

ARTS UNIVERSITY BOURNEMOUTH

Higher Education Quality Assurance Handbook

2025/26



If you would like this handbook in an alternative format, please contact quality@aub.ac.uk

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
SECTION A: University Quality Management Framework: summary	3
SECTION B: Validation partnerships: principles and process	7
SECTION C: The Committee structure of the University	18
SECTION D: Validation and periodic review	22
<i>Validation and periodic review of a Higher Education award</i>	23
<i>Validation of a new course</i>	23
<i>Periodic Review of existing provision</i>	31
<i>Approval of an extended 4-year study option</i>	35
<i>Amendments to validated courses at the University</i>	36
<i>Hybrid course approval process</i>	39
SECTION E: Annual review process	41
<i>Annual Course Review</i>	41
<i>Unit reports</i>	44
SECTION F: Verification Exercise	45
SECTION G: Student engagement with quality processes	47
SECTION H: Validation, review and operation of credit-bearing units not leading to an award, and blocks of learning which do not lead to the award of credit.	50
<i>Validation, review and operation of credit-bearing units not leading to an award</i>	50
<i>Process for approving blocks of learning which fall outside the UK credit framework</i>	56
SECTION I: External context for quality assurance	59
SECTION J: External examining: principles, procedures and guidelines	60

Introduction

This Quality Assurance (QA) Handbook for Higher Education sets out the University's quality management framework. It forms a central point of reference for all staff in relation to quality assurance processes for courses leading to an award of the University, or the award of credit. It sets out the key processes which are used to assure the standards and quality of University courses.

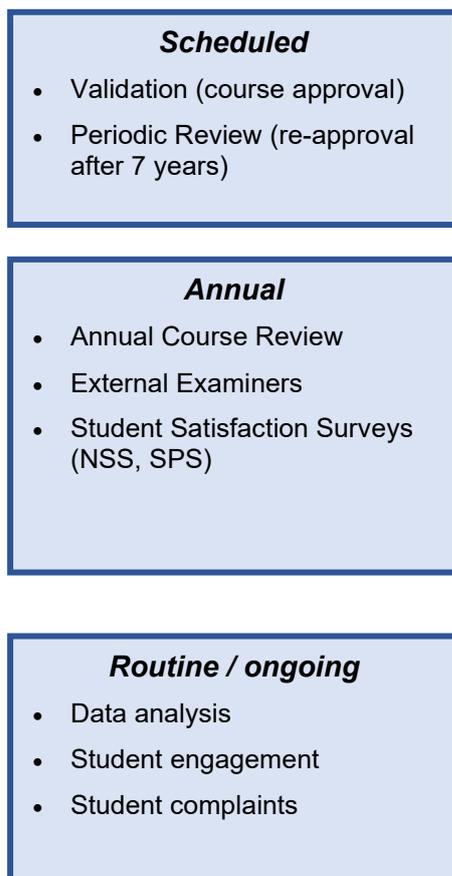
This handbook should be used in conjunction with other documents published by the University, including the Regulatory Framework, undergraduate assessment regulations and postgraduate assessment regulations; and other guidance published to the Intranet.

The Arts University Bournemouth was granted taught degree awarding powers by the Privy Council in 2008; and University status was conferred in 2013. All students on taught higher education courses are enrolled on a course validated by the University.

SECTION A: University Quality Management Framework: summary

1. The University is responsible for assuring itself and its stakeholders that the academic standards of all its higher education provision are:
 - appropriate to the level of the named award; and
 - comparable to the standards of similar awards on offer elsewhere across the UK higher education sector.
2. The University is also responsible for ensuring that students are well supported in their learning: through excellent teaching, well-structured assessment, appropriate resources, and high-quality support and guidance.
3. In meeting these responsibilities, AUB complies with the Quality and Standards conditions (Condition B) set by the Office for Students.
4. To ensure that this is achieved, the University has established a quality assurance framework that allows the University, through its Academic Board and supporting structures, to review its current and prospective provision in a self-reflective and evaluative way. This includes seeking the views of the academic staff involved, the students who participate on course, and external examiners and moderators including practitioners who are able to provide a national perspective on academic standards and quality, and to advise on best practice.
5. The regulatory framework (undergraduate and postgraduate) sets out the common principles for the development of courses; and the regulations for assessment, including the arrangements for the retrieval of failure; the consideration of mitigating circumstances; and the determination of award classification.
6. Individual elements of the framework should not be considered in isolation; the various scheduled, annual and routine activities interact to provide a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing framework. The efficacy of each element is reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to make the necessary contribution to the overall assurance of standards and quality.
7. The framework is illustrated in Figure 1 below. (The Arts University Bournemouth also validates the higher education awards delivered at The Northern School of Art and performing arts awards at Bournemouth & Poole College. The same overarching framework applies in each case).

Quality management framework



Academic Committees

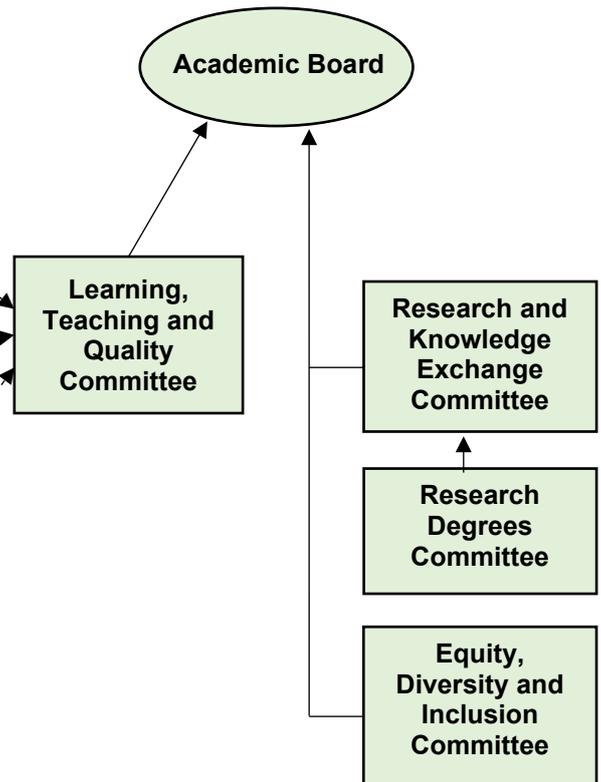


Figure 1: Quality Management Framework

8.0 Scheduled activity

8.1 The approval of courses or units is known as validation. The purpose of validation is to ensure that all provision is aligned to the University's statement and strategic objectives; and that the course content, learning outcomes and structure will deliver a coherent and worthwhile educational experience leading to an award in the stated discipline. It also confirms to the University and its stakeholders that appropriate expertise, experience and resources are available to deliver the course successfully. All courses are developed with reference to the UK Quality Code of Higher Education, relevant national reference points, and take account of the imperative to produce global citizens through an integration of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and sustainability.

8.2 The maximum period of validation for any course or unit is seven years, after which time a periodic review is undertaken. The process of periodic review is similar to initial validation, and permits the course and University to take a longer-term view of provision and to consider a range of quality indicators (including rates of retention, continuation, achievement, progression, and satisfaction).

8.3 Both validation and periodic review include external experts, at least one of whom will be an academic member of staff from another HEI within the UK, who can provide comment in particular on the course content, structure, outcomes and pedagogy.

9.0 Annual

9.1 An annual evaluation of courses is provided through the Annual Course Review (ACR) process. This assures the University that the academic standards and quality of each

course remain secure; that emerging trends in student data, at University and course level, are identified and considered in a timely fashion; and that each course remains responsive to the external environment.

- 9.2 The external examining system is an important aspect of the University's wider quality assurance framework. External Examiners are used to confirm that marking standards are appropriate, and comparable to national standards. Award External Examiners are responsible for ensuring that procedures are applied consistently and that there is fairness and impartiality in the application of award regulations and procedures.
- 9.3 Students are acknowledged as members of the creative academic community, and the University actively secures student feedback in a variety of ways to assure the quality of the student experience. These include the National Student Survey (NSS) for final year students; the internal Student Perception Survey (SPS); unit evaluations; and student feedback through Course Partnership Groups, or provided in more informal ways.
- 9.4 At the end of each academic year, and following the course review cycle, the University prepares a comprehensive overview report on its management of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities which is presented to Academic Board and subsequently the Board of Governors. This supports the Board in its judgement on the assurance statements it makes to the regulator.

10.0 *Routine*

- 10.1 Routine consideration is given to the analysis of data. Subject Examination Boards consider the profile of marks achieved on each unit, and across all subjects within the School as a whole, and compare these both against historical course data, and against national trends. The Progression and Awards Board takes an overview of course profiles, and may identify matters for further discussion through the annual or periodic course review process.
- 10.2 The University is committed to supporting and promoting activities whereby students have the opportunity to engage in matters of quality assurance and enhancement through involvement in quality management processes. These include student panel membership for periodic reviews, student representative systems, and membership of committees and working groups.
- 10.3 The Student Complaint Procedure is an integral part of the quality assurance system. Complaints are monitored centrally through Student Services, and an Annual Report is made to Academic Board on the number of complaints, the nature of the complaint, and the resolution. The Student Complaint Procedure both enables students to secure redress, where appropriate, for any grievance, and the University to learn from the experience of one of its key stakeholder groups.

11.0 Academic committees

- 11.1 The University acknowledges the importance of a shared ownership of its academic values and intentions. The academic committee structure, under the ultimate authority of the Academic Board, provides the means through which the community confirms the principles, approach and practices which govern its academic work.

12.0 Responsibilities

- 12.1 Where a designated postholder is unable to perform the assigned duty, the Academic Lead on Standards and Quality (ALSQ) (appointed annually by the Vice-Chancellor

from among senior academics) has the right to nominate a suitable alternate to take over this duty.

SECTION B: Validation partnerships: principles and process

Introduction

1. AUB wishes to enter into strong academic partnerships. They create value through sharing of idea, knowledge and expertise, as well as promoting the creative and performing arts (and the University). They can represent an income stream and also constitute a mark of esteem. Entering into validation partnerships is part of our duty as a leading sector provider of high-quality education in the creative and performing arts.
2. AUB further recognises that academic partnerships come with an element of risk. In determining whether or not to pursue a formal validation partnership, the University will undertake the necessary due diligence to identify the main risks associated with the proposal, and will consider how these can be mitigated and whether this reduces the risk sufficiently to proceed.
3. Validation describes any situation where AUB holds ultimate responsibility for the academic standard of the award, and thereby also for the quality of student learning experience. Normally, this will mean that students receive a certificate from the University; but AUB can also validate provision such as an Access or Foundation course which leads directly to Level 4 entry. AUB is not authorised to validate provision at Level 3 or below.
4. Any student on an award validated by AUB, anywhere in the world, will have access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA); and the data relating to these students (continuation, completion, achievement and progression) will form part of the OfS regulatory dataset for AUB as well as for the provider concerned.
5. The University must assure itself of the integrity of the academic standards and the learning experience; and to be confident that its degree-awarding powers are being used responsibly. This includes taking steps to consider the security of the arrangements, and any risks which might impact on students enrolled on these awards. At all times, the key stakeholders are the students (current and future), not the provider.
6. AUB recognises the independence and autonomy of providers which are seeking a validation arrangement. It will not seek to impose or unduly influence strategy or operations at an independent provider. However, the University must be satisfied that the operating model is sustainable, and that the provider's strategy responds effectively to any identifiable risks.
7. The precise arrangements for approval will be different in each case, depending on the maturity and status of the partner, and the risks the University identifies. The approval process sets out the steps AUB will take, and the key considerations at each point, before the formal confirmation of an academic partnership.

Primary risk categories

8. All partnerships carry an element of risk. Equally, AUB accepts that there is a risk to doing nothing. It is not possible to eliminate all risks, but it is important that they are identified, and appropriate mitigating action is taken where appropriate.

9. These risks can be categorised as follows:
 - financial difficulty or failure, such that students on a course leading to an award of AUB can no longer be taught at the provider (Category 1)
 - allegations of serious wrongdoing, with the potential for associated reputational risk to AUB (Category 2)
 - for partnerships overseas, risks associated with political instability, and local political decisions which may impact on the provider's operations (Category 3)
 - failure of academic quality management, resulting in unreliable or invalid standard of awards, or an inadequate student learning experience. This will include a consideration of the alignment of the cultures of the two providers (Category 4).
10. It is not practical to itemise all of the ways in which these risks may crystallise. However, it is essential that the University gives due consideration to each category of risk, and identifies the level and type of assurance it requires before entering the partnership. The process is designed to ensure that partnerships are managed effectively and the risks mitigated, while still enabling this positive and enriching opportunity.

Agreement in principle

11. The first stage with any new partnership proposal is to reach Agreement in Principle. Members of University staff, as requested by the Vice-Chancellor, will undertake an initial scoping exercise to consider whether the proposed partnership is consistent with the AUB Strategy and its educational objectives, and whether there is a prima facie case to proceed. This will usually include initial meetings with representatives from the provider, and may also involve a site visit. At this stage, it is also important to establish the nature of partnership which is sought. This may include taking over the validation of courses which have previously been approved by an existing but exiting partner; approving a provider to develop new courses; or approving a provider to deliver course on a franchise model. The nature of the partnership essentially informs the risk review. As part of this process, AUB will also complete an internal financial template which identifies the projected start-up costs for the partnership, and the annual operating costs. This in turn enables a draft financial model to be developed, with proposed fees.
12. Agreement in Principle is confirmed by the Vice-Chancellor, taking the advice of SLT as appropriate. Agreement in Principle is not a firm commitment to enter into a partnership, but confirms that the initial scoping exercise has not identified any significant concerns which would comprise a reason not to proceed.
13. All students registered for an award of the Arts University Bournemouth are considered students of the Arts University for quality assurance purposes (although responsibility for some aspects may be devolved to the partner, under the oversight of the University). All courses leading to awards of AUB must meet the principles of the Quality and Standards condition (Condition B) set by the Office for Students.
14. For the avoidance of doubt, all courses leading to an award of the University must be delivered and assessed in English.
15. AUB would normally expect providers based in England to be registered with the Office for Students, and as a minimum to operate in ways consistent with the Conditions of Registration. AUB is unlikely to proceed if a proposed partner is not on the Register, with no plans to join, although it accepts that there may be some partners for whom this would be impractical. AUB would normally expect providers

based elsewhere in the UK to subscribe to QAA, and is unlikely to proceed if this is not the case.

16. Providers based outside the UK will normally be expected to be in good standing with any local regulatory or accreditation bodies, where appropriate.
17. Once Agreement in Principle has been reached, the Vice-Chancellor will nominate a member of SLT to lead the review of Category One and Two risks (incorporating also Category Three risks if appropriate). The named individual is not expected to work alone, and may seek information from others (including, for example, the Chief Finance and Operating Officer). They may meet with staff at the partner; and may also request that certain matters be considered as part of the Institutional Approval event. These investigations will lead to a written, evidence-based report which details an assessment of the risks, their likelihood, and any mitigating actions or proposed resolutions.
18. The Institutional Approval process, chaired by the Academic Lead on Standards and Quality or a senior nominee, considers in particular the academic risks but also any other matters referred to it.

Approval process

Category one: financial risk

19. The University is not responsible for the financial arrangements of an independent, autonomous provider. The SLT Lead should review the most recent financial information available, and where necessary hold senior-level discussions with the proposed partner to clarify any concerns, recognising that smaller providers are likely to be operating on marginal profits, and with some over-reliance on key individuals. This may include a review of the fee structure for courses leading to an award of AUB. The University acknowledges the right of independent and autonomous higher education providers to determine the tuition fee for courses they offer. It further accepts that many factors may influence the fee, including matters associated with the geographical and historical position of the provider. However, the University reserves the right to set a minimum tuition fee for courses leading to an award made in its name (which will under no circumstances be higher than the fees at the University). This right would be exercised, for example, if AUB had concerns about the finances available to support academic delivery.
20. There can be different financial issues at FE Colleges, or other providers which have several funding streams and where it can be difficult to account precisely for all expenditure. AUB must assure itself that the financial and business model secures proportionate levels of resource for those students on courses leading to an award of AUB.
21. In all cases, consideration of financial risk includes a consideration of the provider's ownership model. The risks of provider sale, and of financial difficulties at owner level having implications for the provider, must be considered. For completeness, AUB confirms that provider sale would immediately terminate the Agreement (subject to arrangements for students already enrolled or with firm offers under the Agreement), and a new Institutional Approval process would be required. This would be without prejudice; there is no assumption that the existing arrangements will not continue.
22. The SLT Lead should prepare a written report on the proposed partnership, indicating any areas of concern, proposed mitigating actions, and an overall recommendation

on whether or not to proceed. This may include remitting certain points for further consideration as part of the Institutional Approval process.

