# Validation and Review Guidance for Programme Teams

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# Contents

# Useful Contacts

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# Introduction

This resource has been produced as an aid to programme teams preparing for validation or review at Queen Margaret University. It includes information and guidance on the aims of validation and review, roles and responsibilities, procedures and regulations. It complements and should be read in conjunction with relevant sections of the University's Governance and Regulations published on the QMU website Links to internal and external reference points are provided where appropriate, including links to the Quality website, which is the definitive and up-to-date source of information on University regulations and procedures.

We hope you will find this guidance useful. We would welcome any comments or suggestions for improvement.  If you would like to provide feedback, please refer to the 'Further information and contacts' section (page 39).

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### Key Point

Staff of the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement (GQE) provide support for programme teams preparing for validation and review events. All staff participating in validation and review should contact staff from GQE at an early stage of their preparation.

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## Background

The University is responsible to students, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the Scottish Funding Council, employers and the wider community for the quality, standard and relevance of programmes delivered in its name.  To fulfil these responsibilities all programmes leading to an award of the University are subject to validation, periodic review and annual monitoring[1].

## Aim of validation

The overall aim of the validation process is to establish that the standards and quality of the programme under consideration are consistent with nationally accepted benchmarks and that the programme aligns with the University's purpose: *helping to create a better society through education, research and innovation, and by providing a supportive and creative learning environment in which students and staff thrive*

This is achieved through peer group scrutiny and discussion which is intended to:

- Challenge and stimulate the programme team by questioning aspects of the proposed programme;
- Ensure that the curriculum is properly aligned with external points of reference including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code and QAA Subject Benchmarks;
- Consider alignment with key internal reference points, including the University's Student Experience Strategy (2021-26) and Graduate Attributes.
- Identify examples of best practice for commendation and dissemination (this is achieved through circulation of the validation or review report, discussion and follow-up action taken by academic committees);

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[1] It is not within the scope of this resource to provide guidance on the Annual Monitoring process.  For further information please refer to the Governance and Regulations, Programme Development, Modification, Monitoring and Review)

- Encourage staff in the development of new areas of the curriculum, new teaching methods and in areas of scholarly activity that will help improve the programme;
- Inform and advise staff of good practice elsewhere and of new developments in the curriculum and teaching methods.

Based on the outcome of the above a decision is made on whether the programme can be recommended for approval.

## Aim of review

A programme is reviewed after it has been in operation for a period of up to five years (specified at the time of the previous validation or review event). During this time one or more cohorts is likely to have passed through the programme. This means that staff, students and employers will have had experience of its operation. The aim of a programme review is to re-evaluate, through peer group scrutiny and discussion, the health and viability of the programme, the validity of aims and learning outcomes and to ascertain:

- How the programme has been operated and managed during the most recent period of validation;
- How standards have been attained and how this has been recognised;
- The ways in which the programme has met the needs of the community;
- The extent to which all the previously expressed aspirations and ambitions have been fulfilled;
- The extent to which the institution has been able to provide an environment in which the programme can flourish.

Based on the outcome of the above a decision is made on whether the programme can continue to be approved.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## The programme team

The role of the programme team is to plan the programme and present it at the validation or review event to a group of panellists, whose responsibilities are described on page 7 below.

A team approach to validation and review is crucial for a number of reasons:

- To provide an efficient, effective and creative means of completing all tasks;
- To ensure the views of all stakeholders are considered and there is shared ownership of the programme;
- To enhance quality since everyone serves as critical reviewer.

Typically, the team should be composed of:

### Programme leader(s)
Normally programmes have only one programme leader. Exceptionally, as with inter-disciplinary programmes, there may be more than one.  However, where there is more than one programme leader it is strongly advised that individual roles and responsibilities for developing and managing the programme be agreed and respected from the outset.

### All (potential) module co-ordinators
- New programme teams should include individuals who are most likely to be named as module co-ordinators. The team may need to recruit individuals as curriculum development dictates.
- Review teams should include module co-ordinators with experience of delivering the curriculum, who can contribute detailed critical analysis of the programme and suggestions for revision.

Where a number of programmes are being put forward for validation together (for instance in the case of School wide validations) it may be appropriate to divide some aspects of planning between sub-groups.

Additional input should be sought for the process of planning from:

### Students
Students should ideally be included on the programme planning team since they offer a different perspective of the programme from that of staff. Where it is not practical to include students, for example in the development of entirely new programmes, one option might be to recruit students from related programmes at QMU. Where possible, review teams should include both current and former students.

### Recent graduates
If possible, it may be useful to include one or more recent graduates.  Graduates are particularly well placed to comment on the way in which the programme has prepared them for employment and can provide useful insights that current students may not be able to offer.

### Employers of graduates or employers within the field
These representatives will bring knowledge of current and future needs of the industry, employability skills of graduates, professional standards and current developments within the profession/industry.  Their insight and perspective is crucial to ensure the programme will not only have currency, but will be future-proofed for the term of validation.

**Placement supervisors and/or practitioners**
Practitioners may contribute professional knowledge and expertise, but will also bring to the discussion their experience of current practice. Placement supervisors will help consider the needs of the profession and issues associated with placements, such as numbers of places, timetabling, student support and staff development.

**Members of QMU advisory boards within the subject**
Some subject areas have professional advisory boards whose role is to contribute to the curriculum portfolio. A member of the board might join the programme team or contribute in other ways, such as critiquing a draft document.

**Members of professional bodies**
Representatives from professional bodies may play an advisory role in curriculum development. It is the responsibility of the programme team to check with the professional body whether this is an expectation in planning for validation or review.

**Service users**
Teams are encouraged to involve service users (clients or customers who might access a service provided by graduates from the programme). Service users can comment on the likely benefits of the programme for the wider community. Based on their experiences of the subject (profession) that is under consideration they play an important role in highlighting their expectations of graduates from the programme.

**School representatives**
For inter-disciplinary programmes there should be representatives from the contributing School, which might include module co-ordinators or proposed teaching staff.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Deans of School and Heads of Division

The programme team is responsible for curriculum development, the preparation of documentation, liaison with GQE and submission of a response to conditions and recommendations.

Deans of School are responsible for the strategic direction of the School. All new programmes going forward for validation must be included in School Operational Plans.

The Head of Division is responsible for ensuring that a programme planning team is established and that appropriate staff are assigned to take forward the work of preparation for review or validation. Heads of Division may be involved in the detailed planning process, development and/or delivery of the programme under consideration. However, this is not a requirement.

Heads of Division are also asked to approve validation and review panels. This is to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

It is an expectation that the secretaries to the School Academic Boards will maintain a record of programmes due for review in their respective Schools. Staff from the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement will provide support for this.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## The validation panel

The role of the validation panel is to evaluate the rationale and coherence of the programme and to make a recommendation on its approval through the Student Experience Committee to the University Senate.

The panel will consider separately and collectively the following areas of the programme:

- Overall philosophy and rationale;
- Aims and learning outcomes;
- Marketing and recruitment, including admissions criteria;
- Structure and content;
- Learning and teaching activities;
- Assessment methods and regulations;
- Quality assurance and enhancement;
- Programme management;
- Student support arrangements;
- Staff and resources including quality and experience of academic staff.

Key areas that the panel may wish to explore with the team in relation to the above include, but are not limited to:

- Stakeholder engagement in developing the new programme;
- Alignment with QMU strategies, such as the Student Experience Strategy, Employability Strategy and Graduate Attributes;
- Articulation with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- Adherence to Benchmark Statements and other external reference points;
- Employer and student demand;
- Adherence to QMU or professional body policies and regulations;
- The accessibility of the award for all students including those from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and disabled students;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations, including decolonising the curriculum;
- Approaches to embedding sustainability within the curriculum.

The panel will also look in detail at module descriptors, with a focus on learning outcomes and assessments. They will be keen to assure themselves that there is a good balance of assessments across the programme and that students have the opportunity to develop specific skills such as reflection and critical thinking in a structured way through the student journey.

Resource requirements for new programmes are identified and agreed by the Academic Planning Board as described on page 12. It is essential that estimated resource requirements are approved well in advance of the validation by the Dean of School and relevant heads of service departments. The Academic Planning Board will also have considered evidence of demand and the business case for the programme.

The panel is expected to adopt a peer group approach to provide a constructive and collegiate setting, while at the same time conducting a sufficiently rigorous evaluation of the merits of the programme.

## The review panel

The role of the review panel is similar to that of the validation panel (see above). Additionally the review panel will carry out a critical appraisal of the standing, progress and future of the programme by evaluating:

- The academic health and standard of the programme;
- Progress and changes in the programme since its validation or last review;
- The continuing need for the programme, including the scale of student intake, and its effectiveness and efficiency in staff and resource terms;
- The academic validity of proposed changes in the programme, and an assessment of the associated resource requirements.

Information about panel membership and selection is provided on page 30.

# Roles and responsibilities

## The Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement (GQE)

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**KEY POINT**

Programme teams are encouraged to contact staff in the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement at an early stage in their preparation for validation or review. Normally an initial meeting between the event secretary, who will be based in the GQE, and programme leader should take place no later than six months prior to the event. The relevant School Manager will also participate in this meeting. Contact details for GQE are provided on page 39.

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Staff in the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement are responsible for aspects of the validation and review process as stated below:

**Validation and review schedule**
Development and approval of the validation and review schedule each year in consultation with Deans of School, Heads of Division and programme leaders.
Approximate dates for validation and review events will be agreed at least eight months in advance to allow for curriculum development and (where applicable) review of the operation of the programme during the most recent period of validation. Final dates should be confirmed at least three months before the event.

**Advice and information**
Liaison with programme leaders, panellists and professional bodies as required to offer support and guidance for aspects of the process including:

- Timescale
- Procedures
- Roles and responsibilities
- The format of the validation or review event
- Documentary requirements
  Please note that staff from GQE generally **cannot** advise on curriculum design and development, or completion of module descriptors.
- Internal and external reference points including QMU regulations; the UK Quality Code; and SCQF.

**Panellists**
The nomination of internal panel members (please refer to page 30 for further information)

**Arrangements**
All arrangements for the validation or review event, including room bookings, hospitality, accommodation and transport for external panel members (please refer to page 30 for further information), or arrangements for a remote event if applicable.

**Secretariat support**
The provision of professional secretariat support to the panel.
This includes: preparation and circulation of the agenda, the consolidated checklist (as described on page 32) and other supporting documentation prior to the event; participation in the event to advise on due process and QMU policies and procedures; preparation and circulation of the validation or review report following the event.

**Response to conditions**
Circulation and tracking of programme teams' response to conditions, in line with the timescale advised in the validation or review report.

**Collaborative agreements**
The development of written agreements (Memoranda of Agreement) between QMU and collaborative partner organisations.
A formal agreement is required and **must be signed** before the commencement of each collaborative programme.
Further information is available on the Quality website in the Collaborations Manual.

# Roles and responsibilities – other professional services

## School Managers

School Managers have a broad understanding and overview of all programmes in the School and are a good source of advice during the planning process. They may be able to put you in touch with staff who have developed a similar programme or who run a module that you might want to access or copy.

Your School Manager can provide guidance on the following matters:

- Programme specific regulations
- Non-standard programme structures and the implications for programme management and exam boards
- School specific guidance regarding assessment load, learning experiences and student contact hours
- Recognition of prior learning and transition arrangements
- Committees and student representation
- External examining
- Fitness to Practise / Fitness to Study procedures
- Compliance with professional and regulatory body requirements

The School Manager will be happy to read draft documents and provide feedback, as long as they are given sufficient time. They may also be able to allocate staff from the School Office to help with formatting. You are strongly advised to contact your School Manager in good time in order to agree timescales.

## Library

It is important for you to communicate with the Liaison Librarian for your subject to ensure the library purchases texts on reading lists and to set up online resource lists. Please see the QMU LRC Policies and Regulations page for up to date versions of the Collections Management Policy for timelines on communicating resource list content and the Resource List policy for requirements around use of the online resource list tool.

Liaison Librarians are able to provide in-course sessions on study skills, including literature searching and referencing, upon request. Liaison Librarians can also advise on other learning resource issues affecting programme delivery and student experience.

## The Centre for Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD)

The Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) Centre offers academic development support for colleagues that focusses around priority areas for the enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

Colleagues from both QMU and our partner institutions are welcome to book onto the LEAD Centre series of continuing professional development (CPD) workshops (please note, you will need to use your @qmu.ac.uk to make a booking).

Staff from LEAD are involved in taking forward many of the actions from the Student Experience Strategy and they are a useful source of advice on institutional initiatives to enhance learning and teaching.

LEAD also works with colleagues in academic divisions to provide the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional and Higher Education. A refreshed Postgraduate Certificate is under development and will be launched in September 2023.

## Careers & Employability Service

It is important for you to communicate with the Careers & Employability Service to ensure that careers education is embedded into the curriculum of the programme, as outlined in the objectives of the Employability Strategy. The team will be happy to support with the design and/or delivery of careers education activities within the programme. Please contact them directly to arrange a discussion about your requirements etc.

The Careers & Employability Service can also offer support and guidance during new programme design regarding evidence for demand for particular subject areas, or specialisms. They work with graduate recruiters and understand labour market trends and requirements and have a network of employers and contacts including graduates across numerous sectors which could help when gathering appropriate information and evidence.

Furthermore, as a member of AGCAS (the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services), the team have access to a network of professional contacts across the UK, as well as publications and resources produced by AGCAS and other sector bodies. You may find some of the resources helpful to review when considering work-based learning or other aspects of the curriculum development.

# Roles and responsibilities

## Professional and regulatory bodies

The role of individual professional and regulatory bodies in the validation and review process varies and should be determined at an early stage in the planning process. It is the responsibility of the programme leader to notify staff in GQE of the involvement of professional organisations and to provide contact details for representatives with responsibility for liaison with education providers.

Staff in GQE are responsible for formal liaison with professional and regulatory bodies regarding arrangements and procedures and for communicating these to the programme team. Programme teams are expected to familiarise themselves at an early stage in the process with the procedural and documentary requirements of professional bodies.

# Approval procedures

## Validation of new programmes

Any proposal to develop a new programme must go through the stages set out below.

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**KEY POINT**

Planning of new programmes should begin up to two years in advance of validation (see below). This lead time is required for new undergraduate degrees to ensure prospectus information can be updated and the programme listed on UCAS.

