Definition

1. Validation (or programme approval) is the process by which SGUL assures the quality and standards of programmes that have not previously been offered. The addition of new awards, new award titles and new modes of study to existing programmes will also require validation.

2. Other changes to validated programmes will be approved through the Modifications Procedure as described in section D of this Manual.

3. Although SGUL recognises the concept of revalidation, programmes are not usually re-validated (unless this is a requirement of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body). From time to time, a programme may be extensively redesigned. If this is the case, the validation process will be appropriate to assure the quality and standards of the redesigned programme. If a programme is to be revalidated, the revalidation documents will be supplemented by a Self-Evaluation Document and supporting evidence.

4. All validated programmes must be reviewed from time to time. Programmes will normally be reviewed at least once every five years. The Periodic Review process is described in section C of this Manual.

Purpose of validation

5. Through the validation process, SGUL confirms that:

   a) The programme fits with SGUL's Strategic Vision and supporting strategies and complies with its policies and regulations.
   b) There is a demand from applicants and a need for its graduates.
   c) The programme and its curriculum are well-designed, founded on sound pedagogic principles and intended to meet the needs of all students.
   d) The aims and learning outcomes for the programme are set at the appropriate level.
   e) Teaching and learning strategies are carefully planned and reflect best practice.
   f) The assessment strategy is fair, valid and reliable.
   g) Sufficient resources (including staff resources) are in place to support the programme.
   h) The programme meets the requirements of relevant external bodies including the OfS Conditions of registration.
   i) All programme documentation is clear, accurate and comprehensive in its description of the programme that will be available to potential students.
   j) Consideration has been given to career opportunities and opportunities for future study available to students who complete the programme.

Regulations

6. The General Regulations for Students and Programmes of Study state that all programmes shall be validated by Senate or its Validation Committee (GR19.2). The General Regulations also stipulate that each programme must have its own regulations (GR2.5) and separate Schemes of

Assessment (GR7). The programme regulations and Schemes of Assessment are drafted as part of the validation process and may be approved by a validation panel.

Principles of validation

7. The validation process as set out in these procedures applies to all programmes that lead to awards of St George's Hospital Medical School (SGHMS).

8. The validation process is conceived as an iterative process with feedback from a range of sources (senior staff, professional support staff, other academic staff, students, employers and PSRBs) provided at one stage influencing subsequent stages. The process has several sequential stages therefore within which the nature and purpose of the programme are described in increasing detail.

9. Validation is based on standard documents to ensure consistency and validity.

10. Validation concludes with a meeting that takes the form of a discussion about academic matters with a panel of independent peers (the validation panel) including both experts who are external to SGUL and student panel members.

11. The process, which will be sufficiently flexible to accommodate professional body requirements, must be complete before students are admitted to the programme. Please refer to section L for information about engagement with professional bodies.

Types of validation

12. The validation process is usually applied to new programmes of study. In addition, the following will be subject to validation:

    a) New modes of study,
    b) New awards and award titles to be added to validated programmes,
    c) New pathways and modules,
    d) Substantive modifications to existing programmes (section D of this Handbook),
    e) Collaborative arrangements (section E of this Handbook).

13. Responsibility for validation of the types listed in paragraph 12 (a to d) is delegated to monitoring committees. Guidance notes have been developed to support monitoring committees in the organisation of validation events conducted under delegated authority (Appendix A1: Guidance Notes for Monitoring Committees on delegated authority).

Authority

14. The procedural framework for approving new programmes and modifications to programmes is developed, approved and maintained by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).

15. Authority to discontinue a programme rests with the Vice-Chancellor who will take advice from Senate and/or ESSC as appropriate (see paragraphs 120 to 122).

16. Any doubt over the interpretation of these procedures or any matter on which these procedures are silent shall be determined by QAEC through its Chair or, where appropriate, the Director of Quality and Partnerships.

Revalidation

17. As noted in paragraph 3, programmes are re-validated:

    a) if this is a requirement of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body

    b) Or a programme team wishes to redesign or make significant changes to the programme. If a programme is to be revalidated, the revalidation documents will be supplemented by a Self-Evaluation Document and supporting evidence.

18. Advice on whether a programme requires revalidation (rather than periodic review) can be sought from the Quality and Partnerships Directorate. The guiding principle relates to the extent to which the programme has changed since validation and if the cumulative effect of changes may result in the programme no longer meeting the approval criteria (as listed in paragraph 89). If there is doubt on whether a programme warrants revalidation, the matter will be referred to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (or its chair) for a final decision.

19. Teams wishing to revalidate rather than review an existing programme can, if they wish, seek advice from the Curriculum Advisory Group (CAG) as they develop their plans for revalidation.

