



Changes to Provision

PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE NOTES

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1. Introduction And Purpose

These guidance notes and procedures have been prepared to ensure consistency with the Office for Students Conditions of Registration, UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Consumer Protection Law and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The aim is to ensure that the University of Buckingham sets and maintains approval systems that are high-quality leading to valued qualifications, with explicit positive learning outcomes for our students.

The Quality Assurance Office can provide further guidance on the application of this procedure and guidance document as required. Any minor amendment or deviation from the agreed changes procedure would require agreement from the Registrar with any major changes to the procedure requiring re-approval from the University, Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC) acting with the designated power of Senate.

2. Scope

The Changes to Provision procedure is applicable to all university faculties and schools including all the provisions which are managed under the University Collaborations Department. The change procedure is also applicable to Programmes which fall under the remit of the University Apprenticeships team.

3. Changes to existing provision – Major

Definition of a MAJOR change to provision is as follows:

- Changes to the final award/title*
- Change of FHEQ level*
- Duration of the Programme*
- Change to module credits* (reducing or increasing the given credit amount)
- Assessment* – Any change to the assessment type or weighting, whether requested internally or by a regulator/ PSRB.
- Changes to Accreditation* (if relevant)
- Changes to the contact hours of the module.
- The removal or replacement of any modules offered within the programme
- Entry requirements*
- Programme and/or Module Aims & Outcomes - where the requested change affects the level or intent of the Programme and/or module.
- Development of interim level award(s) (or exit award) from pre-existing provision. For example, the current Programme is a Diploma level and new Programme requested is a Certificate level. *
- New or replacement modules up to a max 25% of Programme credit value*.
 - Where more than 25% of a Programme's credit value is changing, this will follow the Validation Panel procedure.
- Removal of an entry point from a Programme (Either closure or suspension) that does not impact the university offering the Programme.
- Creation of a new entry point for an existing Programme.
- Information on the awarding body/teaching institution*

*Denotes pre-contract information according to the Competition and Markets Authority ([CMA](#)).

When a major change to provision requires the creation of a new entry point the course structure for that entry point needs to be validated before the course creation request.

Requirements for a MAJOR change to provision that affects CMA pre-contract information is as follows:

- Requires external examiner consultation.
- Requires current students and prospective students (those who have accepted an offer of a place) to be formally notified and consulted. Where the change affects pre-contract information, the express agreement of prospective students must be obtained.
- Applicants who have not yet accepted an offer must be notified of any material changes prior to acceptance.

Submission of a MAJOR change to provision:

- Submission of a major change request needs to be submitted by the programme director for the programme, or a member of the senior leadership team within the faculty. Module change requests should be submitted in conjunction with the module leader.

These change requests should all be submitted via the major change request form on the Quality assurance SharePoint site

Approval of a MAJOR change to provision is as follows:

- Final approval of a major change is done by the Faculty Dean.

Student Consultation:

In order for major changes that affect CMA pre-contract information to take effect, they must:

- Have formal student approval from 100% of students who have applied for the Programme, and from those who have enrolled on the Programme (in the case of abstention or non-response, this will be taken as a “yes”).
- If affected, any student currently enrolled on the Programme at any stage including students on suspension of studies, must be formally notified of the proposed change, and given the opportunity to approve or not.
- If the student approval threshold is not achieved, the change cannot proceed for the existing cohort.

Major changes which do not affect the CMA pre contract information when students are consulted the majority need to consent to the change. Students should be provided with a minimum of 1 week's consultation. Should they not respond tacit approval will be assumed.

IMPORTANT! Major Changes may change the ‘contract’ between the University and the student as governed by the CMA. Please seek advice from your Faculty Quality Manager or the Central Quality Team.

Implementation timeline for MAJOR changes to existing provision

If a change to provision requires the creation of a new entry point, this will need to be implemented at least 3 months prior to the new entry point opening.

