SECTION 3: MODIFICATIONS

Introduction

Bath Spa University supports modifications to modules and programmes wherever changes are necessary to enhance and develop the programme. At the same time, the University recognises the need to be clear about when and why a module or a programme is changed in order to ensure clear information to students and applicants about their programmes.

The modifications process enables staff to make amendments to their programmes or to existing modules, to add new modules or delete obsolete ones. Programme teams may wish to modify their programmes following student feedback or external examiner feedback or for other reasons, such as industry developments or similar. To ensure that information about modifications can be adequately communicated to existing and/or prospective students in order to satisfy requirements of Consumer Law, modifications can only be made at specific times during the academic year. Depending on the type of modification, different internal stakeholders may be required to approve a proposed modification before it can be approved within a School. When modifications are approved by Schools, the Schools have the responsibility to record and implement the modification.

The principles agreed for modifications to modules and programmes were approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) on 21 June 2018. These principles can be found here.

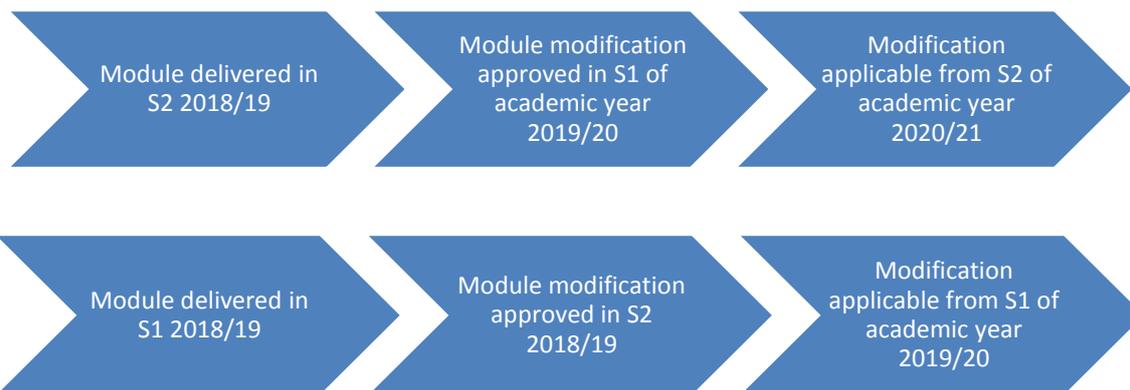The modifications process described here explains:
- When modifications can be made
- How to change an existing module
- How to add a new module to a programme
- How to add or delete an existing module from a programme
- How to make changes to a programme
- Updating programme documentation after modifications
- How to handle modifications at a partner provider

It also includes useful tips and a checklist for planning modifications as well as additional resources in the annex.

When module modifications can be made

Modifications can normally only be made at two points in the year and Schools must report all modifications to PARS, as well as keeping records of all changes to modules which are not considered modifications. Depending on when the modificaiton is approved, the point at which it comes into effect may vary.

Module delivered in S1 2018/19 → Module modification approved in S1 of academic year 2019/20 → Modification applicable from S1 of academic year 2020/21

Module delivered in S2 2018/19	→	Module modification approved in S1 of academic year 2019/20	→	Modification applicable from S2 of academic year 2020/21

Module delivered in S1 2018/19	→	Module modification approved in S2 2018/19	→	Modification applicable from S1 of academic year 2019/20

►Modifications can only be made in Semester 2 if the modification proposal is resulting from issues that have been identified during the running of a module in Semester 1, or where the need for a modification has been identified at Postgraduate Taught Exam Boards.

Changing an existing module

Not all changes to an existing module are considered a modification. The module descriptor attached (Annex 12) explains what is and what isn't considered a modification to an existing module. Nevertheless, all changes to module descriptors should be recorded by the School and the relevant departments of the University must be informed of the change. Also, students should be consulted on all changes to the module descriptor, irrespective of whether they are formal modifications or not.

