Code of practice for programme and module modification

Academic year 2016/17
Introduction

1. The modification process is the quality assurance mechanism by which any proposed changes outside of the periodic review cycle may be considered and, if approved, implemented.

2. The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards (QES) will maintain the records of any modifications. This Code of practice is intended to provide detailed information and guidance about the programme and module modification process, as well as the responsibilities of all participants.

3. Process templates can be downloaded from http://www.surrey.ac.uk/quality_enhancement/validation/modifications/index.htm. It is advisable that templates are always downloaded from the website and not stored locally to ensure the most recent template is used. If an incorrect template is used the documentation will be sent back requesting that the correct template is utilised.

Process aims

4. The University is committed to ensuring the continuous improvement of its programmes to ensure the best possible student experience. Part of this commitment is to recognise where change is needed and to make sure there are no unnecessary barriers, so as to enable programmes to stay relevant, current, viable and competitive. The modification process allows for this.

5. The following factors may contribute to the need to modify a programme in between periodic review cycles:
   - research, professional, subject and industry practice
   - learning and teaching (including technology enhanced learning)
   - Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements
   - the University's strategic aims, objectives and mission

The process

6. There is an expectation that a modification is identified through one or more of the factors below, which then flags the need for a change:
   - data on student progression and achievement
   - Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements
   - external examiners’ reports
   - annual programme review reports
   - student surveys
   - discussion at Boards of Studies
   - feedback from students, employers, alumni and staff
   - periodic programme review

7. The prompts for the proposed modification(s) should be clearly identified on the modification form. External examiners should be kept informed regarding any modifications and consulted where necessary.

8. The modification process should not be used for individual students who require reasonable adjustments due to extenuating circumstances. Faculty level processes are in place to manage these instances.

9. At any stage during the process a decision may be made that the modification is too substantial or the changes too numerous to be managed through the modification process. If this is the case, a periodic review or validation of a new programme will take place. In either instance the Programme Leader will be informed by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards and advised on what process will need to be initiated in order to implement the proposed change.
10. Where a need for modification is identified, the Programme Leader or nominated alternate is required to identify whether the modification is major or minor, complete the relevant form (see Appendices 1 and 2) and append the necessary documentation to support the modification. For example, if the modification was to introduce new programme content through the development of a new module, the new module descriptor would need to be provided along with the amended programme specification.

11. It is the expectation of the University that any changes are discussed with students regarding the proposed modification before it is implemented. The method used to collect this information should be documented on the modification form. All modifications must be considered and approved at Boards of Studies meetings. Chair’s action is only to be used in exceptional circumstances. As well as Boards of Studies meetings students can also be consulted or kept informed through other means such as Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings.

12. If current and/or prospective students need to be contacted to inform them of the change, a form of words should be produced and included within section 8 of the major modification form. The wording will need to be approved by QES prior to any communication being sent to the students.

13. As part of the modification process proposers are expected to identify if any other programmes will be affected by the change and then list them on the relevant form. Programme and Module Leaders linked to the affected programmes should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity. Secretaries to Boards of Studies will check the forms once they are submitted for Board of Studies approval to ensure that all affected programmes have been listed on the relevant form.

14. Modifications such as the introduction of a new programme structure and/or title would only normally come into effect for new cohorts. Other modifications such as the introduction of new optional modules would take effect from the start of the next academic year and could be available to current as well as new students. Clear evidence for the modification and how it will be implemented must be detailed on the modification form to ensure that academic standards are maintained during any transition period.

15. All modifications are to be reported on through the annual programme review process to ensure that the University can be assured of the positive effect of the change.

16. The major modification form within Appendix 1 should be completed for all major modifications. The minor modification tracker within Appendix 2 should be completed for all minor modifications. Minor modifications should not be listed on the major modification form and vice versa.

17. Both major and minor modifications must be considered and approved through a Board of Studies meeting. Following Board of Studies approval minor modifications are considered to have received final approval at Faculty level. Major modifications must be considered further by the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), the Quality and Standards Sub-committee and on occasion the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC).

