

Quick Guide on Quality Assurance Programme and Module Development

Main principles

Programme and module development involves the creation, modification, or withdrawal of a programme or module at the University. Once students have accepted an offer to study at the University, programmes and modules should not 'materially change'. However, changes may be supported by clear rationale (eg: a programme or module is being withdrawn because it is consistently low-recruiting), and changes which are made for sound pedagogical reasons will always be considered.

The University employs a risk-based approach to programme and module development, following the guidance of the Competition and Markets Authority. The higher the risk associated with a change (i.e. it will have a significant impact upon students), or the later that a change is made, means that a higher level of approval and consultation is required.

Student consultation

Students are major stakeholders in the University's decision-making processes, and play an important role in shaping their own educational experience. Thus, when changes which will affect students' educational experience are planned, student consultation is imperative. The purpose of student consultation is to determine whether changes should be made, and how to manage the impact of a change.

Methods of student consultation include: emails to students and applicants; Canvas announcements; lecture shout-outs; Staff Student Forums (SSFs).

Creation of a new programme: a two-part process

The first part consists of submitting a Programme Proposal (Part A: Strategic approval) (or an Approval in Principle, depending on the type of programme being proposed) to the respective College, which is accompanied by market research, and an explanation of how the new programme aligns with the College's aims and priorities.

The second part consists of submitting a New Programme Proposal (Part B: Operational approval), which is accompanied by a programme specification, as well as curriculum, assessment, and skills mapping documents. Prior to submission, all documents are reviewed by an external adviser, whose feedback ensures that the programme is relevant, challenging, and equips students with the skills they need.

Once Part B has received College approval, it will be submitted to the relevant University Committee for verification by the Chair, and paperwork will be submitted to the Curriculum Management Team for action.

Modification of an existing programme

Major programme modifications consist of significant changes, which are likely to have an impact upon students, eg: the withdrawal or introduction of compulsory modules within a programme; major modifications require College level approval. Minor programme modifications consist of small changes, which have no impact (or a minimal, undetectable impact) on students, eg: a minor modification to a programme's outcomes and aims; minor modifications require School level approval, at a minimum. Some programme changes do not require any formal approval, eg: changing the semester in which a module is delivered.

Exceptional programme modifications consist of considerable changes, which are likely to have a large-scale impact upon the programme and students, eg: the addition of a placement or study abroad year. Exceptional programme modifications require University level approval.

Creation, modification, and withdrawal of modules

Module changes which impact the student experience include: removing or introducing a compulsory module; significant changes to module assessment on a compulsory or optional module; significant changes to the module description and/or learning outcomes, which alter what the students will be learning. Such changes require a high level of student consultation (eg: gaining student feedback on the proposed change).

Module changes which have minimal/no impact on the student experience include: minor changes to the module learning outcomes and description; minor changes to the assessment; changes introduced as a result of, and in response to, student feedback. Such changes require a low level of student consultation (eg: informing students of the change, but not requiring a response).

Withdrawal of an existing programme

Programme withdrawal is a permanent process. Alternatively, a programme may be suspended for up to two years, after which the programme will be withdrawn (unless a programme reactivation form is completed). Withdrawing, suspending, or reactivating a programme requires approval by the School Education Committee, College Quality Assurance and Approval Committee, College Board, and the University.

Ideally, if a programme is being withdrawn, current and/or prospective students will be able to complete it as planned, thereby minimising the impact upon students (it will be 'taught out'). However, if a programme cannot be taught out, and a serious risk arises to students' continuation of their studies, the University's Student Protection Plan may be triggered, which outlines the University's measures to protect its students. To view the Student Protection Plan, visit:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/study/applicants/student-protection-plan>

Further information

For more information regarding Programme and Module Development, visit:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/policy/programmemodule/index.aspx>