

Section 5: Course and module modifications

- 5.1 Following the Validation of a course there is an expectation that courses and modules will over time require modifications to respond to advances in the academic discipline, research, improved technology enhanced learning opportunities, student feedback, changes in internal policy, Professional Statutory Regulatory Body and external examiners feedback. It is anticipated such actions are identified through the continuous improvement process.
- 5.2 To ensure the approved course outcomes are maintained, avoid 'validation drift' and to ensure appropriate actions identified through the continuous improvement process, the University operates a proportionate course and module modifications process.
- 5.3 The modifications process recognises that there is a balance between the transparency of information provided to applicants and students and the need for curriculum, assessment and learning outcomes to be continuously enhanced in line with best practice and ensuring courses are kept up to date. Those proposing and approving the modifications do so based on a shared responsibility and shared goal for improving the quality of the course in the interests of staff, students and applicants. A holistic approach to the curriculum and assessment is expected through all modifications.
- 5.4 Those proposing and approving the changes have a shared responsibility to ensure that the impact on the learning outcomes, assessment rationale, assessment criteria have been articulated to national expectations, for example appropriate level learning outcomes. In proposing changes, it is expected that consideration of the potential impact at course level is considered by the course leader or equivalent e.g. course outcomes, Professional Body expectations, subject benchmarks, and Franchise (at collaborative partners) implications prior to submission.
- 5.5 Changes to award titles and proposals for additional named awards must be submitted to and be approved by the relevant University Committee; these cannot be approved by the modification process.

Types of modifications

- 5.6 Modifications are concentrated on the approved published curriculum, namely programme specifications and module proformas. In addition, the information may also be linked to the applicant and student information through the Student Records System.
- 5.7 Taking a risk-based approach there are four categories of modification, minor, major, structural and exceptional retrospective, this is to ensure proportionality in the approval process.
 - i) **Minor modifications:** will normally be expected to have no impact on the overall published programme specification for example course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements and are normally a single or very small number of changes to modules, these are usually proposed by Module Leaders.

- ii) **Major modifications:** are normally more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may be affected. This category requires additional evidence than required for a minor modification. Such modifications are normally expected to form one coherent clear proposal. Further examples are outlined in this section.
- iii) **Structural changes:** are those that impact on the overall course structures of an award, course outcomes or overall philosophy of a course. In addition, refer to the scheduled hours and pre-requisite information in this section.
- iv) **Retrospective changes:** in highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Teaching Committee Chair or nominee. It is anticipated that these will be exceptionally rare and, in all cases, will be reported to the Associate Head of College (Education and Students) and Head of School.

Proportionality

- 5.8 The modification process aims to be proportionate with different evidence and approval requirements for structural, major and minor modifications.
- 5.9 Module proformas contain critical information for students, however, also have an impact on the overall course information provided to applicants and students. Recognising this the below categories are aligned to the structural modification process, which is considered higher risk.
- i) **Scheduled hours changes:** the University scheduled hours form part of the expected published information for which applicants can reasonably be expected to use to inform their decision to come to the University of Westminster over competitor courses. This information is expected to be published by all Higher Education institutions by the Competition and Markets Authority in advance of the *applicant* cycle. It is therefore expected that scheduled hours cannot normally be changed unless through a structural modification which has an earlier deadline.
 - ii) **Pre-requisites, dis-requisites, and co-requisites:** The inclusion of modules which must be passed before another module can be undertaken can impact completion and progression decisions for students and therefore have wider impacts, including on the matrix of data. Taking a risk-based approach, such changes are deemed to be structural.

Note: The modifications table provides full details of the approval mechanism, a summary of the information and evidence required and examples.

Deadlines

- 5.10 The University will set deadlines each academic year for the consideration of proposals. The deadlines take account of the opportunities for student feedback, staff reflections, discussions with external examiners and to allow for a rigorous approval process, whilst balancing the need for other necessary requirements which help improve the student experience e.g. timetabling and the communication of accurate published information to both applicants and continuing students impacted by the changes. All deadlines apply to the full approved submission and supporting evidence.