18. The modification forms and supporting evidence are to be completed by academic members of staff and then submitted to the Board of Studies Secretary who will then manage the consideration of the modification(s) through the Board of Studies process. It is the responsibility of the academic to ensure that major modifications are forwarded on to the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) for Faculty level approval and the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards for institutional level approval. The Academic Quality Officer will keep the proposer
up to date with the progress of the major modification. On occasion further work may be needed before final approval can be given. In these instances the Academic Quality Officer will request amendments or more information from the proposer.

19. All minor modifications should be compiled onto one form by the Board of Studies Secretary and submitted to the meeting as one paper. All modification approvals should clearly be minuted within the Board of Studies minutes and the papers should be made available to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards on request. It is the responsibility of the Board of Studies Secretary to send all minor modifications that have been approved at the Board with the supporting paperwork to modifications@surrey.ac.uk, the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Director of Learning and Teaching following the meeting.

20. For further information and process guidance please see Appendix 3.

Timescales

21. The timescales for modifications can vary greatly depending on the extent of the change. It should be possible to complete the modification process within one to two months, however this cannot be guaranteed.

22. Although the University recognises that there should be flexibility with this process, it is also important to ensure that there is no disruption to the quality of the learning experience. Modifications to change a programme title should be submitted by 15 January if the modification is required to come into effect for entry that same calendar year. This is to ensure that there is sufficient time to inform applicants of the change before they make a decision on whether to accept an offer. All other modifications must be submitted no later than the end of July in the academic year prior to the introduction of the proposed modification. This is to ensure that, if approved, there is enough time for consideration and implementation before the students return/begin their studies.

23. It would be atypical for a change to be introduced during the academic year; however it is recognised that this might be necessary in exceptional cases, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In these instances a clear rationale must be provided as to why the introduction cannot wait and how it will improve the overall student experience.

Major/minor changes

24. The major modification form should be completed for the following changes:
   - programme name change(s)
   - new awards or change of existing award (eg changing a BA to a BSc)
   - new pathway(s)
   - change to/introduction of a mode of study (full-time/part-time/distance learning/short course)

25. The minor modification form should be completed for the following changes (please note that the following list is not exhaustive):
   - module scheduling (ie semester 1/2)
   - module classification (core/compulsory/optional)
   - introduction of a new module (core/compulsory/optional)
   - changes due to PSRB requirements (unless the change conflicts with the University’s regulations – see paragraph 26 below)
   - module titles
   - learning outcomes and/or aims (programme/module)
   - assessment patterns/strategy
• learning and teaching methods
• content (programme/module)
• contact hours
• leader (programme/module)

Each modification will be considered on a case by case basis.

26. Where there is a large volume of changes that could culminate in a minor change becoming a major and/or a major becoming a periodic review or a change that does not fit within either category (major/minor) as listed above, this would be classed as a substantial change. Where a substantive change is identified QES should be contacted in the first instance to determine how the change(s) should be processed.

Approval

27. Once completed the documentation will need to be approved. The level of the change and the risk involved will determine whether the proposed modification will be approved at Faculty level (minor modifications) or institutional level (major modifications). Major modifications must be approved by the Faculty before being submitted for institutional level approval.

28. Appendix 4 details the approval process for the varying levels of modification. If the modification is minor and so can be approved at Faculty level then the documentation will need to be approved by the relevant Board of Studies.

29. If the modification is major such as a programme title name change, the documentation will need to be forwarded to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards once all Faculty-level approvals have been given, where it will be submitted to the Quality and Standards Sub-committee for consideration and approval, if appropriate.

30. If the Sub-committee considers that the change is too substantial for their approval it may be forwarded to the University Learning and Teaching Committee for consideration and final approval. This process will be managed by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards.

31. To ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to introduce changes in a timely manner, modifications can be considered and approved by Chair’s action. For Board of Studies approval Chair’s action should be avoided where possible and only be taken in exceptional circumstance. Where Chair’s action has been granted the modification must be reported at the next Board of Studies meeting and clearly minuted.

