London South Bank University

		PAPER NO: EC.16(12)
Board/Committee:	Educational Character Committee	
Date:	10 December 2012	
Paper title:	Validations and Reviews – 2011/12	
Author:	Catherine Moss, Deputy Director – Academic Quality Development	
Executive sponsor:	Phil Cardew, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	
Recommendation by the Executive:	To note the annual report on programme validations and reviews carried out in 2011/12	
Aspect of the Corporate Plan to which this will help deliver?	3. Student Choice 4. Student Success	
Matter previously considered by:	Quality & Standards Committee/Academic Board	On: 10th October 2012/ 7th November 2012
Further approval required?	No	On:
Communications – who should be made aware of the decision?	Not applicable	

Executive summary

The annual report on validations and reviews:
- provides a summary of the programme approval activity undertaken in the previous academic year, (2011/12).
- confirms that LSBU is continuing to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education that HE providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes and for the periodic review of their continued validity and relevance.
- identifies any emerging issues relating to these processes.

The Educational Character Committee is asked to note the report.

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Report to Quality and Standards Committee on Validations and Reviews held in 2011/12

1.   Volume and Type of Validation Activity

1.1   The table below sets out the number of validation and review events, which took place in 2011/12. These are classified by the type of event.

Validation of new programmes	11
Validation of new programme – involving collaboration with another institution	2
Major modification of existing programmes, including those delivered in collaboration with another institution	3
Major modification of existing programmes with professional body involvement	1
Development of new collaborative link for existing programmes, (with new or existing partner)	5
Periodic (6 yearly) review of programmes by subject area	9
Total	**22**

1.2   *Key points relating to the volume and balance of activity:*
   a)   The Curriculum Modernisation Project meant that most programmes went through approval events for major modifications in 2010/11 resulting in fewer such events in 2011/12.

   b)   The two validation events involving a collaborative link with another institution, relate to programmes that were developed and approved for sole delivery by existing partner institutions and at the partner's request. As in previous years, the Faculty of Business accounted for most of the collaborative approval events undertaken.

   c)   Most of the new awards validated were for masters programmes in subject areas that are well-established at undergraduate level and which are now expanding into postgraduate study. New awards were approved in the following subject areas:
   - Criminology; Social Policy & Social Research Methods; Gender & Sexuality
   - Development & Urbanisation
   - Creative Media Industries
   - Organisational Change & Facilitation
   - Business Project
   - Biomedical Engineering & Instrumentation
   - Neonatal Nursing

d) All programmes, grouped into the relevant subject area, are submitted to review and re-approval through a 6 year cycle review schedule. The University has now embarked on its second cycle of these reviews with 9 subject areas, (including the 5 engineering disciplines), being scrutinised in 2011/12. The remaining subject areas will be reviewed over the next two academic years.

2. Timing of validation events

2.1 The deadline for holding a programme approval event with a September start date is the end of May in the preceding academic year but, ideally, these should be held earlier than this. However, about a third of events were deferred until May. Academic Board has noted and discussed this issue.

2.2 ***Key points relating to the timing of programme development and approval:***
   a) The late sign-off of new programmes has a negative impact on successful marketing and recruitment to the new award.

   b) Successful programme approval involves thoughtful course planning, which requires a commitment of academic staff time.

   c) Employers, professional bodies and external organisations often expect a speedy response to requests for new curriculum development.

3. Outcomes of validations and reviews

3.1 The purpose of programme validations and reviews is to confirm that the programme is fit for purpose and can recruit or continue to recruit students. In doing this the approval panel needs to be assured that the programme meets the required standards, in terms of its level and content and that appropriate measures are in place for the management of the quality of the students' learning experience. In approving programmes, panels often set conditions or make recommendations in relation to either of the above.

3.2 ***Key points relating to the outcomes of validations and reviews:***
   a) One of the programmes submitted for validation was not approved, although the panel agreed that the programme team could, having done more work on the proposal, request a second validation event.

   b) The panels expressed confidence in the standards of the awards for all of the programmes scrutinised through periodic review. However, for one of the 9 reviews the panel found only limited evidence of a systematic and strategic approach to the enhancement of the quality of student learning at a programme

level. Each of the subject areas reviewed is now required to produce an action plan in response to issues raised in the review.

c) All but one of the programmes approved by the validation panel had conditions attached to the approval. These conditions were addressed satisfactorily and the programmes approved to run.

d) The types of conditions set by panels vary according to the nature of the programme being approved but, not surprisingly, these, most commonly related to issues with individual modules. Panels are also commonly concerned with the appropriateness of the assessment methods used for modules and with the entry requirements for the programmes.

e) Panels also identify areas for commendation in programmes. For 2011/12 validations these mainly related to:
   - the professional integrity of LSBU teaching staff
   - responsiveness to student feedback
   - responsiveness to changing professional standards
   - innovative programme design.