- 5.11 There is an expectation that major and structural changes will be submitted no later than mid-November, allowing for appropriate communication to applicants, students and key stakeholders. Minor modifications are anticipated to be possible until later in the academic cycle to allow for student feedback and subject area meetings.
- 5.12 The principles outlined for modification deadlines should also apply to non-standard starting courses e.g. January start courses should where possible allow for student feedback following one semester of teaching. Extra attention should be given to transitional arrangement for part time and January starters, where possible student consultation should also include these representative groups.

Approval process

- 5.13 Modifications, including the appropriate evidence, are considered and approved on behalf of the College Teaching Committee and submitted to Quality and Standards for further comments or approval. The proposals are formally agreed by Quality and Standards where possible. In addition, a College Teaching Committee subgroup is expected to meet following the deadlines to consider any complex proposals and to provide a summary and audit opportunity for the Chair of the College Teaching Committee.
- 5.14 Approval by the College Teaching Committee Chair or Head of School or nominee is normally expected, the below exceptions apply:
- i) Where structural course changes are occurring to a course validated within the last year, the proposal should normally be considered by the relevant University Validation Panel (UVP) Chair or a member of the Course Validation Standing Panel (CVSP).
 - ii) Where 50% or more of the course structure is changing. Structural modifications are normally considered to be 'modifying' a course or group of courses. Where 50% or more of any course structure associated with the modification is proposed to change a University Panel Chair from outside the School may be required to approve the modification. In addition, this may trigger a meeting with the course team, with the understanding further documentation may be required.
- 5.15 Credit-bearing modules which are not part of a University of Westminster award but may be considered a course for the students, should be approved by the College Teaching Committee Chair. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.
- 5.16 The addition of a new Westminster Elective to the portfolio of modules should be considered by a University Panel Chair with experience in interdisciplinary teaching activity and a panel representative from another College. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.
- 5.17 The Quality and Standards Office are expected to formally communicate approval of any changes to the relevant College and Registry staff. In addition, it is important that communication with Marketing, Communication and Development (where applicable) takes place to ensure the accuracy of published information e.g., on web pages, prospectuses, course promotions. Records will be kept by the Quality and Standards Officers on behalf of the College Teaching Committee.

- 5.18 Following approval of modifications, it is the responsibility of the Course Leader or nominee to ensure students, and the external examiner are informed of the changes. Students should be informed at the earliest opportunity following approval. In the case of structural changes communication should be explicitly to applicants and those students affected.
- 5.19 Changes to modules which take account of individual students' disability needs are also expected, in such cases these are normally approved by the Disability Learning Support Unit on a case-by-case basis known as the Reasonable Adjustment. In the case of Collaborative partners this decision making will be the responsibility of the partner institution.

Annual updates requiring no modification

- 5.20 The updating of reading lists is expected on a regular basis to modules to remain up to date. Updates are expected through the university's reading list systems, more information is available through the Academic [Engagement Librarians](#).
- 5.21 The updating of Module Leaders is anticipated, module proformas deliberately do not include module leaders in the final student published version to ensure they remain accurate. Students can access module leaders through E Vision and Blackboard. Any updates should be provided to registry offices.

Schedule hours explanation: The definitions of schedule hours are influenced by external agencies such as Office for Students (OfS) and the UKVI. They may have important implications which are subject to audit; any queries should be directed to Quality and Standards in the first instance.

Note: hours that are delivered online must be clearly listed in the module proforma. Online hours for full time and part time students may have important implications. Any queries should be referred to Quality and Standards in the first instance.

Types of changes	Summary	Examples	Approval required	Other action required
<p>Scheduled hour change with no change to the total scheduled hours.</p>	<p>Changes to student learning and teaching hours table</p> <p>Module proformas should be updated through the modification process where there has been an adjustment to the hours between differing types of teaching methods as described in the indicative student learning and teaching hour's table, but where there is crucially no change to the total hours of non-independent study.</p> <p><u>Online hours</u> Note: any hours that are as standard delivered online must be included in the published module proforma. It is expected all modules include some on campus delivery unless linked to a distance learning course. A course overview of the broad level of online hours is expected. Further guidance is available via Quality and Standards. Any move to more online hours within a module may require further information at a course level.</p>	<p>An example is a move from 20 hours of lecturers to 18 hours of lectures and 2 hours of seminars, i.e., there is no change to the overall scheduled time.</p> <p>Example 20 hours delivered on lecturers on campus moving to 18 on campus and 2 online. This may require additional endorsement to ensure the course level online hours are appropriate.</p>	<p>Minimum approval required, although this should be logged as a minor modification to ensure the published module proforma is accurately published to students.</p>	<p>Minor modification</p>

