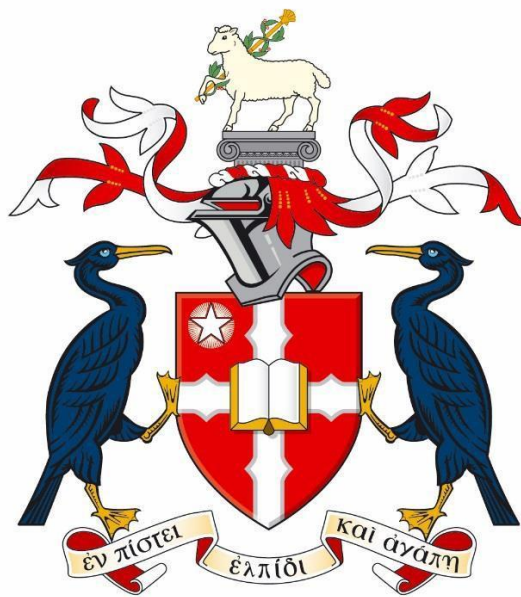


# Liverpool Hope University



## **Academic Quality Handbook (QH10):** Seeking and Maintaining Professional Accreditations

## Document/Version Control

<b>Responsibility for Policy:</b>	Registrar
<b>Version:</b>	V1 – March 2020 V2 – January 2021 V3 – October 2025
<b>Approved by and date:</b>	Academic Committee 15 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 Senate 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
<b>Frequency of Review:</b>	3 Yearly
<b>Next Review date:</b>	September 2028
<b>Revisions:</b>	<p>June 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policy updated as per the requirements of the RSM audit report dated 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2025.</li><li>• In addition, general updates to align to OfS / QAA requirements.</li><li>• General formatting updates completed.</li></ul> <p>June – September 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This Handbook has been through a detailed review. The review included consultation with LHU colleagues who have been through an accreditation within the previous 12 months, who have a responsibility for overseeing/reporting on accreditations at a School or Faculty level or through membership of the Partnerships and Accreditations Committee.</li><li>• RSM Audit Report 2025 for details of roles and responsibilities and training have remained are included in appendices 1 and 2.</li></ul>

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Guidance is to specify the general principles and processes relating to courses, Faculties or Schools or Departments seeking accreditation by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).
- 1.2 Liverpool Hope University (LHU) considers engagement with PSRBs to be fundamental to curriculum development to ensure course relevance and standards, meet industry needs, enable graduates to practice within their chosen profession and enhance graduate employability.
- 1.3 To note, PRSB recognition differs amongst organisations. Therefore, an accolade at course level would usually fall in to a category of accredited, award, approval or endorsed. Similarly for a School, it could become accredited by an organisation or endorsed.
- 1.4 The frequency of reaccreditation varies, with periods ranging from annual to every three to six years.
- 1.5 Reports arising from PSRB accreditation provide valuable information about the quality and standards of programmes and the experience of students. The reports and the responses to any matters arising should be considered during periodic reviews e.g., Annual Review Enhancement (ARE) or QH4 Academic Quality Handbook Review of Existing Courses.
- 1.6 The Accreditation and Collaborations Officer and associated Faculties monitor and maintain an overview of PSRB accreditations and compliance. Partnerships and Accreditations are a standard agenda item at Faculty Academic Committee and Faculty Executive Board- both reporting back to University Academic Committee and University Executive Board. The Partnerships Committee has oversight of all partnerships, and matters of accreditation are the responsibility of the Academic Registrar's Compliance Group.

## **2.0 SCOPE**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all University staff.

## **3.0 DEFINITIONS**

Accreditation	Courses, Schools or Departments can, through successful application, become accredited, endorsed or approved. It is also used as a collective term to cover all accolades.
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Course Accreditation	An accredited course is defined as one which is recognised by an accrediting body and may confer membership, chartered status or partial exemption. Accreditation may be 'any process of approval leading to assurance that a programme meets the standards required by a particular profession' <sup>1</sup>
Course Approval	This is the process for approving new courses or review of courses to be delivered and awarded by Liverpool Hope University.
Course Viability Group	A group which provides advice and guidance to University Executive Board and other internal stakeholders on curriculum design and development. Chaired by the Dean of Global Engagement.
FEB	Faculty Executive Board; a board responsible for overseeing the academic, administrative, and strategic affairs of a specific university faculty. It serves as the main decision-making and coordinating body for faculty-level policies, planning, and operations.
VCAG	Vice Chancellors Advisory Board; a board of senior leaders who advise the Vice Chancellor on various matters, including those relating to new partnerships.
PSRB	Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are a very diverse group of professional and employer bodies, regulators and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. PSRBs engage with higher education as regulators. They provide membership services and promote the interests of people working in professions; accredit or endorse courses that meet professional standards, provide a route through to the professions or are recognised by employers. <sup>2</sup>
School Accreditation	An accredited School within LHU is one that has received an accolade leading to the assurance that it meets the standards required by a particular profession or organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12061/psrb\\_faq](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12061/psrb_faq)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12061/psrb\\_faq](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c12061/psrb_faq)

