



## Curriculum Modification Policy

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### Amendment History

Version	Revision Summary	Date Approved	Author
058/21	Name change PDRRC to PARRC. Addition of paras 6,9,22, 24, 30-35, 58. Other minor editorial changes.	18/11/21	Gov Group
014/22	Minor grammatical change not requiring Governor reapproval. Gov Group approved.	14/2/22	Quality Manager
056/23	Clarification of wording Para 20 that Prog Committee approve editorial changes.	30/10/23	Quality Manager



## Curriculum Modification Policy

### Introduction

1. Curriculum modification is the process by which changes can be made to existing units or programmes. Modifications will usually involve changes to programme/unit specifications.
2. Modification of a programme or unit may be necessary to keep the syllabus up to date, or to correct or make adjustments based on student evaluation, academic reflection or recommendations from an external stakeholder such as the External Examiner or Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).
3. There is a formal process which must be followed if changes to units or programmes are to be made. This process assures all parties that the changes are in the best interests of the students and/or staff involved in the programme, that the programme remains a high quality experience, that it remains in line with sector expectations and that where a change may constitute a significant change to the student experience, that the appropriate measures to conform with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have been, or will be, put in place.

### Scope

4. This policy covers all programmes/units validated by Spurgeon's College, or those validated by other institutions where the validation arrangement allows the College jurisdiction over modification of the curriculum.

### Responsibilities

5. The Programme Director is responsible for using the modification process as part of a cycle of continuous improvement linked to the Annual Programme Monitoring process, including ensuring that any relevant consultation with students, professional support staff, PRSBs and partners is undertaken. The dissemination of information regarding approved changes is also the responsibility of the Programme Director, who must ensure the Senior Registrar has the definitive programme documentation (programme specifications and unit descriptors).
6. The Programme Committee is responsible for approving editorial modifications and ensuring these are recorded in the minutes.
7. The Programme Approval, Revalidation and Review Committee (PARRC) approves minor modifications and recommends major modifications to the

Academic Board. It is the responsibility of the PARRC to ensure that the proposed changes will address the issue prompting the modification and that potential risks to the students or the College have been identified and that measures will be put in place to manage any risk.

8. The Academic Board approves all major modifications and recommends when programmes should be revalidated due to substantial change.
9. The Senior Management Team (SMT) is responsible for assessing any recommended major or minor modifications for any resource and management implications.

### **Types of Modifications**

10. Modifications fall into three categories: editorial modifications, minor modifications, and major modifications.
11. The approval process for modifications to both units and programmes is dependent on the degree of change that is being proposed and the potential impact on:
  - the structure and balance of the programme in relation to its educational aims;
  - learning outcomes and content;
  - resourcing; and
  - the wider practical implications of the student learning experience.

### Editorial Modifications

12. Editorial changes are modifications that do not change the learning outcomes or nature of the unit or programme.
13. Examples of editorial modifications include:
  - clarification of existing content, including variation to the content of individual lectures, seminars or discipline specific delivery methods that occur within a unit, without diverging from the overall approved unit specification;
  - updating factual information, for example changes to a department name, or updating URLs;
  - updating of reading lists to include newer editions, removal of reference texts and resources which are out of date or no longer relevant, and additions of new texts and resources not currently included that relate to the existing aims and learning outcomes of the unit;
  - amending typos.

### Minor modification

14. Minor modifications are changes that have implications for how a unit/programme is delivered and/or assessed, which do not amount to a major change.
15. Examples of minor modifications include:

- change to a unit title;
- changes to assessment within a unit;
- changes to pre- and co-requisites;
- discontinuation/suspension of units;
- changes to learning outcomes of a unit;
- changes to the credit value or level of a unit;
- changes to the weighting of units/assessment within the overall degree/programme award;
- changing of units from core to elective and vice versa; and
- change to a programme title (where this is for marketing purposes and is not a reflection of changes to the programme content or learning outcomes).

### Major modification

16. Major modifications are those that involve significant or fundamental alternations to a programme's aims, learning outcomes, structure, or assessment.
17. Typical examples of specific modifications that are regarded as major are:
- change to the educational purpose of a programme which results in substantial change to the programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching and learning and/or assessment strategy as set out in the Programme Specification;
  - approval of new units;
  - substantive change to a number of units which would impact on the overall programme learning outcomes;
  - changes which affect more than 25% of the total programme credits;
  - changes to the title of a programme (where this reflects changes to the programme content);
  - additions of a new programme pathway (if a significant proportion of the units are different from existing pathways it may be decided to treat this as a new programme proposal);
  - changes to the way the programme is delivered, e.g., the introduction of a new delivery mode, or delivery of the programme at another campus;
  - changes to the duration of the programme; and
  - the addition or withdrawal of a large number of optional units at one time.