All other change requests for major provisions need to be approved prior to week 5 of the previous term to align with reporting at the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee. Changes which fall outside this delivery schedule will be approved for implementation at the next delivery point of the module.

4. Changes To Existing Provision - Minor

Definition of a MINOR change to provision is as follows:

- Removal of an advertised interim award from a pre-existing Programme.
- Editorial corrections or updates to Programme materials (reading list etc.)
- Change of the submission deadline for a formative assignment
- Changes of the delivery week of topics within a module

ALL other changes that are not a major change. In instances in which the change type is unclear, the Faculty Quality Manager (or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners) should be consulted in the first instance.

Requirements for a MINOR change to provision is as follows:

Requires current students (students taking the module in the year of the requested change) to be formally notified of the change(s).

Submission of a MINOR change to provision:

- Minor change requests should be submitted by the module leader for the module or senior in their absence

These change requests should all be submitted via the minor change request form on the Quality assurance SharePoint site.

Approval of a MINOR change to provision is as follows:

- *Module* level change approvals should be made by the Programme Director (or senior in absence).
- *Programme* level change approvals should be made by the Dean of School (or senior in absence).

Implementation timeline for MINOR changes to existing provision

Minor change requests for provisions need to be approved prior to week 5 of the previous term to align with reporting at the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee.

5. Changes to streams of a Combination Degree

In instances where the change to a parent provision impacts the minor pathway of a major minor course for example a change to the BSc Accounting parent course results in a change in the BSc Computing with Accounting provision, it is the responsibility of the Programme director for the parent provision to work with the Programme director of the major to ensure that all impacted students have been communicated to, and the changes procedure has been followed in full. These communications should be done in conjunction with communicating with the single honours parent course students. The External reviewer for the minor stream programme should be consulted as part of the change to the parent course, and the external examiner for the major needs to be notified.

The Faculty Quality Manager (FQM) for the changing programme will also ensure that the FQM for the other provision has all the necessary information to make the requisite changes.

6. Adapted Programmes

In specific instances, it may be necessary to implement a change to a programme for one student, or a small number of students on a temporary basis. In this instance the adapted programme procedure should be followed. This is available on the University website under section 3 of the quality handbook, please use the following link: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/handbooks/quality-handbook/>

7. Programme Suspension

The suspension of a programme or entry point may appear preferable to a complete programme closure, in this instance the closure and suspension procedure should be followed. This is available on the University website under section 3 of the quality handbook, please use the following link: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/handbooks/quality-handbook/>

The University of Buckingham operates two entry points for one cohort on many of their programmes. This means that the September intake and the intake of the following January are amalgamated into one Cohort.

No programme may remain suspended for a period of more than TWO calendar years. Where a programme has been more than two years suspended, the programme must be re-submitted for full validation including business and financial cases as per the current New Programme Procedure.

8. Programme Closure

In some cases, the University may determine that it is necessary to cease to offer a provision. In this instance the closure and suspension procedure should be followed. This is available on the University website under section 3 of the quality handbook, please use the following link: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/handbooks/quality-handbook/>

9. Changes to research Programmes

In some cases, research provision involves the creation or implementation of a taught module as part of the credit value of the course, this should be managed in line with the change procedure for taught provision. This should also be validated in the same manner through correspondence.

10. Communication Of Changes

A summary of all changes will be submitted to the University Assessment Learning and Teaching Committee. This will then be communicated to all staff and students via SharePoint on the Summary curriculum report.

11. Guidance Notes

Terminology

The University of Buckingham's educational provision is organised into Programmes and Modules. However, in some instances across the university the term courses is also applied.

A Programme is the prescribed combination of Modules (or other prescribed pattern of study) which, taken together, lead to a degree or other award of the University. Undergraduate Programmes are available through single, joint or combined honours or in combined major, minor routes. Each requires its own Programme Specification and should be treated as a separate Programme.

