

# Part 6

## Module and Programme Modifications

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Modification of modules / programmes is allowed where it has been identified as necessary to enhance the delivery of a programme. Modifications may or may not trigger the full re-approval of a programme.
- 1.2 Reasons for a modification may be, for instance; a condition of Academic Review (Part 8) or Collaborative Review (Part 11); feedback from students; or feedback from a professional, statutory or regulatory body.
- 1.3 The formal process for approving modifications ensures the integrity of modules / programmes and ensures adherence to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Principles (Part 1).

### 2 Principles Governing the Approval of Modifications

- 2.1 Modifications will not be applied retrospectively and should only be implemented at the start of the Term or academic session following their approval.
- 2.2 Where new curriculum material is being introduced in existing modules, (other than the normal up-dating of existing modules), external peer advice will always be sought.
- 2.3 Where modifications being proposed will affect students currently enrolled on, or applying to, the programme, such students must be consulted and notified of any modifications once they have been approved.
- 2.4 Once a modification has been approved, student facing documentation must be updated by the Programme Leader and the revised version of the programme specification lodged with Quality Assurance and Enhancement. Delta amendments via Courses and Systems must only be processed after formal approval by the School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee.
- 2.5 Modifications should be considered within the parameters of any professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements.

2.6 Where modules are offered cross-institutionally, the School owning the module is responsible for ensuring that proposed modifications do not impact negatively on programmes from other Schools.

## 2 Types of Modification

2.1 Programme modifications can be categorised in three ways:

- Changes that constitute a modification of more than 25% of the core modules of the programme.
- Changes that constitute a modification of less than or equal to 25% of the core modules on the programme.
- Normal and regular updating of core and optional modules that do not count towards the 25% rule.

2.2 Changes that constitute a modification that counts toward the 25% rule are as follows:

- A. any replacement of a core module;
- B. any addition, removal or allocation to a different level of a core module;
- C. any change in the credit weighting of a core module;
- D. any change to the learning outcomes of a core module (with or without a change in the title of a module);
- E. any change to the curriculum content of a core module other than routine updating (with or without a change in the title of a module);
- F. any change in the mode of delivery of a core module (eg from face-to-face to distance learning mode).

2.3 The following table defines the number of core modules that can be modified before the 25% limit is exceeded:

<b><i>Number of core modules on the programme</i></b>	<b><i>Number of core modules that can be modified before the 25% limit is exceeded</i></b>
18-16	4
15-12	3
11-8	2
7-4	1

The 25% rule relates to all Core Modules irrespective of their Credit weighting (15, 30, 45, 60 credit modules all count as one module).

For programmes outside the Academic Framework, assessment of modifications that constitute 25% of the programme will be made on a case by case basis but will be based on the principles outlined here.

- 2.4 A running log of all programme modifications should be kept by the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee and submitted to the first meeting of the academic year of the Validation Review Sub-Committee (VRSC), for formal noting.

### **3 Changes that constitute a modification of more than 25% of the core modules of the programme**

- 3.1 Modifications that constitute more than 25% of the total programme require full re-approval of the programme/provision.

The procedure to be followed for the re-approval of existing programmes is the same as for the approval of new programmes (see Part 5 of this manual) except that: (a) a Revalidation Approval form rather than an Initial Approval form should be submitted to the Education and Student Success Committee; (b) all current enrolled students must be consulted, usually, but not exclusively, via the Programme Committee; (c) transitional arrangements are specified (if applicable); and (d) where the reapproved programme replaces a current programme or programmes, Student Recruitment and Marketing will be notified in order to provide clear information on the university website and contact applicants to provide notification of programme revalidation, where applicable.

- 3.2 Re-approval of on campus programmes should be completed and approved at VRSC by March of the academic year preceding the first intake on to the new programme, in order that applicants can make an informed acceptance of their offer.

### **4 Changes that constitute a modification of less than or equal to 25% of the core modules on the programme.**

- 4.1 The School Quality Leader shall set a deadline, internal to the School, for early notification of all planned modifications to existing programmes and modules. Based on this information, the School Quality Leader determines whether the amount of proposed amendments constitutes a modification or requires full re-approval. In order to aid this process, Schools should put in place a system to log and monitor changes considered cumulatively since the last (re)approval or Academic Review of the programme. The Programme Modification Log will be continuously reviewed and updated by the school quality committee and submitted to the first meeting of the Validation and Review Sub-Committee (VRSC) of the academic year.
- 4.2 The process is not intended to be used to introduce significant amendments that should properly be dealt with by a full re-approval process. For this reason the School Quality Leader may refuse to deal with proposed changes as modifications if it appears that the process is not being used in the spirit for which it is intended (for example, presentation of new options to consecutive meetings of a School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee ).

