

Lincoln Bishop University

Document Administration

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VERSION CONTROL TABLE

<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Authorised</u>	<u>Summary of Key Changes</u>
2.6	October 2016	Update to reflect new processes and changes in terminology.
2.7	22 July 2019	Minor changes following consultation and feedback received from colleagues following the first year of the revised validation process.
2.8	21 August 2024	Update in formatting and revision of content to meet new requirements.
2.9	11 March 2026	Rebranding and minor amendments.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of the validation process is to assure quality, promote best practice and add value by enhancing the quality of the proposal. Proposed programmes will be considered alongside the precepts of the [Office for Students \(OfS\) B Conditions of Registration](#), particularly Condition B1: Academic Experience.
- 1.2. Validation processes ensure that the University's programmes are viable, meet appropriate academic standards, internal and external quality standards and regulations and enable students to meet the required learning outcomes. Validated programmes may also, in some instances, need to meet the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).
- 1.3. The Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes describes the process of securing approval for new programmes. It is designed to follow the Principles and Key Practices contained in the [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\) UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(2024\)](#) which encompass the design and/or delivery of high quality courses, the provision of sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience and the use of appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.
- 1.4. Whilst revalidation ensures the currency of a programme, it is expected that the programme team will consider the extent to which programmes are up-to-date and reflect professional or industry skills and standards through the Annual Monitoring process.
- 1.5. This Code should be read in conjunction with the University's Programme Development Manual (PDM).

2. THE VALIDATION PROCESS

- 2.1. The validation of new programmes and revalidation of existing programmes will follow a phased process involving (1) a programme viability proposal; (2) academic development and critical review by the Faculty; (3) academic challenge on behalf of the University; and (4) committee sign-off.

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- 2.2. Revalidation of a programme will be required should any of the following be proposed:
- 2.2.1. any significant changes involving more than one third of the programme/subject in any one year or one half of the total programme/subject in the period between programme validation/revalidation;
 - 2.2.2. the addition of the new pathways or options to the programme/subject where the options constitute more than one third of a level; and/or
 - 2.2.3. a change to the core features of the programme, such as the title, aims or outcomes of the programme /subject.
- (For further information, please see the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes).
- 2.3. The validation/revalidation process gives consideration to the following themes:
- 2.3.1. the rationale for the new programme;
 - 2.3.2. the coherency and currency of the programme including its curriculum, its design, content, delivery and assessment;
 - 2.3.3. the educational challenge of the programme and appropriateness of the standards set for the level of the award;
 - 2.3.4. the suitability of human, physical and other learning resources required to support the programme;
 - 2.3.5. the student experience offered by the new programme including opportunity for employment and further study by its graduates; and
 - 2.3.6. the way in which the programme facilitates widest possible access to ensure that all students can maximise their potential.
- 2.4. It is anticipated that the validation process for a new programme will normally be completed a minimum of six months prior to the commencement of the new programme. Best practice and key legal provisions indicate that revalidation of existing programmes should also be completed within a timescale that ensures prospective and current applicants are aware about the revised programme prior to enrolment and the start of delivery.
- 2.5. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions when a swift response to demand is necessary, for example, when there is demand from an employer or other organisation for bespoke provision. However, the Faculty and Programme Team should be mindful of the need to allow time for students to be recruited to a new programme and for applicants to the programme to be informed.

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- 2.6. It will be assumed that the programme will conform to the University's regulations with regard to modular structure, credit and levels, assessment, progression and awards. (See University Awards and Credit Framework and the Code of Practice for the Assessment of Students) Any departure from this will be regarded as exceptional, and a clear rationale should be provided in each case, e.g. the need to conform to the requirements of professional accreditation. Such variations can only be accepted where they demonstrably lead to outcomes which are equally, or more, stringent than those imposed by the University's regulations. Any anticipated variations should be highlighted at each stage of the process outlined below.

3. COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

- 3.1. Any programmes validated by Lincoln Bishop University for use by partner organisations will make use of this Code. Partner organisations are not permitted to make changes to Lincoln Bishop University programme and module specifications, but may comment on the provision in Annual Monitoring Reports or at the time of revalidation. Requests to the University for adaptation of programmes can be submitted by partner institutions, but these may only be considered after agreement by the Faculty and the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee or Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee, as relevant.
- 3.2. It is expected that all partner organisations, as outlined in the Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision, will have already been cleared, participated in an institutional approval process and accepted by a Memorandum of Agreement, signed by the Vice-Chancellor, before beginning validation exercises.

