

Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

Section 9: External Accreditation and Endorsement

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Aims

1.1.1 This section describes:

- a) How the University supports the accreditation and/or endorsement of Schools/Colleges, courses and modules by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and industry stakeholders;
- b) How the maintenance of accreditation and/or endorsement by PSRBs is managed by the University;
- c) How the withdrawal of accreditation and/or endorsement is managed by the University.

1.1.2 The aim of the external accreditation and endorsement process is to ensure that the University meets the obligations and expectations of its staff, students and regulators by:

- a) Ensuring compliance with the University's obligations under its conditions of registration with the Office for Students, and broader compliance responsibilities (i.e. Competition and Markets Authority Guidance)
- b) Ensuring there is a focussed effort on identifying opportunities for accreditation and/or endorsement by PSRBs and industry stakeholders, recognising the value of accreditation and/or endorsements for students
- c) Responding to the individual circumstances of each accreditation and/or endorsement to ensure that all quality requirements are met and managed appropriately.
- d) Ensuring the withdrawal of accreditation and/or endorsement is managed and communicated with relevant stakeholders.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 The following definitions are used:

- a) **Accredited:** a PSRB 'accredited', 'recognised' or 'approved' course may convey, or be a step toward obtaining a licence to practise in a particular regulated profession; and/or it may confer full or partial exemption from professional qualifications.
- b) **Endorsed:** recognition of a course, suite of courses or academic unit by an industry stakeholder, similar to the award of a kite mark.
- c) **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs):** a diverse group of professional and employer bodies, regulators and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. PSRBs

provide membership services and promote the interests of people working in professions; accredit or endorse courses that meet professional standards, provide a route through to the professions or are recognised by employers.

- d) **Industry Stakeholders:** organisations and industry stakeholder groups which are not classed as a PSRB but which may choose to work with specific Higher Education providers and provide endorsement or recognition of their work and courses, similar to a kite mark.

1.3 Regulation relevant to this section

- 1.3.1 Condition B1 of the OfS conditions of registration require that providers ensure students registered on each higher education course receive a high-quality academic experience.
- 1.3.2 A high-quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each higher education course:
- a) is up-to-date
 - b) provides educational challenge
 - c) is coherent
 - d) is effectively delivered; and
 - e) requires students to develop relevant skills.
- 1.3.3 Condition B2 requires that providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure:
- a) students registered on a higher education course receive resources and support to ensure:
 - a high-quality academic experience for those students; and
 - those students succeeding in and beyond higher education; and
 - b) effective engagement with students to ensure:
 - a high-quality academic experience for those students; and
 - those students succeed in and beyond higher education.
- 1.3.4 Condition B3 requires that providers must deliver positive outcomes for students on its higher education courses, with reference to:
- continuing in their studies
 - completing their studies
 - progressing into managerial or professional employment, or further study, and

- any other areas determined by the OfS

1.3.5 Condition B4 requires providers must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable further study, by ensuring that:

- students are assessed effectively
- each assessment is valid and reliable
- academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible
- academic regulations are designed to ensure effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and
- relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

1.3.6 Condition B5 requires that providers must ensure that, in respect of any relevant awards granted to students who complete a higher education course provided by, or on behalf of, the provider (whether or not the provider is the awarding body):

- any standards set appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards; and
- awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect any applicable sector-recognised standards.

1.3.7 The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education relevant for accreditation and/or endorsement are:

- a) The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.
- b) Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.
- c) From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.
- d) The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector recognised standards.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1 Academic Board has the responsibility and authority to set, maintain and

assure academic standards.

- 1.4.2 Academic Quality and Standards Committee has the responsibility for the assurance courses meet the requirements of their accreditation and/or endorsement.
- 1.4.3 Academic Quality and Standards Office (AQSO) is responsible for:
- maintaining the definitive register of accreditations and/or endorsements
 - in liaison with the School/College, arranging for a parallel or joint accreditation and approval events
 - in liaison with the School/College, supporting arrangements for visits for the ongoing maintenance of accreditation
 - in liaison with colleagues, ensuring accreditations and/or endorsements are accurately represented on definitive course documentation.
- 1.4.4 Academic Quality Leads in each School and College are responsible for ensuring that colleagues observe the procedures and requirements.
- 1.4.5 Designated staff in the School or College are responsible for:
- identifying relevant accreditation and/or endorsement opportunities, in liaison with the School or College and other colleagues as appropriate
 - liaising with colleagues when completing accreditation and/or endorsement documentation to ensure accurate reflection of University-wide policy, regulation and procedure and that any waivers from regulation are reflected appropriately in the documentation
 - maintaining contact and links with the PSRBs and/or industry stakeholders that accredit or endorse their course
 - communicating information about accreditation and/or endorsement to ensure the University's records and published information are accurate and up-to-date
 - working with AQSO to organise and manage arrangements for visits by PSRBs
 - liaising with PSRBs and/or industry stakeholders over requirements, and providing information about these requirements when requesting approval of new or amended courses and modules
 - communicating assurance of maintenance of accreditation and/or endorsement to the School or College and University on a regular basis, through School and College Quality Committees and Academic Quality and Standards Committee

- managing the outcome of a decision by a PSRB and/or industry stakeholder to withdraw or making the decision to end accreditation and/or endorsement and ensuring that communication of this is appropriately undertaken.

1.4.6 The University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer is responsible for CMA compliance and the requirements of the Student Protection Plan.

1.5 Interpretation

1.5.1 This document refers to named positions (e.g. Academic Quality Lead, Course Leader) to detail required activities or authorisations.

1.5.2 Where a department does not have the identified position, an alternative must be identified, with comparable seniority and remit, such that all required activities or authorisations are undertaken.