Category two: reputational risk

23. Each category of risk may bring reputational damage, but this category refers explicitly to the situation where there are allegations of serious wrongdoing or malpractice against the provider or individual staff members. Examples may include allegations of discrimination or sexual misconduct, but this is not exhaustive. AUB must take all reasonable steps to ensure that it does not enter into a partnership where the values of the provider are not aligned with its own, which can be interrogated through web and document searches, meetings with senior staff, and meetings as part of the academic Institutional Approval process, including meeting with students. This category of risk cannot be eliminated entirely, and the University must be confident that any risk is minimal, and its own exposure limited.
24. The SLT Lead should prepare a written report which summarises the key reputational risks. This may include remitting certain points for further consideration as part of the Institutional Approval process.

Category three: international risks

25. The core issues relating to institutional approval are the same for international partnerships; issues relating to academic standards and quality, and of aligned values and culture, remain the critical factors. Similarly, matters of communication dialogue can be confirmed through the approval process. However, there are additional matters which require consideration. These include the political and economic situation in the host country, and the risks associated with possible political unrest; political intervention, directly in the provider or more broadly within higher education; and strained relationships between the host country and the UK.
26. It is recognised that many of these factors will be outside the control of both the provider and AUB. Each might result in disruption either to the education of students on AUB awards, or to the operation of the partnership, and the risks and potential mitigating actions must be considered. It is further recognised that, in some cases, it may not be possible to offer a satisfactory resolution for students on-course in the event of overseas provider failure.

Category four: academic risk

27. Failure of academic quality management delivers unacceptable outcomes for students (either in terms of their award, or their experience), which may result in complaints; investigation by the OIA; and in the most serious case, investigation by the Office for Students (OfS). The approval process will be sufficiently rigorous to provide assurance that standards will be maintained, and the quality of the student experience assured and enhanced.
28. Academic risks are considered through a formal Institutional Review process; this may be extended to include any other matters referred from the consideration of other risk areas. It results in the preparation of a detailed Academic Agreement which sets out the precise arrangements for the oversight and management of academic standards and quality, with clarity about any devolved authority. Arts University Bournemouth will at all times retain ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. However, it may devolve aspects of the quality processes to the partner institution, where it is confident that the partner has the capability and capacity to undertake these. In each case, the primary consideration will be the most effective way of assuring standards and the student learning

experience. In reaching a judgement, the University considers not just the existing quality management framework at the provider, but the level of provider maturity in quality management. This enables the panel, on behalf of LTQ, to reach a judgement about any steps necessary to secure academic standards, and to be confident that the quality of the student experience is safeguarded. AUB might take direct, “hands-on” responsibility for activity, or may agree to the devolution of some aspects of the framework, with outcomes reported on a regular basis.

29. This process is also likely to consider issues of communication and dialogue between the two providers: how the partnership will be managed effectively over time, with any matters of concern raised in timely fashion.

Course approvals

30. AUB will normally be prepared to take over the validation of courses which are in good academic standing: that is, courses which have been approved by a provider with taught degree awarding powers which is on the OfS Register (in England), or which subscribes to QAA (elsewhere in the UK). Periods of validation will remain unchanged, and reviews will take place in accordance with the existing schedule. This may be discussed with the provider as part of the process, especially where the provider wishes to make revisions to their awards.
31. The Institutional Approval panel does not engage in detailed matters of course validation and review. It is for the validation and review panel to confirm whether the delivery model for each course is consistent with the typical model (and if not, whether this presents any concerns); and to review the minimum viable cohort number (both in relation to course sustainability, and the student academic experience, although the panel will not be unreasonable, and will accept that some courses may be offered as a ‘loss leader’ in the first instance).
32. AUB also recognises its responsibility for approving the teaching team for any of its awards. This is a review of the team as a whole, rather than of specific individuals. This normally takes place at validation or periodic review, but a review will also take place prior to the third and fifth year of the period of validation, undertaken by the Chair of the most recent review or a suitable alternate nominee. AUB will review the academic CVs of the teaching team, and reserves the right to conduct further research where required. If it is not satisfied that the teaching team is appropriate to the award, it may take action to address this.
33. The detail of the Institutional Review process is given below.

Formal approval

34. Ultimately, approval for academic validation partnerships rests with Academic Board.
35. Academic Board will receive both the report of the Institutional Review, and the report on financial, reputational and international risks, to inform its decision.
36. All validation partnerships must be fully-costed, with adequate safeguards against financial or other temptations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. A review of the financial arrangements must be considered as part of any review of the partnership. Some of the financial detail may be commercially sensitive; in such cases, the detail will be shared with the Vice-Chancellor, with assurance provided to Academic Board.

37. Under no circumstances will the University enter into a partnership arrangement which would jeopardise its standing, or risk the integrity of its degree awarding powers. In each case, AUB must also be clear how it would expect to respond in the event that students could no longer be taught at the provider (in accordance with the Student Protection Plan).
38. No partnership will be approved without the express endorsement of the Vice-Chancellor.
39. The Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of Academic Board, will nominate a member of SLT to act as the lead for each academic partnership. SLT will receive, on an annual basis, a confirmation statement to provide assurance about the evaluation of academic partnership working, and details of any due diligence checks undertaken. A summary of these statements will be presented annually to the Governors' Audit & Risk Committee.
40. Academic partnerships will not normally be agreed for a period longer than five years. If both parties wish to extend the Agreement, a full review process will be undertaken during the final year of operation to enable a seamless continuation of responsibilities. It is recognised that while the same process will be followed, prior knowledge and experience will inform this review which may consequently be shorter and less detailed than for a new partner.
41. All validation partnerships will be confirmed in a written Agreement, signed by the Head of respective institutions. The Agreement will make explicit the responsibilities for assuring academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience, including student support arrangements. The Agreement will include arrangements for terminating a partnership, with a minimum of one year's notice subject to satisfactory provision being made for the completion of the studies of existing students. A detailed Financial Memorandum must form part of the Agreement. It is the responsibility of Arts University Bournemouth to draft the Academic Agreement.
42. A register of approved validation partnerships, including the name of the primary contact, is maintained by the Office of the University Secretary.

Institutional Approval process

43. The primary purpose of the Institutional Approval process is to ensure that the academic integrity of AUB's awards is secure, and that students following a course leading to an award of the University have high quality learning opportunities which enable them to meet the expectations of the award.
44. In the event that any courses at the potential partner institution are subject to accreditation by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), exploratory discussions will be held with the relevant authority to ensure that this accreditation will not be jeopardised by the proposed development.
45. The process invites the panel to identify the measures which should be put in place to provide the University with assurance that awards delivered at the partner are equivalent to those delivered at AUB; or, where appropriate, that this environment cannot be established or maintained with sufficient security, and the proposal should thus be declined.
46. The Institutional Approval process will also apply to any renewal of a partnership, and references to validation or approval in the following process should also be read to mean re-validation and re-approval.

47. The precise arrangements for Institutional Approval will be determined based on the nature of the partnership. If validation is sought for a course or group of cognate courses, it is likely that the validation panel will be supplemented by one or more members specifically to consider issues relating to institutional approval in an extended event. However it is more common for a dedicated process to be conducted, with consideration given to the proposed partner's academic ethos, values and quality management processes and maturity.
48. Institutional Approval is a process, not an 'event'. In all cases, at least some members of the panel will visit the provider, including a tour of the site and the resources, and also a face-to-face meeting with a representative group of students. This provides important insight into the culture and values of the provider. However, meetings with partner representatives may take place in person or online, and there is no requirement that these must all happen on the same day; or that all panel members must attend all meetings.
49. Ahead of the main meetings with the panel, the partner institution will be invited to prepare an Institutional Briefing Paper to support full consideration of the proposed partnership. It is anticipated that informal discussions between the University and the prospective partner will discuss a number of the potential issues in advance of the preparation of the paperwork, which will in turn inform the submission.
50. The Institutional Briefing Paper should typically be no more than 20 pages in length for a whole-institution event (and significantly shorter for individual course approvals), and should contain an evaluative commentary using the following headings:

I Institutional context

This should set out brief contextual information about the provider (size, subject mix, and strategic intentions), and how AUB courses fit into that picture.

II Developments since the last Institutional Approval (if appropriate)

As we have not conducted a formal review since inception in 2013, we would request an update on key developments in the last 3-4 years which impact on AUB awards.

III Management and Academic Structures

This section should include a brief commentary upon the partner's organisational and management structure including reporting arrangements, and the arrangements for management and academic development.

IV Academic Standards

This section should outline and evaluate the ways in which the provider assures itself that academic standards are in line with national and AUB expectations, and the internal monitoring framework (noting both management and committee responsibilities, if appropriate).

V Quality Assurance and Enhancement

This section should provide an evaluative commentary on the institution's processes for assuring itself that the quality of HE provision is appropriate, with particular focus on AUB awards. It should include brief sub-sections on:

- Establishing a higher education culture at the provider. This includes consideration of issues of free speech, inclusivity, and diversity
- Staffing, including staff development and progression opportunities
- Resources (this is not a list of available resources, but an explanation of how resourcing decisions are made, and how the provider knows they are effective. To include reference to library, physical and digital resources)
- How currency of the curriculum is maintained, contacts with industry, and external bodies etc
- How quality of teaching and learning is monitored and measured
- Assessment and feedback processes and procedures.

There should also be commentary on the internal monitoring framework (noting both management and committee responsibilities, if appropriate); if this is different to the framework under section IV.

VI Student engagement / voice

This section should provide an evaluative commentary on the provider's processes for encouraging student engagement, including how it gathers and responds to student feedback.

VII Strategies to support student learning

This section should provide an evaluative commentary on how students are supported to learn, including the institution's approach to teaching and learning; academic guidance and careers advice; and the provision of welfare, personal and pastoral support to students.

VIII Alignment with AUB awards and expectations

This section should summarise how the provider's awards match AUB expectations in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion; sustainability; and employer-relevance, thereby meeting the overall award outcomes published by AUB. It is recognised that this may be more of a discursive area, especially for new partnerships.

IX Academic planning and oversight

This section should provide a brief overview of future HE priorities for the partner, explaining the rationale for this. It should comment on how both the provider, and the validating partner, maintains oversight of the overall academic portfolio (in relation to AUB awards).

The review will be supported by data on the last three years (where available):

- overall HE application rates;
- overall HE enrolment figures;
- overall HE continuation rates;
- overall HE completion rates;
- overall HE achievement rates;
- overall HE progression rates;
- HE application rates by course or discipline;
- HE enrolment figures by course or discipline;
- HE retention and continuation rates by course or discipline;
- HE completion and achievement rates by course or discipline
- HE progression data by course or discipline.

51. The panel will comprise:
- Academic Lead on Standards and Quality (ALSQ)
 - University Secretary
 - Two members of academic staff from AUB, (at least one of whom must have significant experience of quality assurance processes, ideally at AUB)
 - Two External Panel Members from other UK HEIs (at least one of whom must be an academic with knowledge of higher education in the creative and performing arts, and both of whom must have some experience of quality assurance)
 - Deputy University Secretary and Head of Academic Operations or nominee, to act as Secretary.
52. At the sole discretion of the Chair, one or two further members of internal staff may be added to the membership. This will normally only occur where specific expertise is required, but not available from within the standard panel membership.
53. The Head of Library Services (or nominee) acts as an adviser to the panel. They will consider the proposed arrangements for students to access Library resources, both physically and digitally, and will be clear about any access which might be given to the AUB digital collection. This may involve a visit to the partner, and/or separate meetings with representatives to discuss the best approach.
54. The Chair of the panel may also appoint further advisers to consider specific aspects of the provider, in particular in relation to specialist resources, with a report to be prepared to inform discussions at the event.
55. The Institutional Approval panel is not expected to comprise financial experts. Nevertheless, the panel will wish to understand the fees which are proposed for Home and Overseas students (for UK-based providers); the typical delivery model for awards; how space and resources are secured and allocated; and the typical approach to, and investment in, academic and professional development. In the case of providers with a number of different funding streams, AUB will wish to assure itself that the resources for its awards are appropriate and proportionate. This element of consideration may be conducted in conjunction with the review of Category One risks, and may also involve a separate report prepared in advance.
56. During the visit the panel will normally expect to meet with the following individuals or groups of individuals:
- Principal or equivalent;
 - Senior staff with responsibility for quality management and quality assurance;
 - Directors of School;
 - A representative group of academic staff;
 - A representative group of students;
 - Staff with responsibility for student support services.
- It is recognised that structure and job titles will vary by provider; the provider should nominate those who best meet these categories.*
57. At the conclusion of the visit, the panel will meet with senior managers at the partner institution and informally discuss the unconfirmed findings and recommendations to be made in the report to Academic Board.
58. Following the completion of the Institutional Approval, the panel will prepare and submit a report to the Arts University's Academic Board regarding its findings. The panel will make one of the following recommendations:

- to approve the (continued) arrangement with the partner institution for a specific time (to a maximum of five years), without conditions or recommendations for further action. Where this is not a new partnership, the arrangement will continue, uninterrupted;
- to approve the (continued) arrangement with the partner institution for a specific time (to a maximum of five years), subject to conditions or recommendations. This means that the partner is asked to prepare an action plan which addresses to the satisfaction of the Panel Chair, and Chair of Academic Board, the conditions of the event; and a written response to any recommendations. The action plan will include detailed tasks and milestones, and progress will normally be monitored by LTQ on behalf of Academic Board. Failure to make satisfactory progress against the action plan may result in further action being taken, including the possibility of a further visit to the partner;
- to suspend the arrangement. The panel will provide Academic Board with a detailed written report describing why the decision has been taken and what actions are now required by the partner institution before the arrangement can be renewed. This may require that the review panel (or a sub-group) be reconvened either to review revised documentation, or to conduct a further visit to the partner. Enrolment onto programmes of the Arts University may not take place while the arrangement is suspended, although students already on-course continue their studies uninterrupted;
- to discontinue the arrangement. The panel will provide a detailed written report describing why the decision has been taken. If this recommendation is endorsed by Academic Board, student recruitment would cease but students remaining on-programme would be enabled to complete their studies.

Management and monitoring of the partnership

59. As noted at paragraph 39, the Vice-Chancellor will nominate a lead contact for each academic partnership leading to an award of AUB. This named individual will prepare a brief annual report on the operation of the partnership, identifying any particular concerns. The report will be received by both SLT and LTQ.
60. As part of this annual review, AUB reserves the right to review the financial accounts of a provider. This can be a light-touch process but might give early indications of any emerging financial concerns. It will also expect the following annual reports:
 - i) Student enrolment numbers, within two weeks of the start of the year
 - ii) Student retention, termly
 - iii) Confidentially, the five-year forecast submitted to OfS.
61. There will normally be two meetings annually between senior members of staff at the University and the partner institution. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss the operation of the partnership, any concerns or potential developments; they may be held at either institution or, by agreement, remotely.
62. AUB must be kept informed of any proposed restructuring exercise which may impact on arrangements for AUB awards. This includes changes to both the central management structure, and course-level arrangements. AUB would not expect to be involved in reviewing or approving any changes, but must satisfy itself that the new arrangements do not create any additional risks for standards or quality. If AUB has any concerns about these new arrangements, it may take action to address this (including, in the most extreme cases, requiring a full review event).

Validation and periodic review

63. Validation and periodic review will, for all courses, be conducted using the principles set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook. A partner institution may be permitted to vary the process in response to the local context, where this is approved by LTQ. In all cases, LTQ must receive a Stage 2 approval form; and a report of the event, recommending the outcome.

Authority to deliver

64. Where a course has been already validated for delivery by AUB, and a partner wishes to deliver this course with no changes (the unit descriptors, content and learning outcomes are identical to those approved for delivery at AUB Wallisdown campus), no formal validation is required. The Authority to deliver process should be followed, as set out in this Quality Assurance Handbook.

Annual course review

65. The Annual Course Review process must meet the key principles set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook. A partner institution will normally be expected to follow the AUB process, with minor amendments to reflect its own structures, but where the partner has a well-established and successful practice of conducting annual review which meets the purposes of the University system, some flexibility may be adopted.

External examiners

66. The University is responsible for the appointment and functions of external examiners. The appointment of external examiners for programmes operating within partnership arrangements will be as outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook.
67. Where the procedure for the appointment and use of external examiners differs from that outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook, this must be explicitly outlined in the written Memorandum and approved by Academic Board. All external examiners must, as a minimum, receive an induction and written briefing documents, approved by the University, in advance of any activity at the partner organisation; and must complete a report using the template issued by the University.

