

# Curriculum Update: Changes to existing provision

This guidance is aimed at both academic and professional services staff that are involved with the review and submission of updated courses and modules. All courses and modules are updated annually as part of the ongoing cycle of monitoring and review.

This guidance is part of a series of themes:

- Theme 1: Curriculum Update overview
- Theme 2: Consultation and justifications
- Theme 3: Teaching, learning and assessment
- Theme 4: Late changes

This guidance includes:

What is Curriculum Update?

Roles and responsibilities

Impact of changes

Approval routes

Timelines

## Further advice and guidance

- Further advice and guidance is provided on the [system](#) and [timelines](#) and how to request changes.
- Departments are welcome to contact the team at any time to seek advice ([crt@essex.ac.uk](mailto:crt@essex.ac.uk) or [quad@essex.ac.uk](mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk)).
- The [External Engagement Framework](#) enables Departments to consider which level of external consultation changes to courses and modules require.
- The [Organisational Development team](#) produce a range of resources which help staff who are designing courses and modules.
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education: [Advice and guidance: Course design and development](#) (November 2018)
- [Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice](#) (November 2015)
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) [Guide to providing information to prospective undergraduate students](#) (2017)

# What is Curriculum Update?

## Curriculum Update

Curriculum Update is the annual **process of reviewing and updating every course and module**, to prepare for the new academic year and provide up-to-date information for students and applicants.

Course and module developments can be triggered by a range of activity, such as:

- Advances and insight from academic research and expertise, for example in the subject area and new styles of assessment and delivery
- Student feedback
- External Examiner reports
- Professional body and industry influences
- Changes in market demand and student needs

**Decisions are made based on the information we publish and share about our courses and modules. It's important for current and prospective students to be given accurate and reliable information at the time they're making their course and module choices.**

## How are requests submitted?

- Members of staff from departments are trained to submit requests via the **Curriculum Update system**, the tool through which all requests for change are submitted, reviewed, discussed and approved.
- Curriculum Update is accessed via: <https://internal.essex.ac.uk/CurriculumUpdateEssex>

## When do requests have to be submitted by?

- Updates are submitted from **December to the end of February**.
- This allows course and module information to be updated in time to feed into the steps that follow.
- For further information on the timeline for updating course provision, please see the charts towards the end of this document.

## Information available to support departments in their decision making

Reports are available through Curriculum Update which can help departments understand the impact of any proposed changes. These include:

- Module enrolment numbers
- Where modules appear in course structures as core or compulsory
- Where modules appear in option groups
- Reports that relate to admissions and recruitment are available through Tableau, this includes current and historic information on the number of applicants and their conversion to enrolment.

## Support

- The Course Records Team run a Virtual Office during the Curriculum Update period.
- If you have any queries about any of the information in this document or would like to discuss possible changes before submitting them, then please contact the relevant QUAD Manager:

Faculty of Arts and  
Humanities:  
Kayt Newman

Faculty of Science  
and Health:  
Karen Leeder

Faculty of Social  
Sciences:  
Hannah Hammond

# The impact of changes and what to consider

Think about the following areas and when changes are best introduced.

## The impact on students (current and future)

- What are the positive and any potential negative impacts of change on students?
- Is there a chance the change might affect how a student feels about their course or module choice?
- How will you communicate changes and their benefits to current and prospective students so they have the information they need, when they need it?
- Remember students currently not attending who will return to study in future, e.g. students on a placement year or year abroad, or currently intermitting their studies.
- Are any students taking the course as a special syllabus?
- Are there any varying patterns of study, including full-time, part-time and modular?
- Will the change impact international students (in terms of their CAS / Tier 4 application)?

## The courses and modules the change applies to

- Does the change apply to all versions of a course or module?

## The impact of module changes on the course structure

- Will the balance of workload and modules across the year be affected? For example, changes to the term a module is offered in may change the course structure and may result in an imbalance between terms – if so, are more changes needed to even out the workload?

## The impact on module and course aims, learning outcomes and assessment

- For example, if passing an existing module ensures students are able to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills, will the change still guarantee the learning outcomes will be met? If not, changes may also be required to the course or module learning outcomes.
- Will the course remain balanced? For example, considering the subjects and skills developed across the course, and considering assessment methods and timing?