UEB	University Executive Board. Its purpose is to support and advise the Vice-Chancellor in the performance of their duties as the University's Chief Executive Officer. It is responsible for developing and leading the strategic planning process in consultation with the Senate and for the effective management of the University, including agreeing core University policies. It reports to University Council and Senate.
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## 4.0 PSRB Application: Internal Approval

### 4.1 PSRB 'first' accreditation for existing approved courses

To obtain approval to progress a PSRB application for a course already approved by the University and currently being offered, the following process applies (to note, there are no time restrictions for when the Programme Lead/Team can commence the approval request process for accreditations):

- a) Early discussions between the Programme Lead/Team and Head of School are a requirement to identify support for course accreditations. Once the PSRB/Programme Lead has gained support, they can progress to the PSRB Internal Approval stage.
- b) The PSRB/Programme Lead is to liaise with the Accreditations and Collaborations Officer who will provide guidance and support throughout the initial approval stage and any subsequent application.
- c) The PSRB/Programme Lead submits a request to the Executive Dean of Faculty and Head of School. This request must capture information necessary to make informed decisions throughout the process. Information gathered relates to the potential benefits of attaining accreditation for the student, academics, the University, wider stakeholders and community. Other considerations include: accreditation application fees; financial estimate of any additional resource requirements; and annual fees if an application is successful. The financial elements are necessary for the Head of School and Executive Dean of Faculty to include in the short and mid-term business planning process.
- d) With FEB or Executive Dean of Faculty and Head of School support, the request is submitted to the Course Viability Group (CVG) for consideration and then to University Executive Board (UEB) for a decision. The Head of School, PSRB/Programme Lead, Academic Registrar and the Accreditations and Collaborations Officer to be informed promptly on the outcome from UEB. Outcomes will be
  - Request approved: Application can commence
  - Decision postponed: Request will be reconsidered at a date to be agreed

- Request denied: FEB/ Executive Dean notified by the Head of Governance
- e) There are several factors that would contribute to a request being 'denied' by UEB including but not limited to
- The financial investment is beyond the reach of the University at the time of application
  - The programme team do not have the credentials to deliver an accredited course
  - The course is at risk e.g., under-recruiting, re-approval is pending
- f) The Executive Dean of Faculty will advise the PSRB/Programme Lead of the outcome from UEB and if there is any potential to resubmit the request immediately or any time in the future.
- g) Requests and outcomes must be recorded in the minutes of School, Faculty and University meetings. This is a requirement for audit purposes.

#### 4.2 PSRB accreditation for new courses or course re-approval

PSRB accreditation should be considered during course re-approval or new course discussions. The internal request for approval needs to be incorporated in to the Course Design and Approval Process (QH1, QH2 and QH3) and not in isolation. Processing an accreditation application may take place during the University approval process or following course approval – this may be determined by the PSRB.

- a) The PSRB/Programme Lead completes the PSRB (Re)Accreditation Internal Approval form, with support from the accreditations officer.
- b) The PSRB (Re) Accreditation Internal Approval form to be included within the documentation for Course Design and Approval process (QH1, QH2 and QH3) to ensure all costs and expectations of accreditation are considered within the viability of course discussions and approval
- c) It is recommended where a profession is regulated e.g., social work, physiotherapy, the PSRB application process should be undertaken at the same time as the internal approval. This is due to regulatory requirements that approval of a course needs to be in place before delivery commences.

#### 4.3 PSRB re-accreditation for approved courses

Accreditations are awarded for a set period of time or until a course makes changes that impacts on its attained status. A re-accreditation application process can take a minimum of 3 months to process through a PSRB system. Therefore, PSRB/Programme Leads or identified leads must obtain approval for re-accreditation prior to any existing recognition expires.

- a) The PSRB/Programme Lead completes submits a request as per 4.1c above. This will enable the Head of School and Executive Dean of Faculty to make an informed decision on the request.

