



## 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) legislation.

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 QA Office can provide further guidance on the application of this procedure and guidance document as required. Any minor deviation from the agreed procedure would require agreement from the Registrar with any major changes to the procedure requiring re-approval from Senate.

## 2. SCOPE

The Changes to Provision procedure is applicable to all university faculties and schools including the Collaborations Department.

## 3. CHANGES TO EXISTING PROVISION - MAJOR

**Definition of a MAJOR change to provision is as follows:**

- Award
- Assessment - either internally or from an external reference (SBS or PSRB)
- Programme and/or Module Aims & Outcomes - where the requested change affects the level or intent of the programme and/or module
- Development of an interim level awards from pre-existing provision
  - where a programme is a replica of an existing programme, but a new offering is required, example: 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 credit value will be changing, this will follow the Validation Panel procedure

**Requirements for a MAJOR change to provision is as follows:**

- Requires external examiner consultation
- Requires current students (students taking the module in the year of the requested change) to be formally consulted and notified with a recommendation that other affected students (students taking the module in the following year) will be notified of the change.

**Approval of a MAJOR change to provision is as follows:**

- Final approval by Faculty Dean.

**In addition to above, any change to AWARD title that is intended to affect CURRENT students on the programme must:**

- Have formal student approval from 100% of students enrolled on the programme.
  - in the case of abstention or non-response, this will be taken as a “no”.
- 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 have the opportunity to approve or not.
- If the student approval threshold is not achieved, the award title cannot be changed.



IMPORTANT! Changing programme titles or awards may change the 'contract' between the University and the student. Please seek advice from your Faculty Quality Manager.

Link for MAJOR change request form: [User Forms \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

#### 4. CHANGES TO EXISTING PROVISION - MINOR

**Definition of a MINOR change to provision is as follows:**

Removal of an interim award from a pre-existing programme.  
ALL other changes that are not a major change.

**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).

**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 Associate Dean (or senior in absence).

Link for MINOR change request form: [User Forms \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

#### 5. ADAPTED PROGRAMMES

**Definition of an ADAPTED PROGRAMME is as follows:**

Individual students permitted to take a different set or arrangement of modules than that prescribed by the calendar of entry.

**Approval of an adapted programme is as follows:**

Approval will be from the Associate Dean (or senior in absence). Where the Associate Dean is also the Programme Director, approval should be sought from the Faculty Dean.

The Faculty Registrar is responsible for tracking and reporting adapted programmes.

Link for ADAPTED PROGRAMME form: [User Forms \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

#### 6. REQUEST FOR CHANGE / ADAPTED PROGRAMME / CLOSE, SUSPEND OR RE-ACTIVATE A PROGRAMME

All change requests, including requests for adapted programmes, requests to suspend, close or re-activate a programme should be submitted using the relevant online request form found in the Quality Handbook [Quality Handbook | University of Buckingham](#).

Online forms will be recorded and managed by the Faculty Quality Manager with central quality assurance scrutiny and internal auditing by the Curriculum & Policy Officer.

A record of all changes will be reported monthly to the Faculty Deans by the Faculty Quality Manager and termly to the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC) and University Research Committee (URC) by the Curriculum & Policy Officer.



A formal record of all changes to provision (Curriculum Update) will be emailed termly (week 9) to all staff and students by the Assistant Registrar (Academic Compliance).

## 7. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

In order to ensure any changes to provision are progressed and in place for the following term, all changes must be approved and returned to the Faculty Quality Manager by week 5 of the previous term.

Where an approval is required and the approver is also the requestor of the change or the approver is not available, the approver should be delegated to the next hierarchical role e.g.: if the requestor is the Faculty Dean, the approver should be an Associate Dean from within the faculty or where the requestor is the Programme Director who is also the Associate Dean, the approver would be the Faculty Dean.

## 8. COMMUNICATION OF CHANGES

A summary communication named 'Curriculum Bulletin' containing all changes made to provision across the university will be sent to all staff and students by the Assistant Registrar (Academic Compliance) in week 9 of each term.

## 9. GUIDANCE NOTES

### Terminology

The University of Buckingham's educational provision is organised into Programmes and Modules.

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 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). Undergraduate modules normally carry a value of 15 or 30 units depending upon whether they are taught over one or two terms, respectively.

### Programme and Module Template Specifications

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

### 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



### 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 consideration of how provision can take account of diversity and inclusion.

[Wellbeing, Skills and Diversity | University of Buckingham](#)

### **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 on the basis of 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. See Section 1.2 "Sector-Recognised Standards" of the Quality Handbook for more detail.

#### 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 "Masters Degree Characteristics Statement. For full details and the latest directory of SBS click here: [Subject Benchmark Statements \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

#### 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 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 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 to ensure anonymity of responses.

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

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### Timing

Wherever possible, changes to modules should take place within the annual monitoring cycle (Winter/Spring terms) 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 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).



Modules must not be amended or approved whilst teaching of the module in question is in process.

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.

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.

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.

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 course 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.



## 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) 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 taken into account by the consumer when deciding to enter into the contract, or
- b) It is taken into account by the consumer when making any decision about the service after entering into 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) 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 the date at which the timetable is published for the upcoming term.

The Assistant Registrar (Academic Compliance) is responsible for circulating to all current students and staff the record of new programmes and changes to provision in the ‘Curriculum Bulletin’ sent in week 9 of each term.

A copy of all student 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.



## 10. 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.

I want to...	Request Type
Change a diet	MAJOR
Change a module assessment	MAJOR
Remove a module	MINOR
Change the module delivery for an individual student	ADAPTED PROGRAMME
Close an entry point for the next term only	SUSPENSION OF PROGRAMME
Change the diet for an individual student or cohort	ADAPTED PROGRAMME
Change an entry requirement	MINOR
Make multiple changes to modules within a programme	MAJOR (VALIDATION PANEL)
Create a new programme	NEW PROGRAMME PROCEDURE VALIDATION PANEL
Change the reading list in a module	MINOR
Change the module aims of a module	MINOR
Create a new module to an existing programme	MAJOR
Replace a module to an existing programme	MAJOR

## 11. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility	Role
Completion of online 'request to change' form	Programme Director
Oversight of the change management procedure	Faculty Quality Manager
Final Approval of MAJOR change request	Faculty Dean*
Final Approval of MINOR change request	Programme Director
Final Approval of ADAPTED PROGRAMME request	Associate Dean*
Evidence and record keeping for each change	Faculty Quality Manager
Student communication and consent collection and record keeping	Programme Director

*\*see section 8*



## 12. DOCUMENT CHANGE TABLE

Version	Author	Date	Changes
<b>1.0</b>	Anita Wise		FIRST RELEASE