20. For revalidated programmes, only stages 4, 5 and 6 of the procedure will usually apply although, as noted in paragraph 19, teams can seek advice from the CAG at stage 1 on their development plans.

Flowchart

21. The validation flowchart (Appendix A15) illustrates the validation process in summary form.

Liaison with Quality and Partnerships

22. The Quality and Partnerships Directorate will:

    a) Advise on the validation procedure and provide support to programme teams in understanding the purpose of each stage,
    b) Organise validation and review events.

Timescales

23. The validation process will include sufficient time for:

    • A market analysis to be conducted and an effective recruitment strategy to be put in place;
    • Proposals to be fully developed and presented at each stage of the approval process;
    • A business case to be developed and course costs to be projected,
    • Documents to be prepared,
    • Administrative arrangements (i.e. appointing a panel chair, convening a panel and fixing a date) to be put in place,

- Panel members to consider draft documents,
- Conditions of approval to be met before students are admitted to the programme,
- An effective recruitment strategy to be put in place

24. For undergraduate programmes, a programme will normally be fully validated at least 12 months before the programme will recruit its first intake of students. This expectation implies a typical curriculum cycle of 24 months. QAEC can approve an accelerated timescale on a case by case basis.

25. For postgraduate programmes, a programme will normally be fully validated at least 12 months before the programme will recruit its first intake of students. This expectation implies a typical curriculum cycle of 18 months. QAEC, in consultation with ESSC as appropriate, can approve an accelerated timescale on a case by case basis. In considering whether a programme can be validated on an accelerated basis, the following criteria will be taken into account:

   a) A competitive advantage will be lost if the launch of the programme is delayed,

   b) The effect on University finances if the validated programme meets its recruitment targets,

   c) Possible partners in programme delivery will seek alternative institutions for joint working,

   d) The experience of the initial intake of students will not be put at risk by reducing the period between programme approval and the launch of the programme,

   e) Academic standards will not be put at risk by reducing the period between programme approval and the launch of the programme.

26. For new programmes, the six stages of the validation process will typically be completed within a one-year period. The exact duration of the process will vary depending on the dates of the Groups and Committees responsible for providing advice and confirming approval of the programme as it progresses through stages 1 to 4 of the validation process. The validation process flowchart provides indicative timescales to support programme teams in planning their validation (Appendix A15).

Guidance

27. Curriculum development teams and course teams are encouraged to make reference to the Common Modular Framework (A17) when designing a new course or when revalidating or modifying an existing course. The Framework sets out expectations for programme design, including module sizes, the organisation of the academic year and the number of assessments.

28. The Centre for Innovation and Development in Education (CIDE) works with staff and students to promote high quality learning, teaching and assessment at St George's. They produce guidance documents, which are available on their [website](#), including guidance on:

   a) [the basic principles underpinning the design and development of learning outcomes](#)
   b) [taking an asynchronous approach to lectures on Canvas](#)
   c) [online examinations](#)

29. The curriculum development team will engage with CIDE through Stage 1 of the validation process (paragraph 33 onwards). Following this stage, a member of CIDE may join the curriculum development team to continue to provide guidance and support to the team as the programme progresses through the process.

Portfolio Growth Steering Group (PGSG)

30. While not formally part of the validation process, PGSG is responsible for considering strategic opportunities for portfolio growth. The Chair of the Education and Student Strategy Committee, which has responsibility for approving new programmes at stages 2 and 4 of the validation process, may direct the curriculum development team to present to PGSG ahead of ESSC to provide additional scrutiny of programme proposals.

PROCESS

31. The stages in the programme approval process are outlined in the following paragraphs.

32. A Validation Recommendation Tracker template (Appendix A5) will be provided to the academic lead responsible for the proposed new course, which they will be expected to update after each validation stage to record their responses against any Conditions and Recommendations.

STAGE 1 – Engagement with the Curriculum Advisory Group

33. At stage 1, the Curriculum Advisory Group (CAG) offers initial support and advice on curriculum design and enhancement primarily from a conceptual and scholarly viewpoint. The aim of this stage is to support programme teams as they develop the concept in preparation for the subsequent stages of the approval process.

34. The Curriculum Advisory Group is a standing committee with a schedule of meetings agreed at the start of the academic year. Meetings are chaired by the Head of the Centre for Innovation and Development in Education (CIDE) and the arrangements for the conduct of meetings are specified by the Head of Centre. Engagement with the CAG takes the form of a brief presentation structured around pre-determined categories, topics and themes. The presentation would normally end with a set of questions identifying areas within which the presenting team would welcome advice, discussion or feedback from the CAG.

