

Curriculum Update: Late Changes

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: Changes to existing provision (overview)
- Theme 2: Consultation and justifications
- Theme 3: Teaching, learning and assessment
- Theme 4: Late changes

This guidance includes:

Overview

Case studies

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 or 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)

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

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Karen Leeder

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Overview

Why do we need a deadline for making changes to courses and modules for the next academic year?

- The deadline for changes is set in order to ensure that prospective and current students have access to the correct information when making choices about their courses or modules. This is a key CMA requirement that the University has to meet.
- The deadline also ensures that the relevant systems and teams have access to the correct information to prepare for the year ahead.

Does this mean that departments can't submit any late changes?

- No, it doesn't. However, because of the reasons above, late changes will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the change could not have been foreseen. For example:
 - Staff turnover (where all other options to cover the provision have been explored)
 - Changes to PSRB requirements
 - Changes to the QAA benchmark
- In all cases, it is useful for departments to discuss the changes and the reason for the late request with the relevant QUAD Manager and Faculty Dean, while a change may not be possible there may be alternate solutions that can be found.

If the late change had been submitted before the deadline, it wouldn't have needed Faculty Dean approval. Why do late changes need higher levels of approval?

- Changes requested after the deadline are likely to be escalated to a higher level of approval due to their increased impact.
- 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.

Do we still need to consult with students and external experts about late changes?

- Yes, external consultation is still required in relation to late changes. Further student communications, consultation and advice on the options available to students may be required, depending on the nature of the change.

What additional information needs to be included on Curriculum Update requests for late changes?

- All late changes that need approval must contain the following information in the Department Comment field at submission:
 - Why the change is late
 - Why it was not considered before the deadline
 - Why it cannot wait until the next academic year.

What if the late change is rejected?

- If it is determined that a late change would have a significant impact and therefore cannot be approved, then there may be other solutions the department could implement in order to achieve their aim.
- For example, it might not be possible for a department to change a module title (which is considered core-CMA information) after the deadline. However, the department could still add extra content to the syllabus or module description and then request the change to the title for the following year.

Case studies

A late change to assessment

A department would like to change the RPS rule from 100% exam, to 90% exam and 10% coursework in order to introduce summative quizzes ahead of seminars. The request is submitted in September for October introduction. The rationale for the change is to increase student engagement due to a high level of failure on the module and remove the increased risk that a single point of assessment creates.

The department is not able to change the RPS rule for the module at this time, because the request is late and would change the assessment pattern from the one students may have based their module choice on. No alerts had been raised about the assessment of the module prior to the request.

The department is able to introduce the quizzes as a formative element, in order to track effectiveness ahead of the next annual update, and are asked to consider whether a 10% change is significant enough to address the concerns with regards to over reliance on the exam.

A late change to a module content and title

A department would like to change the title of a module which is core and compulsory on various courses. The request is submitted in September for October introduction. The rationale for the change is that there's a particular topic in the module which the department would like to be clearer and reflected in the title. The new content would not result in a change to the aims and outcomes of the module.

The department isn't able to change the title of the module at this stage as this could be seen as a change to the core information about the module very late and students have already chosen their modules. The department can, however, still embed the new topic into the module. This can be reflected in a minor change to the module description to refer to the new topic. If the department wished to change the module title, this could be done during the next round of changes.

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. 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 and systems.

Moving the term may cause an imbalance in the number of modules taken in each term and have a detrimental effect on student workload. If the deadline to select modules has passed, students would not have the ability to change their selections, which could breach guidelines on published information.

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.

Snapshot

Why do we need a deadline for changes?

- Late changes refer to any requests that are made **after the deadline of 1 March has passed**.
- The deadline for changes is set in order to ensure that prospective and current students have access to the correct information when making choices about their courses or modules. This is a **key CMA requirement** that the University has to meet.
- The deadline also ensures that the **relevant systems and teams** have access to the correct information to prepare for the year ahead.

What is a necessary late change?

- Late changes will only be considered in **exceptional circumstances** where the change could not have been foreseen.
- This could include changes to staff turnover, updated PSRB requirements or changes to a QAA benchmark.
- In all cases, departments should **discuss the change and the rationale** with their QUAD Manager in the first instance.

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

Will late changes be approved?

- Each late change will be considered on a **case-by-case** basis.
- The **impact** of the change on students and the work required to introduce the change will also be considered.
- If the change cannot be implemented then there may be other solutions the department could implement in order to achieve their aim.

How are requests submitted?

- **Via the Curriculum Update system**, the tool through which all requests for change are submitted, reviewed, discussed and approved.
- **Extra information** will need to be included in the request, including why the change is late and why it cannot wait until the next academic year.

Document review information

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