Quality Assurance Code of Practice

Amendments to Existing Units and Programmes of Study and the Approval of New Units

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1. Scope

1.1 These procedures relate to
- all amendments to units or programmes of study, that lead to an award of the University;
- proposals for new, credit-bearing, units, whether offered on a standalone basis or as additions to, or substitutions for, units in existing programmes;
- the withdrawal of units, pathways and programmes.

Units proposed as part of new programmes will be considered under the provisions of QA3 Approval of New Programmes.

1.2 This QA statement may need to be read in conjunction with:
- University Ordinances and Regulations including the supplement, New Framework for Assessment; Assessment Regulations (NFAAR);
- QA20 Collaborative Provision.

It also draws upon:
- QA3 Approval of New Programmes;
- QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback.
2. Principles

2.1 The University is committed to the ongoing development and improvement of its programmes, taking account of developments in the discipline and pedagogic practice, and being responsive to feedback and monitoring.

2.2 The University needs to ensure that any amendments made to units and programmes and the content of new units are academically and strategically appropriate and sound, and can be resourced. To ensure this, all amendments to units and programmes or the introduction of new units must be approved by a formal process.

2.3 Any discretion to delegate authority to approve amendments to programmes of study and units (see 3.2) will only be exercised in the favour of appropriately formal and minuted fora, and where there are appropriate safeguards in place to protect the interests of all the students (i.e. including those outside the providing department) who may be affected by proposed amendments. Authority to approve new units however, will not be delegated to subject fora.

2.4 The form and content of units and programmes and their assessment should be widely known within the institution. Where changes are made or new units are made available, notice needs to be given in a timely manner to staff and students.

2.5 Where a decision is taken to withdraw a programme or pathway, appropriate measures will be taken to notify and protect the interests of students registered for, or accepted for admission to, the programme.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Proposers of new units, amendments to units and programmes (Unit convenors or Directors of Studies) are responsible for ensuring that:

- proposals are drawn up with due reference to:
  - the University's academic framework (see QA3 Annex A and Annex B) including relevant assessment regulations, for example, where appropriate the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR);
  - the requirements of this Code of Practice;
  - implementation of University policies, such as the Statement of Equality Objectives, entitlements of disabled students, Health and Safety guidelines;
  - nationally recognised guidelines, such as the Quality Assurance Agency's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ);
  - relevant Subject Benchmark Statements;
  - requirements of professional or statutory bodies, with advice where relevant from employers.

- paperwork for each stage of the approval process is complete, is brought forward in a timely fashion, and has received the appropriate support from relevant Heads of Departments (or equivalent in the School) and staff.

Directors of Studies are responsible for ensuring that programmes and units remain inclusive of the diverse student body including disabled students.

3.2 Amendments The following committees are responsible for consideration of proposed amendments to programmes of study and units:

- Boards of Studies are responsible for the final approval of minor and intermediate changes but may delegate this responsibility to the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee or in appropriate cases, in relation to amendments to units, to nominated subject fora, as recommended by the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee;
Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees are responsible for:
- the detailed consideration of proposed amendments to units, programmes and schemes of assessment (except where this responsibility has been delegated by the Board of Studies to subject fora);
- final approval of minor and intermediate changes where that responsibility has been delegated by the Board of Studies;
- recommending to the Board of Studies delegation of approval of certain minor and intermediate unit changes to nominated subject fora, and monitoring the operation of any such delegation.

Nominated subject fora are responsible for approving defined minor and intermediate unit changes where this responsibility has been delegated by the Board of Studies. Normally these fora within faculties will consist of the relevant departmental-level Learning Teaching and Quality Committee. They are also responsible for reviewing any new or revised Subject Benchmark Statements and determining any necessary actions in response;

Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee (PAPAC) is responsible for the approval of major changes, with the exception of the withdrawal of programmes, and consideration of requests for exemptions from elements of the University's academic framework (see QA3 Annex A, section 2);

Academic Programmes Committee (APC) is responsible for
- approval of the withdrawal of programmes
- initial strategic approval of changes to programme titles and material changes to programme aims and/or learning outcomes prior to consideration by PAPAC;

University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is responsible for oversight of the approval mechanisms.

