

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).

1. Key responsibilities

- 1.1 Course 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 Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) considers and where appropriate approves, modifications to courses and units, or notes those changes which, as outlined in this policy, may be approved by Course Steering Committees
- 1.4 Course Steering Committees consider recommendations for modifications, recommending these to ASQC for approval or, where permitted within this policy, approving and reporting to ASQC for note.
- 1.5 The Education 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.²

Changes made to assessment must not alter the overarching strategies and balance of assessment methods agreed when the course was approved.

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Course Teams must also be mindful of the requirements of all relevant PSRBs and ensure that the relevant procedures for reporting, and if necessary seeking approval for, changes are followed.
- 2.5 Where modifications are proposed to units that are delivered across more than one 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 Course 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.
- 2.6 During the approval or review of a course, 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.
- 2.7 Some sections of unit specifications, indicated by means of an asterisk in the unit specification template, may be modified following consideration and approved by the relevant Course Steering Committee. See section 6 below.

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..

4. Modification process

- 4.1 The Course Leader, in discussion with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) 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. In reaching this determination the Course Leader and the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) 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 (see paras 2.2-2.3 of this document).
- 4.2 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

¹ Proposals for changes to the site of delivery should be discussed with the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) in advance, as depending on the nature of the proposal this may require additional action and a full course review

² Proposals for the an existing course delivered on campus to be delivered as an online course should in the first instance be discussed with the Chair of ASQC and Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) to determine the extent of changes required and therefore whether this may proceed as a modification or whether a full course consideration process is required.

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

- 4.3 All proposals for modifications should normally be supported by written comments from the external examiner(s) for the course.
- 4.4 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 Course 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).
- 4.5 The proposal should be considered by the relevant Course Steering Group and, if agreed should be recommended to ASQC for consideration/approval.
- 4.6 It is the responsibility of the Course Leader to submit the documentation to the ASQC secretary for consideration and to ensure that the documentation submitted is complete and accurate.
- 4.7 ASQC 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 needed.
- 4.8 If the decision is to reject the proposal the Course Team will be given feedback and invited to discuss the outcome with the Chair and Secretary of ASQC, to consider whether there are other options for reaching the desired outcome.
- 4.9 Following ASQC approval:

The Secretary will communicate the outcome to the relevant Course Leader and to Registry.

- The Course Leader is responsible for
 - 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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) for storage in Registry and, for Course Specifications, for publication on the VLE and website. .
 - 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.
 - publishing the amended unit specifications on the VLE for students .
- Registry, in consultation with the Course 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.
- The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) is responsible for publishing approved versions of course specifications on the University College website, the SIP (for staff) and the VLE (for students), and for saving unit specifications to the SIP.

Change of Course title

- 4.10 Schools may wish to recommend a change to the title of an existing course if, for example
- recruitment on the current course title has been unsuccessful or has fallen year-on-year.
 - there is evidence that either the current course title does not accurately reflect its content, or that another title would reflect the content better.
 - there is evidence that there is growth in the market for the new course or pathway title.
- 4.11 Proposals for changes to approved course titles require ASQC approval and must be submitted by the relevant Course Lead, supported by the Head of School, using a **change of course title request form**. This process may be used only if the proposed change of title does not involve any change to the course content, aims or learning outcomes (for example, a change proposed primarily for marketing purposes). The proposal should not involve amendment to existing course or unit specifications (other than amending references to the title itself) or to course content. If the title change forms part of a broader set of course changes this is likely to require a full Course Consideration process, and the Course Leader should consult the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) before submitting the proposal.
- 4.12 The proposals for modifications should normally be supported by written comments from the external examiner(s) for the course.
- 4.13 Where applicable relevant PSRBs should be consulted, and confirmation of their acceptance of their support for the proposed change should be submitted with the request form.
- 4.14 The Course Lead must consult the Admissions Manager and Assistant Registrar (Statutory Returns and Compliance) as about the impact of any change and the timings for taking this forward.
- 4.15 Titles cannot be changed once there are offer holders on a course, and will not normally apply to existing students, unless **all students** on the existing course sign up to accept the proposed change.
- 4.16 Once the change is approved reference to the course title within relevant unit specifications may be amended without further approval.
- 4.17 If ASQC determines that the change proposed indicates a major alteration in the nature of the course, then the committee will require the proposal to be considered through the full Course Consideration Process.

