Framework/Course and Unit Modifications Policy and Procedures

Purpose and scope

This document sets out the policy and procedures for making modifications to the approved versions of Course and/or Unit Specifications between initial approval of the course and its subsequent review. Modifications are limited changes which do not alter the nature, focus and purpose of the course, and/or the award title(s). This policy and procedure also sets out the arrangements for making minor changes to sections of the Course and Unit Specification which are headed as 'indicative'.

1. Key responsibilities

1.1 Framework/Programme Leaders are responsible for managing the modification process, completing the relevant documentation for committee consideration and ensuring appropriate communication with current students at all stages of this process.

1.2 Registry are responsible for all communications with applicants and offer holders at all stages of this process.

1.3 Academic Development and Quality Committee (ADQC) considers and where appropriate approves, modifications to courses and units.

1.4 Programme Steering Groups consider and where appropriate approve changes to indicative sections of Course and Unit Specifications, reporting these to ADQC via the minutes.

1.5 The Academic Audit and Policy Committee recommends changes to current policy on course and unit modifications to Academic Board

1.6 Academic Board approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to course and unit modifications.

1.7 References in this policy and procedure to any University College officer shall include his or her properly appointed nominee.

2. Introduction

2.1 It is important that the curriculum, teaching and learning methods and forms of assessment for all AECC University College courses are kept up to date to maintain academic and professional standards, and to enhance the quality of learning opportunities for students. Proposals for modifications to courses and/or units may therefore arise as a result of experience of their delivery and will usually be generated through course monitoring activities, including student and external examiner feedback.

2.2 Modifications are limited changes which do not alter the nature, focus and purpose of the course, and/or the award title(s). Examples of modifications are:

    i) addition, substitution or removal of core units to a total credit value of up to one third of a level between approval/review of the course and its subsequent review;

    ii) addition, substitution or removal of optional units (not all optional units may be offered each year and this does not require a modification – however this must be made clear to prospective applicants, applicants and students in course material);

iii) changes in the credit value and/or level of units;

iv) revision of a Unit Specification which does not affect the aims and learning outcomes of the course, e.g. change to unit learning outcomes; change to delivery method or assessment methodology; change to summative assessment details;

v) structural changes to a course, e.g. introduction or discontinuation of intermediate qualifications, progression routes, placements, Student Exchange opportunities;

vi) changes to the site of delivery;[1]

vii) addition of an alternative delivery mode, e.g. to allow an already approved full-time course to be delivered in part-time mode.

Changes made to assessment must not alter the overarching strategies and balance of assessment methods agreed when the course was approved. Course Teams must be mindful of the scale of changes that have occurred to a course since its approval or last review. Cumulative small changes may necessitate the holding of a course review before the proposed modification may be made.

2.3 Where modifications are proposed to units that are delivered across more than one framework/ course, each course must agree to the change and be modified accordingly. The modification form must list all the courses which use the unit concerned, and show that the 'fit' of the modified unit in each course has been considered. An email confirming agreement to the changes from the Framework/Programme Leader for each affected course should be included with the modification form. If the modification is not appropriate for all courses concerned, the modified unit should be approved as a separate unit with a distinct unit title/code and the course(s) in which it will be used must be clearly specified. Course teams other than the lead course team must ensure that the same consultations occur in relation to the proposed changes, e.g. external examiners, students.

2.4 During the approval or review of a course, common units may be changed which are offered in other courses not being reviewed at the same time. This would necessitate a modification to the course (s) not currently under review. In such cases a Course Modification Form should be completed in the normal way with the required supporting evidence.

3. Timescales

3.1 Modifications should be implemented from the start of a new academic year or intake and should not normally take effect during the academic year in which they are made. Modifications should normally be considered and, if appropriate, approved, during the first round of committee meetings in the academic year, for implementation from September of the next academic year.

4. Modification process

4.1 The Programme Leader, in discussion with the Quality and Enhancement Manager should make an initial decision as to whether any proposed change is a major change to the course which requires a review (see *Course Approval and Review Policy and Procedure*), or a minor change which requires a modification (see para 2.2 of this document).

