

## Quality Process Sheet 16: Material changes

### Principles:

Material programme information is defined as the information present on the relevant programme entry on the UWE website that applicants are presented with in pdf form. Any materials changes to programmes, under CMA legislation, must be communicated to, and agreed by, affected students.

For the purposes of the QMEF, material changes to programmes are;

- Changes to programme title (see QPS15)
- Changes to compulsory modules (including change to the module title or a change in the compulsory module structure of the programme).

This does not include changes to the syllabus, learning outcomes or assessment of modules *unless* this changes the fundamental description of the programme as set out in the programme entry (for example, adding exams to a programme that is described as not having any or significant changes to the content/focus of a programme).

Optional modules are generally not considered to be part of the material information. However, significant changes to optional choices (particularly where choice is reduced or modules are removed) can be a cause of student dissatisfaction. In these cases, the Quality Account Manager may want to advise the faculty that student consultation and/or agreement may be appropriate.

Where changes have to take place, due to a legislative change or if they are required by a PSRB to maintain accreditation, then student agreement is not required. However, students should be informed of the change as soon as possible.

2016/17 is the first year that material changes are being considered in this way and is still a developing area. Queries in the first instance should be directed to your [Quality Account Manager](#), who can seek guidance from the wider LTET team where required. Changes to curriculum is not an exact science and relies on professional judgements from academic and professional services colleagues working in partnership.

### Applicants and Students

Changes can either be implemented to all students for the next academic year or rolled-in for new students only. If implemented for new students only then applicants will be alerted to this but do not have to be consulted/agree the changes. This means that changes to the entry year of the programme can be made without agreement from current students (i.e where they won't be affected by the change) *but recommend suggested changes are discussed with current students through SRSFs.*

If implementing changes to subsequent years that will affect current students then the academic must consult, and get agreement from, all affected students. So if changing Y3 of the programme- all Y2 and Y1 must be consulted with and agree to changes. *Special care needs to be taken with programmes with non-standard structures such as those with foundation years, integrated masters programmes, PT programmes etc. to ensure the impact on students is fully understood and all affected students are consulted with.* The

process of consulting with students must be captured in the **Student Consultation Form: material changes** and submitted to CAP.

Material changes at levels 2/3 must be submitted to the 31<sup>st</sup> Jan/1<sup>st</sup> Feb CAP at the latest (see QPS11). This is so they can 1) be made in the OMC before students make their choices 2) there is enough time to consult with/get agreement from current students.

CMA legislation states that any student who is accessing UK HE is a “consumer” and our academic agreements state that partnerships are subject to UK law. The reality of what this means for partner provision is currently unclear. The recommendation currently is that for UK partners, the process should follow the same as for home provision, and is advisable for International partners, as much as is possible.

### **Guide to student consultation**

- Academics need to take great care to ensure ALL students (including those who have suspended their studies or on placement or study abroad years) have been communicated with. SAT can provide up to date lists of all students registered on the programme
- Faculties must ensure all reasonable efforts are made to obtain student support for the proposed changes. This includes making repeated attempts to contact students through different channels (eg. core lectures/email/BlackBoard)
- Consent must always be obtained before formal authorisation and students must be informed that the changes remain subject to formal approval
- Unanimous student consent in writing must be obtained
- If unanimity is not reached a decision must be made whether to proceed with the change for existing students and allow mitigation / compensation for those who have rejected the change or whether to apply the change for new students only. For example, mitigation might mean enabling individuals to continue on a previous version of the module. If students reject a change it cannot be forced upon them, regardless of the numbers of students involved.
- For instances when students do not respond to repeated communications a judgement must be made whether to proceed or not. In these cases, it is advised to keep records of the communications regarding the proposals in case of a challenge at a later date.
- Once the change is approved at CAP then the programme team can communicate to the students that the change will definitely go ahead. All students will receive formal, written communication before the start of the year, updating them of changes to their programme and to University policies such as the Academic Regulations and Fees policy. All students have a 14 day “cooling off” period at this point

### **Record keeping**

- As part of the process, the academic team complete the **Student Consultation Form: material changes** to evidence student consent and present this to CAP
- The recommended way to record student consent is through a sign-off sheet, signed and dated by all students. A copy of this needs to be submitted to the QAM, who will ensure it is kept with the programme profile on CAR. For programmes where this is not possible (eg. distance learning programmes) a suitable alternative should be found to securely record student consent.

### **Quality Account Manager: things to consider**

- The question on the RIA form will flag any potential material changes

- Recommend this is clearly flagged to the academic signing off the RIA and to faculty scrutiny group considering the change
- Suggest all material changes be taken through as high impact in first year (16/17) and CAP are made aware that it constitutes a material change
- Material changes need to be clearly recorded so that students can be informed at the end of the year
- Material changes need a CAP outcome so that Marketing are made aware