## The impact where modules are pre-requisites, co-requisites or anti-requisites

- Have you checked that students will have taken, or will take, the correct modules?

## The impact on other departments

- Will the change affect a department which contributes to a course?
- Are you changing a module which is part of courses in any other departments?
- Are there any links to provision offered by Essex Pathways, such as foundation year courses?

## The impact on links with partner institutions

- Are there any links to provision offered by any of our partner institutions (including UEIC, Kaplan Singapore and University of Essex Online courses)?

## The impact on recognition by any professional, statutory or regulatory bodies

- Will the change continue to meet their requirements?
- Do you need their consent or a particular approval process?

## The operational impact of changes

- Is there any impact on the delivery and support for the course or module, for example timetabling, admissions requirements such as DBS checks, or IT resources to support teaching methods? Advice can be sought from the relevant department professional services teams.

## Transition arrangements

- Are any transition arrangements needed if a change is to be phased in while previous and current versions run alongside each other?

# Roles and Responsibilities

A number of colleagues across the university are involved in the approval and implementation of a course or module changes, the below roles are directly involved with the change and approval process:

## Professional Services

- The **Course Records Team (CRT)** (part of the Quality and Academic Development team) manage the Curriculum Update system and are responsible for actioning the majority of changes, once approved, on the course records system (ESIS) (some changes are actioned by the department: see the types of change and approval routes tables included in this guidance). CRT can provide advice on the feasibility of proposals where these involve more complex structures and changes, and guidance on how best to implement changes through our systems.
- Once the change is actioned on ESIS, this information feeds into other university systems and processes – either automatically within systems or by triggering action by other teams (e.g. the Timetabling and Room Bookings team take the course structure data to build a timetable; the RPS rule data is used to calculate final module grades; CER update marketing materials).

## Department

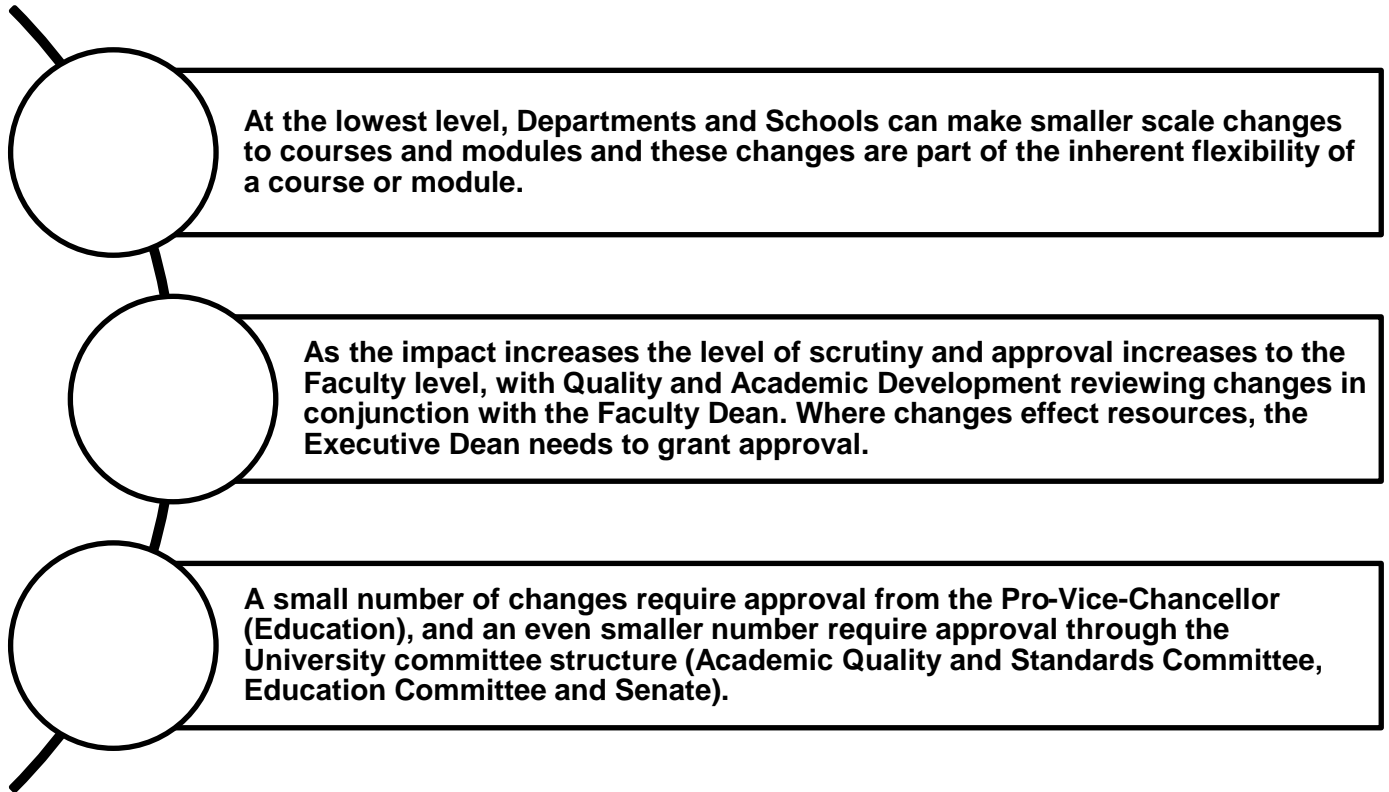
- **Directors of Education (DoE) and Heads of Department (HoD)** are responsible for the academic oversight of changes made within their department. They ensure that the courses and modules taught within the department are reviewed using the information available to them in order for these to be submitted by the deadline and approval processed to allow the updated information to be presented to prospective and current students in a timely manner.
- **Module and course leads, the DoE and HoD** should discuss appropriate changes, considering the impact and who to consult (see pages 2 and 3). Proposed changes should be reviewed within the department to ensure these are appropriate in relation to the overarching course and department-wide approaches. Relevant stakeholders should be consulted (including students and linked departments) before the changes are submitted for action or approval.
- **Department Managers** (and other department professional services colleagues) are responsible for submitting requested changes through the Curriculum Update system, or to the Quality and Academic Development Manager (QUAD Manager). Department Managers should also check that pieces of information they are responsible for updating are amended once changes have been approved (see types of change and approval route table).