A Module is the prescribed combination of study supported by lectures and tutorials, laboratory classes or other tuition, which normally constitutes the smallest element of separate assessment. Modules carry a weighting based on the principle of one unit for each ten hours of notional learning time (i.e. the average time it takes a learner to acquire the specified learning outcomes).

Programme and Module Template Specifications

All Programmes and modules should be designed following the University's standard specification templates. Only the specifications held in the master repository (e: Vision) should be used and referenced.

Changes should be submitted using tracked change versions of these documents.

Internal Reference Points

The following key documents should be referenced when making changes to any aspects of a Programme or module including assessment design, student engagement hours etc.

- University of Buckingham Learning and Teaching Strategy and Framework
- University of Buckingham Assessment Strategy and Framework
- University of Buckingham Academic Framework

Collaborations & Partnerships

For Programmes delivered at partner institutions or educational partnerships and are affected by a change, it is the responsibility of the Programme Director to ensure that relevant consultation and communication of any proposed changes are sent, and records kept of decisions and agreements made.

Wellbeing, Skills and Diversity

The University Wellbeing, Skills, and Diversity (WSD) Team, together with the University Inclusion Committee are helpful resources to colleagues to support the creation of an inclusive curriculum and assessment. Any changes should be made with consideration of how provision can take account of diversity and inclusion.

External Reference Points

Office for Students (OfS)

The Office for Students is the independent regulator of higher education in England. Registration to the OfS and the ongoing compliance to its 'conditions of registration' enable the University of Buckingham to maintain its award body status.

Sector Recognised Standards - Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

The FHEQ sets out qualification descriptors that set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of individual qualifications. The fundamental premise of the FHEQ is that qualifications should be awarded based on achievement of outcomes and attainment rather than years of study. When preparing or revising a module or Programme, it is essential to ensure that all Programmes and modules are aligned to the relevant qualification descriptor.

Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS)

Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject. Subject benchmark statements do not represent a national curriculum in a subject area. Rather, they allow for flexibility and innovation in Programme design within an overall conceptual framework established by an academic subject community. They are intended to assist those involved in Programme design, delivery and review and may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a subject area.

Subject benchmark statements are available for honours degrees and master's degrees. Where there is no subject specific Subject Benchmark Statement at Masters Level, reference should be made to "Master's Degree Characteristics Statement. All Programme amendments should be done in consultation with the latest edition of the relevant subject benchmark statement.

External Expertise

The University requires academic processes to be supported by use of external expertise to ensure assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair, and transparent by taking account of external expertise.

All new Programmes and modules must therefore undergo mandatory External Review (either by correspondence or through a validation panel event) before they are approved.

For major revisions to Programmes and modules, external examiners should be consulted for their comments.

The Faculty Quality Manager holds a register of approved External Examiners (Who when appropriate can also act as external reviewers and manages the new external examiner and reviewer process. Programme Directors and Module Leaders are also encouraged to suggest suitable reviewers to the Faculty Quality Manager, but they should not approach these reviewers themselves. All candidates will be approached by the Faculty Quality Manager.

Due to external reviewer's time commitments from their own institutions, Programme and Module Leaders are encouraged to discuss External Review requirements with the Faculty Quality Manager at an early stage in the approval process.

Collaborations Coordinators will act similarly in facilitating the review process for collaborative and academic partners.

Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Bodies (PSRB's)

PSRB's often regulate at the subject area, for example, the General Medical Council (GMC) decides which bodies are entitled to award UK primary medical qualifications (PMQs), and the Joint Academic Stage Board is the regulator responsible for the validation of Qualifying Law Degrees (QLDs). If the Programme or module requires accreditation by a PSRB, then you must ensure in its design and any revisions to it, that the criteria of that body are met and the accreditation requirements of the Programme are maintained.

UK Quality Code

The UK Quality Code is a key reference point for UK higher education. It enables providers to understand what is expected of them and what to expect from each other. It has been developed by QAA on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, in consultation with the higher education sector.

