Section 5: Course and module modifications

5.1.1 Following the Validation or Re-validation of a course there is still an expectation that courses and modules may require modifying to respond to advances in the academic discipline, research, improved technology enhanced learning opportunities, student feedback, Professional Statutory Body and external examiners feedback. In order to ensure the approved course outcomes are maintained, avoid 'validation drift' and to ensure appropriate actions identified through annual monitoring the University operates a proportionate course and module modifications process.

5.1.2 The modifications process recognises that there is a balance between the transparency of information provided to applicants and students and the need for curriculum, assessment and learning outcomes to be continuously enhanced in line with best practice. Those proposing and approving the modifications do so on the basis of a shared responsibility and shared goal for improving the quality of the course in the interests of staff, students and applicants.

5.1.3 There are four categories of modification, minor, major, structural and exceptional retrospective, this is to ensure proportionality in the approval process. In addition annual updates to module proformas are expected.

i) **Minor modifications;** will normally be expected to have no impact on the overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements and are normally a single or very small number of changes to linked modules.

ii) **Major modifications;** are more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may potentially be affected. This category requires additional evidence over and above that required for a minor modification. Such modifications are normally expected to form one coherent clear proposal.

iii) **Structural changes;** are those that impact on the overall structure of an award.

iv) **Retrospective changes;** in highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Teaching Committee Chair or nominee.

v) **Contact hour changes;** the University contact hours form part of the expected published information for which applicants can reasonably be expected to help inform their decision to come to the University of Westminster over competitor courses based on the information provided. This information is submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in advance of the *applicant* cycle. It is therefore expected that contact hours cannot normally be reduced by the advertised deadline. This will normally be approximately 18 months in advance aligned to the HESA data collection period which informs the published information for applicants.

The modifications table provides full details of the approval mechanism, a

summary of the information and evidence required and examples.

5.1.4 Those proposing and approving the changes have a shared responsibility to ensure that the impact on the learning outcomes, assessment rationale, assessment criteria have been articulated to national expectations, for example appropriate level learning outcomes. In proposing minor, major or structural changes it is expected that consideration of the potential impact at course level is considered by the course leader or equivalent e.g. course outcomes, Professional Body expectations, subject benchmarks, and Franchise implications prior to submission.

5.1.5 Minor and major modifications are considered on behalf of the College Teaching Committee. Each College Teaching Committee establishes the process for consideration of the proposals. Approval by the College Teaching Committee Chair is normally expected, except where there may be a potential conflict of interests.

5.1.6 Structural modifications must be approved by a University Panel Chair, member of Academic Council or College Teaching Committee Chair from outside the host College. This level of approval ensures such modifications are proportionate with the independent peer review Validation and Re-validation process. Where changes are occurring to a course validated or re-validated within the last two academic years, where possible the proposal should be considered by the relevant UVP Chair.

5.1.7 The University will set deadlines each academic year for the consideration of proposals. The deadlines take account of the opportunities for student feedback, staff reflections, discussions with external examiners and to allow for a rigorous approval process, whilst balancing the need for other necessary requirements which help improve the student experience e.g. timetabling and the communication of accurate published information to both applicants and continuing students impacted by the changes. All deadlines apply to the submission of the full required forms and supporting evidence.

i) There is an expectation that major and structural changes will be submitted no later than mid-March, allowing for appropriate communication to applicants, students and key stakeholders. It is recognised that continuing students may have been required to register for modules prior to the deadline and applicants may already have accepted a place based on the current published information, course teams are therefore strongly encouraged to submit proposals earlier.

ii) Proposals for major modifications should normally be considered within 20 working days. Structural modifications should normally also take approximately 20 days however may take longer depending on the scale of the proposed changes and potential requirement for a face to face meeting with the course representatives. In all cases, formal written approval must be secured before the proposed changes are communicated as approved.

iii) The principles outlined for modification deadlines should also apply to non-standard starting courses e.g. January start courses should where possible allow for student feedback following one semester of teaching.

iv) Credit-bearing modules which are not part of a University of Westminster award but may be considered a course for the students, should be approved by a University Re-Validation Panel Chair from outside the college. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor

for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.

v) The addition of a new Westminster Elective to the portfolio of modules should be considered by a University Panel Chair with experience in interdisciplinary teaching activity and a panel representative from another College. There is an expectation that the relevant external examiner or a specialist external advisor for the subject discipline will be consulted regardless of the credit level and this evidence is submitted as part of the proposal.

5.1.8 In exceptional circumstances it is recognised that changes to courses and modules may be required during the academic year and are therefore considered retrospective. It is anticipated that at course level these will be exceptionally rare. In such cases these must have the approval of the Head of Colleges and Chair of the Teaching Committee, discussions with students and the external examiner will also be expected. Where changes to modules are felt required during the academic session these are also presumed to be exceptional and must be approved by the Chair of the Teaching Committee or nominee.

