

Modifications

Procedure for Making Modifications to Programmes and Modules



Responsible Office	Academic Governance and Quality
Responsible Officer	Head of Academic Governance and Quality
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Date of Approval	25th January 2022
Effective Date	1st April 2022
Related Procedures	N/A
Related University Policies	N/A
Amended (if applicable)	April 2023 – Enhancements and clarifications – including for partnership provision. July 2023 –Curriculum Committee replaced by Curriculum Approval Panel June 2024 – Editorial clarifications on responsibilities and move Additional Costs into Programme-level modifications.
Supersedes	Modifications Handbook
Next Review Date	January 2025

Introduction

The University is committed to regularly reviewing and enhancing its programmes of study, to ensure that curriculum content remains up to date and that feedback from students, staff and external examiners is responded to. The Programme Review process forms a point of reflection for academic staff to consider curriculum modifications, informed by key datasets for student achievement, satisfaction and graduate outcomes. Curriculum development and enhancement is also informed by the development of wider University level strategies; and the Modifications process facilitates the implementation of these initiatives.

The Modifications process has been designed to ensure that the University meets its obligations under the Office for Students 'B Conditions' and the CMA Guidance for HEIs in respect of consumer legislation. This regulatory context requires the University to:

- Ensure that students receive a high quality academic experience (Condition B1).
- Deliver successful outcomes for students (Condition B3).
- Ensure students are assessed effectively, that each assessment is valid and reliable and that awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously (Conditions B4).
- Ensure that standards reflect sector-recognised standards and awards are only granted to students whose knowledge and skills appropriately reflect sector-recognised standards (Condition B5).
- Have due regard to the guidance about how to comply with consumer legislation (Condition C1). This includes the provision of 'material information' to prospective students and the requirement to ensure terms and conditions for how programmes may be changed are fair and reasonable under the law. This is to ensure that students receive what they expected, that changes are unlikely to impact them negatively, and that they are kept informed.

The principles that underpin the design and operation of the Modifications process are as follows:

- **Proportionality:** The amount of scrutiny and feedback, as well as formal approval points and the timing of submission rounds is aligned with the level of risk and significance of Modification proposed. The timeframes for approval and implementation have been developed to align with admissions and recruitment, timetabling, academic committees; and the annual programme review timeframes. This creates a 'joined up' approach for the development and implementation of programme changes across teams and services.
- **Listening to Students:** Student engagement is at the heart of the Modifications process. Feedback from students often drives initial Modification proposals, and the Modification process also includes consultation with students about curriculum change to ensure all student comments are considered. Where change is more substantial and impacts students' rights as consumers, student consent is required. Communication of approvals to current and prospective students are provided locally from Schools and from a central curriculum bulletin.
- **Engaging Academic Staff:** Early expert advice is provided to academic staff by Academic Governance and Quality, tailored to each Modification proposal's objectives. This early advice ensures that logistical, compliance and regulatory considerations are shared and discussed **before** proposals are submitted.

- **Data Driven and Enabling Enhancement:** The Annual Programme Review process has been developed to feed into the Modification rounds, ensuring that Modifications are proposed as a result of a holistic consideration of key datasets, enhancement plans and student feedback. An annual report of the Modification process outcomes is considered by the Curriculum Approval Panel, to consider key themes and trends in curriculum development.

Procedure

A. Advice and Consultation

Task	Procedure
A1. Deadlines Circulated	Academic Governance and Quality circulate timelines and process reminders to Subject/Programme Leaders/Module Coordinator for the modifications process.
A2. Seek Early Advice	<p>Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator seek early advice from Academic Governance and Quality where required, including on timeframes for submission, approval and implementation, consultation and communication requirements, compliance with internal and external academic policies and frameworks and alignment with guidance on consumer legislation. This includes checking whether the programme or module being modified is also being delivered at a partner institution and whether the approach to consultation and communication needs to be adapted to include these student cohorts.</p> <p>For franchised partnership provision, the BSU Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator is responsible for submitting modifications, with the Link Tutor ensuring partners are informed and included in the process. For validated partnership provision, the Link Tutor is responsible for submitting the partner's proposed modifications in accordance with this procedure and for ensuring that partners undertake the relevant consultations with students and external examiners. The Link Tutor is supported in this role by Academic Governance and Quality.</p>
A3. Check Consultation and Timing Requirements	<p>It is the responsibility of the Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator to check consultation and timing requirements (see Appendix 1), and seek advice from Academic Governance and Quality.</p> <p>The timeframe for approval, as well as the consultation and consent requirements for modifications vary depending on the likely impact on students of the proposed change.</p>

Modifications fall into two categories:

1) **Programme Modifications:**

What: These include any changes that affect provision at the level of the programme (for example, adding and removing modules; changing the location, duration or timing of programme or module

delivery; amending award titles, redesigning programmes and revising intended learning outcomes and aims). A collection of module level changes may also constitute a programme level change.

