

# PROGRAMME CHANGES AND RE-VALIDATION

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University is committed to maintaining the quality and currency of its programmes, and to providing the best possible academic experience for its students – in line with the expectations of the [UK Quality Code](#). Procedures are therefore in place to ensure **all programmes are re-validated at least every five years**, and to provide a mechanism for making more minor **annual changes**, as necessary, in order to maintain the currency of the provision, to satisfy changing requirements of accrediting or commissioning bodies, or to enhance the student learning experience.
- 1.2 The approved programme specification and associated programme documentation – including programme and module handbooks (and, in the case of collaborative provision, the Operations Manual) - may be considered as the ‘contract’ between the University (as the awarding body), its Schools/Departments (and Partners), and its students, which sets out the terms of delivery of a programme, in line with the expectations of relevant consumer legislation. Within this context, it is recognised that it may be necessary to make changes to existing programmes from time to time. All changes to existing programmes must be approved through the processes described in this section, and clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner to ensure they have access to accurate module and programme information at all times.
- 1.3 The different types of modification have been categorised according to their significance (see definitions below), and the approval processes tailored so that they are proportionate to the changes being proposed.

### Collaborative provision

- 1.4 The same definitions and approval processes apply to collaborative arrangements, but some key points to keep in mind when partners propose curriculum or assessment changes include:
- Where programmes leading to the same award are being delivered by more than one partner, through a franchise arrangement or via the ACP, and/or also by the University, modifications should be agreed by all parties, in order to ensure continued comparability of the standards of the award and quality of the student experience across all delivery locations. However, changing delivery at all sites may not be appropriate for all types of modification, some of which may be to respond to local needs, therefore advice on such proposals should be sought from the link QAO.
  - Modifications to jointly-provided programmes leading to dual or joint awards must be agreed by all partners involved.
  - In the case of validation, credit rating and articulation arrangements, the partner organisation must notify the University when modifications are to be made to their programme, and the Faculty AESC/QLIC must ensure that the partner programme continues to meet the University’s requirements for the credit being awarded.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

### TYPE A changes

- 2.1 Type A changes must have the consent of the relevant Programme Lead or Subject Coordinator, and be approved by the Faculty Head of Quality Assurance & Validations or Associate Dean Education & Student Experience (ADESE).
- 2.2 Type A changes include:
- Changes to the following sections of the approved module descriptor:
    - Section 1: Management details (except level and credit of the module, and details of which programme/s the module is compulsory for)
    - Section 2: Module aims
    - Section 3: Changes to module learning outcomes which do not affect programme learning outcomes
    - Section 4: Outline syllabus
    - Section 5: Overview of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy
    - Section 6: Learning hours
    - Section 7: Summative assessment tasks, provided that the assessment format remains within the same assessment component category in the SRS
    - Section 8: Opportunities for formative assessment & feedback
    - Section 9: Alternative assessment
  - Changes to the list of level 4, 5 and 6 optional modules available to a programme;
  - Making an existing module available to another existing programme;
  - Removing an optional module from a programme;
  - Changes to the prior qualifications required for admission to a programme (*but please note that changes to specific 'A' level tariff points are not subject to this process*).

#### NOTES:

- i. Regarding sections 5, 8 and 9 of the module descriptor – Module Leaders should, as appropriate, discuss any enhancements to TLA strategies with their PLSEs, DMELDs, or OCAED link developer.
- ii. Section 10 of the module descriptor does not have to be updated regularly as reading lists are made available via Talis Aspire; however, these module bibliographies must be kept current, and any updates should be negotiated with the appropriate Academic Liaison Librarian to ensure additional resources are made available to students.

