



2020

Validation and Amendment of Programmes (HE05)

 **Partnership**
Training • Education • Careers

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Document Reference: Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes (HE05)

Version: 1.4

Date: January 2020

Date of Implementation: February 2020

Originator: HE Quality

Approval by: EMT

Date for Review: May 2023

Description:

Whilst taking into account the UK Quality Code (2018) and the regulations of partner awarding bodies, this code of practice makes clear the processes that must be adopted in relation to the validation and approval of new programmes. The code of practice is a reflection of the TEC Partnership’s commitment to ensuring governance over academic standards and that judgments relating to validations are carried out with rigour, fairness and probity.

If you need any further advice on how the regulations work, you should contact the HE Quality Office.

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Version	Change
1.0	New
1.4	References removed for GIG/Grimsby Institute Group (GIFHE remains where this refers to FDAP powers) Reference made to TEC Partnership Reference made to updated UK Quality Code (2018) Replaced 'Foundation Degree benchmark statement with Foundation Degree characteristic statement' Introduction of Course Closure procedure Addition of conditions which must be met before submission of Stage 3b

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Code of Practice builds on the regulations and policies set by awarding institutions and/or partner Higher Education institutions (HEIs) that govern matters relating to validation processes at the TEC Partnership (the Partnership).

1.2 The Partnership is responsible for initiating the development and approval of all programmes of delivery and is therefore responsible for managing the process through liaison with awarding institutions and / or partner HEIs.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles and process that apply in the validation process for the development and approval of all programmes.

1.4 Validation will occur for all programmes which are classed as new programmes or programmes going through major amendment.

1.5 In common with awarding institutions and partner HEIs, the Partnership recognises in every instance the functions of the validation process. Validation processes assist the Partnership in ensuring that:

- i) procedures for the approval of new programmes are robust, transparent and streamlined;
- ii) the development of programmes of study fit with the Partnership's strategic direction;
- iii) the development of programmes of study are well designed, academically coherent, intellectually challenging and that they are informed by research and capable of enriching the student experience
- iv) threshold academic standards of each award and its component parts are set and maintained at the appropriate level;
- v) assessment is designed in accordance with relevant external reference points such as the components of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) including the framework for higher education qualifications, and/or the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB).

1.6 The Partnership recognises the importance of assessing and evaluating the effectiveness, relevance and validity of its programmes alongside the quality of the student experience. The Institute therefore values the involvement of students in programme design and student views will be sought at all stages of the process.

2.0 Support and Guidance

2.1 HE Quality is committed to supporting departments in the validation process for the development and approval of programmes, through providing advice and guidance as required and facilitating links with academic and other staff experienced in relevant areas.

2.2 HE Quality will maintain a validation timetable for all programmes which have completed Stage 1 Validation. This will include deadlines for the stages of validations which need to be met by the academic teams managed by the Associate Principal (or equivalent) of the relevant faculty. This validation timetable is reported to HE Quality Assurance Committee.

2.3 The setting of tasks to meet the deadline is the responsibility of the Associate Principal (or equivalent) for the Faculty wishing to validate.

3.0 Stages of validation

3.1 Validation process will differ according to the awarding institution. Currently the Group has three validating partners/regulations. GIFHE, Hull and Pearson.

3.2 Validations under the powers granted to Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education (GIFHE)

follow a 3-tier approach:

- Stage 1 Validation: Strategic Planning Approval
- Stage 2 Validation: Programme Proposal Approval
- Stage 3 Validation: Full Programme Approval

3.3 Validations under the powers of the University of Hull follow a 3-tier approach:

- Stage 1 Validation: Strategic Planning Approval
- UoH Development Consent
- UoH University Validation Panel

3.4 Validations under the powers under the powers of Pearson a two-tier approach is adopted.

- Stage 1 Validation: Strategic Planning Approval
- Pearson approval process.