How: In most instances, current students need to be consulted about these changes; or you are likely to have to teach out old arrangements and introduce changes for new cohorts. In some instances, student consent needs to be sought. Applicants holding offers should be informed about programme changes. Curriculum Approval Panel is required to approve programme re-designs or modifications that require student consent.

When: Programme level modifications should be submitted during the October round of modifications for earliest implementation from the following academic year. This ensures that the significance of the changes are planned for as part of timetabling and recruitment and admissions cycles.

Appendix 1 provides the detail of what a programme modification is, who to consult, when to submit, and which committee approves.

2) **Module Modifications:**

What: These include most other changes at the level of individual modules (for example, changing the aims, syllabus and learning outcomes of the module or redesigning the assessment strategy and weighting). Some module changes are more significant (for example, changing levels or credits constitutes a new module, and adding additional costs or removing field trips or placement require student consent). Other module changes have little impact and require no approval (e.g changing learning resources, making minor clarifications to wording and changing the module co-ordinator).

How: Some module changes require student consultation, and all require students to be kept informed. Except where student consent is required, module modifications are approved at SQMC level.

When: Module modifications can be submitted during the October or January round of modifications for earliest implementation from the following academic year. This provides flexibility to make changes following the completion of programme review at module level; ensuring module content and assessment is correct for students to choose their modules as part of the timetabling process, and supporting timely publication of complete Definitive Programme Documents (DPDs) for current students for the following academic year.

Appendix 1 provides the detail of what a module modification is, who to consult, when to submit, and which committee approves.

A4. Undertake Consultation/ Consent if Required

If the proposed modifications require consultation this should be conducted as follows¹:

- 1) **Student Consultation:** Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator to contact current students on the Minerva Course Page, setting out a summary of the proposed changes, including a short rationale. Students should be instructed to send comments to the student [Course Representative](#) to collate. Course Representatives may also choose to collect feedback by Microsoft Forms or in person group-discussion.

Course Representatives provide a summary of student feedback to the Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator; who then provides a verbal or written response (if required) for the Course Representative to communicate to the students. A summary of student feedback should be included in the Proposal Submission.

- 2) **Student Consent:** If the proposed modification requires students to provide their consent, the Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator should seek advice from Academic Governance and Quality; and use the standard wording in the Guide to Communication with Students about Modifications when seeking student consent. Admissions will inform students who are holding offers. Appendix 1 outlines examples of when consent is required.

Student consent is sought by contacting students using the Minerva Course Page, setting out a summary of the proposed changes, including a short rationale and tracked change programme/module descriptors. Current students are instructed to complete a Microsoft Form confirming their acceptance of the change.

Academic Governance and Quality to provide advice where students do not respond/engage, or do not agree to the change.

- 3) **External Examiner Consultation:** Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator to contact relevant external examiner, setting out the proposed changes, including a short rationale and attaching tracked change module/programme descriptors.

External examiner is asked to respond with any comments. A summary of external examiner feedback should be included in the Proposal Submission.

- 4) **Consultation with affected programmes:** Where a proposed modification affects other programmes (e.g. changes to, or removal of a module that is delivered on another programme), the owning Programme Leader should discuss this with the Programme Leaders of all affected courses, as early as possible within the process.

Where the proposed modification is to cease delivery of a module, it is the responsibility of the affected Programmes to submit their own

¹ Academic Governance and Quality will advise if different arrangements are required to consult with, or seek consent from, students studying on programmes or modules delivered by partner institutions.

modifications to update their DPDs and provide suitable alternatives if required.

Failure to consult appropriately with affected programmes may mean that the modification cannot be approved.

For modifications to a programme or module also delivered by a partner institution, it is the responsibility of the Link Tutor to keep the partner updated on the progress of any modifications.

B. Submission and Feedback

B1. Modification Submission Form Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator to complete Microsoft Forms Modification Submission Form, including a summary of the proposed changes, a rationale for their introduction, and the outcomes of consultations with external examiners and students if required.

Module leaders confirm in the declaration on Modification Submission Form that they have the agreement of the Subject Leader or equivalent to submit the Proposal Submission.

Subject/Programme Leaders confirm in the declaration that they have undertaken consultation with other affected programmes to submit the Proposal Submission.

