



2023

Validation and Amendment of Higher Education Programmes (HE05)

T:C Partnership
Training • Education • Careers

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Description:

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

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

HE Quality HEQA@tecpartnership.ac.uk.

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This document is available in alternative forms.

Version	Change
1.4	References removed for GIG/Grimsby Institute Group (GIFHE remains where this refers to FDAP powers) Reference made to TEC Partnership Reference made to updated UK Quality Code (2018) Replaced ‘Foundation Degree benchmark statement with Foundation Degree characteristic statement’. Introduction of Course Closure procedure Addition of conditions which must be met before submission of Stage 3b
1.4.1	Addition of text for TDRM
1.5	Changes in requirements for stakeholder feedback. Moving of the requirement for stakeholder feedback form stage 3b to stage 2. Applied to all validations from September 2020. Change of awarding powers names to TEC Partnership
1.5.1	Section 3 - Huddersfield added as a validating partner. Stylistic changes to remove the partnership and replace with TEC Partnership
1.6	Updated code of practice to reflect changes to TEC Partnership structure. Added process to add new site to an existing validated programme. Removal of University of Huddersfield processes.

1.0 Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.7 These regulations and the processes contained refer to the normal operating conditions of the TEC Partnership. There may be occasions where there is a need to enact a temporary disaster recovery measure period. In this scenario with notification by the Chief Executive Officer the Chair of the Higher Education Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee can implement the Temporary Disaster Recovery Measures (TDRM).

- i) Section 13 of HE01 Academic Regulations detail the changes to processes during a TDRM. A bi-weekly report of actions taken needs to be compiled through this period by HEQA.

ii) Validation of New Programmes - There are no changes to the stages of programme validation or the requirements to meet threshold standards during this period. However, meetings will, where appropriate be conducted online or via written feedback. The indicative and regulatory timescales can be negotiated during this period except for the need for all 'new' Degree programmes, or Degrees undergoing 'major amendments' must be fully approved 90 days before they are due to commence delivery.

2.0 Support and Guidance

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

2.2 HEQA will maintain a validation timetable for all programmes which have completed Stage 1 Validation. This will include deadlines for the stages of validations which need to be met by the academic teams managed by the Head of Area/Head of Faculty (or equivalent) of the relevant area. This validation timetable is reported to HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee.

2.3 The setting of tasks to meet the deadline is the responsibility of the Head of Area/Head of Faculty (or equivalent) for the area wishing to validate.

3.0 Stages of validation

3.1 Validation process will differ according to the awarding institution. Currently TEC Partnership has four validating partners/regulations: TEC Partnership, University of Hull and Pearson.

3.2 Validations under the powers granted to TEC Partnership follow a 3-tier approach:

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.0 TEC Partnership Higher Education Programmes

4.1 Approval and Validation

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

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

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

- Stage 1 Validation to the HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards (HECQS).
- Stage 2 Validation to the Proposal Approvals Panel (PAP).
- Stage 3 Validation to the Full Approvals Panel (FAP).

5.0 Stage 1 Validation - Strategic Planning Approval

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

5.2 Applications for Stage 1 Validation must be submitted a minimum of 7 days before a HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee by the Head of Area/Head of Faculty on the appropriate form (HE05A). Prior approval by the SLT of the relevant college must be evidenced. The committee must either 'Grant', 'Not Grant' or 'Defer with Conditions' the application for Stage 1 Validation.

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

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

5.4 If a Stage 1 Validation is 'deferred with conditions' the team must resubmit the application to meet the conditions within 14 days to the Chair of HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee. It is the responsibility of the Head of Area/Head of Faculty to feedback to the delivery team the discussion at the meeting. The decision will be noted through chairs action.

5.5 Upon successful application at Stage 1 the Group Academic Registrar will send the validation and approval dates for Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the process. It is the responsibility of the Head of Area/Head of Faculty to inform the team members of the deadlines associated with validation.

6.0 Stage 2 Validation - Programme Proposal Approval

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

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

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

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

- is following TEC Partnership Academic Regulations set out in HE01, or where there is variance, a strong rationale is included.
- has a clear title matching the title applied for at stage 1 or a captured rationale for change.
- has captured the aims and distinctive features of the programme in a language that a potential student could access.
- has stated entry requirements that safeguard student achievement.
- has a maximum of 12 clear programme learning outcomes that are aligned to the QAA FHEQ and has a mix of skills and knowledge which aligns to the threshold standards associated with the area of study.
- has a programme structure meaning there is clear progression through the levels of study.
- has provided employer and academic contacts to assist programme development.
- is aligned to QAA FHEQ, QAA Foundation Degree characteristic statement, and QAA subject benchmark statement.
- The panel has received evidence of independent employers/stakeholder feedback which may be on form HE05E. No matter what format the feedback is received it must refer specifically to the validation submission with particular focus on how this programme will prepare graduates for working in the field after study.

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

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

6.7 When Stage 2 is 'granted' a copy of the report and the submission will be sent to the relevant SLT for information. The chair of the PAP panel will inform the validating team of their ability to proceed to stage 3 and of the relevant submission deadlines.