Assurance of standards

68. The University will take all steps it considers necessary to assure itself that the standards of awards at the partner institution are commensurate with those expected within higher education, and are consistent with standards at the University. This may mean that academic staff of the University are involved in the final assessment of student work to confirm that the marks awarded are appropriate, although in most partnerships other forms of assurance will be accepted.

Examination Boards

69. The procedures of the University will be used for all Examination Boards. The partner institution may be given delegated authority to operate its own Examination Boards, using these procedures; a senior member of AUB staff will be entitled to attend all Examination Boards operated by the partner institution. Final recommendations for award will be made to the Progression and Awards Board at AUB. One senior member of the partner institution will be invited to attend the Progression and Awards Board.

Certificates and transcripts

70. The issuing of award certificates and transcripts for Arts University Bournemouth awards must remain under the control of the University. The name and location of any partner organisation will be included on the transcript.

SECTION C: The Committee structure of the University

1. What is a committee?

- 1.1 A Committee is simply a representative group of staff gathered together by the University to advise or agree on a particular issue or set of issues. Rather than continually calling ad hoc meetings to consider one issue, the University, in common with most organisations, has agreed some broad areas of business, and has agreed the representative group of staff who are relevant to consideration of these broad areas. What committees do (and do not do) is determined by their remit and constitution. A committee's constitution should ensure that the full range of relevant expertise is available to consider the issues it considers; and nobody should be on the committee who is not relevant to these discussions.

2. Purpose of committee structure

- 2.1 The Arts University Bournemouth acknowledges the importance of a shared ownership of its academic values and intentions. The deliberative committee structure, under the ultimate authority of the Academic Board, sets the strategic aims of the University in relation to its academic offer, and provides the means through which the community confirms the principles, approach and practices which govern its academic work. It is a feature of deliberative committees that each member holds one vote, which is used in a simple democratic forum.
- 2.2 Academic committees consider, confirm and monitor policies, procedures and regulations in support of these aims, and respond to national, regional and local priorities and initiatives. They respond to (and on occasion commission) external and internal reviews of activity, and approve and subsequently monitor any actions arising. The terms of reference and constitution of all academic committees are formally approved by Academic Board.
- 2.3 The University acknowledges the close links between the academic and executive structures, noting that the executive works to deliver an organisational structure and culture which supports academic priorities, and values academic freedom. It also ensures that the University meets its obligations as an organisation in receipt of public funds, in respect of legislation (such as relating to equalities, employment law or health and safety); and in respect of policy objectives as determined by the Government or the relevant funding bodies.
- 2.4 The management committee structure is organised along similar principles to the academic, but differs in that the committee is advisory to the Chair, who holds responsibility on behalf of the University for ensuring that advice from relevant experts, and representative staff members, is taken into account in determining decisions.
- 2.5 Communications between committees is usually through formal reporting (for instance, each committee sends a report to its parent committee). Communication with other members of the University is affected through the publication of a brief summary of the outcomes of each meeting via email and the publication of the full minutes via the intranet site. Managers might also feedback as appropriate to their teams. Where appropriate, committees will send reports or recommendations to other committees (for instance, a new course proposal will be forwarded to Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee).

3. Committee membership

- 3.1 Each Chair will nominate a Deputy from among the members of the committee to take the chair in their place in the event that they are indisposed for a specific meeting. All deputies will be approved by the Chair of Academic Board at the start of each academic year.
- 3.2 Ex Officio members are members by virtue of their post and therefore cease to be members on vacating the post unless they are also nominated under another category. There is no maximum period of office for ex officio members. Where an ex officio member is unable to attend a meeting, they may nominate an alternate to attend in their place.
- 3.3 Nominated members are those who are nominated as stipulated in the constitution, usually by a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Group (SLT). The Chair may review nominations to ensure that overall representation is balanced (both in terms of experience, and in terms of equalities considerations such as gender and age). The term of office for nominated members is three years, with a maximum of two successive terms (i.e. six years in total). No nominated member may serve for more than two terms in this capacity.
- 3.4 If a nominated member is unable to attend a meeting, the nominator may, at their discretion, nominate an alternate for that meeting.
- 3.5 Elected members are those who are elected as stipulated in the constitution, to act as a representative of their constituency. The term of office for elected members is three years, with a maximum of two successive terms (i.e. six years in total). No elected member may serve for more than two terms. Elected members may not send an alternate if they are unable to attend.
- 3.6 Any nominated or elected member who has attended fewer than 75% of the meetings of any committee during one academic year will normally be deemed to have resigned from the committee.
- 3.7 The committee secretary is not a member of the committee, unless expressly included in the constitution.
- 3.8 Many committees offer the Chair the opportunity to co-opt members. Co-option should be used where, in the view of the Chair, relevant expertise is available which is not covered by the existing membership. Co-options are used sparingly, and should only be made where necessary. Co-opted members serve for one year, but may be re-appointed. However, if the Chair considers that successive co-options are required, the normal expectation would be that the committee constitution is reviewed, to consider whether this expertise should be included as a full member in future.
- 3.9 Other relevant staff may be invited to attend a committee as an observer, either for individual items or for the whole meeting. With the agreement of the Chair, an observer may present a paper and / or engage in committee discussion, but will not be permitted to vote.
- 3.10 The role of observer may also be used as a form of staff development for staff who are new to higher education, or who lack committee experience. In these instances, the observer will not contribute to committee discussions.

4. Standing orders for committees

4.1 Meetings where no quorum is established

4.1.1 The “quorum” for a committee is the minimum number of members required for the committee to take place. For all committees at the University, quorum comprises more than 50% of the membership (including the Chair and any co-opted members, but not including any observers or the Secretary, unless they are a member, *see 3.7 above*). In addition, quorum is not established if neither the Chair nor Deputy Chair is present.

4.1.2 When insufficient members are present to establish a quorum, the Chair may take one of the following courses of action:

- postpone the meeting;
- continue with the meeting, making provisional decisions which will be presented to the next meeting for ratification (the record of such meetings will be Notes, rather than Minutes);
- take advice from those members present, and take Chair’s action to expedite urgent business.

4.2 Papers and minutes

4.2.1 The agenda and papers for meetings should be distributed one week in advance of the meeting. A second circulation of “late papers” may be made, although this will be kept to a minimum. Only in exceptional circumstances will tabled papers be acceptable. The Committee Secretary will call for papers in good time in advance of the meeting.

4.2.2 Draft minutes should be presented to the Chair for approval within one week of the meeting. When approved by the Chair, they should immediately be circulated to all members of the committee. These minutes should be clearly marked as ‘Unconfirmed’. Minutes are “Confirmed” once they are approved by the next meeting of the committee.

4.2.3 The Secretary will maintain a list of actions, and ensure that these are notified to relevant staff in order that the necessary action can be progressed.

4.2.4 Minutes of sub-committees should be received by the parent committee at its subsequent meeting. These minutes should be clearly marked as ‘Confirmed’ or ‘Unconfirmed’.

5. Terms of reference of academic committees

5.1 The terms of reference of academic committees are set out on the intranet, together with the constitution. The following academic committees are established:

Academic Board

Academic Board is the senior academic committee of the University. It holds ultimate responsibility for all academic activities of the University, including admissions; quality assurance; research; and partnerships leading to an award of the University.

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQ)

LTQ holds delegated responsibility for the oversight and evaluation of the student learning experience, including the quality management infrastructure for all courses

leading to an award of the University, whether delivered by the University or by a collaborative partner.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI)

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is the representative body which reviews the University's policies, processes and performance in relation to all equalities issues (including, but not limited to, matters of legal compliance). It is responsible for developing and monitoring the EDI Plan, and also for reviewing performance in access and participation activity.

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKE)

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee has oversight of all research and knowledge Exchange activity at the University. It agrees the strategic direction for RKE, and monitors the implementation of plans, policies and processes; and leads the AUB response to national research quality exercises.

Progression and Awards Board

The Progression and Awards Board is the body which determines student progression to subsequent levels of a course; and makes decisions about final awards. This is for all awards of the Arts University Bournemouth, including those delivered at partner colleges.

School Board

The School Board has responsibility for the academic security of all awards within the school, including the outcomes of any review processes. It may consider future academic developments, as well as the implementation of academic policy.

Research Degrees Committee

The Research Degrees Committee has oversight of the University's research degree programme. It confirms that research degree proposals conform to the University of the Arts London's Research Degree Regulations. It considers student applications for progression at each point specified by UAL, to ensure that student applications have the best chance of success. It also retains oversight of training for both research degree students and supervisors, and ensures that supervisory arrangements are effective.

Research Ethics Committee

The purpose of the Research Ethics Committee is to review any staff or student research projects which are referred to it, and ensure that ethical guidelines are followed and that appropriate arrangements are in place for any activity which may carry ethical risk.

Course Partnership Group

This meeting has no formal agenda, but is an open meeting between the Course Leader and all student course representatives to discuss any issues arising in relation to the student experience.

SECTION D: Validation and periodic review

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This chapter sets out the processes for the approval of structured learning opportunities leading to an award of the University at levels 4-7 in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). The approval of blocks of learning leading to the award of credit, but which stand outside a formal award, is explained in Section H.
- 1.2 The approval of courses or units is known as validation. No course or unit may be approved for a period longer than seven years. During the final year of validation, a periodic review will be undertaken to consider approval for a further period of up to seven years. A periodic review will take place sooner if:
- i. The course team wishes to make changes over and above the maximum levels set by LTQ;
 - ii. LTQ deems that course data, especially in relation to continuation, completion, progression or satisfaction, are not satisfactory, or otherwise determines that there may be a risk to standards or quality which necessitates a formal periodic review;
 - iii. The Director requests a review.
- 1.3 The purpose of validation is to ensure that all awards are aligned to the University's mission statement and strategic objectives. It also confirms to the University and its stakeholders that appropriate expertise, experience and resources are available to deliver the course successfully. Students may not be enrolled on a course, or unit, which has not been academically confirmed through validation.
- 1.4 The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQ) has delegated responsibility for overseeing validation and periodic reviews leading to awards of AUB. The processes used for the validation or periodic review of courses, and for minor amendments to these awards, are proportionate to the scope and complexity of the provision under consideration.
- 1.5 This chapter is divided into the following sections:
- Validation and periodic review of a Higher Education award;
 - Approval of an extended 4-year study option;
 - Minor amendments to an approved course;
 - Hybrid course approval process;
 - Authority to deliver.
- 1.6 Where a course or block of learning is offered by a partner institution with which the University has a collaborative agreement, the same principles will apply. A similar process will normally be followed, but this may be varied with the agreement of Academic Board, and included in the Memorandum of Understanding with the partner institution.

Validation and periodic review of a Higher Education award

1.0 Principles

1.1 The following principles underpin all validation and periodic review arrangements for courses leading to an award of the University. This includes an Honours degree, Foundation degree, or Master's degree:

- All new HE courses of study offered by the University should undergo the validation procedures set out below before the provision is made available to prospective students;
- The validated standing of a course will not normally exceed seven years;
- In order to retain validated standing, all HE courses of study should normally be subject to periodic review within seven years of the original validation or most recent review event;
- All new extended 4-year study options will be considered and approved by LTQ;
- New or replacement units to be introduced into validated courses should be validated through the Minor amendments to approved courses process;
- Proposals to introduce a new named award (including a pathway with an award title identified through parentheses) will be considered through the Hybrid course approval process;
- All periods of course validation approved by the University will be based upon a final cohort entry date. In cases where the University wishes to withdraw validation, this will allow the final cohort to complete their studies under the auspices of the University;
- All proposals for validation should be made in compliance with the University's regulations governing the operation of the Regulatory Framework;
- All HE provision should take account of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) stipulation that students should normally be able to follow the course as advertised, and which they apply to and subsequently enrol to; changes to this should be the exception rather than the rule.
- All HE provision should take account of the expectations of the Office for Students (OfS) Condition B1 Academic Experience.

Validation of a new course

2.0 Introducing a new course

2.1 New course proposals will normally emerge from consideration of existing provision and identifying potential niche markets, based on staff expertise, marketing reports, or feedback from employers. Alternatively, regional and national initiatives will suggest to the University alternative provision, which will be agreed through management meetings, and ratified by the Vice-Chancellor's Group.

2.2 The Director of School should nominate a lead person for the development of the course. The Quality team will contact the lead person to provide guidance on the arrangements for the validation, and the proposing lead person will be responsible for coordinating arrangements with the proposing course team. The proposing course team should include members of staff who have responsibility for the delivery of the course, course technicians and the Subject Librarian; this team is expected to attend consultations meetings and contribute towards the development of the course.

2.3 In each case a New Course Proposal form will be completed.

3.0 Approval to develop a proposal

3.1 Stage One: Outline Proposal

- 3.1.1 Schools wishing to put forward a proposal for validation must alert the University of their intention to do so at the earliest possible date.
- 3.1.2 The University has a two-stage process for new course proposals. Initial notification should be made using the Stage One: Outline Proposal form. Stage One gives summary information about the proposal and should enable the University to assess the strategic merit of proposals and to determine which, in any, of the proposals should be develop further.
- 3.1.3 Detailed information, including robust evidence of markets and resource requirements, is not required until Stage Two. This will ensure that detailed work needs only be undertaken on those proposals which the University wishes to progress. Information provided under Stage One should not be considered final, and the University acknowledges that further, more detailed work may demonstrate the unsuitability of some proposals. However, all proposers are reminded that initial decisions are taken based on the outline proposal, and are asked to be as rigorous as possible in presenting their case.
- 3.1.4 Outline Proposals are considered by the Vice-Chancellor's Group (SLT). Outline Proposals that are selected for further development proceed to Stage Two.

3.2 Stage Two: Detailed Proposal

- 3.2.1 There are two distinct elements to the Stage Two approval process. Having received initial approval, the proposing course team should complete both an Academic Case (form 2A) and a Business Case (form 2B), which includes a Cost proposal (form 2C).
- 3.2.2 The Academic Case is considered by LTQ, which will oversee the academic validation of the course. The Stage 2A form requests information about the following area:
- Course management (including the identity of any partners involved in the delivery of provision, and any professional or statutory bodies which might accredit the course);
 - Rationale for development, including collaboration opportunities with current offer;
 - Academic rationale for the proposal, including the proposed content, and expectations of graduates.
- 3.2.3 LTQ may take one of the following actions:
- it may approve the development of the course for consideration through a formal validation process. This decision would normally be based upon a *prima facie* case which clearly established that the rationale for the proposal was aligned to the University's strategic plan or;
 - it may recommend that further development of the proposal be postponed, indicating any areas which require detailed consideration before the proposal be represented or;

- it may reject the proposal.
- 3.2.4 In approving the development of the course, LTQ further agrees that Quality, in consultation with the proposing School, set a timeline for the validation. The validation process can proceed before the Business Case has been approved, although the course may not enrol students until both elements have been signed off.
- 3.2.5 The Business Case and Cost proposal is considered by SLT, which considers the resource requirements of the course and its likely recruitment and future sustainability. Detailed marking information and resourcing analysis is included within the business case, as is acknowledgement from relevant service managers to confirm that they are aware of the proposal and have made the appropriate arrangements (for example, the assignment of a UCAS code).
- 3.2.6 The processes set out below relate to the validation (or academic approval) of the course. All relevant forms are available on the University intranet.

4.0 The purpose of validation

- 4.1 Validation considers the academic coherence and validity of the course as presented. As such, the purpose of validation is to confirm that:
- i. the course meets the requirements for the relevant award and that the proposed standards are appropriate, taking account of relevant external points (such as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications).
 - ii. the course meets the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) Quality and Standards Condition B1: Students registered on each higher education course should receive a high quality academic experience, which includes, but is not limited to ensuring all of the following:
 - i. that the course is up-to-date; being representative of current thinking and practices, and informed by recent subject matter developments and developments in teaching and learning.
 - ii. that the course provides educational challenge; being no less than the minimum level of rigour and difficulty reasonably expected of the course.
 - iii. that the course is coherent; ensuring there is an appropriate balance between breadth and depth of content, with key concepts introduced at the appropriate point in the course content.
 - iv. that the course is effectively delivered; ensuring an appropriate balance between delivery methods and between directed and independent study or research.
 - v. the course requires students to develop relevant skills as appropriate to the subject matter of the course; developing knowledge and understanding, and other relevant skills including cognitive skills, practical skills, transferable skills and professional competences.
 - iii. the learning environment is satisfactory and the School has appropriate and sufficient staff and learning resources to support the delivery of the award(s).
 - iv. the rationale for the provision is clearly stated and is aligned with and supported by institutional aims and objectives.

