Modifications to programmes of study

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* The University has adopted the principles of Designing for Diverse Learners, and all policy documents should be written with reference to these principles. Further information is available at the [Designing for diverse learners website](https://designingfordiverselearners.info/).
* An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) must be considered for all new and amended policies. Further information is available from the [EIA section of SharePoint](https://hullacuk.sharepoint.com/Services/EDI/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments-(EIAs).aspx).
* This document is available in alternative formats from [**policy@hull.ac.uk**](mailto:policy@hull.ac.uk).
* All printed or downloaded versions of this document are classified as uncontrolled

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Modifications to programmes of study

# Introduction

* 1. This Code of Practice sets out the principles and processes for modifications to existing University of Hull programmes and modules and those of its educational partners where applicable. Modifications will ensure that programmes continue to provide a high-quality learning experience for students and be strategically aligned and financially viable. Any changes will align to external expectations such as the QAA UK Quality Code, the Framework for Higher Education and the Consumer and Markets Authority.
  2. The processes facilitating the above are designed to be robust, transparent and rigorous whilst remaining proportionate to the nature of the change.

# Scope

* 1. This Code applies to all approved taught programmes of 60 credits and over and their constituent modules, that lead to an award of the University of Hull covering:
     1. On-campus provision
     2. Collaborative provision
     3. The taught elements of MRes and Professional Doctorate degrees.

# Authority

* 1. The University Education Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this Code of Practice.

# Delegation

* 1. Any action or power designated to a dean under this code of practice may be undertaken by a designated associate dean or chair of the Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (FESEC) of the same faculty.

# Professional Accreditation

* 1. Where appropriate, and in consultation with the relevant professional body, the processes of approval set out in this code will be conducted in parallel with the relevant professional body.

# Overview of the Modification Process

* 1. This Code of Practice recognises two types of modification:
     1. **Minor modification**
     2. **Major modification**
  2. How these are managed depends on the extent and the nature of the proposed change. All modifications, whether minor or major require formal approval at either University or Faculty level, as set out below.
  3. Applications for minor modifications require the approval of the faculty via FESEC (or equivalent) or relevant sub-committee.
  4. The two approval routes for major modifications ensure that changes are considered by the relevant Committee or Board. Proposals that require oversight only of the academic case are considered by the Education Committee. Proposals that require oversight only of the business case are considered by the Strategic Portfolio Board and reported to the Education Committee. Proposals that require oversight of both the business case and the academic case are considered first by the Strategic Portfolio Board and then by the Education Committee.
  5. Corrective changes such as spelling errors or formatting changes that do not affect the student experience in any way do not require formal approval. The amended documentation **must** however be made available to the relevant Faculty Curriculum Team.

# Defining Minor and Major Modifications

* 1. Examples of minor and major modifications are included in Appendix A. QSS can advise on the appropriate approval route for applications.
     1. Minor Modifications – the changes have no impact on the programme competencies or the published learning, teaching and assessment strategies.
     2. Major Modifications SPB – the changes have a business impact, for example on resources or market.
     3. Major Modifications EC – the changes have an academic impact but no business impact, for example substantive changes to the assessment strategy.
     4. Major Modifications SPB & EC - the changes have a business impact and an academic impact.
  2. Applications for academic case major modifications require the approval of the Education Committee usually, but not necessarily, involving consideration by a University Academic Approval Panel in accordance with the University Code of Practice: New Programmes.
  3. A risk-based approach will be applied to proposals for major modifications. In cases where the Quality Support Service (QSS) considers that a major modification is likely to have no adverse effect on the quality and standards of the programme and the impact on the student experience is minimal, the application can be progressed to the Education Committee without the need for consideration by an Academic Approval Panel.

# Approval Documentation

## Major Modification

* 1. A revised programme specification (with changes highlighted) **must** be submitted with a completed standard coversheet. The accompanying Major Modification Form **must** also be submitted.
  2. Where business case consideration is required, this **should** be indicated within the Major Modification Form.
  3. The submission **must** make clear the date from which the change(s) will take effect, including making clear the extent to which it applies to current students.
  4. Submission, including FESEC endorsement, **must** be to the relevant faculty office in the first instance, before submission to Education Committee or Strategic Portfolio Board for approval. For collaborative provision, submission **must** be made to QSS.

## Minor Modification

* 1. Relevant sections of the programme and / or module specification (with changes highlighted) **must** be submitted using the relevant faculty coversheet.
  2. Submission **must** be to the faculty office, or for collaborative provision, to QSS.

# Consultation with Students

## Major Modification

* 1. Where it is intended that the proposed major modification will apply to current students\*, the students directly affected by the change(s) **must** be consulted and a summary of their feedback obtained. Evidence of this **must** be provided with the submitted programme specification.
  2. Any prospective students, including those who may have already applied, **must** be informed in writing of the change(s) once approval has been granted.