All new programmes require planning time to allow for approval, consultation, and preparation, including a considerable amount of document preparation.

The validation event normally takes place at least **six months** prior to the commencement of the programme. This allows time to address any conditions that have to be met before the programme is delivered, but more importantly, it allows time for marketing and recruitment.

The documentation for the event needs to be submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement **no later than four weeks** before the event.

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See Programme Development, Modification, Monitoring and Review under the Quality Assurance section of the [GQE website](#) for more details. The Partnership Development team in GQE must be consulted about proposals for new collaborative programmes.

The steps to planning are given below, some of which would occur in parallel:

- Initial proposal and preliminary market research/fact finding.

- Discussion with the Dean of School and inclusion of the proposed new programme in the School Operational Plan for the academic session in which the programme will operate.

- Once initial support has been secured, the proposal can proceed to stage one of the three stage programme approval process. To allow for marketing and inclusion in the prospectus, new undergraduate programmes should have completed stage three approval through the School Academic Board **22 months** before the start of the academic year in which the programme is due to commence, and postgraduate programmes **18 months** before the start of the academic year in which the programme is due to commence.

- **Stage 1 Programme Approval form** submitted to the School Executive Team (typically the Dean, Heads of Division and School Manager). The School Executive Team is asked to approve the new development in principle, allowing a more detailed examination of the proposal to follow. At this stage the School Executive Team is merely looking to confirm that there is an identified need for the programme, that the University has the capacity to support it and that it does not conflict with the University strategy or the School Operational Plan.

- Identification of programme leader (and Collaborative Academic Lead, for collaborative programmes). More detailed work on proposed shape of programme and methods of delivery, which allows a full costing to be completed. Early consultation with support services such as the School Office, Information Services, Library and technicians

regarding likely resource needs. Estates and Facilities should be contacted regarding any specialist teaching space or equipment that might be required.

- For QMU delivered programmes the Dean or Head of Division will liaise with staff in Finance to undertake the costing, but this may be delegated to the Programme Leader. Advice is available from the Head of Finance. For collaborative programmes, the Partnership Development Manager will take forward the costing, in consultation with the Head of Division and/or Collaborative Academic Lead.

- Research conducted on the market for the programme in order to provide evidence of demand. The Programme Leader should assess the likely demand for the proposed programmes by means such as:

  a. seeking opinion from QMU sources including:
     - colleagues across the University
     - current students
     - Development Office
     - Marketing and Communications Office
     - Recruitment and Admissions Office

  b. seeking opinion from external sources including:
     - alumni
     - prospective students attending open days, campus visits, recruitment fairs etc
     - occupational and professional bodies
     - accrediting bodies
     - statutory and regulatory bodies
     - prospective employers

  c. investigating and considering:
     - existing and planned provision (including tuition fees charged) of similar programmes in HEIs in Scotland, the rest of the UK and international competitor institutions
     - admissions queries from potential students
     - national/local labour market information
     - growth areas in the economy
     - identified shortfalls in certain areas of expertise

  Note that it is essential for all programmes that staff in Marketing and Communications and Admissions are informed of the proposed development. This will allow them to make any changes to the prospectus and web listing.

- For collaborative programmes, a site visit and risk assessment will be required – please see the Collaborations Manual for details.

- **Stage 2 Programme Approval form** submitted to the Academic Planning Board (APB) along with costing, evidence of demand and any other relevant information. This is the crucial stage, at which senior managers will decide whether the proposed programme is viable from a strategic, academic and business point of view. Stage 2 Approval means that the University agrees to commit the resources required to deliver the programme subject to minimum student numbers.

- Following consideration of Stage 2 of the Programme Approval Form by the Academic Planning Board, the Secretary will notify the following people of the outcome: Dean of School; Head of Division; Programme Leader/Collaborative Academic Lead; School Manager; Head of Admissions and Recruitment (except for overseas collaborative programmes). If it is confirmed that the proposal can proceed to Stage 3, the Head(s) of

Division must establish a Programme Team to undertake more detailed curriculum planning and preparation, if they have not already done so.

- Following confirmation from the Academic Planning Board that the proposal can proceed to Stage 3, the Programme Leader/Collaborative Academic Lead must complete and submit stage three paperwork to the School Academic Board in consultation with other members of the proposed Programme Team.

- Identification of programme planning team and invitation to join (see page 3 for details of planning team membership).

- Schedule for programme development, set out as a project plan with timescales and deadlines. Tasks allocated to different members of the team. Regular, minuted meetings. Consultation with all stakeholders, e.g. employers, professional bodies and external examiners.

- Provisional date for validation event agreed with GQE.

- Stage 3 Programme Approval form submitted to School Academic Board for discussion. The School Academic Board will be responsible for debating and agreeing the academic rationale. This will include consideration of the following:

  - Programme title and subsidiary exit points
  - Educational philosophy and aims;
  - Appropriateness of the proposed SCQF level;
  - Outline content;
  - Structure and delivery pattern;
  - Core and elective modules – core modules must be clearly identified;
  - Balance of new and existing modules;
  - Opportunities for linkages and efficiencies through collaboration with existing School provision.

> **Key point**
>
> The programme may not be advertised externally until such time as the School Academic Board has confirmed that it may proceed to validation. At this point, the programme may be advertised as **'subject to validation'**, until such time as the validation process has concluded. Note that care needs to be taken about the level of detail included at this stage as all published information on University programmes must comply with the guidance issued by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

- The School Academic Board will provide feedback to the team that will help to shape the final validation document submitted to the panel. While the SAB does not have authority to veto the development of a new programme, it may raise concerns if it is believed that a programme's design is flawed or the team is not ready to proceed to validation. In such cases, the concerns will be passed to the Dean of the host School and a decision taken whether to postpone the validation.

- GQE confirms that all stages of Programme Approval have been completed and that validation may proceed. Final date confirmed (if this has not been done already).

- Identification of external panel member(s). The programme team is responsible for contacting the proposed external panellist(s) initially to determine availability and willingness and then notifying GQE (see page 30 for further details). GQE will identify internal panellists.

- Document preparation.

- Final documents submitted to GQE four weeks prior to the date of validation. Documents should be submitted electronically.

- Identify and invite students, senior managers, clinical educators, and others as required. Ensure all participants are aware of the time and venue for their part of the agenda.

- Circulate documents to programme team and arrange team meeting to prepare for event. Normally, feedback from the panel will be supplied shortly in advance of the event to given an indication of the likely areas for discussion.

Suggested timescales for the above steps are set out in Diagram 1 overleaf.

**Diagram 1 - process for validating a new programme (with recommended timescales)**

The timescales below are advisory. Actual timescales may vary. More flexibility is allowed for collaborative programmes, as these are not included in the QMU prospectus.

Pre-validation

| Type of programme | | Approval stage |
|---|---|---|
| PG / Collaborative | UG (UCAS) | |
| - 23 months | - 27 months | Programme Leader (PL)/Collaborative Academic Lead (CAL) conducts exploratory discussions and/or market research |
| - 22 months | - 26 months | Approval in principle by Dean of School. Proposal reported to GQE. |
| - 22 months | - 26 months | PL/CAL completes Stage 1 Programme Approval Form. Stage 1 Programme Approval Form submitted to School Executive Board for outline approval which enables detailed planning to commence. |
| - 21 months | - 25 months | Outline programme development. Costing completed. Detailed market research conducted. For collaborative programmes, site visit and risk assessment completed. |
| - 20 months | - 24 months | PL/CAL completes Stage 2 Programme Approval Form. Stage 2 Programme Approval Form submitted to Academic Planning Board for approval to proceed to validation. |
| - 20 months | - 24 months | GQE sets provisional date for validation. More detailed programme planning commences. |
| - 18 months | - 22 months | PL/CAL completes Stage 3 Programme Approval Form. Stage 3 Programme Approval Form submitted to School Academic Board. |
| Following Stage 3 approval, the programme may proceed to validation. The programme may be advertised as 'subject to validation'. | | |

**Validation**

| All programmes | Approval stage |
|---|---|
| - 10 months | Development of validation documentation |
| - 9 months | Panel established |
| - 7 months | Documents submitted to GQE |
| - 6 months | Validation event |
| - 4 months | Response to conditions submitted |
| - 3 months | Recommendations from Panel reported to the Student Experience Committee, which makes a recommendation on programme approval to Senate. |
| 0 | Programme starts |

The example below shows how this works in practice for an undergraduate programme due to start in September 2025.

| July 2023 | Stage 1 paperwork approved by School Executive Team |
|---|---|
| September 2023 | Stage 2 paperwork approved by APB |
| November 2023 | Stage 3 paperwork approved by SAB |
| October 2024 | GQE sets validation date |
| December 2024 | Panel established |
| February 2025 | Documents to GQE  (4 weeks before the event) |
| March 2025 | Validation event |
| June 2025 | Recommendations to SEC and Senate (may be addressed by Convener's Action if the validation exceptionally takes place after the final meeting of these committees takes place) |
| September 2025 | Programme starts |

# Approval procedures

## Validation of new collaborative programmes

Collaborative validation procedures follow those outlined on pages 12 to 14 above with the following exceptions:

**Site visit report and risk assessment**
If the proposed programme is with a new partner, a senior member of staff must visit to view the facilities. The Academic Planning Board will decide who should visit the partner and at what stage this should happen, taking into account the individual circumstances of the partnership negotiations. The site visit report will be filed centrally by GQE.

The Collaborative Academic Lead must then meet with a member of staff from GQE to complete a risk assessment (selection of new partners) form. This will take into account evidence from the site visit report and any other evidence available, such as documents supplied by the partner or statements of support from other universities already working with the partner. The Partnership Development Manager will be able to advise on the type of evidence required to complete the risk assessment.

Note that for new programmes with existing partners a risk assessment is still required but normally a site visit will not be necessary prior to validation.

**Timescale**
The validation event normally takes place a minimum of five months prior to the commencement of the programme.  Further information about different types of collaborative agreement is available from the GQE and on the Partnerships website.

**Validation location**
The event is normally held at the partner institution.  This allows for evaluation of the partner organisation's resources (including Library, IT and educational technology resources), facilities, staff, traditions, ethos, and academic and non-academic capability.

For new programmes with existing partners it may not be necessary to hold the validation at the partner institution unless particular specialist facilities are required to support delivery.

The documentation for collaborative validation and review events is as described on page 15 above.  The following additional information is required:

- Information about student support services provided by the partner. Where services or procedures differ from what is normally offered at QMU, a statement should be provided explaining how support is equivalent to QMU norms.
- A statement on the relationship between QMU and the partner institution and proposed arrangements for quality assurance, including arrangements for moderating student work, and communication between the partners.
- Information about staff recruitment policies and how staff will be supported.
- A statement on the language of instruction and assessment: if this is not English, the documentation must include details of mechanisms to assure the standard and quality of student work

Further information about the operation of collaborative programmes is available in the Collaborations Manual, which is published on the Partnerships website.

# Approval procedures

## Review of existing programmes (including collaborative programmes)

All currently validated programmes require to be reviewed and re-validated before the expiry of the validation period (normally five years).  It is the responsibility of the programme team and GQE to know when a programme is due for review.  School Managers will also have a record of validation periods for all programmes in the School.  Programme teams may bring forward reviews for good reason, e.g. changes to external reference points, changes to professional body requirements, work-load planning.

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**KEY POINT**

The planning for programme review should begin 12 months prior to the review event
The review event normally takes place **no later than four months** prior to the next intake.
This is the minimum time required to address any conditions attached to approval.
The documentation for the event must be submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement **no later than four weeks** before the event.

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Postponement of reviews is not normally allowed unless there is a robust, justifiable reason, e.g. delay in publication of professional body requirements.  Postponement must be recommended by the School Academic Board to the Learning and Teaching Panel of the Student Experience Committee. Reviews may normally only be postponed by one year. This ensures compliance with the requirement for a maximum six-year review cycle, as set out in the Scottish Funding Council Guidance on Quality. Any extension beyond six years would be wholly exceptional and would require prior SFC agreement.

The purpose of the review is to reflect critically on evidence of the quality of the programme over the period of validation, to identify examples of good practice for dissemination and to examine aspects of the programme which may require modification in order to:

- Make enhancements based on stakeholder feedback;
- Maintain currency and relevance;
- Respond to external drivers, e.g. markets, professional standards/regulations/needs, government policies, QAA expectations, student profile;
- Align more closely with QMU policies or strategies.

The review process involves both review of the current programme and development of the revised programme for re-validation. Note that no Programme Approval paperwork is required unless:

i) There is an add-on such as extension of a PgCert to additional awards of PgDip or Masters or from a BSc to BSc (Hons)
ii) There is a significant change, e.g. a merger of two programmes into one new programme or a change of title

Staff from GQE should be contacted for advice in the event that any such changes are planned.

# Preparation and planning

# Documents required

## Required documentation for validation (to be provided in advance)

The documentation listed below is needed for **every validation** and must be submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement **no later than four weeks** before the event.

- Validation Document, including all module descriptors;
- Programme Specification;
- Student Handbook;
- Placement Handbook (if appropriate);
- Staff CVs (these are required for members of the teaching team only, and not for other members of the planning committee e.g. employers, student representatives, service users).

## Other documentation for validation

Other documents required depend on the nature and level of the Programme to be validated and in some cases on professional and regulatory body involvement.  The documentation listed below, if needed, can be provided in advance of the event.  If final versions are not available, handbooks may be provided in draft format.  Staff in the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement can advise on requirements and deadline for submission.

- Supervisors'/Mentors' Handbook
- Other documents required by professional bodies, for example:
     Mapping against Standards of Education and Training (SETS) (HCPC requirement)
     Mapping against Standards of Proficiency (SOPS) (HCPC requirement)

It may be useful to provide a copy of the dissertation handbook (if available) at the event.

## Validation document

The principal requirements of the validation document are summarised below.

**Programme name, rationale, demand and design**

- Programme title and SCQF level of award;
- Subsidiary exit points;
- Date programme is due to start;
- Nature and purpose of the programme;
- Intended student numbers (minimum and maximum);
- The host Division for the programme;
- Any relationship or overlap with existing programmes delivered by QMU;
- The relationship of the programme with comparable awards delivered by other higher education institutions in the UK;
- A statement on how the programme compares with similar provision in other countries (if applicable);
- Any professional or statutory body recognition;
- The use of external reference points including QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and professional body standards

- The use of internal reference points including the University's Student Experience Strategy and Graduate Attributes, policies relating to sustainability, widening access and inclusive learning.
- A list of members of the programme planning team.