Audit checks

32. All minor modifications that have been approved via Board of Studies will be subject to audit checks by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards, the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Director of Learning and Teaching.

33. The purpose of the audit checks is to identify any areas that may require further investigation and ensure that due process is being followed.

34. Those carrying out the audit checks reserve the right to investigate any changes in the process of being approved or which have been approved through the modification process and if necessary insist on revisions/amendments.
Roles and responsibilities

35. Programme Leaders (or nominated alternate) are responsible for:
   • identifying the modification(s) required
   • discussing the modification(s) with students
   • completing the relevant form
   • seeking approval - proposer to send the Faculty approved major modifications to gesadmin@surrey.ac.uk
   • submitting the form to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards once it has received Faculty approval
   • implementing the change(s) whilst maintaining the academic standards of the programme and the quality of the learning experience
   • reporting on and monitoring the effectiveness of the modification(s) through the annual programme review process and any subsequent periodic programme reviews
   • carrying out the process in a timely manner
   • keeping all relevant parties informed throughout the process
   • consulting relevant parties prior to seeking approval

36. Approvers are responsible for:
   • ensuring the information provided is sufficient to make an informed decision
   • ensuring the proposed modification is appropriate and timely
   • ensuring the proposed implementation process is sufficient and that it can be supported by the Faculty, ie if funds are required for further resources
   • ensuring that students have been informed
   • approving modifications or recommending further improvement
   • ensuring that the change(s) is/are monitored through the relevant quality assurance mechanisms, ie annual programme review and periodic programme review

37. The Directorate of Quality and Enhancement is responsible for:
   • ensuring that all modifications are reported to any institutional level committees in a timely manner (if applicable)
   • maintaining clear communication of the process and the progression of any modifications through the process between the Faculty and University committees
   • ensuring all outcomes are clearly communicated to all relevant parties including: the Faculty and the Student Services and Administration Directorate, Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions; identifying where action is required
   • ensuring that the documentation is filed appropriately and is easily accessible
   • ensuring that the documentation is fit for purpose, that enough information has been provided and that all documentation required to support the modification has been submitted
   • ensuring that any programme documentation that is to be amended and approved through the programme modification process is updated and republished, ie programme specifications
   • uploading all approved modifications to the QES SharePoint site
38. The Programme Administration team within the Student Services and Administration Directorate and Faculty Student Services are responsible for:

- ensuring that the correct form has been completed prior to Board of Studies consideration
- ensuring that all necessary documentation has been provided and that due process has been followed
- ensuring that all affected programmes have been listed on the modification form
- collating the modifications and submitting them as papers to the Board of Studies for consideration and approval
- ensuring that all discussions regarding the modifications are clearly minuted
- sending through the approved minor modifications to modifications@surrey.ac.uk
- ensuring that the module catalogue is amended once modifications have been approved

39. The Quality and Standards Sub-committee is responsible for:

- assessing the risk involved in the major modifications
- assuring the implementation process proposed is appropriate
- ensuring that students have been informed
- deciding whether the modification is appropriate and timely
- approving the modification (if appropriate) or escalating the modification to the University Learning and Teaching Committee for further scrutiny
- with the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Director of Learning and Teaching carrying out audit checks (see paragraphs 32-34 above)

40. All major modification forms and the trackers noting minor modifications will be stored on the Quality Assurance Programme Documentation SharePoint site. All University staff members have read access to the SharePoint site.

41. A process flow chart detailing the involvement of professional support teams in the modification process can be found on the programme life-cycle web pages.

