

## MAKING CHANGES TO COURSES

Changes to courses (also known as modifications) are needed to keep module syllabus up to date, enhance the curriculum, promote innovation and further embed the University learning and teaching strategy.

An approved course is a form of contract between multiple stakeholders, approved to provide a particular academic experience appropriate to the subject, students, and sector's expectations. Consequently, when a course team needs or wants to make changes, there is a formal process.

This chapter covers the areas you will need to consider when applying for a course modification. It sets out the process to follow for each modification type, and the requirements for consulting with students and/or informing applicants.

### 1.1 Purpose of Modification

- 1.1.1 Modification is necessary to keep module syllabus up to date, enhance the curriculum to promote innovation and to further embed university learning and teaching strategy, for example introducing an employability strand, creating an international opportunity. In addition, modification provides an opportunity in the early part of a newly validated course to correct or make adjustments based on student evaluation, academic reflection or recommendations from an external stakeholder such as the External Examiner or Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).
- 1.1.2 A validated course is a form of contract between multiple stakeholders whereby a course has been approved to provide a particular academic experience appropriate to the subject, students, and sector's expectations and the course team has undertaken responsibility to deliver and maintain that. Therefore, when a course team needs or wants to make changes, there is a formal process attached to making changes.
- 1.1.3 This process assures all parties that the changes are made in the best interests of the students and/or staff involved in the course, that the course remains a high quality experience, that it remains in line with sector expectations (academic, cultural, as well as regulatory and professional, where necessary). It ensures that, where a change may constitute a significant change to the student experience, that the appropriate measures to conform with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have been or will be put in place to avoid legal challenge.

### 1.2 Responsibility for Modification

- 1.2.1 It is the responsibility of a Course Director to use the modification process as part of a cycle of continuous improvement linked to the Continuous Improvement process. It is the responsibility of the Faculty Quality Committee to ensure that the changes will not constitute a risk to the student or institution in terms of the above considerations. It is the responsibility of the Course Director to assure the Faculty Quality Committee that the proposed changes will improve the student and or staff experience and that potential risks have been identified and where unavoidable, that measures will be put in place to manage risk in line with the University's Change Policy <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/management-of-the-academic-portfolio/course-modification.aspx>
- 1.2.2 The formal process ensures that all changes are recorded and provide a transparent history of the course's evolution. When modifications can clearly demonstrate improvement to the student outcomes and experience, this feeds into institutional quality reviews and to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission. In this regard, the management of modifications by the Faculty Quality Committee should be seen as a service to the institution and to individual courses, rather than an exercise in compliance.

## 1.3 Types of Modifications

1.3.1 Modifications fall into three categories – Major Modification, Minor Modification and Routine Updating.

1.3.2 Major Modification, where significant changes are being proposed, including:

- Changes to the course aims and/or intended learning outcomes of a course (which may or may not involve a change to the course title);
- Introduction of a new pathway / route (single honours / combined honours);
- Modifications to courses at level 8 and level 7 research degrees;
- Introduction of an additional mode of study;
- Changes to the course duration;
- The introduction of delivery of the course at an additional University campus;
- Addition of a Foundation Year (where the major modification is to the Foundation Year with implications for the relevant degree award(s));
- Introduction of a placement component where the placement sits outside of the existing credits of the course and is a required component to be successful in achieving the course award title.

1.3.3 Additionally the Chairs of the Academic Strategy Committee, the Quality Monitoring & Review Sub-Committee and/or the Faculty Quality Committee (or the Faculty Modification Panel acting on behalf of the Faculty Quality Committee) may determine that the modifications being proposed to a course are sufficiently extensive to require major modification. This may relate to modifications presented as a single package or as a result of a cumulative effect of modifications made.

1.3.4 Minor Modification, where changes are being proposed that do not fall into one of the other categories, including:

### Type 1

- Replacement of a compulsory module, where this can be mapped to the existing stage and course learning outcomes;
- Addition, removal or allocation to a different level of a compulsory module (includes an option module becoming a compulsory module);
- Change to module credit rating of either a compulsory or option module;
- Change to module aims and/or learning outcomes of a compulsory module;
- Change to indicative module content of a compulsory module (other than routine updating);
- Change to the course Special Regulations;
- Addition of a 20-credit placement module.

### Type 2

- Change to module title;
- Change to module indicative assessment (includes change to mode, weighting and word count / duration);
- Addition, removal or allocation to a different level of an option module;
- Addition or removal of pre-requisites / co-requisites;
- Change to module learning and teaching strategy (may or may not include a change to module duration hours);
- Change to indicative module content of an option module;
- Change to module aims and/or learning outcomes of an option module;
- Change to the semester in which a module will be delivered;
- Addition of new entry points for the course;
- Change to timetabling band for a General Modular Scheme course;
- Change to the course specification not covered elsewhere.

