Module & Programme Change Process

Adopted at Academic Council meeting of 24th February 2010
Amendment to Academic Quality System

Introduction

Traditionally the principal avenue for changes to modules (formerly subjects) was the programmatic review process. In the opinion of the ARC this approach has two shortcomings. Firstly, the 5 year gap between programmatic reviews may impede necessary and timely changes to programmes or modules. Secondly, the focus on programme and syllabus changes has in the past often dominated the *review* aspect of the programmatic review process.

The ARC believes that in the future ongoing and timely changes to programmes and modules should be the norm rather than the exception, therefore a standard process for the approval of changes is proposed for inclusion in the academic quality system. This process should be reviewed after an initial period of 1 year (when the ARC will report to Academic Council on its effectiveness) and should be subject to periodic review thereafter.

Major versus Minor changes

Changes to existing modules will be categorised as either major or minor. Minor changes will require a very light touch review. Major changes will require a higher level of formal review. To differentiate between major and minor changes the following guidelines are provided and a more detailed breakdown is provided in appendix 1.

Major changes

Major changes will result in a substantially different module. Major changes will be defined as changes which alter in a substantial and significant way the learning outcomes, assessment or delivery of a module. This does not mean that all changes to these parts of a module will be flagged as a major change (for example the correcting of a spelling or grammatical error in the text of a learning outcome would not normally be deemed a major change). However, any changes to learning outcomes, assessment or delivery will require formal review.

It should be noted that although a change may be categorised as major the formal review process may still be quite straightforward and require little more than consultation with the Module Moderator. Therefore departments and individuals should not be discouraged from proposing a major change for fear of a complex or onerous formal review process.

Minor changes

Minor changes will in general correct errors, improve clarity/readability or update content of modules. The clear distinction between minor and major changes is that a minor change will not result in any substantial alteration of the core of the module i.e. learning outcomes, assessment and delivery.

Implementation of Changes

A newly approved version of a module will supersede the previous version no sooner than the start of the next delivery period. **It is not possible to change a module during the delivery period of that module.**

The Module Change Process

Making Minor Changes to a Module

Step 1 Submit

A new version of the module will be submitted through the web tool. This new version will incorporate the proposed change and must be accompanied by an explanation of the change which is proposed.

Step 2 Review and Approval

Minor changes will be reviewed and approved (or rejected) by the Module Coordinator(normally the HoD). The Module Coordinator will ensure that all relevant Programme Coordinators (i.e. for all Programmes which use the module) are consulted about the proposed change. The Module Coordinator will inform the Module Moderator of each and every Module Change which has been approved by him/her.

Step 3 Moderation

The Module Moderator has the right to revoke any such approval and consequently rule that a change which has been submitted as a minor change should be resubmitted as a major change. Only when the Module Moderator signs off on a change will the new version of the module enter the Book of Modules. A newly approved version of a module will supersede the previous version no sooner than the start of the next delivery period. It is not possible to change a module during the delivery period of that module.

Making Major Changes to a Module

Step 1 Submit

A new version of the module will be submitted by the Module Coordinator. This new version will incorporate the proposed change and will be accompanied by an explanation of the change which is proposed. This explanation must clearly outline the Programme-level effects which will result from the proposed change. The proposal must also clearly identify all Programmes which use the Module which is the subject of the proposal. The proposers must consult with the relevant Programme Coordinators and must make a statement of the impact of the proposed change on each Programme.

Step 2 Review

Once submitted the proposal to change a module will be reviewed by the Module Moderator. Having consulted with the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality the Moderator will then decide on one of the following review processes:

1. Review the proposal and consult with the proposers and the relevant Programme Coordinators. the Module Moderator will decide to approve or reject new version of the module.

2. Conduct an internal review of the proposed change which will involve an internal panel of reviewers. The review will consult with the proposers and the relevant Programme Coordinators and the panel will decide to approve or reject the new version of the module.

3. Conduct an external review of the proposed change which will involve consultation with external reviewers. Normally this type of review will also involve an internal review panel. Following consultation with the proposers, the relevant Programme coordinators and the external experts the panel of internal reviewers will decide to approve or reject the new version of the module.

Step 3 Approval and Moderation

Following the review phase the proposed change will either be approved (i.e. the new version of the module will enter the Book of Modules) or rejected (in which case the Module Moderator will communicate the reasons for this decision to the proposers).
Following the review of the proposed change it may be decided by the Module Moderator or the review panel that the Programme level impacts are such that a Programme change proposal (or proposals) is also required. The Module change proposal will not be fully completed until all mandated Programme change proposals have been completed.

Change Tracking Process

To ensure that there is not an unacceptable level of change to an individual Module, a formal tracking process will be implemented. This process will also include an element of review which will allow the Module Moderator to identify if too many change proposals have been received in relation to a particular module.

Reporting Process

At least once per academic year the Module Moderator will present a summary report to the Academic Council on the quantity and nature of module change activity.

Appeal Process

If the Module Coordinator does not agree with the decision of the Module Moderator or the review panel, an appeal can be lodged with the Academic Council. The Academic Council will conduct a review the decision and will either endorse or overturn the earlier decision.

The Role of the Module Moderator

If for any reason the Module Moderator is unable to fulfil his/her responsibilities in relation to the processes outlined above the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality may assume the role of Module Moderator.

Programme Change Process

Introduction

Traditionally the principal avenue for changes to programmes was the programmatic review process. In the opinion of the ARC the current approach has two shortcomings. Firstly, the 5 year gap between programmatic reviews may impede necessary and timely changes to programmes or modules. Secondly, the focus on programme and syllabus changes has in the past often dominated the *review* aspect of the programmatic review process.