42. This Code of practice has been written in line with the Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education and informed by sector-wide practice. Any feedback on how this process can be improved or general feedback can be sent to qesadmin@surrey.ac.uk.
### Appendix 1 – Major modification form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAJOR MODIFICATION FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Programme title and award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Faculty / Department / School / Associated Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Programme Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Please select the relevant change below:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. New programme title(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. New award / change of an existing award (eg BA/BSc/MSc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. New pathway(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Changes to / introduction of a mode of study (full-time / part-time / distance learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. What is being changed and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Date of introduction of the modification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Has the modification been discussed with current students? Was this discussed through Staff/Student Liaison Committee or other informal meetings? Are there any implications for current and/or prospective students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do current and/or prospective students need to be contacted to inform them of the change? If yes, please provide specific wording for the communication below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Details of how the changes will be implemented to ensure that the learning experience and academic standards are maintained. (eg will current student cohorts be transferred on to the new programme/pathway)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do the changes affect any recruitment, admissions and/or marketing material, i.e. website, prospectus, UCAS? Have Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and/or Strategic Planning been consulted? Please append details of consideration from any of the above listed Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does the modification require the introduction of any additional resources? If so, what plans have been made to acquire / fund the resources? (ie have discussions with the Faculty Engagement Librarian taken place? Have the finances / additional staff members been included in the Faculty Plan?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Provide a list of any other programmes that are affected by the modification. Have the relevant Programme Leaders been informed?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 13. Signatures required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme director – to confirm that appropriate discussion has taken place and that the modification has the support of the programme team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair of the Board of Studies – to confirm approval of the relevant Board of Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) – to confirm approval of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair of the Quality and Standards Subcommittee (if required, see process flow chart) – to give approval to the modification on behalf of Q&amp;SS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair of University Learning and Teaching Committee (if required, see process flow chart)</td>
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**PLEASE ATTACH THE REVISED PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION, ANY RELEVANT MODULE DESCRIPTORS. ALSO ENSURE THAT ALL CHANGES ARE CLEARLY HIGHLIGHTED**

**Office use only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/position of approver</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason(s) for not approving</td>
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</table>
## Appendix 2 – Minor modification tracker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme title</th>
<th>Module code</th>
<th>Module title</th>
<th>Modification description</th>
<th>Modification rationale</th>
<th>List of all programmes in which this modification affects (if needed, in brackets indicate if the module is core, compulsory or optional)</th>
<th>Date of introduction</th>
<th>Have key Departments been consulted?</th>
<th>Date of BoS approval</th>
<th>Approved via Chairs action / BoS meeting</th>
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PLEASE ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE MADE AWARE OF THE CHANGES THROUGH STAFF STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEES AND/OR BOARD OF STUDIES MEETINGS

KEY DEPARTMENTS INCLUDE - MARKETING, RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS, STRATEGIC PLANNING, FACULTY(S)/SCHOOL(S), THEY SHOULD BE CONSULTED WHEN:

THEY SHARE/TEACH/DELIVER PART OF THE PROGRAMME(S)/MODULE(S) - CONTACT THE RELEVANT PROGRAMME / MODULE LEADERS
WHERE ADVERTISING MATERIAL NEEDS TO BE AMENDED - CONTACT CONTENT@SURREY.AC.UK
WHERE THE CHANGE REQUIRES MARKET ANALYSIS TO ENSURE THAT THEY MEET MARKET STANDARDS - CONTACT YOUR FACULTY MARKETING MANAGER
WHERE THE CHANGE AFFECTS PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS - CONTACTADMISSIONS@SURREY.AC.UK

Attach:
programme specification - WITH TRACK CHANGES
module descriptors - WITH TRACK CHANGES
BoS minutes documenting the approval
letter of communication for current / prospective students (if required)
Appendix 3 – Guidance form for the completion of the modification process

Categories

Complete a major modification form for major changes and a minor modifications form for minor changes. Examples of when each form should be utilised is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>programme name change(s)</td>
<td>module scheduling (ie semester 1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new award / change of existing award (eg BA/BSc/MSc/MA)</td>
<td>module classification (core/compulsory/optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new pathway(s)</td>
<td>introduction of a new module / removal of a module (core/compulsory/optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change to / introduction of a mode of study (full-time / part-time / distance learning)</td>
<td>changes due to PSRB requirements that do not require deviation from the Regulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Substantial changes - a large volume of changes that could culminate in a minor change becoming a major and/or a major becoming a periodic review or a change that does not fit within either category (major/minor) as listed above. **NOTE:** for substantial changes the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) (ADLT) and the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards (QES) should be consulted in the first instance so that the correct approval process can be identified.

