

**Student Learning & Experience Committee**

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| **Chapter C:****Course and Module Modifications****Principles and Procedures****This document is intended to support staff involved in making amendments to module(s) and course(s) in approval (including awards delivered by and with Partners)** |

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**GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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| **AEF** | Academic Enhancement Framework |
| **CAS** | Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies |
| **CME** | Continuous Monitoring & Enhancement |
| **DAD** | Definitive Approved Documentation |
| **FIN** | Finance  |
| **HECoS** | Higher Education Classification of Subjects |
| **HOD** | Head of Department |
| **HTQs** | Higher Technical Qualifications |
| **IfATE** | Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education  |
| **L&GS** | Legal & Governance Services |
| **MVF** | Module Verification Form |
| **OfS** | Office for Students |
| **PR** | Periodic Review |
| **PSRB** | Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body |
| **QAAP** | Quality Assurance Authorisation Panel  |
| **RLO** | Reading Lists Online |
| **RRT** | Resilience Review Tool |
| **SLAR** | Student Learning & Academic Registry |
| **SLAR (AD)** | Student Learning & Academic Registry (Academic Development) |
| **SLAR (APR)** | Student Learning & Academic Registry (Academic Policy and Regulation) |
| **SLAR (DX)** | Student Learning & Academic Registry (Digital Transformation) |
| **SLAR (QAV)** | Student Learning & Academic Registry (Quality Assurance and Validation) |
| **SLC** | Student Loans Company |
| **SLEC** | Student Learning & Experience Committee |
| **SLS** | Student and Library Services |
| **SRM** | Student Recruitment and Marketing |
| **SSLESC** | School Student Learning & Experience Sub-Committee |
| **SSP** | Student Support Plan |
| **TNE** | Transnational Education |
| **TU** | Teesside University |
| **TUCP**  | Teesside University College Partnership |
| **UKVI** | UK Home Office Visas & Immigration |

# PREFACE

The procedures for modifications to courses and modules between Periodic Review are designed to ensure that modifications to an approved course or module are undertaken with due regard to externality and ensure that regular minor changes do not result in ‘curriculum drift’.

When considering modifications to approved courses and modules, consideration should be given towards current students and applicants and current students must be consulted or notified where a change impacts on their learning. A record of the change needs to be maintained, particularly in changes to core modules, options, teaching hours, etc. Applicants need to be notified if there is a deviation from published information, as failure to do this may lead to a breach Consumer Protection Legislation.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This guidance outlines the principles and arrangements for course and module modifications.

**1.2** The guidance provided is aligned to the University’s Student Protection Plan (2 and 4) to meet the Office for Students (OfS) registration requirements and the UK QAA Quality Code.

**1.3** It is sometimes necessary to make changes to an approved module or course, and these are broadly categorised as follows:

* To enable the University to deliver an equivalent or enhanced quality of educational experience.
* To maintain the currency of the provision or to satisfy the requirements of accrediting or Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).
* To ensure that the approved module/course aims and learning outcome are not compromised and remain consistent.
* To add an additional mode of delivery, for example online delivery
* Due to events beyond our control.

**1.4** The University is committed to managing changes in a manner that minimises impact on students and that meets legal and regulatory requirements. This document sets out the process that members of staff involved in the modification of approved taught provision (as detailed on the module/course templates) should follow. This document should also be used by academic staff and administrators responsible for curriculum management and oversight of quality assurance.

**1.5** The process of course and module modification described in this document relates to the modification of approved credit-bearing module(s) and course(s) at Undergraduate & Postgraduate level, Professional Apprenticeships, Short awards, and Dual & Joint awards delivered by Teesside University (TU Middlesbrough Campus, Darlington Campus, London Campus or in a clinical or corporate setting), along with those awards approved and delivered at and by Partner Institutions.

**1.6** The University has established flexible quality processes to manage validations, periodic reviews, and the modification of courses and modules. On occasion, changes to University policy (e.g. Assessment & Feedback), may result in a large number of courses requiring modification, in order to align them with the revised policy. In such situations, SLAR may agree that these modifications can be considered and approved via a paper presented to School Student Learning & Experience Sub-Committee (SSLESC). However, this type of approach will only be agreed through appropriate consideration of risk levels and impact on student experience.