> **TIP!**
> **Check the module descriptor in Annex 12 for guidance on who you will need to consult about your specific proposal.**

Before approving a modification to an existing module, the School must reassure itself that students and all relevant internal stakeholders have been consulted. The student consultation should ensure that students are involved as co-creators wherever possible.

Once a modification is approved, the School is responsible for ensuring that all relevant module and programme documentation is updated for the academic year from which the modification will be effective.

Framework Exemptions
►Where a modification to a module or a programme requires an exemption from a regulatory framework (e.g. Undergraduate Academic Framework, Taught Postgraduate Framework) the decision will be subject to approval by Academic Board. Schools should consider the proposal as usual and, if the exemption request has the School's support, should refer the proposal to Academic Board or an applicable sub-committee.
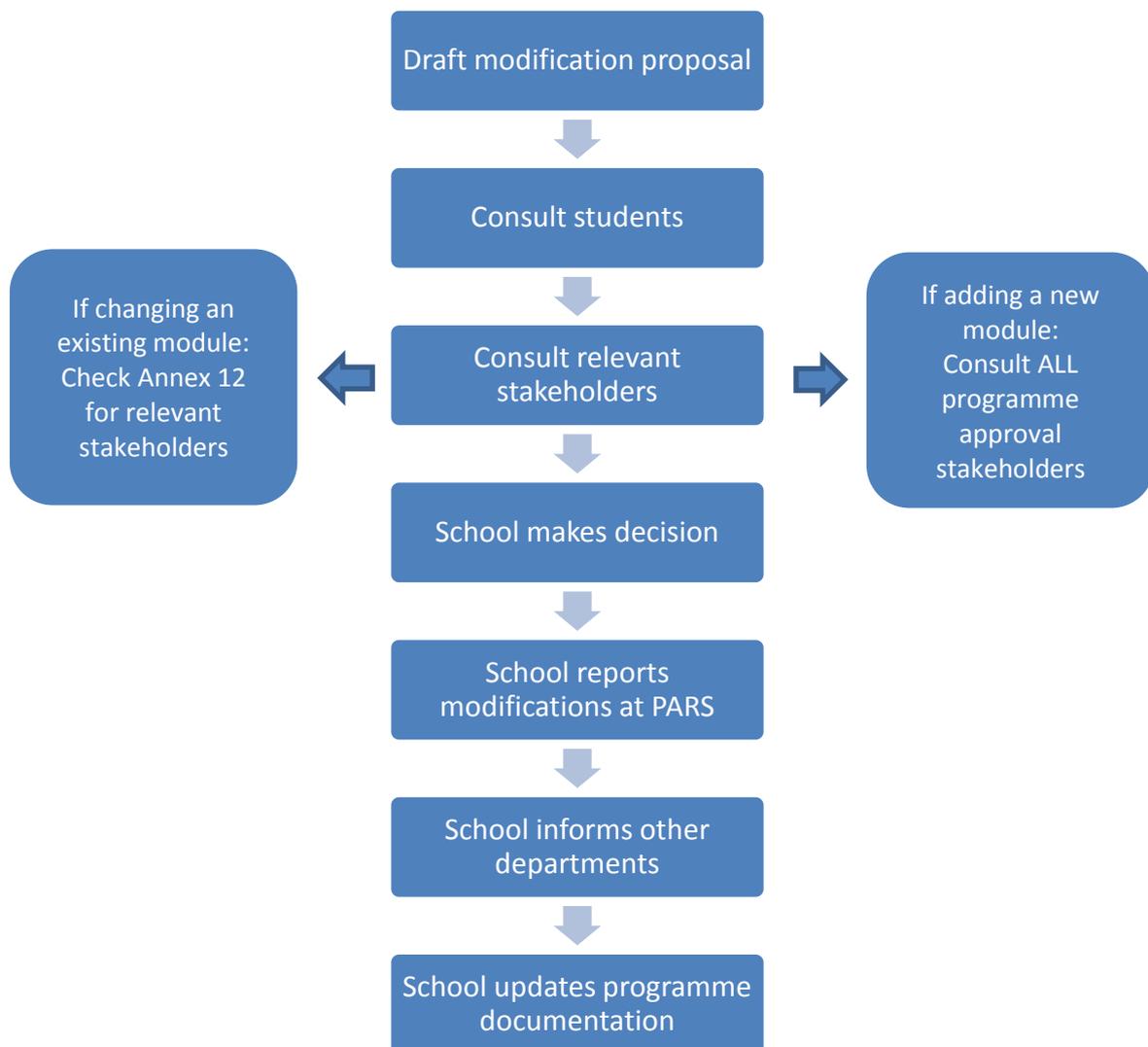
Adding a new module to a programme