If you are creating a new module please do not create a dummy code. Please complete the module code fields as follows: XXXXXXX. A module code will be assigned once it has been approved.

Approval - All changes should be approved at a Board of Studies (BoS) meeting in the first instance. All minor modifications only require approval from BoS. **Chairs action for Board of Studies meetings should only be used in exceptional circumstances,** and where this has been applied it must be reported at the next BoS meeting for notification.

Major modifications must be approved by: Programme Leader, Board of Studies, the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Quality and Standards Subcommittee (QSS) and University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) (if applicable).

In order to support modifications the following documents must be appended when applicable: programme specification(s), module descriptor(s), BoS minutes documenting the approval and letter of communication for current/prospective students (if applicable).

Changes to module and programmes must be clearly highlighted on the programme and/or module specifications/descriptors using track changes.

**PLEASE ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE MADE AWARE OF THE CHANGES THROUGH STAFF STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE’S AND/OR BOARD OF STUDIES MEETINGS.**
No later than two weeks prior to the Board of Studies (BoS) meeting Secretary to circulate the following to members of the board:

- Minor modification form
- Major modification form
- Guidance sheet for the completion of the modification process

Academic(s) to complete the relevant form and send it back to the Secretary with the supporting documentation prior to the BoS meeting, who will compile the agenda and papers for each meeting.

Reminder for papers will be sent one week prior to the BoS meeting.

Secretary to collate all minor modifications onto one tracker to then submit the modification tracker with all relevant supporting documentation (e.g., programme specifications, module descriptors) and any major modifications as papers to the BoS.

Following the meeting the secretary writes the minutes and completes the Secretary Spreadsheet.

If it is a module change Secretary to check that all affected programmes have been listed using the following report (log in > click on module maintenance > click on assessments by route > select relevant year > wait for the report to generate > type the module code into the search box for a list of affected programmes).

If approved the Secretary sends the modification forms, secretary spreadsheet and supporting documentation to modifications@surrey.ac.uk confirming BoS approval. The relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Director of Learning and Teaching must be copied in.

**MAJOR:** following BoS approval academics are required to seek ADLT approval and send the form to QES for institutional level approval.

QES, ADLT and DLT will run audits to double check the changes that are being made through the modification process to ensure that they are following due process and identify any area that require further investigation.

QES, ADLT and DLT reserve the right to investigate any changes in the process of being approved or which have been approved through the modification process and if necessary insist on revisions/amendments.

Programme Administration Central Team to check through the module change request form and make changes where necessary.

**MINOR:** Once checked QES extract modification rationale tracker from the spreadsheet and save a pdf version on to the Quality Assurance Programme Documentation SharePoint site (QAPD).

**MAJOR:** QES to escalate all major modification forms to the Chair of the Quality and Standards Subcommittee for approval and if necessary ULTC.
Appendix 4 – Process flow chart

1. Start

    Programme Leader or nominated alternate to
    - Identify the need for a modification
    - Complete the major/minor modification form
    - Ensure that students and external examiners are consulted, where appropriate
    - Attach any necessary documentation to support the documentation, e.g., amended programme specification, module descriptors
    - Sign the modification form

    Modification to be submitted to the Board of Studies for consideration and approval (final approval for minor modifications – see appendix 3 for more detailed process information on minor modifications)

2. Major

    Major Modification to be submitted to the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) for consideration and approval

    Major modification to be submitted to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards who subsequently submit the modification to the Quality and Standards Sub-committee for consideration and approval

3. Minor

    The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards to inform the Programme Leader, SSAD, Marketing and Admissions of the approval and request that all necessary changes are made.

4. Approved?

    Yes

    Proposer to be informed of the reasons for not approving the proposal. Guidance on how the proposal can be amended should be provided and the proposal resubmitted for consideration (if appropriate).

    No

    Further consideration required

    Modification to be submitted to the University Learning and Teaching Committee for consideration and approval

5. Approved forms to be uploaded to the Quality Assurance Programme Documentation SharePoint site by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards

6. End