**1.7** It may be necessary in extenuating circumstances or circumstances beyond the University’s control that temporary changes to courses or modules may be required, irrespective of where or how TU awards are delivered. In such cases, the Resilience Review Tool (RRT) process provides a 'tool' for course teams to consider the extent to which their course could be delivered through the Hybrid Model without undue impact on the student experience. This will ensure that the University continues to meet the expectations of the OfS conditions of registration. The RRT should be used in conjunction with the Academic Enhancement Framework (Hybrid Model) Matrix, the wider Academic Enhancement Framework (AEF) and any relevant PSRB guidance.

Further information and supporting documentation is available in **Chapter C: Course Design, Development and Validation of Teesside University Taught Provision (C-Appendix 5 Resilience Review Tool)**.

# 2. PRINCIPLES OF MODIFICATION

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| **2.1** | The University has a duty to ensure that its responsibilities for standards and quality are discharged effectively through its procedures for the design, and validation of courses. |
| **2.2** | The University requires a formal documented modification process for a number of reasons. It is important to maintain a record of how and where modules and courses are changed, in order that the University can be assured that standards are maintained. It is important that the University has a clear process to show internal and external stakeholders, and why our curriculum is configured the way it is. |
| **2.3** | The University needs to be assured that its academic subjects are kept relevant and up to date, responding to the views and feedback of academic staff, students and external stakeholders, including External Examiners and Professional Standards and Regulatory Bodies. The modifications process ensures that the University has a formal record of responses to such drivers for change and to ensure that changes do not result in **‘curriculum drift’**. This is defined as significant changes to the content of the modules and courses from that formally approved by the University.  |
| **2.4** | Modifications should normally be triggered by monitoring activities and, therefore, should not normally be requested during the first year of a course’s operation, as they should have been considered as part of the initial validation process.  |
| **2.5** | Modifications would not normally be considered the year prior to a Periodic Review, although a risk-based approach will be taken on a case-by-case basis.  |
| **2.6** | Effective course management and professional practice should ensure that the curriculum, teaching and learning methods and forms of assessment are kept up to date to maintain academic standards and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities for students.  |
| **2.7** | The University has a responsibility to ensure that the information provided to the public on modules and courses after the approval of changes remains fit for purpose. The modifications process, therefore, must ensure that the publication of the Course Specification and related documents meet the minimum requirements of Consumer Protection Law**[[1]](#footnote-2)**. Compliance with the Consumer Protection Law is important in protecting students, maintaining public confidence, and upholding the reputation of the University and Partners. |

# 3. CATEGORIES OF CHANGE BASED ON PROSPECTIVE RISK TO QUALITY AND STANDARDS, and THE MODIFICATION PROCESS

## 3.1 Categories of Modification

The University has the following processes in place to maintain oversight and capture changes to modules and courses. The scale of modification is dependent upon risk. The risk of the proposed change are various categories of modification, and the process and examples are outlined below.

The process and levels of authority for the approval of module and course modifications is detailed in this document and are classified by level and category. The process is outlined in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**:

**Course and Module Modification Process**.

Changes to module(s)/course(s) are grouped in the following categories:

* Administrative (Level 1) (Housekeeping)
* Minor Modification (Level 2a and 2b)
* Major Modification (Level 3)
* Periodic Review

## 3.1.1 Administrative Modifications (Level 1) (Housekeeping)

Modifications designated as editorial changes to a module or course can be made outside of the formal modification process. These modifications are considered routine housekeeping in nature and have no significant impact on the module or course content.

Administrative Modifications (Level 1) **do not** require formal approval or reporting to SSLESC, although Schools will be required to monitor and provide oversight of these changes and update systems where necessary.

Examples of Administrative Modification are outlined in the **Modification Categories** document.

## 3.1.2 Course or Module Modifications (Level 2a)

Defined as low level limited modifications which do not alter the nature, focus and purpose of the course, module or course title. These modifications are considered by the School through the use of the **Modification Request** form (**C-Annex 1**), which is approved by the School Student Learning and Experience Sub-committee (SSLESC) or associated validation event and noted at the Student Learning and Experience Committee (SLEC). Please refer to **Figure 1**: Course/Module Modification Process.

This category only affects changes to a module(s) which do not require an update of the Course Specification.

