Minor Modifications Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. This Policy sets out the School's policy and processes relating to the modification of all postgraduate courses leading to an NFTS award. This Policy is fully aligned with the Expectations and Core Practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education[1] and with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), section 1.2. [2]

2. A Minor Modification is a modification of an existing course or module that is not expected to have an impact on the overall course aims or learning outcomes. Minor modifications usually affect a single module or a small number of linked modules. The course as a whole should not be significantly different, e.g. a slight change to the course title, a change to the module title, a change to the way a module is assessed, minor changes to an existing module that do not substantially change the aims and learning outcomes of that module or that of the course, a change to a module's learning and teaching strategy, a change to the term in which a module will be delivered etc.

3. If you are in any doubt as to whether a proposed change is a minor or major modification, please contact the Quality Assurance Manager for advice.

Aims

4. The responsibility for the minor modifications process rests with the Academic Standards Committee.

5. The aims of the minor modifications process are to:
   - ensure that each proposed modification positively contributes towards the aims and objectives of the course and / or module;
   - ensure that no student will be adversely affected by the modification.

Overview of Process

6. There are three stages to the minor modifications process:

Stage 1 – Concept

The first stage in this process is the decision by a course team that there should be a modification to a current course or module outline (brief). This could be the result of: the Annual Course Evaluation (ACE) process; changes made as part of, or following, the annual Curriculum Planning meetings; student feedback; external examiner feedback; developments in the sector or industry; changes in School or Department

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[1] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/revised-uk-quality-code-for-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=4c19f781_8
[2] https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

strategy; recommendations from the Industry Advisory Board or School requirements.

Stage 2 – Initial Scrutiny of Proposed Changes

Any proposed modifications to courses should:

(i)   be recorded under the appropriate section of the ACE form in order for these to be discussed during the annual course evaluation meeting; and/or

(ii)   form part of the discussions of the two annual School-wide Curriculum Planning meetings, usually held in July and October, to which all HoD, Curriculum Co-ordinators and the School Director attend.

The Quality Assurance Manager will also attend these meetings and will make note of changes proposed to courses... If any changes are considered to be a major modification, the HoD will be asked for further details of the change being proposed and advised that the Course Approval Policy may need to be followed instead. Otherwise, any proposed minor modifications should go on to Stage 3 (below).

Stage 3 – Course Handbooks

Heads of Department (HoDs) will ensure any proposed changes to their courses are reflected in the annual revisions made to course handbooks in the summer and autumn. Any such changes **must** be made either using 'Track Changes' or by clearly highlighting these in red.

Further scrutiny is then undertaken by the Quality Assurance Manager and/or Registrar.

Stage 4 – Approval

If the Quality Assurance Manager deems the modification to minor, they will ask the Registrar to give formal approval as Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). The Quality Assurance Manager will ensure the modification is recorded at the next meeting of ASC and will inform the HoD that this has been approved..

If the Quality Assurance Manager considers that the modification requires further scrutiny, e.g. where it may have an impact on other modules or other courses, where there is a minor change in expression of the course or module aim, where there is a minor change in course name, where there is a minor change in course structure etc., the proposal will either be taken to the next meeting of ASC for discussion and approval or, in cases where approval is required urgently (e.g. to ensure modifications are agreed before publication of the course handbook to students), it may be circulated electronically to ASC members for discussion and approval. Once approved by ASC, the Quality Assurance Manager will then inform the HoD that the modification has been approved.

Stage 5 – Modification Implementation

Following approval of a minor modification by ASC, HoDs should ensure:

- that the agreed changes are reflected in the Module Outline or Module Brief, if applicable;
- that Marketing is informed of the modification, if necessary;
- that the Web Manager is informed if any changes are needed to the Course Web Page to reflect the approved modification e.g. to the Course Outline etc.

- that the Quality Assurance Manager is informed when the above has been completed.

  The Quality Assurance Manager will then monitor this to ensure the agreed changes have been carried out and are appropriately signposted.

7. A course that has undergone a significant number of minor modifications since approval will be required to go through the major modifications procedure as set out in the Course Approval Policy instead. The accumulation of minor modifications to a course will also be monitored through the annual Curriculum Planning meetings, and by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC).

Communicating with Current Students and Applicants

8. In some instances, HoDs may need to consult with current students, or inform applicants, regarding a minor modification. The requirement to do this, and the method by which communication or consultation should take place, will be confirmed by the Quality Assurance Manager.

Timescales

9. In-year changes are not normally permitted and any course-level changes must be approved by ASC no later than two months prior to the intake of students affected. The Quality Assurance Manager will be able to advise when the next proposed meetings of ASC are.

Record Keeping/Monitoring

10. The Quality Assurance Manager will maintain records of all minor modifications and their progress.

This policy was approved in April 2020