



## **MODIFICATIONS PROCESS**

### **1. Programme and module modifications**

- 1.1 A modification is defined as the process by which changes can be made to existing programmes or modules associated with that programme. Programmes can be modified on a yearly basis within its revalidation cycle. Programmes are revalidated for a period of up to 5 years.
- 1.2 Modifications are proposed by the programme lead who keeps oversight of the changes. Proposed changes are usually made in response to feedback from key stakeholders, changes within professional body requirements or as a result of developments within the academic discipline.
- 1.3 All proposed changes involve a process of consultation and clear communication with all key stakeholders such as students, external examiners, professional bodies and collaborative partners. Stakeholders involvement should be appropriate to the scope of change(s) being proposed.
- 1.4 The modifications process and timescales for proposals apply to all undergraduate, postgraduate, collaborative, credit bearing short courses and summer school provision.
- 1.5 Examples of **programme** modifications may include changes to:
  - Programme learning outcomes and associated curriculum content
  - Programme mode of study (e.g. full-time or part-time)
  - Change or introduction of programme start dates (e.g. introduction of January start)
  - Programme mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended learning)
  - Programme specific regulations (normally as a result of PSRB requirements)
  - Status of a module from core to optional or vice versa
  - The introduction, withdrawal or replacement of core and or optional module(s). This includes new, existing and cross-validated/ shared module(s).
  - The credit value or level of modules
  - Module titles
  - Semester of delivery

Examples of **module** modifications may include changes to:

- Module learning outcomes and associate curriculum content
- Module assessment methods, assessment weightings, assessment type(s) or assessment criteria
- Module primary mode of delivery (e.g. from face to face to distance learning mode)
- Module pre and or co-requisites

Cumulative and or significant changes may indicate that the programme may instead require a formal revalidation. Staff are encouraged to consult with the relevant Quality and Standards Manager for advice and guidance on this and any aspect of the modifications process.

- 1.6 The modifications process excludes programme interruptions or programme closures, changes to or introduction of a new programme award title, changes being proposed which are not in line with key University Quality Assurance policies, Regulations and Frameworks. For example, the University Academic Regulations.
- 1.7 There is an external requirement HE Providers to be transparent in our communication about a programme's content, additional costs or anything essential for deciding about where to study. Essential information must be accurate, timely and consistent across all communication channels. This means that modifications must be proposed, approved and communicated in line with the requirements of the Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>

The CMA realises that some of these “essential” information previously communicated might need to change during the course of study; allowing for this we must provide clear and upfront information about changes that might occur and when changes do occur communicate this promptly. (For example, the circumstances in which an advertised module might not be available to them during their studies.)

Please contact the Quality and Standards team for further advice and guidance on CMA requirements.

## 2. Preparing for and submitting a modification

- 2.1 Initial discussions - Proposals must first be discussed and agreed in consultation with relevant programme team(s), including the programme leads where module(s) are shared or have been cross-validated for delivery on another programme. The changes must then be described by completing a **modifications proposal form**.
- 2.2 Completion of modification paperwork – A completed modification proposal form must be completed and submitted together with supporting documents showing consultation, where applicable, with key stakeholders such as students, external examiners, collaborative partners and professional bodies.

An updated version of the **programme specification and/or module outline(s) must be submitted** indicating the proposed modification on these documents using tracked changes. To maintain version control, please ensure that the tracked changes are incorporated into the last approved version of the programme specification and or module outline documents:

Copies of the last approved programme specification are available on StaffNet in the following location: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/qs/programmes-specifications.aspx>

- 2.3 Obtaining signatures – As part of the modification's approvals process, signatures from internal key stakeholders (Finance, Library Services, TEL, Information Technology (IT), Estates and Facilities/ Timetabling) are required.

To assist with obtaining these signatures in a timely way, the Quality and Standards will organise two key stakeholders meeting in December and January. The purpose of these meeting is for programme leads to discuss proposed modifications with key stakeholders and to assist with obtaining the required signatures ahead of submission to the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) for Committee approval.

If you would like assistance with obtaining the required signatures from these internal key stakeholders, programme leads are advised to upload all completed modification paperwork (noted in section 2.3 above) in good time and, prior to the key stakeholders meeting to the following QS folder on OneDrive:

[https://livesmucac.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/QS/EgEL\\_eFAxW1HhHdEoCig8E4BP8EI13BeeZmHTJfWIFtn-w?e=BWpXUC](https://livesmucac.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/QS/EgEL_eFAxW1HhHdEoCig8E4BP8EI13BeeZmHTJfWIFtn-w?e=BWpXUC)

Please notify your Quality and Standards Manager once the upload has been completed.

Colleagues from Professional Services teams (Finance, Library Services, TEL, Information Technology (IT), Estates and Facilities/ Timetabling) will be invited to attend the meeting and can view the proposal ahead of the meeting. Colleagues from the SITS team and Registry will also be invited to attend, as required.

Programme leads are advised to prioritise programme level modifications (examples listed above) for the December's key stakeholders meeting so that changes of a more structural nature can be promptly communicated to prospective applicants in the newly approved programme specifications document and aligned to key recruitment dates and deadlines. Please see CMA guidance below.

If you are not able to submit the modification paperwork to the December or January key stakeholders meetings, then please instead submit directly to the Chair and Secretary of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (IADC) with the signatures you have sought to obtain from the required key stakeholders. Please note that this must be done no later than by the paper deadline for February IADC meeting.