1.3.5 Routine Updating, where an approval process does not need to be followed, including:

- Change to Module Indicative Resources;
- Change to Academic Responsibility at either the module or course level.

1.3.6 Separate processes exist if the sole change is to modify the course / pathway title and for course suspension / withdrawal / closure.

1.3.7 The general principle with regard to all modifications is that they will apply to the next entering cohort and not for any current students. However, there are sometimes circumstances when modifications do need to be made affecting current students and prospective students once the admissions cycle has begun. The University has approved a Change Policy to cover circumstances where it is necessary to make a change in the running of an existing course. This can be read in full at: <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/quality-and-standards-office/management-of-the-academic-portfolio/course-modification.aspx>. In such circumstances, consideration should also be given as to whether there are any students currently on an interruption. Where this is the case, appropriate arrangements must be put in place to communicate with them regarding the modifications.

#### 1.4 Approval Process for Major Modifications

1.4.1 For a major modification, the University's course approval procedure should be followed as set out in the Quality Manual, except that:

- In-Principle approval is not required unless there are resource implications and/or a change to the course title is being proposed as part of the changes;
- Detailed course planning form is not required unless there are resource implications;
- The documentation requirements will comprise of the following:
  - Rationale document outlining the modifications proposed for consideration by the Major Modifications Panel and the rationale for them;
  - Current course specification
  - Draft revised course specification (including the required appendices) with the proposed changes clearly identified;
  - Revised course student handbook;
  - Evidence of student consultation;
  - Blended / distance learning materials (where relevant);
  - Detailed course planning form (where required);
  - Tracker document to be submitted to capture the internal Faculty scrutiny process;
  - the names of the stakeholders attending the event.

1.4.2 The remit of the Major Modification Panel will be to consider the proposed modifications only. Prior to submission the course documentation should be reviewed to ensure it continues to align to the current University regulations. It will not be a requirement for other aspects of the course to be modified to reflect changes to University strategy and policy unless they directly relate to the proposed major modification. The Major Modification Panel may however make recommendations regarding aspects of the course that are not part of the proposed modifications that will need to be taken into consideration when reviewing the course prior to the next scheduled Periodic Course Review.

1.4.3 As a Major Modification Panel will only consider the proposed modifications to the course, it will not constitute a course re-approval. A Periodic Course (and Partnership) Review will need to be undertaken in the sixth year of operation of the course as set out in Section 11 of the Quality Manual.

#### 1.5 Approval Process for Minor Modifications

1.5.1 Minor modifications are a matter for consideration and approval by the appropriate Faculty Quality Committee, following recommendation by the Faculty Course Modification Panel.

1.5.2 The membership of the Faculty Course Modification Panel will be approved by the Faculty Quality Committee but as a minimum should comprise of the Faculty Director of Quality (Chair), Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching, at least one senior academic (normally a Head of School, Subject Director or equivalent) and at least one student representative.

1.5.3 The general principle is that modifications will apply to new students only. Where it is deemed necessary to modify a course for existing students and for incoming students minor modifications must normally have been considered by the Faculty Quality Committee at least 6 months prior to commencement of the

stage / level of the course to which the modification applies, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Individual courses should however consider key course / scheme dates such as module option choice dates when considering timelines for approval of minor modifications as these may require modifications to be submitted for approval at an earlier point in time.

1.5.4 In consultation with the Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching and Faculty Director of Quality, the Course Director must complete Section A of the Modifications Proposal Form along with Appendix 1 (Course Modifications Log). The form should be signed by the Head of School and submitted for consideration by the Faculty Course Modification Panel.

1.5.5 Where a module is a validated part of more than one course, the Course Director for the parent course must agree the proposed change with its counterparts. A modification to all courses will be necessary, and this may require a modification by another Faculty. If systematic change cannot be agreed, an additional module(s) will be created and a new module code(s) will be required.