When a new module is created, students must be consulted and all the usual internal stakeholders for programme approval will need to approve the addition of the module. Schools should make arrangements for sharing proposals for new modules with stakeholders as well as recording stakeholder approval in order to inform the School's decision making. Once stakeholders have approved the addition of a new module, the School should consider the proposal and make a decision on whether or not to approve it.

If the addition of the module is approved, Schools must ensure that all relevant programme documentation is updated for the academic year in which the module will be introduced.

►**Please note:** Adding an existing module from another programme to your programme is not considered to be adding a new module. However, it is still a modification and requires approval from your external examiner and from Academic Services and Student Services.
And, of course, the owning subject also needs to agree to share the module.

Changing an existing module and adding a new module

Draft modification proposal

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Consult students

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If changing an existing module: Check Annex 12 for relevant stakeholders ← Consult relevant stakeholders → If adding a new module: Consult ALL programme approval stakeholders

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School makes decision

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School reports modifications at PARS

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School informs other departments

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School updates programme documentation

Adding or deleting an existing module from a programme?

To add an existing module to a programme or delete an existing module from a programme, proposers need to consult with students and seek approval from the external examiner, Academic Services and Student Services. Where a module is added from another programme, that programme team will need to be consulted as well. The School should reassure itself that stakeholders have not raised any issues with regards to the proposal and that any feedback from the stakeholders has been taken into account.

►Modules which haven't run for two consecutive years are considered to be **out of approval** and therefore need to be **discontinued**. That means that Schools have a responsibility to ensure that modifications to delete modules that haven't run for two years are actioned and a record of the modification is kept by the Schools. It may be useful to agree a process within the Schools to monitor which modules go out of approval.

Making changes to a programme

Changes to an existing programme need to undergo School scrutiny just like other modifications. In addition, they will also be subject to approval by the Programme Approval Review Sub-committee (PARS) [1] or may trigger a re-approval process.
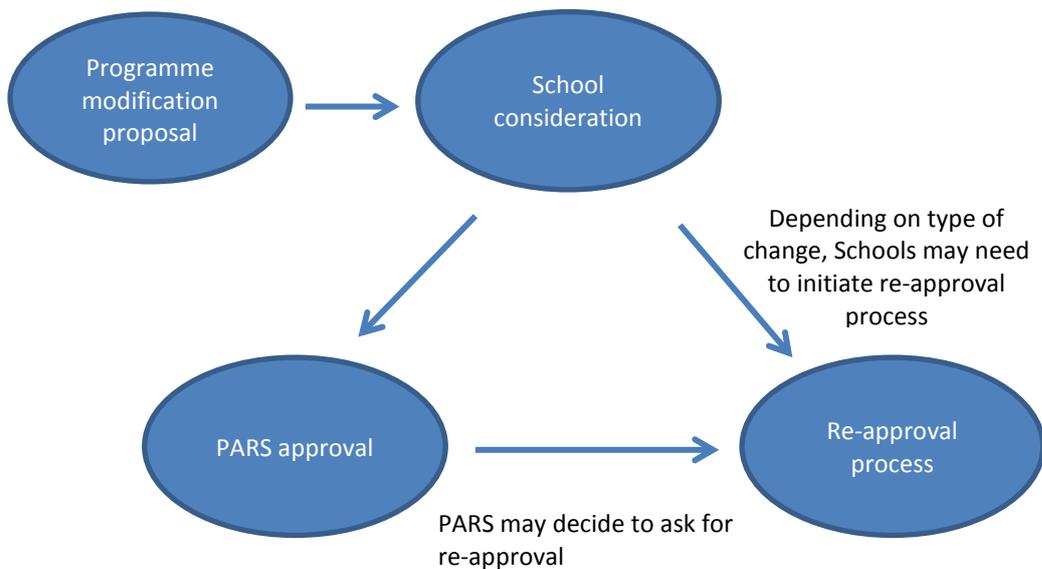
Proposals to modify a programme should be considered by the relevant School's decision making group before being submitted to PARS (NB A specific template for PARS briefing papers for modifications is available from Academic Services). PARS will consider the modification and may decide that a re-approval is necessary.

