

QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK 2016/17**SECTION E: CHANGES TO COURSES****Contents:**

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Introduction:

- E1:** The University makes changes to its courses from time to time in light of experience and with a view to enhancing the quality of its provision.
- E2:** Normally changes to courses take place as part of the Periodic Review Process (Section H), during which Course Leaders undertake a holistic review of their courses in terms of appropriateness and currency of curriculum, the experience of delivery and feedback from stakeholders (including students and employers).
- E3:** However, there are occasions where changes to courses are necessary outside of the quinquennial review period in order to address student feedback, annual monitoring data outcomes or national developments within the subject area. This process describes how the University manages these changes to a course within its period of validation.

Material and Non-Material Changes

- E4: Changes to courses are defined as ‘material’ or ‘non-material’. These definitions are based on the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) definition of ‘material information’ that informs the level of consultation required with enrolled students, applicants and offerees¹. Any changes that impact on ‘material information’ as defined in E5 below are defined as ‘material’ and require institutional oversight and approval. Any changes that do not impact on the ‘material information’ are defined as non-material and are considered and approved within Schools.
- E5: Material information for the purposes of CMA is defined as:
- Course title/ award type
 - Course location and length
 - Any professional accreditation
 - Entry requirements
 - Core units (and likely optional units)
 - Learning and teaching hours and overall methods of assessment
 - General level/status of staff
- E6: Material information forms part of the first section of the Programme Specifications. Therefore any changes that impact on information in the Programme Specifications require institutional approval. Any changes at unit level that do not impact on the information in the Programme Specification can be approved within Schools. Table E1 below describes the changes that fit into each category, and the route of approval.

Integrity of Validated Version of Course

- E7: Rather than checking cumulative changes of a course to protect against a significant drift from the validated version, the University defines Programme Specification as a fixed point of reference to ensure the integrity of any changes against the validated course. This will be checked through the course changes process.
- E8: The Programme Specification defines the validated version of the course. Only Periodic Review Panels and the Course Changes Group, both convened by the Academic Quality Committee, can approve changes to the Programme Specification. Both of these bodies will consider the integrity of the course and confirm that it is appropriate for continued validation, both will cross-reference to the validated or proposed unit descriptors (approving changes to the unit descriptors where required). Both of these bodies include both internal and external academic representation.
- E9: Where changes are proposed to the unit descriptors through School Boards of Studies, these must be submitted to the School Board with tracked changes alongside the current approved Programme Specification. This ensures that the School Boards of Studies use the Programme Specification as a reference point to ensure the integrity of the validated version of the course.
- E10: The School Board of Studies will not be permitted to approve any proposed changes that impact on the Programme Specification.

¹ Paragraphs 4.7 – 4.10 of the [UK higher education provider – advice on consumer protection law](#), 12 March 2015

Table E1 Type of Change and Approval routes:

Type of change	Document	Change to:	Approval Route	Form²
Material	Programme Specification	Professional accreditation	AB	D1 ³
		Final award title	AB	E1
		Course title	APC	E1
		Mode of Study	APC	E2
		Course location	APC	E3
		Unit titles for delivery ⁴	CCG	E4
		Unit credit values and level	CCG	E4
		Course aims	CCG	E4
		Course learning outcomes	CCG	E4
		Any other changes to the Programme Specification	CCG	E4
		Overall methods of assessment ⁵ in terms of course work, written examination and practical examination	CCG	E4
		Overall learning and teaching hours ⁶ in terms of scheduled, independent and placement activity	CCG	E4
		Entry criteria	AB	E6
		Course length	AB	N/A
General level of staff delivering the course	Leadership Team	N/A		
Language of Study	AB	N/A		
Non Material	Unit Descriptors	Unit duration	SBoS	E5
		Unit content	SBoS	E5
		Unit aims	SBoS	E5
		Unit learning outcomes	SBoS	E5
		The typical activities that contribute to delivery	SBoS	E5
		Any changes to the assessment requirements that do not impact on the assessment categories in Table A3 Summary KIS data	SBoS	E5
		Reading Lists ⁷	SBoS	E5

² N/A indicates that these elements are University policy and can only be changed through a policy paper to the responsible committee

³ See section D of the QAH

⁴ Where a change to a unit title is not driven by a change to unit content and is not material in terms of understanding of that unit, the change may, at the discretion of the Head of QAE, be considered under non-material course changes through the School Board.

