Modification to a Taught Programme

Staff Guidelines

1 Introduction

A modification is a change to a validated programme of study for which primary responsibility, for considering and approving the modification, rests with the Programmes Committee. The terms of reference for the Programmes Committee can found at http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/Committees/Senate/Home.aspx

Modifications to programmes are categorised for procedural purposes as "minor" or "major". These categories are described in more detail in section 2 which will help to determine which category a modification falls into.

All modifications should be considered and authorised to proceed by the School Board (either via the Quality Standing Panel or Chair's action where necessary).

For **Minor Modifications**, the Programmes Committee will normally delegate the consideration and approval to the relevant School/Division Board.

For **Major Modifications**, Programmes Committee approval is required and the comments of the relevant external examiner(s) should be sought in support of the modification together with evidence of student consultation.

Minor modifications to the module as defined in section 2 are part of the usual operations and updating of the module content. However consideration should be taken of whether minor modifications affect current students or future cohorts of students and this will impact on the process of consultation, approval and implementation. As a general principle, modifications should be implemented for the next entering student cohort and therefore not impact the current students.

Major modifications as defined in section 2 should normally be planned as part of the periodic review of the programme(s) or can be as a result of institutional strategies such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

2 Determining Category of Modification

It is important to reach a balance between developing and encouraging innovation in teaching, learning and assessment methods, and enabling the curriculum and content of modules to be current and relevant whilst ensuring that the critical information upon which applicants and current students make their decisions when choosing a programme of study is accurate and stable. The categorisation of Minor and Major Modifications attempts to reach the balance of enabling development whilst ensuring that students and applicants are informed and where appropriate consulted with about changes that have a direct impact on their decision making process and where necessary processes are in place to ensure that they agree with the changes that are being developed.

2.1 Minor Modifications

The following changes to programmes are examples of acceptable minor modifications. The timeliness of the changes should be within the timeframe that ensures prospective and current students are not affected or I they are affected there are clear plans to ensure that they are consulted with (see Appendix 1). Minor Modifications are approved by the School Board:

- the addition or withdrawal of individual option modules for a future cohort of students, where this does not affect the overall intended learning outcomes as defined in the programme specification, and does not lead to a reduction in the range of options within the programme.
- changes to the modules (e.g. to reflect a different emphasis brought to the module by a new or different member of teaching staff or to reflect developments in learning, teaching and assessment methods, or to reflect curriculum and content developments), where these do not affect the overall programme learning outcomes or the balance of assessment methods ie coursework/written examinations/practical examinations or the broad learning and teaching methods (ie scheduled learning and teaching activities, placement or guided independent study) as defined in the programme specification statistics and the summary statement in the Programme Specification relating to the teaching, learning and assessment methods for that programme, as published on the Programme Specification and the UniStats website.
- changes to the mode of delivery of a module or modules (e.g. the replacement of lectures with seminars), where these do not affect the summary statement in the Programme Specification relating to the teaching and learning methods for that programme or the intended learning outcomes.
- Change of the module tutor/programme leader/department delivering the module.
- Rewording of a learning outcome as advised by the external examiner to provide greater clarity to the students.

2.2 Major modifications

The following changes to programmes normally constitute major modifications. The timeliness of the changes must be within the timeframe that ensures prospective and current students are either not affected or are consulted and informed about changes that affect them (see Appendix 1). Major modifications need to be approved by Programmes Committee and may require a Standing Approvals Panel to provide academic oversight for the proposed changes:

- the addition of core modules;
- the withdrawal of modules;
- Changes to module title(s);
- the systematic re-structuring of a programme or part thereof due to internal (eg periodic review) or external impact (eg Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements) e.g. the re-definition of modules, changes to credit ratings and changes to levels;
- a change to the programme title and/or award, or the addition of other award routes as part of an existing programme where these have not already been approved (e.g. new points of entry and/or exit).
- a change to the duration of the programme.
- a change in the mode of delivery of the programme (e.g. the introduction of a part-time route or a move from face-to-face tuition to distance learning).
- the addition, or substantive revision, of a work-based placement.
- the addition/withdrawal/modification of modules that results in changes to the intended learning outcomes of the overall programme (as defined in the Programme Specification), and/or a reduction in the range of options within the programme.
- There may be a situation that arises that is beyond the control of the University which results in changes having to be made (also known as a force majeure).
- Content changes that affect the intended learning outcomes of the overall programme.
- Changes to aims, learning outcomes or content that have resource implications
- Changes that could be seen to disadvantage students (e.g. reduction of contact hours)