The ARC believes that in the future ongoing and timely changes to programmes and modules should be the norm rather than the exception, therefore a standard process for the approval of changes is proposed for inclusion in the academic quality system. This process should be reviewed after an initial period of 1 year (when the ARC will report to Academic Council on its effectiveness) and should be subject to periodic review thereafter.

Major versus Minor changes:

Changes to existing programmes will be categorised as either major or minor. To differentiate between major and minor changes the following guidelines are provided and a more detailed breakdown is provided in appendix 2.

Major changes:

Major changes will result in a substantially different programme. Major changes will be defined as changes which alter in a substantial and significant way the programme outcomes, structure (i.e. placement of modules in semesters, nature and number of electives, etc) or content (i.e. modules that make up the programme) of a programme. This does not mean that all changes to these parts of a programme will be flagged as a major change (for example the correcting of a spelling or grammatical error in the text of a programme outcome would not normally be deemed a major change). However, any changes to programme outcomes, structure or content will receive close scrutiny.

It should be noted that although a change may be categorised as major the formal review process may still be quite straightforward and require little more than consultation with the Head of Academic Quality. Therefore departments and individuals should not be discouraged from proposing a major change for fear of a complex or onerous formal review process.

Minor changes:

Minor changes will in general correct errors in or update content of programmes. The clear distinction between minor and major changes is that a minor change will not result in any substantial alteration of the core of the programme i.e. programme outcomes, structure and content.

Implementation of Changes

A newly approved version of a programme will supersede the previous version no sooner than the start of the next delivery period. It is not possible to change a stage of a programme during the delivery period of that stage.

The Programme Change Process

Making Minor Changes to a Programme:

Step 1 Submit

A new version of the programme will be submitted. This new version will incorporate the proposed change and will be accompanied by an explanation of the change which is proposed.

Step 2 Review and Approval

Minor changes will be reviewed and approved (or rejected) by the Faculty Board of Studies (or faculty academic quality committee if it exists). The Faculty Board of Studies will ensure that all relevant Programme and Module Coordinators (e.g. for all Programmes which use a module which is being removed or added to the programme) are consulted about the proposed change. The Faculty Board of Studies will inform the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality of each and every Programme Change which has been approved by the Board.

Step 3 Audit of Changes

The Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality has the right to revoke any such approval and consequently rule that a change which has been submitted as a minor change should be resubmitted as a major change. Only when the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality signs off on a change will the new version of the programme be approved. A newly approved version of a programme will supersede the previous version no sooner than the start of the next delivery period. It is not possible to change a programme during the delivery period of that programme.

Making Major Changes to a Programme:

Step 1 Submit

A new version of the programme will be submitted. This new version will incorporate the proposed change and will be accompanied by an explanation of the change which is proposed. This explanation must clearly outline the Programme-level effects which will result from the proposed change. The proposal must also clearly identify all Programmes and Modules which may be impacted by the proposal. The proposers must consult with the relevant Programme and Module Coordinators and must make every effort to obtain their support for the proposed change.

Before the change proposal is submitted it must be reviewed and endorsed by the Faculty Board of Studies.

Step 2 Review

Once submitted the proposal to change a programme will be reviewed by the Head of Academic Quality. She/he will then decide on one of the following review processes:

1. Review the proposal and after consulting with the proposers and the relevant Programme and Module Coordinators will decide to approve or reject new version of the Programme.

2. Conduct an internal review of the proposed change which will involve an internal panel of reviewers. After consulting with the proposers and the relevant Programme and Module Coordinators the review panel will decide to approve or reject the new version of the programme.

3. Conduct an external review of the proposed change which will involve consultation with external reviewers. Normally this type of review will also involve an internal review panel. Following consultation with the proposers, the relevant Programme and Module coordinators and the external experts the panel of internal reviewers will decide to approve or reject the new version of the programme.

Step 3 Approval

Following the review phase the proposed change will either be approved or rejected (in which case the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality will communicate the reasons for this decision to the proposers).

Change Tracking Process

To ensure that there is not an unacceptable level of change to an individual Programme, a formal tracking process will be implemented. This process will also include an element of review which will allow the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality to identify if too many change proposals have been received in relation to a particular programme.

Reporting Process

At least once per academic year the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality will present a summary report to the Academic Council on the quantity and nature of programme change activity.

Appeal Process

If the Programme Coordinator does not agree with the decision of the Deputy Registrar & Head of Academic Quality or the review panel, an appeal can be lodged with the Academic Council. The Academic Council will conduct a review the decision and will either endorse or overturn the earlier decision.

Appendix 1: Module Changes Classification

Module Descriptor Field	Type of Change	Change Classification
Short Title	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Full Title	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Official Code	n/a	n/a
Module Level	Change	Major
ECTS Credits	Change	Major
Module Coordinator	Change	Major
Description	Correct or change	Minor
Learning Outcomes	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Substantive Change	Major
Indicative Content	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Substantive Change	Major
Assessment Breakdown	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Coursework Breakdown	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Reassessment	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Workload	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Resources	Correct or change	Minor

Appendix 2: Programme Changes Classification

Programme Descriptor Field	Type of Change	Change Classification
Title	Change	Major
Award	Change	Major
NFQ Level	Change	Major
Official Code	n/a	n/a
No. of Semesters	Change	Major
Mode of Delivery	Change	Major
Department	Change	Major
Programme Coordinator	Change	Minor
Educational Aim of Prog.	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Change	Major
Programme Outcomes	Correct typographical errors etc	Minor
	Substantive Change	Major
Semester Schedules	Add or remove a mandatory module	Major
	Add or remove a grouping of elective modules i.e. group elective	Major
	Add or remove a module from a grouping of elective modules	Minor
	Add or remove an elective module	Minor
	Change/swap modules in semester(s)	Minor
Mapping	Change	Minor