5.1.9 The Quality and Standards Office are expected to formally communicate approval of any changes to the relevant College and Registry staff. In addition, it is important that communication with Global, Recruitment and Admissions and Marketing and Communications (where applicable) takes place to ensure the accuracy of published information e.g. on web pages, prospectuses, course promotions. Records will be kept by the Quality and Standards Officers on behalf of the College Teaching Committee.

5.1.10 Following approval of modifications, it is the responsibility of the Course Leader or nominee to ensure students and the external examiner are informed of the changes. Students should be informed at the earliest opportunity following approval. In the case of structural changes communication should be explicitly to applicants and students affected.

5.1.11 Changes to modules which take account of individual students disability needs are also expected, in such cases these are normally approved by the Disability Learning Support Unit on a case by case basis. In the case of Collaborative partners this decision making will be the responsibility of the partner institution.

5.1.12 Changes to courses and modules run by a partner institution follow the same modifications process. All collaboration modifications should be submitted directly to the relevant Liaison Tutor for onward approval on behalf of the College Teaching Committee. It is fully expected that the partner institution engages fully with the approval process.

5.1.13 Changes to award titles and proposals for additional named awards must be submitted to and be approved by the relevant University Committee; these cannot be approved by the modification process.

	Summary	List of examples	Evidence expected	Approval	Other action
Annual updates to module proformas that do not require approval.	Annual updates to modules proformas are expected in some areas to ensure information is accurate and up to date.	Indicative syllabus, module leader changes, reading lists, articles and other learning resources.	N/A	No approval required.	The Academic Liaison Tutor/Library should be informed of updated reading lists. Where a Module Leader changes the College Office and Quality and Standards Office should be notified to update the student record system
Contact hour changes	**Changes to student learning and teaching hours table** 1) Module proformas can be updated where there has been an adjustment to the hours between **differing types** of teaching methods as described in the indicative student learning and teaching hour's table, but where there is crucially **no change to the <u>total hours of non-independent study.</u>**	An example is a move from 20 hours of lecturers to 18 hours of lectures and two hours of seminars, i.e. there is no change to the overall contact time.	N/A	No approval required because this does not impact on the 'total scheduled teaching hours. The module must be lodged with the Quality and Standards Office by the minor modification deadline to ensure accurate publication of information.	No other University level action required.

	For undergraduate courses the University has approved that a standard module will normally be 48 hours of contact. However exceptions are permitted. This may also be in line with subject sector comparisons. For new undergraduate modules that exceed 48 hours this must be approved by the Head of School (or equivalent), this is to ensure the resourcing is appropriately identified at an early stage. A validation or Revalidation panel following this approval have the right to approve such exceptions.	An undergraduate module with 49 total scheduled hours or above. No threshold exists for postgraduate modules.	Not applicable however the Head of School can reasonably be expected to ensure the College resources have been considered.	Written approval from the Head of School (or equivalent).
	Where the **<u>total</u>** scheduled hours are changing this has the potential to impact on the courses total published scheduled hours. The publication of the hours is aligned to the applicant cycle 18 months in advance. This is to help inform the applicant's decision to come to the University over other courses and therefore forms part of the student contract. Any reduction in total hours must be carefully considered within this context.	Module changing from 48 hours scheduled activity to 44 hours scheduled activity.	Student consultation is required.	By the College Teaching Committee and endorsed by Quality and Standards by the published deadlines.

FORMAL COURSE AND MODULE MODIFICATION PROCESS				
MODIFICATION TYPE	**DESCRIPTION**	**EXAMPLE**	**EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL**	**APPROVAL REQUIRED**
MINOR MODULE MODIFICATIONS	Minor modifications will normally be expected to have no impact on the overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy, balance of the course, subject benchmarks and Professional Statutory Body requirements. Examples of these types of modifications are provided. The *potential* impact of 'minor changes' on course outcomes is however recognised. An example might be the removal of a presentation on a core module, that may result in a course outcome aligned to 'verbally communicating'. The course leader or equivalent is expected to ensure minor modifications are not impacting on the overall course outcomes. Where the course outcomes are changing please refer to major modifications.	Changes to Module Learning outcomes, assessment methods, assessment weightings, pre or co requisites , qualifying marks/sets, assessment criteria, the way the module is delivered (teaching and Learning methods),	1) A brief and clear explanation describing the proposed changes, and the date from which they would be implemented. E.g. change from exam to coursework. 2) Academic rationale E.g. the academic purpose for the change from exam to coursework. 3) A list of the courses to which the amended module contributes, as either a core or a named option, 3) Old and new proforma,	1)Module Leader 2)*Course leader (s) or equivalent. In signing the course leader or equivalent is also confirming there is no impact on the overall course outcomes. *where the module is core across more than one named award it is expected that approval on behalf of each course is provided 3) Approval on behalf of the College Teaching Committee 4) Endorsed by the Quality and Standards Office. 5) Communication to students by the