- v. the structure of the provision is consonant with the University's Regulatory Framework and assessment regulations, as appropriate.
- vi. The provision is consistent with the University's Strategic Plan, and academic policies.

5.0 Documentation requirements for a validation

5.1 Once LTQ has given approval at Stage Two, the School is responsible for the preparation and submission of all required documentation in support of the proposal. This normally consists of two separate but related documents, plus appendices. The first document, the Course Briefing Document, is developed to illustrate the context in which the award(s) will operate. The second document is the Programme Specification (Section One of the Course Handbook); this should also include the Unit Descriptors (Section Two of the Course Handbook). The completed documents must be received by Quality at least 3 weeks before the date of the validation meeting.

5.2 Course Briefing Document

5.2.1 The Course Briefing Document provides the context to the proposed course, and should be regarded as supporting evidence to enable the panel make a judgement on the proposed offer. This document should be brief and not exceed twenty pages in length.

5.3 Programme Specification

5.3.1 The Programme Specification, which should include Unit Descriptors, should explain clearly what the course offers and how it will be delivered. It should also make clear what the course will expect of students. The Programme Specification should be developed using the standard University template.

5.4 Appendices

5.4.1 This should include the following:

- Mapping against the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ);
- UCAS entry profile for the course;
- Staff profiles include CVs;
- Marketing report;
- Detailed description of learning resources available to support the course;
- Schedule of consultation meetings.

5.5 Additional Documentation

5.5.1 The draft scheme of work and assignment brief for two units.

Process of approval

5.6 The proposing course team should start their preparation for the validation process some months in advance. The School is advised to schedule a structured development process which includes interim deadlines. It is important that the Director is involved in the development process, to ensure that University priorities are reflected in the proposal, and also that resource deployment is effective and efficient.

- 5.7 A member of the Quality team will meet with the proposing Course Leader at the start of the process. This meeting will include the Academic Officer. The Course Leader should meet with a designated member of staff who can advise on Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), Graduate Attributes (GA) and regulatory requirements, and the Subject Librarian at this stage.
- 5.8 The Director of School will confirm that the proposal is aligned with strategic objectives, and is likely to be approved following scrutiny of a validation panel. This includes taking steps to ensure that the documentation associated with the proposal is of a satisfactory standard; and ensuring that the documentation is released in accordance with agreed deadlines. Failure to meet the deadline may result in postponement or cancellation of the meeting by the Chair of LTQ.

6.0 Panel membership

- 6.1 A validation panel is established by the Chair of LTQ, with support from the Quality team.
- 6.2 The panel will normally be as follows;
- The Chair (who shall normally be a member of academic staff with significant validation experience). The Chair should not have been involved in the proposal and is not required to have expertise in the discipline to be validated. The Chair acts as the representative of the Chair of LTQ and acts with their full authority;
 - One independent internal academic member of staff, who should be from a School not associated with the course;
 - In addition, two external advisers to the panel are appointed. At least one should normally be an academic, and one member who should be either an academic or industry professional.
- 6.3 Panel members should not have had any prior association with the proposed course or its development.
- 6.4 External advisers are nominated by the School but should not normally have had any association with the University, its staff or students within the last five years. Quality will brief external panel members on their role. The School should arrange for a nomination form to be completed, which should include details of relevant external experience (for example, as external panel member at validation or periodic review, or as an external examiner). The completed form must be received by Quality at least 8 weeks before the date of the validation meeting.
- 6.5 The panel Chair will consider the appropriateness of the external advisers, and the balance of the panel, before the final arrangements are confirmed. The final panel membership will be confirmed by the Chair of LTQ.
- 6.6 Once the panel has been approved, the Quality team will provide them with details of the arrangements for the validation. This should include details on when the panel can expect to receive the documentation, and their remit.

7.0 Validation meeting

- 7.1 The Quality team will send the documentation to the panel. This will include a proforma, which the panel will be asked to complete and return to the Quality team. The proforma will be in the form of a checklist whereby the panel will indicate their

level of satisfaction with specific elements of the proposed course. If the panel identify any issues that need clarification or amending, this will be reported to the Quality team, who will forward this to the panel Chair for use in reaching a conclusion.

7.2 The validation meeting will take place at the institution where the course or programme under consideration is to be offered. The meeting takes place between the Chair and panel with the person with lead responsibility for the development of the award and, where appropriate, the proposing Director. Any issues raised are notified to the Chair and are included within the meeting agenda.

7.3 The Validation Panel should give consideration to:

- i. the documentation submitted in support of the proposal (the panel may request additional information if this is considered to be necessary).
- ii. the relevant issues to arise from the proposal that should be explored in greater detail during the validation process. These may include:
 - the context of the provision in terms of institutional strategies and plans as well as regional or national demand for provision; this may include strategies which respond to national objectives such as those for Widening Participation;
 - the closeness of fit between the specification of the provision and relevant regulations governing the title and award;
 - the standards indicated by the aims and outcomes of the provision, and their comparability with those of awards at the same level in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications;
 - the compatibility with sector recognised standards;
 - the planned content, delivery of the syllabus and teaching and assessment methods to be used within each component of the proposed provision (including special projects and work placements);
 - the contribution of the teaching, learning and assessment methods to the University's Portfolio Plan and to the achievement of the provision's aims and outcomes;
 - the appropriateness of the entry criteria and selection strategies for the aims and objectives of the provision as well as the University's strategic plans;
 - the provision's staffing resource including current staffing levels and the qualifications and experience of staff;
 - the required learning resources necessary to deliver the specified provision including access to workshop and studio space, library and IT facilities;
 - the intended booklist/texts/software for the provision.

7.4 Upon the conclusion of the validation meeting, the panel Chair, with support from the Quality team, will inform the course proposer of any areas where further work is required before the course can be recommended to LTQ for approval. This will be formalised in a written report to the course proposer and the Director.

8.0 Validation meeting outcome

8.1 The report of the validation meeting will indicate whether the proposed course meets each of the key expectations of courses at the University. If any expectation is not met, a condition or required action will be imposed. If an expectation is met but, in the view of the panel, the response could be strengthened, a recommendation will be made. Briefly:

- **conditions** are those actions which a course team must complete, to the satisfaction of the Chair, before it can enrol and register students. Conditions, therefore, relate to actions which the panel considers crucial to the operation of the course;
- **required actions** may also be crucial, but need not be completed before the course enrolls and registers students. Required actions, for instance, may relate to matters such as ongoing staff development, which cannot be completed before the course commences;
- **recommendations** are matters which the course team is asked to consider; the team is required to respond to the Chair of the panel indicating how the recommendations are to be actioned or providing a rationale for rejecting their implementation.

8.2 The final outcome will be submitted to LTQ and must contain one of the following recommendations:

- to approve the proposal subject to any conditions, required actions or recommendations, or
- to require re-submission of the proposal with a detailed description of areas for further development and a timescale for completion, or
- to reject the proposal with a detailed explanation for the recommendation.

8.3 The Chair further recommends the period of validation, i.e. the time before the course will be required to undergo a periodic review, which will be no longer than seven years.

8.4 Having received the Chair's report and recommendation, LTQ will make a final decision on the validated status of the course of study.

- **Validation approval without conditions or recommendations.** This means that the course will have validated status for a period of up to seven years, as recommended by the panel. It also means that the School can begin to recruit onto the course for delivery the next academic year.
- **Validation approval subject to meeting conditions.** If conditions of approval apply, the School will be required to meet the terms of the conditions, as confirmed by LTQ, before the course can register and enrol students. However, once the Chair of the panel has confirmed that all conditions have been met, approval may be given by Chair's action. The course will remain subject to validation until the Chair has confirmed that the conditions have been met.
- **Validation approval subject to required actions.** If required actions are identified, the School must meet the terms of the required actions, as confirmed by LTQ, in accordance with the approved timescale. However, the course will be permitted to register and enrol students.
- **Validation approval subject to recommendations.** If recommendations for further action are made, and confirmed by LTQ, the School must consider these and provide a written response to the Chair of the panel, on behalf of the committee, indicating how the recommendations are to be actioned or providing a rationale for rejecting their implementation.
- **Postponing or rejecting the validation pending further development of the proposal.** The documentation may be returned to the School for further specified work. Following the strengthening of the documentation, the Validation

Panel (or a sub-group) will be reconvened to review the proposal in its entirety and make a recommendation to LTQ on this basis. A validation proposal may only be submitted to a panel on two occasions within a single academic year.

Periodic Review of existing provision

9.0 Context for Periodic Review

- 9.1 All provision validated by the Arts University Bournemouth is validated for a maximum period of seven years, after which time a periodic review is undertaken. The process of periodic review is similar to validation.
- 9.2 The purpose of periodic review is the same as described for validation at paragraph 4.0, but in addition will include a consideration of the performance of the course under review in terms of:
- Student progression and achievement, the retention of students, their academic achievement and subsequent career success;
 - Quality management and enhancement, achievement of quality action plans, and responsiveness to student and examiner feedback.
- 9.3 The constitution of the panel is as described for validation at paragraph 6.0. However, the panel is enhanced through the inclusion of a student, who will be nominated by the University and will be from a course other than that under review.
- 9.4 The University has agreed that, on occasion, it may be appropriate to group two or more courses together for periodic review events, especially where there is significant overlap in terms of resources or where units are shared. LTQ will consider a proposal for the periodic review of more than one course according to its merits. Where a periodic review is scheduled to consider more than one course, the School will provide a summary report of those areas where there are shared elements. The panel Chair will, in discussion with the Chair of LTQ, determine whether the panel should be enhanced through additional members; however, this will not normally be required.
- 9.5 On occasion, where just cause is found, LTQ may recommend that a periodic review is postponed.
- 9.6 The proposing course team should start their preparation for the periodic review process some months in advance. The School is advised to schedule a structured development process which includes interim deadlines. It is important that the Director is involved in the development process, to ensure that University priorities are reflected in the proposal, and also that resource deployment is effective and efficient.
- 9.7 A member of the Quality team will meet with the proposing Course Leader at the start of the process. This meeting will include the Academic Officer. The Course Leader should meet with a designated members of staff who can advise on Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), Graduate Attributes (GA) and regulatory requirements, and the Subject Librarian at this stage.
- 9.8 The Director of School will confirm that the proposal is aligned with strategic objectives, and is likely to be approved following scrutiny of a periodic review panel. This includes taking steps to ensure that the documentation associated with the proposal is of a satisfactory standard; and ensuring that the documentation is released in accordance with agreed deadlines. Failure to meet the deadline may result in postponement or cancellation of the meeting by the Chair of LTQ.
- 9.9 The School is reminded of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirement that students should normally be able to follow the course which was in place when

they accepted the offer and subsequently enrolled on the course; changes to this should be the exception rather than the rule, and must be demonstrably in the student interest. Promotional material targeting new students should reflect the intentions for the proposed course. The University would normally expect current students to remain on the course for which they enrolled. Where there is a case for transferring students to the newly validated structure, the Course Leader must secure 100% agreement from the student cohort in writing prior to the transfer taking effect.

10.0 Documentation requirements for Periodic Review

10.1 Documentation requirements for periodic review are as follows:

10.2 Course Briefing Document

10.2.1 This is a self-reflective and critically evaluative document. It should be forward-looking and explain the rationale for the course as proposed, but also take account of the evidence of the most recent period in validation, noting for instance data on retention, achievement, employment, and student satisfaction; and referencing the recent reports from external examiners. It should review the target market, and likely future recruitment validation.

10.3 Programme Specification

10.3.1 The Programme Specification, which should include Unit Descriptors, should explain clearly what the course offers and how it will be delivered. It should also make clear what the course will expect of students. The Programme Specification should be developed using the standard University template.

10.4 Appendices

10.4.1 This should include the following:

- Mapping against the Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ);
- UCAS entry profile for the course;
- Most recent Annual Course Review Action Plan, with a report on progress against the actions noted;
- Course statistics for the last three years;
- External Examiner reports for the last three years;
- Staff profiles include CVs;
- Marketing report;
- Detailed description of learning resources available to support the course.

10.5 Additional Documentation

10.5.1 The draft scheme of work and assignment brief for two units.

11.0 Periodic Review meeting

11.1 The Quality team will send the documentation to the panel. This will include a proforma, which the panel will be asked to complete and return to the Quality team. The proforma will be in the form of a checklist whereby the panel will indicate their level of satisfaction with specific elements of the proposed course. If the panel identify any issues that need clarification or amending, this will be reported to the Quality team, who will forward this to the panel Chair for use in reaching a conclusion.

- 11.2 The periodic review meeting will take place at the institution where the course or programme under review is offered.
- 11.3 The Chair and panel members (including the student panel member) will meet with student representatives of the course at the start of the meeting. This will provide an opportunity to gain a sense of student satisfaction and to identify any recommendations from student feedback.
- 11.4 The panel will also have a brief tour of the resources available to support the course, to inform their discussions.
- 11.5 The periodic review meeting takes place between the Chair and panel with the Course Leader and, where appropriate, the proposing Director. With the agreement of the Chair, one further member of the course team may be invited to attend. Any issues raised are notified to the Chair and are included within the meeting agenda.
- 11.6 Upon the conclusion of the validation meeting, the panel Chair, with support from the Quality team, will inform the Course Leader of any areas where further work is required before the course can be recommended to LTQ for approval. This will be formalised in a written report to the Course Leader and the Director.

12.0 Periodic Review outcome

- 12.1 The report of the periodic review meeting will indicate whether the proposed course meets each of the key expectations of courses at the University. If any expectation is not met, a condition or required action will be imposed. If an expectation is met but, in the view of the panel, the response could be strengthened, a recommendation will be made.
- 12.2 The Chair further recommends the period of continued validation, i.e. the time before the course will be required to undergo a further periodic review, which will normally be seven years.
- 12.3. The Chair will also make a recommendation on the transfer arrangements where the School has made a case to transfer current students to the newly validated structure.
- 12.4 Having received the Chair's report and recommendation on the periodic review, LTQ will make its final decision on the status of the course. The Committee can make one of the following decisions:
 - **to approve the validated status of the course for seven years without conditions or recommendations for further action.** Student recruitment for the next intake can continue, uninterrupted;
 - **to approve the validated status of the course subject to conditions.** This means that the course's validated status is withheld until the Chair of the panel, on behalf of LTQ has confirmed that the conditions have been met in full. However, once met, the course may continue to register and enrol students;
 - **to approve the validated status of the course subject to required actions.** This means that the course's validated status continues, but the course team must meet the terms of the required actions, as confirmed by LTQ, in accordance with the approved timescale. The course may continue to register and enrol students;
 - **to approve the validated status of the course subject to recommendations for further action.** This means that the course's validated status normally

continues and the course may continue to register and enrol students. However, a written response to the recommendations must be submitted to the Chair of the panel, on behalf of LTQ detailing the way in which the recommendations are being actioned or outlining the rationale for not implementing the recommendations;

- **to suspend the validated status of the course.** LTQ will provide a detailed written report to the University's Academic Board describing why the decision has been taken and what actions it believes the School Board of Study should undertake and by when. The review panel (or a sub-group) will be reconvened to review the re-submitted documentation in its entirety and make a recommendation to LTQ on this basis. Documentation in support of a periodic review may only be submitted to a panel on two occasions within a single academic year. Student recruitment onto the course normally ceases until the suspended status of the provision has been removed. Students currently on-course continue their studies uninterrupted;
- **to discontinue the validated status of the course.** LTQ will provide a detailed written report to the Academic Board describing why the decision has been taken. Student recruitment ceases but students remaining on-course are allowed to complete their studies.

Approval of an extended 4-year study option

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Students who enrol onto the extended 4-year study option are registered onto the first year of a four-year Honours degree, and progress automatically if they complete the year successfully.
- 1.2 Courses may propose a four-year route through the normal course approval process.

2.0 Process

- 2.1 If a new course is proposed, which also includes (or comprises solely) a four-year route including an extended year, this will be considered through the standard course approval process. In most cases, however, the proposal will be to offer a four-year route alongside an established Honours degree course. Thus the three years comprising Levels 4, 5 and 6 of the course will already be in validation; and the University will already have established expertise within the discipline area. The key issues for discussion will be the consideration of the market for the course, and the resources and expertise available to deliver it.
- 2.2 If the course is undergoing periodic review, the validation of the four-year route should be considered as part of this process.
- 2.3 If the course is already in validation, LTQ or a sub-group established for this purpose will be charged with considering a proposal to introduce the four-year route. To enable the Committee to give full consideration to the viability of the proposal, it will require the following:
 - i. details about the demand for the course; and
 - ii. details about the resources available to support delivery, including staffing.
- 2.4 LTQ, or sub-group, will review this information and make a decision on whether the extended year should be introduced.
- 2.5 Courses that have an extended 4-year study option in validation will be formally considered and reviewed alongside the three-year course. This will allow for staffing and other resources to be considered, and also for the progression of students to be reviewed by the panel.