Subject/Module Leaders to request Word versions of module/programme descriptors from School Operations Managers.

Tracked change module and programme descriptors to be uploaded by Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator with the Modification Submission Form.

B2. Stakeholder Comments Academic Governance and Quality monitor Modification Submission Forms and provide any additional comments or a summary of early advice on the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

Academic Governance and Quality close the submissions for new proposals. Academic Governance and Quality to provide access to the submissions and inform, Teaching Expertise Development, Careers and Employability, Library and Learning Services and Immigration Compliance and Advice that they are able (but not required) to comment by the deadline.

Academic Governance and Quality to notify additional stakeholders by exception (e.g for a new module) where specific comment or feedback is needed on a proposal.

Academic Governance and Quality and Portfolio and Planning to liaise on modifications that amount to programme re-design.

If modifications are Editorial, AGQ updates the DPD.

B3. Subject/Module Leader Response or Amendment Subject/Module Leads to then provide any further comments and clarification, or update their submission on the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

C. Approval

C1. SQMC Preparation Portfolio and Planning to extract Modification Submission Spreadsheet into School level PDF reports that include stakeholder comments and responses.

School Operations Teams to include School Modification Submission Spreadsheet within SQMC paperwork.

Academic Governance and Quality to brief Heads of Schools on notable Modification Submissions in advance of the SQMC. Heads of Schools to invite Subject Leaders to SQMC if necessary.

C2. SQMC Approval SQMC meets to consider Modification Submissions, including consideration of how any feedback has been addressed.

SQMC makes a recommendation for approval to the Curriculum Approval Panel for any programme re-designs or modifications that require student consent. All other modifications can be approved/rejected by the SQMC and reported to the Curriculum Approval Panel.

School Operation Teams update the Modification Submission Spreadsheet to show SQMC approval/recommendation.

C3. Curriculum Approval Panel Approval/Oversight Academic Governance and Quality to export Modification Submission Spreadsheet into University level PDF report that includes stakeholder comments and responses. Modification Submission Spreadsheet is submitted to the Curriculum Approval Panel.

Portfolio and Planning submit a joint report with Academic Governance and Quality on the overall themes and trends from the Modifications cycle, along with any consumer legislation/compliance risks identified.

Curriculum Approval Panel approves programme re-designs, and programme-level modifications, including proposals requiring student consent, and proposals that require exemptions or exclusions from academic frameworks and policies.

D. Documentation and Communication

D1. Documentation Updating Academic Governance and Quality to update working DPD space on Confluence, download updated DPDs from Confluence working space into Sharepoint, create Full PDF versions.

Academic Governance and Quality to create Web DPDs from Full PDF DPDs.

**D2. Documentation
Updating/Publishing**

Academic Governance and Quality to update, download, publish and archive DPDs in accordance with the DPD Management Protocol.

External Affairs Unit to publish Web DPDs on course pages.

**D3. Communication
to Current Students
and Staff**

Academic Governance and Quality to circulate Modifications Bulletin to staff and students (as part of central news email). To also communicate any relevant modifications and updated DPDs to staff and students at partner institutions.

Subject/Programme Leader or Module Coordinator to additionally inform students of the approved changes using the Ultra Course Page.

**D4. Communication
to Prospective
Students**

AGQ to meet with Admissions to discuss which Modifications require applicant notification or consent.

Admissions to communicate with Subject/Programme Leaders to agree wording to affected applications; using the Guide to Communication with Students about Modifications.

Communication to prospective students will include a summary of the proposed changes, including a short rationale and link to the updated Web DPD.

Admissions to communicate with prospective students where this is required.

Academic Governance and Quality to provide advice where prospective students do not respond/engage; or do not agree to the change.

Appendix 1: Guide to the Types of Modification

These grids show the different kinds of module and programme modifications and include guidance for undertaking student consultation and in some cases, seeking consent. It also includes information about the final approval from SQMCs and the Curriculum Approval Panel.

Modifications can often involve a combination of changes within a single module or across a collection of modules or programmes and so these don't always fall neatly into one category or another. **Before submitting your modification proposal, please seek advice from Academic Governance and Quality (academicquality@bathspa.ac.uk)**, who can guide you in respect of consultation, consent and approval requirements. This helps the University ensure it complies with the right guidance in respect of consumer legislation; and support you to keep your students informed and involved in changes to their programmes.