35. It is recommended that presentations will be accompanied by a completed marketing questionnaire to guide discussions with the CAG.

36. CAG discussions, comments and recommendations are formally recorded and the records of CAG deliberations are appended, along with the completed marketing questionnaire, to the documentation presented to the Education and Student Strategy Committee at Stage 2.

37. Engagement with the CAG is a developmental process intended to help programme teams to craft relevant, pedagogically sound and innovative programmes that are attractive to potential students. The CAG will not prevent a proposal from being presented at Stage 2 although any reservations about the proposal will appear in the record of the CAG meeting.

38. Following the CAG meeting, CIDE will be available to provide support to the programme team on any aspect of the curriculum at subsequent stages of the approval process on a negotiated basis.

39. For more information, refer to *"CAG: The process and categories for discussion (Guidance for Programme Teams".*

40. When sufficient progress has been made in initial curriculum development, the programme development team lead should approach the Chair of the CAG for date on which the proposal can be presented to the Group.

41. Teams wishing to revalidate rather than review an existing programme can, if they wish, seek advice from the Curriculum Advisory Group as they develop their plans for revalidation. If a programme is to be revalidated, there is no requirement for the presentation to the CAG to be accompanied by a marketing questionnaire.

42. For revalidated programmes, following consideration at the CAG, only stages 4, 5 and 6 will apply.

STAGE 2 – Strategic approval at the Education and Student Strategy Committee

43. The Education and Student Strategy Committee (ESSC) is a standing committee with a schedule of meetings agreed at the start of the academic year. At stage 2, ESSC considers whether a proposal aligns with the institution's mission, values and strategic objectives. In considering proposals, ESSC will apply the following criteria:

   a) The programme aligns with St George's Strategic Vision.

   b) There is initial evidence of sufficient demand amongst potential students for the programme and a need, in terms of employment opportunities, for its graduates.

   c) SGUL has expertise in subject area and in research and scholarship linked to the subject. For clinical programmes, the involvement of practitioners will also be considered.

   d) The intended scale of the programme measured by the planned student numbers (home and international) in the start-up and consolidation phases and in steady state is manageable.

   e) The outline structure of the programme including modes of study, placements, project work and the approach to blended learning is clear.

   f) Alignment with other SGUL programmes and any potential for shared delivery of elements of the programme has been considered.

   g) The composition of the curriculum development team. In addition to subject level expertise, scholarship and research the team will include within it familiarity with the pedagogic principles underpinning effective curriculum development.

   h) The curriculum development team has the capacity and support needed to develop the programme.

   i) The availability of the human and physical resources needed to deliver a high-quality academic experience and extent to which these resources will be in place before the

programme recruits its first intake of students. This will involve a consideration of whether there:

- Will be appropriately qualified and skilled staff in sufficient numbers to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- The facilities, learning resources and student support services needed to deliver a high quality academic experience are in place.

44. Following discussions at CAG, the programme development team lead should approach the Chair of ESSC for a date on which the proposal can be presented to the Committee. The relevant Head of Centre/Department will usually present the proposal to ESSC.

45. The documents available to ESSC are:

- Programme Proposal Form Part 1 (Appendix A2), to completed by the programme lead
- The report from the Curriculum Advisory Group (see Stage 1)
- The completed marketing questionnaire.

46. If it is envisaged that the programme will be delivered in partnership with an external organisation, the proposals must be discussed with the Quality and Partnerships Directorate prior to ESSC. The documents presented to ESSC will include a commentary on, inter alia, the partnership model, the financial implications, the scope of any agreement, Due Diligence considerations and risk. The commentary will be prepared by QPD. See also Section E of the Quality Manual on Collaboration.

47. ESSC will either: approve the proposal for further development; refer the proposal for further work for consideration in the current academic year; or reject the proposal. If a proposal is rejected, ESSC will decide if the proposal can be resubmitted at a later date.

48. If the programme requires approval from a Professional, statutory and regulatory body, the subsequent stages of the procedure may be adapted to meet PSRB requirements. See also Section L of the Quality Manual on PSRB engagement.

49. At this point:

a) Curriculum development team will be invited to develop a project plan;

b) Prompted to discuss proposals with professional support service leads.

50. The project plan will set out the indicative timelines for:

a) Engagement with QAEC (Stage 3)

b) Liaison with professional support service leads;

c) Development and approval of the business case (stage 4);

d) Scrutiny of draft validation documents (stage 5)

e) Validation (stage 6)

51. The project plan will also identify key stages in the marketing and recruitment of the programme (from the creation of a web presence for the course, when the programme will be open for applications and the recruitment of students).

