

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CHANGES TO VALIDATED PROGRAMMES

Document Administration

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VERSION CONTROL TABLE

<u>Version Number</u>	<u>Date Authorised</u>	<u>Summary of Key Changes</u>
2.2	October 2016	Unknown
2.3	22 July 2019	Updates in Terminology
2.4	21 August 2024	Update in Formatting
2.5	11 March 2026	Revised to reflect University committee and organisational structures; and align with relevant external legal and regulatory frameworks

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Programme Teams may sometimes find it necessary to make changes to current programmes outside the standard of the cycle of validation and review. Such changes may range from updating content of individual modules to a major redesign of the programme curriculum.
- 1.2. The following procedures and timeline for making changes to validated programmes/subjects are designed to allow programmes/subjects to be revised in the light of annual reviews, student feedback, or external examiner reports, while ensuring that the integrity of the validated programme/subject is maintained.
- 1.3. These provisions are designed to follow the precepts and guidance contained in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) [UK Quality Code for Higher Education \(2024\)](#), specifically Principle 7, Designing, Developing, Approving and Modifying Programmes: 'Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, [The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area](#).'
- 1.4. Whilst a local rationale for changes might support the need for modifications, any such proposals for change must also reflect the conditions of registration of the [Office for Students \(OfS\) Regulatory Framework for HE in England \(2022\)](#), particularly in terms of Condition B1, Academic Experience, which indicates that providers are responsible for ensuring programmes are: up-to-date; provide educational challenge; coherent; effectively delivered; and enable students to develop relevant skills.
- 1.5. The process for undertaking proposed changes to validated programmes should also consider the principles of advice for HE providers, published by the Competition & Markets Authority, which outlines the responsibilities of providers to comply with obligations under the Consumer Rights Act 2015. The publication '[UK Higher Education Providers – advice on Consumer Protection Law](#)' (2023) provides for changes to the delivery of a subject to be undertaken, but the "need for variation must be balanced against the overarching requirement that students (and prospective students) must receive the educational service they expect" (5.19).

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2. DEFINITIONS

Housekeeping/Typographical Changes

- 2.1. Housekeeping changes or corrections to programmes and modules are those which do not require formal committee approval. They cover amendments to the programme or module narrative where these do not constitute a significant change to learning outcomes, aims, delivery structure or assessment type.
- 2.2. Programme teams may request to make typographical changes to a programme or module by asking for advice from Quality, who manage the definitive copies of programme and module specifications.
- 2.3. All module housekeeping changes or typographical corrections must be made in line with the principles set out in the Programme Development Manual and be approved by Quality.
- 2.4. When the changes have been approved, the Programme Team must also amend any handbook copies etc. which may have been based on the prior documentation.

Minor Modifications

- 2.5. Minor modifications are those classed as changes affecting the defining features of a module, or module changes that impact upon the approved resourcing and delivery pattern of the programme.
- 2.6. Changes to the component modules of validated programmes may be made under the terms of this Code of Practice. Any such proposals for change require not only liaison with Quality as described above, but also approval by the Faculty and the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee.
- 2.7. Prior to Minor Modifications being presented for approval by the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee, the Programme Team will normally be required obtain feedback about the proposed amendments from the relevant External Examiner/s to provide an objective viewpoint about the change/s.

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- 2.8. Programme and module modifications should be considered within the context of the Student Agreement, which is a binding contract between the University and the student, and students' rights under consumer protection law. Therefore, consultation about programme amendments should also be undertaken with current students, and/or applicants with offers to enter the programme, who will be affected by the proposed changes.

