Part 6
Module and Course Modifications

1. Introduction

1.1. Modification of modules/courses is allowed where it has been identified as necessary to enhance the delivery of a course. Modifications may or may not trigger the full re-approval of a course.

1.2. Reasons for a modification may be, for instance; a condition of Academic Review (Part 8) or Collaborative Review (Part 11); feedback from students; feedback from a professional, statutory, or regulatory body (PSRB); feedback from an External Examiner; or to keep content current and relevant

1.3. The formal process for approving modifications ensures the integrity of modules/courses and ensures adherence to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Principles (Part 1).

2. Principles governing the approval of modifications

2.1. Modifications will not be applied retrospectively and should only be implemented at the start of the Term or academic session following their approval.

2.2. Where new curriculum material is being introduced in existing modules, (other than the normal up-dating of existing modules), external input will always be sought.

2.3. Where modifications being proposed will affect students currently enrolled on, or applying to, the course, such students must be consulted and notified of any modifications once they have been approved.

2.4. Once a modification has been approved, student-facing documentation must be updated by the Course Leader and the revised version of the course specification lodged with Quality Assurance and Enhancement. Delta amendments via Courses and Systems must only be processed after formal approval by the relevant School Quality Committee (SQC).

2.5. Modifications should be considered within the parameters of any PSRB requirements.

2.6. Where a module is shared on several courses, either within a School or cross-institutionally, the School owning the module is responsible for ensuring that those impacted by the proposed modification have been consulted, including Course Leaders and Department Heads.

3. Types of modification

3.1. Course modifications can be categorised in three ways:

- Changes that constitute a modification of more than 25% of the core modules of the course.
- Changes that constitute a modification of less than or equal to 25% of the core modules on the course.
- Normal and regular updating of core and optional modules that do not count towards the 25% rule.

3.2. Changes that constitute a modification that counts toward the 25% rule are as follows:

- any replacement of a core module;
- any addition, removal or allocation to a different level of a core module;
- any change in the credit weighting of a core module;
- any change to the learning outcomes of a core module (with or without a change in the title of a module);
- any change to the curriculum content of a core module other than routine updating (with or without a change in the title of a module);
- any change in the mode of delivery of a core module (e.g., from face-to-face to distance learning mode).

3.3. The following table defines the number of core modules that can be modified before the 25% limit is exceeded:

Number of core modules on the course	*Number of core modules that can be modified before the 25% limit is exceeded*
18-16	4
15-12	3
11-8	2
7-4	1

3.4. The 25% rule relates to all core modules irrespective of their credit weighting (i.e., 15, 20, 30, 40, 45, 60, 120 credit modules all count as one module).

3.5. For courses outside the Academic Framework, assessment of modifications that constitute 25% of the course will be made on a case-by-case basis but will be based on the principles outlined here.

3.6. A running log of all course modifications should be kept by the School Quality Committee and submitted at the end of the academic year, to the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

4. Changes that constitute a modification of <u>more than</u> 25% of the core modules of the course

4.1. Modifications that constitute more than 25% of the total course require full re-approval of the course/provision.

4.2. The procedure to be followed for the re-approval of existing courses is the same as for the approval of new courses (see Part 5 of this manual) except that:

- all current enrolled students must be consulted, usually, but not exclusively, via the Course Committee;
- transitional arrangements are specified (if applicable); and
- where the reapproved course replaces a current course or courses, External Relations Directorate (ERD) will be notified in order to provide clear information on the university website and contact applicants to provide notification of course revalidation, where applicable.

4.3. Re-approval of on-campus courses should usually be completed and approved through the Peer Review process by March of the academic year preceding the first intake on to the new course, in order that applicants can make an informed acceptance of their offer.

5. Changes that constitute a modification of <u>less than or equal to</u> 25% of the core modules on the course.

5.1. The School Quality Leader shall set a deadline, internal to the School, for early notification of all planned modifications to existing courses and modules. Based on this information, the School Quality Leader determines whether the proposed amendment(s) constitute a modification or will trigger a full course re-approval. In order to aid this process, Schools should put in place a system to log and monitor changes considered cumulatively since the last (re)approval or Academic Review of the course. The Course Modification Log will be continuously reviewed and updated by the School Quality Committee and submitted to Quality Assurance and Enhancement for monitoring.