52. The following professional support service leads or their teams will usually be consulted during the curriculum development process:

Student Systems and Records
Admissions
Student Centre for Student Support & Welfare team
Examinations team
Room bookings/Timetabling
International Support and Compliance
Careers Services
Students Unions sabbatical officers
Head of Widening Participation
Student Recruitment
Communications
Library and Learning Services
Human Resources
Student Conduct and Compliance

STAGE 3 – Initial academic approval at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

53. Following ESSC approval at stage 2, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee will carry out an initial consideration of the pedagogic and curriculum design principles on which the programme will be based. The purpose of this stage of the validation process is to stimulate criterion-based discussion and debate within the curriculum development team to ensure that development of the programme will be informed by a consideration of sound pedagogic principles.

54. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) is a standing committee with a schedule of meetings agreed at the start of the academic year. At stage 3, QAEC will consider the strategic approach to curriculum design within which is defined holistically:

> A curriculum is a statement of the intended aims and objectives, content, experiences, learning outcomes and processes of a programme or course of learning, including a description of the structure and expected methods of learning, teaching, assessment, feedback and supervision. The curriculum should set out a programme of learning and specify what learning outcomes the learner will achieve. How these outcomes will be assessed through a coherent programme of assessment and how learners will be determined as having successfully completed a programme of learning must also be described (GMC, Excellence by Design, May 2017).

55. At stage 3, QAEC will consider the following criteria:

a) The educational aims of the programme and its main intended learning outcomes of the programme.

b) The way in which external reference points (eg QAA qualifications frameworks; QAA subject benchmark statements; PSRB documentation, apprenticeship standards; credit frameworks, level descriptors) have been or will be used to inform curriculum development.

c) The way in which Graduate attributes (the qualities, skills and understandings that students should develop during their time on the programme) have or will be reflected in the intended learning outcomes.

d) Initial decisions about course content and the way in which that contents will be packaged (e.g. as modules) and developed across the duration of the programme.

e) The inclusion of multiple programme entry and exit points linked to intermediate or exit qualifications,

f) The points where students are invited to make a decision about study options and the way in which students will be prepared to make informed decisions about the options available to them;

g) Initial thinking on rigour and stretch (stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential) and the way in which students will develop as they progress through the programme (transformative education).

h) The way in which stakeholders (e.g. students, patients, service users and carers; employers or employer groups; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) will be involved in the development of the programme.

i) Intentions to develop an inclusive curriculum reflecting the needs of all students including those in protected characteristic groups.

j) Initial intentions regarding the assessment strategy and the way in which these decisions consider the need to provide meaningful feedback and feedforward.

56. The documents available to QAEC are:

- Programme Proposal Form Part 1 (Appendix A2) (approved by ESSC at stage 2)

- Programme Proposal Form Part 2 (Appendix A2)

57. QAEC will either: approve the proposal for further development; refer the proposal for further work for consideration in the current academic year; or reject the proposal. If a proposal is rejected, QAEC will decide if the proposal can be resubmitted at a later date.

Stage 4: Business case development

58. At stage 4, ESSC will receive and approve the detailed business case for the programme. The documents available to ESSC are:

- Programme Proposal Form Part 1 (Appendix A2) (approved by ESSC at stage 2)

- Programme Proposal Form Part 2 (Appendix A2) (approved by QAEC at stage 3)

- Programme Proposal Form Part 3 (Appendix A2)

- Appendix A3: course costing template

- Appendix A4: staff costing template

59. The business case will include:

   a) Full statements of projected income and expenditure for a period determined by the Finance Department,
   c) Teaching load on existing staff and the need for any new appointments,
   d) Support services required (Registry, Library & Information Services, Academic Services and Administration),
   e) Course management costs.

60. The relevant Head of Centre/Department will usually present the proposal to ESSC.

61. The business case and course costs must be signed off before the subsequent stages of validation process (Stage 5: Scrutiny of draft validation documents) and Stage 6 (validation).

62. Following approval of the business case, the programme will be marketed (subject to validation).

Stage 5: Scrutiny of draft validation documents

63. QAEC will scrutinise draft validation documents to confirm:

   a) That they conform to SGUL requirements.

   b) To offer advice on ways in which documents can be improved.

   c) To highlight any commendable aspects of the proposed programme

64. The scrutiny of draft validation documents will usually take place in specially convened meetings with a minimum attendance of three (academic) members. Members of the relevant monitoring committee will also be invited to attend. The meeting will usually take place at least five weeks in advance of the validation event and will be organised by the Quality and Partnerships Directorate.

