# External engagement on changes to existing courses and modules

*Course development and design benefits from the informal input of a range of external experts. This can include academic and professional services staff from other departments of the provider and from other providers. It may also include relevant expertise from employers, community organisations, students, and alumni* (QAA Quality Code).

External experts provide independent, impartial input and advice and ensure courses meet the academic standards and quality expected across the sector. Input from industry contacts and professional bodies also helps to design courses which are responsive to the needs of industry, enterprise and employers. The University's Education Strategy includes an objective to provide a range of opportunities for students to apply their learning, including the integration of experiential, work-related and entrepreneurial learning in the curriculum.

This external engagement framework concerns changes to existing courses and modules, although a flexible approach can be applied depending on the context and/or any professional body requirements. The framework has been based on the University's approach to new course approvals, where the approval route and external consultation are risk-based according to the quantity of new provision, and it has also drawn on current work on how minor and major changes are defined for the Curriculum Update. The template report for seeking external input on course developments also includes ideas for what to consult on.

An indication is given below of the activity which meet the timelines for the Curriculum Update process. Departments can, however, determine how they wish to implement the framework and how to collect and record the supporting evidence. Activity could take place earlier, for example when NSS review results are available, or as part of the exam board process over the summer or alternatively the external engagement could take place as part of reflection embedded in the ARC report in the autumn term. Earlier discussions are likely to be needed where significant changes are planned, particularly where they would lead to approval via an approval event and panel. Please note, requests for course/module changes past the published Curriculum Update deadline should still be submitted with evidence of external engagement.

**Departments should ensure:**

- they consult/liaise with external experts depending on the type of change and provide information about any requests for changes via the Curriculum Update
- that External Examiners have the information they need in order to be able to comment on any changes to academic provision as part of their annual report
- that External Examiners are only asked to comment on the areas that fall within their role. These are set out in the External Examiner role and Annual Review of Courses report template.
- that External Examiners are contacted separately on assessment policy/process, for example, they would be consulted in advance on exam questions.

## External Engagement Framework – Suggested timeline

- Departments start discussions about curriculum updates and timelines
- Autumn term department away days / planning meetings / ARC[1] discussions / Student Voice Groups (if any in this timeframe)
- Strategic alignment and PSRB / external requirements / QAA benchmark statements reviewed

- Prepare outline of revised module/course
- Review potential impact of changes, such as on students, staff, professional bodies, employer/placement providers, policy, processes and systems, other departments, and links with Partner Institutions.
- Market research for significant changes to existing courses
- Undertake student consultation
- **External Examiner and/or Industry consultation (level of consultation required detailed in Appendix A)**

- Following consultation during design and consultation stage update course/module information
- Submit the changes on Curriculum Update for approval, meeting the relevant deadline and providing a rationale on who has been consulted and how this has been considered.
- Provide the supporting documentation (including updated programme specifications, module maps, or new module form to QUAD (if applicable)) as set out in the 'Making changes to academic provision' guidance.

[1] ARC – Annual Review of Courses

| Type of Change | Example changes[2] | Consultation required |
|---|---|---|
| **Minor amendments (non-core CMA information)** | Minor change to course title / module title, credit value of existing modules, module syllabus | The current External Examiner (or other relevant external contact depending on the nature of the course/change) to be informed |
| **Major amendments (core CMA information)** | Significant changes to course title / module learning outcomes, significant change to method of teaching, delivery, and assessment | The current External Examiner (or other relevant external contact depending on the nature of the course/change) consulted prior to any changes taking place |
| **Extensive change / re-design** | Significant redesign of course and curriculum, new method of delivery or new site of delivery | Independent External Academic Input<br>External academic, and/or<br>employer / industry contact depending on the nature of the course/change.<br>Payment would be available as part of the consultation and on completion of their report |

**Document review information**

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[2] More detailed changes are provided in Appendix A

## External Engagement Framework - Appendix A

| Type of change | Consultation | Example changes |
|---|---|---|
| **Minor amendments:**<br>▪ Changes that are classed as minor for Curriculum Update (non-core CMA information or areas that departments can update) | The current External Examiner (or other relevant external contact depending on the nature of the course/change) to be **informed.** | ▪ Minor change to course title / module title<br>▪ Module syllabus<br>▪ Methods of assessment / weightings<br>▪ Minor change to course structure<br>▪ Credit value of existing modules<br>▪ Minor updates to course/module learning aims and outcomes<br>▪ Introduction of an exit award, pathway, or qualifier (not seen as a new course approval)<br>▪ Mode of study (e.g. part-time, blended learning)<br>▪ Amendment to, or addition/removal of requisites |
| **Major amendments:**<br>▪ Changes that are classed as major for Curriculum Update (core CMA information)<br>▪ Significant levels of change, revised content and/or new modules which would be classed as a category 2 course approval if the course was being proposed as a new course. | The current External Examiner (or other relevant external contact depending on the nature of the course/change) **consulted** prior to any changes taking place. | ▪ Change to award (e.g. BA/BSc)<br>▪ Significant change to course title<br>▪ Significant changes to course/module learning aims and outcomes<br>▪ Significant changes to course structure involving core and compulsory modules<br>▪ Introduction of new modules (not similar to existing modules)<br>▪ Significant change to methods of teaching, delivery, and assessment |
| **Extensive changes/re-design:**<br>▪ Level of change which would be classed as a category 3 course approval (validation panel) if being proposed as a new course | Independent external academic input (external academic, and /or employer / industry contacts or professional bodies) required. Payment would be available as part of the consultation and on completion of their report. | ▪ Significant redesign of a course or programme<br>▪ Significant change to curriculum<br>▪ Introduction of a new curriculum area in a significant volume of the course.<br>▪ A significantly new method of delivery or new site of delivery |