5.2. Changes that count towards the 25% rule should be approved by the School Quality Committee by no later than end of February of the academic year prior to the academic year in which they are to be implemented. Changes that do not count towards the 25% rule should be approved by the School Quality Committee no later than one full month prior to their implementation. Exceptions to deadlines may be permitted at the discretion of the School Quality Committee where there are sufficient grounds. Examples of sufficient grounds include; external / validating body requirements; significant unexpected operational difficulties; or clear evidence that not carrying out an amendment in line with the requirements will detrimentally impact students or applicants. General improvements to the teaching and learning experience and minor operational difficulties do not count as sufficient grounds.

5.3. The modification process is not intended to be used to introduce significant

amendments that should properly be dealt with by a full reapproval process. For this reason, the School Quality Leader may refuse to deal with proposed changes as modifications if it appears that the process is not being used in the spirit for which it is intended (for example, presentation of new options to consecutive meetings of a School Quality Committee).

5.4. Subject to the provisions of the 25% rule, the School Quality Committee may approve the creation of a distance learning version of an existing module. The following will be required:

- A distance learning strategy – via completion of the Validation Annex - Strategy for Distance Blended and Online Learning;
- Learning materials for the module amounting to 3 weeks of content;
- Via the external expert's report, confirmation that the materials and online learning strategy meet the quality assurance requirements for distance learning.

5.5. In the following circumstances the Department Head is responsible for ensuring that a suitable external expert is nominated:

- proposal of a new module;
- changes to the curriculum content in an existing module;
- addition or subtraction of learning outcomes in an existing module;
- changes to the objective of learning outcomes in an existing module;
- creation of a distance learning version of an existing module.

5.6. The suitability of the external expert will be determined by the Chair of the School Quality Committee subject to the following criteria:

- The depth and relevance of subject knowledge.
- Prior experience in teaching courses at the same level or above.
- Impartiality (the nominee should not normally have any formal links with the School offering the course during the last five years as a former member of staff).
- It is possible to use a current External Examiner with the required subject knowledge.

5.7. The external expert is asked to comment, in writing, on the following issues:

- Whether the module is an academically coherent package;
- Whether the learning outcomes for the module are of an appropriate standard;
- Whether the indicative reading list for the module is appropriate and up to date;
- Whether the teaching and learning methods listed for the module are appropriate;
- Whether the assessment methods and weightings listed for the module are appropriate;
- Whether the module is an appropriate addition to the overall course and whether its place in the structure is appropriate; and

- For distance learning modules, confirmation that the materials and online learning strategy meet the quality assurance requirements for distance learning.

5.8. The Course Leader or Department Head, as appropriate, is responsible for providing the following documentation to the School Quality Committee for the consideration of modifications. All documentation should be circulated to members in advance of the meeting:

- Rationale for modification including details of how the modification affects the structure of the course(s) on which it is offered, how it affects the stated aims and objectives of the course, transitional arrangements (if applicable), communication with partner institution(s) (if applicable), communication with other School(s) where offered (if applicable) and, for new modules, examples of evidence of demand etc.
- Evidence of student consultation (see Appendix D for expected consultation activities).
- Where changes to existing modules are being proposed, a copy of the existing module specification(s) and a copy of the amended module specification(s).
- Where changes to curriculum content are being proposed, the written comments of an external expert.
- Where a new module is being proposed, the curriculum vitae of the module leader involved, and the written comments of an external expert.
- A revised version of the course specification.
- For apprenticeship courses, a revised version of the apprenticeship mapping document (if appropriate).

5.9. The School Quality Committee will evaluate the proposal against elements of the Quality Criteria (see part 4 of this manual) and other appropriate external reference points, as appropriate (see section 5.2 in Part 5 of this manual).

5.10. The School Quality Committee can either (a) approve the proposal or; (b) reject the proposal and require that it be revised and re-submitted for further consideration at a future meeting. The School Quality Committee may not impose conditions of approval.

5.11. The minutes of the School Quality Committee will record details of the discussion regarding the proposal, comments of external experts where appropriate, and the outcome agreed by the committee. The School Quality Committee Servicing Officer is responsible for forwarding the relevant paperwork to the internal departments affected.

5.12. Once a modification has been approved by the School Quality Committee, it can be delivered at the next point of delivery of that module.

5.13. The Module Leader should consult Library and Learning Services or other relevant departments to ensure the availability of funding to purchase learning resources.

5.14. When approving modifications to modules or re-approving a module/replacing

a module with an alternative, Schools should ensure that modifications are applied to all courses on which the module is offered. It is important that Department Head also consider whether such modules are offered on courses in other Schools or on collaborative courses.