It should be noted though, that the OfS no longer deem the use of the Quality Code as a requirement for ongoing compliance to their conditions of registration. The University, however, encourage continued reference of the Quality Code as a source of good practice, advice and guidance.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

ESFA is a government agency accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. This agency is responsible for the funding rules required for Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeship Programmes. Any changes to provision that has any element of apprenticeship standards included, should be verified by the Apprenticeship Manager and Apprenticeships Quality Manager.

Timing

Wherever possible, changes to modules should take place within the annual monitoring cycle, following the annual review and the receipt of external examiner reports, and in good time, ideally one year before teaching begins.

Where major changes are being made to provision, Programme Directors will need to consult with the Faculty Quality Manager (or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners) as soon as possible. Students should also be notified and where applicable, consulted on, and given due notice of changes being made to modules and Programmes (see section 4 for detail).

Any major changes to modules in a Programme need to be done in conjunction with the Programme specification as a whole, to ensure that all learning outcomes are still met, and that the Programme still adheres to the latest version of the subject benchmark statement. All Major changes are to be submitted through the programme director.

Modules must not be amended or approved whilst teaching of the module in question is in process. At least one term lead time should be given for all major changes.

If necessary, and where circumstances are outside of the University's control (such as the sudden departure or illness of a key member of staff or a change in the PSRB requirements), amendments to Programmes and modules can be approved by the Faculty Dean, provided that the appropriate paperwork is completed and submitted; and those registered students are consulted and informed as soon as is practical.

University Communication and Record Keeping

For each category of change (major, minor and adapted Programmes), there is an associated online form to be completed, which will also record any supporting documentation including evidence of student and external expertise consultation and consent. In instances where communication with students is done verbally in the first instance, this will be followed up with written communication to provide evidence of the consultation / notification for audit purposes.

Consultation between Programme directors is key to ensure that the implications of any changes to Programmes delivered by multiple Schools are considered. Programme directors should run the Module Impact Report (MIR) from e: Vision and liaise with their Faculty Quality Manager (or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners).

Institutional Change Trackers are created from the online forms and used to manage the requests and provide an audit trail. All records are held in the University Professional Services SharePoint site. All Records of change to courses and student consent will be maintained for a minimum of five years to align with the Universities periodic review procedure.

A summary of each term's changes and new Programmes is sent to all university colleagues and current students via a Curriculum Bulletin in week 9 of each term. This summary is in turn used by internal departments to:

- A) ensure applicants and offer holders are formally updated – Admissions Department and
- B) University HESA Unistats* records are updated where applicable (Planning Department)

**Along with publication of Programme and Programme information to current students and staff, the University also makes returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for Unistats. The University is expected (by the Competition and Markets Authority) to ensure the information it makes available to prospective and current students and staff is accurate and trustworthy; and that any changes made to Programmes and modules are carried out fairly and transparently under the law. The University follows its Published Information Policy in this regard [10.1-Published-Information-Policy.pdf \(buckingham.ac.uk\)](#)*

Colleagues involved in making changes to provision are therefore required to ensure that record keeping of all changes is carried out as prescribed in this procedure.

Following the approval of any changes, the Programme director is responsible for informing current and prospective students of agreed changes alongside the publication of the timetable for the upcoming term.

A record of all changes within a faculty will be reported weekly to the Faculty Dean by the Faculty Quality Manager. A termly report of all changes across the University will be made to the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC) by the Curriculum & Policy Officer.

12. Student Consultation and Consent

It is particularly important when making changes to a Programme or module which affects students (enrolled, prospective and applicants holding an offer) to understand and comply with the University's responsibilities in relation to Consumer Rights Legislation. Any changes which might impact on students should be raised and consulted in a timely and sensitive manner and evidence kept where consultation and consent has taken place.

