

# Section 6: Course Documentation

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- 6.1 The course documentation that applicants access help inform students on their journey through the course cycle from why they should come to the University of Westminster, through to graduation. It is therefore important that through the course validation, re-validation and modifications processes that these documents reflect accurate information, which is then considered for approval. Documentation published to applicants and students should meet digital accessibility requirements. Course documentation will also inform published information and external government returns.

## Programme Specification

- 6.2 A Programme Specification is a concise description of the course. They should be written for prospective and current students and are published externally on the University webpages as part of the course information. The document differs from marketing material in that it must also meet external benchmarks and internal expectation and is subject to formal approval. The University's standard format takes into account external guidance on the setting of appropriate outputs for students at the course level. Programme specifications can include a number of linked differing awards, this is encouraged in order to show applicants the differences between similar cognate groups of courses and to avoid duplication.
- 6.3 The primary users of the Programme Specification will be applicants, current students, external examiners, professional bodies, potential employers of graduates and external auditors. The document is also published in E Vision for students and all staff and will also be used to ensure accuracy of information on the Student Record System for external reporting, informing the course details on the web and prospectuses e.g. duration of the course, September start, mode of study and approved course structure.
- 6.4 A Programme Specification is required for the purpose of validation and re-validation; as well as any proposed changes to the course structure (including module title changes) made as part of the course modifications process.

## Course Handbook

- 6.5 The Course Handbook is the main reference for students in navigating the overview of their course and overall university experience. It is expected that this document is reviewed annually to ensure that the information remains accurate and up to date. Any changes to course structures, modules, and academic regulations will be expected to have followed the appropriate process, annual operational updates are expected. Courses are encouraged to include relevant course specific information which will help students navigate their course. A template is available from the Quality and Standards Office.
- 6.6 Where a group of awards form a cognate group of courses, it may be judged more appropriate to produce the Course Handbooks collectively in a single document to avoid duplication. Colleges may also choose to provide common student support information in a College handbook or School handbook.

## Module Proforma/Descriptor

- 6.7 The Quality and Standards Office publishes a template for all modules known as the module proforma. All module syllabuses must be published in the agreed template and published to students. The module proforma must articulate the module accurately and be published as approved by a validation, re-validation or as part of a modification. The information in the approved module proforma is added to the Student Records System, which is published to students online, the information is also used to inform external returns to the Office for Students. A guide to completing the module proforma is available from Quality and Standards.
- 6.8 Where a group of courses with several named award pathways is to be considered, it may be judged more appropriate to present the module syllabuses in a separate Module Handbook, giving an overview of all modules.

## Reflective statement (for Re-validation)

### 6.9 Opening statement (indicative 1000 words)

This statement should provide a holistic overview of the School/Cognate Subject area being considered.

The opening statement should be an open and honest narrative of what is working and what is not, including a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision since the validation/last revalidation. The opening statement should act as an executive summary for the suite of courses being considered and for the rest of the document.

Course teams may want to consider, what are the key strengths of the provision? What has worked well? What is considered good practice in the way the provision is delivered? Are there employer or international links? What is the School/subject area matrix of data? How does it compare with the sector benchmarks? Where have students and staff succeeded?

### 6.10 Reflection (indicative 2500 words per course<sup>1</sup>)

This section should provide an overview of how each course has operated and what the available course/group of courses metrics tell you about the outcomes of students, their satisfaction and their employment outcomes. What changes are happening within the subject area? What new skills will your graduates need in 5 years' time and how does the new curriculum address this? What risks have been identified through the course matrix of data and what associated actions are you taking to improve? What is the student performance data telling you? Where data is above the sector benchmark have you captured what you are doing well? There should be an outline of the changes that are being made to the provision as part of the Re-validation process, and reasons given for these changes (student feedback, External Examiner comments, changes to the market, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, and changes to staffing, resources and the

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<sup>1</sup> This may vary by the type of provision being considered for example a reflection per course may not be necessary e.g. where multiply pathways exist)

discipline). There should also be a reflection on what is staying in the provision and why it is being retained?

How is the provision taking due regard of inclusive curriculum initiatives?

Have the course team completed the [Being Westminster: Inclusive Course Design checklist and reflected the results in the curriculum?](#) In addition, workshops are required as part of the validation and revalidation process.

If the course is linked to collaborative arrangements, then you could also review how the changes may affected collaborative links e.g. franchise partners, progression agreements and consider how any proposed changes will impact on these links.

How does the provision consider the student experience, academic support for students and student engagement?

There should be a reflection on how the market for the provision has operated. Where does the provision fit in relation to competitors? How does the provision reflect the needs of employers? Where market attractiveness is a potential factor (courses in Quadrant 1 or 3), are you aware of the key competitor courses and why they may appeal more to applicants?

Students are expected to be involved in the development of the Reflective Document.

Good practice examples are available from the Quality and Standards team.

## **Evidence Base**

6.11 The reflective statement should be supplemented with the following items of evidence:

- External Examiner reports (for the last 3 years)
- Current Course metrics used as part of the annual monitoring process.
- Continuous Improvement/Annual Monitoring reports (for the last 3 years)
- Staffing Overview Form normally one per course
- Mapping to PSRB requirements (if appropriate)
- Apprenticeship standards (if appropriate)
- Apprenticeship Employer Feedback (if appropriate)

6.12 Links to the evidence base can be provided to the internal panel members via the University's on-line systems. The Panel Chair should determine which evidence base external advisers should be sent. It is normally advisable to send at minimum the external examiner reports and responses.

6.13 A summary of the staff overview is required as part of the revalidation process. A template is available via Quality and Standards which summarises the balance of the course team, this should be supplemented by staff CV's.

## **Communication of Changes**

6.14 The communication of changes clearly articulates to the panel the planned changes for Re-validation, as well as serving as the final drafts to be communicated to applicants and students. It is important for example if a mode of study is being withdrawn this is clearly articulated so the necessary action can be taken to ensure accurate published information and communication to applicants and current students, likewise, changes of module titles, new modules, modules being replaced will be communicated to applicants and registry in order to make changes in the system. The accuracy of these documents is therefore crucial.