

Major Programme Amendments

Following the request of the Taught Student Education Board the Quality Assurance Team has revisited the definition of 'major programme amendments' to ensure that only those proposals presenting substantial changes to existing programmes are classified as such. As stated in current policy, approval of minor programme amendments is delegated to the relevant School Taught Student Education Committee (although it is proposed that the annual programme review provides details of any such amendments and reflects on the rationale for their implementation). In clarifying the definition presented below, reference has been made of the QAA Quality Code and current practice in other higher education institutions.

Major Programme Amendments are those that involve **changes to the structure of a programme which have the potential to impact on the programme level learning outcomes and the programme title**, i.e.:

1. Any changes to the structure of the programme via the removal and/or addition of compulsory modules¹
2. The withdrawal, addition or re-designation of optional modules as co-requisites or pre-requisites (where such changes impact on a substantial number of optional modules - equating to 30% or more of the credit weighting for any single year of study, for example 40 credits at undergraduate or 60 credits at postgraduate level)
3. Changes to the programme title and/or award, where this reflects changes to programme content
4. Significant changes to the mode of delivery (e.g., via introduction of a Flexible and Distributed Learning mode or an alternative programme delivery location)

In the light of any such changes careful consideration must be given to a **potential impact on the learning outcomes and the title of the programme**, and whether these should be revised in the light of the changes proposed. All such major programme amendments will require an external review and are to be considered by the relevant Programme Approval Group. The Programme Approval Group also has responsibility for the consideration of all new modules.

All other programme changes are to be considered and approved by the relevant School Taught Student Education Committee/s.

¹ Replacement compulsory modules, where these do not impact on programme level Learning Outcomes are not included.

Examples include:

1. Change to a programme title (when the change is for marketing purposes and does not reflect any changes to programme content, structure or learning outcomes. In these instances the advice of the Faculty's Marketing Manager should be sought and the title change agreed with the Dean of the relevant Faculty.) Such changes should only be implemented in advance of any recruitment cycle.
2. Adding or removing optional modules (when these amount to less than 30% of the credit weighting for any one year)

Proposed changes to programmes of study on which students are currently registered (i.e., changes to be introduced for existing as opposed to future cohorts) require the consent of those students registered on the programme as set out in the attached policy document.

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. 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 four main points for undergraduate education at which any proposed changes to the programme of study may have a different bearing:
 - (i) when the programme has been approved and the recruitment cycle has commenced;
 - (ii) when the student has firmly accepted a place on the course;
 - (iii) at the point of registering in the first year of the programme;
 - (iv) 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 (iii) and (iv) 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 discovery modules/ 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 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. If the majority of those students consulted object to the changes proposed, then careful consideration should be given to the issues raised and the proposals modified, if appropriate, to reach consensus. Further guidance is available from the Quality Assurance Team and the University's Legal Adviser.

Module amendments – different types and approval process

School TSECs have authority to approve module amendments and then report these to Faculty TSEC via the [STSEC business report](#) and STSEC minutes. (A copy of the amended module is not required by FTSEC).

All module amendments can be approved by STSEC except where the proposed amendments are considered major and affect the credit weighting, credit level or require substantive amendments to the learning outcomes. In such instances, a new module must be proposed and the existing module withdrawn. The replacement module is treated as a new module for approval purposes. This retains the integrity and consistency of the historical record of modules and ensures parity for any student retaking a module in a future year.

Changing a module title is considered a minor change and can be approved by STSEC, however the re-titled module requires a new module code to retain consistency of the historical record. The existing module code will need to be withdrawn and the new module code and title confirmed to the Faculty TSEC in the [report of STSEC business](#).

Process for amending modules

The changes to the module must be clearly indicated with a supporting rationale. This proposal is then considered for approval by the STSEC.

- A module catalogue report or amended module proposal can be provided if this is considered appropriate for STSEC consideration.
- Following approval, the module catalogue must be updated to reflect the changes.
- The module amendments must be reported to the FTSEC through the STSEC business report and the STSEC minutes, which must be sent to your Quality Assurance team (QAT) faculty contact.
- Please contact your Quality Assurance team (QAT) faculty contact if you have any queries regarding the process.

Timeline for module amendments

Modules amendments must be approved by 31 March in the session before they are to be taught. Module enrolment goes live for returning students on 1 May and new students starting in September will be able to access this information. Therefore, only under exceptional circumstances should module amendments be made after 31 March.

Please contact your QAT Faculty contact for further advice regarding module amendments.