Amendments to validated courses at the University

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The University's Academic Board devolves its authority for the validation of minor modifications to validated courses to LTQ.
- 1.2 The following changes are deemed major modifications and require a full validation or review event:
- i. Introduction of new mode of delivery (such as the introduction of part-time mode, or full-time mode for a part-time course).
 - ii. Substantive change to course aims and objectives*.
 - iii. Substantive change to course learning outcomes*.
 - iv. Substantive changes to more than the permitted number of units in one year, or during the period of validation (see below) *.
 - v. Substantive change to the structure of the course*.
 - vi. Any minor modifications which result in more than 60 credits in any one stage being amended since the most recent validation or review.
- 1.3 Where a change of course or award title is proposed, LTQ shall determine whether a full event is required to consider the change, or whether approval might be granted through some other process (such as the provision of a written rationale to the Committee, with or without supporting evidence).
- 1.4 The following changes are deemed minor modifications and may be approved by LTQ on the recommendation of the School Board (a maximum of two units per stage may be changed in each academic year):
- i. Changes to course admission criteria.
 - ii. Introduction of new required units (and consequent withdrawal of units).
 - iii. Formal introduction or withdrawal of optional units within the course.
 - iv. Minor change to course structure (moving up to two units within the academic year).
 - i. Substantive change to assessment requirements of a unit*.
 - ii. Substantive change to unit learning outcomes*.
 - iii. Substantive change in the content of a unit (i.e. which affects the unit objectives / learning outcomes) *.
 - iv. Changes to co/pre-requisites of units.
- 1.5 The following modifications are deemed non-substantive and may be approved by the Director of School, as Chair of School Board:
- i. Changes to indicative reference material.
 - ii. Changes to syllabus content which does not affect objectives / learning outcomes.
 - iii. Changes of unit title.
 - iv. Introduction or withdrawal of new optional units already validated in other courses.
 - v. Drafting changes to other aspects of the unit descriptor¹.

* Substantive changes are those which result in a change of focus, approach or outcome (or means of measuring this outcome). Changes which are not substantive are those which reflect only a "tidying", or clarification.

¹ Drafting changes are those which do not affect the intention of the descriptor, but lead to an amplification, clarification or clearer articulation of this intention.

2.0 Process

- 2.1 The documentation for validation and review events includes the unit descriptor for all units to be offered as part of the course. For review events, sample Unit Information are also provided. Units introduced or amended through this process do not require additional paperwork, as their content and appropriateness within the course will be tested by the Panel. Supporting documentation for review events should outline any significant changes to the course and the reasons for these changes.
- 2.2 All units considered as part of a validation or review event will be individually named, ascribed a level and be tested, as part of the overall validation or review, in terms of their coherence and appropriateness within the course. Units validated through this approach may be selected for use within other named courses. It is up to LTQ to determine which of these units, validated as part of a named course, will be offered as a part of other courses or as elective options for students.
- 2.3 Units validated or modified outside of a named course of study require the confirmation of LTQ or the Chair of the School Board, as appropriate (*see Items 1.4 and 1.5 above*), taking account of the views of the external examiner for the unit(s). These changes will be recorded using the approved template, which is available from the Quality and Standards section of the Intranet.

3.0 Documentation requirements for unit validation

- 3.1 For a new unit, the documentation should include the draft unit descriptor, together with a brief statement which outlines:
- how it will assist the course in meeting its stated aims and objectives;
 - a full list of named courses that will use the unit (including appropriate documentation that notes whether the unit will become part of provision or an optional aspect of provision);
 - the identification of any additional learning resources required to deliver the unit;
 - the provision the unit will replace (if appropriate).

The comments of the external examiner for the course area should be attached.

- 3.2 **For amendments to an existing unit**, the documentation should include the draft unit descriptor, together with a brief statement which outlines:
- i. the reasons for the amendment(s).
 - ii. a full list of named courses which will / may use the unit.
 - iii. and the identification of any additional learning resources required to deliver the revised unit.

The comments of the external examiner for the discipline should be attached.

Process of approval

4.0 Substantive changes

- 4.1 Substantive changes should be considered by a course team meeting, including the Subject Librarian and a technician representative (where appropriate).
- 4.2 The formal proposal is then considered by School Board and, if approved, presented to LTQ.

4.3 As part of its deliberations on the proposed modified unit, the School Board and LTQ must give consideration to:

- the rationale for the modification and how it will enhance the overall student learning experience or course of study;
- how the unit fits in terms of subject balance;
- in the event of a unit withdrawal, the impact on the overall student experience of the removal of this learning opportunity;
- whether the level and its location within the intended programme(s) are appropriate;
- how the proposal integrates with the intended programme(s);
- whether additional learning resources will be required, and whether they are available;
- what type of demand for the unit exists;
- the comments of the external examiner;
- what proportion of the course will be changed with the introduction of the unit(s) this year and since its validation.

5.0 Non-substantive changes

5.1 Modifications which are not material to the aims, outcomes or assessment of the unit may be approved by the Chair of the School Board. The Chair will consider the rationale for the changes and will confirm that the proposed changes do not affect the aims, outcomes or assessment of the unit.

6.0 Record of changes

6.1 The Quality team will be responsible for maintaining a record of unit modifications, and for ensuring that provision remains stable throughout the period of validation. All completed templates must be forwarded to the Quality office in advance of their approval; where proposed changes would trigger a full review event, the Quality team will alert the School to this to enable the proposals to be withdrawn if required.

6.2 All revised unit descriptors must be forwarded to the Quality office immediately following approval for inclusion in the revised Course Handbook.

6.3 Additionally, the Quality team will prepare a brief overview report on unit changes, which will be considered by LTQ as part of the annual monitoring exercise. This will enable the committee to take an overview of the nature of changes proposed, and identify any trends or particular areas of concern.

7.0 Timing

7.1 Amendments to validated programmes will normally be considered during the spring term. All units approved through this process may be offered during the next academic year.

8.0 Lapse of validated status

8.1 The continuing validated status of any course or block of learning which does not recruit for three successive academic years will be deemed to have lapsed. The course must be considered through the full validation process (including initial approval) before it can be offered to students. This is to ensure that all courses are

reviewed and revised on a regular basis, and remain aligned to the University's mission and strategic objectives.

- 8.2 In addition, a School may wish to withdraw a course from validation. In these circumstances, the School Board should consider the matter and make a recommendation to LTQ, citing the reasons for the proposed withdrawal, using the template which is available through the intranet. The decision to withdraw a course is at the sole discretion of the committee.

Hybrid course approval process

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The hybrid course approval process has been introduced to consider proposals for change that do not fit neatly within either the full periodic review process or the minor modifications process. Specifically, this could include the introduction of a new pathway or award where most or all of the units are already approved and used for an existing award or awards, but where new dedicated units are to be introduced, or a new route through existing units made available.
- 1.2 The hybrid course approval process is used to review proposals which introduce a new named award (including a pathway with an award title identified through parentheses), but where the maximum new credit to be included is 60 credits or less per level, and 100 or fewer credits across the whole of an award.

2.0 Process

- 2.1 Proposals to be considered through the hybrid process are considered at School level, with a recommendation made to LTQ. It is legitimate to hold one event to consider more than one such proposal. The documentation requirements for each proposal are the same as for a periodic review (Course Briefing Document and draft Programme Specification, including Unit Descriptors), although the Course Briefing Document may be briefer than for a full five-year review. The panel also mirrors that for periodic review.
- 2.2 It remains the default position that significant course changes should be considered through a full periodic review event. The Quality team will advise on any cases where it is unclear which process should be followed.

Authority to Deliver Arts University Bournemouth Courses

1. The Authority to Deliver process applies only in the case where a partner provider proposes delivery of a course already validated by AUB to which no changes are proposed: the unit descriptors, content and learning outcomes are identical to those approved for delivery at AUB Wallisdown campus.
2. The intention is to deliver robust and secure assurance without imposing unrealistic and unnecessary burdens.
3. The Chair of LTQ will appoint an AUB senior academic member of staff to prepare a report on the suitability of staffing and resources at the partner institution. This includes considering any specific health and safety arrangements relating to those resources. The nominee must have experience of academic quality assurance processes or be a member of LTQ with appropriate experience. They will be supported by one external academic (who might previously have been involved in the validation of the course). The nominee will also consider admissions (minimum

requirements and how these are assessed) and induction to the course to ensure that students are well prepared for study.

4. The report will be based on a review of the staff and resources available at the partner institution, to include an audit of staff experience and qualifications, and a recommendation as to whether both would be sufficient for the proposed first intake and that future acquisition of resources and / or staff development or recruitment is planned, to ensure the institution can sustain growth as further student intakes arrive. The report will also offer any observations on the suitability of the admissions process, and arrangements for induction.
5. The process might include a visit to the provider, although this will not be required if verification can be provided by other members of AUB who have already conducted a site visit. On no occasion will this process rely on a partner college's statement of their resources.
6. The reports and recommendations / outcomes from the review would be presented to LTQ for final decision.
7. AUB accepts that some resources may not be in place at the time of the review approval (either at AUB or at a partner); for example, staff may not be recruited or resources formally purchased until after the formal approval. In this instance, the resourcing plan will be reviewed, and any approval will be subject to the requisite evidence being provided by a deadline set by AUB and well before the course is due for delivery.
8. It is important to note that this process does **not** apply to situations where a partner wishes to franchise a course but proposes to make minor but substantive changes (as outlined in the Minor amendments process in the Quality Assurance Handbook).

SECTION E: Annual review process

Annual Course Review

1. Overview of the process

- 1.1 The University requires all courses to undergo an annual review process which encourages reflection on the past year, and considers improvements which can be made for the future.
- 1.2 In addition, the University has adopted a comprehensive and integrated planning process for all discipline areas. The process is designed to ensure that performance, and intentions, are aligned to the strategic objectives, with a clear plan for the coming year which supports the needs of colleagues.
- 1.3 The Annual Course Review process is described in the first part of this section; details about the integrated planning process follow for information.
- 1.4 The Annual Course Review process should take account of the Office for Students (OfS) Quality and Standards Condition B1: Students registered on each higher education course should receive a high quality academic experience, which includes, but is not limited to ensuring all of the following:
 - that the course is up-to-date;
 - that the course provides educational challenge;
 - that the course is coherent;
 - that the course is effectively delivered;
 - the course requires students to develop relevant skills as appropriate to the subject matter of the course.

2. Arrangements for Annual course review

These arrangements apply to all Higher Education courses at the University; where a course has an extended 4-year study option, the course will be reviewed alongside the 3-year course.

- 2.1 Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is responsible for the Annual Course Review process, and the associated timescales. Overall University oversight of the process rests within the University Secretary's Office.
- 2.2 The purposes of the annual course review (ACR) process are:
 - To assure the University that the quality and standards of each course remain secure;
 - To assure the University that emerging trends in student data, at University and course level, are identified and considered in timely fashion;
 - To assure the University that each course remains responsive to the external environment.
- 2.3 As such, the process is aligned to the requirements of the University.
- 2.4 The review process requires course teams annually to reflect on a range of evidence, including the views of external examiners, students and employers, and relevant student data. The University has agreed that the ACR process should be aligned to the concept of risk analysis, so that course teams concentrate on addressing

immediate concerns, and responding to key opportunities and threats. As such, the process is designed to be both backward-looking (and to provide assurance about quality and standards), but also predictive, to ensure that courses are taking appropriate and timely action to respond to developments in the discipline or the sector.

- 2.5 The annual review process focuses on the operation, delivery and positioning of validated courses on a year-to-year basis. This is distinct from validation, which is the process by which all new courses or parts of courses are approved; and periodic review, which takes a longer-term view of provision and considers its continued mission-alignment and strategic value. The procedures for validation and review are contained in a separate section of the Handbook.
- 2.6 The process of ACR is undertaken in a self-critical and supportive environment where the views of staff, students, externals and others that contribute to the delivery of courses can be expressed and fully considered. An intended outcome of the process is to ensure that the standards of all courses are maintained, and that the quality of learning opportunities is monitored and improved. It also provides a vehicle for the University to identify and share good practice across courses.
- 2.7 The Course Leader completes the annual course review report, taking account of all relevant evidence. Completed reports are forwarded to the School Board for confirmation at an extraordinary meeting held for this purpose.
- 2.8 Following the extraordinary meeting(s) of the School Board to consider the reports for undergraduate courses, the minutes of the meeting are received by LTQ to enable the Committee to assure itself that the process has operated effectively.
- 2.9 Following the conclusion of the course-level process, the University Secretary, on behalf of the Academic Lead on Standards and Quality (ALSQ), prepares an Overview Report which identifies issues to emerge from the annual review process across the institution, and any other quality assurance developments during the academic year. The Overview Report includes a University Quality Assurance Action Plan. The Overview Report and Action Plan are submitted to Academic Board for approval, and are also considered by the Board of Governors.
- 2.10 Partner institutions are expected to hold a formal meeting to give consideration to their ACR reports. A representative of the University will normally attend this meeting and the minutes will be received by LTQ.
- 2.11 In the case where a partner institution is offering an individual award / suite of related awards, LTQ will identify a School Board at the University to consider the report. The relevant Course Leader(s) from the partner institution will normally be expected to attend this meeting, where this is practical.

3. Summary of the annual course review

3.1 Process for Annual Review of Undergraduate courses

- 3.1.1 The following section outlines the ACR process which has been approved by LTQ.

Evidence base

Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee has agreed a range of indicators against which each course is measured. Each of these is a simple metric and does not involve any “judgement”. In each case, there is a standard answer or target approved

by LTQ. Additional evidence will include information from unit reviews, or student feedback from Course Partnership Group meetings.

SWOT analysis

The course undertakes a SWOT analysis. This must be rigorous, and reinforced by evidence (rather than anecdote). A list of possible risk factors has been produced to inform this discussion. This will include a consideration of any action points from the previous academic year which have not been addressed in full, and their implications.

Action plan

The action plan from the previous academic year will be attached, with a report on progress made against each of the action points. Some of these actions may have been longer term, and hence may not have been completed. Where an action has not been completed, this will normally be carried forward to the next year, although the team may consider that other opportunities or risks are now more significant. The course will prepare an action plan. The action plan will:

- Identify remedial action to address any weaknesses (this should not include activity which has already been completed, but should be targeted action with a defined timescale);
- Outline any action to be undertaken in response to the opportunities (this may be longer term, and may include further investigation to be undertaken by the course team, or requests for activity by other members of the University community);
- Outline any action to be undertaken in response to the threats (this may also be longer term, but should indicate clear milestones which will enable the School Board, and the course team, to monitor progress and mitigate any threats).

Response to report(s) from the external examiner(s)

The course presents the draft response to the report(s) from external examiner(s). Once approved by School Board, the response should be sent to the examiner(s).

Annex:

Courses should include as an annex a list of student successes from the last academic year (including any notable alumni successes, which should be appropriately identified).

4. Timetable

**Please note that this outline timetable is effective until further notice. The precise arrangements are reviewed annually and approved by LTQ. The outline would, for instance, be revised in the event that the shape of the academic year were to change.*

- 4.1 Data indicators are issued for each undergraduate course in July.
- 4.2 Updated quality indicators will be issued in early September, which will include information not previously available (such as the outcomes of the National Student Survey, and updated referral and retention reports).
- 4.3 Undergraduate course reports will be completed by the middle of September.

- 4.4 School Boards will meet early in the Autumn term to confirm the reports.
- 4.5 LTQ will receive the minutes from the School Board meeting at the next meeting following the School Board.
- 4.6 The University Secretary will prepare an Overview Report, which provides evidence to Academic Board that LTQ has discharged its devolved responsibility for the standards and quality of AUB awards during the past year. This will include drawing together common threads from the Annual Course Review. The Overview Report will be finalised such that it can be approved by an extraordinary meeting of Academic Board in November of each academic year.
- 4.7 Data indicators are issued for each postgraduate taught course within one month of the conclusion of the course. Reports will be considered by the next available meeting of the School Board; and the relevant School Board minute presented to the next available meeting of LTQ.