## Faculty

- The **Faculty Dean (Undergraduate/Postgraduate) (FD)** has oversight of all taught education related matters within their Faculty, and is able to provide guidance on course and module design and the education strategy of a department. They are the approving authority in a large number of changes. They work closely with the QUAD Manager and in some cases have delegated authority to the QUAD Manager for the approval of more routine changes. Where a change requires a higher level of approval (for example, the Executive Dean or Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) (PVCE), they will provide feedback to the department where needed, and recommend the proposal for approval.
- The Faculty-based **QUAD Managers** review changes submitted to ensure that all relevant information is provided in order to assess a proposal and review the proposed change against wider university policy and external requirements. Where needed, they will liaise with the department and other teams to assess the impact of a change and prepare a case for consideration by the FD. QUAD managers can provide advice and guidance ahead of changes being submitted for approval, and can help departments to ensure that all relevant information is included in rationales and supporting documentation.

# How to make changes and their approval routes

Approval routes escalate depending on the scale and impact a change will have on students, staff, policy, processes and systems.



Where changes are submitted late, have more complex interactions with processes or policy, they may be escalated to a higher approval route.

## Rationale for change

For any amendment, departments must provide a clear rationale. Any request without this will be returned to departments to complete. The rationale enables the QUAD Manager and the relevant approver to understand the proposed change in the landscape of the particular department, course or module the proposal applies to and will enable a smooth approval process. A rationale should include:

- The reasoning behind the change – this is not just a description of the change, but the academic justification as to why the change is being made.
- Information on who has been consulted and how this has been taken into account.

## Approval Routes

The tables below map the approval level, approval route and further information needed for changes to courses and modules as follows:

- **Type of change** – describes the overarching nature of the change.
- **Approval level** – indicates the highest level of approval usually needed to implement a change (consultation normally takes place with those lower on the approval route).
- **Responsible for system update once approved** – indicates who is responsible for making changes to the system once updates are approved.
- **Further information** – details useful further information, where additional supporting documentation might be required or more information on the specific approval route if this differs from the standard routes shown in the table.

