

Open University Validation Partnerships (OUVP)

Guidelines on the provision, position and function of observers

1. Provision for Observers

Validation and Revalidation

The observer will be a member of staff of the institution, but will not be from the senior management of the institution or involved in the teaching of the programme under validation or revalidation. In small institutions where all the staff are involved in delivering the programme, the observer may be an external member of the Academic Board or governing body.

2. Position of Observers

The observer may attend all formal meetings of the panel, other than meetings with students. Observers are not decision-making members of the panel, but are encouraged to assist the panel in its work. Observers may, at the discretion of the Chair, be asked to withdraw from a private meeting of the panel. Such action should be necessary only on rare occasions.

3. Functions of Observers

The main functions of observers are:

- to reassure the institution that the deliberations and decision-making of the panel were based on the information supplied by the institution and discussion with its staff, and were rigorous, fair and thorough.
- to contribute to the staff development of the institution by giving feedback on the factors involved in making an effective presentation of the institution's work or future plans to a panel of external peers.
- to aid the panel by clarifying matters of fact, particularly in the initial consideration of documentation and indicating if the observer believes the panel has gained an impression from documentation which is factually incorrect
- to respond to requests for information and comment
- to identify the location of evidence

It is not the function of the observer to report to the panel information or views which should properly be obtained from staff in open discussion.

4. Confidentiality

In order to ensure that the institution receives only the panel's collective and agreed decisions, the observer should not report the views of any individual panel member.