**Consultation and Research**

Evidence (in a summarised form) of the consultation engaged in the development of a new programme or in making major changes to an existing programme should be provided. This should include details of who was consulted, by what means, the information those consulted received on which to base an opinion (normally the draft programme proposal or a summary) and a summary of their opinions. It is important to remember to discuss both student and employer demand.

Consultation should take place with the following groups:

- Professional and statutory bodies as appropriate;
- Current External Examiners on related programmes or other assessors;
- Students currently on the programme (reviews only) or related programmes;
- Recent graduates from the programme (reviews only) or related programmes;
- Potential employers;
- Service users, where possible;
- Others, as appropriate.

The document should also include information on the programme's target market. Discuss any plans to increase recruitment from previously under-represented groups, e.g. disabled students, direct entrants from FE, or students from previously under-represented genders or cultural backgrounds.

**Programme Characteristics**

The validation document sets out the essential characteristics of the programme in a narrative format.

- Mode of study and programme length (including maximum registration period);
- Educational intentions (programme aims);
- Learning outcomes in terms of the attainment of knowledge, understanding, skills, experience and, where appropriate, professional development;
- Learning and teaching strategies, explaining the rationale for the choice of learning and teaching methods to be used;
- The curriculum and its component parts (including relationship to educational intentions and learning objectives);
- The distinction between core and optional elements and a statement of any prerequisites;
- The patterns of attendance on the programme including the structure of periods of placement or professional training and duration of placement periods, or the nature of part-time or mixed-mode study (this should include a statement on the use of Library and IT resources). It is helpful to include a diagram to illustrate the structure and possible routes through the programme for full-and part-time students;
- Sequence of progression between programmes/levels.

**Methods of Assessment**

- Methods of assessment with relevant weightings, and appropriateness to the learning outcomes and the level of the programme;
- Arrangements for formative assessment;

- Board of Examiners' arrangements including the involvement of External Examiners in the assessment process.

It can be helpful to include a table showing how formative assessment informs summative assessment. The validation document may also include a draft assessment schedule with approximate submission dates for individual assessment components.

**Student Support**

In this section you should discuss:

- Support for study skills;
- Arrangements for personal development planning (if applicable);
- Support for students from the full range of diverse backgrounds;
- Personal Academic Tutors;
- Opportunities for student involvement in quality processes e.g. through the Student-Staff Consultative Committee or other regular meetings with tutors;
- Strategies for development of an inclusive learning community;
- Careers advice.

Students on programmes delivered at QMU will have access to on-site Student Services. Additional information should be provided regarding student support mechanisms for programmes delivered by blended or distance learning. Programmes delivered by collaborative partners should clarify how they will provide an equivalent level of support.

If tailored careers resources or careers support would be particularly relevant to students on the programme, please discuss this with the Careers & Employability Service to ensure this provision is in place.

**Arrangements for admission, progress and transfer**

Admissions colleagues should be consulted before drawing up the standard entrance requirements.

- Entrance requirements;
- Recognition of prior learning/experiential learning, where appropriate;
- Arrangements for admission with advanced standing;
- Scope for students to transfer into the programme;
- Scope for students to transfer to other programmes;
- Progress requirements and criteria for success;
- Transitional arrangements for students affected by changes to the programme (reviews only);
- A statement on accessibility of the programme for students from all backgrounds, including disabled and international students. If there are professional or regulatory body restrictions/requirements for admission make this clear.

State any special admissions procedures that are used, such as auditions or interviews. Clarify safeguards in place to ensure equitable treatment of all applicants regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, nationality, culture and sexual orientation.

If it is expected that a number of students will enter the programme with advanced standing, on the basis of specific qualifications, these routes should be spelled out in the document and approved by the validation panel. (For example, articulation arrangements, or group agreements for RPL for applicants with certain professional qualifications.)

**Resource requirements**

- Teaching and support staff;
- Teaching and learning accommodation and equipment;
- Learning resources;
- Central resources and services, including Library, IT, and educational technology resources (these should be identified and agreed in advance of the event as part of Stage 2 Programme Approval as described on page 11);
- Others (please specify).

Normally, it will not be necessary for the panel to discuss resource issues in depth, as resource requirements will have been discussed and agreed through the Programme Approval process. However, if the panel does have questions it may be appropriate to raise these at the event. GQE staff can provide guidance, as required.

**Management of the Programme**

Management arrangements including the constitution and terms of reference of the Programme Committee, Student-Staff Consultative Committee, the role of the programme leader, module co-ordinators and Personal Academic Tutor. Normally these will be consistent with QMU regulations. In this case it is appropriate to cross refer to relevant sections of the Quality website.

**Quality Assurance Procedures**

Quality assurance arrangements for the management, operation and monitoring of the programme, including student feedback arrangements, evaluation mechanisms, provision for student representation and student support. The documentation should identify any areas where the programme deviates from the standard University quality assurance procedures, citing the reasons, such as professional and statutory body requirements. This section should also be used to highlight any innovative approaches to quality assurance either planned or in operation.

**Regulations**

Draft regulations should be submitted with the documentation where necessary. In most areas the programme team will use the University regulations. It will be sufficient to state that the programme conforms to QMU regulations, where this is the case.

Validation and review panels will evaluate the validity of any specific regulations for the programme(s) in question. It is recommended that programme teams wishing to introduce programme specific regulations consult the School Manager, before submitting the validation document to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

**Module Descriptors**

[Electronic copies of the module descriptor forms and instructions for completion](#) are available on the Quality website. It is important to ensure that they are completed in full and in a standardised format. Particular attention should be paid to ensure the following:

- Module descriptors are complete (including the SCQF level and SCOTCAT credit value) and presented in a consistent format;
- Texts cited in module descriptors are reviewed and updated;
- Pre- and co-requisites have been included where applicable;
- Notional hours of student effort have been included;
- Assessment formats include the duration of exams and presentations and the word count of written work.

Programme teams are expected to seek advice from the Library on the completion of reading lists in module descriptors.

The University provides guidance on a consistent approach to module design. This guidance covers the number of learning hours and volume of assessment. There are some differences between each School. Please contact your School Manager for advice.

## Programme specification

The Programme Specification consists of a summary of the information in the programme (validation) document. This is useful for providing succinct details about the programme to external stakeholders.

Use the template provided. Cutting and pasting from the programme document is encouraged, as this ensures the information is consistent across both documents.

## Student handbook

The panel needs to see the student handbook in order to satisfy themselves that students receive clear and user-friendly information about the programme.

QMU produces a generic Student Handbook that includes information on systems, regulations, policies and procedures. This Handbook is available on the A-Z pages of the QMU website under the letter H.

The purpose of the Programme Student Handbook is **not** to duplicate the information in the generic Student Handbook. Instead, the Programme Student Handbook should provide specific and local information, for example:

- Introduction and welcome from the Programme Leader.
- A link to the generic Student Handbook and Essential Information for Students publication.
- Details of the Programme structure – where there are different pathways through the Programme, it can be helpful to provide flowchart diagrams and/or case studies (this approach has been commended at previous events).
- Information on learning experiences with an overview of the learning, teaching and assessment philosophy.
- Information on assessment strategy – formative and summative – it can be good to provide this in table format.
- Guidance about how to submit assessments and advice on avoiding plagiarism.
- Information on work-based learning, although this may be provided separately.
- Information on eligibility for professional registration (if applicable) and any associated policies, such as Fitness to Practise.
- Information on staff with responsibility for the programme and key contacts.
- Clear information on any programme specific regulations.
- Clear information about any equipment that students require; fields trips or extra-curricular activities; or any other potential expenses.
- Expectations of conduct and participation.
- An overview of approaches to student support and student representation.
- Detail of how the programme promotes employability and the ways in which QMU Graduate Attributes are developed. You may wish to have a discussion with the Careers & Employability Service to help evaluate how the programme promotes employability.
- Any other information relevant to the Programme that the Team considers will be of interest.

There is no prescribed length for the Programme Student Handbook, and it is recognised that Teams will be flexible in their approach. For the purposes of validation or review, Panels need to be satisfied that students receive the necessary information, and that this is accessible, accurate and updated regularly. It may be that student-facing materials are available on the Hub, rather than being presented in the format of a traditional single source document.

# Placement handbook

Many programmes include a placement. This can take different forms. The level of supporting documentation that panels will need to see depends on the role of the placement in the programme and the extent to which students' overall progress is determined by the placement experience. Thus, pre-registration healthcare placements, that must be passed if the student is to achieve registration, require considerably more detail than experiential placements in an arts degree.

1. Assessed placement. The student undertakes a period of work-based learning under the guidance of a qualified supervisor. The student undertakes tasks under the direction of the supervisor, normally being given increased responsibility as the placement develops. The student's competence in various practical skills is normally assessed by the workplace supervisor, although in some cases assessment may be the responsibility of the programme team. Students require to pass this placement in order to demonstrate that they are competent to practice in their discipline. (This type of placement is standard in pre-registration health-related programmes and normally the standards of competence to be achieved will be set by a professional body.)
2. Experiential placement. The student undertakes a period of work-based learning in an organisation relevant to their future career. Activities are negotiated with the placement provider. Often, the range of activities will be informed by a learning contract that sets out what the student hopes to gain from the experience. The student's competence is not assessed. The student normally writes a reflective assignment or provides a portfolio for assessment by the QMU module co-ordinator.
3. Shadowing placement. The student does not undertake any activities and merely observes a qualified professional in action, in order to gain a sense of what the profession involves.

For the first two types of placement listed above it is recommended that students are given a placement handbook. For assessed placements it is recommended that documentation also be provided to the workplace supervisors so as to ensure they understand their role in assessing students' competence. Some form of guidance to workplace supervisors may also be advisable for experiential placements.

Some of the areas that panels will expect to see addressed in placement handbooks (depending on the type of programme) and may wish to discuss at the event are listed below:

- Number, timing and types of placement (to ensure compliance with the requirements of professional and regulatory bodies and a good breadth of experience);
- Contractual arrangements (often in the form of a tripartite agreement between the students, the University and the placement host);
- Responsibility for finding a placement (clarify whether the responsibility rests with the student, a staff member or central placement team within or external to QMU);
- Timeframe for students being notified of their placement (ideally this will be as early as possible to allow students to prepare and put in place arrangements for travel, accommodation etc.);
- Insurance arrangements and liability for travel, accommodation and other costs;
- Arrangements for communication between the student, programme team and placement staff;

- Cause for concern process – this often takes the form of a flowchart.

Panels are also interested in parity of experience across placement sites, in terms of the student and placement staff experience. This will include support and development opportunities for placement supervisors.

More detailed guidance on the content of placement handbooks may be sourced from professional and regulatory bodies. Staff of GQE can also provide advice.

# Preparation and planning

## Reviewing an existing programme

A programme review and planning team should be established as set out on page 5. It is good practice for the team to include representation from students, recent graduates, employers and (if applicable) service users.

The first step is to seek evidence from a wide range of sources regarding the effectiveness of the current programme and possible areas for change. Types of evidence to consider are listed below under the requirements for the Review Document.

Having considered the evidence, the planning team should then make recommendations for changes to the existing programme. The re-designed programme is set out in the validation document as described on pages 19-22 above.

The programme team is responsible for contacting external panellists initially (except where regulatory or professional bodies are involved), as above, but also former students, current students, employers and practitioners to determine their willingness and availability to be interviewed by the panel on the day(s) of the review.

## Required documentation for review

The review of the programme should provide a critically reflective and evidence based overview, covering the academic viability, quality and standards, fitness-for-purpose, recruitment and resource efficiency of the programme. This critical reflection should be presented in the Programme Review Document, along with a summary of the evidence gathered. The Programme Review Document is normally separate from the Programme Document describing the revised curriculum.

Effort should be made to streamline and reduce paper as much as possible by summarising and cross-referring to existing documents.

All other documentation is the same as that listed on page 20 above, but much of the work will involve revision of existing documents.

## Review document

The principal requirements of the review document are listed below:
- A statement on conditions and recommendations from the previous validation or review event and the team's response;
- A statement on the operation of the programme during the most recent period of validation, including the extent to which it has met its aims and objectives;
- Critical appraisal of the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning methods;
- Detailed information relating to any changes made to the programme during the period of review;

- A statement on feedback from employers, service users and other stakeholders and the programme team's response;
- A statement on feedback from staff and the team's response;
- A statement on mechanisms for gathering student feedback, any issues raised by students during the previous two years and the programme team's response;
- A statement of any resource implications that have arisen since the most recent validation or review event;
- A statement on any significant changes in the external context; and
- A clear statement of proposed changes to the programme.

It should be clear to the reader how the proposed changes follow from the evidence presented.

The following appendices will be provided to the Panel. The Secretary to the Panel can provide support for collating this information.

- Previous validation or review report and response to conditions.
- Annual monitoring reports for the previous two academic sessions, including a summary of progression statistics and data on graduate employment;
- External Examiners' reports and the programme team's response for the previous two academic sessions;
- NSS/QSS results (as applicable). (Data from the Partner Organisation Student Survey may be provided for collaborative programmes.)

## Programme document

The Programme Document sets out the curriculum and delivery arrangements for the revised programme. Please follow the advice regarding the Validation Document set out on pages 19-22. The only difference is that when reviewing an existing programme it is not necessary to include a rationale for the programme or information about market demand.

# Preparation and planning

## Reference points for curriculum design

In designing your programme you will be guided by various internal and external reference points.

There are three fundamental principles to bear in mind:

1. All awards of QMU will include the academic content expected for that subject. The depth and complexity of knowledge will be appropriate for the academic level of the award.
2. Degrees that relate to a profession or a particular field of employment will include the skills and knowledge needed to work in that field.
3. Whatever the area of study, QMU has a commitment to support learners in the development of Graduate Attributes that will aid them in their future life, and allow them to make a positive contribution to society.

**External**

- QAA Subject Benchmark statements
  These are reviewed regularly by the sector and provide guidance around the key content expected of degrees in various subjects. Note that subject benchmarks relate mainly to undergraduate degrees.

- Professional and regulatory body guidance
  For any programme that is intended to allow graduates to apply for professional registration, the curriculum must meet the standards set out by the relevant regulatory body. In many cases, there are also non-regulatory professional bodies that provide guidance on curriculum content.

- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
  All QMU qualifications are expected to align to this Framework. Check the level descriptors to see the types of intellectual and practical skills that students are expected to demonstrate at different levels of study. Both the overall programme objectives and learning outcomes in module descriptors should align with the verbs used for different SCQF levels.

- Sector-wide good practice
  Programme Leaders are encouraged to be aware of good practice in their discipline, as well as general advice from sources such as AdvanceHE and the Enhancement Themes.

- Employer feedback and demand
  Programme Leaders should be aware of professional and employer networks in their field. Such networks may publish advice on what they are looking for in graduates, or information about skills shortages in the sector.

**Internal**

The majority of QMU regulations and policies can be found on the Quality website. You may find it helpful to bookmark this page.

- Student Experience Strategy
  The Student Experience Strategy sets out the University's strategy for enhancing learning, teaching and assessment, as well as the wider learning environment. The Strategy is relevant for all of our students based in Edinburgh, as well as distance learning students and students at our partner institutions around the world.

  Programme Leaders should be aware of the priorities of the Strategy, especially as they relate to areas such as student-centred learning, extra-curricular activities and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment.

  The three overarching themes of the strategy include the following strands:

  Equality Diversity and Inclusion
  - The Intercultural Curriculum (Advance HE)
  - Anti-Racist Curriculum (Enhancement Themes)

  Sustainability
  - Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education – guidance and practice guides
  - Learning and Teaching resources (Sustainability Exchange)

  Students as Partners / Student Engagement
  - Students as Partners (Centre for Engaged Learning)
  - Staff Development toolkit (sparqs)

- School Operational Plan and Annual Monitoring Report
  Each School reviews its operational plan annually and identifies actions that will help the School to grow and develop. Schools also compile an annual report, based on

programme level annual monitoring reports, with specific actions relating to managing the portfolio and enhancing learning and teaching. These actions should be reflected in the design of individual programmes. (See the Intranet and School Academic Board papers for details.)

- Inclusive learning and teaching policy
  This policy provides guidance on how to design programmes and learning activities in such a way as to avoid any unnecessary barriers to learning. It is designed to benefit all students, including disabled students, whether self disclosed or not.

- Employability Strategy
  This Strategy outlines actions that can be taken to improve graduates' ability to succeed in their chosen career. Programme Leaders may wish to consider co-curricular activities that can be built into modules (such as field trips, guest lectures, CV workshops); whether to include some form of placement or work experience; or designing assessment activities specifically to develop students wider transferable skills.

- Graduate Attributes
  Graduate attributes refer to the additional skills and attributes developed through degree level study, beyond the core subject knowledge covered by the curriculum. In addition to academic knowledge and professional skills, QMU awards will help graduates to develop personal attributes that will aid them in their future life, whatever career choices they make. Programme Leaders should design the curriculum and learning opportunities to enable students to develop the broad range of skills and attributes set out in this policy.

- University Awards
  These regulations define the minimum requirements for different awards of the University. This includes the number of credits at each level as well as specifying requirements such as a capstone project.

- Sustainability/Social Justice
  A commitment to sustainability and social justice is one of the University's key shared values. It is expected that this will be threaded through the curriculum.

# Arrangements

## Pre-meeting

All programme leaders due to undergo validation or review must meet with the event secretary (from GQE) and School Manager early in the process. The purpose of this meeting is:

a)  To ensure the programme leader understands the process and what is required of them.
b)  To confirm the documentary requirements.
c)  To discuss any unusual aspects of the programme and any implications for progression regulations or programme management.
d)  To discuss possible involvement from professional or regulatory bodies.

Staff of GQE will be responsible for arranging this meeting.

## Panel membership

The size of the validation or review panel varies depending on the nature of the event, but as minimum guide the following will apply:

- A Convener, preferably drawn from the School other than that which houses the programme under consideration;
- Two internal members of staff who have no direct involvement in the programme and who have previous experience as panellists at QMU;
- At least one external panellist (sometimes two);
- One student panellist; and
- Members of appropriate professional and regulatory bodies if applicable

To promote staff development each panel will normally also include at least one internal member with no prior experience of validation and review at QMU.

Staff participating in validation and review are asked to note that the secretary, whose role is described on pages 6-7, is **not** a member of the panel.

## Selection of internal panel members

Internal panellists are nominated by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement and are subject to the criteria included in the Governance and Regulations - see section on Programme Development, Modification, Monitoring and Review.  Student panel members are appointed in consultation with the Students' Union. Training is provided for student panellists in partnership between GQE and the Students' Union.

## Selection of external panel members

External panel members for some validation and review events are nominated by the relevant regulatory or professional body. This applies to all programmes requiring approval from the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).  For all other programmes, external panel members are nominated by the programme team.  Where this applies, it is the team's responsibility to make initial contact with external panel members who meet the criteria identified below and to determine their availability.  Once approved, external panellists liaise directly with staff in the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement regarding their role, documentation, accommodation other arrangements.  Panellists are normally paid an honorarium and all costs for travel and subsistence are reimbursed.

The criteria for external panel members are as follows:

- Experience in academia in an appropriate subject or discipline; and
- Experience in professional practice of that subject, in the employment of graduates, or industry; and
- Experience of the validation and/or review process.

External panellists should meet one or more of the above and should have no current or previous involvement in the programme under consideration.  This means that former[2] University students, former members of staff, visiting lecturers, and examiners with current or recent[3] responsibility for the programme under consideration will not be appointed.

Normally, the programme team should nominate one external panel member who fulfils the criteria above.  It may be desirable to nominate more than one external panellist for some programmes, for example where it is difficult to identify one person who meets all of the criteria, or where the panel is asked to consider two or more related programmes rather than a single outcome.   It can be beneficial to involve panel members from outside Scotland to gain an international perspective.  However it is recognised that this is not usually practical.

## Approval of panel members

All panel members need to be approved by the Deputy Principal, University Secretary and Head of Division housing the programme.  Heads of Division are required to declare any possible conflict of interest at the point of approval.  In the case of joint validation and professional accreditation of a programme, the full membership of the panel is agreed with the regulatory or professional body.

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[2] 'Former' in this context can normally be interpreted as 'within the previous five years'
[3] 'Recent' in this context can normally be interpreted as 'within the previous five years'

# Arrangements

## Submission of documents

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**KEY POINT**

It is the responsibility of the programme team to forward the validation or review documentation to GQE by the date agreed which is **no later than four weeks** prior to the event.  Please note that this deadline is not flexible.

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In the case of a joint validation or review event, the deadline for submission of documentation is agreed in consultation with the relevant professional or regulatory body.  In some cases professional and regulatory bodies can require documentation up to eight weeks in advance of the meeting.  It is therefore essential to check requirements early in the planning process.  This is the responsibility of GQE.

The programme team is required to submit one copy of each of the documents required to GQE.  All documentation should be submitted electronically.  Staff from  GQE will arrange for copies to be forwarded to the panel and professional body representatives in advance of the meeting. Please note that GQE is not responsible for sharing documents with members of the programme team.  This is the responsibility of the programme leader.

## Other information required from the programme team

Staff in GQE will also need the following information in advance of the meeting: list of all staff members, students, placement educators and others attending on behalf of the programme planning team.  For events that are held in person, GQE will organise name plates. For events held remotely, GQE will coordinate meeting invites.

## Documents provided by GQE

GQE will circulate the following documentation to each member of the panel three weeks in advance of the meeting:

- Agenda (a sample agenda has been included as Appendix I);
- Background document, including the panel's remit;
- List of panel members;
- Copy of documentation provided by the programme team;
- A link to the SCQF level descriptors (mostly for the benefit of external participants who may be less familiar with the SCQF);
- An electronic copy of the checklist for validation or review (see below for further details)

The Secretary will also provide a copy of the agenda and a list of panel members to the programme leader. It is the programme leader's responsibility to circulate this information to the team and others attending the event on behalf of the team.

## Validation and review checklist

Panellists are asked to submit comments on the validation or review documentation prior to the event using the University's validation and review checklists.  The purpose of the checklist is partly to act as an aide memoire to ensure all important issues are covered and partly as a tool to help prepare the agenda for the meeting with the programme team.

A consolidated version of the checklist, which may take the form of a summary of key points rather than a populated checklist template, is forwarded to the panel and programme team, usually no later than three days prior to the event. This process allows for the clarification of questions or concerns prior to the event and enables the team to prepare fully so that the event itself runs smoothly and effectively. In some cases, minor errors or oversights can be resolved quickly, avoiding the need for discussion at the event.

Programme teams are asked to note that whilst the checklist is normally used to inform the agenda for the meeting with the programme team, it does not constitute an exhaustive list of issues and that panellists can raise other issues as they consider appropriate during the validation or review event.

Panellists who wish to refer to their own checklist, as well as the consolidated version, during the validation or review event are asked to retain a copy for this purpose.

# On the day

## Expectations

Validation and review events provide opportunities to engage in academic debate about all aspects of programmes with the intent of validating its integrity, quality and fitness-for-purpose.  Furthermore, they provide excellent opportunities to discuss enhancement and share good practice. The expectation is that all members of the team will participate, not just the programme leader(s).  As it is meant to be a constructive dialogue, the team will have the opportunity not only to respond to requests for clarification but also to provide examples of good practice.  All areas which might be problematic and lead to conditions or failure to validate must be explored during the meeting so that the team can defend and explain their rationale, and so that they will understand the outcome.  When the panel's decision is announced, the team will have the opportunity to ask for clarification.

## Meetings

Meetings may be held on campus or online. The meeting format will depend on a range of factors, including team and panel preferences, professional and regulatory body requirements, and sustainability considerations. For new partner institutions it is usual to hold the event in person at the partner's campus. The Programme Leader and Head of Division will discuss and agree the event format with GQE on a case by case basis.

### Validation meetings

On the day of the validation a number of meetings are scheduled as detailed below.  The secretary, who is a member of the GQE, will be in attendance for all meetings.  It is not usual for the panel to meet the evening prior to the event, although this may be a requirement for some overseas events.

**Private meeting of panel**
Normally lasts about 1 hour
During this meeting the panel will use the validation checklist to identify the main issues to be explored with the planning team, students and other participants. The convener will also allocate specific areas of questioning to members of the panel.

**Meeting with programme team**
Normally lasts about 2 hours
During this meeting the panel and team will discuss the proposed new programme.  The panel will use the agenda agreed during the private meeting as a basis for discussion with the team.

**Private meeting of panel**
Normally lasts between 1 and 1.5 hours
The purpose of the second private meeting is to allow the panel to reflect on its discussion with the programme team and agree the outcome of the event (possible outcomes are listed on page 29). Occasionally the panel may ask for a supplementary meeting with the programme leader and / or other key staff to clarify an issue which was not fully explored in the main meeting.

**Optional additional meetings**
For certain events, in particular those conducted in conjunction with a professional or regulatory body, some or all of the following additional meetings may be required:

- **Meeting with students and recent graduates**

Normally lasts 30 minutes. It may be useful to talk to students on a related programme and recent graduates as their experience may be similar to that expected for the new programme.
- **Meeting with senior managers (usually only in response to professional and regulatory body requirements)**
Normally lasts 15-30 minutes. The purpose of the meeting with senior staff (e.g. Dean of School, Deputy Principal) is to discuss resources committed to supporting the programme.
- **Meeting with clinical managers/placement providers**
Normally lasts 30 minutes. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for the provision of work-based learning and that potential employers are supportive of the planned programme (in terms of design and rationale).

**Decision relayed to programme team**
Normally lasts between 15 and 30 minutes
Following the private meeting, the panel meets again with the team to communicate the overall decision, conditions, recommendations and commendations as appropriate. The team has the opportunity to ask for clarification if needed.

## Review meetings

The agenda for programme review is similar to that for a validation event (see above) with the following additional meetings:

### Meeting with students and recent graduates
Normally lasts between 30 minutes and 1 hour
The purpose of this meeting is to allow students and graduates to reflect on their experience of the programme and how it has prepared them for employment. Likely areas for discussion with students and graduates include the following: curriculum; assessment and feedback; placement arrangements; student support; information provided for students e.g. student handbook; proposed changes to the existing programme; student involvement in the review.

For some programmes, including distance learning and part-time programmes, it can be difficult to organise meetings with students. If this is the case, students are invited to provide written comments for the panel's consideration. It is the responsibility of the programme leader to provide contact details for students who are willing to provide feedback. The event secretary is responsible for liaison with students who are unable to attend.

### Meeting with supervisors/practice placement educators (programme dependent)
Normally lasts between 30 minutes and 1 hour
The purpose of this meeting is to allow supervisors/practice placement educators to reflect on their experience of the programme and working with QMU students. Likely areas for discussion include the following: quality of QMU students and graduates; curriculum and relationship with external benchmarks; assessment; arrangements for communication with QMU and other supervisors/practice placement educators; advice and support provided by QMU for assessing students; proposed changes to the existing programme; employer involvement in the review.

## Other optional meetings

### Tour of facilities
The validation or review panel may wish to tour facilities and inspect the adequacy of resources to support the programme. This applies to all collaborative validation events (see page 17) and also to some events involving professional and regulatory body representatives.

**Meeting with service users**
This applies most often for healthcare programmes where there is professional and regulatory body involvement. The purpose of the service user meeting is to learn about the experience of people engaging with the service/profession that is under consideration and the qualities they would expect from a graduate practitioner.

**Private meeting of panellists who are members of professional bodies**
Some professional and regulatory bodies require private meetings during the event to discuss professional approval or accreditation.  Typically these meetings do not involve QMU staff.

# Outcomes

The validation or review panel will make one of the following recommendations to the Student Experience Committee and to Senate:

1   That the programme (continues to) be validated subject to conditions (all conditions must be satisfied before the programme can be considered validated);

2   That the programme (continues to) be validated (with further advisory recommendations, if appropriate);

3   That the programme should not be (re-)validated

Conditions of validation relate to issues that, if not satisfactorily addressed, would prevent the programme from running. Recommendations are advisory in nature, although it is expected that programme teams will give these serious consideration. Panels are therefore expected to maintain a clear distinction between mandatory conditions and recommendations.

Where the panel imposes a significant number of conditions, this may bring into question the validity of the programme.  The maximum number of conditions applied normally should not exceed five.  In cases where more than five conditions are set by the panel, the programme will not normally be validated.  Panels are asked to state conditions and recommendations in clear and unambiguous terms.

