with MU, with corresponding module and award titles. These scenarios will be considered on a case by case basis, at the discretion of the Director of AQS.

- a. Consideration and approval of the programme proposal through the relevant Faculty-based Committee.
- b. Consideration and approval of the programme proposal from PDC.
- c. A validation will be undertaken by the Faculty committee. An Officer paper, Overview document, Programme handbook, resource statement, marketing material, staff CVs and relevant guidance notes will be provided to an external assessor for their consideration and approval. The EA's response will be considered at the relevant Faculty Committee along with all documentation noted above. The Faculty committee may choose to undertake the event via videoconference, with the external assessor present. The event is discussed at the Faculty Quality Committee and recorded in the minutes.
- d. Appendix 3e should be signed by the Chair of the Faculty Committee.
- e. The length of approval of the programme should be the university six year standard, or otherwise agreed by Faculty committee.

3.4 Validation by Faculty committee

Validation by Faculty committee may only take place under exceptional circumstances which must be approved by PDC and AQS following a specific request.

The overall purpose of validation remains as outlined in 3.3 and the documentation required is the same. The Committee meeting should include an appropriate External Assessor (may be via correspondence) and a copy of the minutes and an Appendix 3e should be circulated as normal.

3.5 Validation of programmes to be run at overseas campuses

3.5.1 Purpose

3.5.1.1 The procedure is designed for approving or validating programmes to run at already approved overseas campuses.

3.5.1.2 The overall purpose of validation is to ensure that arrangements at the overseas campus are sufficient for the successful delivery of the programme and that adequate programme-specific resources are available.

3.5.2 Scope and procedures

3.5.2.1 The procedure to be followed in each case is proportionate to the potential risk involved in programme set up, delivery and management. The procedure applies to programmes to be run at all MU overseas campuses. Procedures are as follows based on three scenarios.

3.5.2.2 The following scenarios only apply when programmes are being validated to run at an overseas campus part way through a programme's validation cycle. In all other cases, programmes will be Validated and Reviewed simultaneously with London programmes.

Scenario A

The proposed programme runs at the London campus, and there are already programmes at the same level in the same or a cognate subject area running at the overseas campus wanting to deliver the proposed programme;

- a. Consideration and approval of the Curriculum Business Case by FLT and PDC.
- b. Consideration and approval of the programme proposal (APPF) by the relevant Faculty Quality Committee
- c. Resource requirements are provided by the London programme team to the overseas campus.
- d. Confirmation is received from the Campus Director (or nominee), who provides a resource statement that confirms that the resources, including staffing and specialist infrastructure, will be provided with an appropriate timeline.
- e. The validation will be undertaken by the Faculty Quality Committee (Officer Paper, Programme Specification and Resource Statement required) and the relevant campus are required to participate via videoconference. Conditions and recommendations may be set and the minutes record the outcome of the validation.
- f. Appendix 3e should be signed by the Chair of the Faculty Committee.
- g. Approval lasts until the date for review of the programme as validated at the London campus.

Scenario B

The proposed programme runs at the London campus, but represents a greater level of risk for delivery at the overseas campus. The types of risk in this category could include – (i) there are not currently any programmes running in a cognate subject area at the overseas campus in question (ii) the programme is at a level not currently being delivered in a cognate subject area at that campus; (iii) the programme requires the use of highly specialist resources or equipment which the campus does not already have; (iv) any other risk as identified by PDC.

- a. Consideration and approval of the Curriculum Business Case by FLT and PDC.
- b. Consideration and approval of the programme proposal (APPF) by the relevant Faculty Quality Committee
- c. Where the risk concerns resources or if agreed by PDC, a campus visit needs to be undertaken by a member of Faculty-based staff to establish the appropriateness of the resources for delivery of the programme. This may be via videoconference (see below).
- d. The validation will be undertaken by the Faculty Quality Committee. An Officer paper, Overview document, Programme Specification, Module Narratives, Resource statement, Staff CVs and relevant guidance notes will be provided to an external assessor for their consideration and approval. The EA's response will be considered at the relevant Faculty Committee along with all documentation noted above. Where a campus visit has taken place, a report on this also needs to be provided to the external assessor for approval. The Faculty committee may choose to undertake the event via videoconference, with the external assessor present, if required. The proposal is discussed at the Faculty Quality Committee and the relevant campus are required to participate via videoconference. Conditions and recommendations may be set and the minutes record the outcome of the validation.
- e. Appendix 3e should be signed by the Chair of the Faculty Committee.
- f. Approval lasts until the date for review of the programme as validated at the London campus.

Scenario C

The proposed programme is new, and will be validated for delivery at an overseas campus **only**. **It will not be possible to undertake Scenario C validations until PDC has determined that the campus is fully operational.**

- a. Consideration and approval of the Curriculum Business Case by FLT and PDC.
- b. Consideration and approval of the programme proposal (APPF) by the relevant Faculty Quality Committee
- c. Validation of the programme through the standard procedures with the following additions: (i) the event should normally take place at the overseas campus.
- d. The period of approval is agreed at validation.

3.5.3 Duration of approval

For scenarios A and B, approval lasts until the date for review of the programme as validated at the London campus.

For Scenario C, the period of approval would be agreed at validation. The standard period of approval is 6 years, though a shorter period could be approved.

