



Higher Level 4/5
Guidelines for Modification to a Programme
2023-24

1 Introduction

A modification is a change to a programme of study for which primary responsibility, for considering and approving the modification, rests with the HE Quality Assurance Committee and the Director of Curriculum and Quality. Modifications to programmes are categorised for procedural purposes as “minor” or “major”. These categories are described in more detail in section 2 which will help to determine which category a modification falls into.

All modifications should be considered and authorised to proceed by the Subject Head of Area (via the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the HE Quality Assurance Committee).

For **Minor Modifications**, the Director of Curriculum and Quality will normally delegate the consideration and approval to the relevant Subject Head of Area and the HE Committee.

For **Major Modifications**, the Director of Curriculum and Quality approval is required and the comments of the relevant external examiner(s) should be sought in support of the modification together with evidence of student consultation.

Minor modifications to the module as defined in section 2 are part of the usual operations and updating of the module content. However consideration should be taken of whether minor modifications affect current students or future cohorts of students and this will impact on the process of consultation, approval and implementation. As a general principle, modifications should be implemented for the next entering student cohort and therefore not impact the current students.

Major modifications as defined in section 2 should normally be planned as part of the periodic review of the programme(s) or can be as a result of institutional strategies.

2 Determining Category of Modification

It is important to reach a balance between developing and encouraging innovation in teaching, learning and assessment methods, and enabling the curriculum and content of modules to be current and relevant whilst ensuring that the critical information upon which applicants and current students make their decisions when choosing a programme of study is accurate and stable. The categorisation of Minor and Major Modifications attempts to reach the balance of enabling development whilst ensuring that students and applicants are informed and where appropriate consulted with about changes that have a direct impact on their decision making process and where necessary processes are in place to ensure that they agree with the changes that are being developed.

2.1 Minor Modifications

The following changes to programmes are examples of acceptable minor modifications. The timeliness of the changes should be within the timeframe that ensures prospective and current students are not affected or if they are affected there are clear plans to ensure that they are consulted with. Minor Modifications are approved by the HE Academic Quality Leader via the HE Committee or the HE Quality Assurance committee:

- the addition of individual option modules for a future cohort of students, where this does not affect the overall intended learning outcomes as defined in the programme specification;
- changes to the modules (e.g. to reflect a different emphasis brought to the module by a new or different member of teaching staff or to reflect developments in learning, teaching and assessment methods, or to reflect curriculum and content developments), where these do not affect the overall programme learning outcomes or the balance of assessment methods i.e. coursework/written examinations/practical examinations or the broad learning and teaching methods (i.e. scheduled learning and teaching activities, placement or guided independent study) as defined in the programme specification;
- changes to the mode of delivery of a module or modules (e.g. the replacement of lectures with seminars), where these do not affect the summary statement in the programme specification relating to the teaching and learning methods for that programme or the intended learning outcomes;
- Change of the module tutor/programme leader/department delivering the module.
- Rewording of a learning outcome as advised by the external examiner to provide greater clarity to the students.

2.2 Major Modifications

The following changes to programmes normally constitute major modifications. The timeliness of the changes must be within the timeframe that ensures prospective and current students are either not affected or are consulted and informed about changes that affect them. Major modifications need to be approved by the Director Curriculum and Quality and the HE Academic Quality Leader and may require an extraordinary meeting of the HE Quality Assurance Committees Panel to provide academic oversight for the proposed changes:

- the addition of core modules;
- the withdrawal of modules;
- Changes to module title(s);
- the systematic re-structuring of a programme or part thereof due to internal (e.g. periodic review) or external impact (e.g. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements) e.g. the re-definition of modules, changes to credit ratings and changes to levels;
- Changes to the programme title and/or award, or the addition of other award routes as part of an existing programme where these have not already been approved (e.g. new points of entry and/or exit);
- a change to the duration of the programme;
- a change in the mode of delivery of the programme (e.g. the introduction of a part-time route or a move from face-to-face tuition to distance learning);
- the addition, or substantive revision, of a work-based placement;
- the addition/withdrawal/modification of modules that results in changes to the intended learning outcomes of the overall programme (as defined in the programme specification), and/or a reduction in the range of options within the programme;
- Content changes that affect the intended learning outcomes of the overall programme;
- Changes to aims, learning outcomes or content that have resource implications;

- Changes that could be seen to disadvantage students (e.g. reduction of contact hours);

There may be a situation that arises that is beyond the control of the College which results in changes having to be made (also known as a force majeure).

2.3 Modifications to Assessment

The following guidance should be used where a proposed modification concerns student assessment. Departments are advised to contact the HE Academic Quality Leader about proposed assessment changes. The categorisation of Minor and Major modification is based on ensuring that students are able to make an informed choice.	Assessment Type	Timing of the assessment	Length of examination (time). Length of written task (words) (as appropriate)	Change in the weighting of different elements of assessment
Students Affected				
New cohort or future student (pre recruitment cycle)	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
Mid recruitment cycle	Major	Major	Major	Major
Future stage for current students	Major	Major	Major	Major
Current students – same stage	Major	Major	Major	Major