⁵ The origin of this data is generated by the unit descriptors of the course.

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⁷ Formerly known as 'Reference Material'. Amended to align to Reading Lists Policy (LSS). See Appendix 3, Annex 5 QAH.

Documentation and Timescales

Table E2 Documentation Requirements:

Type of Change	Documents to be submitted
Material ⁸	<p>Form E4 (including documentary evidence of student consultation on the proposed changes)</p> <p>Current validated unit descriptors with proposed material changes highlighted by Track Changes</p> <p>Migration strategy⁹</p> <p>Current Programme Specification with proposed material changes highlighted by Track Changes</p>
Non-Material	<p>Form E5 (including documentary evidence of student consultation on the proposed changes)</p> <p>Current validated unit descriptors with proposed non-material changes highlighted by Track Changes</p> <p>Current validated version of Programme Specification¹⁰</p>

Timescales for Material Changes

- E11: All material changes made within this process must be completed (i.e. finally approved and enacted within the documentation) by the end of the second week in October for implementation in the following academic year. This will mean that:
- A Course Changes Group will be convened within the first week in October to consider any changes proposed through this route for implementation in the following academic year;
 - Changes requiring Academic Board or Academic Planning Committee approval must be submitted at least 12 months in advance of implementation.
- E12: Due to the requirement to send the material information to offerees, these deadlines are normally compulsory. However, if it is necessary to make a change outside of these deadlines, the rationale and the proposed changes will be considered by the University Secretary & Registrar and the Chair of AQC. Any such proposed change may also require consent of any applicants to the affected course that have accepted offers.

⁸ Non-material changes may also be submitted to the Course Changes Group for consideration alongside the material changes

⁹ If making any changes to the unit titles and/or credit values

¹⁰ This may be the version most recently approved by the Course Changes Group

Table E3 Timescales for Material Changes:

Month	Action	Responsibility
3 rd week of September	Submit Head of School endorsed Form E4 and associated documents to Campus Registry and QAE	Course Leader
First week of October	Course Changes Group convened to consider proposed changes	QAE
End of 2 nd week of October	Submit approved Material Changes to Marketing & Student Recruitment (Admissions) for onward communications with offerees	QAE

Timescales for Non-Material Changes

- E13: All non-material changes¹¹ for the following academic year must be submitted to the second School Board of Study meeting¹² of the calendar year for approval. Final course documentation reflecting these changes must be submitted to Campus Registry for onward distribution to Quality Assurance and Enhancement by the end of March for implementation the following academic year.

Table E4 Timescales for Non-Material Changes:

Month	Action	Responsibility
February/ Early March	Submit Form E5 and associated documents to School Board of Study meeting for approval	Course Leader
End of March	Submit final course documentation to Campus Registry for onward distribution to QAE	Course Leader

Impact of Changes on Students and Applicants

- E14: The Course Leader must consult with current students regarding any proposed changes to the course that will affect their experience, regardless of the approval route (i.e. minor changes for clarification or to the reading lists will not require consultation). Documentary evidence of this consultation must be submitted with Form E4 (material changes) or Form E5 (non-material changes). Where there will be an impact of changes upon returning and retrieving students, a migration strategy will be required as part of Form E4.
- E15: Student consent to such changes must be obtained where the course will be materially different to the version upon which they first enrolled. Further, where changes affect the material information provided to offerees prior to their enrolment consent may be sought from any offerees that have previously accepted their offer.

¹¹ Applicable where stand-alone non-material changes are being proposed. If the Course Leader is seeking to propose material changes and non-material changes, these may be considered earlier by the Course Changes Group

¹² Or a designated sub-group of the SBoS comprising the Head of School, the proposing Course Leader(s) and at least one other Course Leader and Faculty Quality Officer

Impact of Changes on Franchised Courses validated with Collaborative Partners

- E16: A Course Leader proposing any material and/or non-material changes to the unit descriptors of courses which are franchised to Collaborative Partners are required to liaise with the Collaborative Partner before proposals are submitted for approval¹³ to ensure that the proposed changes are feasible. Documentary evidence of this communication must be submitted along with the applicable Form E4 (material changes) and/or Form E5 (non-material changes).
- E17: Once the material and/or non-material changes have been approved, these changes will be communicated by QAE to the Collaborative Partners operating franchised courses.

¹³ This ensures that the validated unit descriptor(s) are appropriately maintained and are deliverable as franchised unit descriptor(s) by the Collaborative Partner