

THE COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY (CMA) GUIDANCE AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND MODIFICATION PROCESSES

WHEN TO INFORM, CONSULT OR SEEK CONSENT

WHAT CHANGES SHOULD I CONSIDER

If you are planning to make changes to a programme or individual module(s), it is essential that you consider the impact that this may have on both current and prospective students. Such changes may include:

- change to the aims and/or learning outcomes of a programme
- significant restructuring of a programme e.g. following a curriculum review
- change or addition of a mode of attendance (e.g. from PT to FT)
- change to the assessment across the whole programme or in a number of modules contributing to the programme
- change to the programme title
- change to the nature of the award
- change to the duration of a programme
- discontinuation of a programme
- change to the accreditation status of a programme (for professionally accredited programmes)
- change to more than 40 credits of optional modules in a level / year of a programme (including withdrawal of optional modules so that module choice is reduced from what was originally published in the programme regulations)
- changes to the core modules published in the programme regulations
- changes to the content of core modules where the means of delivery and/or means of assessment is substantially different to what has been published in student handbooks etc.

Students must be either be informed or consulted of any changes that they may perceive to mean that the course that they have applied to or registered on is substantially different to what they signed up to. However, students should be aware that optional modules may change from time to time and to reflect this fact the following statement is included in all programme regulations and the prospectus:

The content of our courses is reviewed annually to make sure it is up-to-date and relevant. Individual modules are occasionally updated or withdrawn. This is in response to discoveries through our world-leading research; funding changes; professional accreditation requirements; student or employer feedback; outcomes of reviews; and variations in staff or student numbers. In the event of changes the University will consult and inform students in good time and will take reasonable steps to minimise disruption.

WHEN TO INFORM

If the changes made will only affect prospective students who have not yet been offered a place, departments should ensure that any marketing information has been updated to reflect the changes.

If any of the changes listed above have been approved after a prospective student has been offered a place (i.e. via UCAS) but before they become a registered student (i.e. at the registration event during intro week), the nature of the change should be communicated to them.

The following actions should be taken:

- Departments should inform Admissions, who will handle any communications with prospective students.
- For any programmes which have a Foundation Year version the Department needs to inform the Department for Lifelong Learning. Students on a Foundation Year have to be notified as they are equivalent to offer holders.
- Prospective students will be offered the option of applying to an alternative programme, so please be aware of the potential impact on student recruitment if making changes at this stage.
- Review and consider the Admissions Service [Terms and Conditions of acceptance of an offer](#).

Please note, if the changes made will only affect prospective students who have not yet been offered a place, departments should ensure that any marketing information has been updated to reflect the changes.

WHEN TO CONSULT

Where planned changes will affect current students (i.e. currently registered continuing students), departments should take the following actions:

- Inform the Students' Union. Contact the Education Officer with brief details of the programme, the proposed change and how the department intends to consult students.
- Consult current students. All students who are affected by the change should be consulted including Foundation Year students on linked/integrated degree pathways. Usually, departments will email the students directly explaining the changes and setting a deadline for any comments and/or objections. The outcomes of the consultation should then be followed up by the departmental learning and teaching committees as necessary. A copy of the email, and any notes / minutes from meetings where the changes have been discussed with students should be kept.
- Submit changes for approval to the Academic Programmes Office via your Academic Programmes and Quality Adviser. This should be done via the normal procedures but should include details of how students have been consulted and how they will be informed should the change be approved.
- Provide written notification to all students affected by the change. When a change has been approved, all affected students must be informed in writing and, where appropriate, suitable alternative options offered. This information must be provided to students in good time to allow them to take up alternatives where this is appropriate. Remember to include any students who are away from the University, for example on a placement, studying abroad or taking a leave of absence from their programme.

The table below provides details of who should be consulted in each case:

Changes	Communication to:
Proposed changes to Level 1	Applicants to the programme who have been offered a place (informed only) All level 0 students on linked/integrated degree pathways (informed and consulted)
Proposed changes to Level 2	All level 1 students
Proposed changes to Level 3	All level 1 and level 2 students

The University is keen to take a pragmatic approach towards this activity. It is anticipated that if students are informed about the rationale and potential benefits behind any proposed changes, then there should be relatively few objections. In the situation where the majority of students object to a proposed change at programme level, then the Department should discuss and negotiate further with the relevant students. This might mean some compromise to the changes being proposed or in the case of extreme opposition a delay in implementation until the next intake of students.

WHEN TO SEEK CONSENT

Consent should be obtained when changes are made 'in-session', i.e. a change in title that will affect students currently on the programme. The University's general principle is that any significant changes should be introduced for new cohorts of students. However, there will be occasions when changes need to be made which affect students already registered on the programme such as when a Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requests amendments to a programme with immediate effect. In this situation, departments are expected to consult with their students and gain consent for the changes. Copies of consent should be kept by departments.

Academic Programmes Office
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