65. The format of the scrutiny meeting is as follows:

   a) A brief private meeting of the panel for agenda setting purposes,
   b) Meeting with the teaching team,
   c) A private meeting of the panel for decision-making purposes,
   d) Feedback to the teaching team.

66. A maximum of two hours will be set aside for the meeting. Documents will usually be circulated a week before the meeting.

67. The role of QAEC at stage 5 is advisory; QAEC cannot prevent a programme from being considered by a validation panel at Stage 6. However, areas of concern can be drawn to the attention of the validation panel by means of a report prepared by the Quality and Partnerships Directorate.

68. The chair of the monitoring committee can identify an alternative chair if s/he is involved in curriculum development.

69. The format of validation documents is outlined in paragraphs 78 to 80.

70. In addition to providing the validation documents, the academic lead responsible for developing the new programme should submit a draft version of the new course set up form to the Head of Records and Reporting at this stage. The Associate Director (Marketing & Student Recruitment) should also be included, to ensure that the marketing department can begin planning for the marketing of the course.

Stage 6: Validation

Panel membership

71. Panels should include sufficient experience and expertise to be able to reach a judgment on all aspects of the provision that is being considered for validation. Validation panels will normally include:

   a) A Chair (see paragraph 73),
   b) At least two external Panel members:
      i.   For professional programmes, this should include an external panel member with professional expertise relating to the programme,
      ii. At least one external panel member with appropriate academic expertise,
   c) An internal panel member ideally with some familiarity with the subject and experience of quality assurance and/or programme management (from a school, department or institute unrelated to the provision submitted for validation),
   d) Student panel member (the validation of a postgraduate programme would normally require student panel members to be postgraduate students)
   e) Other internal panel members with an area of expertise relevant to the programme as appropriate.

72. In addition to the above, if the programme is to be taught online:

   f) An external Panel member with experience of developing and delivering distance learning provision should be a member of the Panel, where possible.
   g) A member of CTiE and a member of CIDE will receive the full validation documentation and will be invited to attend (or submit comments and questions to) the Validation event. CTiE and CIDE will pay particular attention to:
      - the suitability of the learning platform being used to deliver the programme,
      - whether the minimum system requirements are set at the appropriate level and
      - the measures put in place to authenticate students' work.

73. The Chair will be identified by the Quality and Partnerships Directorate and will typically hold a senior academic role within the institution or will have extensive experience in quality assurance and curriculum development.

74. It is the responsibility of the School, Department or Institute taking the lead in curriculum development to nominate external panel members. Nominees may be contacted by the School/ Institute regarding willingness to take part and availability. Nominations should be accompanied by a rationale for the nomination and the CV of the nominee. Nominations will be considered against the following criteria:

   a) Academic and professional experience, including experience of curriculum development, relevant to the proposed programme,
   b) Familiarity with UK Higher Education,
   c) Independence: conflicts of interest may arise if a nominated panel member has a recent (within five years) and close association with SGUL for example as an external examiner, as a former member of staff, as a former student or through collaborative research.

75. Nominations will be scrutinised by the Quality and Partnerships Directorate for suitability in consultation with the panel chair as appropriate. Nominations may be rejected at this stage.

76. The Quality and Partnerships Directorate is responsible for confirming arrangements with approved panel members and for providing guidance material. SGUL pays a fee to external panel members (Appendix A6: schedule of payments to external panel members). The Director of Quality and Partnerships (or nominee) will confirm the fee.

Validation documents

77. The nature and purpose of the validation documentation will be discussed and agreed with the Quality and Partnerships Directorate after ESSC has confirmed the strategic approval of the programme (at stage 2).

78. The core documents for validation are:

   a) Programme Specification,
   b) Programme Specification commentary template (Appendix A13),
   c) Programme regulations (See General Regulations Paragraph 2.5)
   d) Scheme of Assessment (Appendix A8)
   e) Module Directory (Appendix A7: module template),
   f) Student Handbook (draft).
   g) Resource and Delivery Document (Appendix A14)
   h) Staff CVs (an optional template is provided as Appendix A16)
   i) Evidence grids for panel members (see paragraph 91).
   j) The notes of the QAEC scrutiny of draft validation documents.
   k) **If a programme is to be revalidated, the revalidation documents will be supplemented by a Self-Evaluation Document and supporting evidence (see Section C, paragraph 21).**

79. The draft Student Handbook can be presented in a format appropriate for the programme and its current stage of development. This Handbook might take the form of a series of draft VLE pages

and content, some of which may be in outline. See also Section G of this Manual on Student Information,

80. The Resource and Delivery Document may include

a) Resources – a detailed specification of the human and physical resources needed to deliver the programme.

b) Work-based and practice learning (including the provision and quality assurance of practice placements (if appropriate),

f) Arrangements to allow students to plan and execute a research project (if appropriate) and arrangements for the providing adequate project supervision

g) Student selection procedures,

h) Programme management arrangements,

i) Quality assurance (see General Regulation 19) to encompass SGUL mandatory quality assurance mechanisms as outlined in section H of the Quality Manual (student engagement) and measures specific to the programme.

