Section 3:
Re-validation Process

Re-validation process

3.1   Re-validation takes place on a six-yearly cycle. It enables the University to verify over a particular timeframe, academic standards, the quality of the student learning experience, the continuing relevance of courses to both internal/external needs, as well as the identification of good practice and innovation. Continued alignment with all the internal and external reference points articulated in section 2 are expected to be demonstrated.

3.2   Re-validation is undertaken through the measurement of student performance, the impact of change, merits of curriculum design and local strategies for learning, teaching and assessment beyond annual monitoring. Re-validation will enable a course to reflect on its strengths and areas for improvement in order to improve the experience of the students.

3.3   Re-validation applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes leading to an award of the University of Westminster; Research degrees with a taught component (e.g. MRes or Professional Doctorate). In addition, coherent suites of modules e.g. Polylang, Academic English and Inter-disciplinary electives are also subject to Re-validation. Where Colleges have credit bearing modules not associated with a specific award these modules should be included within a similar subject area. This should include any modules offered for the purpose of Study Abroad, College electives or as credit bearing standalone modules.

Principles

3.4   The principles of Re-validation are that it will:
- Provide a holistic and critical reflection of courses ;
- Be a review of course(s) to ensure there is an enhanced student experience;
- Be a peer review process; drawing on the expertise of internal colleagues and external experts;
- Promote constructive and challenging discussion of matters related to academic provision;
- Have significant staff and student input;
- Be an evidence-based process and will draw on a wide range of available management information;
- Share good practice through the consideration of a cognate group of courses
- Enable a holistic approach to the curriculum design and student outputs
- Help to facilitate the development of:
  - new, amended or enhanced provision (agreed as part of the Re-validation);
  - innovative approaches to delivering programme content;
  - Student support and increased levels of satisfaction.

Aims

3.5   The aims of the Re-validation process are:
- To establish whether there are effective and appropriate mechanisms to ensure that intended learning outcomes are being attained by students,

standards are being achieved and the programme specification is being delivered;

- To establish whether the course(s) remain current and valid in the light of developments in the discipline and in teaching and learning;
- To consider the matrix of course data relating to student numbers, student experience, continuation and employability within the context of the curriculum, taking a risk-based approach.
- To verify that the University's agreed procedures are working effectively to assure the standards of awards and the quality of the learning opportunities;
- To review the quality and consistency of the information provided to students and applicants;
- To identify good practice within course(s) that can be disseminated.

Planning

3.6   Re-validation will utilise management information to determine the procedure for individual course(s).   Each year the Quality and Standards Office in consultation with the College will review the Portfolio Review Bubble Charts produced by Strategic Planning and Performance and use a course(s)' position to assign the Re-validation methodology. In October each year Quality and Standards will produced an overview Re-validation schedule showing the groupings and quadrant position. In some cases, cognate groups of courses may have courses at different positions on the chart. In these cases, Quality and Standards will work with the College to confirm the appropriate course of action.

3.7   Revalidation is expected to take place in cognate groups of courses enabling a holistic overview of the curriculum, matrix of data, critical reflection and enabling the sharing of practice.

3.8   The methodologies and documentation requirements are set out below.

Quadrant	Documentation Requirements	Panel Requirements
1 – low performance and low market attractiveness	Programme Specification Module Descriptors Reflective Document with management information and market analysis Schedule of Changes Action plan to improve performance and market attractiveness	Chair – DVC or Head of College External Subject Adviser A Re-validation Panel Chair Representative from the Centre for Teaching Innovation Student Adviser Quality and Standards Adviser
2 – low performance and high market attractiveness	Programme Specification Module Descriptors Reflective Document with management information analysis Schedule of Changes Action plan to improve performance	Chair External Adviser Learning, Teaching and Quality Representative Student Adviser Quality and Standards Adviser
3 – high performance and	Programme Specification Module Descriptors	Chair External Adviser

low market attractiveness	Reflective Document with market analysis statement Schedule of Changes Action plan to improve market attractiveness	Learning, Teaching and Quality Representative Student Adviser Quality and Standards Adviser
4 – high performance and high market attractiveness	Programme Specification Module Descriptors Reflective Document Schedule of Changes Enhancement Plan	Chair External Adviser Learning, Teaching and Quality Representative Student Adviser Quality and Standards Adviser

3.9　In some cases, a quadrant position may not be possible to define. This is normally due to insufficient student numbers (data). In such cases courses will normally follow the quadrant 3 approach.

3.10　A revalidation event may include differing documentation per course e.g. differing action plans based on the differing matrix of data. The Revalidation panel will normally take a risk-based approach to the matrix of data.

3.11　Where there are performance issues, student number concerns or feedback from the student meeting indicating a particular concern the Panel may request further documentation or evidence as appropriate.   This may include for example Panel access to Assessment and Feedback through Blackboard, further information on strategic plans to address student numbers, an assessment strategy or matrix etc.

