

Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees

Programme title changes

The Learning and Teaching Board approved the updated policy at its meeting on 23 June 2010. for introduction in the 2010-11 academic session.

This paper provides an update to the policy agreed by Learning and Teaching Board in 2001 (LTB/00-53) concerning amendments to programmes on which students are registered. The main change arises as a consequence of the introduction of the Home Office's Points Based System of immigration control (see para 4 below). It is proposed that the title of a programme to which a student requiring a visa has been accepted, or is currently registered, will not be changed during his/her candidature unless this is unavoidable. The opportunity is also being taken to make minor alterations to the wording of the policy to improve its clarity.

Making changes to programmes to which students are registered

Principles

1. The University recognises the importance of achieving a balance between the need to ensure that its programmes of study are up to date and of high quality and the need also to satisfy the reasonable expectation of students who are already, or who are about to become, registered on such courses. Where revisions significantly affect either the structure of the programme or its content a rule is applied that allows registered students either to change to the new arrangements or to continue with the old ones such that they suffer no detriment arising from the changes.
2. The application of this rule, however, is not straightforward. Where the changes are relatively minor the rule can be applied on a year by year basis so that a student in the first year of a programme would not be permitted to resist a change in the final year if that change were small. However, a student already in, or who was about to enter, the final year and whose choice of modules, for example, was restricted by the change would be permitted to object. If no detriment to the student was involved, e.g., if the choice of modules was increased, then that student would not be allowed to object.
3. A major amendment to a programme such as a change of title or the way in which a degree is classified would invariably apply to all students registered on the programme. Major amendments such as these will need to be introduced at the start of an academic session and be rolled forward year by year such that the old arrangements are gradually replaced by the new as the former programme is taught out. Only in exceptional circumstances will other arrangements be approved.
4. Any change to the title of a programme affects the validity of the visa or General Student Visa letter issued to students from outside of the European Economic Area. Once issued these documents are costly and inconvenient for students to replace. The expectation is, therefore, that the title of a programme to which a student requiring a visa

has been accepted, or is currently registered, will not be changed during his/her candidature.

Implementation

5. There are three main points in an undergraduate student's career at which any proposed changes to the programme of study may have a different bearing:
 - a) when the student has firmly accepted a place on the course;
 - b) at the point of registering in the first year of the programme;
 - c) when registering in the upper years (normally the second year or the year in which the results count towards the classified degree).

In the case of postgraduate students stages (ii) and (iii) will be the same. Individual consideration should be given to arrangements in respect of the MBChB and the BChD.

6. There is also a need to give special consideration to part-time programmes of study running over an extended period of time and to instances where students have been granted an extension to the normal period of study. In this latter case students would have to accept that there might be changes to the content and structure of programmes of study beyond their expectations had they completed within the normal timeframe.

Prior to initial registration on the programme

7. For students intending to enter the programme of study the following should be considered fixed:
 - (i) the title of the programme and the qualification to which it leads;
 - (ii) the main subject 'thrust' of the programme and the intended learning outcomes;
 - (iii) any professional exemptions;
 - (iv) the main structure, i.e., the number of years of study, credit requirements, etc.;
 - (v) any compulsory special features of the programme such as a year of study spent abroad, an industrial work placement or extended fieldwork;
 - (vi) an integral Erasmus or other exchange arrangement;
 - (vii) a major structural choice within the programme, e.g., the choice between bachelors or integrated masters programme at the end of Year 2.

If there are unavoidable changes at this stage, students must be informed as soon as possible and advice given as necessary as to the alternatives.

At entry to the first year

8. As above and, in addition, as published in the currently approved programme specification available through the web catalogue:
 - (i) the compulsory modules for Year 1 together with the format of assessment;
 - (ii) the optional modules for Year 1 together with format of assessments.
 - (iii) any late changes to the optional modules for Year 1 together with the format of assessment if circumstances (such as staff changes) make this unavoidable. (Note: the web catalogues carry a disclaimer which protects the University from legal challenge)

9. There can be no guarantees in respect of electives but, if particular modules are recommended, the parent department should ensure that, as far as possible, they are available to students on the programme concerned.

Upper years of the programme

10. As above and, in addition, as published in the currently approved programme specification available through the web catalogue:
 - (i) the award classification arrangements;
 - (ii) the compulsory modules together with the format of assessment;
 - (iii) the optional modules for the year together with format of assessments (students entering a non-final year would need to understand that options published for the final year might change by the time they themselves became finalists);
 - (iv) any late changes to the optional modules for the year together with the format of assessment if circumstances (such as staff changes) make this unavoidable.
11. The management of any alteration to a programme of study needs to be achieved through goodwill. Changes that are agreed by the School should be published to students as early as possible and explained fully. Amendments to programmes of study are usually for good academic reasons and if the course as a whole is thereby strengthened then the explanation itself will be valuable.

CAGB/CES
Approved as LTB/00-53 on 20-Feb-01

Amended by GBR/AQST
24-May-10

Reviewed (AQST): August 2011
Please note the following changes to nomenclature from 1 August 2011:
Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) is now Taught Student Education Board (TSEB)
Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC) is now Faculty Taught Student Education Committee (FTSEC)