If the programme is (re-)validated, or (re-)validated subject to conditions, then the panel must also set the date for review.  This is usually five years, based on the nature of the programme, mode of delivery and duration. A shorter period of validation, whilst possible, would be wholly exceptional.  A shorter validation period than five years may reflect the degree of confidence the panel has in the programme, or may reflect some changes anticipated in the short term.  Where the period of validation is shorter than five years, the reasons for this decision will be clearly recorded in the report of the event.

The panel will identify aspects of the programme worthy of noting, commendation and wider dissemination.  Commendations are detailed in the event report and summary and disseminated through meetings of key academic committees.

The panel's decision is communicated to the team directly after the final private meeting.

If for any reason the programme team disagrees with the panel's decision, this should be reported to the School Academic Board.   The School Academic Board can make a request to Senate, that the panel's decision be reviewed. Any such recommendation must be supported by a clear statement explaining the rationale for the request.  Decisions made by validation and review panels may **only** be overturned by Senate.  The decision of Senate in such matters is final.

# After the event

## Report

The secretary to the validation or review panel, who is normally a member of the GQE, will prepare a summary report of the event, normally within 48 working hours, for circulation to all panel members for comment and to the programme leader for accuracy. A full report is normally produced within 20 working days and circulated for comment to all panel members and for the accuracy to the programme leader. The relevant Dean(s) of School and Head(s) of Division receive copies of the report for information.

The overall recommendation and any conditions set by the panel are considered by the Student Experience Committee and Senate. All validation and review reports are also noted by the School Academic Board. The Learning and Teaching Panel has a remit to consider any key themes emerging from reports each year and make recommendations for the future enhancement of the process on the basis of this scrutiny.

## Response to conditions

The team's response to conditions of validation must be submitted, in writing, to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement no later than the deadline specified at the event. The response should include a cover page, quoting each of the conditions followed by an indication of how this has been met. Updated documentation should be provided, with any changes or additions highlighted. The event secretary can advise on the presentation of the team's response to conditions.

Whilst recommendations are advisory rather than mandatory, it is expected that teams will provide an account of any action taken in response to recommendations shortly after the event. This should be submitted to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement at the same time as the response to conditions. Programme teams' responses to recommendations, some of which encourage action to be taken over a longer period of time, are reviewed through the Annual Monitoring process.

The secretary to the event is responsible for forwarding the response to members of the panel and professional body representatives as appropriate. Panel members are asked to confirm by a specified date that the response is satisfactory. If necessary, panellists can request additional information from the team before recommending approval. If the panel is not satisfied with the response, the issue will be referred to the School Academic Board for consideration. The Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement is responsible for recording the status of conditions and reporting progress to the Senate through the Student Experience Committee.

Once the panel has approved the response to conditions the programme leader receives written notification of this from the event secretary.

## Definitive document

The programme leader is required to produce a definitive programme document for submission to the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement once the response to conditions has been approved by the panel and at least one month prior to the start of the programme. The definitive document is the validation document with all changes made in response to the validation conditions incorporated. It is a factual account of what is in the programme and how it should be delivered and provides a source of reference to all who are involved in the programme. For instance, at exam boards the definitive document may be

referred to in order to confirm programme specific regulations or options available for a student with special circumstances.

The definitive document is expected to be available to students, prospective students, professional bodies and other bodies or authorities that need to know about the programme. A full set of definitive programme documents is held by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement.

Each student enrolled on the programme has a right to receive the information included in the definitive document. The information supplied to students may contain additional material on e.g. learning and teaching methods, booklists for the year, any resources required (e.g. laptop, Internet access) study notes, information on membership of professional bodies, etc.

Staff are required to inform students at the start of each year of the detailed basis of the continuous assessment to be used in each subject. The student handbook for the programme can serve as the vehicle for the provision of such information.

The programme leader is responsible for ensuring any necessary revisions are made to copies of the definitive document held by the Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement once changes have been approved.

## Module codes

Once the programme has been approved and the definitive document submitted to the GQE a copy of all module descriptors will be forwarded by the GQE to staff in the School Office. This will allow for updating of information on SITS. The School Office will provide programme leaders with lists of module codes.

# Further information and contacts

Further information on all aspects of the validation and review process are available from:

**Dawn Martin**, Assistant Secretary, Governance and Quality Enhancement
Email: dmartin1@qmu.ac.uk

Further information on validation and review for collaborative programmes is available from:

**Sheila Adamson**, Partnership Development Manager
Email: sadamson@qmu.ac.uk

This resource is available in different formats on request.

All key resources and templates are available on the Quality website.

Feedback can be submitted electronically to Dawn Martin (contact details as above)

# References

QMU Quality website
SCQF website
QAA website
Enhancement Themes
AdvanceHE

# Abbreviations

| APB | Academic Planning Board |
| --- | --- |
| HCPC | Health and Care Professions Council |
| IS | Information Services |
| LEAD | Learning Enhancement and Academic Development |
| LTP | Learning and Teaching Panel |
| PDP | Personal Development Planning |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| GQE | Division of Governance and Quality Enhancement |
| QMU | Queen Margaret University |
| SAB | School Academic Board |
| SCQF | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework |
| SEC | Student Experience Committee |
| SETS | (HCPC) Standards of Education and Training |
| SITS | Student Records System |
| SOPS | (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency |

# Acknowledgements

This booklet draws on work by Dr Kate Morss, former Director for the Centre of Academic Practice.

**QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY**
**Review and revalidation of MSc PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE**
**27 April 2021 by Microsoft Teams**

| | |
|---|---|
| 09.30 – 10.30 | Private meeting of Panel |
| 10.30 – 12.45 | Meeting with the Programme Team giving the Panel the opportunity to discuss the Programme and any issues relating to the following points[4]: |

- Programme title, overall aims and objectives
- Demand for the Programme, recruitment and admissions
- Structure and content
- Learning, teaching and assessment
- Programme management, QA and enhancement
- The student experience
- Staff experience

| | |
|---|---|
| 12.45 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 13.45 | Private meeting of Panel |
| 13.45 – 14.15 | Meeting with current students and graduates[5] |
| 14.15 – 14.45 | Meeting with practice education facilitators |
| 14.45 – 15.00 | Private meeting of Panel |
| 15.00 – 15.15 | Optional second meeting with Programme Team to clarify any outstanding issues or issues raised by students and practice education facilitators |
| 15.15 – 16.15 | Private meeting of Panel, to include discussion of due process of event |
| 16.15 – 16.30 | Panel conclusions to Programme Team |

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[4] These are the same categories listed in the review checklist
[5] The timing of meetings with students, graduates and placement educators depends on the availability of these participants

# APPENDIX II  KEY UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES



## Student Experience Strategy and Employability Strategy

Amongst other reference points, Programme Teams participating in validation and review are expected to engage with the Graduate Attributes, Student Experience and Employability Strategies. A separate Appendix is provided in relation to the Graduate Attributes, including an optional checklist to help programme teams map the development of the Graduate Attributes within their programme. This Appendix provides information on the Student Experience Strategy and Employability Strategy.

## Student Experience Strategy
The full Student Experience Strategy is provided at the end of this Appendix. The SES Infographic (below) can be copied and included within student-facing materials.
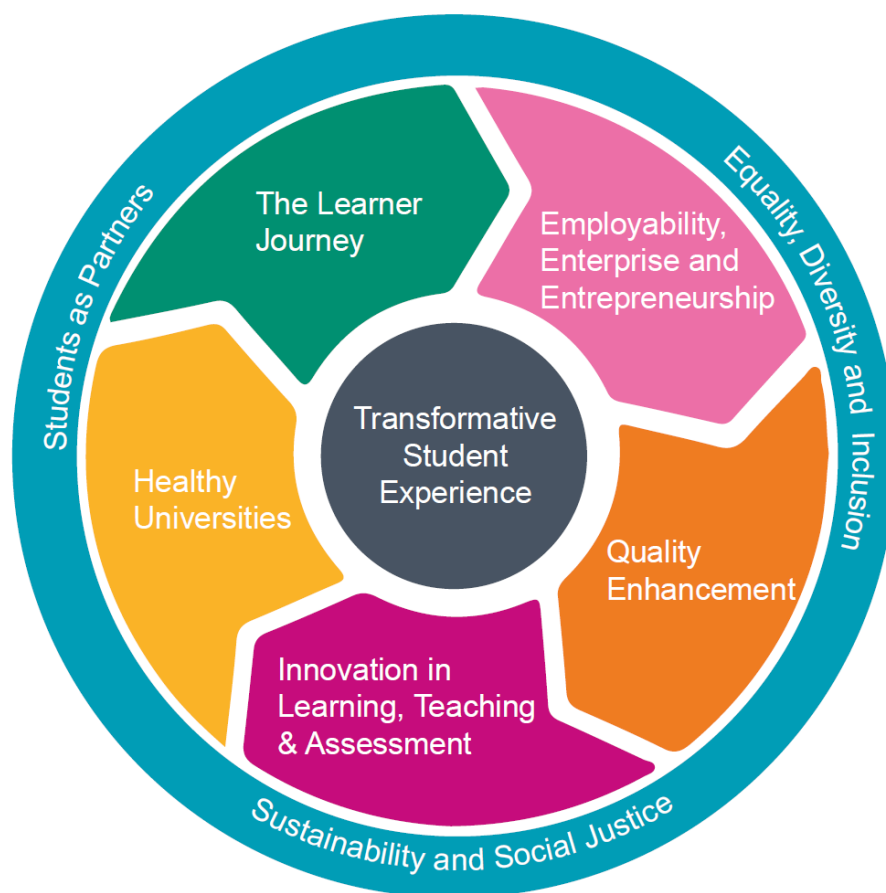


QMU expects that all programmes will articulate with the Student Experience Strategy (2021-26)  Alignment with the Student Experience Strategy will be considered through the programme approval (validation) and periodic review process and should be explicit within in the Definitive Programme Document. Ongoing quality enhancement activities will be documented in AMRs, and through sharing of good practice in other ways.  Programme Leaders are encouraged to share the Student Experience Strategy widely within their Team

and with students and to engage with projects that are co-ordinated under the auspices of the Strategy. The Student Experience Committee agrees priority activities. These priority projects are set out in a flexible Delivery Plan, which is subject to regular review and update through the SEC. The Delivery Plan is available from the SEC Intranet site. Details of projects and ways to become involved are communicated by Moderator. The Secretary to the Student Experience Committee can provide further advice.

**Employability Strategy (Developing a Positive Future)**

QMU's Employability Strategy (2021-26) outlines the measures that the University will take to create an environment in which students will develop the skills and attributes that they will need to flourish in a rapidly changing labour market. Programme Leaders (and teams) are key stakeholders in delivering the Strategy. The Strategy assists in developing and embedding transferable skills within and across QMU programmes, building upon excellent examples that are already in place and extending practice. It provides a further mechanism for the sharing of practice and for the inclusion of careers education with programme design. It also provides focus for conversations between Personal Academic Tutors and students, creating a framework for productive employability-oriented conversations. Programme Leaders are encouraged to contact colleagues from the Employability Service for further information and to discuss opportunities to embed employability within their programmes.

The diagram below summarises the aims and objectives within the Strategy and can be copied and included within student-facing materials.



Engaging with the Strategies through validation and review
It is open to Teams to determine for themselves how best to engage with the Strategies and how to demonstrate alignment through the validation and review process. Some suggested approaches are indicated below:
- Discussion and reflection at planning meetings. This will build on the expected ongoing engagement with the Strategies.
- Articulation of approaches in the philosophy section of the documentation

- Reference to particular initiatives/projects. It is unlikely that any Team will engage in depth with each of the priority activities captured in the Delivery Plan. However, some of the activities will be relevant to all Teams. Examples from the Student Experience Strategy Delivery Plan include updates to the PAT System, developing the Class Rep system, and embedding the Graduate Attributes.

A separate mapping exercise is not required.

**Further information**

For further information on the **Student Experience Strategy** and accompanying Delivery Plan, contact [Dawn Martin, Secretary to the Student Experience Committee](#)
For further information on the Employability Strategy, use the [Careers & Employability email address](#).

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2021-26: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The QMU Student Experience Strategy is concerned with the holistic student experience. This encompasses both the student learning experience, and aspects of the wider student experience that support and complement student learning. The Strategy is relevant for all of our students based in Edinburgh, as well as distance learning students and students at our partner institutions around the world.

The Student Experience Strategy for the period 2021-2026 has been developed in partnership between the University and the Students' Union, drawing on the outcome of consultation and co-creation with students and staff. Embracing and extending this 'Students as Partners' approach will be fundamental to our plans for implementation of the Strategy, and students and staff will work collectively to deliver this.

**Principles**

Our overarching principles for the student experience are listed below. These are inter-related and of equal importance.
- All QMU students experience a transformative journey through outstanding learning and teaching and co- and extra-curricular opportunities that enable them to achieve their individual goals and enhance their well-being.
- We share individual and collective responsibility for enhancing and placing the student experience at the heart of our thinking and practice.
- We establish, maintain and contribute to communities and a learning environment that supports our students to flourish and succeed and actively influences wider society.