Timelines

3.12　Re-validation takes place on a calendar year basis (January to December) for the following September start. It is recognised that published information may need to be changed after the approval sign off. Course teams are expected to work with Global, Recruitment and Admissions in writing appropriate applicant and student communication that reflects the changes. This recognises that the UCAS, prospectus information, web pages and published course materials are published well in advance. It is conversely recognised that a Re-validation process too far ahead of the delivery date would not ensure currency of the curriculum based on the most up to date evidence base. The response to any conditions and sign off should be completed no later than the 13th December. Course teams are however strongly encouraged to work towards a much earlier deadline to utilise as much time as possible in the build up to student recruitment cycles. A risk report will be submitted to the Teaching Committee each year of courses/panels who do not meet the December deadline.

3.13　External adviser nomination forms should be completed at the earliest opportunity (see 3.16) to avoid delays in the process.

Documentation

3.14　The documentation required is proportionate to the courses position on the University Portfolio Review bubble charts. The chart summarise a course based on data such as Student Surveys, employability, completion rates, classifications, student staff ratios, market attractiveness, applications, and conversion rates.

3.15   Before documentation is provided to a Panel it must be signed off by the Associate Head of College (Education and Students). The panel must receive a final electronic copy of all documentation 4 weeks in advance of the meeting, therefore setting internal deadlines early is strongly advisable.

3.16   The Curriculum, Review and Innovation Committee (CRIC) has oversight of change to award titles. The Chair of the Teaching Committee and Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards will determine where appropriate if an associated quality assurance processes is required.

3.17   All courses are expected to comply with the Academic Regulations. However, where this is not the case, for example PSRB requirements, Academic Council approval is required for all new regulations and course specific regulations in advance of the Re-validation meeting.   The Quality and Standards Adviser must be informed of the need for regulation exceptions well in advance in order to be able to advise the College of the required action and timeline.

Independent Externality
External Subject Advisers

3.18   The role of the External Subject Advisers is to provide appropriate subject expertise to the Re-validation Panel, within the wider context of Higher Education, and business or industry. External Advisers evaluate the subject-specific evidence in the context of external reference points with particular reference to academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and employability. External advisers act as advisers to the Panel.

3.19   Independent External Advisers are approved by the Chair and Quality and Standards Adviser, following the submission of an external adviser nomination form from the Course team, approved by the Head of College. This is done by correspondence. It should be done at the earliest opportunity noting external adviser involvement is required.

3.20   In all cases:
   • External advisers must not be either current or recent (i.e. within the previous six years) External Examiners at the University, member of staff or a student. Any other connections with the University or course teams are expected to be declared on the nomination form. All Panels should include one External adviser with appropriate academic experience, course teams are however also encouraged to include an External adviser from industry, commerce or professions who can explicitly consider the course in terms of its employability, graduate attributes, links with industry and specific/transferable skills. For distance learning courses an external with experience of online provision is expected.

   • Direct reciprocation must always be avoided, the general principle that academics, senior administrators and practicing professionals are prepared to give their time to contribute constructive criticism to course provision is central to the UK's quality assurance processes in HE. The nominating course representative and the Head of College attests to this independence in nominating and signing the nomination form.

   • The Head of College may also consider that the University should not draw external advisers from institutions identified as being in direct competition with

the University of Westminster in the subject area concerned: in this context direct competition normally implies geographical proximity.

3.21   External Advisers to Panels convened at the University of Westminster receive a standard fee in recognition of their contribution; they will be required to provide the appropriate documentation in accordance with the Home Office requirements.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

3.22   If a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) require that a Re-validation event is held further documentation such as the course handbook may be required. Should additional elements be required the Quality and Standards Office will work with the Course team and the PSRB to incorporate these elements into the Re-validation event. In the case of joint University/Professional or Statutory Body Panels, external advisers normally hold full membership to the panel.

Student Involvement
3.23   The Re-validation procedure is expected to be inclusive of students and is student focused. Students are expected to have the opportunity to play a key role in the preparation for Re-validation of course(s) in their subject area. They should be engaged in the development of the Reflective Document and invited to participate in the Re-validation meetings. Normally a separate meeting with students will be held as part of the Re-validation event.

Membership of the Re- Validation Panels
3.24   Panels will convene to consider the documentation against the aims and principles of Re-validation. The Panel will meet with the Course team and students studying the course(s). The Panel may set conditions and/or recommendations. The Quality and Standards Adviser will produce a report outlining the findings of the Panels.

3.25   Peer Review and independence is a key feature of the Re- validation process. The Panel will include members from Westminster who are external to the cognate area(s) under Re-validation, as well as members external to the University. The roles of Panel members are set out below:

        Chair
3.26   The role of the Chair is to manage and direct the Re-validation process. The Chair will lead all meetings held during the course of the Re-validation, provide oral feedback to the Course team at the conclusion of the review and approve the draft report.