81. The Validation Documents will normally be submitted to the Quality and Partnerships Directorate four weeks in advance of the validation meeting. This four week deadline may be reduced at the discretion of the panel chair.

82. The Quality and Partnerships will also circulate any relevant contextual documents (for example QAA subject benchmark statements, Qualifications Frameworks and PSRB publications) with the validation documents.

Validation event

83. The purpose of the validation event is to enable the panel to consider the suitability of the programme. The evidence base for the panel is the validation documents and information collected by the panel in discussion with the course team. In considering the suitability of the programme, the panel will refer to the approval criteria outlined in paragraphs 89 and 90 of this procedure.

Conduct of validation panel meetings and agenda setting

84. The validation event will normally include the following core elements:

a) A private meeting of the panel for agenda setting purposes,

b) Meeting with students (if a cognate or previous iteration of the programme has been offered)

c) Meeting with the teaching team,

d) A private meeting of the panel for decision-making purposes,

e) Feedback to the teaching team.

85. There must be a demonstration of the learning platform at the validation event for an online programme. At least a portion of one module will need to be completed for the demonstration and should be implemented in the VLE platform.

86. Additional elements may be included to meet PSRB requirements or if deemed to be of particular relevance to the programme being validated. These may include:

   f) Meeting with senior staff with executive responsibility for the programme,
   g) Meeting with practice placement providers,
   h) Meeting with service users
   i) Tour of specialist facilities (arranged by the course team),
   j) Demonstration of virtual learning environment (or digital learning tool that is unique to the programme)

87. Panel members will be asked to identify in advance of the meeting the issues that they wish to raise in discussion with the course team. In consultation with the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager, the panel chair will draw up a draft agenda for the meeting based on comments from panel members and an initial scrutiny of the validation documents. The agenda will be circulated to all participants 48 hours in advance of the meeting. At the discretion of the chair, the agenda may be adapted in the light of issues raised by the panel in its private meeting.

88. In the private meeting, the chair will normally:

   a) Invite panel members to introduce themselves,
   b) Outline the purpose of the meeting and explain whether professional accreditation is involved,
   c) List the possible outcomes of the validation process,
   d) With reference to the draft agenda, invite each panel member to in turn comment on the issues to be discussed with the team. If a draft agenda has not been prepared, each panel member will be invited to suggest areas for discussion,
   e) Invite individual panel members to take the lead on each discussion item (ensuring that all panel members have the opportunity to contribute fully).

Approval criteria

89. The approval criteria are aligned with the OfS general ongoing conditions of registration, in particular the B conditions. A validation panel will ensure that:

   a) There is a demand for the programme,
   b) The arrangements for the recruitment, selection and admission of students are fair, clear and explicit,
   c) The aims of the programme are clearly expressed,
   d) The intended learning outcomes for the programme are clearly specified, consistent with its aims and ensure an educational challenge appropriate for the subject and level being taught,
   e) There is an appropriate balance between delivery methods, for example lectures, seminars, group work or practical study, as well as an appropriate balance between directed and independent study or research,
   f) The curriculum is coherent for example in relation to its academic elements, the acquisition of practical skills and personal and professional development,
   g) The curriculum is well-structured for example in terms of progression, the balance between core and optional elements and breadth and depth,

h) The curriculum is up to date, taking current research into account and, if appropriate, the requirements of professional and regulatory bodies,

i) The curriculum is inclusive and takes account of the needs of all students including those in protected characteristic groups,

j) The strategy for assessing the intended learning outcomes is suitable,

k) Opportunities for students to receive feedback on their assessments and feedforward to help them prepare for future assessments are built into the assessment strategy.

l) The opportunities available to graduates from the programme have been considered,

m) The necessary resources are available to support the programme,

n) The programme is co-ordinated with other activities and programmes within SGUL,

o) Stakeholders (e.g. patients, service users and carers; employers or employer groups) have been appropriately involved in the development of the programme,

p) Information about the course is accurate and accessible. It assists students in making informed decisions before applying and ensures that they understand their responsibilities in respect of their learning (see also Section G: Student Information),

q) Arrangements are in place for evaluating the quality of the programme that allow students to comment on their experience as learners and understand how their feedback will be used to enhance the programme.