1.5.6 The role of the Faculty Course Modification Panel will be as follows:

- (i) To consider the proposed modification(s) in light of any previous modification(s) made to the course(s) concerned since the course approval event / last Periodic Course Review and either confirm that the proposal can be considered under the Approval Process for Minor Modifications, a Course Modification Review Exercise is required or refer for consideration as a Major Modification;

Where it is identified that the proposed modification(s) can be considered under the Approval Process for Minor Modifications, the role of the Faculty Course Modification Panel will also be as follows:

- (ii) To identify any aspects of the proposal that require amendment / further review prior to consideration by the Faculty Quality Committee;
- (iii) To confirm the appropriateness of the mechanisms set out for student consultation to support the proposed modification or identify an alternative student consultation process and request that this be undertaken prior to submission of the proposed modification to the Faculty Quality Committee;
- (iv) To confirm that the proposed modification can proceed for consultation with the External Examiner (except in the case of a change to a semester/trimester or change to GMS timetabling band, in which case consultation with the External Examiner is not required);

1.5.7 In considering (i) above the Faculty Course Modification Panel will have reference to

- a Course Modifications Log, which will outline all modifications made to the course since the last Course Approval Event or Periodic Course Review Event; and
- the Course Specification with the proposed modification(s) in mark-up.

1.5.8 The Faculty Course Modification Panel will consider the volume of modifications undertaken since the last approval / review event. It will be the responsibility of the Faculty Course Modification Panel to have oversight of the modifications made and to ensure that where a range of modifications have been made that the course aims and learning outcomes are still fit for purpose. As part of this consideration greater weight will be given to Minor Modifications Type 1 as these relate to compulsory modules. The Faculty Course Modification Panel may determine that the volume of the changes proposed taking in to account the cumulative effect of changes already made require either consideration by a Major Modifications Panel (see above) or that a Course Modification Review Exercise (see below) is required.

1.5.9 In the event that the Faculty Course Modification Panel determines that the proposal can be considered under the Approval Process for Minor Modifications, consideration will be given to the proposed student consultation arrangements. The level of student consultation required will depend on whether the proposed modification presents a material change to the published information students have previously been provided with and therefore represents a change in the student contract or whether the proposed modification presents a non-material change or constitutes a change due to circumstances outside the University's control that it could not plan for such as changes to PSRB requirements.

1.5.10 The [Change Policy](#) sets out examples of types of modifications that would be considered as material changes and examples of types of modifications that would be considered non-material.

1.5.11 For non-material changes, the consultation process is as follows:

- all current students that have the potential to be affected by the proposed modification(s) should be consulted and given the opportunity to comment on the proposed modification(s);
- the consultation process must be undertaken in a manner that can be evidenced i.e. through a meeting that is minuted with the minutes capturing both the proposal and student feedback or through a written consultation undertaken by e-mail or via the Virtual Learning Environment;
- the views of the students must be taken into consideration when finalising the Modification Proposal Form for consideration by the Faculty Quality Committee but a majority agreement will be considered acceptable for the approval of a non-material change.

1.5.12 For material changes, the consultation process is as follows:

- all current students that will be affected by the proposed modification should be consulted and given the opportunity to comment on the proposed modification(s);
- the consultation process must be undertaken in a manner that can be evidenced in respect to individual students;
- the views of the students must be taken in to consideration when finalising the Modification Proposal Form for consideration by the Faculty Quality Committee. For the approval of a material change the Faculty Quality Committee will need to be assured that all students currently on the course that will be affected by the proposed modification(s) have agreed to the change or that alternative arrangements have been put in place to the satisfaction of an individual student where they expressed dissatisfaction with the change.

1.5.13 Separate arrangements exist for notifying applicants as set out in the Change Policy.

1.5.14 The Faculty Course Modification Panel will either confirm that the proposed student consultation arrangements are appropriate or indicate where changes to the proposed student consultation process will be required. The Course Director is responsible for ensuring the specified student consultation process is undertaken.

1.5.15 In the event that the Faculty Course Modification Panel determines that the proposal can be considered under the Approval Process for Minor Modifications and following initial consideration of the proposed modification and the arrangements for student consultation, the Modification Proposal Form will be referred back to the Course Director for completion of Section B of the Form. Section B requires consultation to take place with students and the current External Examiner. If additional resources are needed that cannot be met within the existing School / Centre budget, a detailed course planning form will also need to be approved by the Faculty Course Planning Executive.

1.5.16 On completion of Section B and accompanied by the required supporting evidence, the proposal will be returned for consideration by the Chair of the Faculty Course Modification Panel, who will either confirm that the proposal can proceed for consideration by the Faculty Quality Committee or refer back to the Course Director for further amendment prior to submission to the Faculty Quality Committee.

1.5.17 The Faculty Quality Committee is the decision-making body with respect to the approval of modifications. The Faculty Quality Committee has the discretion to refer the proposal for consideration by a Course Modification Review Exercise or Major Modification Event.