Major Modifications

- 2.9. Major programme modifications are those which are judged to have a significant impact upon the core features of a programme, such as a programme title or aims; the programme learning outcomes or delivery structure; or changes that would affect the approved resourcing of a programme, particularly where this is advertised as a key feature of a programme. Proposals for new modes of attendance or an additional location of programme delivery would also constitute major modifications, due to the potential impact upon University resources and/or liabilities.
- 2.10. Proposed changes that are considered to be major modifications are discussed and approved through an internal scrutiny or desktop review event. These events are organised by Quality upon notification of approval to proceed from the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee, normally following completion of a Programme Viability Document (PVD) by the Programme Team setting out a rationale for the proposed change.
- 2.11. The Faculty will carefully consider the timeframe for implementing major modifications and the date from which they become effective, both within the context of consumer protection law and the internal processes that affect University services, e.g. recruitment, admissions and marketing; data and timetabling processes; examination board scheduling; placements; and services provided by The Hub, such as the development of VLE pages; library resources; and student support.

3. PROCEDURE FOR PROGRESSING CHANGES TO VALIDATED PROGRAMMES/MODULES

- 3.1. Prior to the start of the process of planning any changes that would result in changes in module or programme specifications, academic staff should contact Quality, who will provide advice about the process for making changes to the relevant documentation.

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Housekeeping/Typographical Changes

- 3.2. Requested housekeeping/typographical amendments should be forwarded to Quality in writing, explaining details about the changes. Once approved, the Quality team will undertake the proposed amendments to programme or module specification and/or appended documents, and upload them to the University programme management library.

Minor Modification requiring approval

- 3.3. At the start of the process of planning any modifications to module or programme specifications, the Programme Leader should contact the Quality team outlining details of the proposed changes. Based on the information provided, Quality will advise about the appropriate process and communication channels, and provide the relevant documentation to allow the amendments to be recorded.
- 3.4. The proposed change(s) must be submitted on a Curriculum Modification form to the relevant Dean of Faculty for approval. The completed form must clearly indicate the nature of the modifications(s) (from/to) and provide a rationale for each change. The form should also indicate that potential impact of the amendments has been discussed and approved by the Dean of Faculty.
- 3.5. Written feedback from the External Examiner should be submitted to Quality alongside the modification form. In addition, evidence of consultation with relevant students or applicants with offers must be appended to the modification pro-forma. This can take the form of email/s to/from students or applicants, outcomes of surveys or focus groups, or confirmation of feedback from a Student Representative for the group/s affected.
- 3.6. Where the proposed change/s affect the delivery structure of one or more joint programmes, consideration must be given to the impact of the change on the second subject. The agreement of the relevant Programme Leader/s must be sought by the proposer of the changes and written confirmation of discussion included within the modification form, which on completion, should be forwarded by the proposer to the relevant Dean of Faculty for endorsement.

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- 3.7. The Dean of Faculty will notify the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager of the change(s), returning the completed Curriculum Modification form, evidence of External Examiner feedback, student consultation and, where necessary, joint Programme Leader approval, together with any necessary supporting documentation including the module/ programme specification, amended using tracked-changes.
- 3.8. The Academic Quality and Compliance Manager will present the proposed changes to the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee and will notify all relevant departments following approval of the modifications, which will be uploaded to the programme management library.
- 3.9. The Programme Leader/Link Tutor will forward a copy of all updated specifications to any collaborative partner approved to deliver the programme as appropriate.

Major Modifications

- 3.10. The process for the approval of major modifications follows that as required for the validation of new programmes (see the Code of Practice for the Validation of Programmes) in that it requires a Programme Viability Document (PVD) to be presented to the Academic Portfolio and Programme Approval Sub-Committee. However, there are a number of differences which are set out below.
- 3.11. The PVD should contain the following:
 - 3.11.1. a reflective and evidenced account of the operation of the programme(s) since initial validation or the last review, drawing on such sources as; annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, student feedback, Faculty Executive minutes and where appropriate, PSRB or other external reports. At the pre-meeting for the review event, it will be agreed which of these source documents will be circulated to the panel and which will be made available to the panel at the review meeting;
 - 3.11.2. a summary of any changes made to the programme since it was first validated or last revalidated. These are the incremental minor modifications that are approved through the Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee; and
 - 3.11.3. an explanation of the reasons for the review/re-validation and the rationale for any proposed changes to the programme(s) which the panel is being asked to consider as part of the internal scrutiny/desktop review event.