5.15. Where modifications have been made to courses franchised to partner institution(s), the School Quality Committee will formally note the need to arrange for rolling out modifications to the partner. The School Collaborative Lead and Link Tutor will initiate discussions with the partner as to implementation and the partner will notify students of the changes usually but not exclusively through Course Committees. Once an agreement has been reached on the date from which the modifications are to be implemented by the partner, the School Quality Committee will approve the timescale and arrangements for implementation. Where new core modules or changes to curriculum content are involved, the School Quality Committee will need to satisfy itself that the partner is able to deliver the new content prior to commencement of delivery.

6. Normal and regular updating of core and optional modules that do not count towards the 25% rule

6.1. Changes to optional modules, require the approval of the School Quality Committee but do not constitute a modification counting towards the 25% modifications rule.

6.2. Changes to core modules that do not involve changes to curriculum content or learning outcomes, for example, the addition or removal of pre- or co-requisites; a change in the form, length, or nature of assessment; the main aims or main topics of study; or module title changes, require the approval of the School Quality Committee but do not constitute a modification counting towards the 25% modifications rule.

6.3. School Quality Committee may approve non-25 % rule modifications, on receipt of an appropriate rationale, evidence of student consultation (see Appendix D for expected consultation activities), and where appropriate, a revised module specification.

6.4. A change to a learning outcome would usually be considered as a 25% rule modification, however the School Quality Leader has the discretion to classify this as non-25% rule modification if the change is to improve the clarity of the learning outcomes without affecting a fundamental change to the meaning.

6.5. Normal and regular updating of indicative reading lists does not require approval by the School Quality Committee, any normal or regular updates to module specifications should be sent to Quality Assurance and Enhancement so that an up-to-date version of the module specification is always accessible.

7. Modifications to course titles

7.1. Stage 1 – Cease recruitment to the former title

7.1.1. Permission must be obtained from the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), or their nominee, and the Dean/Head of School. The CMO and the Dean will confirm the basic details of how the transition to the new title will be actioned, considering the following factors:

- Recruitment considerations including obligations relating to recruitment targets
- Impact on foundation year students or students for whom this course is a progression route
- Impact on collaborative partner arrangements, including consideration of in-country regulatory requirements
- Impact on other Schools (if modules are shared)
- Impact on current students
- Impact on offer holders including international students who may have been issued a CAS

7.1.2. The new title can be advertised subject to validation.

7.2. Stage 2 – Formally Approving the new title

7.2.1. Proposed modifications to course titles are considered and approved by the School Quality Committee, using the standard proforma (available from the UEL intranet (https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx).

7.2.2. All proposals must include a rationale for the title change. Evidence of consultation of all students and applicants affected must be provided (see Appendix D for expected consultation activities), both through Course Committee and individual notifications, and detailed transitional arrangements supplied. The comments of an external expert are required to confirm that the proposed change is appropriate. A revised course specification should be presented to the School Quality Committee.

7.2.3. All course title changes are reported, by the School, to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer responsible for approval and withdrawal, in order that Peer Review can be completed, and final approval obtained. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer is responsible for informing the relevant departments to ensure that all records are updated.

8. Intermediate and named awards

8.1. Where an approved course exists, it may have named or un-named intermediate awards. If it is proposed that an intermediate award should be open for recruitment as a course in its own right (e.g. a PGDip from an MSc course) approval can only be considered after permission is obtained from the Chief Marketing Officer, or their nominee, and the Dean/Head of School.

8.2. The School Quality Committee can create a course in its own right from an

intermediate award after considering a rationale and the course specification.

8.3.   Where the intermediate award was previously un-named, the comments of an external expert are required to confirm the validity of the proposed change.

8.4.   The process described in sections 8.2.and 8.3 of this section can also be adapted to add intermediate awards to existing courses, or to name/re-name previously un-named intermediate awards of existing courses.

9.   Approving a distance learning version of an on-campus course

9.1.   It has been the position of the university since the introduction of Vision 2028 that there is strategic approval for courses to validate with multiple modes of delivery and multiple intakes. Where a course is currently validated On-Campus and the School wish to add a full Distance Learning mode version of the course, the following is required:

9.1.1.   Head of School confirmation that the School wish to offer this mode of delivery.

9.1.2.   Submission of a shortened validation proforma (template to be provided by QAE), that includes:

- Technical details about the operation of the course
- The DL delivery strategy
- Support mechanisms for students provided by the course team, highlighting any additional support agreed with support services for students with Special Learning Differences (SpLDs)
- Details of any variations from the on-campus delivery for DL students

9.1.3.   Module specifications including any updates

9.1.4.   An updated Course Specification

9.1.5.   Confirmation from one or more external advisors, who are knowledgeable in the subject and distance learning, to confirm that the curriculum and assessment are achievable online.