The principles are aligned with the objectives established in our overarching institutional Strategic Plan, and which are reflected in other reference points such as our Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council.
The accompanying infographic on page 2 summarises core themes and action headings (key areas of focus) within the Student Experience Strategy. A prioritised Strategy Delivery Plan, will support the translation of strategy into practice. This will be iterated and monitored on an annual basis by the Student Experience Committee.
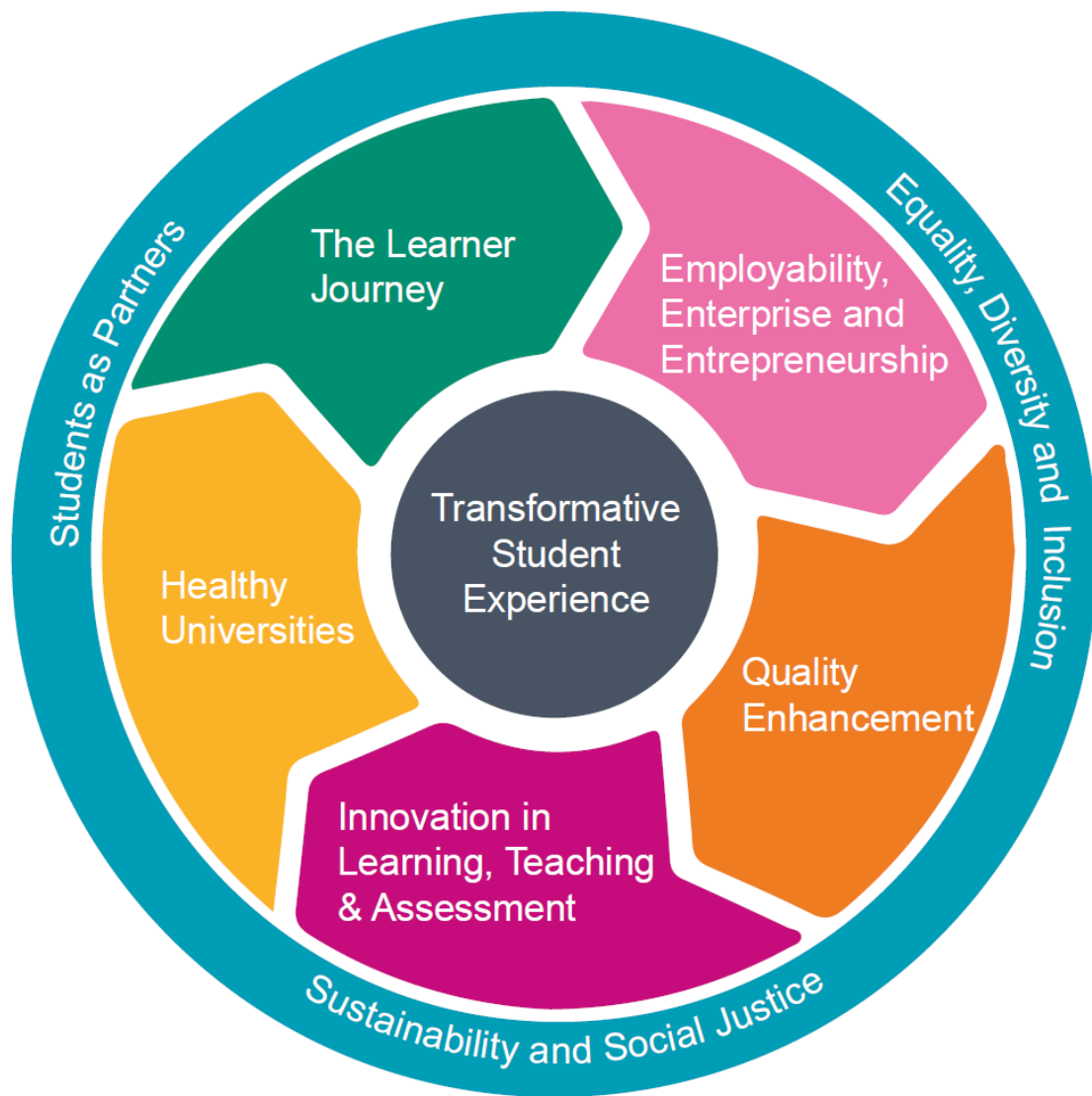
**The QMU Student Experience Strategy 2021-26.**

As the infographic shows, key areas of priority are presented under one of five action headings. These are supported by three overarching themes of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Students as Partners; and Sustainability and Social Justice that cut across the student experience during the period of Strategy. These themes are fundamental to the delivery of an outstanding student experience, and underpin all of our actions and activities

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2021-26 ACTIONS**

These actions are underpinned by a detailed delivery plan, which is subject to annual review, evaluation and prioritisation through the Student Experience Committee. Our actions under each of the headings will be informed by our experiences during COVID-19, drawing on good practice and learning from positive as well as negative experiences.
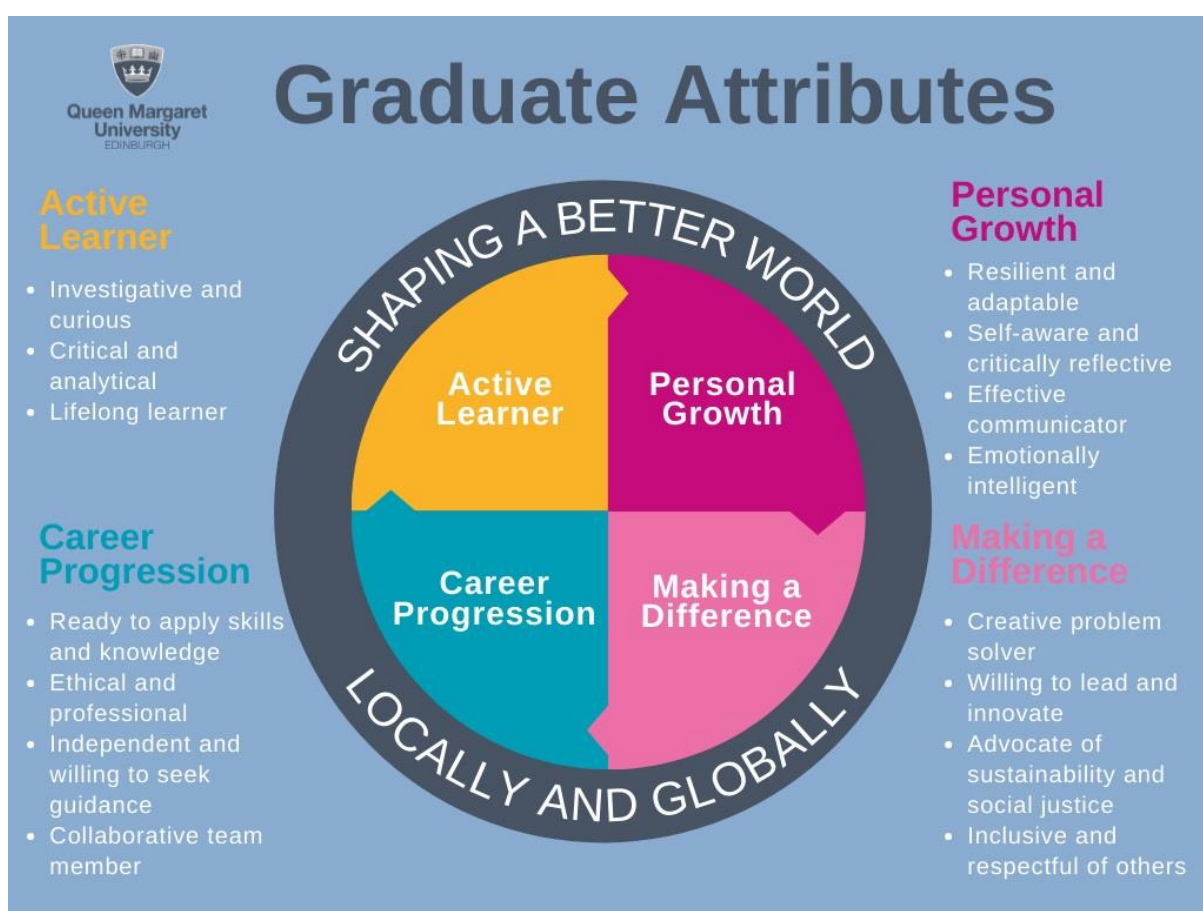
| **The Learner Journey** |
| --- |
| Provide high quality and personalised support to all students as they transition from pre-entry through to graduation and beyond. |
| Map a range of learner journeys to enhance signposting to available support, resources and campus facilities. |
| Develop, promote and recognise learning (Graduate Attributes) achieved through co- and extra-curricular activities. |
| **Healthy Universities** |
| Create a culture that enables healthy learning and practice. |
| Create a physical and online environment conducive to positive mental and physical health. |
| Develop practices that enable healthy communication, engagement and community building. |
| **Innovation in Learning, Teaching and Assessment** |
| Develop mechanisms for capturing, learning from and sharing good practice in LTA, including experiences of LTA during COVID. |
| Provide a flexible and technology rich approach to support student learning and engagement. |
| Support the development of inclusive curricula and authentic assessment approaches that reflect the culture, values and strengths of QMU and promote application of learning in real world situations. |
| **Quality Enhancement** |
| Develop our Quality Enhancement Framework plus associated resources and support to ensure continued alignment with QMU and sector priorities. |
| Maximise staff and student engagement with quality enhancement activities. |
| Build on existing good practice in representation/closing the feedback loop. |
| **Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship** |
| Implement the Employability Strategy and Graduate Attributes across all programmes and wider student experience activities. |
| Support and encourage development of enterprise skills to foster employability and entrepreneurship in graduates. |
| Encourage creation of ventures with social impact through support and promotion of social entrepreneurship. |
| **Themes: 1) Sustainability & Social Justice 2) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion 3) Students as Partners** |
| Embed the themes across Academic Development and Programme Review activities, and within professional services, adopting a co-creation approach with students and staff. |
| Develop Curriculum Champions (students and staff) for the themes. |
| Support and encourage students and staff to role model the themes. |

# APPENDIX III – GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES



**GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES - applicable to all QMU programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) with effect from January 2022**



**Definitions**

| Active Learner | |
|---|---|
| • Investigative and curious | • You are willing to ask questions and don't automatically accept statements of fact without evidence.<br>• Where there is a gap in knowledge or a question is unanswered, you have the skills to investigate.<br>• You are confident in your ability to find information, making use of library and |

| | |
|---|---|
| | digital literacy skills, and understanding which sources of evidence are the most reliable. |
| • Critical and analytical | • You have the ability to evaluate an argument critically, challenging the inferences and assumptions lying behind it and relating it to existing knowledge in the field.<br>• When you have to deal with a large amount of complex information or evidence, you have the skills to synthesise it, see patterns and come to conclusions based on the data. |
| • Lifelong learner | • You are committed to lifelong learning and keen to develop new skills as you need them.<br>• You are able to identify gaps in your own knowledge and take steps to address them.<br>• You adapt to new circumstances and ways of working and change your practices accordingly. |
| **Personal growth** | |
| • Resilient and adaptable | • You are able to cope with setbacks and maintain your self-belief.<br>• You don't fear failure but treat it as a learning experience.<br>• You are open to change and can think on your feet as circumstances evolve. |
| • Self aware and critically reflective | • You have a good understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses and how to get the best out of yourself.<br>• You reflect critically on your own actions and seek to make continuous improvements.<br>• If you have made a mistake you are willing to acknowledge it and learn from it. |
| • Effective communicator | • You are able to communicate verbally and in writing, adapting your style to suit different audiences and situations.<br>• In discussions, you can introduce your opinions in ways that add value to the conversation without diminishing others.<br>• You recognise the need to listen actively in order to understand other people's concerns and viewpoints. |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Emotionally intelligent | • You understand how to work with others effectively, and how to build relationships of trust.<br>• You recognise other people's emotions and know how to respond appropriately.<br>• You contribute positively to creating supportive networks that enable others to flourish. |
| **Career progression** | |
| • Ready to apply skills and knowledge | • You understand how to apply your subject-specific skills and knowledge to real life situations.<br>• You are able to make connections between academic theory and the real world context. |
| • Ethical and professional | • You understand what is expected of you in terms of ethical and professional behaviour.<br>• You take responsibility for your own actions and behaviour.<br>• You recognise the boundaries between the personal and the professional and what that means for the way you interact with people at work. |
| • Independent and willing to seek guidance | • You are capable of working independently without supervision.<br>• You take responsibility for your own work and will act proactively to address issues as appropriate.<br>• You can manage your workload effectively, understanding which activities to prioritise in order to meet deadlines.<br>• You recognise the limits of your knowledge and will seek guidance when needed. |
| • Collaborative team member | • You understand your role within a wider team and take responsibility for your contribution to meeting common goals.<br>• You assist others in the team by sharing your knowledge and expertise. |
| **Making a difference** | |
| • Creative problem solver | • You are able to identify and analyse problems, coming up with innovative solutions.<br>• You are willing to experiment and also to reflect critically on the success of new ideas, in order to make further improvements for the future. |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Willing to lead and innovate | • You are willing to challenge received wisdom and find better ways of doing things.<br>• You are ready to take the initiative and take on new responsibilities.<br>• You have the confidence to take the lead and persuade others to your viewpoint. |
| • Advocate of sustainability and social justice | • You recognise the need for social, economic and environmental sustainability and factor that into decision-making.<br>• You appreciate how your actions relate to wider society and their possible impact in terms of equality, inclusion and social justice.<br>• Where relevant, you stand up for people who are vulnerable or marginalised. |
| • Inclusive and respectful of difference | • You appreciate that people come from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures and welcome the value and richness that this brings.<br>• You are willing to take steps to learn more about cultures and beliefs that are different from your own.<br>• You seek to involve people from all cultures and backgrounds in your work and decision-making. |
| **External context** | |
| • Shaping a better world – locally and globally | • You understand how you and your work relate to the local, national and global context.<br>• You are aware of how wider agendas and political decisions can affect your local area or professional life.<br>• You have the skills and confidence to contribute to shaping a better world. |

**APPENDIX IV Guidance on developing taught postgraduate programmes**



**DEVELOPING A NEW TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME: staff guidance**

**1    Introduction**

This guidance has been developed as a reference for all staff at QMU who wish to develop a taught postgraduate programme at Master's-level (M-level), or who are involved with the operation of such an award. The guidance offers a structure for a range of awards, and it allows different types of awards to be developed.

Responsibility for developing this guidance sits with the Student Experience Committee (SEC). SEC has a remit to *establish and review strategies, policies and procedures that support and enhance the student experience, assure and enhance academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, and promote best practice in curricula, learning and teaching and in the support of students.* The membership of SEC includes academic and professional services colleagues as well as Students' Union and wider student representation.

Responsibility for the operation of taught postgraduate programmes at QMU sits with Programme Committees and Boards of Examiners. This guidance must be read in conjunction with the wider University regulations, which are available from the Quality website. Full details of committee memberships and remits are also available from the Quality website. The University regulations are the definitive reference point for all staff and students and take precedence over any other University or programme specific materials.

**1.1    Scope of QMU's taught postgraduate programmes**

This guidance sets out the external and internal context for the development of taught postgraduate programmes. It is relevant to the full range of taught postgraduate degrees (with one important exception – see below for details). Types of provision include specialist, multi-disciplinary, pre-registration and post-registration programmes, offering a wide range of choice to students in the type of programmes and the modes of study available.