### Cumulative change & revalidation

18. Programmes are revalidated every six years through the College's revalidation procedure. The PARRC will monitor minor modifications to programmes within the Annual Programme Review process. This allows the PARRC to take an overview of the level of change within a programme. If cumulative changes amounting to more than 25% of the programme are approved between validation events, this will be considered a major modification.
19. If the PARRC feels that the scope of the proposed modifications to a programme are such that academic quality and standards, opportunities available to students, or the continuing validity and relevance of the

programme might be affected, then this should be regarded as a new programme and the Programme Approval Policy should apply. The revalidation procedure may also be used for this purpose if considered appropriate.

### **Process for Editorial Modifications**

20. Editorial modifications can be undertaken at any time and do not require Governance approval. Changes should however be approved and recorded by the relevant Programme Committee, and the Programme Director should ensure that amended versions of any documentation is sent to the Senior Registrar, who is responsible for keeping the Definitive Programme Documentation (programme specifications and unit descriptors).
21. It is important to ensure that any relevant academic or professional support staff are aware of these changes. There may also be circumstances where current students should be informed of editorial changes in a timely fashion, e.g., changes to the core group of academic staff for a programme to maintain academic expertise due to a staff departure, research leave or reallocation of teaching responsibilities.
22. It is also important to ensure that amended versions are put on Moodle, any shared drives, and the College website as relevant.

### **Process for Minor Modifications**

23. Minor modifications are normally initiated by the Programme Director or Unit Tutor. Changes should be specified on the Curriculum Modification Form, along with supporting evidence and new or tracked change unit and programme specifications appended to the submitted form.
24. Recommendations for minor modifications must be sent to the Senior Management Team for approval prior to any other action being taken, so that resource and management implications can be assessed. SMT approval should be recorded on Section five of the Curriculum Modification Form.
25. The Programme Director is responsible for ensuring an appropriate student consultation process is undertaken and recorded, and for consultation with any relevant professional staff or PSRBs prior to the proposed change being formally considered by the PARRC.
26. Minor modifications require approval from the PARRC, which has delegated authority from the Academic Board; the Academic Board will be notified of all minor modifications.
27. Where appropriate, minor changes may be considered and approved as part of revalidation processes.
28. The PARRC is responsible for consideration of proposed modifications and should assure itself that:

- there is a sound case for the proposed modification;
- students have been effectively consulted and, where appropriate, have given consent to the proposed modification;
- legal obligations with regard to the accurate and timely dissemination of information to students and potential students are not compromised by the modification;
- there remains a coherent and academic rationale for the content, structure, delivery and assessment of the provision;
- any proposed changes to assessment continue to enable students to meet the learning outcomes;
- the educational aims and learning outcomes remain appropriate; and
- any additional resourcing required by the modification has been agreed.

29. The Chair of the PARRC should then complete Section 5 of the Curriculum Modification Form.

### **Process for Major Modifications**

30. Major modifications are normally initiated by the Programme Director or Unit Tutor. Changes should be specified on the Curriculum Modification Form, along with supporting evidence and new or tracked change unit and programme specifications appended to the submitted form.
31. Recommendations for major modifications must be sent to the Senior Management Team for approval prior to any other action being taken, so that resource and management implications can be assessed. SMT approval should be recorded on Section 5 of the Curriculum Modification Form.
32. The Programme Director is responsible for ensuring an appropriate student consultation process is undertaken and recorded, and for consultation with any relevant professional staff or PSRBs prior to the proposed change being formally considered by the PARRC.
33. Where appropriate, major changes may be considered and approved as part of revalidation processes.
34. The PARRC should consider the proposed modifications and assure itself that:
- there is a sound case for the proposed modification;
  - students have been effectively consulted and, where appropriate, have given consent to the proposed modification;
  - legal obligations with regard to the accurate and timely dissemination of information to students and potential students are not compromised by the modification;
  - there remains a coherent and academic rationale for the content, structure, delivery and assessment of the provision;
  - any proposed changes to assessment continue to enable students to meet the learning outcomes;
  - the educational aims and learning outcomes remain appropriate; and

- any additional resourcing required by the modification has been agreed.
35. The Chair of the PARRC should then complete Section 5 of the Curriculum Modification Form, to signify that they are happy to recommend the modification for approval by the Academic Board.
  36. Where a major modification may involve a change of degree title, the Academic Board will consider the strategic and market implications of the change and the potential impact on student recruitment.
  37. If the changes involve the introduction of an entirely new unit(s), where the unit has not been previously approved as part of a programme validation, the designated External Advisor (usually the external member of the PARRC) must be consulted (using the External Advisor Report Form). The Academic Board may use its discretion to require the approval of the Validation Panel prior to the unit being given approval at Board level.
  38. Proposed major modifications which involve curriculum modifications or could lead to a programme revalidation should be accompanied by the comments of the External Examiner (and by additional external comment if deemed necessary).
  39. If the programme or unit is professionally accredited, the relevant PSRB should be fully consulted about the intended changes. Similarly, if part or all of the programme/unit is delivered by a partner institution, they too must be involved in the consultation prior to approval being given.
  40. Dependant on the nature of the change, the PARRC or Academic Board may decide that the proposed major modification may need to be considered through the full Programme Approval Process.
  41. The Chair of the Academic Board should complete Section 5 of the Curriculum Modification Form.

