Discussing YSJ Values in Validation Events

First introduced following approval by Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) in October 2019, this document was refreshed in November 2025 in line with the introduction of the YSJ Pedagogy, the 2025 YSJ Strategy and its supporting frameworks, and developments in the wider higher education landscape.

The YSJ Pedagogy is designed to foster consistency and enhance quality, rigour and academic standards. It is built upon a set of values that YSJ is committed to embedding in its curricula. As such, conversations around these values are a mandatory part of validation and revalidation events for every programme at the University. More details and prompts for validation discussions can be found below.

How do Inclusive Higher Education, Equality, Decolonisation, Ecological Justice and Wellbeing Relate to (Re)Validation?

A commitment to the **Inclusive Higher Education Framework (IHEF)** and to **equality of opportunity**, **decolonisation and anti-racism, ecological justice, and wellbeing and mental health** are central to the values written into the YSJ Pedagogy. All colleagues involved in designing curricula must take these areas into consideration during validation events, with a rationale being given for the programme's approach to these values.

1. Inclusive Higher Education Framework and Equality of Opportunity

YSJ's commitment to the use of the Inclusive Higher Education Framework (IHEF) signals the move towards designing curricula for diversity, rather than making adjustments for difference. It also recognises that inclusivity is everyone's responsibility and should be a core consideration, therefore, in validation processes.
The IHEF outlines how inclusion can be made central within curriculum design and delivery. Prompts that programme teams might consider here include (but are not limited to):-

- How can we adopt an active and authentic learning approach that isn't overly reliant on didactic teaching and is designed to be accessible to all students (considering e.g. disability, international students, those with limited financial resources)?
- How can we work with students as active partners in curriculum design and delivery?
- How can we ensure that students can personalise the curriculum where appropriate (e.g. focus on topics of personal interest)?
- How can we make our teaching resources available in appropriate, accessible formats and in advance of scheduled teaching wherever possible?

More prompts can be found on the IHEF website.

2. Decolonisation and Anti-Racism

Decolonisation refers to the ongoing collective struggle for liberation, self-determination and the emancipation of all peoples from colonial domination, oppression, exploitation and dispossession. This includes the dismantling and, ultimately, abolition of the systemic logics, institutions and structures that continue to legitimise and maintain colonial power and privilege beyond the formal 'end' of colonial rule. Anti-racism can be defined as active opposition to racism in all its forms, including interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. At YSJ, we have developed resources to support the University community in

[examining the complexities of decolonisation and anti-racism](#) both within curricula and more broadly across the institution as a whole.

Prompts that programme teams might consider during (re)validation events include (but are not limited to):-

- What is the history of my discipline and how does it relate to the imperial-capitalist project? How does thinking about this change my approach to curriculum design and development?
- What insights or interpretations have been omitted or marginalised from my field of expertise? What are the politics and consequences of these omissions?
- How might my colleagues and I develop richer, more critical and historically robust accounts of our subject matter? Are there any counter-hegemonic or dissenting voices on this topic that we are missing out on?
- What can I learn from anti-colonial thinkers of the past and/or anti-racist scholar-activists today? How can I implement this learning in my teaching and/or my conversations with colleagues?

More prompts can be found on the [YSJ Decolonisation web pages](#). Further support can also be sought from the [Teaching and Learning Enhancement Team](#).

3. Ecological Justice

As part of its mission as the 'university for social impact' ([YSJ Strategy 2025](#)), YSJ recognises that ecological justice is closely interconnected with social justice, and is committed to addressing environmental change and the accelerating climate crisis within curricula.

Prompts that programme teams might consider here include (but are not limited to):-

- What can or does your discipline contribute to ecological justice solutions? What theories, frameworks or case studies (locally, nationally or globally) might your students engage with to demonstrate this?
- How can your students utilise their disciplinary skills to contribute to climate resilience or make interventions in relation to accelerated climate breakdown?
- What changes are climate change and other environmental issues bringing about in the careers, industries and communities your students might enter? How can we address these within the curriculum?

Further support and advice can also be sought from the [YSJ Sustainability and Environment Community of Practice](#).

4. Wellbeing and Mental Health

Recognising the importance of promoting wellbeing and supporting mental health across the campus, YSJ has made a commitment to embed the principles of the [University Mental Health Charter](#) within its structures and practices, including in curricula.

Prompts that programme teams might consider here include (but are not limited to):-

- Does my curriculum seek to impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of students? What could I do to make improvements in this area – e.g. to foster a sense of belonging?
- Does my curriculum provide adequate scaffolding to enable all students to develop the academic skills, confidence and self-efficacy needed to be successful on the programme?
- How might my assessment design impact students' wellbeing and mental health? What positive changes could be made to benefit student learning and alleviate stress?
- Does my curriculum signpost students to appropriate university support services at relevant points (e.g. induction, transition, and when dealing with potentially sensitive or distressing content)?

These prompts were inspired by the University Mental Health Charter Framework (2024) and written in conjunction with the YSJ Disability Support and Inclusion Team.

Examples of Good Practice

A range of examples of this part of the Design Narrative, from different disciplines and Schools, can be found in **Appendix 1***. They demonstrate ways in which programme teams have engaged well with prompts about inclusive higher education, equality, decolonisation, ecological justice and wellbeing as part of validation, and serve as models that might inspire your own team's approach [NB: to ensure thorough and meaningful engagement with this area of the Design Narrative, please resist the temptation to copy and paste!].

It should be noted that proposals made in the Design Narrative must adhere to YSJ's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, which outlines the University's legal obligations in relation to protecting free speech within the law.

*Appendix 1 will follow once examples have been gathered during 2025-26 and 2026-27.