3.3 New units The Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee will undertake the detailed consideration of proposed new units, and will also determine approval where authority has been delegated by the Board of Studies. Such proposals will normally be recommended by a subject forum.

3.4 The following are responsible for providing professional advice as part of the process of considering a proposal for amendments or for new units:
- Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School are the primary source of professional advice on preparing proposal documentation, identifying the level of change involved, and navigating the approval process;
- Academic Registry staff, on conformity with the University's academic, and other nationally recognised, frameworks;
- Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office, on good practice in learning and teaching and quality assurance frameworks; and signposting further guidance and advice for Assistant Registrars in the Faculties/School (or equivalents) on more complex issues.

4. Types of Amendment

4.1 The procedure and corresponding timetable vary according to the degree of change to the unit or programme. The key factor in determining the level of change is consideration of the scale of the impact of the proposed change. A distinction is made between proposed amendments where the potential impact is contained within a unit, those with implications for the structure and balance of a programme, those where there is a larger impact upon the educational aims, learning outcomes and content of an entire programme, and/or those with wider practical or operational implications for other academic and service Departments. There are three types of change, minor, intermediate and major, examples of which are given as an illustration below.
4.2 Minor change (note: only units can have minor changes)

- change of unit title;
- changes in the breakdown of, or overall, taught contact time;
- minor variations in content;
- changes of assessment pattern and/or weightings;
- frequency and pattern of examinations, provided that they are within the pattern of examination periods approved by Senate;
- changes to requisites.

4.3 Intermediate changes - implications for the structure and balance of a programme

- changing the designation of a unit e.g. compulsory/optional/elective, or in the NFAAR context, essential, as a designated essential unit (DEU);
- an additional compulsory unit and/or, in the NFAAR context, an additional designated essential unit (DEU);
- additional optional/elective units;
- changing the unit’s occurrence from one year or semester to another;
- withdrawal of a unit;

Intermediate changes - Changes where the impact is contained within a unit

- material revisions to unit content;
- change to an examination date to one outside the approved examination period;
- changes in pattern of examinations to one outside the model approved by Senate.

4.4 Major changes

- changes to the title of a programme of study;
- changes which require an exemption from elements of the University’s Academic Framework (see QA3 Annex A, section 2).
- changes which result in material change to the programme aims or programme learning outcomes. NOTE: this could be brought about by changes to individual or a groups of units e.g. introducing new, existing unit(s), changing a significant unit, for example a dissertation or major group project unit;
- exemptions from the generic exit awards (Certificate of Higher Education and Diploma of Higher Education) available on undergraduate programmes (including an exemption from the stipulation that credit achieved through a placement or study year abroad will not contribute to these awards).
Further guidance on the classification of amendments may be obtained from the relevant Assistant Registrar in the Faculties/School or the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Office.

4.5 Units and programmes naturally develop over time. A series of incremental amendments and any associated introduction of new units will be monitored as a matter of course as part of the [annual monitoring process](#) to ensure that the focus of the programme (particularly the aims and learning outcomes) has not altered overall. It is also open to the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, as part of its consideration of a proposed change, to request additional reassurance from the Director of Studies that the focus of the programme remains the same.

4.6 Where substantial programme change is planned, for example in order to maintain currency, in response to stakeholder demands, or to better shape Faculty, School and Departmental portfolios, consideration should be given to making effective use of the University’s formal context for developmental periodic review: [Degree Scheme Review](#). Consideration should be given to the date of the scheduled DSR for the programme and there may be a case for bringing this forward, in discussion with the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Office, so that proposals for major change may be discussed within this forum.

5. **Timetable for Amendments and for the Introduction of New Units**

5.1 The purpose of establishing deadlines is primarily to ensure that timely and clear information can be made available to students to inform their academic choices. The [academic administration calendar](#) sets out the timescales for the University to reach major administrative deadlines, and is provided to help all departments, both academic and professional, to plan work accordingly. It is therefore desirable that the majority of amendments to units and programmes including the availability of new units should be completed by the end of the preceding January in order to fit in with the other activities such as students making unit choices and the production of the University timetable. Where units or programmes have been approved for delivery outside the semester pattern, advice on timescales for proposed changes should be sought from the Academic Registry.