90. A validation panel will also ensure that all operational documents required by this procedure are in place before students are admitted. These documents include Programme Regulations; Programme Specification; and the Scheme of Assessment.

91. Panels members will be provided with evidence grids (Appendix A10). These grids, which are mapped against the approval criteria set out above, are intended to support panel members in the evaluation of the evidence available to them.

Outcomes of validation

92. The validation panel may recommend:

a) Approval,

b) Approval with conditions,

c) Approval with recommendations,

d) Approval with conditions and recommendations,

e) That the programme is not approved.

93. A condition is an issue that the team is required to address before the programme can commence. Conditions typically relate to issues that may have an impact on the student experience or on standards if uncorrected.

94. A recommendation usually refers to an aspect of the programme or its delivery that might be enhanced if the recommended action is taken. A recommendation might also refer to an aspect of the programme that the team is encouraged to keep under review over time. The response to recommendations of this kind can by checked through the annual monitoring process.

95. Validation panels are not invited to commend good practice. Panels may however highlight positive or innovative features of the design of the programme or the intended arrangements for delivering the programme to students. In identifying any positive features, the panel is highlighting practice that has the potential to become good practice and enhance the student experience.

96. The outcome of the validation is usually communicated orally to the course team at the conclusion of the validation event by the chair.

97. The panel will set clear deadlines for the fulfilment of conditions. This will normally be within six weeks of the date of the event (or sooner, if the event takes place late in the academic year).

98. If a condition relates to a later stage/year of a programme, the panel may set a deadline which can only be met after the start of the programme. If this is the case, the team will be asked to report on action taken to fulfil the condition in the context of annual monitoring.

99. For international medical programmes where the clinical requirements are to be provided at an overseas campus, follow up validation visits will take place to each campus. These visits will normally take place prior to the delivery of each of the clinical years. The follow up visit will usually involve a subset of the original panel and must include at least one of the external panel members.

100.   For validations involving collaborative partners, it will be a condition of approval that a signed Institutional Agreement with its accompanying annexes is in place before the programme commences (see section E of this Manual on Collaborative Activity).

101.   The panel will decide how the response to conditions and recommendations will be considered. Normally, the team's response will be circulated to all panel members although, if the conditions are few and not substantive, it may be appropriate for the chair to consider the response.

102.   If a follow up response to any of the conditions is required, a further deadline will be set to ensure that the team has fulfilled all conditions before the scheduled commencement of the programme.

Periods of approval

103.   Once validated, programmes are deemed to be in perpetual approval and there is no further requirement for the programme to go through the approval process. Once approved, all programmes will be reviewed (see section C of this Manual on Periodic Review). Programmes will normally be reviewed once every five years. However, approval may be time limited if the panel determines that an early periodic review is needed to assure quality and standards.

Approval not recommended

104.   If the panel does not recommend approval of a programme, the chair will explain orally to the course team at the conclusion of the validation event why the panel has come to this decision. The feedback will normally address:

a)   The main reasons why approval is not recommended,

b) Whether the programme should be resubmitted for approval following further development work,

c) The timescale for any resubmission and the way in which the resubmission should be considered.

Appeals against recommendations of validation panels

105. The Course Leader may appeal against the recommendation of the validation panel. Appeals may be made against the summative recommendation or against specific conditions.

106. The appeal, which must be submitted within one week of the publication of the validation report, may be made on one or more of the following grounds:

a) Administrative error of sufficient weight to call into question the decision of the panel,
b) Procedural error of sufficient weight to call into question the decision of the panel,
c) Academic misjudgement.

107. The chair of the panel will consider the appeal in the first instance to determine whether the matter can be resolved informally. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, a panel comprised of members of Senate will be convened to hear the appeal. The membership and terms of reference of the Senate panel will be specified by the Vice-Chancellor as chair of Senate.

108. No appeal against the decision of the Senate panel will be allowed.

Validation report

109. The report, which is prepared by the clerk to the panel, should record:

a) The membership and designation of the panel,
b) The evidence base for the approval event,
c) The decision of the panel on whether approval is recommended,
d) The conditions of approval and the reason for these conditions,
e) The recommendations and the reason for these recommendations,
f) Positive features that have the potential to become good practice,
g) Any substantive issues discussed at the approval event that did not result in conditions,
h) The date of the first intake for which approval is granted,
i) For joint events with professional bodies, the nature of any approval or accreditation,
j) The period for which approval is recommended,
k) The format required for the response to the conditions and recommendations,
l) The means by which the response to the conditions and recommendations will be considered.
m) Confirmation that the Panel's decision was taken with reference to the OfS Conditions of Registration

110. The draft report will normally be produced within ten working days of the event. After the report has been confirmed by the chair, it will be distributed to all panel members and representatives of the course team.