3.6 Validating programmes in another language

- a) Consideration and approval of the programme proposal through the Faculty Leadership Team, Portfolio Development Committee and through the relevant Faculty Quality Committee.
- b) Validation of the programme through the standard procedures with the following additions: (i) the event should normally take place at the partner premises; (ii) documentation should include programme handbook(s) in English language and language of tuition; (iii) panel should consider staff language skills within Staff CVs and language of VLE.
- c) One of the EAs must be fluent in English and the language of validation.
- d) The period of approval is agreed at validation.

3.7 Changes to programmes

3.7.1 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all changes to academic provision validated by the University take account of internal and external requirements and that appropriate consultation and notification takes place in the development and approval of these changes. In addition this procedure should guard against incremental changes to programmes, where the resulting changes are so significant that they warrant a full Review.

Any change to the Programme Specification will need approval via Faculty Quality Committee/ Review event.

If the programme were to request a change to the English language requirement this should be considered by the English Language Qualifications Working Group in the first instance, and then submitted to the Faculty APQC for final approval.

3.7.2 Major changes

Major changes to programmes are those which substantially change the character of the programme (please refer to [APS 28](#) and Guidance 3xxvi for guidance). The following changes will require a Validation/Review event:

- Changes in collaborative programme status (e.g. from franchised to validated).
- Change in mode of delivery of a programme other than to PT/FT mode, for example adding a distance education version of the programme or delivery of the programme in another language
- A significant change to the programme learning outcomes
- A re-mapping of an Apprenticeship programme to an updated Apprenticeship Standard
- A change of more than 1/3 of the core/compulsory credits of a programme (or the optional modules of a programme where the programme learning outcomes are affected), during the period of Validation involving changes to the structure (the addition or deletion of modules) or to existing modules involving changes to learning outcomes. The following will contribute to such a change:
 - a) Any replacement of a core module
 - b) Any addition, removal or allocation to a different level of a core module;
 - c) Any change in the credit weighting of a core module;
 - d) Any significant change to the learning outcomes of a core module (with or without a change in the title of a module);
 - e) Any significant change to the curriculum content of a core module other than routine updating (with or without a change in the title of a module);
 - f) Any change in the mode of delivery of a module (e.g. from on-campus/blended to distance education mode)

Records should be maintained to log changes that take place during the period of validation of a programme, to identify when the changes have affected 1/3 of the credits of the programme.

3.7.3 Minor changes

The Faculty Quality Committee alone can approve minor changes but in collaborative partnerships must ensure agreement of the University Link Tutor prior to consideration of the change. Please refer to [APS28](#) and Guidance 3xxvi Making changes to published information.

3.7.4 Timelines

All programme changes must be approved before the preceding May (for a September start) and October (for a January start). For programmes that have intakes outside of these times, changes should be approved three months in advance of the next intake. Any proposed change should normally only be applicable from the next intake.

3.8 New modules, changes to modules and module deletion

3.8.1 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that all changes to academic provision take account of internal and external requirements and that appropriate consultation and notification takes place in the development and approval of these changes.

3.8.3 Responsibility

The Faculty is entirely responsible for approving changes to modules, new modules, and module deletions at Faculty Quality Committee. This covers in-house and collaborative modules, but for collaborative partnerships must ensure agreement of the University Link Tutor prior to consideration of the change. Please refer to [APS28](#) and Guidance 3xxvi Making changes to published information.

3.8.4 Timelines

All module changes must be approved before the preceding May (for a September start) and October (for a January start). For programmes that have intakes outside of these times, changes should be approved three months in advance of the next intake. Any proposed change should normally only be applicable from the next intake.

3.8.5 New module

The validation of a single module, either in-house or for a collaborative partner, is undertaken by the Faculty Committee according to the principles set out in this procedure. The External Examiner is required to have agreed the module narrative for both in-house and collaborative new modules. Where the module is for a collaborative partner, there should also be consultation with the Link Tutors.

3.8.6 Major changes

Major changes are defined in 3.7.2 above (please also refer to [APS28](#) and Guidance 3xxvi). A change to the module title and/or credit weighting will require the creation of a new module code.

3.8.7 Minor changes

The following will constitute minor changes (please also refer to [APS28](#) and Guidance 3xxvi):

- Recoding of a module retaining the same content.
- Changes of a drafting nature.
- Those required to keep academic content current.
- Those enhancements of the module teaching, learning and assessment strategies, or other assessment arrangements that are intended to improve the quality of the student learning experience. Changes will be deemed minor provided that the changes will not substantially alter the character of the module, and that the module strategies and arrangements continue to accord with the teaching, learning and assessment strategies of programmes of which the module in question is a constituent part. Such amendments will allow for changes in emphasis on particular teaching or assessment methods, a move from outmoded or ineffective methods, or the introduction of new (to the module) approaches.

Comments from the External Examiner on the changes made should be invited and considered as per the module change form (applicable to all modules including those at levels 3 and 4). In cases where enrolled students may be affected by such changes, consultation with students must also take place as per the module change form.

3.8.8 Module closures and suspensions

Applications for module closures should be made through either the programme closure or programme or module change process. Please speak to your Quality Enhancement Manager for the appropriate process and form.

Optional module suspensions are processed via an email to Student Records.