A copy of the completed **Modification Request** form (**C-Annex 1**), detailing the SSLESC minute reference and summary of discussion and decision must be forwarded electronically to Student Learning & Academic Registry (Quality Assurance and Validation) (SLAR (QAV)) via **QAV@tees.ac.uk**. It is the responsibility of SLAR (QAV) to track these changes. Once approved the online UTREG system is then updated to ensure the accuracy of module data in SITS.

Examples of Course or Module Modification (Level 2a) are outlined in the **Modification Categories** document.

## 3.1.3 Course and Module Modifications (Level 2b)

These changes are defined as modifications that are normally minor in nature but require an update to the Course Specification.

Through the use of the **Modification Request** form (**C-Annex 1**), these changes are approved by the School Student Learning and Experience Sub-committee (SSLESC) or associated validation event, and noted at the Student Learning and Experience Committee (SLEC), via the SSLESC Standing Report. Please refer to **Figure 1**: **Course**/**Module Modification Process**.

The process for approving these minor modifications is negotiated with SLAR (QAV) following the submission of the **C-Annex 1**.

Once approved, the Course Specification must be updated to ensure it is accurate, complete and fit for publication. It is the responsibility of SLAR (QAV) to track these changes.

Examples of requested changes which could trigger a Course or Module Modification process at Level 2b are outlined in the **Modification Categories** document.

### 3.1.4 Course/Module Modifications (Level 3)

These are defined as modifications that are normally major in nature, impact significantly upon the Course Specification(s), and may alter the students’ expectations following acceptance of a place on the course and joining the University.

Major modifications are defined as those that result in a more substantial change to the module(s)/course(s) and involve significant or fundamental alterations to a module(s)/course(s) aim, learning outcomes, structure or assessment.

These modifications are normally considered at the scheduled Quality Assurance and Authorisation Panel (QAAP) identified through the completion of the **Modification Request** form(**C-Annex 1**). However, consideration may also be aligned with an appropriate validation event or SSSLEC where appropriate. In the event, for example, of PSRB requirements, a supplementary Panel membership may be required. These modifications are reported to SLEC through the SSLESC Standing Report. Please refer to **Figure 2**: **Course/Module Modification Process**.

The process for approving all major modifications is negotiated with SLAR (QAV) following the submission of the **C-Annex 1** form.

Examples of requested changes which would trigger a Course or Module Modification process at Level 3 are outlined in the **Modification Categories** document.

### 3.1.5 Periodic Review

Substantive modification(s) to a course(s) can result from a combination and accumulation of minor and major modifications between the next scheduled Periodic Review. These modifications are seen as those which substantially change the character, focus and purpose of the course and will result in Periodic Review activity.

Once a substantive modification(s) has been identified, the standard process for Periodic Review outlined in **Chapter C: Course Design, Development and Validation** of the Quality Framework, should be followed.

Changes which will always trigger a Periodic Review are provided under Periodic Review Triggers in the **Modification Categories** document.

## 3.2 Cumulative Changes

 Schools should be mindful of the **cumulative effect** of a significant number of individual modifications to a module/course over its approval period (6 years) and must ensure that all changes are approved through the process outlined in this document. These modifications are to be clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders in a timely manner (**see sections 6 and 7** below for details on timing, communication and consultation of modifications).

 Through the recording of modifications on the **Modification Request** form (**C-Annex 1**), SLAR (QAV) will track the volume and level of minor and major modifications to module(s)/course(s) to ensure limited cumulative drift from the approved course award and title (normally no more than replacement of 1/3rd of course content) between a Periodic Review.

## Figure 1 Module/Course Modification Process (Level 1 & 2a/2b)

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## Figure 2 Module/Course Modification Process (Level 3)

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# 4. Documentation REQUIREMENTS

Consideration of modification requests will be assessed based on the level of risk associated with the change. **Minor 2b** modifications would normally be considered via SSLESC, whereas **Major 3** requests would be presented for consideration at Quality Assurance Authorisation Panel (QAAP).

It is expected that documentation submitted for consideration at either SSLESC or QAAP should include highlighted/tracked changes to support the Panel in easily identifying changes.