Changes that need approval by PARS
- Name of award
- Addition of Sandwich period
- Programme Aims
- Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

[1] See Annex 11

Some changes to programmes will (in most cases) automatically trigger a re-approval process (see Annex 11). If a programme team wants to make such a change, this should be discussed within the School to ensure there is support for the proposal. Schools should make a decision on whether to put the proposal forward (this should normally happen in Semester 1 of the academic year). After that, a re-approval schedule should be agreed through PARS. The process for re-approvals can be found in the Section 4 of this Course Planning and Approval Handbook.

In accordance with Consumer Law, re-approvals should normally take place about 12 to 15 months before the modified programme is due to run. This is to allow for accurate information to be provided for prospective students during the recruitment cycle. For Postgraduate programmes the timescales may differ due to the generally shorter recruitment cycle (normally 6 to 8 months). Timescales should be agreed in the context of marketing deadlines.

Updating programme documentation after modifications
After modifications have been approved, Schools need to update all relevant programme documentation before submitting it to Academic Services. Module changes may require updating programme content table, ILO map, assessment map and programme structure diagram. Therefore, changes to these sections of a DPD resulting from module modifications are approved by the Schools (See Annex 11).
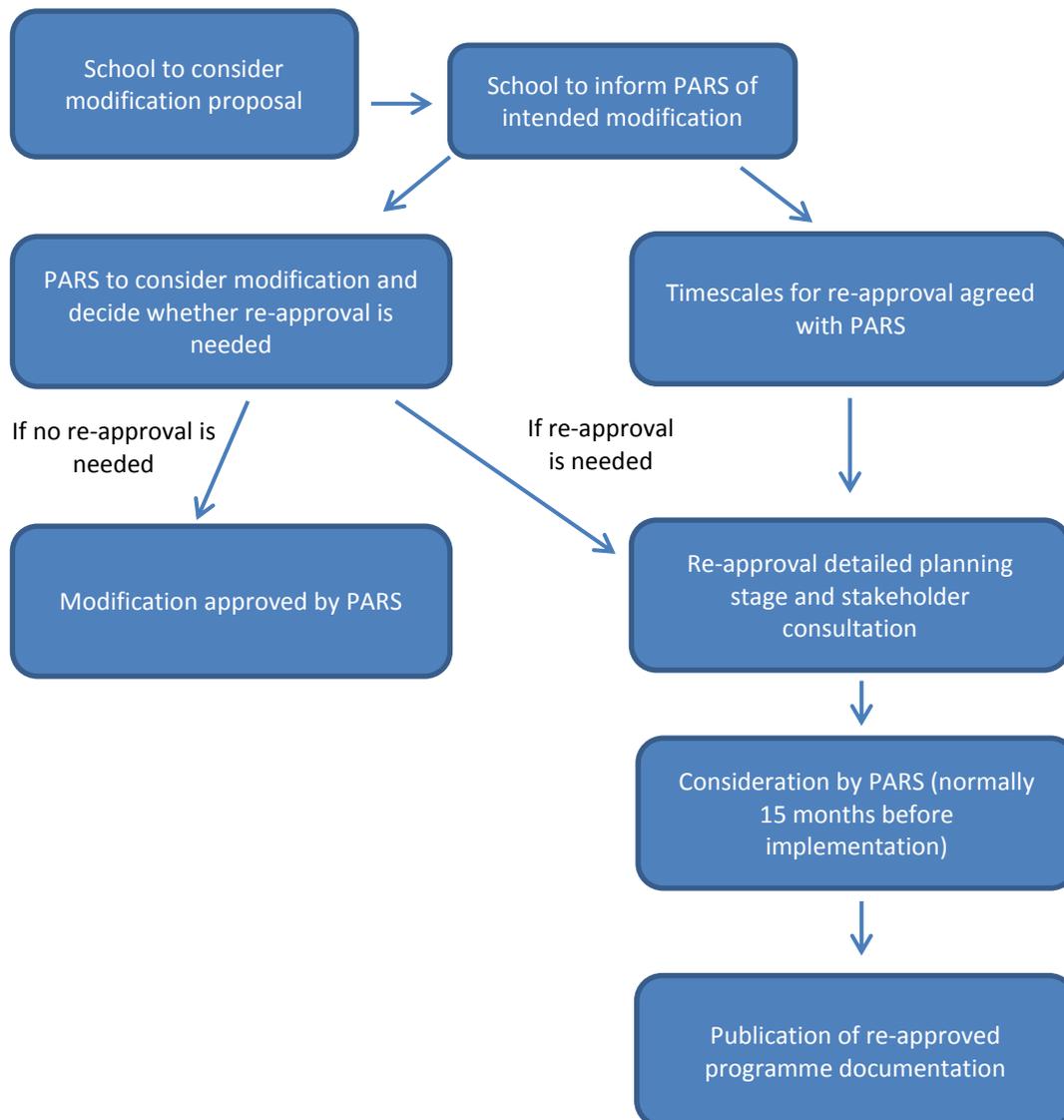
►**Cross Referencing**
It is important that Schools ensure there is **cross-referencing** between programme documentation when this is updated following any modification. For example, if a module from an existing programme is added to another programme, the module descriptor must be updated in both DPDs as well as any other DPDs the module is included in.