2.3 Modifications to Assessment

The following guidance should be used where a proposed modification concerns student assessment. Departments are advised to contact the Standards and Enhancement Office about proposed assessment

changes. The categorisation of Minor and Major modification is based on ensuring that students are able to make an informed choice.

Students Affected	Assessment Type	Timing of the assessment	Length of examination (time). Length of written task (words) (as appropriate)	Change in the weighting of different elements of assessment
New cohort or future student (pre recruitment cycle)	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor
Mid recruitment cycle	Major	Major	Major	Major
Future stage for current students	Major	Major	Major	Major
Current students – same stage*	Major	Major	Major	Major

*Such changes must only be made in very exceptional circumstances such as events outside of the control of the University.

3   Impact of Modifications Affecting Current Students

It is normal practice to implement modifications with a new cohort of students (i.e. a cohort new to the programme of study). If a department wishes to implement a modification for a current cohort, in most cases, it will be dealt with as a major modification and in this case Programmes Committee approval is required. In a small number of scenarios the changes are considered to be Minor and School Board approval is sufficient (eg. the addition of optional modules without the withdrawal of a module; the rewording of a learning outcome as advised by the external examiner to provide greater clarity to the student).

The reason for treating the majority of modifications affecting current cohorts as 'major' is not to prevent such modifications taking place but rather to ensure that the consultation and notification processes are in place. This is important, given that a modification could compromise the previously specified student experience and serve as grounds for a student to complain or appeal. Moreover, as the relationship between a University and its students is considered in law to be contractual in its nature and constrained by consumer law (the student contract), a student whose programme is modified could, in theory, take legal action against the University.

A modification that affects a current cohort is likely to be approved if:

- the academic department can provide evidence that no student involved will be disadvantaged by the change. That is, the change is minor and either neutral or advantageous in terms of its impact on the student experience (and consequently unlikely to provide grounds for a complaint, appeal or legal action – or any such move could be dismissed as unreasonable). For example minor modifications that allow new research to be brought to the curriculum, that enable innovative learning, teaching and assessment methods to be introduced, or that specifically address the concerns of students, external examiners, or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) will normally be approved.

- all students involved have been consulted and have given their consent for the change. Written consent from all students is likely to be a requirement in cases pertaining to changes to the published teaching timetable, the assessment regime or assessment regulations. As far as is practicable, departments should ensure they give sufficient time for: students to voice their

concerns/consent; recording the students' view; and if applicable informing all students of the modifications approval and implications for their studies.

Occasionally, circumstances may arise where programme changes that could have a negative impact upon a current cohort of students are unavoidable (e.g. because of unforeseen staff changes at short notice). In such a scenario, a department should, as a matter of urgency and through the Head of School and/or the Academic Group Coordinator, consult with the Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic) and/or the Academic Registrar. It is then essential to devise a plan that protects the interests of the students by ensuring that the impact of any modifications to the programme are minimal and that the student experience is not compromised. The department may be asked to take action to prevent a similar situation arising in future.

The Change Approval Form requests information including:

- the method of student consultation
- how student feedback will be gathered following consultation; and
- what the process will be to inform students about the implications/implementation of any approved changes

Consultation with current students about proposed modifications that will affect their programme of study is **mandatory** and requires written confirmation from the students, accepting the change, this can be obtained via the Staff Student Liaison Committee and the student representative thereof.

4 Modifications Affecting Prospective Students

Modifications affecting prospective students must be handled carefully if the University is to avoid complaints and legal action.