1.6 Further Guidance

- 1.6.1 For further guidance colleagues should contact the AQSO at quality@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2116.
- 1.6.2 Where accreditation and/or endorsement involves courses through an academic partnership, the School or College must ensure they contact both the AQSO, and the Global Partnerships Office at UWL.GPO@uwl.ac.uk or on 020 8231 2449.
- 1.6.3 The University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer should be consulted where CMA compliance guidance is required, including dealing with issues that may lead to complaints and appeals. Advice can be provided on the provisions of the Student Protection Plan.

2. OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION AND ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

2.1 Application for accreditation and/or endorsement

- 2.1.1 The University supports the achievement of accreditation and/or endorsement by PSRBs and/or industry stakeholders for its provision, as this is beneficial for students. When requesting approval for new or amended courses, Course Leaders should identify any relevant accreditation and/or endorsement routes. Course Leaders should also regularly undertake horizon scanning of the external environment in relation to existing provision, so that new opportunities are identified as appropriate.
- 2.1.2 Plans for achieving accreditation and/or endorsement should be set out in the Business Case for new courses. It may be appropriate to undertake a parallel or joint approval and accreditation process for new courses. See Section 3 – Course Approval and Re-approval for more information.
- 2.1.3 Applying for accreditation and/or endorsement normally involves submission of written documentation and may require an accreditation event or visit. Schools/Colleges should liaise with colleagues across the University to ensure accurate reflection of University-wide policy, regulation and procedure and that any waivers from regulation are reflected appropriately in the documentation. The AQSO can provide support for organising accreditation and/or endorsement visits as well as contributing to events where relevant.
- 2.1.4 Schools/Colleges should consider the possibility of approving non-accredited routes through their provision where there is the potential for students to choose to do a non-accredited course or who may fail to meet the requirements of accreditation. It should be made clear whether accreditation and/or endorsement applies to exit awards.

2.2 Communication of accreditation and/or endorsement

- 2.2.1 Students may make decisions on whether to enrol on a course on the basis of links with a PSRB or industry stakeholder, so it must be made clear in any published information to students what the status of accreditation and/or endorsement is, what accreditation and/or endorsement is possible, and what students need to achieve to gain accreditation (including whether this is automatic or whether students need to apply separately). Where an application has been made for accreditation and/or endorsement, but this has not yet been confirmed, this must be clear in the information with which prospective and current students are provided.
- 2.2.2 Methods and the frequency of accreditation (of any type) vary. Schools/Colleges should ensure clear information is provided on the PSRB requirements for accreditation or the potential for achieving industry endorsement when requesting approval of new and amended courses.
- 2.2.3 Information on accreditation and/or endorsement is published in course specifications, course webpages and in the prospectus. It is also collected by the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\)](#) who [share the information with public authorities](#) who require it to carry out their statutory and/or public functions. The information is also published on [Discover Uni](#), the official website that holds data on undergraduate courses at universities. Therefore information on links with PSRBs and/or industry stakeholders must be clear and accurate.
- 2.2.4 On confirmation of obtaining accreditation and/or endorsement, the AQSO should be informed in order to update the register. Documentation with the official confirmation should be provided to the AQSO and a copy also retained within the School/College.

2.3 Maintenance of accreditation and/or endorsement

- 2.3.1 Regular liaison should be undertaken with the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder to ensure a clear and current understanding of the relationship and nature of the accreditation and/or endorsement. Schools/Colleges are encouraged to engage with development events and consultations with PSRB and/or industry stakeholders and to encourage students to make full use of any benefits of the accreditation and/or endorsement available to them while at the University.
- 2.3.2 The PSRB and/or industry stakeholder should be consulted and permission obtained, where required, when changes to the course or regulations are proposed. The University Academic Regulations recognise that PSRB requirements will, where required, override the provisions in the regulations. Special course regulations may be developed where significant deviation from the regulations is needed.
- 2.3.3 Schools/Colleges should ensure all reporting requirements are completed and provided as necessary to the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder. This may require completion of additional annual or periodic reporting to that required by

the University; see Section 6 – Monitoring Course Outcomes for further information. Where possible, the same reporting format should be used to meet the requirements of the University and the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder.

2.3.4 Arrangements should be made in plenty of time for the renewal of accreditation and/or endorsement where required. Schools/Colleges should liaise with the AQSO about renewal requirements and with other parts of the University when completing documentation to ensure accurate reflection of University-wide policy, regulation and procedure and that any waivers from regulation are reflected appropriately in the documentation.

2.3.5 Regular updates on accreditation and/or endorsements should be provided to School/College Quality Committees and any updated information provided to the AQSO for ensuring the register remains current and accurate.

2.4 Removal of accreditation and/or endorsement

2.4.1 Accreditation and/or endorsements may be removed either as a result of a decision made by the School or College or the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder. Where the School or College is considering ending accreditation and/or endorsement of a course, the rationale for doing so should be approved by the School and College Quality Committee. In addition, alternative accreditation and/or endorsement opportunities should be explored.

2.4.2 Where removal of accreditation and/or endorsement is decided by the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder, the reasons for this removal should be provided to the AQSO, particularly where this is the result of failure on part of the School or College to satisfy the requirements for accreditation.

2.4.3 Where possible, agreement should be reached with the PSRB and/or industry stakeholder for students which had joined courses with accreditation and/or endorsement to continue to be able to retain this while they complete their course, including in cases where the course is closing. Where this is not possible, this should be reported to the AQSO, which may need to liaise with the University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer.

2.4.4 The AQSO will communicate the details of the removal of the accreditation and/or endorsement to relevant colleagues to ensure documentation is accurately updated.

2.4.5 Where a School or College makes a decision to end accreditation and/or endorsement, a positive relationship should be maintained with the PSRB or industry stakeholder where possible.