5.2 Amendments requiring Minor Changes may be undertaken at any point provided that adequate prior consultation is undertaken, where appropriate, with all students affected.

### Good Practice

Particular care should be taken to consult students via the SSLC:
- where a proposed unit change or the availability of a new unit would occur within the existing programme year, or
- where students have already made unit choices in advance in the preceding academic year.

5.3 Deadlines for amendments requiring Intermediate Changes and Introduction of New Units:
- Undergraduate programmes (mainstream): all programme-related changes and new units by 31 January in the preceding academic year; all non-programme related changes by 1 May in the preceding academic year;
- Postgraduate taught programmes (mainstream): 1 May in the preceding academic year; Taught programmes (collaborative provision) – no later than the beginning of the semester preceding that in which the changes or new units are to be implemented;
• Programmes/Units for distance learning delivery: with minimum of one month’s clear notice to students and Academic Registry.

5.4 Amendments requiring Major Changes, must be submitted to the Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee for approval as follows:
• Undergraduate programmes: January meeting preceding the academic year in which the changes are to be implemented;
• Postgraduate taught programmes: May meeting preceding the academic year in which the changes are to be implemented;
• Distance learning programmes: with minimum of one month’s clear notice to students and Academic Registry.
• In the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g. staff illness), Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees and subject fora retain the discretion to consider approval of amendments consisting of minor or intermediate changes to units and programmes at any point in time. In instances during the first year of a new programme where amendments may be required prior to the next intake of students it will be at the discretion of the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee to decide which deadline is appropriate.

Summary table of deadlines:

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<tr>
<th>5.2 Minor change</th>
<th>5.3 Intermediate change</th>
<th>5.4 Major change</th>
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<td>Programmes</td>
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<td>Collaborative: 1 semester before implementation</td>
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<td>Units</td>
<td>May be undertaken at any point provided that adequate prior consultation is undertaken, where appropriate, with all students affected.</td>
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<td>NEW UNIT: 31 January</td>
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31 January and 1 May refer to dates in the preceding academic year

5.5 Similarly, in the event of unforeseen circumstances (e.g. staff illness), Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (but not subject fora) retain the discretion to consider approval of new units. In instances during the first year of a new programme where a new unit may be required prior to the next intake of students, it will be at the
discretion of the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee to decide which
deadline is appropriate.

6. **Procedures for Approval**

6.1 A set of useful references and links to assist proposers of new units and amendments to
units and programmes in developing proposals with due regard to University requirements
and frameworks (including the New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations
(NFAAR), is provided in Annexes A and B of [QA3 Approval of New Programmes of Study](#).

6.2 In developing the proposal and prior to seeking approval, the proposer should, as
appropriate:
- in cases where the proposed amendment or new unit entails a change in requirements
  for teaching space on campus, consult with the Timetabling Office with respect to
  availability of teaching space and other timetabling constraints;
- identify any other additional or differentiated resourcing requirements that the proposed
  amendment or new unit would entail, and obtain the necessary assurances that these
  can be met e.g. from the Library or Computing Services;
- seek consideration of changes affecting existing students by the Staff Student Liaison
  Committee; (see also good practice box below);
- review the assessment methodologies for the programme as whole (see [QA16 Assessment
  Marking and Feedback para 5 and 6](#));
- invite the External Examiner(s) to comment on changes to the curriculum, new units and
  anything affecting the nature and pattern of assessment;
- in the case of collaborative provision, seek the views of the Link Academic Adviser;
- seek support from the Head of the home Department/School;
- determine the extent to which the proposed change has an impact on cohorts or
  programmes in other Departments/the School and consult/obtain the views of, all
  relevant Directors of Studies;
- identify the impact upon collaborative provision with partner institutions, undertake
  appropriate consultation with partners and, in those instances where an amendment to
  an existing institutional agreement is required, seek advice from the Legal Advisers (see
  [QA20](#));
- in cases of a series of incremental minor changes or the introduction of new units, solicit
  the view of the Director of Studies regarding the impact of the proposed change upon
  the academic focus of the programme.