4. PROGRAMME VIABILITY

- 4.1. Before a new programme is introduced or the revalidation of an existing programme is undertaken, approval for the proposal in principle should normally be obtained by the Programme Team from the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee by means of a Programme Viability Document (PVD).
- 4.2. The Sub-Committee may also receive PVDs where an existing programme is undergoing major modification/s that affect the core intent of a programme, or significantly impact the resources originally allocated to programme delivery by the University (for further details on

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what constitutes a major change in a programme, please see the Code of Practice for Changes to Validated Programmes).

- 4.3. All proposals must have the support of the relevant Dean of Faculty (or, exceptionally, an appropriate senior manager in the case of provision which is not located in the Faculty).
- 4.4. The Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee will seek to establish the fit of the proposal with the strategic aims of the academic portfolio in terms of determining the academic purpose of the programme, and give consideration to the physical, human and learning resource requirements within the context of business planning and the impact on wider University resources, such as accommodation, placement services, library provision.
- 4.5. Proposals that are considered viable by the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee will be recommended to progress to full programme development. (See the Programme Development Manual for Details of the Programme Viability Document template and guidance documentation).
- 4.6. Any subsequent change to the resources required to operate the programme or the core intent or features of the programme (such as the title) will be resubmitted to the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee for approval.
- 4.7. Programme development teams are advised that, in order that institutional deadlines are met, proposals aiming to recruit for the next admissions cycle should normally be submitted to the Faculty Executive Group in sufficient time. Specifically, this should normally allow a six-month period between final validation approval by Senate and the start of the academic year in which the programme is to be introduced (as per point 2.4). For example:
 - 4.7.1. Programme Validity Document – by end of March 2026
 - 4.7.2. Validation process complete – by end of February 2026
 - 4.7.3. Programme delivery start – recruitment from September 2027(See the Programme Development Manual for specific timelines)
- 4.8. Once approval to develop a programme has been granted by the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee and the programme is accepted onto the institutional portfolio, then the relevant academic and professional services departments are notified.

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- 4.9. The programme may be included on the University website and publicised in other ways to gather 'expressions of interest'. The academic team will need to work with the planning team and recruitment, admissions and marketing departments to provide the necessary information in order to meet compliance requirements.

5. STAGE 1 FACULTY EVENT

- 5.1. The Stage 1 event is coordinated by the Faculty, and entails a Faculty-led review of the proposed programme/s and module/s. The advisory nature of the Stage 1 event or events should incorporate the notion of academic challenge, by inviting academic colleagues from a different subject area/s to provide their perspective with regard to the proposed curriculum coherency and design, the educational challenge, and the learning, teaching and assessment strategies. It is also recommended that the developing team seeks external expertise to provide specialist and objective advice from an early point in the development of the programme and considers how the student voice evidences the design and development of the programme.
- 5.2. On receipt of permission to proceed, the Faculty will liaise with the academic team tasked with programme development to ensure that appropriate communication takes place between the Faculty and the Professional Support departments (e.g. in relation to marketing, data, learning resources and placements).
- 5.3. The draft programme documentation (consisting of the Programme Viability Documentation, Programme Specification and Module Specifications) will be subject to an iterative and developmental process of review. The draft documentation will be subject to quality assurance and viability checks by professional support departments. Any queries will be raised with the lead academic for the programme. Queries highlighting the requirement for additional resources, above those included in the proposal to the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee, will be highlighted with the Faculty.
- 5.4. A representative of the Quality team will be invited to attend the Stage 1 event to verify the documentation's compliance with the University's regulations with regard to modular structure, credit and levels, assessment, progression and awards. Any variances in compliance with the University's regulations will be highlighted to the lead academic and Dean of Faculty.