> **Important:** The guidance covers the majority of M-level awards, with the exception of the undergraduate **Integrated Master's degrees**. A separate Appendix is included providing summary information on the award of Integrated Master's.

QMU taught postgraduate programmes follow the modular, credit accumulation approach that is also used at undergraduate level. This provides the necessary flexibility to meet the needs and demands of individual students, while providing a structure which can be easily understood by students, deliverers, and planners of postgraduate programmes of study. The modular structure is important not only for full awards of the University, but also for students who are engaged in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or lifelong learning within QMU. This means that it is relevant also for the development of M-level micro-credentials, which are self-contained short programmes designed to support skills development and employability.

## 1.2    Approved M-level awards of the University

Approved M-level awards are listed below. New awards can be added only with agreement of the University Senate.

| Master of Arts | MA |
|---|---|
| Master of Science | MSc |
| Master of Fine Arts | MFA |
| Master of Business Administration | MBA |
| Master of Public Administration | MPA |
| Master of Research | MRes |
| Executive Master's | |
| Integrated Master's | |
| Professional Graduate Diploma | PGDE |
| Postgraduate Diploma | PgDip |
| Postgraduate Certificate | PgCert |

The majority of awards include subsidiary exit points of Postgraduate Diploma, or Postgraduate Certificate. It is also possible to develop a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma as an award in its own right.

Modules may be accrued through a named route programme or, in some specific cases, through a more individually designed study route. Study may be full- or part-time depending on the validated programme. A student who does not wish to study for a full award may be able join the University as an Associate Student and complete modules on a stand-alone basis without registering for a specific award. This option is only available where modules are specifically available to be taken on a stand-alone basis.

## 1.3    Aims of the Guidance

The aims of this guidance are to:

- Provide the context for the development of taught postgraduate programmes at QMU with due regard to key internal and external reference points.

- Facilitate the growth and development of flexible, multidisciplinary, inter-disciplinary and professional programmes.

- Promote an equity in structure, design and standards across all modules and programmes, whilst embracing and encouraging diversity of approach.

> **Important:** The guidance sets the context on an institutional level. Programme teams developing new taught postgraduate programmes also need to be familiar with any School, Divisional or other local expectations, recommendations and reference points.

## 1.4 Flexibility

A student's selected programme of study can be designed to:

a) Develop areas of study relevant to the profession, employment/industrial sector, or academic discipline in which the student is currently engaged.

b) Update the knowledge of those engaged in a field, especially where the discipline is subject to expansion or change.

c) Provide an analytical in-depth treatment of an area beyond their first-degree level in the same area.

d) Act as a re-orientation or conversion in areas new to the student or in areas not directly related to the scope of the student's first degree.

e) Support a student with a first degree in a relevant subject to exit with a pre-registration postgraduate degree that confers eligibility to register with a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).

f) Synthesise and integrate a number of disciplines or subjects.

g) Develop applied studies or to extend an area of study that cannot be pursued adequately at undergraduate level.

h) Support progression to further study at doctoral level.

### 1.4.1 Types of postgraduate award

The [Quality Assurance Agency's Characteristics Statement on Master's Degrees](#) categorises postgraduate awards as follows (copied directly from the Statement; includes references to some awards not currently offered at QMU):

**Category 1: Research Master's degrees:** Examples of Research Master's include the MPhil, MLitt and the MRes.
Research Master's degrees usually aim to prepare students for the next stage in a research career, whether pursuing a further research programme or entering research-based employment; or to enable those undertaking the course to contribute towards research in the subject.

**Category 2: Specialised or advanced study Master's degrees:** Examples of specialised or advanced study Master's include the MSc, the MA, the MBA, the MRes and some integrated Master's.
Specialised or advanced study Master's degrees usually aim to prepare students for the next stage in their careers, whether that is further academic or professional study, or entering or progressing within employment of different kinds.

**Category 3: Professional or practice Master's degrees:** Examples of professional or practice Master's include the MBA, MDiv, LLM and MSW, post experience MAs and MScs and some integrated Master's.

Professional or practice Master's degrees usually aim to enable graduates to qualify for entry into a profession, subject to any further conditions required by the PSRB; or to provide development opportunities related to particular professions or employment settings.

**Integrated Master's degrees[6]:** Integrated Master's degrees are delivered through a course that combines study at the level of a bachelor's degree with honours with study at Master's level during the latter stages of the course. As such, a student usually graduates with a Master's degree after a continuous course of study.

Integrated Master's degree courses typically include study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year at level 11 in Scotland (for example, at Master's level).

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[6] QMU offers a number of Integrated Master's degrees, which do not fall within the scope of this guidance.

## 2 Level of Awards

Within the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#), there are two parameters that determine qualifications: level of learning outcomes and volume of outcomes, calculated as number of credits. SCQF Level 11 includes a number of qualifications that differ only in the volume of credit, not in level of outcomes. The taught awards of Queen Margaret University that are delivered at SCQF Level 11 category are as set out in paragraph 1.2 of this Framework. Credit definitions for each of these qualifications are given in the [Quality Assurance Agency's Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions (QAA 2014).](#)

Standards of awards will be determined by the demand made on students and their response to that demand. Standards will be benchmarked against the appropriate external reference points such as expectations of professional bodies and standards of similar awards in other universities as determined by the external examining system.

## 3 Purpose

QMU taught postgraduate degrees are aligned with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level descriptor for the Master's degree, which includes generic information around the skills, capabilities and qualities of all holders of the Master's (level 11) qualification.

### 3.1 Aims

The shared aims of all taught postgraduate programmes at QMU are to enable students to:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the relevant body of knowledge and their personal and professional skills in order to contribute to development of a subject area, field, or profession.
- Engage in critical reflection on practice and independent study for lifelong learning.

**3.2** All validated taught postgraduate programmes will have programme-specific aims and learning outcomes. Programmes may also have learning outcomes that reflect expectations of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. The programme-specific outcomes must be cross-referred to the SCQF Level 11 descriptors and defined in the Programme Specifications.

### 3.3    Student Experience Strategy

The Student Experience Strategy serves as an important reference point for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes at QMU. The infographic below sets out the key priorities for the period 2021-26. Programme teams are expected to demonstrate through validation and periodic review how they align with the Strategy.
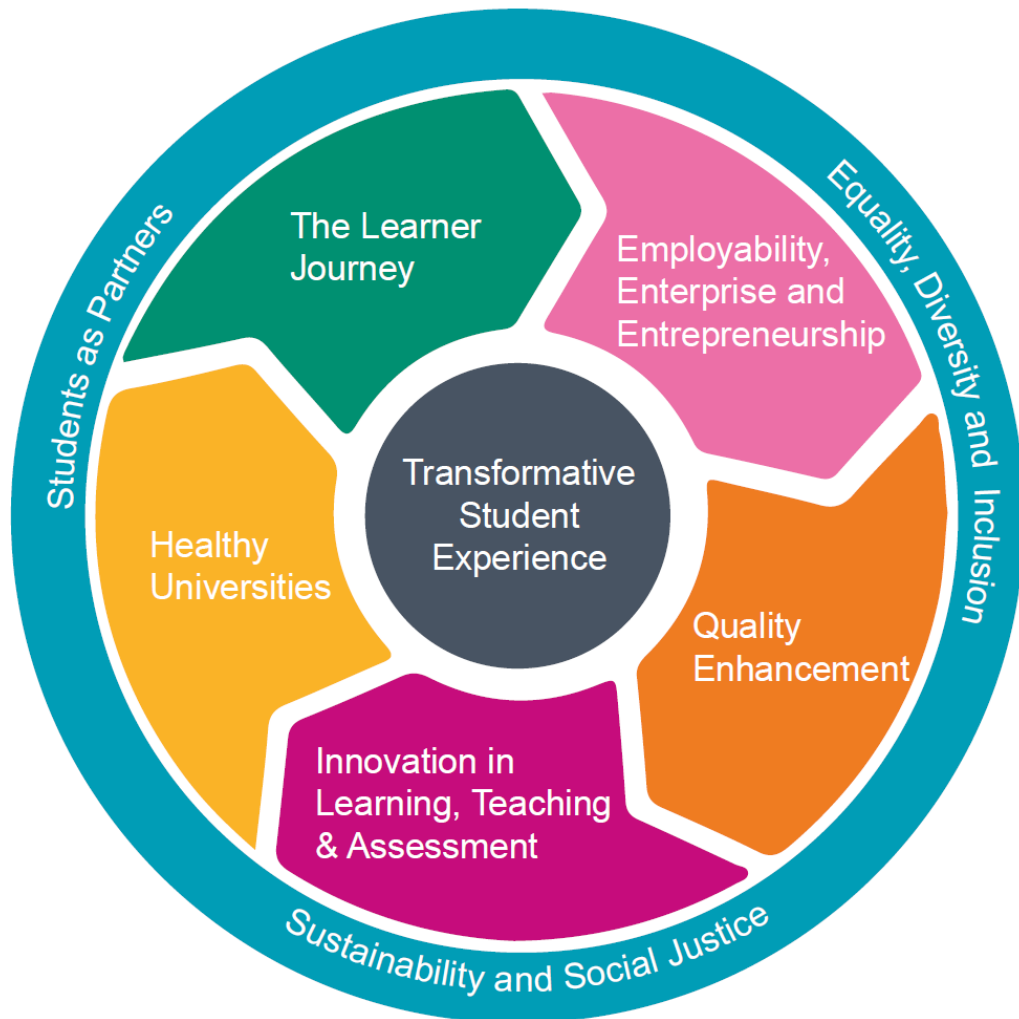


### 3.4    Graduate Attributes

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes must also align with QMU's generic Graduate Attributes. Graduate Attributes are the skills and attributes that our students develop either through their academic and/or co-and extra-curricular activities at QMU. It is not expected that programmes address each of the Attributes. However, teams developing postgraduate programmes are expected to reflect on the Attributes and how, and to what extent, these can be developed through the curriculum.

**Graduate Attributes**

Queen Margaret University EDINBURGH

SHAPING A BETTER WORLD

**Active Learner**
- Investigative and curious
- Critical and analytical
- Lifelong learner

**Personal Growth**
- Resilient and adaptable
- Self-aware and critically reflective
- Effective communicator
- Emotionally intelligent

**Career Progression**
- Ready to apply skills and knowledge
- Ethical and professional
- Independent and willing to seek guidance
- Collaborative team member

**Making a Difference**
- Creative problem solver
- Willing to lead and innovate
- Advocate of sustainability and social justice
- Inclusive and respectful of others

Active Learner · Personal Growth · Career Progression · Making a Difference

LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

## 4    Mode of Study

Taught postgraduate programmes facilitate student choice, allowing students to pursue their studies while still in employment for suitable routes.  Modules may be available in ways that allow both part-time and full-time study.  Modules may be offered, depending on demand:

- In the evening or at weekends.
- In concentrated blocks of full-time study.
- In standard working hours during the weekdays.
- By flexible online asynchronous or synchronous learning.
- By supervised work-based learning.

In addition to the facilitated learning activities that are delivered on campus or online, students will engage in substantial independent study.

## 5    Admissions and registration

## 5.1    Admissions

Staff developing taught postgraduate programmes should refer to the Admissions Regulations for standard minimum entry requirements. In addition, programmes may set higher and/or alternative entry requirements, for example to meet the needs of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Programme-specific requirements will be defined in the Definitive Document, Student Handbook and

associated materials. Advice and guidance is available from the Admissions Team.

The process and arrangements for entry with Advanced Standing can be found in the Regulations governing Recognition of Prior Learning (certificated and experiential).

**5.2    Period of registration**

Minimum and maximum periods of registration are set out in the University's Registration Regulations.

**6        Structure**

**6.1      The module**

A module is a self-contained part of a programme with separate aims, pre-requisites, content and assessment as defined in the module descriptor. Each module offered is subject to a process of approval and review, which is designed to ensure the module meets the expectations for SCQF level 11, that it has been designed taking account of all relevant internal and external reference points, and that it meets the needs of students and employers. Learning, teaching and assessment methods for each module will vary according to the subject and context. However, all modules require similar student effort and meet the requirements of level 11 of the SCQF.

The building block of the taught postgraduate programmes is the standard module (20 credits), which is defined in terms of study time (approximately 200 hours per 20 credit module). The equivalent of nine 20-credit modules are to be completed to fulfil the requirements of a 180 credit Master's programme.

Modules can be offered as core or elective units of study. Module viability for electives is determined by the Dean of School in conjunction with the University's Academic Planning Board. When a module has to be withdrawn at short notice, the affected students will be guided to viable alternatives.

**6.2    Requirements for the award of Master's, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate – extract from the University's General Assessment Regulations**

The Master's degree will be awarded on the successful completion of modules equivalent to at least 180 credits, of which at least 160 must be at SCQF level 11. QMU modules are normally delivered as 20 credit units, or multiples thereof (40 or 60 credits). Each 20 credit module is estimated to require 200 hours of student effort.

A Master's Degree will normally be awarded when the student has successfully completed:

a)    Modules equivalent to 180 credits with a minimum of 160 credits at SCQF level 11 and no credits below SCQF level 10.

Some Master's degrees will require considerably more credits than the minimum of 180. This is typically the case for pre-registration Health Care

programmes, which include a significant number of credits, often practical/clinical skills, below SCQF level 11.

b) A Master's Project either by research, a portfolio, a professional intervention, creative piece of work or work-based study which includes theoretical testing and analysis to the same high standard as required from a piece of empirical research. The project is typically weighted at either 60 or 40 credits. However, alternative project formats may also be approved, where appropriate.

It is essential that a Master's degree includes sufficient research skills content to prepare students adequately for the Master's Project. Research skills can either be delivered through named/dedicated Research Methods modules and/or embedded throughout the curriculum. Where research skills content is embedded, a mapping exercise can be helpful to demonstrate to approval panels and students how and where research skills are delivered.

**Postgraduate Diploma**

The Postgraduate Diploma will be awarded on the successful completion of modules equivalent to at least 120 credits, of which at least 100 credits must be at SCQF level 11, and no credits below SCQF level 10.

**Postgraduate Certificate**

The Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded on the successful completion of modules equivalent to at least 60 credits, of which at least 40 credits must be at SCQF level 11, and no credits below level 10.

### 6.3 CPD modules

Students successfully completing stand-alone modules/micro-credentials for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will be awarded a transcript with the M-level credits for that module.