The PSRB request must capture the potential benefits of maintaining accreditation, details of re-accreditation application fees, and an estimate of any additional resource requirements e.g., people, equipment, space. The financial elements are necessary for the Head of School and Executive Dean of Faculty to accommodate any expenses in the business planning process.

- b) The Head of School and Executive Dean of Faculty will, following a review of the request, and make a decision of one of the following:
- Re-accreditation application can proceed
  - Approval request to be referred to (UEB) for consideration.
  - Approval denied

A re-accreditation request would be referred to UEB if it meets one of the following, though not limited to:

- PSRB application fee and/or additional resource costs to maintain accreditation status are beyond the financial scope of the School/Faculty
- Re-accreditation/inspection has been triggered by something other than the course accreditation coming to the end of its approval period. For example, the percentage of changes to the course impacts on the status of the existing accreditation.

- 4.4 Requests and outcomes must be recorded in the minutes of School, Faculty and University meetings. This is essential for auditing purposes.

## **5.0 ACCREDITATION APPLICATION**

- 5.1 A typical course accreditation will involve the mapping of course content, and learning outcomes against PSRB standards, may include the production of a self-evaluation document (SED) and substantial supporting evidence. The structure of the report can be dictated by the PSRB e.g., a form provided or the organisation will accept the SED in the format the University wishes to adopt.
- 5.2 The PSRB/Programme Lead and Accreditations and Collaborations Officer to meet with the PSRB's identified lead/representative. The PSRB lead will confirm the application process, and formally agree dates for application submission and any associated visit (remote or on campus).

- 5.3 There are instances where PSRBs will back date an accreditation to the date a course commenced. This needs to be confirmed by the PSRB prior to commencing the application.
- 5.4 The PSRB/Programme Lead will identify a team from within their area to support the accreditation process. The team should include the University Executive Manager, Faculty Academic Lead and the Accreditations and Collaborations Officer.
- 5.4 The Team will draw up and agree a schedule of meetings, action plan with identified milestones, roles and responsibilities.
- 5.5 The Accreditations and Collaborations Officer will provide support to the team in generating the application e.g. establishing a digital base room, gathering evidence whilst monitoring progress against the agreed schedule.
- 5.6 Submission to be made on or before the PSRB set deadline. Each PSRB has a different submission method e.g., application and evidence to be uploaded to an organisation's portal or the panel members are given access to a university generated digital base room.

## **6.0 PSRB APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS**

- 6.1 There are two models for accreditations, a desktop panel review or a panel review visit (PRV). A PRV may be held remotely or on campus. A review panel comprises two to four people one of which is identified the chair or lead reviewer/inspector. A panel usually makes a recommendation to approve with or without conditions or decline an application. Their recommendation would go to PSRB Approval Committee (or similar) who will take the final decision and notify the University of its outcome.
- 6.2 A desktop review involves the PSRB panel scrutinising the application and supplementary evidence provided. It would not be unusual for the PSRB to request additional information or clarity around elements of the submission. Once the panel have completed their review the University will be informed on its recommendation/outcome.
- 6.3 A PRV is scheduled from 1 to 5 days in duration. The panel review team will meet with internal and external stakeholders e.g. programme team, senior management, students, employers to substantiate the information provided in the University's application. The panel review team will have a physical or digital tour of the campus and of general and subject specific resources e.g. library and laboratories available to students. At the end of the visit the Panel usually provides some general feedback, its recommendation to be submitted to their PSRB Approval Committee (or similar) and the date of them meeting.
- 6.4 The Accreditation and Collaborations Officer co-ordinates any accreditation visits with the support of the relevant University Executive Manager or their



designated administrator. The Head of School will ensure the participation of academic staff and give support in identifying stakeholder participants.

## **7.0 REPORTING COURSE PSRB VISITS/OUTCOMES**

7.1 The University will receive formal notification of its outcome following the meeting of the PSRB Approval Committee. Outcomes fall in to one of the following

- Approved with or without conditions/recommendations
- Not approved

Where an application has been approved the University will be informed of the accreditation period.

7.2 The Accreditations and Collaborations Officer will inform the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Registrar, Head of School, Dean of Faculty, Director of Marketing and other key internal stakeholders of the application outcome on receipt of the Final Report.

7.3 The Accreditations Officer and Collaborations Officer will notify all stakeholders involved in the accreditation process of the formal outcome.

