

Chapter Five

Guidelines and Procedures for Programme or Course Modifications

5.1 Purpose

5.1.1 After a programme/a course has been approved, some modifications to the programme or courses may need to be made from time to time.

5.1.2 The need arises from the following causes (non-exhaustive):

- course evaluations;
- response to feedback from students;
- views from the Advisory Board or External Academic Advisers (EAAs);
- changes in the content or techniques of a subject area;
- changes in community needs, social/political climate, employment opportunities, etc.

5.2 Major Changes

5.2.1 Major changes are those which will significantly change the status or content of the originally approved programme (*Major/Minor*).

5.2.2 The following specific major changes may be proposed:

- (a) a change in the title of a programme or award;
- (b) a change in the normal length of a programme;
- (c) significant changes to the programme aims and/or programme intended learning outcomes;
- (d) changes in the intermediate award (e.g. addition/deletion of an intermediate award and a change in the requirements for an intermediate award);
- (e) addition/deletion of option(s), Major(s) and/or concentration(s)^{##};
- (f) significant changes to the programme structure and content;
- (g) a significant reduction in the provision of resources (e.g. staff, finance or equipment) for the programme;
- (h) a change in the programme entrance and/or graduation requirements;
- (i) a change in the delivery mode of the programme (e.g. addition of a part-time mode);
- (j) changes in partnership or collaboration arrangements for a local or non-local joint programme;
- (k) changes to the external benchmarking plan for the programme;
- (l) addition of required/core/new elective courses (not including actual topics under Special Topics courses);
- (m) deletion of required/core courses;

^{##} For addition of new concentration(s) for Master's Degree programmes:

A concentration refers to a recognised area of specialisation within a programme of study. It comprises a coherent grouping of elective courses undertaken by students in addition to the core courses as stipulated in the programme curriculum. The academic depth and breadth of a concentration of a Master's Degree programme shall be represented by the successful completion of a minimum of 9 credits (30% of the total programme credits) of concentration courses. For taught postgraduate programmes, unless otherwise approved by the Senate, the title of the concentration will be shown on both the transcript and the degree certificate.

- (n) significant changes to a course, involving substantial changes to the course description, learning outcomes and indicative contents; and
- (o) a change in the number of credits assigned to a course.

5.2.3 It is important that students and any other department(s)/unit(s)[@] affected by the proposed change be consulted prior to the submission of the proposal. In addition, a proposal of a major change should specify the following:

- rationale and/or reasons(s) for such a change;
- views of students and other parties (e.g. the Advisory Board and EAAs);
- details of the change with the new/revised course syllabus attached;
- the time when the change is to become effective;
- effects of the change on students;
- the means for dealing with students affected; and
- resource implications[#], if any.

For a new course proposed, relevant assessment rubrics should be submitted together with the proposed course syllabus in the course approval processes for quality assurance purpose. The Director of Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning shall be invited to provide written comments to the outcome-based elements and blended learning (if any) in the course proposal. [Note: A Blended Learning Template (in Appendix 1 of the paper entitled “Blended Learning Policy and Guidelines: Learning and Teaching in a Digital Age”) has to be completed by any staff member proposing to incorporate blended learning as shaded in blue in the table in Appendix 2 of the paper into the course. More details are given in Section 2.3 of the paper.]

5.2.4 Generally, the proposal of a major change is first considered and endorsed by the relevant Programme and Curriculum Committee (PCC)[^] or Undergraduate Business Programmes Committee (UBPC) or Department Board for BA programmes^{@@} or Boards of the Centres for courses of the Centre for English and Additional Languages (CEAL) or Chinese Language Education and Assessment Centre (CLEAC) or Board of Division of Science for the courses/programmes offered by the Division of Science or Board of Wong Bing Lai Music and Performing Arts Unit (WBLMP) for music and performing arts courses. This procedure is applicable also to major changes to a course offered specifically for a programme by a department/unit not hosting the programme. Please refer to Section 5.4 for endorsement procedures for major changes to courses offered for more than one programme and for courses jointly offered by two or more departments/units.