CPD credits may be accumulated and used towards either entering a named award or obtaining a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma. It is also possible to use a learning contract to assess learning that has taken place as a result of CPD activity and may cover the specific learning in the CPD module(s) together with the evaluation/application of that learning to the workplace.

### 6.4 Free route programmes

Exceptionally, a student may wish to construct a programme that deviates from the validated structure. Such amendments are possible only with the agreement of the School Academic Board. Please contact the relevant School Manager for further information

### 7 Titles of Master's Degree

A programme of study at Master's level may lead to one of the following awards to be confirmed through the validation process.

- The MA will be awarded where the programme is predominantly concerned with the fields of art, design and the humanities.
- The MBA will be awarded where the programme is based predominantly on the study of business management and its applications.
- The MFA will be awarded where the programme is based predominantly in the Fine Arts.
- The MSc will be awarded where the programme is based predominantly on science and its applications.
- The MRes will be awarded where the programme is predominantly concerned with research skills development.

The subsidiary award of Postgraduate Diploma is typically a named award. The Postgraduate Certificate may be offered as a named award, or as an unnamed PgCert.  A named PgCert route will only be validated where there is sufficient evidence of specialist content. This is a matter of academic judgement to be determined at the validation event.

## 8    Change of Programme

Exceptionally, a student may change their agreed programme of study. Such changes require the approval of the Programme Leader. A student wishing to change their programme of study is encouraged to discuss this with their Personal Academic Tutor in the first instance. This will provide an opportunity for the student and PAT to discuss the reason for the change and confirm that the revised programme is still coherent, that the necessary prerequisite qualifications are fulfilled, and that the registration period is still within the allowed time.

## 9    Programme management

Responsibilities for the oversight of taught postgraduate programmes are broadly the same as for undergraduate programmes. Full details of these responsibilities are contained in the [Programme Management](#) section of the Quality website, which covers the following:

- Roles and responsibilities: Dean, Head of Division, Programme Leader
- Arrangements for the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) System
- Operation of the Programme Committee
- Operation of the Student-Staff Consultative Committee

## 9.1    Committee management

The nature of postgraduate study means that it can be difficult to schedule Programme and Student-Staff Consultative Committee meetings.  This particularly, but not exclusively, applies to part-time programmes, where students are often also in full-time employment. In the event that it is not possible to organise a committee meeting in line with the usual practice set out in the Programme Management Regulations, teams are encouraged to take a more flexible approach, whilst observing the minimum requirements.

## 10    Learning, Teaching and Assessment

In accordance with the University's Student Experience Strategy, all taught postgraduate programmes will be student-centred. The learning, teaching and

assessment strategies will be designed to enable independent progress within a supportive framework.

Guided by the principles of constructive alignment, and recognising diversity of learning styles and background, learning will be facilitated and assessed using strategies most appropriate to support achievement of learning outcomes within the discipline.

Constructive alignment is an outcomes-based approach to teaching, in which the learning outcomes that students are intended to achieve are defined before teaching takes place. Teaching and assessment methods are then designed to best achieve those outcomes and to assess the standard at which they have been achieved.

Teaching and assessment strategies will enable students to develop their full potential by recognising and building on prior knowledge and experience and by facilitating development of subject-related knowledge and skills and the QMU Graduate Attributes. Strategies should develop and reward critical, evaluative and enquiry-based approaches to study.

Students should have a broad appreciation of the range of methodologies that are available to researchers, including both quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry. They should understand the general principles and characteristic practices of those various approaches to research, for example, the theoretical underpinnings, data gathering techniques and forms of data analysis. Students should be able to appreciate the reasons why researchers come to adopt a particular methodology which is appropriate both to their object of study and to the aims of their investigation. They will also benefit from an understanding of the ethical and political issues that can arise in the planning, conduct and presentation of a research project.

Students should be facilitated to develop a deeper working knowledge of the key methodologies that are employed in their chosen subject area or discipline. They should be able to critically evaluate contemporary research developments in that field. Most importantly, students should develop the conceptual and practical skills necessary to carry out independent research in the form of a Master's dissertation, or other major project, so that they are competent to define a manageable topic of study, decide on appropriate strategies for inquiry, development, analysis and conclusions, and are able to present results in appropriate formats and media.

The Master's project is amongst the most important learning activities for Master's students and is therefore usually weighted equivalent to two or three 20-credit modules. Dependent on the award, this significant assessment may be a dissertation, an original and creative work, a work-based study, a portfolio or a professional intervention, but it must include theoretical evaluation and analysis of a high standard equivalent to a piece of empirical research, and must contribute to the development of the subject or profession. Further information is provided in Appendix one.

## 11 The Master's dissertation or other major project (the project)

The general guidelines for Master's projects are given in Appendix 1. Individual programmes will define the expectations, including timeline within their Definitive Document and student-facing materials.

The achievement of a study of sufficient depth and quality to satisfy the requirements of a Master's project cannot necessarily be programmed within specific time limits. Whilst students will be encouraged not to delay the process, more importance will be placed on the quality and maturity of their work than the speed with which they achieve it.

Students will typically submit a synopsis of the proposed project for review, the timing of which is to be discussed with the dissertation supervisor, or other nominated staff member. This will allow some preparatory work for a proposal or full outline to commence.

The dissertation supervisor, or the nominated staff member, will provide guidance on other timelines relevant to the discipline and programme. Such timelines will vary according to factors such as mode of study and project format.

Those conducting the assessment of the project will normally be the supervisor and a member of staff appointed as a second independent marker for the project. Projects will be double-blind marked. Full information on marking and moderation can be found in the Assessment Regulations.

## 12 Assessment and examination

Assessment Regulations are available from the Quality website. Programme teams may exceptionally introduce programme specific assessment regulations, where there is good cause to do so. Any such changes must be approved either through the validation process, or via the School Academic Board. Typically such regulations apply where there are PSRB requirements.

Regulations governing Boards of Examiners are also available from the Quality website. In common with undergraduate programmes at QMU, an External Examiner is appointed for each taught postgraduate programme. The role of the External Examiner is of crucial importance in maintaining the postgraduate standard of the modules. Individual External Examiners may be responsible for a specific set of modules or for a whole programme. Full information on External Examining is available from our External Examiner Regulations.

## 13 Academic misconduct

QMU's Plagiarism Policy is available from the Quality website. QMU defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation by an individual of another person's idea or work (in any medium, or unpublished) as though they were his or her own work…academic collusion is deemed to be unacceptable where it involves the unauthorised and unattributed collaboration of students or others' work resulting in plagiarism, which is against University discipline*

In the following circumstances academic collusion represents a form of plagiarism:

*Academic collusion is deemed to be unacceptable where it involves the unauthorised and unattributed collaboration of students or others work resulting in plagiarism, which is against University discipline.*

Resources to support good academic practice are available on the Library and Effective Learning Service website. Additionally, all QMU students (undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate) have access to Studiosity.

**14      Introducing changes to a Master's programme**

In order to keep taught postgraduate programmes dynamic, current and responsive to the need for change, various alterations may be implemented with due authorisation.  Please refer to the Programme Development, Modification, Monitoring and Review section of the Governance and Regulations. Normally changes should be proposed and approved well in advance of the implementation date and usually at least one semester before the proposed change (accepting that the programme may run across three semesters in the year).The Assistant Secretary, Governance and Quality Enhancement can offer advice.

**15      Further information**

For further information on University policies please refer to the Quality website

**Master's project guidance**

Important: This Appendix provides generic guidance on the expectations and management of the Master's dissertation or other major project (the project). It is recognised that a variety of project models are in place across the University, and more specific guidance should be provided in the Definitive Document and other programme specific materials.

**1      Introduction**

The project is the culmination of the Master's programme, successful completion of which allows the student to demonstrate achievement of the overarching programme aims and outcomes.  It carries a weight that is normally equivalent to either two (40 credits) or three (60 credits) taught modules and thus represents around either 400 or 600 hours of student effort. In general, the project must reflect sufficient evidence of independent thought to justify the award at Master's level.

The subject of the project often aligns with work with which the student is already involved or represents development within a cognate academic discipline. Students may also choose to pursue a subject in an area where they wish to develop experience.

The project, regardless of its format, must be intellectually demanding and clearly applicable to Master's level study. The nature and scope of the project must be discussed with relevant academic colleagues, and if appropriate professionals in the field, one of whom may be invited to act as supervisor. Under certain circumstances, students may also wish to consult with their employer.

The project should be an exposition of the student's own work, ideas and/or contribution.  If the work for the project forms part of a group endeavour e.g. within the student's employing organisation, it is essential that the student's personal contribution is clearly identified and outlined.  Students are required to discuss any copyright implications, both with their employer, and relevant academic staff (usually the project supervisor).

**2      The Aims of the Project**

The **general aims** of the project are to:

a)      Enable students to develop and apply the skills of research and enquiry to produce original work which contributes to a subject, field or profession.

b)      Engage students in study which demands a professional approach, academic rigour, independence and self-direction

The **specific aims** of the project are to enable the student to:

a)      Explore and apply relevant intellectual approaches and practical skills, including those acquired in the taught components, to the chosen topic.

b)   Develop critically, strategically and in depth a topic or area of interest arising from the work undertaken within the taught modules contributing to the programme and in the student's area of academic or professional interest.

c)   Develop further the research skills as acquired through the taught research modules and/or other research content, to demonstrate an ability to set the project in its wider context, to sustain argument and to present conclusions.

c)   Present and be able to defend their rationale, approach or methodology, outcomes and conclusions.

**3      Points to cover in the Definitive Document/student facing materials**

When designing a new taught postgraduate programme, it will be important to consider and clearly define within the Definitive Programme Document and student facing materials the following key points:

- Student responsibilities
- Programme Leader responsibilities
- Dissertation supervisor (or equivalent) responsibilities
- The process for agreeing the project topic
- The structure and format of the project
- How to present the project
- Arrangements for securing ethical approval
- Marking criteria – the following generic criteria will apply:

**Process**: Demonstrates appreciation and comprehension of the task planned and undertaken showing initiative and thorough grasp of relevant literature to demonstrate a sound understanding and knowledge. The work should demonstrate competence in the following, as appropriate to the subject: use of new methodologies; apparatus or technique(s), collection and analysis of data and/or statistical applications; use of new technology; creativity and resourcefulness in meeting project objective(s); thoroughness in undertaking of the investigation. Students will also demonstrate originality of thought and/or execution.

**Written submission**: Demonstrates thoroughness of review and critical appraisal  of past work and use of relevant literature; care in presentation including diagrams if appropriate; clarity and accuracy of prose; organisation of report into logical sequence; choice of style of presentation as shown by clarity of results; intellectual quality of analysis; discussion of results, conclusions and suggestions for further work.

**Oral examination/other components assessed orally (where applicable)**: Demonstrates complete grasp of the topic; thorough understanding of ethical issues therein; achievement of the objectives; attention to cost and quality if appropriate; presentation and communication skills.

The presentation and oral examination/other components assessed orally include the demonstration of the results in a project that has an experimental component. For projects that are predominantly theoretical or design oriented, the assessment component for the report may be increased relative to the oral examination components at the discretion of the assessment team. Students

should refer to the individual programme handbook/module descriptor for detail of projects of this nature.

**Key points for Supervisors – output from a 2021 Student Experience Committee project on the dissertation/other major project**

- Make sure that the Student Handbook/Dissertation Handbook/Other Major Project Handbook and other relevant materials are up to date and accessible to students.
- Explicitly direct students to relevant materials at the beginning of their work on the dissertation/other major project, and issue regular reminders.
- Be clear about the frequency and format of supervisory meetings[7] and clarify responsibility for arranging and recording meeting outcomes.
- Consider flexible approaches to supervisory meetings to accommodate online meetings where appropriate.
- Arrange an introductory group session at the beginning of your students' work on the dissertation/other major project to discuss the arrangements.
- Consider running sessions throughout the duration of the dissertation/other major project to cover topics such as writing the proposal, ethics etc.
- Establish opportunities for students to network – writing the dissertation/other major project can be a lonely process and students can benefit from peer support.
- Clarify expectations for matters such as the timescale for responding to emails, timescale for feedback and number of drafts on which you will provide feedback.
- Help your students understand the expectations for presentation, formatting and referencing, signposting them to the Learning Resource Centre, Effective Learning Service and other relevant resources.
- Consider the particular needs of part-time students and students not following the usual timeline to make sure they can access relevant group sessions at a meaningful stage in their dissertation/other major project.
- Participate in Division or School staff development sessions on dissertation/other major project support.
- If you are supervising a dissertation/other major project for the first time, consider working with a mentor from your Division. This can be especially useful if you are supervising a different type of project to those you have supervised previously.

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[7] QMU AWAM Guidelines allow for a total of 20 hours per student (to include supervision, first and second marking) – please check if there is Programme specific guidance.

**APPENDIX THREE**
**Integrated Master's: summary information**

### 1. Introduction

Integrated Master's programmes refer to an Undergraduate programme that results in a Master's qualification. Integrated Master's degrees are delivered through a course that combines study at the level of a Bachelor's degree with study at Master's level during the later stages of the course. As such, a student usually graduates with a Master's degree after a continuous course of study.

### 2. Credits and levels

In line with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework requirements, students on Integrated Master's degree courses will typically complete a total of 600 credits, of which at least 120 credits will be at level 11 (at Master's level). These credits are spread over the duration of the programme (usually four years). For a four-year Integrated Master's programme, students are required to complete more than the normal 120 SCQF credits in each year. They may also be required to undertake credits at different levels in the same year, for example 120 SCQF level 7 credits and 20 SCQF level 8 credits in year 1.

### 3. Progression and exit awards

In line with QMU regulations and the SCQF, there will be a range of exit qualifications, with each award dependent on the number and level of module credits achieved. Details of possible exit qualifications are outlined in QMU Awards regulations. Programmes may also have a final exit award at SCQF level 10 (e.g. BSc Honours). The award classification for a Master's qualification will be calculated based on the marks gained for Master's level modules (SCQF 11)

Considering the demands of the programme in terms of number of credits in a year, as well as the higher level of credits, programmes may set requirements for students to perform at a certain academic level to progress to Master's level study. For example, a progression point at the end of year 2 where an overall average of 60% is required for progression on the M programme; students who do not meet such requirements will normally continue on the Undergraduate (e.g. BSc Honours) route.