7.4 The PSRB/Programme Lead shall co-ordinate the responses to issues raised in the Final Report. In doing so, they will

- a) Consider any recommendations/conditions;
- b) prepare an action plan to meet any recommendations/conditions;
- c) prepare a list of matters that need to be referred to School/ University level to be resolved or to be disseminated as good practice;
- d) ensure that any programme changes are managed through the University's Approval of Modification to Existing Provision (QH5) process and that documentation reflects the changes are made at the request of the PSRB.

7.5 The Head of School will, if appropriate, escalate the PSRB report to the relevant executives or committees if conditions or recommendations have implications on the wider university.

7.6 The Registrar will coordinate the University level reporting and statutory reporting to external agencies e.g., HESA, Office for Students.

## **8.0 RESPONSIBILITIES AND MANAGEMENT OF COURSE PSRB**

8.1 Schools are responsible for

- seeking and retaining PSRB accreditation for courses and subject areas
- ensuring that all marketing materials (webpages, leaflets etc) and course materials are updated to reflect PSRB status, in collaboration with Corporate Communications & Marketing.
- submit PSRB periodic returns and progress any minor/major modifications with the organisation to maintain status
- notifying the Academic Registrar immediately if an accreditation is withdrawn or at risk of being withdrawn or did not maintain its status through re-accreditation (see section 10.0)
- working with the Academic Registrar to complete QA spot checks, quickly and accurately as and when requested.

8.2 The Programme/PSRB Lead is to escalate any risks or concerns raised by the PSRB or identified by the programme team that has the potential to impact on the status of accreditation, students, reputation of the School and/or University to the Head of School, Dean of Faculty, Academic Registrar and Faculty Academic Lead.

8.3 The PSRB Central Register and Compliance Tracker is updated by the Accreditations and Collaborations Officer. It is the responsibility of the PSRB/Programme Lead to inform the Accreditations and Collaborations Officer of any updates.

8.4 The Academic Registrar's Compliance Group will request an annual, or at a frequency determined by the Chair, report from each Faculty on all accreditations, including confirmation that each of their accreditations is in good standing and currently meets the requirements of the accrediting body. These will inform the Annual ARCG Report annual assurance report to University Academic Committee on the robustness of the arrangements in place across the University in respect of accreditations, identifying any institutional matters for consideration and resolution.

## **9.0 COURSE CLOSURE OR MORATORIUM**

9.1 The Academic Registrar, Executive Dean of Faculty and Head of School must be informed timely of any course closure or course moratorium with details of when it will come in to effect – the Head of Governance will inform stakeholders accordingly.

9.2 The Academic Registrar will coordinate the University level reporting and statutory reporting to external agencies e.g., HESA. Office for Students, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and PSRBs.

## **10.0 RISK OF WITHDRAWAL OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION**

- 10.1 The PSRB/Programme Lead will advise the Head of School and Academic Registrar immediately if an accreditation is withdrawn or at risk of being withdrawn or did not maintain its status through re-accreditation.
- 10.2 The Academic Registrar will coordinate the University level reporting and statutory reporting to external agencies e.g., HESA. Office for Students, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
- 10.3 Should accreditation be withdrawn from any programme or the status be altered in any way, the School/University will inform all current students including those on interruption of studies, offer holders and other potential students affected by the change to avoid any disadvantage to the student(s) as far as possible.

## **11.0 UNIVERSITY WIDE ACCREDITATIONS**

- 11.1 In addition to 'course' accreditation, University Units can apply for accreditation or endorsement<sup>3</sup> by an external professionally recognised organisation, national or international - e.g., Sports Lab within a School,
- 11.2 The process for seeking such accreditations will be determined on the scope and scale of the accreditation and each will be considered at UEB level and a bespoke process will be established accordingly.
- 11.3 The project and administrative support model used for course accreditations will be applied consistently to non-course accreditations and endorsements..

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<sup>3</sup> Including but not limited to such accolades as: kitemarks, watermarks, Recognition Schemes, Affiliations etc.

## Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities of key individuals:

Accreditations and Collaborations Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary non-academic link person between the University and PSRB organisation for programme and/or Faculty/School accreditations</li> <li>• To support Faculty/School/Subject PSRB/Programme Leads with the PSRB application within the required timeframe/deadline.</li> <li>• To co-ordinate and oversee online or on campus PSRB panel visits with the support of the University Executive Manager or nominated administrator.</li> <li>• Provide updates to the Academic Registrar Update centralised records on accreditation activity and attainments.</li> </ul>
PSRB/Programme Lead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary academic between the University and PSRB organisation for management and oversight of the accreditation application</li> <li>• Prior to any PSRB application, ensure that accreditation application fees/costs are approved by the School/Faculty and approval for any annual fees when accreditation is attained. Evidence to support this e.g., email, minutes of meetings to be kept for auditing purposes.</li> <li>• Establish a PSRB group, membership to include the Partnerships and Accreditations Officer and University Executive Manager, record discussions, decisions and actions of regularly schedule meetings, development and agreement of an action plan with clear milestones</li> <li>• On accreditation attainment, monitor programmes against statutory requirements and any associated conditions e.g., attendance, grades, staff student ratios etc.</li> <li>• Produce and submit periodic returns, changes to programme content, delivery and assessment, new academic appointments in accordance with the conditions of accreditation</li> </ul>
University Executive Manager (UEM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports operational aspects of the accreditation process and allocation of appropriate resources e.g., finance, people. Support may include but not limited to uploading/categorising evidence to digital base rooms, booking of space, facilities and hospitality for campus visits and technology requirements for hybrid or remote inspections, organising travel and accommodation, scheduling briefing sessions, invite various stakeholders to meetings and briefing session and monitoring acceptances, provision of notetakers at panel meetings where this is a requirement of the PSRB. Provide the Partnerships and Accreditations Officer with support throughout an on campus/remote inspection visit</li> </ul>
Associate Dean for External Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have general oversight of accreditations within their Faculty. Provide updates at School/Faculty Academic and Executive Board with minutes to reflect the discussions, decisions and outcomes.</li> </ul>

Academic Registrar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides leadership and direction to their Compliance Group and, direct or indirect, to Faculties and Schools to facilitate its work in pursuing the University's vision, mission and strategic direction.</li> </ul>
Academic Registrar's Compliance Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible to Academic Committee for overseeing the management of all partnerships and accreditations ensuring that these are conducted in accordance with the Quality Assurance Agency expectations in UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Partnerships<sup>1</sup> and the OfS.</li> <li>Through the annual monitoring of Faculties/Schools ensure that accreditation obligations are met, actions are effectively implemented, and consideration given to common issues; that systems, process and associated policy are fit for purpose with consistency and embedded good practice</li> <li>Provides leadership and direction to, direct or indirect, to Faculties and Schools to facilitate its work in pursuing the University's vision, mission and strategic direction</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX 2: Training and Coaching opportunities are offered in the following areas:-<sup>4</sup>**

### **Understanding Accreditation Frameworks**

- Overview of accreditation bodies (e.g., AACSB, AfN, CIM, Ofsted etc.).
- Differences between regional, national, and international accreditations.
- Key standards, criteria, and compliance requirements.
- One-to-one or group sessions on the internal accreditation process for new accreditations and re-accreditations

### **Preparing for Accreditation**

- Self-assessment and gap analysis.
- Documentation, evidence collection and best practices.
- Aligning institutional processes with accreditation standards.

### **Writing Effective Self-Evaluation Reports**

- Structuring reports to meet accreditation expectations.
- Data presentation and narrative development.
- Common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

### **Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement**

- Developing a culture of continuous improvement.
- Using data for accreditation compliance.
- How to manage Conditions and/or recommendations post-accreditation.

### **Managing Site Visits & Peer Reviews**

- Preparing for accreditation visits (logistics, documentation, presentations etc.).
- Communication approaches with accreditation teams.
- Mock site visits.

### **Curriculum Alignment & Learning Outcomes**

- Mapping courses to accreditation standards.
- Defining and assessing student learning outcomes.
- Curriculum review and enhancement strategies.

### **Data Management & Institutional Effectiveness**

- Collecting, analysing, and reporting on key data metrics.
- Using dashboards and accreditation management software (if applicable).
- Ensuring data integrity and transparency.

### **Leadership & Stakeholder Engagement**

- Role of leadership in driving accreditation success.
- Engaging staff (both Academic and Professional Services), and students in the process.
- Communicating accreditation requirements to internal and external stakeholders.

### **Specialised Accreditation for Disciplines**

- Training for course specific accreditations (e.g., Teacher Training, Social Work, etc.).
- How to produce case studies for specific discipline-based accreditations.

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<sup>4</sup> This list is an example of the various training / coaching opportunities available; in addition, bespoke training is offered as and when required by a Faculty/School.

## APPENDIX 3: PROCESS MAP FOR “NEW” OR RE-ACCREDITATIONS