Individuals apply to the University on the basis of the information available to them at the time of application eg in the prospectus, in department advertising material, on the website and in Programme Specifications/Module Specifications. Prospective students must be informed at the earliest opportunity of any major changes to a programme made between the time the offer of a place is made and enrolment is completed. The Programme Specification document is sent to the student with the offer letter and this process begins in November preceding enrolment in the subsequent September. Changes that affect the content of the Programme Specification document that are approved after November are minimal, justified, controlled and the process of communication to prospective students forms an important part of the implementation process. It is essential to advise prospective students of the options available in the case of such major change (including the chance for individuals to change their minds about their place on the programme). Major changes would include withdrawal of modules, changes to module titles, major alterations to the teaching, learning and assessment arrangements for the programme and a change in the status of the programme, for example the withdrawal of PSRB accreditation. All of the above information is included within the Programme Specification and this is part of the material information upon which the prospective student is making their decision.

If the intention is that any proposed change(s) will have an impact on Prospective Students and the admissions cycle is underway, the programme team should consult the Student Recruitment and Admissions team about proposed modifications. It is essential to agree the process for notifying Prospective Students with the Student Recruitment and Admissions team **before** presenting proposed changes to the School Board and/or (if relevant) Student Staff Liaison Committee.

5   Publicity Material

Whilst much of the publicity material is produced centrally, departments must consider the contract with the student when preparing prospectus entries, placing information on websites, material used in presentations at external and internal events etc. Particular attention should be paid to: (i) module information; for example, departments are advised to **outline the range and likely subject(s) of option modules, rather than on specific offerings**. This is especially important for those curriculum areas that are dependent on a single member of staff; and (ii) methods of assessment e.g .in order to permit use of varied approaches, it is best to keep the detailed information to a minimum; specify the balance between open and closed assessment.

Departments should contact the Student Recruitment and Admissions Team if they have any queries about the suitability of publicity materials.

6   Obtaining Approval for a Proposed Minor Modification

6.1   Proposed Minor Modification

- Once a proposed modification has been explored and developed by relevant staff in consultation with students and the external examiner, a Change Approval Form (CAF) should be completed.
- Completed CAF submitted to the appropriate School Board Chair (or nominee) with the relevant supporting documentation (ie Student Consultation Evidence/External Examiner Feedback/communication with Student Recruitment and Admissions Team and Off Campus Division if applicable) for consideration and approval.
- School Board Decision (Approved/Approved and referred to Programmes Committee/Deferred/Not Approved) logged and date recorded on the CAF.
- If Approved, the modifications can be entered by the Programme Leader onto the Module/ Programme Specifications database.
- The completed (and signed) CAF together with supporting documents and draft Programme/Module specifications are to be submitted to the SEO so that changes can be either progressed on the database system(s) or if considered to be Major modifications will be forwarded to the Chair of Programmes Committee. The Head of School/AGC/Programme Leader will be notified by SEO whether the modification is to be classed as minor or escalated to major status.
- For minor modifications (as per the definitions in section 2), approval by School Board marks the end of the approval process. However, there are further actions that need to be completed and these are shown in section 9.

6.2   Proposed Major Modification

- Once a proposed modification has been explored and developed by relevant staff in consultation with students and the external examiner, a Change Approval Form (CAF) should be completed.
- Completed CAF is submitted to the appropriate School Board Chair (or nominee) with the relevant supporting documentation (ie Student Consultation Evidence/External Examiner Feedback) for consideration and approval.
- The School Board decision (Approved and referred to Programmes Committee/Deferred/Not Approved) is logged and date recorded on the CAF.
- If Approved, the modifications can be inserted/entered by the Programme Leader onto the Module/Programme Specifications database.
- The Approved CAF together with supporting documents and the draft Programme/Module specifications are to be submitted to the SEO for consideration by Programmes Committee;

- Programmes Committee may determine that the changes are of such significance that a Standing Approvals Panel with external input is required.
- The Programmes Committee decision will be forwarded to the Head of School within two days of the Programmes Committee meeting.

6.3   University level approval

Once major modification has been considered, a report of outcomes will be forwarded by SEO to Programmes Committee and the relevant School Boards. The proposed modifications may then be implemented.

There are further actions that need to be completed and these are shown in section 9.

Where there are resource implications Heads of Schools will need to consult with the AVC(A) about how to progress such requirements particularly if such changes are required outside of the Academic Planning cycle.