Flowchart for programme modifications

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┌─────────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   School to consider    │ ───► │   School to inform PARS │
│  modification proposal  │      │   of intended modification │
└─────────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────────┘
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School to consider modification proposal → School to inform PARS of intended modification

PARS to consider modification and decide whether re-approval is needed

Timescales for re-approval agreed with PARS

If no re-approval is needed

If re-approval is needed

Modification approved by PARS

Re-approval detailed planning stage and stakeholder consultation

Consideration by PARS (normally 15 months before implementation)

Publication of re-approved programme documentation

Handling modifications at a partner provider

For partner organisations running courses that are franchised or validated by the University, the modifications process should be carried out by the link tutor or relevant head of field within the University. Schools should be confident that there is a strong rationale for the proposed modification and that the necessary resources are available at the partner provider.

Where identical modules are delivered at both the University and a partner organisation, care must be taken to ensure that changes made at one are also made at the other. Where a modification would affect students at both institutions, students at partner organisations should be consulted in addition to students at BSU.

►Things that Schools may wish to take into account when deciding upon modifications at partner providers:
- Staff resources and experience
- Other resources implications, for example library, IT, space and timetabling
- Any impact on BSU provision and/or resources

Useful Tips

►In managing School approvals, Schools may wish to consider
- Internal approval mechanisms, timescales and deadlines
- Internal recording and reporting systems, including evidence of stakeholder approval
- Advance liaison with stakeholders about upcoming modifications
- Monitoring mechanisms for modules going out of approval
- Monitoring mechanisms for programme documentation updates, including for partner provision

Checklist for planning a modification

✓ Have you planned a student consultation?
✓ Do you need to consult with other programmes/Schools who are also using the module in question?
✓ Do you need to consult a partner provider (including students)?
✓ Which internal stakeholders do you need to consult?
✓ Which School decision making group needs to approve the modification?
✓ What are the deadlines for proposing modifications?
✓ Would the modification need an exemption from a regulatory framework?
✓ Does the modification proposal need to go to PARS?
✓ If approved, have all relevant DPDs been updated (including cross-referencing if modules are shared)?

Annexes

Annex 11 Nature of modification and level of approval/consultation

Annex 12 Module Descriptor Template and relevant stakeholders