## Examples of types of change

- Occasionally, Departments and Schools may discover typographical or spelling corrections that need to be made to course or module aims or learning outcomes, or perhaps may need to rephrase to make an outcome clearer. In these cases the department would not need to seek a higher level of approval as the amendment would not change what the outcome is.
- In addition, changes to coursework that would have no impact on the mapping of assessment to learning outcomes, would not involve the addition of a new type of assessment, or the removal of an existing type. These could result in small changes in weighting between assessments.
- The level of approval increases where more extensive amendments will be made that have a greater impact on the educational experience. For example. This could include introducing a new deliver method or significant changes to learning aims and outcomes.
- Changes to courses and modules can be complex and a combination of smaller incremental changes at a modular level can build to become a major change where the amendments result in the course level aims and learning outcomes being revised.

### **Case Study 1 – Department level approval**

A module leader would like to update a module to include recent developments in the field of study. The module syllabus is updated and the topics taught in each week and the bibliography but the title, assessment pattern and learning outcomes are not amended. They have also amended the weighting between elements of approved coursework items for the module.

The changes to the module can be approved at the department level as the overall aim of the module and assessment pattern are not affected, and there is no impact on the overall course aims, learning outcomes or structure.

### **Case Study 2 – Faculty Approval**

A department has reviewed the curriculum of a course against the QAA benchmark statement for the subject and has decided to introduce a new core module, change an existing compulsory module to become optional and has clarified the language used in the programme specification to ensure this is clear to students. The existing modules are weighted 100% coursework, but the weighting of coursework items has been amended in order to introduce new elements of assessment in order to ensure that particular skills that students are expected to achieve are developed in an incremental way, and the learning outcomes of the module have been reviewed and amended.

The changes in the mix of core, compulsory and optional modules requires QUAD approval and should be submitted via Curriculum Update. The changes to the programme specification can be approved at the department level as the overall intention of the aims and learning outcomes are not affected. The department should update the module map to ensure that the amendment to the structure reflects how the course meets the programme learning outcomes.

The changes to assessment at the module level also require Faculty Dean approval as new elements of assessment have been introduced and the learning outcomes of the module have been amended. The department should submit the assessment changes through Curriculum Update, accompanied by an updated module outline.

### **Case Study 3 – Faculty Dean Approval, PSRB requirements.**

A department has reviewed the curriculum of a course against external requirements for a validating body (PSRB).

As a result, the course has been redesigned with a new core module introduced and changes to assessment made at module level. As a result of these changes the overall aims and learning outcomes for the course have been reviewed and revised to ensure that they are still relevant and correct and meet the requirements of the PSRB.

The changes require approval from QUAD and the Faculty Dean as these affect the overall course structure, assessment patterns within modules and overall aims and learning outcomes.

The department is responsible for ensuring that any requirements of the PSRB are met within the curriculum and updating them of any changes, and organising opportunity for the PSRB to review, where appropriate. The department should submit the course structure changes and modular assessment changes through Curriculum Update, this should be accompanied by an updated programme specification and module map.

### **Late Changes**

- In some cases, what may appear to be a smaller modification may have an increased impact once the deadline for changes has passed. This is because of the impact that the change will have on the student experience, the fact that the change may be surprising to students, and the complexity to introduce at a late stage due to systems and processes that may already be in action.
- For further information on submitting late changes please see the guidance “Theme 4: Late Changes”

### **Case Study 4 – Timing of a change results in an increased impact**

A department has had a sudden change in staffing and needs to reorganise the teaching on some modules. As a result of this, it is proposed that the teaching on an optional module is moved from spring to autumn term. eNROL has opened and 138 students have chosen to take the module, from 5 different departments.

Before the deadline for changes, this type of change would be minor. However, as students have begun to select the module the effects of the change become much more significant in terms of impact of students, systems and the complexity to introduce.