### TYPE B changes

- 2.3 Type B changes are more significant modifications, which require submission for approval by the Faculty AESC/QLIC (or authorised sub-group). These changes may also require some internal or external consultation, as appropriate to the changes being proposed.
- 2.4 Type B includes changes to:
- Section 7 (summative assessment tasks) of the approved module descriptor, if the changes would move assessment tasks into different SRS assessment component categories;
  - Compulsory module requirements;
  - Credit level and/or value of a module;
  - Approval of entirely new modules for inclusion in an existing programme;
  - Programme title or awards available;
  - Programme learning outcomes;
  - Professional body accreditation requirements (*in some cases – e.g. where significant curriculum changes are required - this may necessitate a full re-validation of a programme*);
  - For collaborative provision, changes to delivery location and the addition of new teaching staff;
  - Programme-level variation from the University Regulations (see [new awards and other variations section](#) of Quality & Standards Handbook for the process to be followed).

*NOTE: Changes to resource requirements for programme delivery should be dealt with by the Head of School/Department or Faculty Executive, as appropriate.*

## Re-validation

- 2.5 All programmes are required to be re-validated regularly, at a maximum interval of five years. Refer to paragraphs 4.2-6 for details on how the assessment is made of when programmes are due for revalidation.
- 2.6 However, Faculties should also be mindful of the cumulative effect of a significant number of Type A and B changes to programmes over a period of time within the five year revalidation cycle; and re-validation of an existing programme should be brought forward where substantial curriculum change is required - this may occur, for example, in the case of:
- changes to professional standards or industry requirements;
  - the addition of a significant number of compulsory modules, resulting in a change to the programme learning outcomes;
  - the modification of an existing programme for a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship.
- 2.7 Advice should be sought from the Faculty link QAO on whether proposed Type A/B changes constitute a re-validation issue; and OCEAD should be consulted for advice on good practice in teaching, learning and assessment where changes are to be made to these strategies.
- 2.8 Programmes delivered through collaborative partnerships are also subject to a five-yearly revalidation and renewal of contracts. However, there is also provision for carrying out the revalidation process earlier than the full term of approval, where:
- the University programme (where there is equivalent or mirrored on-campus provision) undergoes review and revision;
  - the partner revises their programme (in the case of validation, credit rating or articulation arrangements);
  - student performance data, or other evidence, gives cause for concern about academic standards on the partner programme; or
  - there are changes to national permissions and regulations, or to professional body requirements, that impact significantly on the operation of the programme.

## 3 APPROVAL PROCESSES

### TYPE A Changes

- 3.1 Type A changes must have the consent of the relevant Programme Lead or Subject Coordinator, and be approved by the Faculty Head of Quality Assurance & Validations or Associate Dean Education & Student Experience (ADESE); and should be logged by the Faculty AESC/QLIC quality sub-group.
- 3.2 Where they consider that a requested Type A update actually constitutes a Type B change, the Faculty quality sub-group should refer it back to the Module Leader, who should follow the appropriate approval process as set out below.
- 3.3 In the case of module level changes, the Module Leader must provide the PL or SC and the Faculty Quality Officer with an updated module descriptor (and, if necessary, programme specification) together with a completed Request for Changes form (on template T2.13).
- 3.4 Once the update has been agreed, the Faculty Quality Officer should submit the change request form to the Student Records and Curriculum Management team (SRCM); and the updated module descriptor/s should be submitted to SRCM at the same time. Updated programme specifications (if applicable) should be lodged with the APQO and SRCM, via the link Quality Assurance Officer.

### TYPE B changes

- 3.5 Type B changes require submission for approval by the Faculty AESC/QLIC (via the quality sub-group), and proposals should be presented by the Module Leader, Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead (as appropriate) on the Request for Changes template (T2.13). *NOTE:* the process for obtaining approval for variations from the Regulations is set out in [new awards and variations section](#) of the Quality and Standards Handbook.
- 3.6 Type B changes may also require some internal or external consultation, as appropriate to the changes being proposed - this may include consultation with students, external examiners, accrediting bodies, or other interested parties. The Faculty link QAO can advise on the level of consultation which should take place. If required, consultation report/s should be provided, using template T2.14. If a consultation 3

report is not required, the Module Leader, Subject Coordinator or Programme Lead (as appropriate) should provide a summary of any feedback they have had from students on the changes. This may take the form of a short account of the discussion at the Subject Committee or - where the change has come about as a result of student feedback - a statement to this effect.