The documentation requirements would be aligned to the change being requested and will typically consist of the following, where appropriate:

* Completed **Modification Request** form (**C-Annex 1**)
* Revised Course Specification
* Revised Module Specification(s)
* Revised Course Structure
* Revised Assessment Chart
* Revised Map of Learning Outcomes to modules
* Revised Practice Handbook
* Evidence of consultation with Students and External Examiner
* Evidence of consultation and agreement of the changes with Partners
* Consideration of impact on resources
* Additional mapping documents including PSRB, Professional Apprenticeships (Apprenticeship Training Plan and Skills Scan), Higher National Awards, Recognition of Prior Learning, Articulation Agreement, or internal mapping between approved TU courses, and
* Additional documents may be required depending upon the nature of the modification (e.g., CVs, library statements)

# 5. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND LEVELS OF AUTHORITY IN THE MODIFICATION PROCESS

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| **LEVEL OF AUTHORITY** | **REsponsibility** |
| **Student Learning & Experience Committee (SLEC)** | Responsible for maintaining oversight of all modifications to module(s)/ course(s). |
| **School Student Learning & Experience Sub-Committee (SSLESC)** | Responsible for the management and approval of all minor Level 2a/2b modifications on behalf of the SLEC.Following preliminary advice provided through SLAR (QAV), Student Learning & Academic Registry (Academic Policy and Regulations) (SLAR (APR) coordinate the paperwork for all Minor level 2a/2b modifications through SSLESC meetings. |
| **Quality Assurance Authorisation Panel (QAAP)** | Responsible for the management and approval of Major Level 3 modifications.Following advice and guidance, SLAR (QAV) coordinates the paperwork for all Major level 3 modifications through QAAP monthly scheduled meetings.  |
| **Student Learning & Academic Registry (Quality Assurance and Validation) (SLAR (QAV))** | SLAR (QAV) confirm the level of all modifications, whilst maintaining a record and oversight for tracking purposes. Liaise with the Module/Course Team Leader to access systems to update the necessary module and/or Course Specification following modification approval by SSLESC or QAAP.  |
| **School Administration** | School Administration to maintain records of each administrative modification for audit purposes. |

## 5.1 Scheduling Meetings to consider and approve Modifications

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| **Stakeholders** | **Role and responsibility** |
| Student Learning & Academic Registry (Academic Policy and Regulations)  | Schedule and set agenda for SSLESC meetings. SSLESC will receive and approve Minor modifications (level 2a-2b) and record approval of these in minutes to ensure oversight is maintained and complete standing reports for SLEC.  |
| Student Learning & Academic Registry (Quality Assurance and Validation) | Scheduled QAAP meetings to consider modifications categorised as Major (level 3). Minutes of meetings detailing the approval of modifications will be reported to SSLESC. |

# 6. **COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION OF MODIFICATIONS WITH CURRENT STUDENTS, EXTERNAL EXAMINER(S), PSRB AND APPLICANTS**

**6.1** The key issue regarding the modification process, above all else, is **communication and transparency** – particularly communication with students and the record of that communication. Students must be consulted and kept informed about changes to their course and its constituent modules and documentation by the Course Leader/Module Leader. Please also refer to the **Student Protection Plan** **Section 4** [**here**](https://www.tees.ac.uk/studenthandbook).

 Where modifications alter the Course Specification (part of the contract on enrolment between the University and student), then the School/Course Team will be required to ascertain student consultation and, in some cases, agreement on both the minor and major change(s), and adhere to the following provision in the Teesside University Terms and Conditions. The relevant provisions are as follows:

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| Paragraph 3.3:The University is entitled to make reasonable changes to its courses where that will enable the University to deliver an equivalent or better quality of educational experience to students enrolled on the course. Examples of such circumstances may include: 1. d) the content and syllabus of the course where developments in the subject area make that necessary, including changes in any applicable statutory and/ or regulatory body requirements and feedback from external examiners and/or students.
2. e) the location of the course.

f) the method of delivery of the course Paragraph 4.4:*’*‘To give you reasonable notice of proposed changes to the delivery of your course or other services and to consult you on any material changes which, in exceptional circumstances, may be necessary. These may include alterations to the timetable, location, number of classes and method of delivery of your course, or variations in its content or syllabus.’  |

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| Paragraph 7.3:1. Events outside of our control: We will not be liable to you for our delay or failure to deliver educational services as described under this contract due to events outside our control which we could not have prevented even if we had taken reasonable care.