Types of changes	Summary	Examples	Approval required	Other action required
Undergraduate standard hours	<p>For undergraduate courses the University has approved that a standard module will normally be a maximum of 48 scheduled hours. However, exceptions are permitted. This may also be in line with subject sector comparisons.</p> <p>For undergraduate modules that exceed 48 hours this must be approved by the Head of School (or equivalent), this is to ensure the resourcing is appropriately identified at an early stage.</p>	<p>An undergraduate module with 49 total scheduled hours or above.</p> <p>No threshold exists for postgraduate modules.</p>	Head of School approval	Not applicable however the Head of School can reasonably be expected to ensure College resources have been considered
Changing the total scheduled hours	<p>Where the total scheduled hours are changing, this has the potential to impact on the courses total published scheduled hours, which is published to applicants. Any changes in scheduled hours at module level is considered a structural modification, it will in addition require the holistic overview by the Course Leader to ascertain the course level impact.</p> <p>Where changes are taking place across multiple modules the Head of School is expected to take an overview.</p>	Module changing from 48 hours scheduled activity to 44 hours scheduled activity.	By the College Teaching Committee and endorsed by Quality and Standards by the published deadlines.	Student consultation is normally required.

COURSE AND MODULE MODIFICATIONS PROCESS

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL AND ACTION REQUIRED
<p>MINOR MODULE MODIFICATION</p> <p>Minor modifications will normally be expected to have no impact on the published programme specifications for example overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements. Examples of these types of modifications are provided.</p> <p>The potential impact of ‘minor changes’ on course outcomes is however recognised. An example might be the removal of a presentation on a core module, that may result in a course outcome aligned to ‘verbally communicating’. The course leader or equivalent is expected to ensure minor modifications are not impacting on the overall course outcomes. Where the course outcomes are changing, please refer to major modifications.</p>	<p>Changes to Module Learning outcomes, assessment methods, assessment weightings, qualifying marks or sets, assessment criteria, the way the module is delivered (teaching and Learning methods).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A brief and clear explanation describing the proposed changes, and the date from which they would be implemented. E.g., change from exam to coursework. 2) Academic rationale E.g., the academic purpose for the change from exam to coursework. 3) Updated Module Proforma <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader reflects upon the currency of the reading list. If updates are required these should be communicated to the Academic Engagement Librarians Team at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Module Leader 2) Course leader or Head of School or Nominee(s) <p>In signing the course leader or equivalent is also confirming there is no impact on the overall course outcomes.</p> <p>Where the module is core across more than one named award it is expected that consultation on behalf of each course has taken place to ensure course outcomes are not impacted.</p> <p>Approval on behalf of the College Teaching Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3) Endorsed by the Quality and Standards Office. 4) Communication to students by the course leader or nominee

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED
<p>MAJOR MODIFICATION</p> <p>Major modifications are more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may be affected. This category requires additional evidence over and above that required for a minor modification. Such modifications are normally expected to form one clear proposal.</p> <p>In addition, a change of module title is considered a major modification as the information is contained in the programme specification and course web pages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive changes to assessment, learning outcomes, across current modules. • Changes to overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy. • Module Title changes • New cohort start date e.g. January start • The addition of an already approved option module with no associated removal of another module. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A very brief explanation outlining what the changes are, normally from the course leader or equivalent and when they will be implemented. 2) Academic Rationale – this describes in more detail the academic purpose of the changes. 3) Updated Module proforma(s) 4) Updated Programme Specification if appropriate (module title changes will require an update to all applicable Programme Specifications). 5) Consultation with students where appropriate, determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment. This is normally expected to be through the course committee, student representatives or evidence from student surveys. 6) External Examiner consultation where appropriate; determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, with the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment. 7) PSRB reports or guidance where appropriate. 	<p>Approval is as per minor modifications</p>

