***Guidance for Internal Panel Members on University Approval Panels***

On behalf of the University, thank you for agreeing to act as an Internal Panel Member of a University Approval (or re-validation) Panel.

## ***Aims and Purpose of Programme Approval:***

Programme approval is the method by which new courses are introduced into the university’s offer to students. It is an opportunity for new courses to be scrutinised before their introduction, both to assure their standards and to enhance the quality of the proposal. As part of the approval process the programme teams and panels will consider:

* The rationale for introducing the new course;
* How the new course fits with other courses on offer and how the academic portfolio is reflective of their mission and strategic objectives;
* The awards offered and the curriculum – its design, content, delivery and assessment;
* The appropriateness of the standards set for the level of the award;
* The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes and how well those intentions are being met;
* The suitability of human, physical and other learning resources to support the new course;
* The student experience offered by the new course, including opportunities for employment and further study for its graduates;
* The way in which the course facilitates the widest possible access to ensure that all students can maximise their potential.

At a general level, the panel as a whole provides a “confidence judgement” that:

* a range of internal and external consultation has informed the development process;
* there is a strong rationale for the proposal and information about likely demand and student entry profiles;
* the curriculum - its design, content, assessment and delivery – and the associated student experience has been fully considered and is appropriate;
* the standards set for students are appropriate, reference national qualification frameworks and match with the title of award;
* there are appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

## ***The approval process:***

The relevant documentation is circulated to the panel approximately 2 weeks prior to the meeting, depending on availability of the paperwork. Panel members are asked to review the documentation and, bearing in mind the aims and purpose of programme approval, bring their comments to the meeting, identifying points on which they would like additional clarification and areas that they would wish to pursue further with the course team during the meeting. Minor issues may be resolved by the provision of additional documentation or a brief explanation. The meeting provides the opportunity for the panel to discuss specific points with the course team and other representatives from the faculty.

## ***The programme approval meeting:***

The meeting begins with introductions and a private meeting of the panel members to agree priorities for discussion. There may also be an initial presentation by the course team to provide an overview of the new course proposal.

During the meeting, the panel meets with senior staff and the course team. For both new and revalidated provision, the views of students on the course will be sought. The meeting will conclude with feedback from the panel on whether the course may successfully be approved, and what else, if anything, the course team needs to do to improve the course or address issues prior to students arriving. The panel may set the following:

1. **Conditions** – action points to address issues of a serious nature, which must be resolved prior to the start of the new course;
2. **Required technical corrections** – action points to address minor issues, such as typographical errors, which must be resolved prior to the start of the new course;
3. **Recommendations** – points for the course team to think about in terms of the future development and improvement of the course;
4. **Observations** – any other points which the panel wishes to convey to the course team, including commendations and recognition of good practice.

Following the review, a report will be drafted for the approval of the Chair before circulation to the course/faculty team and to the others within the university.

## ***Roles and responsibilities of an Internal Panel Member:***

Along with the External Examiner, the internal panel member’s role is to give consideration to the proposal and to provide an objective view, highlighting any weaknesses in the proposal and commending areas of good practice. It follows that they need to be able to commit to thorough preparation, e.g. through careful study of the programme documentation in advance of the meeting. They should critically examine the documentation provided and engage in discussion with the programme team. They must assess whether the intended programme aims and learning outcomes are realistic, attainable and set at an appropriate level, and that the programme is going to provide students with a high quality learning experience/academic qualification. They should also give consideration to any conditions and recommendations that must be addressed prior to the final approval of the programme. More specifically, panel members need to:

* to consider the proposed organisation, character, coherence and curriculum of the programme including assessment processes, drawing on general practice and norms which are current in their own professional area;
* to raise issues concerning the operation of the programme in relation to the regulations and general guidelines of the awarding bodies;
* to scrutinise the proposed operation of the programme in relation to prevailing UoH policies and procedures;
* to raise issues concerning the clarity of the programme documentation, the programme under consideration and to comment on the relevancy of the programme;
* to contribute to the preparation of an agenda for discussion with the team, in the private meeting of the panel, in relation to any areas of concern identified from reading the programme documentation;
* to engage team members in discussion on matters pertaining to the organisation, process, outcomes and regulations of the programme in response to the agreed agenda and as directed by the Chair;
* to contribute to the panel's conclusions about the approval of the programme.

Notes:

1. **conditions** will only normally be set:
   1. if any regulatory issues are likely to endanger the standards of provision;
   2. where there is a clear omission of required information;
   3. where aspects of the provision may cause serious concern for students;
   4. where there are PSRB requirements to be met.
2. **recommendations** will normally include issues and advice not related to standards