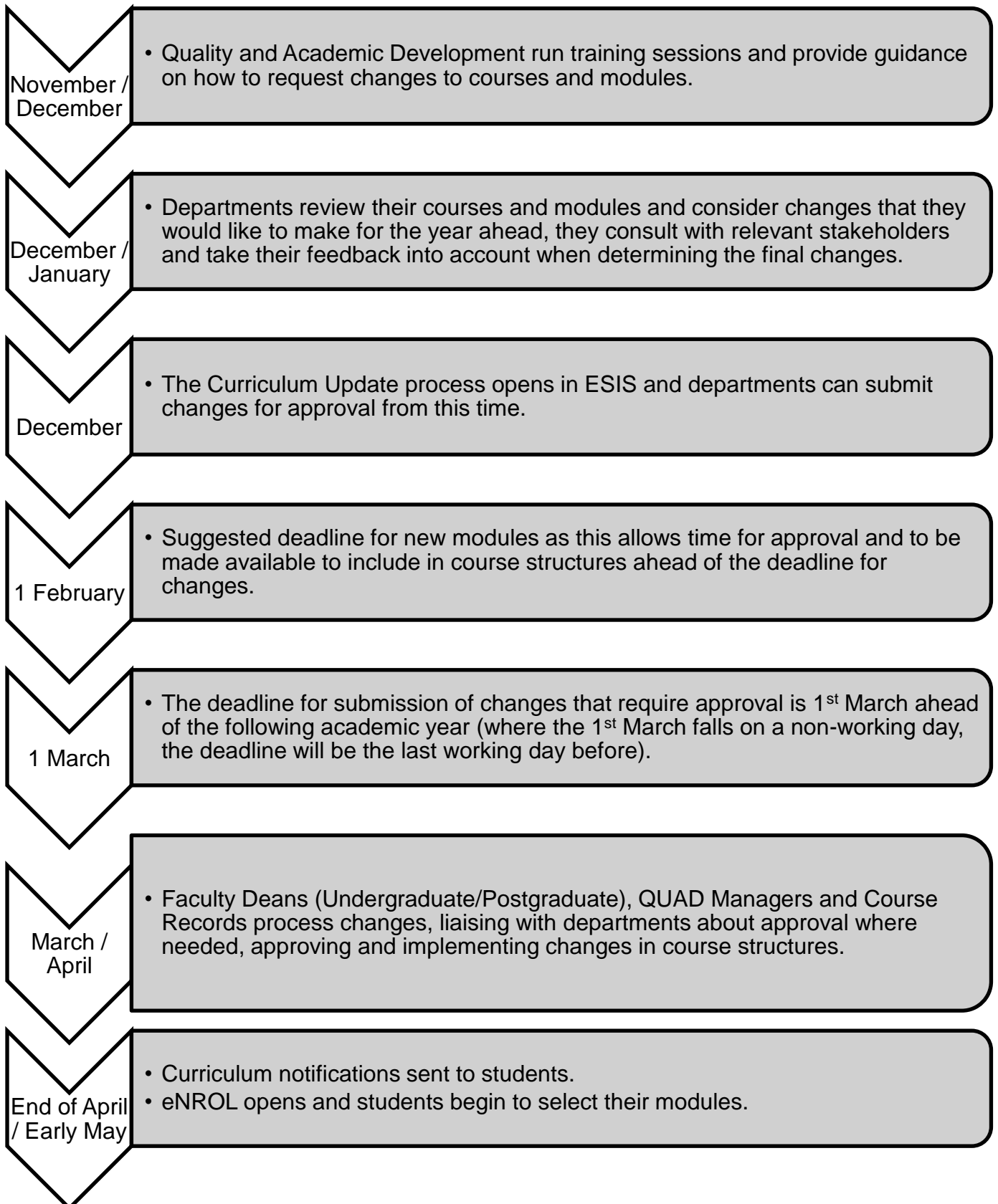
**Students** 138 students have chosen the module based on the information that was presented to them. Moving the term may cause an imbalance in the number of modules taken in each term and have a detrimental effect on their workload, leading the students to review their module selections. If the deadline to select modules has passed, students would not have the ability to change their selections. The late change could therefore breach guidelines on published information and has the potential to significantly impact their learning.

**Systems** In order to implement this change, the course records team would need to re-roll all 138 students, removing module enrolments from the student records and re-adding them manually. The timetabling team would need to move the teaching manually at a late stage working around the existing timetables. The change is extremely likely to result in timetable clashes for students that need to be manually resolved by the timetabling team or lead to a student being unable to take their chosen optional module and forced to make a change to their selections.

# Timelines for changes

The [timeline of key dates for course and module approval and updates](#) shows an overview of key dates and deadlines for submission of new courses and modules, and making changes to courses and modules, and the associated processes in order to show the interactions between these.