Events outside our control include industrial action (except for industrial action by University employees), over or under demand from students, exceptional cases of staff illness, significant changes to our funding or to government direction to higher education, compliance with any law or government order, rule regulation or direction, severe weather, fire, natural disaster, terrorism, civil disorder, political unrest, government restrictions, epidemics and concern with regard to the transmission of serious illness that lead to the imposition of local, regional or national government restrictions which adversely affect our operations, the unexpected absence or departure of a key member of staff or where the numbers recruited to a course and/or module are so low that it is not possible to deliver an appropriate quality of education to students enrolled on it. In such circumstances, we reserve the right to delay, change or cancel parts or all of our service to you including your course, placements and access to usual University facilities. |

**6.2** In respect to students with a Student Support Plan (SSP) (students with a disability) in place, ensure that reasonable adjustments have been considered and made to the plan, particularly if the modification(s) impacts student placements, field trips, teaching methods and/or assessment. School or Course Teams should consult the School Disability Officer or Student & Library Services (SLS) for advice and guidance to consider reasonable and alternative adjustments.

**6.3** The University is entitled to make reasonable changes to its courses that will enable the University to deliver an equivalent or better quality of educational experience to students enrolled on the course. Examples of such circumstances may include:

* The content and syllabus of the course where developments in the subject area make that necessary, including changes in any applicable statutory and/or regulatory body requirements and feedback from external examiners and/or students.
* The location of the course.
* The method of delivery of the course.

In making any such changes, the University must aim to keep the changes to the minimum necessary to achieve the required experience and will notify and where appropriate, consult with affected students in advance about any changes that are required.

In cases where student agreement is required, students who are not satisfied with the changes must be offered the opportunity to transfer to another course or, if required, to withdraw and be given reasonable support to move to another university.

Other types of course changes can be made in the following circumstances:

* Where the change is brought about due to an event beyond the University’s control, for example:
* industrial action,
* over or under demand from students,
* exceptional cases of staff illness,
* significant changes to our funding or to government direction to higher education,
* compliance with any law or government order, rule regulation or direction
* severe weather,
* fire,
* natural disaster
* terrorism,
* civil disorder,
* political unrest,
* government restrictions
* epidemics and concern with regard to the transmission of serious illness that lead to the imposition of local, regional or national government restrictions which adversely affect our operations,
* the unexpected absence or departure of a key member of staff,
* where the numbers recruited to a course and/or module are so low that it is not possible to deliver an appropriate quality of education to students enrolled on it.

In such circumstances, the University can delay, change or cancel parts or all of a course, but before exercising any of these rights, permission from Legal & Governance Services (L&GS) must be sought.

**6.4** Where designated option modules are added to a course but do not replace existing modules or where the change does not alter information previously supplied to students, student agreement is not necessary, though it can still be provided.

**6.5** Schools/Partners are advised to use existing mechanisms to communicate, consult and obtain agreement of the proposed modification(s) from all students (e.g. Blackboard Ultra, student representative system, open meeting, email to individual student accounts, WhatsApp group, dissemination in lectures/seminars/tutorials etc). The consultation process selected must target those students who will be affected by the proposed modification and allow students the time to reflect, question and give feedback on the proposal.

When communicating the proposed modification(s) to students (both active and suspended students), a clear notification of the deadline for responses no later than 4 weeks from the original request should be included.

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| **Please note the consultation and consent period with students must be undertaken during the course delivery period, as defined in the Course Handbook, i.e., during semester/timetabled hours.** |

**6.6** Proposals for modifications from Level 2a should normally be supported by written comments from the appropriate **External Examiner(s)**. Where there is more than one External Examiner, comments should be obtained from the External Examiner with particular responsibility for the academic course, module and level. Other External Examiners must be informed of the change(s).

**6.7** Courses with proposals for modifications from Level 2a with **PSRB accreditation** will require consultation with the PSRB to discuss and confirm the modification to ensure alignment with PSRB requirements. Evidence of this communication should be referenced and confirmed within the modification form (**C-Annex 1**).

**6.8 Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ)** courses with proposals for modifications from Level 2a will require consultation with the Institute forApprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and, where appropriate, approval of the change. Evidence of this communication should be referenced and confirmed within the modification form (**C-Annex 1**).

**6.9** In relation to **applicants**, where the University has offered a place on the course affected by the modification, these changes should be brought to their attention before enrolment under the ‘Terms of Offer’. This can be achieved by writing to applicants to notify them of the modification and their right to withdraw or cancel their place should they not agree. Admissions tutors should be prepared to offer advice about alternative courses, should this be requested.