				course leader or nominee
MODIFICATION TYPE	**DESCRIPTION**	**EXAMPLES**	**EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL**	**APPROVAL REQUIRED.**
MAJOR MODIFICATION	Major modifications are more extensive changes often across multiple modules where a courses overall outcomes, balance and overall philosophy may be affected. This category requires additional evidence over and above that required for a minor modification. . Such modifications are normally expected to form one clear proposal.	• Extensive changes to assessment, learning outcomes, across current modules. • Changes to overall course aims, course outcomes, objectives, philosophy. • The adding of a new option or elective module within a wider suite of modules with no associated removal of a moduleModule Title changes • New cohort start date e.g January start The addition of an already approved option module with no associated removal of another module.	1) A very brief explanation outlining what the changes are, normally from the course leader or equivalent and when they will be implemented. 2) Academic Rationale – this describes in more detail the academic purpose of the changes. 3) Old and new proforma(s) 4) Updated Programme Specification if appropriate. 5) Consultation with students where appropriate, determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment. This is normally expected to be through the course committee, student representatives or evidence from student surveys.	As above

		.	6) External examiner consultation where appropriate; determined with shared responsibility by those proposing and approving the changes, with the Chair of the College Teaching Committee making a final judgment. 7) PSRB reports or guidance where appropriate. 8) In the case of a new cohort start date a statement from the course leader should explain the expected module running order including the final dissertation submission this may impact on the normal duration of the course. Assurance is expected to be given that the same course including all options modules are available to both cohorts. 9) Where an already approved option module is being added to a course with no associated removal of a module, no further evidence is required other than the updated programme specification. The addition must still be approved by the course leader and Head of School.	

			Course team discussions with Registry and Timetabling will be required following approval. Where an accumulation of minor modifications results in significant changes across a named award in one academic year the Chair of the College Teaching Committee can ask for the above information to be provided. In determining if the changes are extensive the overall course structure number of credits involved, extent of the course outcome changes will be considered.	

STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS REQUIRE APPROVAL FROM OUTSIDE THE COLLEGE				
MODIFICATION TYPE	**DESCRIPTION**	**EXAMPLES**	**EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSAL**	**APPROVAL REQUIRED.**
STRUCTURAL CHANGES	Structural changes are those that impact on the structure of the course. The only exception is where an *additional* option module(s) are being proposed, such modifications can be dealt with under the major modification process as the	Changes to: • core and optional choices, including the removal of a named option module. • credit value • credit level • mode of study	The required evidence is as per a major modification; however an updated Programme Specification, student and external examiner consultation are requirements. Where a mode of study is being introduced or changed this must be approved by the Head of	Approved by the 1) College process, 2)Approved by a UVP Chair, academic Council member or Associate Head of College (Education and Students) from ,

	expectations of students are not being impacted.	• The approval of new modules on a named award.	College, a statement from the course leader will be required to confirm how students on the new mode of study will be supported.	outside the host College. The scrutiny of the proposal(s), will normally take place by correspondence however a meeting may be required for more complex proposals. Communication to students and applicants must take place providing the rationale and reasons for the change.
Credit bearing short courses	New credit bearing short course/modules with no named award or associated structure.	A new 20 credit module to be delivered to an external group of students or to be available to students as a "module buyer".	Module Proforma (s) Comments from an external examiner or independent examiner advisor from the relevant subject discipline Confirmation of the academic lead for students and annual monitoring purposes Confirmation from the relevant Director of College Operations or nominee to confirm the administrative requirements have been addressed.	University Re-Validation Panel Chair from outside the College. If it is deemed appropriate and proportionate by the Chair a meeting may be required. This is always the case for modifications but may in the case of such proposals be proportionately more likely.

Westminster interdisciplinary Electives	The additional of one or more Westminster interdisciplinary Electives to the portfolio of modules	A new module or existing module being added to the interdisciplinary portfolio	Comments from the relevant external examiner for Westminster interdisciplinary modules. A statement as to how the module fits into the Westminster Distinctiveness and interdisciplinary activity.	University Re-Validation Panel Chair with inter-disciplinary teaching activity and another LTQ representative from another College
Retrospective exceptional modifications	In highly exceptional circumstances a module or course may be required to change for the current academic year. Such changes can only be approved by the University Quality Review Committee Chair or nominee.	Examples may include urgent external examiner comments identified after the start of term.	The evidence is the same dependent on the type of modification being proposed; in addition confirmation of what has been published in the course handbook may be required.	Teaching Committee Chair, Head of School and College Teaching Committee