Programme Modifications					
Programme Changes should be submitted for approval during the October round of modifications . This is to ensure the timely release of information to applicants and offer holders in the recruitment cycle, minimising the amount of material changes occurring after offers have been accepted. This timing also ensures that current student timetables can be produced to schedule.	Who needs to be consulted, informed or consent sought?			Where is Approval Required?	
	Current Students (if the change affects, impacts or applies to them at any point in their studies)	Prospective Students (if the change affects, impacts or applies to them at any point in their future studies)	External Examiner	SQMC Approval	Curriculum Approval Panel
Introduction and removal of existing Optional Module	Consult with current students	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers	Consult	✓	✓
Introduction and removal of Core/Required Modules	Consult with current students	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	Consult	✓	✓
Removal or change to the routes/duration/modes (including fully online**, blended, part time)	Most changes of this nature would be taught out for current students and therefore consultation is not required. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	n/a	✓	✓

Changes to teaching institution and/or campus location	Changes to location cannot be submitted through the Modifications Process – please contact Academic Governance and Quality for advice.		n/a	✓	✓
Changes to award title	n/a (teach out current students)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	n/a	✓	✓
Removal of or Changes to Work Experience or Placement Provision	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	n/a	✓	✓
Programme re-design	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	Consult	✓	✓
Introduction of, changes to the requirements for or removal of accreditation status from a PSRB*	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	Consult	✓	✓
Excluded Combinations/Pre-requisites and co-requisites	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. The introduction of pre-requisites will require an exemption request to be submitted.	n/a	Consult	✓	n/a
Changes to a module semester/trimester of delivery	Inform current students	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a
Additional routes/durations/modes offered (including fully online**, blended, part time)			n/a	✓	✓
Introduction of Additional Costs (inc compulsory field trip/equipment incurring cost)	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	n/a	✓	✓
Changes to Programme Aims and/or Programme ILOs	Beyond typographical amendments or clarifications; changes to programme aims and/or ILOs constitute a programme redesign. Please seek advice from Academic Governance and Quality				

*Please contact Academic Governance and Quality if you are making or are aware of any changes to the accreditation status of programmes; or if modifications to modules and programme impact the accreditation status of programmes.

** Please note that international students cannot be sponsored for a UK visa if they are on a fully online programme.

Module Modifications					
Module Changes should be submitted during either the October or January round . However, if you're planning or aware of multiple module changes within a programme, please contact Academic Governance and Quality for advice (academicquality@bathspa.ac.uk) as these may require an October submission and/or constitute a programme level change.	Who needs to be consulted, informed or consent sought?			Where is Approval Required?	
	Current Students (if the change affects, impacts or applies to them at any point in their studies)	Prospective Students (if the change affects, impacts or applies to them at any point in their future studies)	External Examiner	SQMC Approval	Curriculum Approval Panel
Changes to the brief aims and description of module	Consult with current students	n/a	Consult	✓	n/a
Outline syllabus				✓	n/a
Teaching and Learning Activities				✓	n/a
Module intended learning outcomes				✓	n/a
Assessment tasks and weighting				✓	n/a
Changes in contact time	Consult with current students	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	Consult	✓	n/a
Removal of or Changes to Field Trip or Placement Provision	n/a - teach out current students in most instances. If changes affect current students, consult and seek their consent; unless other contractual obligations apply (e.g legislative requirements)	Inform applicants holding and accepted offers; offer right to withdraw or support to transfer elsewhere	n/a	✓	✓
Excluded Combinations/Pre-requisites and co-requisites	(Programme level change as it relates to more than one module and impacts awarding frameworks – see above)				
Changes to Level or Credits	Treated as a New Module				

Module Title	A change to a module title change isn't normally permitted; unless for exceptional reasons. If a title change is accompanied by content/curriculum changes then it should be submitted as a new module. Otherwise, please contact Academic Governance and Quality for advice.
Module co-ordinator	These are 'Editorial' changes and don't require any approval by a committee or student consultation, but do need to be submitted centrally through the Modifications Submission Form and checked by Academic Governance and Quality who will notify the School Operations Team to update DPDs if required.
Module learning resources	
Module preparatory work	
Typographical amendments and minor clarifications to wording.	
Any changes to learning resources need to be approved by the Library and Learning Services team (and/or the Head of Technical Services if required). These do not need to be additionally submitted as a Modification as resource lists are now maintained in Talis.	

Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Academic Governance and Quality

1. Work with Portfolio and Planning to set the timeline for the modification cycle. Communicate this to academic staff, and remind them of the deadlines and encourage staff to seek early advice from Academic Governance and Quality about their proposals before preparing their submissions.
2. Provide supportive and helpful communication to academic staff to guide them how to submit their modifications, when these might be approved and implemented, and how to undertake consultation with students and external examiners.
3. Provide constructive feedback on proposed modifications in respect of:
 - Due regard to compliance with consumer legislation where modifications relate to material information.
 - Adherence to internal policy and academic frameworks.
 - Alignment with external academic standards frameworks.
4. Provide advice to staff on the implementation of and communication for modification proposals that require consent from students.
5. Identify and notify additional stakeholders to comment on modifications if required.
6. Provide advice and guidance to staff in conjunction with Portfolio and Planning where proposals constitute a programme re-design.
7. Brief Head of School on notable Modification Submissions in advance of the School Quality Management Committee.
8. Contribute to an overview report for Curriculum Approval Panel prepared by Portfolio and Planning, identifying trends in curriculum development along with any consumer legislation/compliance risks identified.
9. Update DPDs in Confluence. Download updated DPDs from Confluence working space and publish Full and Web versions on SharePoint, ensuring Web Team and Timetabling are notified when complete.
10. Circulate central Modification Bulletin to staff and students confirming approved Modifications. Also communicate any relevant modifications to staff and students at partner institutions.

Student and Registry Services

1. Provide supportive and constructive feedback to academic staff on submitted modifications in respect of:
 - The implementation of changes for timetabling and student records and assessment process management
 - Implication and possible solutions for students on study breaks, part time modes, deferral or referral
2. Implement approved changes to programmes and modules in respect of timetabling, students records and assessment.
3. Ensure that any amendments made to the delivery of teaching and assessment reflect the information in the Modifications Bulletin and/or the published DPD; and seek clarity from Academic Governance and Quality where needed.
4. Use updated DPDs to inform the creation of Module Guides as part of Timetabling.

Portfolio and Planning

1. Support the administration of the modifications process including:
 - Setting up the Microsoft Form and integrated guidance.
 - Set up access rights for all stakeholders and staff submitting proposals
 - Maintain effective file storage of Modification Submissions to support SQMC administration
2. Provide advice and guidance to staff in conjunction with Academic Governance and Quality where proposals constitute a programme re-design.
3. Prepare extracts of the Modifications Submission Form for SQMCs and the Curriculum Approval Panel.
4. Prepare an overview report for Curriculum Approval Panel in consultation with Academic Governance and Quality, identifying trends in curriculum development along with any consumer legislation/compliance risks identified.

School Operations Teams

1. Ensure that the School Modification Submission Spreadsheet is included in the SQMC papers.

2. Attend the Head of School briefing by Academic Governance and Quality in advance of the SQMC. Ensure the SQMC/Head of School is clear which Modifications can be approved by the SQMC or require approval by the Curriculum Approval Panel.
3. Update the Modification Submission Spreadsheet to show SQMC approval/recommendation.

Teaching Expertise Development Team

Provide supportive and constructive feedback to academic staff on submitted modifications in respect of:

- Alignment with BSU Education Strategy
- Impact of proposal on student experience

PVC Student Experience

Have access to, and comment by exception on, proposals within the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

Library and Learning Services

Have access to, and comment by exception on, proposals within the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

Careers and Employability

Have access to, and comment by exception on, proposals within the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

Immigration Compliance and Advice

Have access to, and comment by exception on, proposals within the Modification Submission Spreadsheet.

Subject/Module Leads

1. Seek advice from Academic Governance and Quality on the submission of a modification proposal.

2. Where required, initiate and respond to comments following consultation with students; or seek consent from prospective and current students for changes that affect material information.
3. Where required, seek external examiner feedback.
4. Request Word versions of module/programme descriptors from School Operation Managers.
5. Complete Microsoft Forms Modification Submission Form, providing clear summary and rationale; and tracked change documentation.
6. Respond to feedback provided by stakeholders on submitted modifications; or modify submission accordingly.
7. Inform students using Minerva Course Page of approved changes, following Modifications Bulletin.
8. Ensure that the delivery of teaching and assessment for programmes and modules reflects the information in the Modifications Bulletin and/or the published DPD; and seek clarity from Academic Governance and Quality where needed.

External Affairs Unit

1. Update the web versions of DPDs onto course pages
2. Ensure that any amendments made to course pages reflect only the information in the Modifications Bulletin; and seek clarity from Academic Governance and Quality or Portfolio and Planning where needed.

Link Tutors

1. Update staff at partner institutions throughout the process on any proposals for modifications to any programmes or modules that they deliver.
2. For validated partnership provision, responsible for submitting the partner's proposed modifications in accordance with this procedure and for ensuring that partners undertake the relevant consultations with students and external examiners.