### **Programme Closure and Suspension**

42. Separate processes exist for programme suspension and withdrawal. Please see the Student Protection Plan.

### **Consultation and communication with current students and applicants**

#### When is consultation needed?

43. The general principle with regard to all modifications (especially major modification) is that they will apply to the next entering cohort and not for any current students.
44. The views of students must be taken into consideration for all proposed changes to units and programmes. The consultation process will normally be

done through the Staff Student Liaison Council, Moodle or tutorial groups. Consultation must be undertaken in a manner that can be evidenced e.g. by meeting minutes or through a specific written consultation.

45. The views of the students must be taken into consideration when finalising the Curriculum Modification Form for consideration by the PARRC. For non-material changes, a majority agreement will be considered acceptable for approval.
46. Any future students who are affected by the proposed changes should also be consulted, for example when making changes to a level 5 curriculum, the consultation should be with students currently studying level 4 curriculum, if the change is affecting level 6 study, then both levels 4 and 5 students should be consulted. By implication, this will only apply to changes to the curriculum of which the student was aware when choosing Spurgeon's College.
47. If a proposed change affects student candidates who are within the application process, it is expected that the College will communicate either directly with affected students or via its online application software.
48. Editorial modifications and some minor modifications do not require any student consultation, for example change to a unit title or unit learning outcomes.
49. The Programme Director is responsible for ensuring the specified student consultation process is undertaken.

#### When is consent needed?

50. The College has a legal responsibility under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (Section 50) to provide clear and accurate information to students and applicants on their programme of study, as well as inform them of any material changes. If a suggested amendment could have altered a student's decision to take up an offer on a programme, should they have known about it in advance, then the *consent* of all affected students on a programme will need to be obtained.
51. Areas which need careful consideration in terms of the changes above include:
  - entry requirements;
  - adding or removing optional or compulsory units;
  - core hours;
  - assessment methods;
  - credit value changes or level of a unit;
  - pre-requisites or co-requisites;
  - programme award name or title;
  - length of course;
  - professional accreditation;
  - additional costs; and
  - where there are a significant number of changes and re-validation of



the programme has been triggered.

52. It is recommended that written consent is sought from any students affected by the above changes. 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 and retained securely as evidence of consent.
53. If a student does not wish to agree to the changes, the Programme Director will need to work with this 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 College will offer the student the right to cancel the contract and obtain a refund of any advance payments made by the student. The College will also provide advice, assistance, and support to assist the student find an alternative programme provider where necessary.
54. In all the above cases, it is highly recommended that future cohorts affected by the change are consulted and written to. Any applicants, who may have made choices based on previous options available, must also be contacted and engaged.

### **Timings for Approval**

55. Applicants and students must be informed of approved changes to material information at the earliest opportunity. Major changes to undergraduate programmes will normally be approved by the start of the UCAS application cycle. This avoids having to inform applicants of substantial changes to programmes at the time of making an offer, or after an offer has been made.
56. Due to consumer law, major modifications to programmes and any modifications affecting programme specifications proposed outside of the annually published programme approval timelines will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. In these cases, the Admissions team will send a written communication to applicants and offer holders.

### **Following Approval**

57. The Programme Director is responsible for the timely dissemination of final versions of documentation to the relevant professional staff to ensure that the unit and/or programme information is updated and correct on internal systems e.g., web information, admissions, Moodle. A list of staff that may need to be informed of changes are listed in section five of the Curriculum Modification Form.
58. The Senior Registrar is responsible for the storage and maintenance of the Definitive Programme Documentation (programme specifications and unit descriptors) during the life of the programme.

59. Programme Directors are responsible overall for ensuring that students are provided with up-to-date information about their current programme, including their choice of options. In particular, they are responsible for notifying all affected current students, in writing, at the earliest opportunity of any approved changes to their unit(s)/programme(s) (including any new units), and for ensuring that the programme handbook(s) and programme specification(s) are amended appropriately.
60. All documentation must be kept for the life of the programme or at least six years according to the College's records retention schedule.