4.3 Subject to the provisions of the 25% rule, School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee may approve the creation of a distance learning version of an existing module. The following will be required:

- Learning materials for the modules;
- Via the external adviser's report, confirmation that assessment design, materials and support meet the quality assurance requirements for distance learning.

4.4 In the following circumstances the Department Head is responsible for ensuring that a suitable external subject adviser is nominated.

- proposal of a new module;
- changes to curriculum content in an existing module;
- addition or subtraction of learning outcomes in an existing module;
- changes to the objective of learning outcomes in an existing module;
- creation of a distance learning version of an existing module

The suitability of the external adviser will be determined by the Chair of the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee subject to the following criteria:

4.4.1 The depth and relevance of subject knowledge.

4.4.2 Prior experience of teaching on programmes at the same level or above.

4.4.3 Impartiality (the nominee should not normally have any formal links with the School offering the programme during the last five years as a former member of staff or the last three years as an external examiner).

4.5 The external adviser is asked to comment, in writing, on the following issues:

4.5.1 Whether the module is an academically coherent package.

4.5.2 Whether the learning outcomes for the module are of an appropriate standard.

4.5.3 Whether the indicative reading list for the module are appropriate and up-to-date.

4.5.4 Whether the teaching and learning methods listed for the module are appropriate.

4.5.5 Whether the assessment methods and weightings listed for the module are appropriate.

4.5.6 Whether the module is an appropriate addition to the overall programme and whether its place in the structure is appropriate.

- 4.5.7 For distance learning modules, that assessment design, materials and support meet the quality assurance requirements for distance learning.
- 4.6 The Programme Leader or Department Head, as appropriate, is responsible for providing the following documentation to the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee for the consideration of modifications. All documentation should be circulated to members in advance of the meeting:
- 4.6.1 Rationale for modification including details of how the modification affects the structure of the programme(s) on which it is offered, how it affects the stated aims and objectives of the programme, transitional arrangements (if applicable), communication with partner institution(s) (if applicable), communication with other School(s) where offered (if applicable) and, for new modules, examples of evidence of demand etc.
  - 4.6.2 Evidence of student consultation (usually via the minutes of the Programme Committee).
  - 4.6.3 Where changes to existing modules are being proposed, a copy of the existing module specification(s) and a copy of the amended module specification(s).
  - 4.6.4 Where changes to curriculum content are being proposed, the written comments of an external subject adviser.
  - 4.6.5 Where a new module is being proposed, the curriculum vitae of the module leader involved, and the written comments of an external subject adviser.
  - 4.6.6 A revised version of the programme specification.
- 4.7 The School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will evaluate the proposal against elements of the Quality Criteria (see part 4 of this manual) and other appropriate external reference points, as appropriate (see section 5.2 in Part 5 of this manual).
- 4.8 The School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee can either (a) approve the proposal or; (b) reject the proposal and require that it be revised and re-submitted for further consideration at a future meeting. The School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee may not impose conditions of approval.
- 4.9 The minutes of the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will record details of the discussion with regard to the proposal, comments of external advisers where appropriate, and the outcome agreed by the committee. The minutes will be forwarded to the Validation & Review Sub-Committee for noting. The School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee Servicing Officer is responsible for forwarding the relevant paperwork.

- 4.10 Once a modification has been approved by the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, it can be delivered at the next point of delivery of that module.
- 4.11 The Module Leader should consult Library and Learning Services to ensure availability of funding to purchase learning resources.
- 4.12 When approving modifications to modules, or re-approving a module/replacing a module with an alternative, Schools should ensure that modifications are applied to all programmes on which the module is offered. It is important that Department Head also consider whether such modules are offered on programmes in other Schools or on collaborative programmes.
- 4.13 Where modifications have been made to programmes franchised to partner institution(s), the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will formally note the need to arrange for rolling out modifications to the partner. The School Collaborative Lead and Link Tutor will initiate discussions with the partner as to implementation and the partner will notify students of the changes usually but not exclusively through programme committees. Once agreement has been reached on the date from which the modifications be implemented by the partner, the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will approve the timescale and arrangements for implementation. Where new core modules, or changes to curriculum content are involved, the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will need to satisfy itself that the partner has the ability to deliver the new content prior to commencement of delivery.