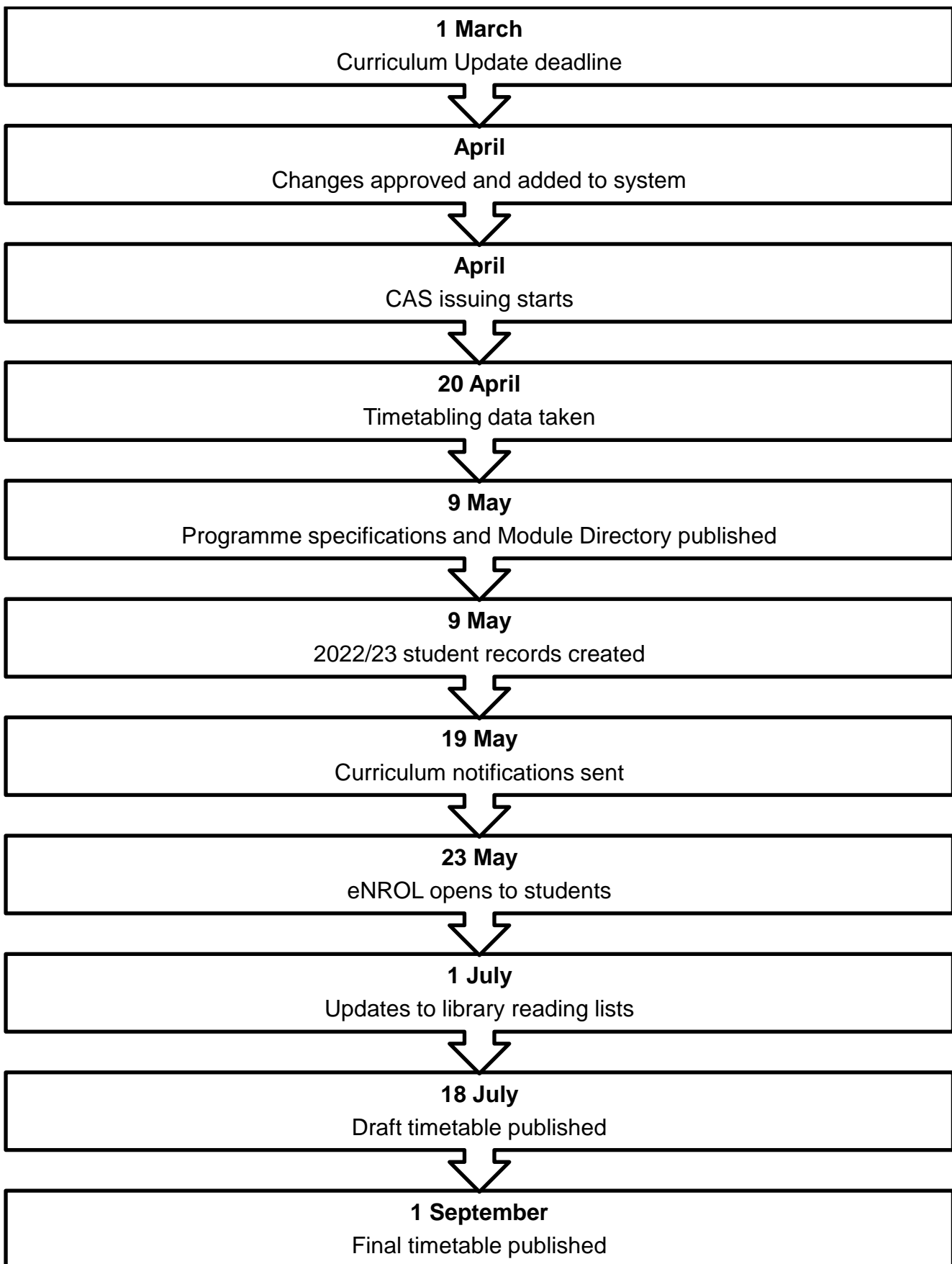
Key dates associated with making changes to provision are:





# What comes next?

The 1 March deadline is only the start of the activity to prepare provision for the upcoming year:



For this reason, only exceptional changes are permitted after the 1 March deadline. For further information on late changes please see the guidance "Theme 4: Late Changes".