4.2 In reaching this determination the Programme Leader and the Quality and Enhancement Manager will also take into account whether the scale of changes that have occurred to the course since its approval or last review may necessitate the holding of a full course review before the proposed modification may be made

4.3 In proposing modifications Course Teams must give careful consideration to the impact of the proposed changes on students, applicants and potential applicants, including those with protected

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[1] Proposals for changes to the site of delivery should be discussed with the Quality and Enhancement Manager in advance, as depending on the nature of the proposal this may require additional action and a full course review

2

characteristics, and ensure that appropriate and documented consultation takes place where required. See Section 4 below

4.4 All proposals for modifications should normally be supported by written comments from the external examiner(s) for the course.

4.5 All proposals for modifications must be submitted on a standard Course Modification form. Additional documentation in support of the change should be attached as required. Examples of required documentation include:

- changes of wording within existing Course Specification(s) with changes tracked, and amended Course Summary (course summaries, while part of the Course Specification documentation are for internal use only and not published for students/stakeholders)

- new Unit Specifications or existing Unit Specifications with changes tracked
- Agreement from the Programme Leader for other courses affected by the modification (see 2.5).
- written comments from external examiners (see 3.4)
- written feedback and agreement from students (see section 4)
- CMA significant change form (see section 4)

4.6 ADQC will consider the proposal and either approve the change, refer it back to the team for more work, reject the proposal or determine that a periodic course review is required. The Committee must be satisfied that all supporting evidence is complete and adequate, and that a valid case has been made that the modification is essential. The committee may specify conditions or recommendations of approval. Conditions must be met before the proposal can be approved.

4.7 Following ADQC approval :

The Committee Secretary will communicate the outcome to the relevant Framework/Programme Leader, Registry and the relevant Programmes Office.

- The Programme Leader is responsible for

  o ensuring that Course and Unit Specifications and amended Course Summary are updated in the light of approved changes, and for providing the updated version to the Quality and Enhancement Manager for publication.

  o advising Marketing of the change and for ensuring that all relevant on and offline material is updated, including drawing specific attention to the changes made.

- the Programmes Office, in consultation with the Framework/Programme Leader, is responsible for informing students of the change, including any differences between the change that they were consulted about and the one that is finally made, and the response to any important issues raised by students during the consultation.

- Registry is responsible for communicating the changes made to the course to current applicants and offer holders.

5. Consumer law requirements: information provided to students, applicants and potential applicants

5.1 To meet the information requirements that apply to students, applicants and potential applicants under consumer law, the impact of the changes on these groups needs to be considered. Although a modification is by definition a limited change to the course, it may still be regarded as 'significant' in terms of consumer law if it:

- is a change to one of the items of material/pre-contractual information provided to students, applicants or potential applicants as specified by the CMA (which includes the Course Specification);

- potentially has a negative impact on a group of students; or
- could influence (or could have already influenced) decisions that a potential applicant, applicant, offer holder or student would make.

In considering the appropriateness of the modification the Course Team needs to consider whether the change is fair, and whether mitigation should be offered if it may have an adverse effect on students in general or a particular group of students. Further advice may be sought from the Quality and Enhancement Manager if required.

5.2   To meet these requirements it is therefore important that:

- consultation with students is undertaken, and evidence evidencing student consent is gathered where appropriate.
- timely communication of the changes to students, applicants and potential applicants takes place.

Current students

5.3   If the proposed modification involves changes to information already supplied to students, students must be directly informed about the proposed change and the written agreement of at least 75% of students affected by the change must be obtained (normally this would be 75% of affected students per level, per course).

5.4   The Programmes Office, in consultation with the Programme Leader, is responsible for managing the consultation process, and should ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to obtain student support to any proposed changes. This should include repeated attempts to contact students. When outlining the changes to students it is suggested that the following text is included: *"Please confirm that you are happy with these changes. If you do have concerns or are not willing to consent to them, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can consider your concerns."*

5.5   The Programmes Office should keep a record of any correspondence with the students including any potential issues that are raised. The outcome of the consent process must be reported to ADQC, attached to the course and unit modification form.

5.6   Where less than 100% sign up is achieved during the consultation process, and where the proposed modification is a significant change in respect of consumer legislation as set out in para 4.1, the *CMA significant change form* should be completed and attached to the course and unit modification form as part of the process for considering the modification.