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- 3.12. Where there is an impact upon University resources, a costing of the financial implications should accompany the PVD which is submitted to the Academic Portfolio and Programme Approval Sub-Committee. This should outline the existing programme costs and highlight any additional resources required as a result of the proposed changes.
- 3.13. Upon notification of approval from the Academic Portfolio and Programme Approval Sub-Committee, Quality will inform the Admissions, Marketing and Recruitment team that the programme is under review and marketing of the programme/s should be advertised as 'subject to re/validation'.
- 3.14. An internal scrutiny/desktop review event will be scheduled by Quality. The scope of the event will be based upon the range and extent of the modification/s, but discussion will consider the proposed changes to the programme in terms of educational challenge, the student experience and programme coherency.
- 3.15. Conditions and recommendations may be set at the discretion of the panel which will be set out in a Record of Decision (ROD) to be addressed by the Programme Team. Upon completion, the ROD will be progressed through committee sign-off, for final approval by Senate.
- 3.16. The amended programme/module documentation will be uploaded to the programme management library by Quality and notification about the updated programme and module specifications will be circulated to academic and professional services teams.

4. AMOUNT AND TIMING OF CHANGES TO VALIDATED PROGRAMMES

- 4.1. The number of changes made under these procedures should not normally exceed one third of a programme in any one academic year, or exceed 50% in any (normally six- year) revalidation cycle. A record of all changes notified to the Academic Quality and Compliance Manager will be presented to the relevant sub-committee of Senate in order to monitor the year-on-year changes made to a programme. Changes which are judged to be in excess of these must be achieved by revalidation of the programme.
- 4.2. All changes must be carried out as early as possible and by the end of the semester preceding that in which the changes become operational at the latest, as changes to programmes/subjects affect student experience and impact upon services that can affect student information, such as course materials within the VLE, library systems, data records, and timetabling.

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- 4.3. Changes should be justified (e.g. to improve student learning experience or to follow best sector-practice). In particular it should be remembered that applicants to a programme acquire information about the University and their chosen programme before and upon the official offer being made, and indeed when they accept a place of study at the University. The programme should therefore be as much as possible in line with the programme as it was when they were admitted to it.
- 4.4. Applicants have the right to receive correct and up-to-date information, which also means that the University will need to inform applicants regarding any major relevant changes made to the offer. The need to be able to rely on the information provided by the University also applies to current students, who have made their choice of university and programme based on information provided to them before being admitted as students or before making a choice of a module.
- 4.5. Because of quality-related and legal implications, major changes in particular should not normally be made late in the academic cycle immediately preceding the delivery of a programme, or of a module. Quality can advise on appropriate timescales for making changes to validated provision. In certain cases, Quality may refuse a change that could have substantial quality-related or legal implications.
- 4.6. Programme Teams must ensure that proposed changes meet all specified deadlines. Appendix B sets out the timelines for submission and approval of curriculum modifications ahead of the relevant dates of implementation.
- 4.7. Quality, in collaboration with the Faculty, must make sure that all relevant departments, including Recruitment and Admissions, and Marketing, are informed of any modifications as soon as the definite approval to proceed has been granted.

5. COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

- 5.1. Partner institutions are not allowed to make changes to validated University provision but may comment on the provision in the Annual Monitoring Reports and periodic reviews and request adaptations to the programme to be made by the University on their behalf. Requests for such adaptations may be considered by Faculty and/or the Academic Portfolio and Programme Approval Sub-Committee.

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6. APPENDIX A – MODIFICATION DEFINITIONS

Housekeeping/Typographical Amendments (approved by Quality)

Modification	Notes
Textual corrections / housekeeping changes	Amendments to the narrative of a module, or typographical corrections throughout, where confirmed by Quality and where these do not alter the rationale, aims, learning outcomes or the assessment strategy of the module.
Minor adjustments to assignments or examinations.	Changes to an assessment affecting assignments or examinations where the assessment strategy and the weighting of the assessment component is not affected, e.g. a change in an assignment task or the timing of an assignment within a scheduled Semester.
Updating of set texts/journals/websites and webpages.	Subject to confirmation that the updates have been discussed with the Library team.