7   Change Approval Form

All modifications to programmes must be documented using the Change Approval Form (see Appendix 2).

Where Major Modifications have been made to a programme, as well as the consultation process with current student, applicants must be informed of the changes and how they may be affected. For this reason major changes to programmes should normally be made at least 12 months prior to the start date of that programme and affect only newly enrolled students rather than existing students.

The timeline Modifications to Programmes Approval is provided in Appendix 1.

Approved and implemented changes must be identified on the relevant Module and/or Programme Specifications databases.

The Standards and Enhancement Office check and progress the revised Module and Programme Specifications so that they are published on the relevant databases.

The details of the changes are also logged by the Standards and Enhancement Office in order that cumulative changes to programmes can be tracked.

These records will be audited as a minimum as part of the University's periodic review process.

8   Records

Records of all modifications will be kept by the Standards and Enhancement Office. Inspection of the records may be required by external reviewers from the QAA and PSRBs.

All validated programme specifications and module specifications are published on the website. Once the Programme and/Module Specifications have been populated, approved and progressed by SEO, there will be accurate information on the website about the validated programme. Changes to module or programme specifications will be reflected in new versions on the relevant databases. In this way students and applicants will always have access to the information they need.

9   Post Approval Actions

The academic department should :

1. complete the modifications to the Module and/or Programme Specifications on the relevant databases (if further changes have been requested by the Programmes Committee or Standing Approvals Panel);
2. liaise with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Team to ensure the publication of up to date course information and prospectus copy ;
3. ensure that any substantive changes affecting prospective students are notified in writing to those individuals in liaison with the Student Recruitment and Admissions team;
4. contact the Timetable Team to resolve any timetabling issues;
5. liaise with the Off Campus Division to ensure implementation of changes that affect partner students is managed effectively;
6. liaise with providers of learning resources, if appropriate (eg the Library and IT services) that the modification is progressing.

The Standards and Enhancement Office will:

1. on notification of approval progress the module and programme specifications in order that they become publishable on the University website

Appendix 1

Timeline for Modifications to a Taught Programme

		MINOR					MAJOR				
		Approval for Minor changes and administrative	Timeline for Consultation Existing Students	2016/17 intake	Applicants with Offer (inc deferred)	Future Students 2017/18 intake	Approval for Major changes and administrative	Timeline for Consultation Existing Students	2016/17 intake	Applicants with Offer (inc deferred)	Future Students 2017/18 intake
2015/16	Mar-16	Approval to go ahead by School Board (by Quality Standing					Approval to go ahead by School Board (by Quality Standing				
	Apr-16		Deadline for consultation with existing students who will be affected					No major changes for existing students to be implemented unless critical - If there are - need to envoke consultation with students including signed			
	May-16	1 External Examiner Consultation 2 If necessary - Final Programmes Committee - CAF Forms Submitted	SSLC report Consultation				Final Programmes Committee - CAF Forms Submitted and deadline for Standing Approvals Panel for those CAFs approved by PC		Aim for no major changes to be implemented for 2016/17 intake - if there are - need to envoke consultation with applicants	Aim for no major changes to be implemented for 2016/17 intake - if there are - need to envoke consultation with applicants	
	Jun-16	Module Specs updated for 2016/17 iteration		Notification email to students about updates to modules	Notification email to applicants about updates to modules	No Impact - no action required	If approved - Module Specs and Programme Specs updated for 2016/17				No impact - No additional action required
	Jul-16	Module Specs updated for 2017/18 iteration					Module Specs and Programme Specs updated for 2017/18 iteration				

Change Approval Form (CAF)

This form is to be used for all proposed modifications to validated modules or programmes