Unit reports

1. Unit evaluations are used to secure feedback from students on individual units: at least one unit should be evaluated for each level of each course each year (this is the minimum number required); the maximum number of years between evaluations of a given unit is 2 years for Level 6 units and 3 years for Levels 4 and 5 units. All units with a credit weighting of 60 should be evaluated every year.
2. The unit evaluation (student satisfaction with the unit) will be conducted at the point of hand-in for the unit (although it may be slightly before or after if there are good reasons for this, and the integrity of the process can be assured).
3. The responses will be processed by the Academic Office.
4. The unit is complete once assessment has been concluded. The unit report should then be prepared within five working days.
5. The unit report is a summary of the operation of the unit. It should be no more than one side of A4 in total (and will usually be much shorter than this), and should include:
 - i. A brief summary of the unit evaluation and student performance (overall spread of marks, how many students were referred and/or failed to submit).
 - ii. Recommendations for action made by the unit leader based on the overall experience of the unit. This might reference timing; staffing; resources; structure of delivery; and any issues which might lead to a minor modification if appropriate.
6. The report is shared with the Course Leader and the Director, and presented to the next available School Board.
7. In the meantime, it is open to the Course Leader and Director to take immediate action on receipt of the report if this is necessary – there is no requirement to wait for a formal meeting. If it is evident that consideration needs to be given urgently to matters of resources, including staff resources, then it would be expected that swift action would be taken to address this.

SECTION F: Verification Exercise

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Verification is a means of providing additional assurance that the grading matrix is being applied consistently across all courses. It also provides a useful developmental opportunity to newer staff, especially those without a previous background in higher education. The Exercise takes place prior to the Subject Examination Boards, such that any specific concerns can be addressed before marks are confirmed.

2.0 Process

- 2.1 The largest unit at Level 6 (likely to be the major project unit) will be subject to review.
- 2.2 Whilst the panel is invited to make an overall judgement on the standard of the work, a specific theme or focus may be agreed for the exercise in any individual year; this will be agreed by LTQ.
- 2.3 Each Honours degree course will be invited to submit the work of at least 5 pieces of work. There are no strict criteria to determine the work which should be submitted, but it is anticipated that Course Leaders will give due attention to the following:
- i. Confirmation of any very high marks (of above 75%), possibly through the inclusion of work to represent this band.
 - ii. Confirmation of any fail / marginal pass marks (30-42%), possibly through the inclusion of work to represent this band.
 - iii. The inclusion of any work which might be characterised as unusual and which, in consequence, may warrant further scrutiny.
 - iv. The need to provide a generally representative sample which will enable an overview of the course as a whole.
- 2.4 Course Leaders will be asked to provide guidance in advance on how their course conducts group assessment.
- 2.5 Where possible work will be accessed via the on-line assessment system, WISEflow. Any additional digital material should be provided in an easily accessible format and with clear instructions for viewing the work.
- 2.6 The panel will be led by a Director, who will be in attendance throughout the exercise. A second Director will be available to contact throughout this process (and it is likely that any communication regarding courses within the School will be directed through the Director).
- 2.7 Directors will be responsible for confirming the panel members, noting that each should have sufficient experience to play a full part in the moderation process. It is open for Directors to suggest additional members of staff as participants (or observers) as part of their development, but these may not replace the formal members of the panel.
- 2.8 The Director will make formal report to LTQ at its final meeting of the year.

- 2.9 Partner institutions are expected to hold an equivalent exercise. A representative of the University will normally attend this meeting and a report will be received by LTQ.
- 2.10 In the case where a partner institution is offering an individual award / suite of related awards, the relevant Course Leader(s) from the partner institution will normally be expected to attend the verification exercise at the University, where this is practical.

SECTION G: Student engagement with quality processes

1. Position statement

- 1.1 The Arts University Bournemouth is committed to providing a high quality student learning experience, enabling the development of professionally qualified graduates. It values the transformative power of education, and believes that this transformation is most likely to be achieved when students are fully engaged in the creation and shaping of their learning experience.

2. Definition

- 2.1 *Student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution¹.*

The aims of student engagement activity at AUB are:

- To encourage and enable student involvement in University decision-making processes, through both representation and feedback, securing a high level of democratisation;
- To secure and sustain an environment in which all students, regardless of discipline, level of study, background or characteristic, are able to participate fully in a high-quality educational community, and to fulfil their potential;
- To provide an environment which is student-centred and encourages active participation in learning, including student involvement in the design of their learning experience.

3. Principles

- 3.1 In support of these aims, the following principles are adopted:
- i) All students should be made aware of opportunities to engage in decision-making processes (SU elections, student representative elections, periodic review membership) and have a fair opportunity to participate in these.
 - ii) All incoming sabbatical officers should have a coherent and comprehensive induction during the first two months of their term of office, supported by both the Trustees and the University, to ensure they understand the decision-making processes of the University and thus enable them to participate to best effect in these processes.
 - iii) All student representatives at course level should receive training in the role.
 - iv) All students engaged in validation or periodic review should receive training and support in the role.
 - v) Students who wish to be involved in national activities (either as a representative of AUB or AUBSU, or participating in sector-wide processes) should be able to do so; and supported and encouraged where there is good reason to believe their participation will be beneficial to themselves, AUBSU or AUB.

¹ Trowler, V. (2010), *Student Engagement Literature Review*, available at www.heacademy.ac.uk [accessed 1 May 2013]

- vi) Students should be involved, where relevant, in processes of quality assurance and enhancement. This includes being included in working groups established to consider specific aspects of the quality management framework.
 - vii) Reviews of processes of course design, delivery and assessment should secure student views; and should be based on national and international research on effective practice (with specific relevance to the creative arts). Such reviews should consider how best to encourage innovative approaches to design and delivery.
 - viii) Curriculum structures should be sufficient flexible to permit and encourage peer and community learning, and should reward students who engage in this successfully.
 - ix) Students should be encouraged to take full advantage of the extended learning opportunities available to them (such as, for example, engaging with creative outputs such as theatre, cinema, galleries and other exhibitions); and the rewards of such activities should be evident.
 - x) Proxy measures of student engagement should be developed, and the outcomes reported annually to LTQ.
- 3.2 Specific arrangements in relation to the processes of quality assurance and enhancement are given below for reference.
- 3.3 The panel membership for periodic reviews includes students as panel members. Training and support is provided to enable students to participate as a full panel member with authority to ask questions and pursue particular lines of enquiry. The review can continue in the event that no student is available. Students may also be included on validation panels but, given the lack of data on the student experience and the absence of a student meeting, this is discussed with potential student panel members on an individual basis.
- 3.4 The University has a well-established student representative system. The Course Partnership Group (CPG) meets at course level, and comprises the Course Leader and nominated members of academic staff together with the elected student reps (one for each PGT course, and two for each cohort at undergraduate level). It will meet at least twice in each academic year. If matters are raised which are outside the scope of the CPG (i.e. they are not course management or academic matters), the student reps will be asked to raise these with the Students' Union.
- 3.5 Unit evaluations are used to secure feedback from students on individual units. Feedback from course representatives and unit evaluations are considered by course teams with responses given in the annual course review (ACR). The panel of a periodic review event will meet with a group of students from the course under consideration; the feedback of which will assist the panel in reaching a conclusion. There is student representation on the central academic committees and sub-groups, and students are invited to take part in staff recruitment processes.
- 3.6 Final year students are encouraged to engage in the National Student Survey (NSS), a survey conducted annually by an external agency (currently Ipsos-Mori UK) on behalf of the Funding Council. The purpose of the NSS is to provide feedback on the quality of students' courses, the results of which are published on the Unistats website to enable stakeholders, including future applicants, to compare information across institutions.
- 3.7 All students are able to participate in the University's internal survey, the Student Perception Survey (SPS) that is conducted on an annual basis.

- 3.8 The results from both the NSS and SPS surveys are used to determine student satisfaction according to different categories; including by course, theme and equality target groups. The results are divided into those that are course specific, the results of which will be reported through the ACR, and those that are University wide, which will be discussed by relevant committees. Any issues arising from these surveys will be identified on the appropriate ACR action plan. LTQ will consider the results from both surveys and will make a decision on any action that might be required where an issue is identified that gives rise to high levels of dissatisfaction across the full student body; this will be noted in the Annual Overview Report on higher education awards, and included in the action plan. Equalities Committee considers the student experience using the breakdown of results according to equality target groups.

SECTION H: Validation, review and operation of credit-bearing units not leading to an award, and blocks of learning which do not lead to the award of credit

Validation, review and operation of credit-bearing units not leading to an award

1. Scope

- 1.1 This section sets out the validation, review and organisational arrangements for any units which lead to the award of credit by the Arts University Bournemouth, but which are not designed to contribute to an award. These arrangements have been determined by Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQ) to ensure that any units leading to credit awarded by the Arts University Bournemouth are of an appropriate standard, and of suitable quality. For the avoidance of doubt, at least 60 credits are required for an award at Level 7; and at least 120 credits are required for an award at Levels 4-6.
- 1.2 All units which form a core or optional part of a validated course will be approved as part of the validation / periodic review of the course. This applies irrespective of other modes of study in which the unit may be taken.
- 1.3 The introduction of new units, which will form a core or optional part of a validated course, will be approved through the minor modification process as currently described in the Quality Assurance Handbook (i.e. approved by LTQ).
- 1.4 Proposed elective units remain the academic responsibility of the course delivering the unit. This applies irrespective of which students are entitled to take the unit. (In other words, a unit written and developed by Textiles for other students across a wide range of courses remains the responsibility of Textiles.) These units are validated and revised in exactly the same way as core / optional units; they may be approved when the course is validated / reviewed, or through the introduction of a new elective unit through LTQ.
- 1.5 This section relates specifically to standalone units which lead to the award of credit. Standalone units are defined as those which are proposed to sit outside the undergraduate or postgraduate course framework; they may be taken as part of an independent study unit, and may potentially be offered as an elective if they are of an appropriate size. However, they are designed to be studied independently, and may include the accreditation of in-house training courses offered by local companies, or the accreditation of training which is offered by the University, either to a specific target group, or made publicly available.
- 1.6 It is possible for some units to be linked, or to be designed for consecutive study, but these may not be built into an award. Any programme of study which is expected to lead to an award must be mapped against the Regulatory Framework.
- 1.7 It is possible for an undergraduate or postgraduate unit to be offered, in its entirety, to an external group, where there is a clear market. This requires careful consideration of the issues of structure and design as well as staff and other resources. Where the unit is already in validation, no further approval process is required, although the relevant Director should give careful consideration to any pre-requisite or co-requisite learning, as well as resourcing issues, before agreeing for the unit to be offered.
- 1.8 Equally, it is possible for units which are taken independently to contribute towards a named award, either by being included as part of an independent study unit, or by contributing to a claim for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

2. Principles which apply to the development and operation of standalone units

The following principles apply to all standalone units:

- 1 A unit is a self-contained block of learning with a coherent set of aims and learning outcomes, and associated assessment processes.
- 2 The result of each unit is expressed as a series of Learning Outcomes. Attainment of these is the objective of the unit; measuring their attainment is the purpose of assessment. The expression of unit objectives as Learning Outcomes, and how they are assessed, is included within each unit descriptor.
- 3 As each unit is self-contained, it results in an assessment of defined learning outcomes within the period of the unit. Each unit is essentially a free-standing and complete educational experience.
- 4 All units are attributed to a level which indicates the standard of work normally required for successful completion. The University has developed level descriptors, which give the general characteristics associated with an award at each level and provide a template against which units may be aligned. These Level Descriptors are based on the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and conform to the UK Credit Accumulation and Transfer Schemes. Whilst the complexity of content contributes to the assignment of a level, the key determining factor in ascribing a level is the complexity of the assessment requirement, and the nature of work expected of a student. Hence two units which appear similar in content may be at different levels if the assessment requirements differ. The Descriptors for University courses are available on the intranet
- 5 The following levels are available in the CPD Framework:
 - Level 4 (equivalent to the first year of an Honours degree or Foundation degree);
 - Level 5 (equivalent to the second year of an Honours degree or Foundation degree);
 - Level 6 (equivalent to the third year of an Honours degree);
 - Level 7 (equivalent to Masters level study).
- 6 All units are described in a consistent manner detailing their level, credit rating, aims, learning outcomes, assessment component and assessment criteria. This information is contained within a formal unit descriptor, which is approved before the student undertakes the learning. There is no standard definition of delivery methods, except that these should be appropriate to the stated learning outcomes.
- 7 Each unit developed as part of the CPD Framework has a credit rating. The amount of credit for each unit is determined by the amount of time required to complete the learning and assessment for the unit. In accordance with the Academic Credit Framework for UK Higher Education (and hence in line with standard practice within the sector), one credit is allocated for ten notional study hours.
- 8 Notional study hours can comprise the following types of activity:
 - Contact hours in respect of formal activity (lectures, seminars, training etc);

- Background reading;
- Personal study time;
- Completion of Personal Learning Log;
- Completion of assignments;
- Revision for assessment.

Note that this is an indicative list, and the activity will in each case be determined by the nature of the unit and associated learning.

- 9 Credit can only be assessed and awarded if there is a process of formal assessment. Assessment is therefore a key element to make judgements as to the award of credit.
- 10 The smallest unit permitted within the CPD Framework comprises 5 credits. Credit can be awarded in multiples of 5 up to the largest unit, which comprises 20 credits.
- 11 A student successfully completing any unit is awarded the full amount of credit assigned to that unit.
- 12 Credit indicates threshold achievement or above, and is wholly allocated on a pass/fail basis. There are no circumstances in which partial credit can be awarded for partial completion or success in particular elements of a unit.
- 13 Credit is not used for grading. The marking scheme quantifies levels of achievement.
- 14 The CPD Framework is not designed for the delivery of whole or part qualifications, but to enable the accreditation and certification of learning. However, all students who successfully complete a unit or units will be given a transcript which records individual achievement. It will list the units completed; the level and credit-rating; and the outcome achieved.
- 15 Once awarded, credit cannot be taken away or withdrawn as it represents achievement gained in relation to approved study, except in cases of proven academic misconduct – see Academic Misconduct Policy.
- 16 Credit cannot normally be “double counted”, i.e. used to contribute towards more than one award, although any credit achieved through the CPD Framework might be offered as part of an RPL claim for future study, subject to the normal procedures for considering such claims.
- 17 A unit leader is identified for each unit. The Unit Leader has discretion to determine whether or not to admit a student onto a unit, i.e. to allow the student to enrol.
- 18 Every unit should provide a clear statement indicating the level of prior knowledge and skills required by students before commencing the unit. This is to ensure that students are enrolled only where there is a realistic expectation that they will be able to undertake the learning, and demonstrate the outcomes to an appropriate level.
- 19 Assessment tasks should enable all learning outcomes for a unit to be assessed.
- 20 All assessment tasks should be explicitly defined in a written brief, except where a learning agreement is developed to define individual study within the

parameters of a unit. Formative assessment tasks, which are primarily diagnostic and do not contribute to the overall mark for the unit, must also be listed, and must make a clear contribution to the student learning experience.

- 21 Assessment methods should be flexible to encourage achievement by students with a variety of strengths and learning styles.
- 22 Some units may require the preparation and delivery of a learning agreement, in which the student identifies how they intend to meet the unit aims and learning outcomes. This will vary according to individual student interest and aspirations, and enables each student to vary the work which is to be produced for assessment. The agreement must be approved by the unit leader and should be prepared using the standard learning agreement proforma.
- 23 Units of less than 20 credits will be graded Pass/Fail. Units of 20 credits may be marked Pass/Fail or, where this is agreed as part of the validation process, allocated a percentage mark using the relevant grade descriptors.
- 24 Students should receive feedback on their work to contribute to their learning and development. Feedback should relate to learning outcomes and should substantiate the unit outcome.
- 25 Any student who fails an assessment task (or who fails to submit to deadline) will have one further opportunity to demonstrate the unit outcomes, to a deadline agreed with the Unit Leader.
- 26 The deadline for submission for reassessment should be no less than four weeks and no more than three months from the original deadline.
- 27 Failure at reassessment will result in no credit being awarded, although the student may (with the agreement of the Unit Leader) take the unit again in future with no penalty. This will incur the full tuition fee.
- 28 When it is presented for approval, each unit descriptor must indicate the proposed length of the unit, i.e. the length of time which is normally expected between enrolment and submission of work. There is no standard "shape" for a unit, which may be heavily taught or may rely largely on self-directed study. One consideration, at approval, will be how realistic the workload appears to be.
- 29 Units are not required to follow the academic year or timetable. However, each unit descriptor must be explicit about the anticipated resource requirements, and should include a statement about how these will be managed, especially if there is a need to use University resources.

3. Validation of standalone units

- 3.1 Proposed standalone units leading to the award of credit MUST be allocated as the responsibility of an established course team, which constitutes the home course for the unit. It is possible that the unit leader, responsible for delivery, does not lead any of the units on the home course; but overall responsibility for quality and standards rests with the home Course Leader. These units are validated and revised in the same way as core or optional units; they may be approved when the course is validated / reviewed (alongside the course), or through the introduction of a new credit-bearing unit through LTQ.