- 2.4 Key deadlines - The University modifications deadline for F/IADC approved modifications is the **28 February**. These will be for implementation in the next academic year. Please be mindful that the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) paper deadline may be set before this date. The secretary to F/IADC can advise you of the February F/IADC paper deadline or alternatively please see the [University's online combined calendar](#).

Completed modification proposals and supporting documents should be sent to the Secretary of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) for Committee approval by the February paper deadline.

- 2.5 Submission to F/IADC - On obtaining the relevant signatures at the modification meeting, the programme lead is responsible for submission of the finalised proposed modification paperwork and supporting documents to the Secretary and Chair of Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

Please be advised that proposals may not be considered in the following circumstances:

- Incomplete/ missing modification form;
- The IADC deadline has passed;
- Incomplete /missing supporting documents and or information. This includes revised programme specifications for all programmes affected by the proposed change(s), revised module outline(s), appropriate signatures and evidence of consultation with relevant key stakeholders.

- 2.6 Committee approved proposals will be effective from the start of the **next** academic session (for example, a modification submitted and approved by the end of February 2022 will come into effect from the 2022/23 academic year).
- 2.7 In exceptional cases, module modifications made in response to feedback from external examiners or as a result of changes within professional body requirements can be considered by the Chair of the relevant Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).
- 2.8 Retrospective/ in-year modifications (i.e. seeking for approval for the last or current academic year) will not normally be considered unless it is in response to a professional body requirement. An academic rationale must be clearly evidenced and submitted to the relevant Quality and Standards Manager and the Chair of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

### **3. Considering and Approving modifications**

3.1 The programme lead is responsible for preparation and submission of the proposed modification paperwork to the relevant Secretary and Chair of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

3.2 Members of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) are asked to consider the following:

- Overall academic coherency and relevance;
- Learning outcomes are of an appropriate standard;
- Teaching and learning methods are appropriate;
- Assessment methods and weightings for modules are appropriate and comply with the requirements set out in relevant Assessment Policies, Tariff, Framework and Regulations;
- Assessment design, materials and support are appropriately resourced;
- The student experience which encompasses approaches and enhancements to ensure a cohesive and inclusive academic experience.
- Issues of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Widening Participation
- Resources

3.2.1 In considering the proposal, members of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC)) can make the following decisions:

- Approve the proposal;
- Reject the proposal and require that it be revised and resubmitted for further consideration at a future meeting or via Chair's action;
- Approve subject to minor amendments and require this to be checked and approved via Chair's action.

3.3 The minutes from the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) formally records the discussion, recommendations and outcome of proposed modifications.

Quality and Standards Managers are responsible for keeping oversight of all approved modifications and communicating the Committee's decision to the wider Academic and Professional Services community to include where applicable, Collaborative partners. Quality and Standards Managers are also responsible publication of the approved programme specification and or module outline(s) to all key stakeholders.

The SITS Data Officer is responsible for updates to relevant SITS programme, module and assessment records liaising with relevant Professional Services teams as needed to ensure ongoing integrity and accuracy of systems records.

The relevant programme lead is responsible for liaising with all Institute and Professional Services teams to ensure that resources are in place in good time prior to implementation of the approved modification. The relevant programme lead is also responsible for ensuring students have access to clear, accurate and timely information at all stages of their educational experience.

- 3.4 To ensure that a programme is not significantly modified between re/validations, an oversight of cumulative changes will be monitored by the relevant Quality and Standards Manager. Please contact the Quality and Standards team for further advice and guidance (details below).

#### 4. **Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA) guidance for Higher Education Providers**

- 4.1 On registration with the Office for Students, all Higher Education Institutions completed a self-assessment showing how they've given due regard to guidance about how to comply with consumer law. Advice for helping Higher Education providers understand the responsibilities under consumer protection law when dealing with students is published on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers) in the following location: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>
- 4.2 The modifications process had been revised and informed by CMA requirements, specifically in relation to access of accurately published information about a programme's content and structure to enable key stakeholders such as prospective and current students to make a well-informed choice about their programme of study.

#### 5. **Key contacts**

- 5.1 The Associate Deans of Student Experience (ADSEs) are Chair to Faculty/ Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).
- 5.2 Quality and Standards Managers can provide advice on key aspects of the modifications process. Their contact details are as follows:

Rebecca Pointer	Collaborative programmes	<a href="mailto:rebecca.pointer@stmarys.ac.uk">rebecca.pointer@stmarys.ac.uk</a>
Luke Dillon	Collaborative programmes	<a href="mailto:luke.dillion@stmarys.ac.uk">luke.dillion@stmarys.ac.uk</a>
Mandhir Gill	Sports, Health and Applied Science St Mary's programmes	<a href="mailto:mandhir.gill@stmarys.ac.uk">mandhir.gill@stmarys.ac.uk</a>
Emma Akinlusi	Business Law and Society, Drama, Liberal Arts St Mary's programmes	<a href="mailto:emma.akinlusi@stmarys.ac.uk">emma.akinlusi@stmarys.ac.uk</a>
Marcia Kelly	Education and Theology St Mary's programmes	<a href="mailto:marcia.kelly@stmarys.ac.uk">marcia.kelly@stmarys.ac.uk</a>