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 Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) 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 Registry, in consultation with the Course 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 Registry 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 ASQC, 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. Minor modifications that can be approved by Course Steering Committees

- 6.1 Some changes to Unit Specifications, which do not alter the substantial character or content of the unit, and which are indicated by means of an asterisk in the unit specification template, may be considered and approved by the relevant Course Steering Committee.
- 6.2 The Course Leader should submit the proposed amendment for consideration by Course Steering Committee using the Course Modification form.
- 6.3 Following CSC approval the relevant Course Leader is responsible for

- o providing the relevant documentation to the Secretary of ASQC, for submission to ASQC for note.
- o ensuring that Course and Unit Specifications are updated in the light of approved changes, and providing the final version of the amended document(s) to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) for storage in Registry.
- o publishing the amended unit specifications on the VLE for students.
- 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.

6.4 The Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) is responsible for publishing approved versions of amended course specifications on the University College website, the SIP (for staff) and the VLE (for students), and for saving unit specifications to the SIP.

7. Corrective changes

7.1 It may be necessary to make corrective changes to Course and/or Unit specifications – for example to

- correct typographical errors
- make a factual change (such as changing unit leader name, or adding reference to an additional course within which a unit will now be offered)
- update links.

Such changes can be made without committee approval but the course leader must record the changes made in the modification record on the relevant template. Where a unit is delivered for more than one course the responsibility for making such changes rests with the Course Leader for the course for which the unit was initially approved.

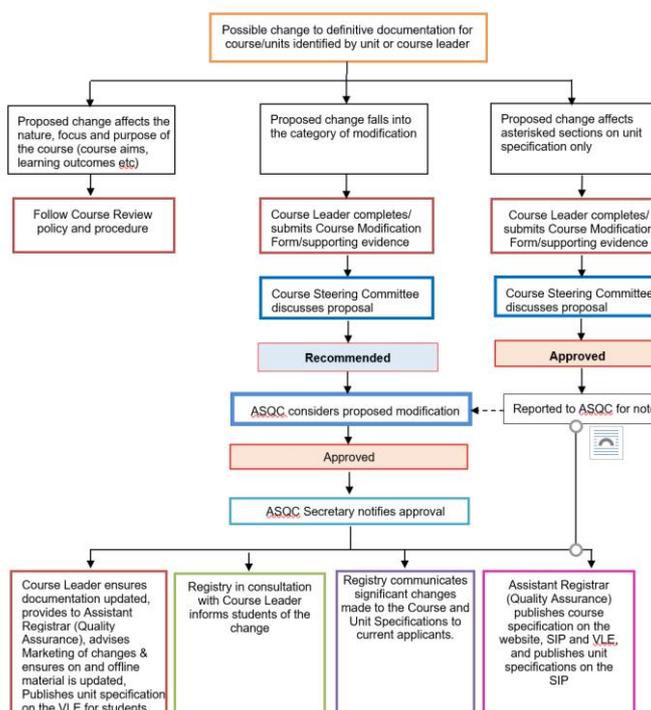
7.2 The Course Leader must provide a copy of the amended document to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and ensure the updated version is made available to students and to the Course Leaders for all courses of which an amended unit forms a part.

8. Version numbers

8.1 Please refer to the document ‘Guidance on version numbering for Course and Unit Specifications’.

9. Modifications flow-chart

9.1 A flow-chart summary of the process is below.



Version:	2.0
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	UK Quality Code. UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance: Course Design and Development; External Expertise, Student Engagement 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	30 June 2021
Effective from	September 2021
Review date	Spring 2024
Target	Course Leaders, Unit leaders, Registry, members of Academic Standards and Quality Committee
Policy location	SIP, Latest Policies webpage
Equality Analysis	No direct impact, the process provides opportunity to highlight any issues specifically related to students with protected characteristics