3.27   Learning, Teaching and Quality Representatives
        The role of the LTQ Representative is to provide information about the values, strategies and policies of Westminster, to evaluate the evidence provided within the particular context of Westminster, and to bring experience to the Panel of the operation, management and delivery of courses elsewhere within the University.

3.28   Quality and Standards Adviser
        The Quality and Standards Adviser provides advice to the Course team in the development of documentation for the Re-validation including on Academic Regulations, internal/external quality assurance expectations and signposting to appropriate University Learning and Teaching Policies. The adviser will also act as the Secretary distributing documentation to the panel, book rooms, liaise with the external advisors as appropriate, support the Chair, prepare the draft report, outlining

conditions, recommendations and areas of good practice for immediate circulation to the Chair and Panel. The Quality and Standards Adviser will also circulate the report to the Course team and provide advice on meeting the conditions.

3.29   External Subject Advisers
        The role of the External Subject Advisers is to provide appropriate subject expertise to the Re-validation Panel, within the wider context of Higher Education, and business or industry. External Advisers should evaluate the subject-specific evidence in the context of external reference points with particular reference to academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and employability.

3.30   Student Adviser
        Student Advisers will be appointed as set out in section 8 of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. They will be full members of the Re-validation Panel and be expected to comment on the Reflective Document, inform the agenda setting and pursue lines of questioning during the meetings with the Course team.

Decisions
3.31   Conditions and recommendations may be set; including any required follow up with the Head of College or appropriate resource manager. A date by when the demonstration of the conditions being met must be specified. This will normally allow for appropriate due consideration by the panel following resubmission and should be accompanied by a summary of how the conditions have been met.

3.32   Course Approval may be reapproved:
        o   without time limit (6 years) approval
        o   for a specified period (up to six academic sessions)

3.33   Where a course has been approved for two years or less the University Panel Chair will where reasonably possible remain the same for the next revalidation. Where this is not the case the Chair will be drawn from UEB or CVSP.

3.34   A Re-validation Panel may decide that academic case has not been made, or that there are insufficient resources or fundamental problems which cannot reasonably be addressed by setting conditions. The decision of the panel will in such cases be Non-approval, possibly with encouragement to resubmit after suggested revision. This decision will be reported to Academic Council and CRIC.

3.35   Following the Re-validation approval a Course Handbook must be produced and submitted to the Quality and Standards Office. This must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the course commencing. Any inconsistencies noted from the signed documentation may lead to the course being referred back to the Panel for reconsideration of the approval status. Examples may include academic regulations, discrepancies in the modes of study or other issues that are deemed to cause a significant student experience or publication of information issue.

3.36   The Re-validation process and associated templates are kept under constant review. Policies are reviewed in light of other internal or external factors, such as, changes to the internal committee structure or the external regulatory environment.

3.37   It is the responsibility of the Head of College to ensure that conditions of approval set by a Panel are fulfilled by the date specified. The course team must submit alongside the documentation a summary of how the conditions have been met.

Report of the Review

3.38   Summary conclusions and recommendations should be made available to relevant participants within five working days. An outcomes report on the review process should be circulated to all participants within fifteen working days of its completion. A confirmed and agreed report should then be provided to all participants and made available to the relevant College. The confirmed and agreed report will be included in the annual overview report to Academic Council as part of the annual overview.

Revalidation drift

3.39   Revalidation may result in important decisions and conditions being agreed relating to a range of issues.   It is important that course leads continue to have this holistic approach following the revalidation. This includes ensuring the decisions of the panel are not inadvertently undone through e.g. course modifications. Course modifications are intended to provide the opportunity for courses to be enhanced and should not undermine the authority of a revalidation panel.   A course who requests structural modification in the year following revalidation will be required to gain the approval of the Panel Chair or where this is not possible another Panel Chair from outside the College.

3.40   Courses undertaking Revalidation are not normally permitted to request concurrent or subsequent modifications for implementation in the same academic year. Exceptionally where this is thought to be critical to implement strong evidence must be submitted that was not known prior to the revalidation. The modification must be requested in the published modification deadlines and must be approved by the Re-validation Panel Chair and Deputy Registrar Academic Quality and Standards or nominee.

Note: It is recognised that courses outside the remit of the Revalidation panel may require modification as a consequence of the changes.

Communication and Course records

3.41   The Quality and Standards Office is responsible for the accurate set up and maintenance of courses in the Student Records System to ensure the title and modes of delivery (including if the course is part time day, part time evening, part time mixed mode, distance learning or block mode) accurately reflects the agreed validated course. This information links to the public facing web page and other external government returns. Where changes to information are being made it is crucial these are reflected in the schedule of changes document to ensure changes are communicated to the right stakeholders.

3.42   It is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Office to ensure the Student Record System accurately reflects the module titles, summative assessments types, percentage weightings and qualifying marks in line with the approved module descriptors. The Quality and Standards Office communicate the creation of the new modules to a wide group of stakeholders once the revalidation has been signed off. This will normally include the course team, College staff, Admissions, Marketing, web team, Registry, Planning Office, Timetabling etc.