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Good Practice

Feedback from current students via the SSLC or informally from alumni is of value on
most changes irrespective of whether the students are themselves affected directly.

6.3 The Assistant Registrar in the Faculties/School will be able to advise on the development of
a proposal for change and identifying the appropriate level of approval and any exemptions
that may be required from the University's Academic Framework or the provisions of the

6.4 For approval by committees of a proposed amendment or the introduction of a new unit, the
following documentation will be required, as appropriate,
New or revised [Unit Description](#) (Form UD – 1) accompanied by the relevant covering report
sheet:
- [QA4 Form 1](#): Changes to Existing Programmes
**QA4 Form 2**: Withdrawal of a Programme Approval  
**QA4 Form 3**: New Units Approval

which collects the essential information indicated in the points below:

- rationale for the proposal;
- a note on the resourcing impact of the proposal, and where additional or differentiated resourcing will be required, confirmation that the resourcing requirement(s) can be met;
- updated Programme Specification and Description (Form **QA3.2**) - for intermediate or major changes to programmes or the introduction of new units to existing programmes;
- feedback on the consultations undertaken including:
  - a summary of the views expressed by students affected by the proposal (see also good practice box above);
  - for changes to curriculum including new units and changes affecting assessment (unless of a negligible nature) the views of the external examiner(s).

### 6.5

The Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (or where relevant, the nominated subject fora) is responsible for detailed consideration of proposed amendments at a level of detail commensurate with the proposed level of change. The relevant committee will assure itself:

- that the case made for the proposed amendment is coherent;
- that the proposed amendment can be appropriately resourced where differentiated or additional resourcing will be required;
- that the educational aims and intended learning outcomes remain appropriate; that the academic rationale for the content, structure, methods of delivery and assessment remain coherent; and that the methods of assessment demonstrate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the programme;
- that relevant consultation has been undertaken and support has been received (as outlined in Section 6.2);
- that the proposed amendment is in line with internal academic frameworks and has taken account of external reference points (as outlined in Annexes A and B to **QA3**).

### 6.6

The Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality is responsible for detailed consideration of proposed new units and will assure itself that:

- the assessment criteria test the learning outcomes;
- where postgraduate and undergraduate students are taught together and the postgraduate students are expected to achieve different learning outcomes:
  - two separate unit descriptions will be produced each requiring a different assessment;
  - it is clear that it is not sufficient to state that postgraduate students need to achieve higher scores than undergraduates in common assessment tasks.
- where it is legitimate for postgraduate students to take some undergraduate units as part of their programmes of study, the postgraduate students will be expected to achieve the same 40% pass mark as the undergraduate students in order to demonstrate successful achievement of the learning outcomes.

### 6.7

The Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee will:

- approve amendments involving minor/intermediate changes and proposals for new units and the withdrawal of existing units where that responsibility has been delegated to the Committee by the Board of Studies;
- recommend all amendments involving major changes for approval by Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee, including where such changes affect collaborative arrangements and agreements;
- where the major change involves a change of programme title and/or material change to programme aims and/or learning outcomes, submit the proposal to Academic Programmes Committee for strategic approval prior to its consideration by Programmes and Partnerships Approval Committee (see 6.9).
6.8 Subject fora will approve amendments involving minor/intermediate changes to units where that responsibility has been delegated by the Board of Studies. Subject fora will however, not be delegated powers to approve new units alongside (possibly associated) amendments to existing programmes and units.

6.9 Changes to programme titles and/or material changes to programme aims and/or learning outcomes may have strategic implications for the University and, in particular, may impact on the recruitment of students. Where a major change involves a change in programme title, and/or material changes to programme aims and/or learning outcomes a rationale for the change(s) (set out on QA4 form 1) should normally be submitted to Academic Programmes Committee prior to its consideration by Programme and Partnerships Approval Committee. Academic Programmes Committee will consider the strategic impact of the change(s) and advise Programmes and Partnerships Approval Panel accordingly.