3.5 For validations organised by university, or Pearson partners, HE Quality will support the academic teams to develop the programmes in timeframes and processes agreed with the relevant partners and the Associate Principal (or equivalent) of the academic teams.

4.0 Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education Programmes

4.1 Approval and Validation

There are three formal stages in granting new Foundation Degree programmes or the major amendment of existing programmes:

- Stage 1 Validation: Strategic Planning Approval (HE05A);
- Stage 2 Validation: Programme Proposal Approval (HE05B);
- Stage 3 Validation: Full Programme Approval (HE05C).

4.2 Whilst for all three stages the authority to grant approval for programmes and major amendments rests with the Executive Management Team, powers are delegated to the following committees:

- Stage 1 Validation to the HE Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC);
- Stage 2 Validation to the Proposal Approvals Panel (PAP);
- Stage 3 Validation to the Full Approvals Panel (FAP).

5.0 Stage 1 Validation - Strategic Planning Approval

5.1 This establishes if there is a prima facie academic and appropriate business case, to support the development of a full proposal. Stage 1 Validation permits a strategic decision to support the development of new programmes and resources as an addition to the Partnership's portfolio.

5.2 Applications for Stage 1 Validation must be submitted a minimum of 14 days before a HE Quality Assurance Committee by the Associate Principal (or STEC equivalent) of the proposing Faculty of the appropriate form (HE05A). The committee must either 'Grant', 'Not Grant' or 'Defer with Conditions' the application for Stage 1 Validation.

5.3 By the committee granting the Stage 1 Validation they are confident that the programme as proposed:

- meets the Partnership priorities;
- is likely to recruit enough students to be viable;
- has demonstrated a need in the labour market;
- Is likely to get employer support during the validation process;
- is aligned to QAA FHEQ, QAA Foundation Degree characteristic statement, and QAA subject benchmark statements.

5.4 If a Stage 1 Validation is 'deferred with conditions' the team must resubmit the application to meet the conditions within 14 days to the Chair of HE Quality Assurance Committee. It is the responsibility of the Associate Principal (or equivalent) to feedback to the delivery team the discussion at the meeting. The decision will be noted through chairs action.

5.5 Upon successful application at Stage 1 the Academic Registrar will send the validation and approval dates for Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the process. It is the responsibility of the Associate Principal (or equivalent) to inform the team members of the deadlines associated with validation.

6.0 Stage 2 Validation - Programme Proposal Approval

6.1 This is a process by which the Partnership gives approval for the full approvals specification to be developed. It provides an early check that the programme proposal is appropriate for development in terms of adherence to regulations and Codes of Practice, resources and provides an opportunity to identify any advice and guidance to support the development of the programme and its specifications. Programme Proposal Approval is mandatory for all programmes validated under GIFHE awarding powers.

6.2 A proposed new programme must not be advertised through any means unless Programme Proposal Approval has been granted by a Proposal Approvals Panel (PAP) in accordance with these regulations and associated Codes of Practice. Following PAP approval, a programme must only be advertised as 'Subject to Validation'. No offers may be made at this stage and any contact with students must make clear that the programme is not yet validated.

6.3 Applications for Stage 2 Validation must be submitted on form Stage 2 Validation (HE05B) to HEQA@grimsby.ac.uk. The PAP panel should convene within 14 days and either 'Grant', 'Not Grant' or 'Defer with Conditions' the application for PAP with feedback given on form HE05G.

6.4 By the committee granting the Stage 2 Validation they are confident that the programme as proposed:

- is following GIFHE Academic Regulations set out in HE01, or where there is variance a strong rationale is included;
- has a clear title matching the title applied for at stage 1 or a captured rationale for change;
- has captured the aims and distinctive features of the programme in a language that a potential student could access;
- has stated entry requirements that safeguard student achievement;
- has a maximum of 12 clear programme learning outcomes that are aligned to the QAA FHEQ and has a mix of skills and knowledge which aligns to the threshold standards associated with the area of study;
- has a programme structure meaning there is clear progression through the levels of study;
- has provided employer and academic contacts to assist programme development;
- is aligned to QAA FHEQ, QAA Foundation Degree characteristic statement, and QAA subject benchmark statements.