10.   Approving an apprenticeship version of a non-apprenticeship course

10.1.   All apprenticeship courses must follow the standard and full apprenticeship course validation process. Given the many additional considerations including external funding that come with delivering an apprenticeship course vs. a non-apprenticeship course, apprenticeship proposals cannot be validated as a 'course modification'. See Part 5 of this manual.

11.   Course withdrawal

11.1. Course withdrawal principles

11.1.1.   Course withdrawals are considered and noted by the School Quality Committee using the standard proforma, available from the UEL intranet

(https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/ SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx).

11.1.2. Withdrawal consists of two stages. No action to halt recruitment will be taken until Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) receive the details from stage 1 of the form.

11.1.3. School Management Team (SMT) consider this form; if the decision is to withdraw, the servicing officer for SMT will circulate the form to QAE.

11.1.4. QAE will add the course to the withdrawal schedule and ERD to take action to halt recruitment. School Quality Committees will monitor stage 2 of the process.

11.1.5. This process is not for halting recruitment for a brief period.

11.2. Course withdrawal - Stage 1: Cease Recruitment

11.2.1. Dean/Head of School confirmation is needed to provide some basic details about what is being withdrawn and when. Confirmation is also needed to assure stakeholders that the decision to withdraw has been made with due consideration to all surrounding circumstances, including the following:

- Recruitment considerations including obligations relating to recruitment targets
- Obligations to foundation year students or students for whom this course is a progression route
- Impact on collaborative partner arrangements, including consideration of in-country regulatory requirements
- Impact on other Schools (if modules are shared)
- Impact on staff
- Impact on students
- Impact on offer holders including international students who may have been issued a CAS

11.3. Course Withdrawal - Stage 2: Student Protection

11.3.1. The quality assurance process ensures those affected, particularly students and offer holders have been appropriately involved with the withdrawal, and that agreed transitional arrangements are in place.

11.3.2. Arrangements for withdrawal are approved at the School Quality Committee, forwarded to QAE for due process audit and thereafter noted at the Education and Experience Committee. System and Courses Team are notified of the withdrawal when the due process check is complete.

11.3.3. Where students currently enrolled on or intermitting from the course will not be affected by the withdrawal, i.e., the course will continue as normal until all students complete, students should be notified both at

the Course Committee and via individual notifications.

11.3.4. Where students currently enrolled on or intermitting from the course will be affected by the proposed changes, evidence of consultation of all students affected must be provided, both through the course committee and individual notifications, and detailed transitional arrangements supplied.

11.3.5. The processes described in 9.3 and 9.4 also apply to students at collaborative partners.

11.3.6. Note: there is no process for course suspension (this process was removed in 2016/17). A course is withdrawn and then if a decision is made to bring the course back, a rationale must be made to the Education and Experience Committee. The committee will decide whether the course needs to go through the initial approval process and/or be re-validated before teaching resumes. Where a course has been withdrawn for more than two years, it will normally require revalidation.

12. Study abroad

12.1. School Quality Committee will wish to consider proposals for study abroad modules for UEL students. This is to ensure that the modules that the student plans to study map against the level, aims and learning outcomes of the student's course of study, and that appropriate arrangements are made for credit achieved via study abroad to be counted in degree classifications. Prior to the student taking modules abroad, the module content and the way in which marks or grades awarded would be mapped to UEL marks needs to be agreed upon. This needs to consider the mapping and grading system being used in the relevant country and its relation to the UK system, to ensure that different approaches to marking and grading and their relationship to the equivalent UEL mark are considered. The study abroad module will be shown on the student's transcript of study.

13. Involvement of External Examiners

13.1. Modifications may be the result, either directly or indirectly, of external examiners' comments and/or annual reports. Schools are advised to keep their external examiners informed of any proposed modifications. External examiners can be used as external experts.

14.   Manuals, Forms and Guidance notes relevant to Part 6
Available to download at:
https://uelac.sharepoint.com/sites/QualityAssuranceandEnhancement/SitePages/Forms-and-Guidance.aspx

- Module Specification Template
- Nomination of an External Adviser for a validation/review event
- Course Withdrawal Form
- Change of Course Title Form
- Course Modification Log Template
- Validation Annex - Strategy for Distance Blended and Online Learning