Schools should contact Student Recruitment & Marketing (SRM) regarding modifications impacting published course literature and contacting applicants. Schools may also wish to seek legal advice with regards to the wording of communication with applicants and those holding offers.

# 7. TIMESCALE FOR SUBMITTING AND APPROVING MODIFICATIONS

**7.1** Modifications are normally implemented from the start of a new academic semester or intake. Exceptionally, for in-year implementation of modifications, where the External Examiner has requested the immediate implementation of changes to ensure and maintain academic standards, see the suggested timeline below for submission. Modifications to module(s)/course(s) should be implemented in a coordinated manner.

**7.2** Therefore, it is advised that the submission of the proforma **Modification Request** (**C-Annex 1**)outlining the modification(s), is submitted and approved before the start of a new academic year, semester or intake.

**7.3** Where modifications are proposed to modules/courses that are delivered across more than one course, across Schools, and/or Partner Institutions, each course must be consulted and agree to the change accordingly. The **Modification Request** (**C-Annex 1**) form must list all the courses which utilise the module(s) and must indicate the consideration and ‘fit’ of the modified module in each course.

**7.4** Where the partner is part of the Teesside University College Partnership (TUCP), the Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching) should respond to the College within 14 calendar days of submission of the modification form to confirm if the School supports the proposal. If the School does NOT support the proposal, a statement should be provided to the College to explain the rationale behind the decision.

**7.5** Modification Forms for TU College Partners will be presented to termly meetings of the TUCP Board for consideration, alongside a matrix which will be used to record decisions in relation to each proposal.

**7.6** Before submission of a modification request, which may result in potential content changes to the University website/course pages mid-cycle, Schools must initially seek advice and guidance on Student Recruitment and Marketing protocol in such circumstances from theSchool’s Associate Dean (Marketing & Recruitment) and Deputy Director (Student Recruitment & Admissions) within SRM before submission.

# 8. GENERAL

References and Further Information;

The Office for Students (OfS) Advise 1: The OfS approach to regulation, Annex B.

The Office for Students (OfS) Advise 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20, Annex 2.

The Office for Students (OfS) Quality and Standards Conditions

OIA Good Practice Framework: Supporting Disabled Students.

QAA Quality Code:

* Course Design and Development.

Competition & Markets Authority

* UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law - Helping you comply with your obligations.

Teesside University Legal Services

* Terms and Conditions.

GuildHE/HEFCE - Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice.

IfATE Higher Technical Qualifications: Changes to Qualifications.

# APPENDIX 1

**Guidance on Naming Awards, Naming Conventions for Award Titles, and using Alternative Award Titles for Similar Courses of Study**

**Naming Awards: General Principles**

When deciding on award titles, a number of related criteria should be taken into account, including:

* The title should be justifiable in terms of the course of study.
* There should be a close alignment between the overall learning outcomes of the course and the award title.
* The overall learning outcomes of the course should be compatible with the totality of module learning outcomes.
* The concepts referred to in the title should have currency and/or be recognised within relevant academic disciplines and/or employment sectors.
* The title should be attractive and distinctive within specific defined markets.
* The title should be simple and clarify the subject matter of a course to applicants.
* There may be administrative/funding/international (UK Home Office Visas & Immigration (UKVI)) requirements to consider, e.g. relation to HECoS codes and HEFCE price groups.
* Awards including a sandwich year/placement year must be recognised within the title.
* Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) approved courses must not share the same award title as non-HTQ awards.
* HTQ should not be referenced within the award title.

**Naming Conventions for Award Titles**

Brackets ( ) should be used in award titles rather than colons, forward slashes, or quotes, e.g.:

**Correct Convention:** BSc (Hons) Advanced Engineering (Electronics)

Incorrect Convention: BSc (Hons) Advanced Engineering/Electronics

 ***or***

 BSc (Hons) Advanced Engineering: Electronics

**‘and’** should be used in award titles rather than &, +, or other shortened versions, e.g.:

**Correct Convention:** FdA Leadership and Management

Incorrect Convention: FdA Leadership & Management

 ***or***

 FdA Leadership + Management

Additionally, ‘**in**’ should not be used in titles between the award designation and the actual title, e.g.:

**Correct Convention:** BSc (Hons) Nursing Studies

Incorrect Convention: BSc (Hons) in Nursing Studies

The only exception to the above is if a Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Body (PSRB) specifically requires a title to be presented in a certain way, e.g. MSc Nursing in the Home/District Nursing.