6.5 If a Stage 2 Validation is 'deferred with conditions' the team must resubmit the application to meet the conditions within 14 days to heqa@grimsby.ac.uk. The quality team will check off the changes and recommend to the chair of the panel that the decision is upgraded to 'Grant'.

6.6 If Stage 2 is Validation is 'Not Granted' a new deadline for resubmission will be given and a new panel convened. Adjustments will be made to the validation timeline and reported to HEQAC.

7.0 Stage 3 Validation – Full Approvals

7.1 This is a process through which the Partnership seeks to confirm that a new programme or one that has been significantly amended, is properly designed, that arrangements for its delivery and assessment

have been properly planned, that it conforms to its regulations, associated Codes of Practice and policies and that, where relevant, it meets the requirements of the UK Quality Code (2018) and other relevant external reference points. Stage 3 is comprised of two sub-stages:

7.2 Stage 3a: A full approvals document and supporting documents must be submitted to HEQA@grimsby.ac.uk who will convene a reading group.

7.3 A Full Approvals Panel (FAP) must convene as a reading group (independently of the developing team) and scrutinise the full approvals documentation. The FAP reading group must provide written feedback within 14 days after the approvals document is submitted to HEQA@grimsby.ac.uk.

7.4 Stage 3a: the Full Approvals document must be re-submitted to heqa@grimsby.ac.uk within 14 days after written feedback is received from the FAP reading group. The following conditions must be met at Stage 3a before a programme will be allowed to proceed to stage 3b:

- there is evidence of student engagement and feedback in the writing of the programme;
- there is evidence of stakeholder engagement (inc employers) and feedback in the writing of the programme;
- the completion of form HE05D from the HE Learning Centre;
- if the programme does not have a named Programme Leader, written confirmation from the relevant Vice-Principal that the staffing of programme is committed too.

7.5 Stage 3b: The Full Approvals Panel (FAP) should convene for a full approvals event within 21 days of resubmission of paperwork.

7.6 The FAP will be testing to see if they are confident that the programme as proposed:

- is following GIFHE Academic Regulations set out in HE01, or where there is variance a strong rationale is included;
- is of publishable standard throughout the document with all sections completed or n/a used;
- reading lists are checked by the library to ensure currency, accuracy and accessibility of materials by completion of HE05D;
- has captured the aims and distinctive features of the programme in a language that a potential student could access;
- has a programme structure demonstrating there is clear progression through the levels of study with clear identity of how the Programme Learning Outcomes are assessed.
- has a completed module structure aligned to the FHEQ, including rationales which includes module learning outcomes which will contribute to the achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes;
- has been reviewed by student, independent academic (HE05F) and independent employers/stakeholders (HE05E) including contributions to the FAP;
- the assessment diet meets the threshold standards to achieve the qualification; the assessments are varied and robust providing students opportunities to achieve beyond threshold standards;
- is aligned to QAA FHEQ, QAA Foundation Degree characteristic statement, and QAA subject benchmark statements;
- If relevant is approved by PSRBs.

7.7 Within 14 days of an approvals event, the chair of the Full Approvals Panel (FAP) must send a FAP report (Form HE05I) to the chair of the Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee (AASSC) and the chair of the AASSC must issue a confirmation of permission to proceed that 'Recommends Approval', is 'Deferred with Conditions', or 'Not Approved'.

7.8a If the decision is 'Recommends Approval' then HE Quality will ensure that the feedback is given within 7 days including the signatures of the Executive Management Team required to formally adopt the course

under GIFHE awarding powers.

7.8b If a programme is 'Deferred with Conditions', the conditions should be met within 7 days or 14 days depending on the number of conditions. HE Quality will then review the changes and make a recommendation to the chair of the panel that the status be updated to 'Recommends Approval' within 7 days.