## Approval Routes – Changes to Courses

Type of Change	How to submit a request for approval		Approval Level Changes may be referred on for a higher level of approval in some cases (e.g. where a number of changes combine or in more complex cases)						Responsible for system update once approved		Further information
	Curriculum Update	QUAD Manager	Dept	QUAD	Faculty Dean	Exec Dean	PVC(E)	AQSC/EC/Senate	CRT	Dept	
<b>Course Structure and Content</b>											
Course structure (change to status of modules as core / compulsory / optional; term changes)	✓			✓					✓		If changes are extensive, the department may need to submit an updated module map to show how the new structure meets the approved aims and learning outcomes.
Option groups	✓		✓						✓		
Programme specification (aims, learning outcomes and HEAR summary)	✓				✓				✓	✓	An updated programme specification in Curriculum Update system is updated by CRT. Module map with updates and tracked changes should be submitted for approval by the department.
Course title		✓		✓					✓		QUAD will liaise with Communications and External Relations (CER).
Credit model	✓				✓				✓		
JACS/HECoS codes	✓								✓		Request should be sent to Planning and Data Insights.
Length of course		✓			✓	✓			✓		Faculty Dean for academic approval and Executive Dean for resourcing.
Change of start date		✓		✓					✓		
<b>Admissions and Recruitment</b>											
Exceptional fees									✓		Requests should be submitted to <a href="#">Student Funding and Fees Group</a> for approval.
Course entry requirements (amendment to criteria agreed with admissions)							✓				Requests should be sent to the relevant <a href="#">undergraduate</a> or <a href="#">postgraduate</a> Admissions team for processing and approval.
Change to admitting status		✓			✓	✓			✓		The relevant <a href="#">undergraduate</a> or <a href="#">postgraduate</a> Admissions team should be consulted.
<b>Course Versions and Progression</b>											
<a href="#">Variation to the Rules of Assessment (RoA)</a>		✓						✓			The Assessment team ( <a href="#">Exam Boards</a> ) should be consulted and the proposal considered by the RoA Advisory Group before approval by Education

											Committee and Senate. Updates are published online by the Assessment team.
Introduction of a year zero, placement year or year abroad to an existing course		✓				✓			✓		Treated as a new course approval, contact the relevant QUAD Manager for advice.
Mode of study (e.g part time, modular, blended learning, distance learning)		✓				✓			✓		Further consultation may be required with other teams, e.g Partnerships with regards to distance learning.
Introduction of an exit award		✓				✓			✓		Exit awards can either be an award that is available to students unable to fulfill the requirements of the course in which they are enrolled but who have completed the requirements of another qualification. This may also refer to courses that are not open for admission but are available for students to transfer onto.
Introduction of a pathway (open for admission)		✓				✓			✓		Pathways are combinations of modules under a master course that lead to a different title, these can be admitted to, or only open for transfer for existing students (see below).
Introduction of a pathway (not open for admission, only transfer for existing students)		✓				✓			✓		
Introduction of a qualifier (only awarded on exit)		✓				✓			✓		Qualifiers refer to a combination of modules that students can take that lead to a different course title on award by the exam board (e.g students on the BA Liberal Arts take a defined number of credits in Politics and can opt in to be awarded a BA Liberal Arts (with Politics) by the exam board.
Temporary suspension of recruitment		✓				✓	✓		✓		Department should complete the <u>Course Suspension and Discontinuation Form</u> . Courses and modules that have not recruited in the previous three years should be withdrawn except where a case to retain the provision is approved by the Executive Dean.
Reinstatement of a suspended course		✓				✓	✓		✓		Request should be emailed to the QUAD Manager ( <a href="mailto:quad@essex.ac.uk">quad@essex.ac.uk</a> ). Any updates to the course prior to its reintroduction should be made ahead of the appropriate deadlines and submitted in the indicated way, dependant on the change.
Discontinuation		✓				✓	✓		✓		Completed <u>Course Suspension and Discontinuation Form</u> sent to the Faculty Executive Dean for approval, and reported to Faculty Education Committee (FEC) and Academic Quality and Standards Committees (AQSC).