1	Programme(s) affected by the modification(s)		Programme Code
2	**Form completed by**		**Date**
3	**Summary of the proposed modification and rationale** *[please also attach revised Module Specification(s) and Programme Specification(s) where appropriate]*		
3	**Proposed date for introduction of the modification** *Please note that modifications to programmes should not usually be implemented for a current cohort of students. Modifications with timetabling implications need to be approved by February before the year of introduction to be taken into account in the annual timetable.*		
4	**Does the modification have implications for other departments eg Off Campus Division?** *If so please list the relevant Boards of Studies affected and confirm that they have been formally consulted and agree to the changes. Relevant email or pdf's of correspondence should be included with the CAF.*		
5	**Does the modification require approval by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB)?** *Relevant emails or pdf's of correspondence should be included with the CAF*		
6a	**PSRB approval required?**	Yes/No	
6b	**Name of relevant PSRB**		
6c	**PSRB approached**	Yes/No Date of approach:	
6d	**PSRB approval received**	Date of receipt:	
6	**Does the proposed modification require a new or substantially revised module spec?** *If so, please attach pdf of the revised Module Specifications from the database*		
7a	**New or substantially revised module spec(s)?**	Yes/No	
7b	**Revised Module Spec(s) attached?**	Yes/No	

8 For each module to be modified mark the appropriate box(es) to indicate the proposed change(s)

Module Code and Title	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	E

Key to categories of change:

B1. New core or optional module **(including change of title*)**

B2. Distance delivery of new or existing module

B3. Adding new module

B4. Credit rating of existing module*

B5. Pre-requisite rule for existing module

B6. Level of existing module*

B7. Core/optional status of existing module

B8. Deletion/withdrawing existing module

B9. Type C changes above one-third threshold

C1. Aims of existing module

C2. Learning outcomes of existing module

C3. Assessment criteria for existing module

C4. Assessment methods for existing module

C5. Assessment weightings for existing module

C6. Learning and teaching methods and/or time allocations in existing
modules

E. Other change to module not included above, i.e. change to module
length *(please specify below)*

*Note that a change of module title and/or credit rating technically necessitates the creation of a new module with a different code because the original module must remain on SITS so that it will be available for reports and transcripts in the future. To obtain a new module code, please contact Student Data Management.

Category E Change – please provide detail of proposed change:

8	**Does the modification entail the addition, or substantial revision, of a work-based placement or study abroad element?** *Please refer to the University Work Based Placement Code of Practice*	Yes/No

Brief Description:

9a	**Supporting documentation attached:**	Yes/No

9 **Are there any resource implications arising from the proposed modification?**
Appropriate consultation within and beyond the School should take place regarding any identified increased or decreased resource needs from proposed modifications. Please consult with the Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic) regarding all new modules or significant changes to existing modules. Please also consult with the Subject Librarian to ensure Library resources are planned for.

Staffing resources identified	Yes/No/Not applicable
Library resources identified	Yes/No/Not applicable
Computing resources identified	Yes/No/Not applicable
Laboratory/teaching space needs	Yes/No/Not applicable
Study/field trips	Yes/No/Not applicable
Other mandatory costs to be met by the University	Yes/No/Not applicable
Relevant supporting documentation is attached	Yes/No/Not applicable

10 Equality and Diversity
Does the modification have any implication for equal opportunities

Yes/No
Further information:

11 Other University Consultation
Has consideration been given to other parties within the University who need to be consulted? For example, Standards and Enhancement Office regarding suitability of the changes; Timetabling team in relation to timetabling matters; Student Recruitment and Admissions team in relation to changes affecting prospective students within the admissions cycle.

Yes/No
Further information:

12 Comments from the external examiner(s)

EE Comments provided/attached:	Yes/No/Not Applicable

13 Student Consultation

Please provide details of how students have been/will be consulted about:

a) the proposed modification(s) including explanation regarding the reasons for the change;
b) the implications for the students and/or applicants; and
c) the implementation plan including where appropriate the means by which applicants who have an offer of a place which will be impacted upon by the changes will be supported to make alternative arrangements should that be necessary.

Please also provide details of how the agreement of existing students will be obtained if they are to be affected by the proposed change.

14 Any other relevant information
Please provide/attach additional information as required.

15 Decision of School/Division Board	Please tick selection
Approved	
Approved and referred to Programmes Committee	
Deferred	
Not Approved	

16 Date approved by the School/Division Board

17 Decision of Programmes Committee

Approved	
Deferred	
Not Approved	

18 Programmes Committee Comments

19 Date of Decision by Programmes Committee

20 Follow up action undertaken by Standards and Enhancement Officer

Name ………………………………………………………………………………..

Date ………………………………………………………………………………..