*\*The programme on to which students were initially registered forms part of a legally binding contract and therefore cannot be significantly varied unless the students are consulted and a summary of their feedback is obtained.*

## Minor Modification

* 1. Where it is intended that the proposed minor modifications will apply to current students, the students **must** be consulted and informed of any change.

# Deadlines

* 1. Major modifications to programmes of study **should** normally only take effect at the start of an academic year. Where such a modification is being considered, a detailed implementation plan **must** first be approved by the relevant faculty. The implementation plan **must** include as a minimum (i) details of the support to be offered to students impacted by the modification, (ii) whether or not compensation is to be offered and (iii) a communication plan. Details of the proposed modification **should** also be forwarded to [studentcontract@hull.ac.uk](mailto:studentcontract@hull.ac.uk)

## Major Modification

* 1. The deadline for submitting a proposed major modification for full approval is five months prior to the proposed start date. This timing is essential to enable applicants and students to be informed in good time of any changes and to enable systems to be updated.
  2. For applications to be considered, they **must** be submitted to the secretary of the relevant committee by the published deadline.

## Minor Modification

* 1. The deadline for submitting a proposed minor modification for full approval is determined by the dean and **should** be no less than five months prior to the proposed start date.

# Externality

## Major Modification

* 1. Written evidence of the opinion of the current external examiner **must** be provided. No additional independent externality is required, but it may prove helpful as part of the rationale for the change (e.g. views of industry or other stakeholders to demonstrate the appropriateness of a change of title).
  2. The opinion of the external examiner is important, although the final decision necessarily rests with the programme team, the University Academic Panel (if required) and the approving body.

## Minor Modification

* 1. Written evidence of the opinion of the current external examiner **should** be provided.

# Glossary of Terms

## Core, Compulsory, Optional and Elective modules

* 1. Modules **must** be designated as core, compulsory, optional or elective, according to their importance in enabling students to achieve the learning outcomes/competencies for the programme as a whole and, where applicable, to meet professional body requirements.
     1. CORE MODULE: This is a module that is fundamental to the degree programme and **must** be studied. It cannot be compensated or condoned. There may also be different restrictions applied with regard to minor/major modifications.
     2. COMPULSORY MODULE: This is a module which **must** be studied to successfully complete a particular degree programme. It can be compensated or condoned, subject to regulations.
     3. OPTIONAL MODULE: This is a module that a student may choose to study as part of their degree programme.
     4. ELECTIVE MODULE: This is a module that a student may choose to study as part of their degree programmes. It cannot be compensated or condoned.
  2. Note:
     1. There **should** be no optional modules at Level 4 (unless an exemption request has been approved).
     2. Optionality **should** be minimised throughout the programme.
     3. Faculty Education and Student Experience Committee (FESEC) is the final arbitrator of any disagreements regarding the level of optionality in a programme.
     4. Levels of optionality **should** be clearly linked to the number of students taking the module.

# Appendix A

**Minor Modifications**

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| **Examples of Minor Modifications** | |
| 1 | The withdrawal or substitution of a individual module for a future cohort of students, where this does not affect the overall programme competencies |
| 2 | Changes within a module where these do not affect the overall programme competencies, for example to reflect a different emphasis brought to the module by a new or different member of teaching staff |
| 3 | Changes to the delivery model of modules where these do not affect the statement in the programme specification relating to the teaching and learning methods for that programme or the programme competencies |
| 4 | Changes to the assessment for a module where these have not already been published to students or where students will be informed sufficiently in advance of a change to published details to not be disadvantaged |

**Major Modifications that have a business impact**

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| **Examples of business impact** | |
| 5 | A change to the programme title |
| 6 | A change to the duration of the programme |
| 7 | A change to the location of delivery of the programme |
| 8 | A change to the mode of study the programme, for example from FT to PT |
| 9 | A change to the method of delivery of the programme, for example from on campus to distance learning |

**Major Modifications that may have a business impact**

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| **Examples that require triage** | | |
| 10 | | A change to the award, for example from MA to MSc |
| 11 | | The addition or removal of other award routes, for example new entry and/or exit points |
| 12 | | The addition of, or substantive revision of, a placement or study abroad element |
| 13 | | Collaboration with another institution or organisation in the delivery of the programme and/or delivery of a programme, or part of a programme, overseas |
| 14 | Modifications that would require changes to the published teaching timetable once teaching has begun. | |
| 15 | Modifications to a programme of study that affect programmes offered by other subject groups where agreement has not been reached, for example in the case of combined degrees. | |
| 16 | The addition of modules which supplement rather than replace existing modules where there is no impact on competencies. | |
| 17 | Modifications that do not comply with the University’s Academic or Quality and Standards Frameworks. | |