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLE	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED
		<p>8) In the case of a new cohort start date, a statement from the course leader should explain the expected module running order including the final dissertation submission, this may impact on the normal duration of the course. Assurance is expected to be given that the same course including all options modules are available to both cohorts.</p> <p>9) Where an already approved option module is being added to a course with no associated removal of a module, no further evidence is required other than the updated programme specification. The addition must still be approved by Head of School or nominee. Course team discussions with Registry and Timetabling will be required following approval.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader(s) reflects upon the currency of the reading list. If updates are required these should be communicated to the Academic Engagement Librarians Team at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Where an accumulation of minor modifications results in significant changes across a named award in one academic year the Chair of the College Teaching Committee can ask for the above information to be provided. In determining if the changes are extensive the overall course structure number of credits involved, extent of the course outcome changes will be considered.</p>	

STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLES	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED.
<p>STRUCTURAL CHANGES</p> <p>Structural changes are those that impact on the structure of the course, although other instances apply. Structural modifications are considered to require more evidence.</p> <p>The only exception is where an additional already approved option module(s) is being proposed, such modifications can be dealt with under the major modification process as the published expectations of students are not being impacted.</p>	<p>Changes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core and option modules, including the removal of a named option module. • credit value • credit level • mode of study • The approval of new module(s) on a named award. • Changes to pre- or co requisite requirements 	<p>The required evidence is as per a major modification; however, an updated Programme Specification, student and external examiner consultation are requirements.</p> <p>All new modules must be considered by an appropriate external examiner.</p> <p>Where a mode of study is being introduced or changed this must be approved by the Head of College or nominee, a statement from the course leader will be required to confirm how students on the new mode of study will be supported.</p> <p>Pre-requisite requirements impact on module registration, progressions decision and can have an impact on completion rates, submissions are strongly encouraged to be submitted as soon as possible. Module Leaders and Course Leaders with pre-requisites should cross reference academic regulations 5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.1.5.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected the Module Leader(s) reflects upon the currency of existing reading list and creates one online for any new modules. If updates are required these should be communicated to the Academic Engagement Librarians Team at the earliest opportunity to ensure the timely availability to students.</p>	<p>Approved by the</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) College Teaching Committee (including the Chair) 2) Approved 3) Endorsed by Quality and Standards. <p>The scrutiny of the proposal(s) will normally take place by correspondence however a meeting may be required for more complex proposals.</p> <p>Communication to students and applicants must take place providing the rationale and reasons for the change.</p>
<p>Credit bearing short courses</p> <p>New credit bearing short course/modules</p>	<p>A new 20 credit module to be delivered to an external group of students or to be available to students as a “module buyer”.</p>	<p>Module Proforma(s) Comments from an external examiner or independent examiner advisor from the relevant subject discipline</p>	<p>College Teaching Committee Chair. If it is deemed appropriate and proportionate by the Chair a meeting may be required. Please note</p>

MODIFICATION TYPE	EXAMPLES	EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL	APPROVAL REQUIRED.
with no named award or associated structure.		<p>Confirmation of the academic lead for students and continuing improvement processes.</p> <p>Confirmation from the relevant Director of College Operations or nominee to confirm the administrative requirements have been addressed.</p>	some proposals may require approval by the Portfolio Planning Committee.
<p>Westminster Electives Portfolio</p> <p>The additional of one or more Westminster Plus Electives to the portfolio of modules available on courses across the University.</p>	A new module or existing module being added to the portfolio	<p>A new module will require external examiner comments. In addition, the Teaching Committee approves the inclusion of the module in the wider suite of modules available across the University annually.</p> <p>A statement as to how the module fits into the Westminster Distinctiveness and contributes to the Employability Strategy or graduate attributes will be expected as part of the modification. Such modules will not be permitted to have any pre-requisites and will normally not require any previous subject specialist knowledge.</p>	University Teaching Committee
<p>Retrospective exceptional modifications</p> <p>In highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Quality Review Committee Chair or nominee.</p>	Examples may include urgent external examiner comments identified after the start of term.	The evidence is the same dependent on the type of modification being proposed; in addition, confirmation of what has been published in the course handbook may be required.	University Teaching Committee Chair or nominee.