7.8c If a programme is 'Not Approved' it is decided that the changes required are fundamental and the programme needs significant redesign. Likely causes of this are feedback from external stakeholders or academics suggesting that the programme does not meet industry or academic requirements or that there are significant flaws in the document presented. In this scenario the programme must start Stage 3 again with a new reading group date being set.

7.9 Timescales for approval of programmes:

- a) From the date of Stage 1 approval, the full approvals timescale must not surpass a period of 15 months.
- b) In accordance with each of the Institute's stages of approval, should a programme not receive approval from the Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee within a 15-month period (following the date of Stage 1 approval), Stage 1 approval must be re-submitted and the development and approvals stages started afresh.
- c) All 'new' Foundation Degree programmes, or Foundation Degrees undergoing 'major amendments' must be fully approved 90 days before they are due delivery.
- d) When an application for Stage 1 Strategic Planning Approval (SPA) is approved by HE Quality Assurance Committee within the mandatory timescales set out in these regulations, a schedule of events for programme development and approval should be determined by the Academic Registrar.
- e) Within the mandatory timescales set out in these regulations, the timeframe for the approval of new programmes and major amendments should be tailored, within reason, to meet the demands of the environment in which programmes are offered.

8.0 Criteria for giving external opinion

8.1 External Stakeholder Feedback is completed on form HE05E or by presence at the validation event. The person selected must have at least two years' experience in a role related to the sector of the qualification and would normally have studied to degree level. A fee is payable for this role.

8.2 External Academic feedback is completed on form HE05F or by presence at the validation event. The external academic must currently work in the sector and have a minimum of two years' experience teaching in a subject aligned to the proposed programme. They would not normally be an external examiner of a programme delivered at the TEC Partnership. A fee is payable for this role.

9.0 Amendments of Programmes

9.1 Major Amendment: amendments to an approved Foundation Degree are categorised as major according to whether or not the proposed changes are significant in intent or effect.

Major amendments include:

- i A change in programme title
- ii Change in mode of study
- iii Change of entry criteria
- iv Changes to modules which necessitates a change to the aims and programme learning outcomes
- v Changes to the programme learning outcomes which necessitate a change to the module structure, module specifications or module learning outcomes
- vi The introduction of a new pathway(s)
- vii Restructuring
- viii Changes to major elements of teaching, learning or assessment e.g. the introduction of distance delivery, change of location
- ix Professional accreditation
- x Changes to module credits
- xi The addition of a Pre-Certificate year
- xii Changes that would mean the programme would not be in accordance with the Institute's regulations

9.2 Major Amendments are applied for by submission of a track changed validation document alongside form HE05J to heqa@grimsby.ac.uk. HE Quality will assess the validity of the changes before organising a Stage 3 Validation Event.

9.3 Minor Amendment: amendments to an approved Foundation Degree are categorised as minor according to whether or not the proposed changes are insignificant in intent or effect. Minor amendments include any changes that are not listed in 9.1 above.

9.4 Minor Amendments are applied for by submission of a track changed validation document alongside form HE05K to heqa@grimsby.ac.uk. HE Quality will consider the changes and if approved will ensure they are noted as changes at Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee.

10.0 Review

10.1 All Foundation Degrees are subject to a full approval panel every sixth year to ensure that the curriculum is current and valid.