**Major Modifications that need academic approval only**

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| **Examples where there is no business impact** | |
| 18 | The addition, withdrawal, modification of modules where these result in changes to the programme competencies |
| 19 | The partial or full restructuring of a programme, for example the reorganisation of a stage of the programme and/or changes to module credits values/levels |
| 20 | A change to the module designation of pass/fail |
| 21 | Substantive changes to the assessment strategy for the programme (rather than of individual module assessments) |

# Version control

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| **Version** | **Author** | **Date approved** | **Relevant sections** |
| 5 12 | UoH Working Group | March 2025, Education Committee | * Reviewed as part of the UoH 5-year cyclical review of its quality and standards framework. * Updated definitions for major/minor modifications (para 7). * Makes clear which major modifications impact on the business case for a programme and therefore need to be approved by the Strategic Portfolio Board. Such proposals may also need to be considered by Education Committee, which may or may not be on the recommendation of a University Academic Approval Panel. |
| 5 11 | Quality Manager, Quality Support Service | Jan 2022 | Migrated to new template |
| 5 10 | Quality Manager, Quality Support Service | May 2021 | Housekeeping:   * Clarifies where development consent is required for the approval of major modifications * Clarifies that submission of minor and major modifications for collaborative provision must be made to Quality Support Service * Replaces Quality Governance with Quality Support Service |
| 5 09 | Quality Manager, Quality Governance | Feb 2020 | Housekeeping:   * Removes reference to any approval via Chairs Action. The Education Planning Committee meets every two weeks and as such removes the need for the process of chairs action. * Clarifies that it is the Education Planning Committee, which notifies stakeholders of the approval of a programme proposal. |
| 5 08 | Quality Manager, Quality Governance | Oct 2019 | Housekeeping:   * Replaces University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) with Education Committee. * Replaces Programme management Committee with Education Planning Committee. * Replaces Learning and Teaching Enhancement with Quality Governance. * Replaces School with Academic Unit. |
| 5 07 | Quality Manager, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE) | July 2018,  requested at May ULTC | Makes explicit when changes can be made to a programme of study as per UoH Student Contract. |
| 5 06 | Quality Manager, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE) | May 2018 | Housekeeping change to include the definition of core, compulsory and optional modules. |
| 5 05 | Quality Manager, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE) | Oct 2017, ULTC | Clarifies that a change to the location of delivery of a programme is considered as a major modification. |
| 5 04 | Quality Manager, Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE) | April 2017 (May ULTAC) | Removes exceptional modifications and provides greater clarity around what constitutes a minor and a major modification. |
| 5 03 | Quality Manager, Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) | Sept 2016 | Housekeeping - replaces department with school |
| 5 02 | Quality Manager, Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) | Jan 2016 (RCPC) | Clarifies the advisory role of Academic Quality and Advisory Group (AQAG) with respect to proportionate processes for exceptional and major modifications that are likely to have no adverse effect on the quality and standards of the programme, and where the likely impact on the student experience is deemed to be minimal (para. 10) |
| 5 01 | Quality Manager, Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) | Sept 2015 | Replaces amendment with modification. |
| 5 00 | Quality Manager, Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP) | Feb 2015  (RCPC Jan 2015) | Revised to categorise amendments as:   * Exceptional amendments (requires development consent followed by a proportionate approval process). * Major amendments (does not require development consent but must be considered by a University Validation panel). * Minor amendments (approved by faculties). |
| 4 00 |  | Sept 2013 | * Reflects changes concomitant with QH:G1 version 4 02. * Removes the distinction between on campus and collaborative provision processes. * Introduces a risk-based approach (para 14). |
| 3 03 | University Quality Office | Feb 2011, ULTAC | Reflects the following changes made to Section G1 upon decision by RCPC and ULTAC:   * Succession of PAMEC by PAC and QSC by ULTAC. * FAPs now recommend their decision to PAC rather than approve new programmes. * Broadens the pool of staff who may Chair FAPs. * Acknowledges the replacement of Academic Board with Senate Executive Board. * That programmes needing to meet conditions do so within three weeks of the PPC and/or FAP or approval may lapse. * Removes entitlement not to use an up to date programme specification template if original approval of a programme proposed for amendment pre-dates September 2005. |
| 3 02 | University Quality Office | July 2009 | Housekeeping changes to reflect to reflect change to Committees such as the removal of Academic Board and those duties being referred to the PVC (L&T). |
| 3 01 | University Quality Office | Nov 2008 | Removes requirement to receive written approval from students for minor changes to programmes. |
| 3 00 | University Quality Office | Oct/Nov 2007 | Introduces the devolution of approvals to faculty level. Major amendments are subject to the approval of a Full Approval Panel chaired by an academic member of PAMEC (being drawn from another faculty). Minor amendments continue to be the responsibility of the relevant faculty. ‘International programmes’ are subject to the Code on International Educational Partnerships (QH:I5) [being revised]. |