## Approval Routes – Changes to Modules

Type of Change	How to submit a request for approval		Approval Level Changes may be referred on for a higher level of approval in some cases (e.g. where a number of changes combine or in more complex cases)					Responsible for system update once approved		Further information
	Curriculum Update	QUAD Manager	Dept	QUAD	Faculty Dean	Exec Dean	PVC(E)	CRT	Dept	
<b>Module details</b>										
Module title	✓			✓				✓		
Credit value	✓			✓				✓		
Amendment to, or addition/removal of requisites	✓			✓				✓		
JACs/HECoS code	✓							✓		
Module directory (no impact on items that require a higher level of approval)			✓						✓	CRT will update all items included in Curriculum Update. Departments responsible for teaching staff, contact information and module supervisors.
Site of delivery (e.g. change of campus, delivery on an off-campus site)	✓				✓			✓		If the site of delivery does not have an existing arrangement with the university, this may require a higher level of approval. Departments should contact the relevant QUAD Manager to discuss.
PSRB accreditation			✓						✓	Departments are responsible for maintaining links with PSRBs. If changes affect any of the items that require a higher level approval, these would still need to follow the university process. More information is available on the <a href="#">QUAD webpages</a> .
<b>Module status</b>										
Term offered (module in option group, no impact on requisites or structure)	✓		✓					✓		The option group should also be amended to ensure the correct term is showing.  If the module is detailed in the structure, the course structure should be amended.  If the change has an effect on structure or requisites, this would then require QUAD approval.
Make a module active/inactive	✓			✓				✓		Making a module inactive makes it unavailable for student to enrol onto, but the module remains available to be made active again in future years.  Discontinuing a module removes it from course records and it would not be available to make active again in future. Courses and modules that have not recruited in the previous three years should

										be withdrawn except where a case to retain the provision is approved by the Executive Dean.  Where changing the availability of a module would affect core/compulsory components of a structure, the department should submit the structural change as in the table above.
Discontinue a module	✓			✓				✓		
Module enrolment cap	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		Approved module enrolment caps should be reviewed on an annual basis.
Manual approval	✓				✓			✓		eNROL auto approves student module selections, departments can request for registrations on modules to be manually approved. Modules that have an approved enrolment cap will automatically have manual approval on order to manage the cap.
Availability of module (e.g outside option, study abroad)	✓			✓				✓		Departments may need to consult with Essex Abroad or other departments about suitability of the module.
<b>Assessment</b>										
Weighting of exams to coursework (change to RPS rule)	✓			✓				✓		
Weighting of reassessment exams to coursework (reassessment RPS rule)	✓			✓				✓		
Timing or length of exam	✓			✓				✓		
Format of the exam paper			✓							Department should submit the correct format to the Assessment Team ( <u>Exams Office</u> ) by the given deadlines.
Weighting between existing approved coursework items	✓		✓					✓	✓	Coursework items should be updated in FASer by the department.
Addition or removal of an assessment type	✓			✓				✓	✓	Coursework items should be updated in FASer by the department once approved.

# Snapshot

## What is Curriculum Update?

- The annual **process of reviewing and updating every course and module**, to prepare for the new academic year and provide up-to-date information for students and applicants.
- It's often used as the route to capture and approve **changes resulting from Education Action Plans or other education initiatives**.

## Why is it important?

- It captures information **published to applicants and sent to students** so they know what updates have been made to their course and can make decisions about what courses and modules to choose.
- The information is **used by other departments and partner institutions** in their course design, for example where they draw on modules from another department and for joint courses
- The information is also **used by teams across the University**: to create the teaching timetable; to check library resources; to feed into Exam Board processes; to generate information for award certificates and transcripts/HEAR statements; and for external reporting
- The system is used to **provide a picture of the volume and type of changes** being submitted each year.

## Who's involved?

- Staff**: Both academic and Professional Services staff bring their experience, research and expertise, and consider fit with other courses and department approaches, current process and policy, and any developments needed
- Students**: provide feedback throughout their studies and are involved in developing courses and modules
- External input**: External Examiners, professional bodies, industry contacts and others provide input and comment on developments.
- Deans and QUAD**: Review and approve changes, and update course records

## How are requests submitted?

- Via the Curriculum Update system**, the tool through which all requests for change are submitted, reviewed, discussed and approved.

## When does it happen?

- Updates are submitted from **December to the end of February**.
- This allows course and module information to be updated in time to feed into the steps that follow.