10.2 All programmes undergoing the six-year review will start at Stage 3 in the Validation process.

11.0 Course Closure

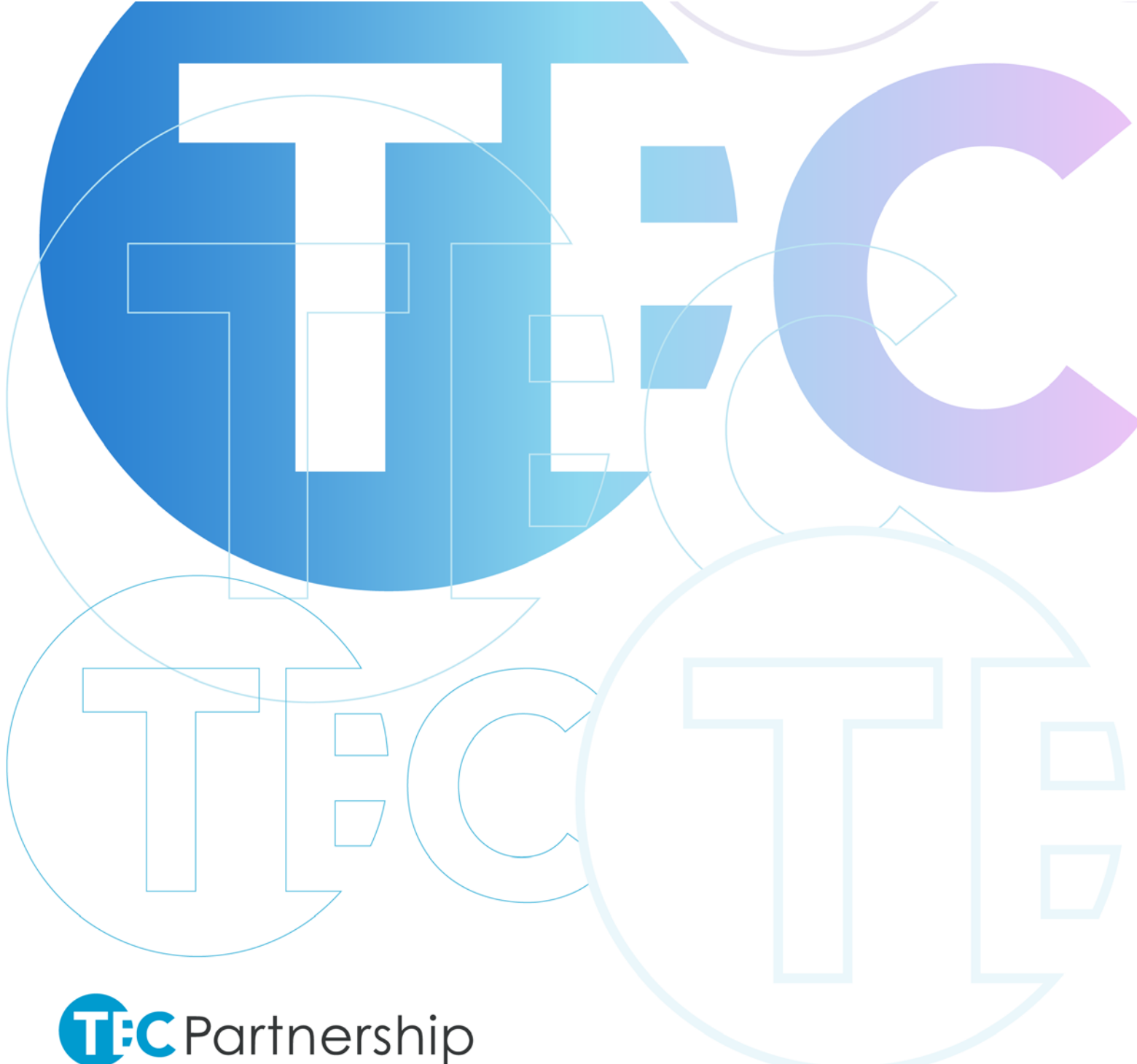
11.1 The process for closing Grimsby Institute validated programmes requires the completion of form HE05L Course Closure.

11.2 Once completed, the form should be submitted to Academic Authority and Standards Senior Committee, who will make a recommendation to EMT about the course closure and any associated actions.

11.3 It is recommended that to reduce the impact on applicant experience that the process is completed by end of July before each admission cycle.

11.4 Except under extraordinary circumstances, the TEC Partnership aims to close courses and teach out

the cohorts that enrolled on programme. A closure contrary to this would be covered by the HE18 Student Protection Plan.



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