- 3.7 Once the change has been agreed by the programme team at a Subject Committee, the Request for Changes form, together with the updated module description and (if necessary, programme specification), should be forwarded to the Faculty Quality Officer, who will arrange for the proposal to be considered by the Faculty QLIC/AESC quality sub-group.
- 3.8 The FQLIC/AESC quality sub-group must consider whether the documentation provides evidence that an appropriate consultation process has been undertaken, and that the rationale for the change is robust. Where new compulsory modules are being introduced, the panel must check that the modules contribute to the achievement of the programme learning outcomes and that the proposed curriculum change does not substantially alter the nature of the award.
- 3.9 A short report will be added to the Request for Changes form, by the Faculty Quality Officer, to summarise the key points raised by panel members and to indicate their decision. The form will then be submitted to the FQLIC/AESC for endorsement. Once Faculty approval has been granted, the form should be submitted to the APQO and SRCM, along with updated programme specifications, via the link QAO. Updated module descriptors should be submitted to SRCM via the link Curriculum & Student Information Manager.
- 3.10 Students must be notified by the Subject Coordinator/Programme Lead when changes affecting their programmes of study have been approved; and the relevant external examiner/s must be notified of any changes to module assessment strategies prior to the next assessment period for the amended module/s.

### **Collaborative provision – additional ‘Type B’ changes**

- 3.11 CVs of new staff appointed by the partner to teach on an existing collaborative programme should be submitted to the Liaison Manager - the summary staff CV template (T5.9) may be used for this purpose. Please note that applications from new staff appointed by an ACP partner to teach on an existing collaborative programme should be submitted via the affiliate staff request page. All new staff proposals should be considered for approval by the Faculty AESC/QLIC, and the outcome of the FAESC/QLIC consideration should be reported to the APQO via the link QAO, for recording with the definitive programme documentation: the Operations Manual must also be updated accordingly.
- 3.12 For the approval of additional delivery locations for existing collaborative arrangements, i.e. the same partner will be delivering the same programme/s at a new location, a site visit will be undertaken by an appropriate member of University staff, plus a secretary (usually a QAO, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the Head of APQO) who will write a report to notify Faculty AESC/QLIC. Template T5.14 may be used, but the format of the report is likely to vary, depending on the nature of the provision concerned (for example, specialist facilities may need to be evaluated for some provision), and Faculties should consult their link QAO to agree on the agenda for the visit, and the personnel who will need to be involved in the visit. *Note:* If a proposal involves the addition of new teaching staff as well as a new delivery location, an approval event should be held.

### **Revalidation**

- 3.13 Revalidation of existing programmes follows the same process as set out for the approval of new programmes. Key differences are that:
  - external panel membership may not be required in some cases, for example, the modification of an existing programme for a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship.
  - the Request for Changes form (T2.13) should be submitted with the Submission Document, to record any changes which will be required to existing modules as a consequence of the re-validation of a programme.
- 3.14 Programme teams are not obliged to go through the [business case](#) process for revalidations, but – other than in the case of PSRB-driven revalidations – it may be useful to do so, in order to ensure there is robust consideration of the market for a re-designed programme by the Faculty Executive. Advice on whether this is required should be sought from the Faculty ADESE and the Faculty Planning Partner.

As with new programmes, sufficient time must be allowed between the re-validation event and the intended start date for the revised programme to enable effective marketing and recruitment activities to take place and to notify students/applicants of programme changes.