- 3.2 Proposed standalone units of less than 20 credits are subject to approval as follows:
- i. If a staff member is interested in developing a unit or receives an external request for a particular unit, they should discuss the matter with their line manager prior to starting on the development; and should identify the relevant course team who will hold academic responsibility for the unit.
 - ii. The proposal will require approval from the relevant Director
 - iii. Having gained agreement in principle, the unit or suite of units should be written in consultation with the Director and in accordance with the principles outlined above. The proposal form and unit descriptor for a standalone unit, available from the intranet, should be completed.
 - iv. The proposal should include information on the target student group and evidence of demand for this provision.
 - v. The required documentation should be submitted to the Quality team, who will set up a meeting of the LTQ sub-group to consider the units.
 - vi. The LTQ sub-group will meet as required to consider any proposed units; the group will have two options:
 - Recommending the unit(s) for approval.
 - Recommending the unit(s) for further work and subsequent resubmission to the sub-group.
 - vii. Any units which are recommended for approval are passed to the Academic Lead on Standards and Quality (ALSQ) as Chair of LTQ for final approval.

4. Confirmation of assessment outcomes

- 4.1 Arrangements for the confirmation of assessment outcomes are as follows:
- i. The Unit Leader is responsible for the assessment of all work on the unit.
 - ii. Given the scale of provision, it would be unrealistic to appoint an external examiner to review outcomes. However, in order to assure consistency of outcome, the ALSQ will approve a panel of appropriate academic staff as moderators for work presented for standalone units. The size of the panel may vary depending on the amount of work to be reviewed.
 - iii. The moderation process involves the sampling of some work to confirm consistency in the application of appropriate standards (as articulated with the level descriptors) and consistency of judgement.
 - iv. The moderator for each unit must have lead responsibility for the assessment of at least some work at the comparable level (either undergraduate or postgraduate), which is itself subject to external examination.
 - v. In addition, the nominees appointed by the ALSQ may identify additional moderation activities as required. This might include the central moderation of a sample of work from across several units, either by the moderation panel or by an external examiner.
 - vi. Outcomes will not be deemed to be confirmed until the moderation process is complete.
 - vii. Results will be presented for approval to the ALSQ.

5. Annual review

- 5.1 All units should be evaluated by the Unit Leader through the standard Unit review process.

- 5.2 The Chair of LTQ will nominate an appropriate member of staff who will prepare an annual report for LTQ on the operation of standalone units of less than 20 credits during the academic year, noting in particular any areas of concern, and identifying any actions required. This will include an overview of the evaluations prepared by Unit Leaders.
- 5.3 The report will normally be considered as part of the annual review cycle, and hence received by LTQ in the Autumn of each year.

6. Delivery and Administration issues

- 6.1 The unit leader should carry out the administration associated with the development and delivery of the unit, with the exception of particular duties specified below which will be undertaken by Registry.
- 6.2 Registry will hold the list of approved units, but does not hold academic responsibility for them.
- 6.3 Prior to validation the Unit Leader should make contact with the Student Records team and provide unit information as detailed on the validation form, in order that the unit can be set up on SITS, the Student Records database. The Unit Leader should also agree appropriate tuition fees with the Income Accountant/Student Accounts Officer.
- 6.4 Details of students undertaking a unit within this CPD Framework must be included within the HESA return; it is therefore essential that appropriate data is obtained from all students. The unit leader should ensure that all students complete enrolment forms prior to the start or on the first day of the unit delivery. Completed forms should then be passed to Registry.
- 6.5 Fees (if applicable) must be paid prior to or at enrolment; students will be subject to the Fees and Charges Payment Policy.
- 6.6 If attendance is required for unit delivery, a register must be kept and Registry informed if any student withdraws prior to completion of the unit.
- 6.7 The Unit Leader is responsible for assessment and arranging moderation.
- 6.8 Once assessment has taken place and results confirmed through moderation, the completed register and assessment results should be returned to Registry.
- 6.9 Students who pass a standalone unit will receive a transcript indicating the credit awarded and a certificate of achievement (following confirmation of the results as described in paragraph above). Registry is responsible for providing transcripts and certificates.

Process for approving blocks of learning which fall outside the UK credit framework

1. The following sets out the process for the approval of blocks of learning, some of which may be substantial, which fall outside the UK credit framework. This may be because they are at Level 2 or 3; or because they are not designed to meet credit requirements (because they have no formal assessment, or because the outcomes are not designated at a specific Level or volume).
2. The proposer should complete a brief proposal form, which is available on the Intranet, that provides information about the following:

Key information

This should include:

- Course title;
- Mode of attendance;
- Length of course (in weeks);
- Start date / end date;
- Course lead (this may be different to the person who delivers the course);
- Resource requirements (including staffing and rooms)
- How completion will be recognised (if progression to further study at AUB, how this will be managed);
- Fee information;
- University team responsible for delivery.

Course overview

This should include:

Course summary

Any pre-requisites to the course (e.g. English language skills)

Scheme of work

Resumé or CV of tutor.

Approval information

This should include:

- Is the course accredited by an external body?
- Does the course anticipate independent study time?
- Will the course include formal assessment (i.e., is it “passed”)?
- Will the course include English language provision?
- Does the course include any trips and if so, are these compulsory or optional?
- Does the course require 50 or more hours of contact?

If the answer to ALL the above questions is **no**, the simple approval process (as below) should be followed. If the answer to ANY of the above questions is **yes**, the formal process must be followed.

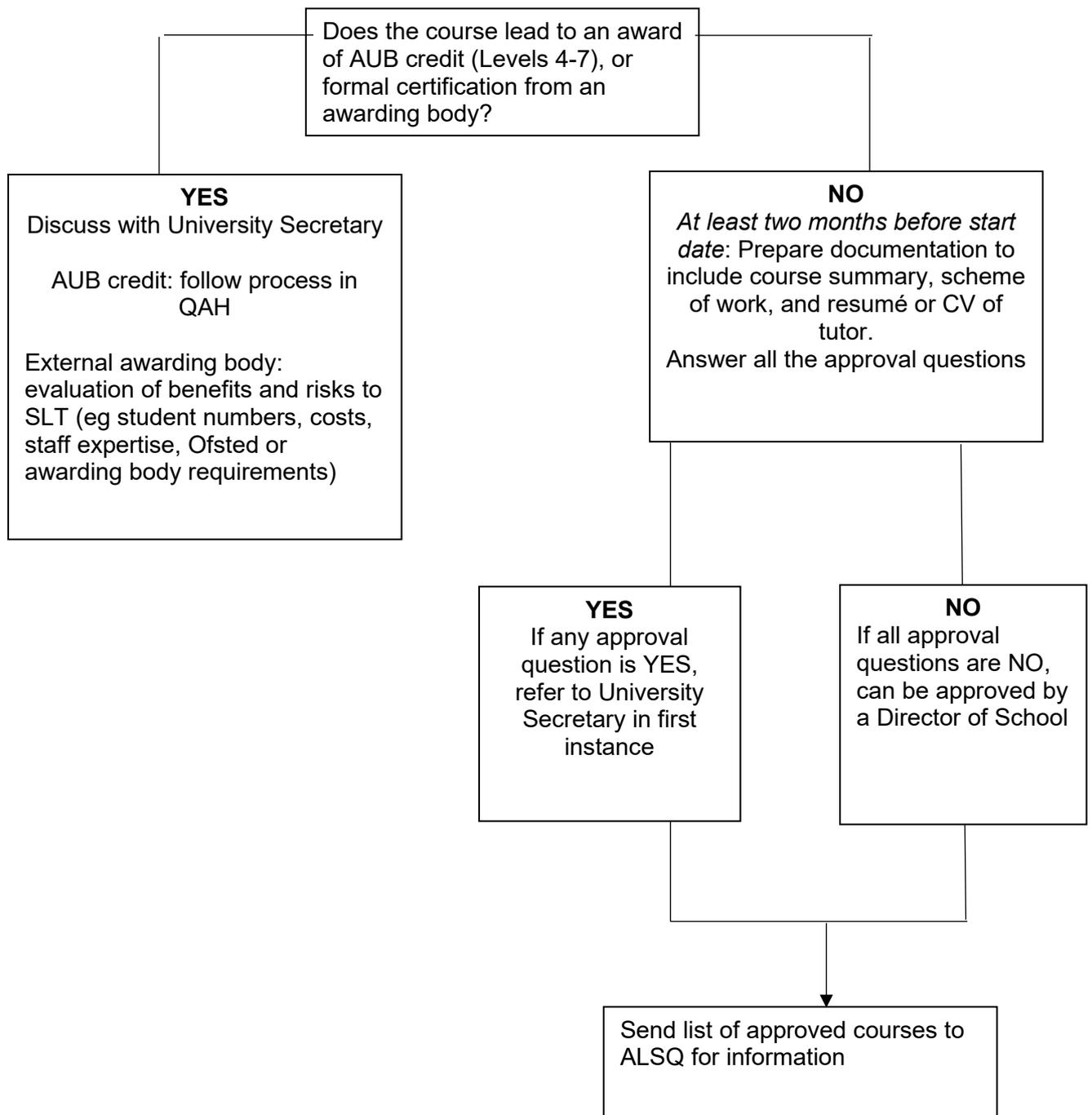
3. Simple approval process

- 3.1 If the answer to all of the approval questions is no, the proposal can be signed off by a Director or the ALSQ. The course must have received approval at least one month before its start-date, and in all circumstances before any publicity material is released. Approval will be reported to the next meeting of the SLT for information.

4. Formal approval process

- 4.1 Any proposal for a course which involves more extensive or complex learning, or is accredited by an external body, must be forwarded to the University Secretary. In most cases, these proposals will be forwarded to the SLT for consideration (which may require additional information), but there may be occasions where alternative arrangements would be more appropriate. The University Secretary will determine the process based on the level of risk which the proposal represents to the institution.

Approval of standalone units, or blocks of learning not leading to credit or an AUB award



SECTION I: External context for quality assurance

1. National Quality Assessment arrangements

1.1 The key features of the quality landscape for universities in England are as follows:

- a) All established institutions are expected to conform to the baseline regulatory requirements. The baseline regulatory requirements for quality assurance are, in summary:
 - The Office for Students Conditions of Registration, in particular Condition B. This includes reference to any sector-recognised standards such as the framework for higher education qualifications
 - The relevant code of HE governance;
 - Obligations under consumer law;
 - Subscription to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for handling complaints and academic appeals.
- b) The Office for Students conducts an annual review of data and other information it considers relevant to identify whether it considers there may be a risk to standards or quality. This may result in a formal investigation, including a possible visit, to gain assurance that the provider complies with its Conditions.
- c) Separately, the Office for Students may conduct thematic reviews of provision across England, especially where it has concerns that student data indicate levels of continuation, completion and achievement which fall below expectations.
- d) The Office for Students is also considering major revisions to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to create a more integrated quality review process.
- e) Annual confirmation from the Board of Governors that standards have been met.

1.2 At University level, the Board of Governors receives assurance that quality management processes are robust and are working effectively through a review of data and consideration of an annual overview report which details activity over the previous year. It also approves an annual Degree Outcomes Statement, proposed by Academic Board. The Statement provides an overview of the degrees awarded, and explains the process through which classifications are determined, which serves to demonstrate AUB's commitment to fairness and transparency in awards.

SECTION J: External examining: principles, procedures and guidelines

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The external examining system is an important aspect of the University's wider quality assurance framework. External examiners contribute to the University's quality assurance process by assisting the University in:
- i. assuring itself about the comparability and appropriateness of academic standards and awards as indicated by the practice and experience of other similar higher education institutions.
 - ii. confirming that the assessment process is fair and fairly operated.
 - iii. informing other formal quality assurance processes including Annual Course Review and periodic review.
 - iv. reporting on its responses to the key elements of the Office for Students (OfS) Quality and Standards Condition B1.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The principles underlying the external examiner system at the University are that:
- i. the external examiner selection criteria should assure the University that the purposes of the external examiner system are achieved.
 - ii. an external examiner is appointed to all units contributing to an award.
 - iii. all newly-appointed external examiners will be formally briefed and inducted prior to taking up their role.
 - iv. the external examiner system operates on an objective and impartial basis.
 - v. the membership of all Examination Boards must include external examiners.
 - vi. external examiners are appointed as full and equal members of the Examination Board.
 - vii. the normal term of office for an external examiner will be no more than four years; only under exceptional circumstances will an extension for a further year be considered.
 - viii. all external examiners will normally visit the University for the examination process and will complete and submit a report to the Academic Lead on Standards and Quality (ALSQ) as Chair of the AUB Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQ).
 - ix. all external examiner reports will be considered as part of wider quality assurance arrangements with the University.

3. Role and Responsibilities of External Examiners

- 3.1 The primary role of external examiners is to assist the University in assuring the academic standards of provision and awards are comparable with other similar HE institutions elsewhere and to ensure fairness in student assessment and the assessment process. To fulfil these dual aims, external examiners act as moderators. As such, they are normally expected to ensure:

- i. the form and content of examination papers, coursework or other assignments that count towards the award are consistent with course aims and the standard of the award.
- ii. the course reflects any additional requirements.
- iii. the curriculum remains current.
- iv. student marks are moderated, as a cohort, in consultation with internal markers. External examiners do not have the power to adjust marks for individual students. Examination Boards may, however, adjust the marks of individual units for an individual or a cohort of students on the basis of the sampled assessed work using the principles outlined.
- v. any proposed changes to course-specific assessment regulations are fully considered.
- vi. assessments are conducted in accordance with approved course regulations.
- vii. decisions about progression and awards are reached according to the University's regulations.
- viii. consideration is given to the assessment process and the schemes used for marking and classification purposes.
- ix. an annual report is completed and submitted to the ALSQ that considers the above in terms of the quality and standards of academic provision.
- x. annual reports are received by the Senior Academic Governance Officer not later than **three weeks** from the date of the Examination Board.

3.2 In order to fulfil this role, external examiners should normally:

- i. have access to the full range of assessed student work.
- ii. agree a sampling strategy to ensure that assessed work from all award categories, including the highest and lowest (including any failures) and borderlines are considered. This will normally be 20% of all student work at Levels 5 and 6 for undergraduate courses; and a reliable sample for postgraduate courses, which is likely to mean all student work where there are fewer than five students.
- iii. optionally, to meet with a group of students to discuss their experience of the course.
- iv. have access to appropriate documentation that sets out course regulations and assessment requirements.
- v. attend any relevant meetings and, in particular, the end of year Examination Board.
- vi. be asked to participate in any reviews of student work to arise as a result of an allegation of academic misconduct.
- vii. conduct, if felt necessary, and with the agreement of the Director of School, an interim visit to the University to meet with course-related staff and students.
- viii. attend the formal University's External Examiner Induction programme (this might be remote).

3.3 An online portal has been set up to provide external examiners with information, and to facilitate their role as external examiner. This should be used to access student work (see 3.4 below) and supporting documentation, which includes Course Handbooks, Assessment Regulations, and the report template and claim form.

3.4 The majority of student work will be available through WISEflow (this is the University's online system for the receipt and assessment of student work). In some cases, work will be stored on OneDrive, which is particularly the case for larger file sizes. The Course Team will direct external examiners where this is applicable. Both WISEflow and OneDrive are available on the portal.

3.5 Further details, including instructions for accessing the portal, will be sent to external examiners in advance of the moderation period.

4. Selection Process

4.1 The Quality team will review annually the status of all external examiner appointments. When an upcoming vacancy is noted, the Senior Academic Governance Officer will notify the Director of School in order to seek an appropriate nomination. Before forwarding the nomination for consideration by the ALSQ, the Director must be assured that the candidate meets the selection criteria set out below.

5. Nomination

5.1 External examiners are nominated by the School in which the course is based. In order to expedite the nomination process, the ALSQ, as Chair of LTQ, receives and confirms nominations as appropriate, usually having taken advice from senior members of the Committee.

5.2 The University has developed a pro-forma for use by individuals nominated as external examiners. The Director is responsible for ensuring that these forms are completed and signed by the examiner before consideration of behalf of LTQ. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

6. Selection Criteria

6.1 In confirming external examiner appointments, the ALSQ will give consideration to the following selection criteria:

- i. the appropriateness of the academic and/or professional qualifications of the candidate in relation to the subject of study.
- ii. the standing, expertise and experience of the nominee in relation to the subject of study.
- iii. the candidate's past experience as an external examiner elsewhere or other experience in assessing students in the subject area. Where the nominee has no experience as an HE external examiner or the experience is limited, the Committee will seek to assure itself of the candidate's suitability by considering:
 - the nominee's range of experience as an internal examiner;
 - the nominee's range of experience at other levels or in other capacities;
 - other relevant experience likely to support the external examiner role;
 - whether the appointment would be part of an experienced team;
 - whether another external examiner within the same School is able to act as mentor to provide support.
- iv. the range of institutional and/or professional experience the external examiner can draw upon to inform deliberations about the comparability of academic standards and provision.