5.7   Such changes made should also be specifically highlighted at the point of enrolment (as enrolment establishes a second contract between the student and the institution). This will be managed as part of the enrolment declaration.

5.8   If the proposed modification will apply only to continuing students who have not previously had access to the information being changed the consultation process and 75% sign-up is not required.

Applicants/potential applicants

5.9   If the proposed modification involves changes to information available to potential applicants (for example on the website or at open days) the information should be amended and the nature of the amendment/date it was made highlighted in a manner which can be easily identifiable and understood by potential applicants.

5.10   If the proposed modification involves changes to information provided to applicants, they must be directly informed of the change and their consent to the change must be secured when they accept an offer.

5.11 If the proposed modification involves changes to information provided to offer holders they must be directly informed of the change and their consent to the change must be secured at enrolment (as enrolment establishes a second contract between the student and the institution). This will be managed as part of the enrolment declaration.

6. Changes to indicative information

6.1 Formal modification is not required where changes are made to the indicative sections of the Course or Unit Specification. However any changes to sections other than indicative learning resources should be considered and, where appropriate, approved by the relevant Programme Steering Group using the *indicative information modification form* and then drawn to the attention of ADQC through the minutes.

6.2 Following PSG approval the relevant Programme Leader is responsible for

  o ensuring that Course and Unit Specifications are updated in the light of approved changes, and for providing the updated version to the Quality and Enhancement Manager for publication.

  o advising Marketing of the change and for ensuring that all relevant on and offline material is updated, including drawing specific attention to the changes made.

6.3 Unit Leaders are responsible for reviewing and updating indicative learning resources annually. The date the updates were made should be noted next to the 'indicative learning resources' title in each Unit Specification. Programme Leaders must ensure that the updated version is provided to the Quality and Enhancement Manager for publication.

7. Version numbers

7.1 Please refer to the document 'Guidance regarding version numbering for Course and Unit Specifications'.

8. Associated documents and forms

  • Course and Unit Modification Form
  • Indicative Information Modification Form
  • CMA Significant Change Form
  • Policy and Procedures for Course Approval and Review
  • Guidance regarding version numbering for course and unit specifications'

9. Modifications flow-chart

  A flow-chart is attached as appendix 1.

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Owner	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Reference source	The Expectation and Indicators of sound practice set out in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)'s QAA UK Quality Code, Part B. In particular: Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval Chapter B8 Programme Monitoring and Review Competition Marketing Authority : UK higher education providers - advice on consumer protection law Helping you comply with your obligations 12 March 2015 CMA33 Examples from other institutions used as source material (in particular Bournemouth University and University of Southampton)

Date approved	15.11.2017
Effective from	16 November 2017 for programmes leading to AECC University College awards
Review date	Spring 2020
Target	Framework/Programme Leaders, Programmes Offices, Registry, members of Academic Development and Quality Committee
Policy location	SIP, policies for students webpage
Equality Analysis	No direct impact, the process provides opportunity to highlight any issues specifically related to students with protected characteristics

Appendix 1: Modification process flowchart

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│   Course Team discusses possible     │
│  change to definitive documentation  │
│          for course/units            │
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Proposed change affects the nature, focus and purpose of the course (course aims, learning outcomes etc),	Proposed change falls into the category of modification	Proposed change affects indicative information only
Programme Leader Discuss with Quality and Enhancement Manager and follow Course Review policy and procedure	Programme Leader completes/ submits Course Modification Form and additional documentation/supporting evidence	Programme Leader completes/ submits Indicative Information Modification Form and additional documentation/ supporting evidence

Programme Steering Group discusses proposal and supporting evidence → Not approved

Approved

ADQC considers proposed modification and supporting evidence. → Not approved

PSG reports to ADQC for note

Any conditions/ recommendations addressed.

Approved

ADQC Secretary notifies approval

| Framework/Programme Leader ensures documentation updated, provides updated version to Quality and Enhancement Manager for publication, advises Marketing of changes & ensures on and offline material is updated | Programmes Office, in consultation with Framework/Programme Leader informs students of the change | Registry communicates significant changes made to the Course and Unit Specifications to current applicants. |