## **1.6 Course Modification Review Exercise**

1.6.1 In the event that the Faculty Course Modification Panel requires a Course Modification Review Exercise to be undertaken the Course Director will be notified. The following documentation will be required to support the process:

- Course Modifications Log – outlining all approved modifications since the last Approval / Review Event;

- Previous Course Modifications Proposal Forms;
- A summary of cumulative totals of the volume of changed credit and the types of module from which it was derived, i.e. compulsory or option, during the period under consideration;
- The course specification approved at the last Approval / Review Event;
- The current course specification;
- Minutes from the Faculty's modifications approval process for the period under consideration;
- External Examiner's written endorsement of the current appropriateness and coherence of the course in its totality.

1.6.2 The purpose of the Course Modification Review Exercise will be to confirm that the approved course award, course aims and course learning outcomes remain intact, valid and achievable.

1.6.3 The Course Modification Review Exercise does not require the direct participation of the course team. It is undertaken at the next scheduled meeting of the Faculty Course Modification Panel. A Faculty Director of Quality or Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching from outside of the Faculty will be requested to join the meeting for the purposes of the Course Modification Review Exercise to provide a further element of externality.

1.6.4 The outcome of the Course Modification Review Exercise will be reported to the Faculty Quality Committee as a recommendation. The Faculty Quality Committee will:

EITHER

- Confirm that all modifications completed since the previous approval / review event have followed due process and that the course aims and learning outcomes remain consistent with the approved award;

OR

- Refers the course for major modification.

1.6.5 Where the outcome is the former of the above, the course may proceed with the proposed modification as a minor modification as set out in Section 5.5 above.

## 1.7 Reporting of Modifications

1.7.1 The minutes of Faculty Quality Committee will record each proposal submitted. They should include a list of the proposals with sufficient information to identify each one.

1.7.2 The Course Director will be formally responsible for ensuring all student-facing documentation and materials are updated as part of the approval process of the modification. They will also be responsible for liaising with Admissions/Marketing with respect to any amendments required to marketing material and for ensuring that any necessary correspondence with applicants is undertaken as set out in the Change Policy at the earliest opportunity.

1.7.3 The Faculty Quality Committee must report all minor modifications through submission of the Modification Proposal Form and the revised Course Specification and amended / additional appendices to the following:

- Quality and Standards Office;
- Student Systems QL in Planning and Academic Administration ([studentsystems.ql@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:studentsystems.ql@canterbury.ac.uk));
- Applicant Services ([applicantsservices@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:applicantsservices@canterbury.ac.uk))
- Planning Office ([planningoffice@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:planningoffice@canterbury.ac.uk)); and
- Faculty Marketing Manager (via [marcomms@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:marcomms@canterbury.ac.uk)).

1.7.4 Student Systems QL will be responsible for modifying the module or course details as recorded in the Student Records System. Such changes must be entered before students are registered for new or modified modules.

1.7.5 On an annual basis, the Quality Monitoring & Review Sub-Committee will receive a Summary Report from each Faculty on the operation of its delegated authority, which will reference its role in the approval of modifications.

## **1.8 Modification to Course / Pathway Title**

1.8.1 Where a modification relates solely to the modification of a Course / Pathway Title, the Course / Pathway Title Modification Form must be completed. This must indicate a rationale for the title change and be accompanied by comments from an External Examiner to confirm the validity of the proposed change.

1.8.2 Modifications to Course / Pathway Titles will apply to the next recruiting cohort only and cannot be applied to existing students.

1.8.3 The completed form should be signed by the relevant Head(s) of School and submitted to the relevant Faculty Director(s) of Quality along with an updated course specification. The Faculty Director of Quality will ensure that the form is considered by the following Faculty committees:

- Faculty Course Planning Executive, or equivalent body for consideration of any portfolio implications;
- Faculty Quality Committee – for consideration of any quality assurance implications.

1.8.4 The Faculty Committee may determine that changes are required before the proposals can be approved.

1.8.5 Following Faculty-level approval, the form will be signed by the Dean and submitted to the Academic Strategy Committee for institutional-level approval.

1.8.6 The Secretary to the Academic Strategy Committee will notify the Heads of all relevant Professional Service areas of Course / Pathway Title changes approved by the Academic Strategy Committee including:

- Admissions
- Finance
- Marketing
- Planning
- Quality and Standards
- Planning & Academic Administration
- Student Support and Guidance
- UK Partnerships or International Partnerships (where relevant)

1.8.7 The Faculty Director of Quality is responsible for ensuring that the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body is notified (where relevant).

1.8.8 For the avoidance of doubt, a change of course / pathway title will not constitute course re-approval. A Periodic Course (and Partnership) Review will need to be undertaken in the sixth year of operation of the course as set out in Section 10 of the Quality Manual.

## **1.9 Overview of the Course Modifications Process**

1.9.1 The following flowchart provides an overview of the Course Modifications Process

Figure 1.1