7.0 Stage 3 Validation – Full Approvals

7.1 This is a process through which TEC Partnership seeks to confirm that a new programme or one that has been significantly amended, is properly designed, that arrangements for its delivery and assessment have been properly planned, that it conforms to its regulations, associated Codes of Practice and policies and that, where relevant, it meets the requirements of the UK Quality Code (2018) and other relevant external reference points. Stage 3 is comprised of two sub-stages:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- is following TEC Partnership Academic Regulations set out in HE01, or where there is variance, a strong rationale is included.

- is of publishable standard throughout the document with all sections completed or n/a used.
- reading lists are checked by the library to ensure currency, accuracy and accessibility of materials by completion of HE05D.
- has captured the aims and distinctive features of the programme in a language that a potential student could access.
- has a programme structure demonstrating there is clear progression through the levels of study with clear identity of how the Programme Learning Outcomes are assessed.
- has a completed module structure aligned to the FHEQ, including rationales which includes module learning outcomes which will contribute to the achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes.
- has been reviewed by student, independent academic (HE05F) and independent employers/stakeholders (from Stage 2) (HE05E) including contributions to the FAP.
- the assessment diet meets the threshold standards to achieve the qualification; the assessments are varied and robust providing students opportunities to achieve beyond threshold standards.
- is aligned to QAA FHEQ, QAA Foundation Degree characteristic statement, and QAA subject benchmark statements.
- If relevant is approved by PSRBs.

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

7.8a If the decision is 'Recommends Approval' then HEQA will ensure that the feedback is given within 7 days including the signatures of the Executive Leadership Team required to formally adopt the course under TEC Partnership awarding powers.

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

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

7.9 Timescales for approval of programmes:

- a) From the date of Stage 1 approval, the full approvals timescale must not surpass a period of 15 months.

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

8.0 Criteria for giving external opinion.

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

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

9.0 Amendments of Programmes

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

Major amendments include:

- i A change in programme title
- ii Change in mode of study.
- iii Changes to modules which necessitates a change to the aims and programme learning outcomes.
- iv Changes to the programme learning outcomes which necessitate a change to the module structure, module specifications or module learning outcomes.
- v The introduction of a new pathway(s)
- vi Restructuring
- vii Changes to major elements of teaching, learning or assessment e.g., the introduction of distance delivery, change of location.
- viii Professional accreditation

- ix Changes to module credits
- x The addition of a Pre-Certificate year
- xi Changes that would mean the programme would not be in accordance with the Institute's regulations.

9.2 Major amendments are applied for by submission of a track changed validation document alongside form HE05J to HEQA@tecpartnership.ac.uk. HEQA will assess the validity of the changes, and the completeness of HE05J ensuring student feedback and employer feedback is present, before organising a Stage 3 Validation Event. Programmes under a major amendment will normally be entered at Stage 3b of the validation process. However, upon request can be entered at Stage 3a for further support.

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

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

10.0 Delivery of a TEC Partnership HE Award at a new site.

10.1 When colleges within TEC Partnership wish to add a delivery site to an existing validated programme, there must be a site visit conducted by the HE Quality Office and the outcome of this site visit must be approved by the Chair of HECQS.

10.2 The college can start this process by submitting a HE05A and HE05P TEC Partnership Awards at a New Site Form. HE05P must be submitted to HEQA@tecpartnership.ac.uk with any other supporting documentation identified by the form.

10.3 Once a HE05P has been received by the HE Quality Office, a site visit will be arranged to test the credibility of plans for staffing, resources and other changes needed to implement the programme.

10.4 The site visit team will be appointed by the Group Academic Registrar and must consist of a representative of HEQA and an academic from a different site.

10.5 The site visit team must make a recommendation to either approve, approve with conditions or reject the proposal.

10.6 Where validation amendments are required of the validation document, this process must also be completed before the final submission of the completed HE05P is made to the Chair of HECQS.

10.7 Any proposal rejected must start the process again by submitting a new HE05A and HE05P.

11.0 Review

11.1 All Degrees are subject to a full approval panel every sixth year to ensure that the curriculum is current and valid. Six year review is applied for by submission of a track changed validation document alongside form HE05J to HEQA@tecpartnership.ac.uk. HEQA will assess the validity of the changes, and the completeness of HE05J ensuring student feedback and employer feedback is present, before organising a Stage 3 Validation Event. Programmes under a Six-year review will normally be entered at Stage 3b of the validation process. However, upon request can be entered at Stage 3a for further support.

12.0 Course Closure

12.1 The process for closing TEC Partnership validated programmes requires the completion of form HE05L Course Closure.

12.2 Once completed, the form should be submitted to HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards, who will make a recommendation to ELT about the course closure and any associated actions.

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

12.4 Except under extraordinary circumstances, TEC Partnership aims to close courses and teach out the cohorts that enrolled on programme. A closure contrary to this would be covered by the HE18 Student Protection Plan.

