



Code of practice for programme and module modification

Academic year 2017/18

Contents

Quality and Curriculum Management (QCM) project	1
Introduction	1
Process aims	1
The process	1
Timescales	3
Major/minor changes	4
Approval	4
Audit checks	5
Roles and responsibilities	5

Quality and Curriculum Management (QCM) project

The QCM project has been established to automate the following processes and will be carried out in three distinct phases:

Phase 1: modification process (to be completed for 2017/18)

Phase 2: suspension and withdrawal processes (to be completed for 2018/19)

Phase 3: validation and periodic review process (to be completed for 2019/20)

The principles of each process will remain as they are at the moment but some detail of how they operate in practice may change. Because of this it may be necessary to make some amendments to the processes following the publication of this *Code of practice*.

All modification templates and process flow charts will be replaced with an automated system that can be accessed via e-vision. Further guidance on the new process can be found [here](#).

For further information on the project visit its [webpage](#) or contact the project team (qualitysupport@surrey.ac.uk).

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. Further process information can be downloaded [here](#). It is advisable that documentation is not stored locally to ensure the most recent records are used.

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 (within the context screen of the Quality and Curriculum Management System). 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 log into SITS and start a modification. They will be required to complete the modification context sections as well as edit any programme and/or module records related to the modification. For example, if the modification was to introduce new programme content through the development of a new module, a new module would need to be created within the system and the programme record updated to include the new module. Based on the modifications entered the system will then determine whether the modification is major or minor.
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 (within the context screen of the Quality and Curriculum Management System). 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 the modification form (within the context screen of the Quality and Curriculum Management System).
13. Programme and Module Leaders linked to the affected programmes should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity. A notification from the QCM system will be sent to relevant parties affected by the modification once it has been submitted by the proposer.
14. Modifications such as the introduction of a new programme structure and/or title should only come into effect for new cohorts, unless there are exceptional circumstances that require this change. Please note the process timescales in relation to the approval of changes, a summary of which is available on the [programme life cycle webpage](#). 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 (within the context screen of the Quality and Curriculum Management System) 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. 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).
 17. Modifications and any necessary amendments to programme and module records are to be completed and submitted by academic members of staff. The Board of Studies Secretary will manage the consideration of the modification(s) through the Board of Studies process
 18. 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.

Timescales

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. All major and/or minor modifications should be submitted by no later than the end of July prior to the academic year in which the change will be introduced. 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 to the Board of Studies as to why the introduction cannot wait and how it will improve the overall student experience.
22. Examples of exceptional circumstances in this context include:
 - where a member of staff who is the only subject expert on staff has left the University, meaning there is no one to carry on the delivery of a module content
 - a PSRB requirement that must be implemented with immediate affect
 - where a programme is in breach of the University's regulations
23. In each instance a strong rationale must be provided that confirms why the modification cannot wait until the following academic year to be. In-year changes

must be communicated to all students affected and where possible they should be consulted.

Major/minor changes

24. The following changes represent a major change:
 - 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 following changes represent a minor change (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 institutional level approval.
28. 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.
29. 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

30. 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.
31. The purpose of the audit checks is to identify any areas that may require further investigation and ensure that due process is being followed.
32. 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

33. Programme Leaders (or nominated alternate) are responsible for:
 - identifying the modification(s) required
 - discussing the modification(s) with students
 - completing the relevant sections within the system
 - submitting the modification within the system once all information has been provided and changes made
 - 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
34. 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 the change(s) is/are monitored through the relevant quality assurance mechanisms, ie annual programme review and periodic programme review
35. 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 modification information is fit for purpose, that enough information has been provided and that all relevant information required to support the modification has been submitted

36. The Programme Administration team within the Student Services and Administration Directorate and Faculty Student Services are responsible for:
 - ensuring that the correct information has been provided prior to Board of Studies consideration
 - ensuring that all corrections have been made to programme and/or module records and that due process has been followed
 - ensuring that all submitted modifications are put forward to the relevant Board of Studies meeting for approval
 - ensuring that all discussions regarding the modifications are clearly minuted
37. 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 30-32 above)
38. 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.
39. 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 gesadmin@surrey.ac.uk.