**Alternative Award Titles for Similar Courses of Study**

It should always be possible to articulate clearly why one award title is different from another when the content of the awards is very similar or even identical. One of the legitimate reasons might be to improve the marketability of the award in specific markets. Conversely, it would not be possible for the same award title to apply to two different course structures.

The above criteria are based on academic judgement and should outweigh any mechanistic considerations. However, as a guide, 60 credits would normally be a reasonable amount of differentiation on a 360-credit undergraduate course, with pro-rata differentiation in other awards of 60 credits or more. Approval Panels will need to exercise discretion in the case of awards of less than 60 credits.

All award titles (including named intermediate/fall-back awards) should have their own Course Specification. There should be an additional Course Specification for an alternative award title, even when the modular course is the same.

The alternative award title/course combination should be considered by the relevant modification process as identified within the Quality Framework (**C- Annex 1**).

Schools should consider issues such as the suitability of existing External Examiners for the alternative award. They should also review the titles and content of the modules that make up the course of study. In practice, it may be desirable to re-name certain key modules to better reflect the new award title and make necessary amendments to the learning outcomes.

It is expected that students will normally apply for, enrol on and graduate with a specific award title. Any transfer should have a sound rationale and be undertaken in line with the University’s Policy on Internal Transfers. Whilst there is no desire to restrict student choice, students who express a wish to transfer between the different award titles on the same course should be given appropriate counselling and advised that this may likely be subject to relevant constraints. The cut-off date for transfers should be the end of the final teaching year, i.e. well before the final Award Board.

# Appendix 2

**Impact of Title Changes Mid-Cycle – UCAS Regulations**

**1.** Changes of title for UCAS courses should be implemented by 31st May before the next annual UCAS cycle (i.e., 18 months before the start of the annual UCAS Cycle). Once a definitive set of titles has been lodged with UCAS, they should remain unchanged throughout the cycle.

**2.** When a course title is discontinued for a new cycle and there are applicants with deferred entry from a previous cycle, the School should make strenuous attempts to accommodate the applicant’s needs and ensure they receive the necessary support. Schools should liaise with Finance and SRM on any applicant record updates required. If an applicant is not satisfied with all alternatives offered, the University should liaise with other institutions to see if they can accommodate the applicant.

**3.** Based on the above, title changes will not be allowed to be implemented in mid-cycle where there are any applicants with offers, particularly where there are firm acceptances of these offers (this includes deferred entry).

**4.** Where a course has received applications, but no offers have been made or offers made have not been accepted as an insurance or firm offer, a change of title may be agreed with a view to attracting late applications or applications through Clearing.

**5.** Schools will inform SRM Admissions which alternative courses applicants should be given an alternative offer if they are dissatisfied with the course title change. SRM Admissions will contact the applicants to notify them of the course title changes. A deadline is specified to the applicant, asking them to contact admissions to discuss alternative options if they are unhappy with the change in the course title. Alternative options will be offered by e-mail if the applicant is unwilling to accept the offer for the new course title. The School must ensure this has taken place and that records are updated before they submit a web amendment request to SRM (Marketing) for the website and UCAS to be updated. For course information to be amended on the University website, School marketing contacts should formally log the request through the [**Marketing Web Amendment Request System**](https://ems.tees.ac.uk/tas/public/ssp/content/serviceflow?unid=934ee9f32dea4e2cae40871daa45db2b&openedFromService=true). Please note that it is a requirement for audit and business assurance purposes that all web amends are logged in this system, so SRM (Marketing) cannot progress any web amends not received in this way.

Low levels of applications for a course are sometimes addressed by changing the title to something that is (hopefully) more marketable. This can lead to title changes being submitted for approval late in the UCAS admissions cycle. When a title change is approved, the University is contractually obliged to inform UCAS that the old title is discontinued. The University also has contractual obligations to anyone who has applied for the ‘old’ title, particularly those to whom the University has already made an offer and from whom a firm acceptance has already been received.

**UCAS Regulations**

Once a course title has been discontinued, Institutions are required to contact applicants as soon as the decision has been taken to explain the situation. This enables each applicant to decide on the best course of action. Institutions should be aware that late withdrawal of a course will leave applicants with little or no hope of securing an alternative offer.