Please seek early advice from your Faculty Quality Manager (FQM), (or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners) to mitigate and minimise the impact of these changes, the risks of a challenge being made and, if a challenge is made, the risks of that challenge being successful.

The ideal method to ensure compliance to regulatory bodies and law, is to ensure changes are planned and made well in advance of delivery (ideally one year in advance).

What changes need consent (agreement) by students?

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 (section 50) refers to anything that is said or written to the consumer, by or on behalf of the trader or the service if.

- a) It is considered by the consumer when deciding to enter the contract, or
- b) It is considered by the consumer when making any decision about the service after entering the contract.

This is the test we need to apply on whether we need consent by students or applicants.

There are some changes that require consent by students if they are going to affect the current cohort, or if they will affect future students and change information they were previously provided with. Without the consent of students to such a change, if a challenge is made under the Consumer Rights Act, there is a high risk that the challenge will be successful. These include the following changes:

- **Changing the Programme award title** (this should be evidenced through written consent of each individual student of all affected cohorts at all levels of study).
- **Changes to assessment type** e.g., changing from 100% Coursework to exams/vice versa or splitting assessments into Coursework and exams where it was previously 100% exam or Coursework.
- Where there are **significant numbers of changes** (more than 25% of the total credit value of the Programme), and a revalidation of the Programme has been recommended.

It is recommended that written consent is sought from any students affected by the above changes.

If affected, any student currently enrolled on the Programme at any stage including students on suspension of studies must be formally notified of the proposed change and be given the opportunity to approve, decline or abstain. If the student approval threshold is not achieved, the award title cannot be changed.

It is recommended that changes such as those listed above are not made in the current academic year, but where this is necessary, written consent from the current cohort will be required. It will be the responsibility of the Programme director to ensure this task is carried out and that written evidence is collected from students and held with the change request on SharePoint (refer to FQM for guidance, or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners) before any approval is granted.

Where a student does not wish to agree to the changes, the Programme director will need to work with the individual to come to an acceptable arrangement; major changes cannot be approved with a majority vote.

Each student has an individual right under the Consumer Rights Act. Where a mutually acceptable arrangement cannot be agreed with the student, the university will offer the student the right to cancel the contract and obtain a refund of any advance payments made by the student. The university will also provide advice, assistance, and support to assist the student find an alternative Programme provider where necessary.

Student Communication and Participation

Student representatives should be given every opportunity to contribute to discussions regarding changes to provision.

For any major change, all registered students must be consulted no later than the date at which the timetable is published for the upcoming term.

All applicants holding offers should be informed in writing by the Faculty Admissions staff of major changes no later than Week 8 of the term preceding the term in which the variation shall take effect.

In addition to the above, any change to AWARD title that is intended to affect current students on the Programme must have student approval with a 100% consent from students enrolled on the Programme. In the case of abstention or non-response, this will be taken as a “no”.

All registered students should be informed by the respective Programme directors of all minor and major changes no later than week five of the previous term.

A copy of all student email communication and consent regarding changes to provision as noted above should be kept on record for a minimum of six years for audit and compliance purposes.

13. Summary Of Change Types

This is a non-exhaustive list of common types of change requests, and which change process should be followed. All questions should be directed to your Faculty Quality Manager (or Collaborations Coordinator for academic partners).

I want to...	Request Type
Change the module delivery for an individual student	Adapted Programme
Change the diet for an individual student or cohort	Adapted Programme
Close an entry point for the next term only	Suspension of Programme
Create a new Programme	New Programme Procedure Validation Panel
Make multiple changes to modules within a Programme	Major (Validation Panel)
Change a diet	Major
Change to module assessment or outcomes	Major
Remove a module	Major
Add a new module to an existing Programme	Major
Replace a module on an existing Programme	Major
Change an entry requirement (pre-requisites)	Minor
Change the reading list in a module	Minor
Editorial corrections (spelling/grammar) to module or programme	Minor