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- 5.5. The Dean of Faculty (or their nominated representative) will chair and manage the Stage 1 event/s to determine if the programme is ready for a University Validation event. The staff at the event will include the presenting team, and an advisory panel consisting of a minimum of two members of academic staff who are not from the programme area of the presenting team, and representation from the Data, Admissions and Quality teams. External input should also be sought either via attendance at the Stage 1 Validation event, or it should be made clear at the event how the external input has been obtained. External input should be appropriate to the programme concerned and sufficiently independent of Lincoln Bishop University, to provide input as an objective 'critical friend'.
- 5.6. Administrative support will be provided through the Faculty.
- 5.7. Although the process is developmental, the Chair will have the power to set conditions which are recorded in a Record of Decision (ROD) and which must be met to secure the progression of the proposal to a University Validation event.
- 5.8. The review process is complete when the Chair of the Stage 1 event/s and lead academic responsible for the programme are able to sign-off any conditions outlined in the ROD to confirm that they are satisfied that the prepared documentation is ready to progress to a Stage 2 University Validation event, and that any concerns have been addressed and conditions have been met.
- 5.9. Following receipt of approval to proceed to University Validation, the programme can be marketed in full and published on the University website and UCAS, provided that it is made clear that it is offered 'subject to re/validation'.

6. STAGE 2 UNIVERSITY VALIDATION EVENT

- 6.1. The proposed programme will be subject to challenge and scrutiny during a University Validation event, which will provide an opportunity for panel members to explore the documentation and pose questions arising from it with the presenting team. The purpose of the University Validation event is to ensure the programme is coherent, in terms of structure and intellectual integrity, that it provides appropriate educational challenge, and that the proposed assessment methods are appropriately aligned with the programme content, learning outcomes and learning and teaching activities.

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- 6.2. The University Validation event will be chaired by a senior academic or their nominee of equal background. In addition to the Chair, the panel will normally include representation from academic staff of the University who are not members of the programme area responsible for the programme under consideration and who have not been involved in its development to date. The Students' Union will nominate a student representative as a panel member.
- 6.3. The University Validation panel will normally include input from an external representative approved by the Dean of Faculty/Deputy Dean and Chair of the Validation event according to the instructions provided by Quality (e.g. as regards impartiality). In the case of a programme undergoing revalidation, the external input should be provided by an experienced academic with expertise in the relevant discipline or professional area. Consideration can also be given to the inclusion of a second external member from a relevant business or other organisation with specific knowledge of an area of employment which students would typically enter on completing their studies.
- 6.4. The University Validation event will be attended by the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager or a nominee who will advise on matters of University regulation.
- 6.5. At the conclusion of its meeting with the presenting team, it will be open to the University Validation panel to make one of the following decisions:
- 6.5.1. to approve the proposal (with or without recommendations for consideration). All programmes approved under earlier sections will be subject to revalidation after a specified period. This period will normally be five years; or
 - 6.5.2. to approve the proposal for a specified period (normally up to five years), subject to conditions for modification (with or without recommendations for consideration); or
 - 6.5.3. to approve the proposal in principle for a specified period of up to five years, but with a requirement for major revision; or
 - 6.5.4. to reject the proposal.
- 6.6. The University Validation panel will identify a timescale by when the programme team must address any conditions and/or respond to any recommendations.

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7. UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE APPROVAL

- 7.1. The outcome of the University Validation event will be summarised in a Record of Decision, which will outline progress by the presenting team towards implementing any conditions and responding to any recommendations. The Chair of the panel will indicate that they agree that the conditions have been met before the documentation is forwarded to the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee will consider the Record of Decision and if satisfied that the conditions and/or recommendation are addressed and the Validation Process has been undertaken in accordance with this code, will submit it for final approval by Senate.
- 7.2. Once Senate confirms final approval, the validation process is complete and the programme can be marketed without the caveat of 'subject to validation'. The University's Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing department will be informed so that the relevant marketing and promotional activities can be undertaken.
- 7.3. Documentation will be version controlled and entered into the Definitive Document programme management system library, responsibility for the document being assigned to Quality.
- 7.4. All subsequent changes made to the programme and its provision will be expressed with reference to the definitive documents, and no changes to documentation can be made except by adhering to the relevant University Codes of Practice. All information issued to students through the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and in handbooks providing details of modules and their assessment must conform to the authoritative, Quality-held programme and module specifications exactly and in all respects. Any changes approved through the relevant Code of Practice will be recorded and details appended and/or incorporated.