Minor Modifications (approved by Programme Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee)

Modification	Notes
Changes to the defining features of a module.	<p>The defining features of a module are the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • module title; • the overall aim or content of the module; • the FHEQ level; • the module credit tariff; • the module learning outcomes; • the UNISTATs/KIS assessment category; and • the weighting between components of assessment. <p>Changes should be considered within the context of consumer law and advice, issued by the Competitions and Marketing Authority, particularly with regard to current and prospective students.</p>
Addition, deletion or substitution of modules	If the proposed changes are made to more than 40 credits in any one level of the award, or to more than 180 credits within the entire award, the programme will be subject to revalidation. In cases of dispute, Quality will have the final say of what constitutes 'one third' or 'half' of the total programme/subject area or pathway. It should be noted that when the module is reassigned to a different level of learning, outcomes of the module should be changed to reflect the level at which the module is to be delivered. Where it is proposed to adopt a module from another programme, the Programme Team intending to import the module must seek approval from the relevant Dean of Faculty.
Changes to the semester of delivery of a module.	Consideration will need to be given about the potential impact of changes on joint programme delivery or the pre-requisite/ sequencing nature of the programme delivery structure

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Changes that exceed those that can be categorized as Module Housekeeping/ Typographical Corrections	This includes amendments that have a significant effect on the workload of the students, such as changes in the length of an assignment.
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Major Modifications *(requiring revalidation or internal scrutiny/desktop review)*

Modification	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change to the title of an award/adding a new award title to a programme. • Changes to the programme aims or learning outcomes. • Adding a part-time mode of delivery. • Changes in the medium of delivery (e.g. the introduction of distance learning, e-learning or web-based delivery). • A proposal to change the pattern of delivery from semesters to terms or whole year delivery or the reverse. • Adding an off-site/ flying faculty (UK only) delivery. 	<p>Modifications falling within these categories require prior approval from the Faculty / Academic Portfolio and Programme Approval Sub-Committee before they are considered by internal scrutiny/desktop review.</p> <p>Approval mainly relates to the effect of changes on the original intent of the programme and the student experience, but also considers the potential impact on a range of resourcing themes, such as accommodation, timetabling and the staff resource, requiring confirmation of approval from Faculty.</p>
Significant changes involving more than 40 credits in any one level of the award, or to more than 180 credits within the entire award/programme.	Programme teams are advised to liaise with the Quality team prior to drawing up documentation for a modification to establish the nature and impact of the change/s. The final decision regarding what constitutes a 'significant change' rests with the Quality team.

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7. APPENDIX B – CURRICULUM MODIFICATION TIMELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE/POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Period	Submission Date	Committee Approval
Semester 1/Trimester 1 Curriculum Modification (minor modification)	Submit Curriculum Modification form by 28 February for implementation from 1 September of next academic year/cohort.	March/April
Semester 2/Trimester 2 Curriculum Modification (minor modification)	Submit Curriculum Modification form by 31 May for implementation from 1 February of next academic year/cohort.	June/July
Trimester 3 Curriculum Modification (minor modification)	Submit Curriculum Modification form by 31 August for implantation from 1 May of next academic year/cohort.	October/November

NB Housekeeping/typographical corrections will ideally follow the above timelines, requiring Programme Teams to review module specifications prior to use. Major modifications will likely require a longer period of planning, due to the requirement for a Programme Viability Document (PVD) to be submitted and approved by the Academic Portfolio & Programme Approval Sub-Committee.

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Period	Year	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sem 1/ Trim 1	1	Submission of Curriculum Modification/s for Sem1 changes of following academic year						Committee approval					
	2	Changes go live											
Period	Year	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sem 2 Trim 2	1	Submission of Curriculum Modification/s for Sem 2 changes of following academic year									Committee approval		
	2					Changes go live							
Period	Year	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Trim 3	1									Submission of Curriculum Modification form for Tri 3 changes of the following			
	2	academic year	Committee approval							Changes go live			