7. Withdrawal of programmes (including pathways)

7.1 Programme withdrawal comprises two elements: strategic approval and final approval. These two elements can occur simultaneously. QA4 form 2 should be completed, as appropriate, and submitted to Academic Programmes Committee. For withdrawal of programmes which are delivered collaboratively with a partner institution see also QA20.

7.2 Strategic approval The initiator of a proposal to withdraw a programme is responsible for submitting to Academic Programmes Committee:
- a rationale; and
- the numbers of current students, the date when the last of them is expected to complete, and the number of students accepted for admission.

Where the initiator is not the relevant Head of Department (or the Dean in the case of the School of Management), then they should be consulted, and any feedback presented with the rationale.

7.3 Final approval The Dean of the relevant Faculty/School (or their delegate) is responsible for providing information to Academic Programmes Committee on the proposed arrangements to protect current students remaining on the programme during the phasing out period, and any students accepted for admission onto the programme. The note should include feedback from students and external examiners and, where relevant, collaborative partners and link tutors, regarding the proposed arrangements for the protection of student interests.

7.4 Academic Programmes Committee will:
- grant initial strategic approval where an appropriate rationale has been provided;
- grant final approval where it is satisfied that the interests of current students, and students accepted for admission, are being/have been appropriately protected.

8. Reporting of decisions

- The decisions of the Programme and Partnerships Approval Committee and the Academic Programmes Committee will be reported to Senate via the minutes;
- The decisions of the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees will be reported to the Board of Studies via the minutes;
- The decisions of subject fora will be reported to the Faculty/School Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees via a formal set of minutes together with the relevant unit descriptions and associated documentation required by the Faculty-level committee.

9. Following Approval
9.1 Following completion of the approval process, the Secretary to the relevant Committee will complete and forward the amended programme and/or unit specifications and/or descriptions, to the designated person in the Faculty/School within 5 working days of the approval being given, and the designated person shall forward that documentation to the Student Records & Examinations Office (SREO) within 10 working days of the approval being given. The SREO will make the necessary changes to the University database and update the University web catalogue.

9.2 Where an amendment or introduction of a new unit entails a change in requirements for University teaching space, Departments/the School are responsible for notifying the Timetabling Office.

9.3 Directors of Studies are responsible overall for ensuring that students are provided with up to date information about their current programme, and to inform their choice of options. In particular, Directors of Studies are responsible for notifying students of any intermediate or major changes and any new units and for ensuring that the programme handbook is amended appropriately.

9.4 Directors of Studies are responsible for notifying the Student Recruitment & Access Office of intermediate and major changes or the availability of new units where these impact upon recruitment and marketing information for programmes or the offer of CPD units.

10 Subject benchmark statements

10.1 When new or revised subject benchmarks are published, LTEO will disseminate these to relevant Academic Departments via the Assistant Registrar in the relevant Faculty/School. Academic Departments will review any relevant provision against the new/revised benchmark, and report the findings to the relevant Faculty/School LTQC, including an action plan where appropriate.

11 Monitoring and Review

11.1 The impact of amendments to units and programmes and the introduction of new units will be monitored through External Examiners’ reports, Annual Monitoring processes and Degree Scheme Reviews, drawing upon feedback, such as student unit and programme evaluation and proceedings of Staff/Student Liaison Committees.
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### Antecedents:

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<td>University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee</td>
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<td>13 July 2011, 10 July 2012, 9 July 2013, 5 Nov 2013, 8 July 2014, 11 Nov 2014</td>
<td>Minute 120, 279, 428, 462, 552</td>
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<td>Senate New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR) and Review of Committee processes Report of the Working Party on Faculty Structure</td>
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<td>11/06/2008, 09/04/2008</td>
<td>Minute 12782, 12740</td>
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<td>Review of the Effectiveness of Senate, 2006.</td>
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<td>Senate paper 453, Senate paper S01/02 – 4</td>
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### Related Documentation:

- New Framework for Assessment: Assessment Regulations (NFAAR) (see http://www.bath.ac.uk/registry/nfa/index.htm)
- QA3 Approval of New Programmes of Study, and the related Guidance on Preparing a Programme Specification
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Part B1: Programme development design and approval
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Part C: Information about higher education provision
- The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statements

### Author:

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