- v. the candidate's experience in the light of the balance and experience of other members of the external examiner team (e.g., a balance between professional and academic practitioners).

6.2 Candidates for external examinerships will not normally be approved if:

- i. the candidate has had a previous close relationship with the University, its staff or students within the last five years. For these purposes, 'close relationship' is defined as having.
- ii. been a member of staff, a governor, a student, a close friend or a near relative to a member of staff associated with the course.
- iii. been a member of staff or a governor at a partner institution.
- iv. held an external examinership at the University or partner institution.
- v. acted as an external member of the validation or review panel that considered the course.
- vi. anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of students on the programme of study.
- vii. the candidate already holds two substantial external examiner appointments elsewhere (this may be considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the ALSQ).
- viii. the candidate is from an institution already represented on the external examiner team within the School.
- ix. the candidate is from a School/school or course where staff of the University act as external examiner.
- x. the candidate is from the same institution as the retiring external examiner.

6.3 Any changes to the external examiner's professional circumstances must be notified to the Senior Academic Governance Officer. This will enable the University to confirm that the examiner continues to meet the appointment criteria. Where the external examiner has changed role and is no longer working within Higher Education, the University would wish to satisfy itself that the examiner still has sufficient connection with HE to ensure that their knowledge is both current and relevant. If the external examiner is not able to demonstrate currency, they may no longer be meeting the appointment criteria and the relationship may be subject to early termination. Any changes to contact details also need to be notified to the Senior Academic Governance Officer.

6.4 Award External Examiner

Final decisions about progression and award are made by the Progression and Award Board. This Board includes at least one Award External Examiner. The responsibilities of the Award External Examiner will include:

- i. To ensure that regulations are applied appropriately.
- ii. To ensure that procedures are applied consistently.
- iii. To ensure fairness and impartiality in the application of award regulations and procedures.
- iv. To attend the University's progression and awards boards where awards are being made, and ensure that they are conducted fairly and in accordance with their terms of reference.

- v. To provide the University with advice as required when considering overall grade profiles and potential grade improvement, specifically in relation to its draft Degree Outcomes Statement.
 - vi. To report annually to LTQ.
- 6.5 The University will appoint up to two Award External Examiners, at least one of whom is required to attend the Progression and Awards Board (attendance may be remote or in exceptional circumstances, by correspondence). The selection criteria for Award External Examiners are as follows:
- i. The candidate should hold an appropriately senior role within the higher education sector in the UK (such as Academic Registrar, Dean of School/Faculty, Dean or Head of Quality and other suitably senior posts which includes a substantial level of higher education quality assurance management)
 - ii. The candidate must have substantial experience of the application of assessment regulations and understanding of assessment board processes.
- 6.6 To ensure the objectivity of the process, the exclusions outlined at paragraph 6.2 above will also apply to the appointment of Award External Examiners.

7. Terms of Appointment

- 7.1 All Examination Boards operate with external examiner membership and it is a requirement that external examiners agree to attend these Boards (attendance may be remote).
- 7.2 Non-attendance at the Examination Board may result in termination of the appointment (see below) and subsequent replacement as external examiner to this Board.
- 7.3 The terms of appointment for external examiners at the University are as follows:
- i. the normal term of appointment is four years; only under exceptional circumstances will an extension for a further year be considered.
 - ii. where a team of external examiners is appointed, the terms of office will be phased to ensure continuity.
 - iii. the appointment year for external examiners is normally January to December.
 - iv. in the event of an early resignation from office, LTQ will seek new nominations to fill the role at the earliest possible date (see below).
 - v. each external examiner is expected to submit an annual report to the ALSQ.
 - vi. failure to meet the prescribed responsibilities set out in these guidelines could lead to actions by the University. In extreme cases, this may lead to a termination of employment.
- 7.4 All external examiners are entitled to submit their resignation during their period of tenure. However, to ensure that such action does not put the standards of awards in jeopardy, the University would expect sufficient notice in order to make revised arrangements for awards. Where an external examiner needs to submit their resignation, they should put this in writing to the Senior Academic Governance Officer, who will forward this to the ALSQ.

- 7.5 The University reserves the right to terminate the contract of any external examiner, subject to the agreement of LTQ. Such action will only be taken where there is evidence that the examiner has not fulfilled their obligations or if a conflict of interest arises which cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Such actions might include non-receipt of an annual report non-attendance at Examination Boards without prior arrangements, or changes in their professional role, which means they no longer fulfil the terms of appointment.
- 7.6 To ensure that the University's external examining arrangements are transparent, and to support the involvement of students in quality management processes, students are made aware of the identity and current position of the external examiners appointed to their course.
- 7.7 Students will receive explicit information that it is inappropriate to make direct contact with external examiners, in particular regarding their individual performance in assessments; other mechanisms are available which are more appropriate, e.g. the appeals or complaints procedures.
- 7.8 In the event that a student does contact an external examiner directly, the external examiner is advised to refer this to the University.

8. Examination Board Remit

- 8.1 The University has common principles and terms of reference for examination boards for undergraduate and postgraduate courses. It is usual that a meeting of the Board will be convened to consider either undergraduate or postgraduate courses, but it is equally valid for a range of courses to be considered where units have been concluded. Meetings of the Board will be held at least annually, usually at the end of the respective academic years (attendance may be remote).

The Subject Examination Board will consider all student work on named degrees for all courses within the school. The remit of the Subject Examination Board is:

- To consider the assessment and examination of students on all courses within the school involving external examiners and verifiers;
 - To provide recommendations on student progression and award (including classification) to the Progression and Awards Board;
 - To exercise responsibility for the conduct of all assessments leading to an award of credit for a unit and to agree the terms of Referral and Retake;
 - To consider the award of compensation for failed units, in line with the Guidelines for Compensations in the HE Regulations.
- 8.2 Each course has at least one external examiner; the number is determined by the breadth of the course, content of the units and the number of students undertaking those units. The external examiners for all courses under consideration are expected to attend meetings of the Subject Examination Board.
- 8.3 To discharge the University's obligation to ensure consistency of standards not simply within a course but also across all similar courses at the University, the Subject Examination Board is chaired by a Director not from the school in which the subjects are based; and membership is supplemented by the University Secretary or their nominee. This process also allows the University to make similar and appropriate decisions on issues such as mitigation, referral, exit velocity and borderline students.
- 8.4 To ensure consistency across all courses at the University, applications for mitigation are considered through a common process which is coordinated by the Quality

team. Applications must be accompanied by relevant documentary evidence, and are ultimately determined by the Director, taking advice from relevant staff. Decisions are notified to the relevant Subject Examination Board.

8.5 The Examination Board schedule is sent to external examiners at the start of each academic year, and the school will contact external examiners with timings.

8.6 Moderation

8.6.1 To ensure consistency of judgement and standard within individual courses and across courses offered at a similar level within the University, all unit results are reviewed and confirmed by the full Subject Examination Board, including external examiners. This may include the moderation of marks as appropriate. Moderation is not conducted by partial reconsideration of marks for units which have already been assessed by due process. Moderation is exercised by reviewing the mark profile of all students within their cohort and ensuring that they conform to University and national standards. This moderation is informed both by the external examination sampling process, and a review of the overall profiles.

8.6.2 On Honours degrees, moderation extends to Level 5 assessment as it contributes marks towards the final Honours classification. All units at Levels 6 and 7 should be reviewed annually and all Level 5 units reviewed at least every other year, in accordance with the schedule agreed by the University. Level 4 work is not normally considered, although the outcomes are reported, and the external examiner has the right to review work at Level 4 if they wish.

8.6.3 On foundation degrees all Level 5 units should be reviewed annually and all units at Level 4 reviewed at least every other year.

8.7 The Subject Examination Board for undergraduate courses meets in the summer term of each academic year. The Postgraduate Taught degrees has two intakes per year; normally September or October and January or February. As a consequence, the Postgraduate Exam Board meets in the autumn and spring each year. The Examination Board may also devolve responsibility for defined aspects of its remit to its internal members, subject to report to the full Board.

8.8 Progression and Awards Board

8.8.1 The Progression and Awards Board is a sub-committee of Academic Board, and was established to ensure consistency of treatment across all awards, and fair application of the regulations. It does not review individual unit results, and (at most) refers matter for consideration through the Annual Course Review process.

8.8.2 The University has at least one Award External Examiner, who is required to attend the Progression and Awards Board that meets to consider final awards from their school.

8.8.3 The Progression and Awards Board has responsibility for:

- Reviewing Examination Board decisions to ensure that they are consistent and in accordance with the University's Higher Education regulations on assessment;
- Confirming decisions on progression and award on behalf of the Chair of Academic Board;
- Reviewing Examination Board processes and making recommendations as appropriate;

- Reviewing University retention and achievement data and comparing with national and sector benchmarks.

8.9 Endorsing assessment outcomes

- 8.9.1 Prior to the confirmation of pass lists, external examiners are expected to endorse the outcomes of the assessment process. Decisions about assessment outcomes are the collective decision of the examination board to which external examiners contribute as board members. A key way in which the external examiner provides an expert view of the rigour and fairness of the assessment process is by endorsing, or not, the decisions of the board.
- 8.9.2 External examiners are asked to confirm in their annual report that they are satisfied with the grades awarded in all units for which they have responsibility. They will also be asked to confirm this verbally at the Examination Board.
- 8.9.3 At the Progression and Awards Board, Award External Examiners sign to confirm that they are satisfied that the decisions of the Examination Boards at the University have been consistent in the application of standards and have been made in accordance with the University's Higher Education regulations on assessment; and that they are happy to confirm the recommended decisions on progression and award.
- 8.9.4 In the event that an external examiner or Award External Examiner is unwilling to provide endorsement, a separate report is to be made to the University and students will be informed if there is to be a delay in publishing their results.

9. **Attendance at the University**

9.1 Induction

- 9.1.1 Once a nomination has been approved, the Senior Academic Governance Officer, on behalf of the ALSQ, will confirm details of the appointment to the external examiner.
- 9.1.2 The Quality team will provide all external examiners with the following documentation every year for the duration of the examiners period of tenure:

- Dates of Examination Boards;
- HE Quality Assurance Handbook;
- Regulatory Framework and HE Regulations;
- Relevant Course Handbook(s);
- Annual Course Review; this comprises a SWOT analysis, action plan, progress against the previous year's action plan, and response to the External Examiner's comments made in the previous year;
- Annual report template;
- Details of payment and claim form (please note that the fee is taxable and that tax will be deducted at source);
- Previous year's External Examiner's report (new Examiners will receive a copy of their predecessor's report).

Unit Information, which includes detailed information of the work required for each unit, will be available electronically on the AUB Intranet.

- 9.1.3 The University will also conduct an induction meeting (attendance may be remote) for new examiners to provide clarification on:

- i. the procedures for examination.
- ii. the role of the external examiner.
- iii. questions relating to the external examining section within the HE Quality Assurance Handbook.
- iv. the reporting of their visit.
- v. payment of fees and expenses.

To ensure that the University complies with its UK Visa and Immigration obligations, it is essential that proof of right of work is obtained in every case where an individual will be paid for work, or services, completed at AUB. New examiners will be asked to provide proof of identification at the time of their first visit to the University.

9.2 Visit to the University:

9.2.1 The course leader will provide the examiner with a full student list with marks proposed per unit for the year.

9.2.2 The course leader will have prepared a sample of work as described in paragraph 3.2 (ii) above, with associated Unit Information. The sample will also include;

- All work being judged as a fail;
- All work marked at 75% or more (honours degrees only);

A minimum sample of 10 pieces of work will be provided; in courses where there is a cohort of less than 10 students, all work will be sampled.

9.2.3 The schedule for the visit will include a meeting with all members of the course team (the meeting may be remote).

9.2.4 A meeting with students of the course may be included in the schedule, if agreed to be desirable (the meeting may be remote).

9.2.5 The examiner will have an opportunity to consider forthcoming project briefs and any examination papers in order to anticipate the end of level assessments and visit.

10. **Reporting Requirements**

10.1 All external examiners are expected to prepare and submit an evaluative annual report to the ALSQ.

10.2 The University has adopted a reporting pro-forma that all external examiners must use; an electronic copy of the pro-forma will be sent by the Quality team to external examiners prior to the Examination Boards. The pro-forma has been designed to elicit full feedback from external examiners on the issues/topics raised. Incomplete reports or those lacking clarity in response to the required information will be returned by the ALSQ for re-submission at a later date. Payment will be postponed pending the receipt of the revised report.

10.3 Names of students should not be used anywhere with the report.

10.4 For those external examiners who are appointed to a course that has links with an accrediting or professional body, external examiners will be asked to confirm that additional PSRB requirements have been met.

- 10.5 Where an external examiner identifies any matter of serious concern, the examiner has the right to make a confidential report, in writing, to the ALSQ at the University. Such a report would be made in addition to the normal annual report, the latter containing matters not deemed confidential.
- 10.6 Where an external examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failing with the academic standards of a course and has exhausted all internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the ALSQ, they may invoke the QAA's concerns scheme or inform the relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

11. Areas for Report

- 11.1 The proforma asks external examiners to comment on the following in the context of the University's Mission statement and the course's approved aims and objectives:
- i. The appropriateness of the standards set for the award with reference to sector recognised standards and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
 - ii. The standard of student work in relation to the course outcomes.
 - iii. The standard of student work in the subject/award(s) examined, in relation to their peers on comparable courses at other HEIs.
 - iv. The size and range of sample made available to assess the students work.
 - v. Access to all the material needed to make a judgement, and opportunities to discuss the assessment process with staff.
 - vi. The conduct of assessment for the subject/award(s), and in particular if it had been conducted in accordance with its programme specification(s).
 - vii. The design, structure and organisation of the assessment scheme, and the marking of assessments; making reference to the programme specification.
 - viii. The range of assessment methods uses – including the assessment of practical work.
 - ix. A summary of the strengths of the particular unit/course, as revealed through the assessment process.
 - x. A summary of recommended action points regarding the course, as revealed through the assessment process, that the course team should address prior to the next examiner's visit.

12. Report Circulation

- 12.1 Upon receipt, external examiner reports will normally be circulated by the Senior Academic Governance Officer to the Course Leader and Director of School. However, if required, an external examiner may, on an exceptional basis, write a confidential report to the Principal and Vice-Chancellor where it is believed that the security of provision may be at risk.

13. Availability of reports to students

- 13.1 To reflect the general principle of engaging students in quality management processes, and to support the transparency of the process, external examiners' reports are made available to students. Reports are redacted where an external examiner has included something intended to cause harm to the University or to bring it into disrepute. Reports are normally made available to student representatives

through the standard Annual Course Review process, but will also be made available to other students on request.

14. University Response

- 14.1 External examiner reports will be given consideration upon their receipt by the ALSQ. Any substantive issues raised by external examiners about the quality or security of academic provision will be subject to immediate consideration by the ALSQ and action by the School Board. This will normally include contact with the external examiner by the ALSQ to discuss their conclusions and any actions that might be taken to ensure that provision remains secure. The nature of the discussion with the external examiner will be noted in a letter to the external examiner, copied to the University Secretary, that sets out any agreed action including the possibility of an amendment or addendum to the original report to reference action taken.
- 14.2 All external examiner reports will be considered during the process of annual course review. Commendations and recommendations for action in response to the external examiner report will be noted in these reports. Annual Course Review reports will be forwarded to external examiners after the conclusion of the review process. In addition, all external examiners will receive a formal letter from the University which identifies the points they have raised, and confirms how they are to be addressed (see 9.1.2 above).
- 14.3 External examiner reports will also be used to inform the processes of Periodic Review and any relevant external review process.

15. Payment

- 15.1 External examiners will only be paid after the receipt of a complete annual report. The University specifies that these reports must be received within three weeks of the Board in order to ensure payment. In addition, the University will pay (through the Quality office) all reasonable fees for travel (at standard class rail travel or mileage), lodgings and meals, if required, during visits to the University. It is anticipated that external examiners will visit the University once during the academic year. The University will arrange overnight accommodation where requested and will meet the expenses for meals during the visit period provided that receipts are made available.
- 15.2 The University pays a set total fee for each course, and fees are reviewed on an annual basis. The Quality team will arrange for the examiners' claim form to be made available to external examiners prior to any visit. Please note that fees are taxable and that tax will be deducted at source.