If the applicant has not replied, they may ask to be considered for another course. If the applicant does not wish to be considered for another course, they can choose another Institution and course substitution via Track.

If the applicant has replied – accepting an offer as a Firm or Insurance – an alternative offer should be made. If the applicant does not wish to accept the alternative, the applicant may decline it or may ask UCAS to make a substitution. In substitution cases, UCAS will remove all replies and give the applicant as full a set of options as possible. UCAS will inform the Institutions affected by this via online data transfer or movements lists so that they know that the applicant may want to accept an offer they had previously declined.

Where a course has been discontinued after 30 June, a duty of care is placed on the Institution to assist the applicants in any way possible, if necessary, by contacting other Institutions that may be able to offer a suitable place. The applicant must be kept fully informed of the situation. Where the Institution can offer an alternative course, it must be discussed with the applicant before the UCAS applicant, or UCAS course records are changed. Alternative course offers may be subject to relevant constraints.

The situation may be even more difficult for applicants who have become UF for a discontinued course and for those who had deferred entry from the previous cycle. Institutions must pay particular attention to their needs. UCAS will not insist on reapplication if another Institution is prepared to allow the applicant UF status.

Special consideration must also be given to international applicants and the stage at which they are in the cycle. If an international student has already been provided with a CAS this will need to be amended to ensure the correct title is shown on visa application documents.

**Implications for Applicants**

The implications for applicants of a course discontinuance (including change of title), particularly those who have already made their Firm or Insurance commitment to the University, are far more significant than the practical application of the process outlined above is to the University.

It would be difficult to justify a title change to an applicant if the content and/or learning outcomes remain unchanged. An applicant may have chosen a particular title for specific reasons. The same title may have been applied for at another Institution which was subsequently declined by the applicant, preferring to come to Teesside University. This is a poor applicant experience that does not reflect well on the University.

It is also worth considering those applicants that may have deferred entry or replied early to our offer. This category of applicant will have already made representations to the Student Loans Company (SLC) for funding. Such funding applications are made for specific-named courses and at the time of application.

All funding applications are made against a bona fide registered list of HE courses that each Institution submits to the SLC by a set date each year. The deadline for registering for existing courses is usually by Christmas the year before intake (e.g. by December 2021 for 2023 entry). Updates to the loans course database are completed by Finance (Records). It will be possible to add new courses after this date. Discontinued courses are deleted from this list (after all students have graduated) and new titles are added following approval by the Academic Registrar. In addition, all new full-time/sandwich undergraduate titles must be assigned a UCAS code, which has to be applied for, following formal approval of any title change. Updates to the UCAS course database are completed by Student Recruitment & Marketing (SRM).

Where a title has been discontinued, and a new title approved, this process should be completed before the update of the SLC approved course list. In all cases where an applicant has already applied for funding against a named course, it would be necessary for them to notify the SLC accordingly. This would certainly affect the timely payment of any monies awarded to the applicant. Additional complications would be encountered should there be any backlog of dealing with applications or reassessments by the SLC, which is often the case late in the cycle.

Applicants can apply for student financial support at the same time as they apply for university places. This intensifies the pressure on Institutions to agree on a definitive set of titles before the beginning of the UCAS cycle, and to avoid, as much as possible, any changes through the cycle.

There are also implications for various University publications. For example, for the 2024 entries, the deadline for inclusion in the prospectus would be September 2022, ready for the prospectus to go to print in January 2023. Whilst online and electronic information can be amended in real-time, published literature can be out-of-date after printing.

Changes late in the cycle may also have implications for international applicants who may not receive information with respect to changed courses before the commencement of their studies. In particular, international applicants who have already been issued with a "Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies" (CAS) and a visa by the Home Office for a specific course at Teesside University. In such instances, both the applicant and the University (Compliance) are required to contact the Home Office (UK Home Office Visas & Immigration (UKVI)) to inform them of the change.

Decisions on applications usually start to be made in mid-October. The main deadline for UCAS applications to be received is 15 January.

Anyone requiring further detail or clarification on the above should contact Finance (Deputy Director of Finance; Business Planning Services) or SRM (Deputy Director).

1. **Guidance provided in the ‘UK Higher Education Providers – advice on consumer protection law – Helping you comply with your obligations’ 12 March 2015** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)