## **5 Normal and regular updating of core and optional modules that do not count towards the 25% rule**

- 5.1 Changes to optional modules, require the approval of the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee but do not constitute a modification counting towards the 25% modifications rule.
- 5.2 Changes to core modules that do not involve changes to curriculum content or learning outcomes, as for example the addition or removal of pre- or co-requisites; a change in the form, length or nature of assessment; the main aims or main topics of study; or module title changes, require the approval of the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, but do not constitute a modification counting towards the 25% modifications rule.
- 5.3 School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee may approve non 25% rule modifications, on receipt of an appropriate rationale, evidence of student consultation, and where appropriate, a revised module specification.
- 5.4 Normal and regular updating of indicative reading lists does not require approval by the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee. The Department Committee must ensure all modules remain up-to-date.

## **6 Modifications to Programme Titles**

- 6.1 Proposed modifications to programme titles are considered and approved by the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, using the standard proforma (available from the UEL website at: <https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx>).

Such proposals must include a rationale for the title change. Evidence of consultation of all students and applicants affected must be provided, both through programme committee and individual notifications, and detailed transitional arrangements supplied. The comments of an external adviser are required to confirm the validity of the proposed change. A revised programme specification should be presented to the committee.

- 6.2 All programme title changes are reported, by the School, to the Validation & Review Sub-Committee for formal validation. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer is responsible for informing the relevant department to ensure that all records are updated.

## **7 Programme Withdrawal**

### **7.1 Programme Withdrawal Principles**

- 7.2 Programme withdrawals are considered and noted by the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee using the standard proforma, available from the UEL website at: <https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx>

- 7.3 The decommissioning of all programmes whether a UK based or overseas collaborative programme, an on-campus or distance learning programme, or withdrawing from an overseas partnership arrangement, can only be approved by the Vice-Chancellors Group. Schools are responsible for securing the relevant permission.

- 7.4 Where the programme to be withdrawn is offered also at a collaborating partner institution, Schools should consider the effect of the withdrawal at the partner institution. It is important that the School communicate their intentions to the partner institutions via the School Collaborative Lead and Link Tutor.

- 7.5 Programme withdrawal forms are not required where the School is approving a new programme that replaces an existing one. Details of student consultations and the details for transferring students to the new programme should be included in the re-approval documentation considered by the school quality committee, together with the expected final date by which students will complete the withdrawn programme. The details and conclusions should be minuted clearly. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer will note the

arrangements on the confirmation of approval activity form ('24 hour form') to ensure that the institutional record system is updated accordingly.

## **7.6 Programme Withdrawal Process**

- 7.7 Arrangements for withdrawal will be approved at the School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, forwarded to QAE for inclusion on the Validation & Review Sub-Committee and thereafter noted at the Education and Student Success Committee. The activity form ('24 hour form') will be completed by QAE and sent to the System and Courses Team.
- 7.8 Where students currently enrolled on, or intermitting from, the programme will not be affected by the withdrawal, i.e., the programme will continue as normal until all students are complete. Students should be notified both at the programme committee and via individual notifications.
- 7.9 Where students currently enrolled on, or intermitting from, the programme will be affected by the proposed changes, evidence of consultation of all students affected must be provided, both through the programme committee and individual notifications, and detailed transitional arrangements supplied.
- 7.10 The processes described in 7.8 and 7.9 also apply to students at collaborative partners.
- 7.11 Note programmes are not suspended (this process was removed in 2016/17). A programme is withdrawn and then if a decision is made to bring the programme back, a rationale is made to the Education and Student Success Committee (ESSC). The committee will decide whether the programme needs to go through the initial approval process and/or be re-validated before teaching resumes. Where a programme has been withdrawn for more than two years it will normally require revalidation.

## **8 Study abroad**

- 8.1 School Learning and Teaching Quality Committee will wish to consider proposals for study abroad modules for UEL students. This is to ensure that the modules that the student plans to study map against the level, aims and learning outcomes of the student's programme of study, and that appropriate arrangements are made for credit achieved via study abroad to be counted in degree classifications. Prior to the student taking modules abroad, the module content and way in which marks or grades awarded would be mapped to UEL marks needs to be agreed. This needs to take account of the mapping and grading system being used in country and its relation to the UK system, to ensure that we have accurately taken account of the different approaches to marking and grading and its relationship to the equivalent UEL mark. The study abroad module will be shown on the student's transcript of study.

## **9 Involvement of External Examiners**

- 9.1 Modifications may be the result, either directly or indirectly, of external examiners' comments and/or annual reports. Schools are advised to keep their external examiners informed of any proposed modifications.

***Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 6***

***<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/LearningandTeaching/Pages/forms-and-guidance-notes.aspx>***

- Module Specification Template
- Nomination of an External Adviser for a validation/review event
- Programme Withdrawal Form
- Change of Programme Title Form
- Programme Modification Log Template