## 4 QUINQUENNIAL REVALIDATION

- 4.1 The quinquennial revalidation cycle replaced the periodic review process from 2020-21, as agreed at QLIC on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

### Home programmes

- 4.2 Initially, the schedule for quinquennial revalidation of home programmes will be based on the existing periodic review schedule. However, there is flexibility to extend the timescale for re-validation of individual programmes, for a period of up to two years, if there is clear evidence that they meet University criteria for quality, student outcomes, and currency.
- 4.3 The quinquennial revalidation process therefore involves an initial desk-based assessment by the FAESC/QLIC quality sub-group, to determine whether a re-validation is needed for all the programmes within the subject group due for review, or whether the validation period can be extended for any or all of the programmes.
- 4.4 The quality sub-group will consider the following factors:
- How long ago the programme was first validated or most recently revalidated;
  - A summary of modifications made since the above date;
  - When the programme was last re-accredited by the relevant PSRB;
  - Student recruitment numbers;
  - NSS/PTES scores, or other measures of student satisfaction;
  - Graduate outcomes (attainment/employability);
  - Externality (external examiner reports, PSRB monitoring, industrial liaison/advisory activity, alumni activity including mentoring/placement activity, etc).
- 4.5 The Faculty quality sub-group will be looking for consistently good performance in respect of these indicators, over the last 3-4 years. Many of these indicators are covered in the annual quality monitoring/annual review report; therefore, Programme Leads or Subject Coordinators wishing to request an extension to the current validation period should refer to their annual review reports for the last 3-4 years, and make a brief submission to the quality sub-group (using template T2.19), setting out their rationale for seeking exemption from the current revalidation exercise. The rationale should cover the indicators listed above, and highlight any of the programme team's recent achievements which they believe provide evidence that the programme meets University and sector expectations for quality, currency and benefits for students (for example, using the core practices in the [UK Quality Code](#) as a reference point). Advice on submissions may be sought from the Faculty ADESE or Head of QA & Validations.
- 4.6 If the Faculty quality sub-group considers that strong evidence regarding the quality of the academic experience has been provided, the revalidation schedule will be updated to reflect the programme/s exempted from the revalidation exercise and this will be reported to QLIC. Otherwise, the programme team will be asked to prepare for revalidation, following the new programme approval process described in the Quality & Standards Handbook

### Quinquennial revalidation – collaborative programmes

- 4.7 For programmes delivered through partnership arrangements, the process of revalidation for continuation beyond the end of the current contractual period is dependent on LPAG approval of the renewal of the partnership arrangements, through the process set out in the Quality & Standards Handbook section on [collaborative partnerships](#).
- 4.8 Revalidation should usually take place at least 15 months prior to the expiry of the current contract, since permission to recruit to collaborative programmes is suspended in the last year of the contract, pending a successful outcome of the approval process. This is so that no students may be recruited for a start date beyond the date of expiry of the current contract until a satisfactory revalidation has taken place, in order to allow time to change or terminate the partnership without prejudicing existing applicants. However, this may vary according to the frequency and timing of intakes for different

partnership arrangements, so advice on the timing of the revalidation exercise should be sought from the Faculty's link QAO.

- 4.9 A review should be undertaken where a collaborative arrangement is to be discontinued and where students will remain on the programme/s beyond the date of expiry of the current contract. This is in order to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to protect the academic standards of the provision, and the interests of the remaining students registered for the Brookes award/s, during the period leading up to final closure of the partnership. LPAG approval is not required, but should be notified of the Faculty's intention not to renew a contract.

## **5 DEADLINES FOR APPROVAL**

### **Type A and B changes**

Changes for implementation in the next academic year should have completed the approval process above by **28<sup>th</sup> February** (in order to meet the March deadline for systems amendments and to ensure that the April module registration window can open on time). This deadline also applies to changes to modules delivered by partner organisations.

However, it may be possible to make in-year changes to sections 1,3,4,5,7,8 and 9 of a module descriptor, provided that the proposed changes are unlikely to impact on student choices and will not affect any statutory returns. Permission to make in-year changes is at the discretion of the ADESE or Faculty Head of Quality Assurance & Validations, in line with the Type A change approval process.

### **Revalidation**

Programme teams should be aware that re-validation can have an impact on current students and applicants, and should seek advice on the timing of the exercise from the Student Records and Curriculum Management (Registry), APQO and Admissions teams.