111.   Panel members will be invited to suggest corrections to the report. The representatives of the course team will be invited to identify factual inaccuracies. Any changes to the report are at the discretion of the chair.

Circulation of validation reports

112.   To capture the enhancement potential of validation and to meet the requirement for providing public information about quality management processes, confirmed reports will be circulated as follows: Senate, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, the monitoring committee, the Director of External Relations and Communications and the Head of Library Services.

Response to conditions and recommendations

113.   The format and timescale for responding to conditions and recommendations will be specified by the panel. The response will normally take the form of an Action Plan that briefly summarises the response to each condition and recommendation and is cross-referenced to the operational documents that contain the substantive response. Amended extracts from the validation documents may also be submitted. Amendments must be shown clearly, for example in a different colour or recorded through tracked changes.

114.   If the initial response is deemed to be insufficient, a supplementary response may be required. Approval will be confirmed when the panel and/or its chair are satisfied that the response to all conditions and recommendations is satisfactory.

Completion of the validation

115.   When the validation process is complete, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager will write formally to the Course Leader. The formal notification will:

a)   Confirm the review date for the programme.
b)   Specify any requirement for the tracking of "delayed" conditions and recommendations through the monitoring process and ask the Course Leader to lodge definitive documents (electronically) with the Quality and Partnerships Directorate.
c)   Outline the actions that will need to be completed ahead of the programme's launch and sign-post the Course Leader to the relevant departments to ensure their completion.

116.   The Course Leader will be required to complete a technical pro-forma at the conclusion of the validation process for each variation of the programme. The purpose of the technical pro-forma is to capture the data to enable a course record to be created in SITS.

117.   The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager will also ensure that:

a)   Internal stakeholders are informed that the programme has been validated, including:
- Registrar
- Head of Records and Reporting
- Assistant Registrar (Admissions)
- Assistant Registrar (Examinations)

- Timetabling Manager
- Head of Marketing
- Head of Learning Technology Services
- Head of Student Services
- Student Finance & Policy Officer
- Head of Postgraduate Administration (for postgraduate courses only)

b) Programme Regulations are submitted to Senate for approval.
c) Schemes of Assessment are submitted for monitoring committee approval.
d) The Programme Specification is uploaded to the St George's website.

Evaluation of processes

118.   The Quality and Partnerships Directorate will invite all panel members to complete an online evaluation questionnaire (a list of the questions that appear in the questionnaire are included in Appendix A9). Course Leaders will also be invited to complete the questionnaire. The Quality and Partnerships Directorate is responsible for analysing the results of the evaluation questionnaires. Findings will be included in the annual report on validation and review activity submitted to QAEC by QPD.

Office for Students (OfS)

119.   Compliance with the OfS regulatory framework will be monitored by the Quality and Partnerships Directorate. Compliance will usually be monitored by considering a mapping document prepared by QPD against the OfS Conditions of Registration.

Closure of a validated programme

120.   Authority to discontinue a programme rests with the Vice-Chancellor who will take advice from Senate and/or ESSC as appropriate.

121.   Applications to discontinue a programme may be initiated by the Dean, the Deputy Dean or the Institute Director offering the programme. In all cases the Programme Closure form will be used (Appendix A11: Programme Closure form) and reference will be made to sector-level guidance on good practice in programme closure.

122.   For programmes that involve collaboration, the closure of the programme may also result in the termination of the collaborative agreement. For further information, refer to Section E of this Manual.

Forms and guidance notes

123.   The following forms and guidance notes are available from QPD:

a) Appendix A1: Guidance Notes for Monitoring Committees on delegated authority
b) Appendix A2: Programme Proposal Form
c) Appendix A3: course costing template
d) Appendix A4: staff costing template

e) Appendix A5: Validation Recommendation Tracker
f) Appendix A6: schedule of payments to external panel members
g) Appendix A7: module template
h) Appendix A8: Scheme of Assessment template
i) Appendix A9: list of questionnaire questions
j) Appendix A10: Evidence grid for Panel members
k) Appendix A11: Programme Closure form
l) Appendix A12: Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice
m) Appendix A13: Programme Specification Commentary Template
n) Appendix A14: Resource and Delivery Document Template
o) Appendix A15: Validation Process Flowchart
p) Appendix A16: Staff CV template
q) Appendix A17: Common Modular Framework