5.2.5 The proposal should then be submitted to the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) for undergraduate programmes/courses^{*} or the Postgraduate Studies Committee (PSC) for taught postgraduate programmes/courses for endorsement/approval.

[@] A division assumes similar roles and responsibilities of a department/unit.

[#] Request for resources should be separately submitted to relevant Committees, e.g. University Administrative and Planning Committee.

[^] Changes proposed for Core Curriculum and English Language Enhancement (ELE) courses require endorsement by the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) and ELE Programme Curriculum Committee respectively. Changes proposed for taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes should be endorsed by the relevant PCC and Faculty/School Board before submission to the PSC.

[~] Changes proposed for TPg courses offered by the School of Graduate Studies but not administered by any TPg programmes require endorsement by the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS).

^{@@} Major changes to BA programmes offered by the Faculty of Arts should also be endorsed by the Executive Committee in Arts.

^{*} Except for changes to undergraduate programme entrance requirements which will be considered by the Undergraduate Admissions Committee.

- 5.2.6 With the authority delegated by the Senate in March 2008, the AQAC/PSC may approve major changes specified under 5.2.2 (l) to (o). The changes as approved by the AQAC/PSC will be reported to the Senate for noting. The Senate Chairman in September 2020 further approved that the PSC be delegated the authority to approve a one-off substitution of a TPg course for a TPg programme. Furthermore, the Senate approved in December 2025 that the AQAC/PSC be delegated the authority to approve changes to external benchmarking plans specified under 5.2.2 (k).
- 5.2.7 On other major changes, the proposals are forwarded to the Senate for approval on the recommendation of the AQAC/PSC.
- 5.2.8 Time frame to effectuate these changes

It is desirable for major changes to be processed as early as possible so that they can be incorporated in the annual budgeting exercise and the student recruitment exercise.

As a general guideline, major changes should be considered/noted by the Senate in January/February preceding the academic year in which the changes will take effect with the following time frame**:

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|---|--------------------|
| • endorsement by the PCC/UBPC/Department Board [@] /
Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP/
Core Curriculum Committee [^] /BGS [~] | September-November |
| • endorsement/approval by the AQAC/PSC | December/January |
| • approval/noting by the Senate | January/February |

Submission of proposals for major changes after the specified time can be considered if fully justified.

[Note: Please refer to Section 3 in Chapter 13 for approval procedures for courses that contain Service-Learning.]

5.3 Minor Changes

- 5.3.1 Minor changes are those which will **not** significantly change the status or content of the originally approved programme (*Major/Minor*).
- 5.3.2 Indicative examples of minor changes (non-exhaustive):
- minor changes to the programme aims and/or programme intended learning outcomes;
 - minor changes to the programme structure;
 - addition of elective courses (which are existing courses);
 - deletion of elective courses; [Note: It is advisable for courses not offered for 3 consecutive years be reviewed for continuous listing or delisting.]

** As the actual term dates may vary among TPg programmes, the time frame can be adjusted.

[@] Major changes to BA programmes offered by the Faculty of Arts should also be endorsed by the Executive Committee in Arts.

[^] Changes proposed for Core Curriculum and English Language Enhancement (ELE) courses require endorsement by the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) and ELE Programme Curriculum Committee respectively. Changes proposed for taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes should be endorsed by the relevant PCC and Faculty/School Board before submission to the PSC.

[~] Changes proposed for TPg courses offered by the School of Graduate Studies but not administered by any TPg programmes require endorsement by the BGS

- (e) a change in the regulations governing the choice of Majors and/or concentrations/options/electives;
- (f) a change of course title, course code, prerequisite, co-requisite, exclusion, minor changes to course description, aims, learning outcomes, indicative content or teaching methods for a course;
- (g) a change in the number of contact hours and/or mode of tuition (e.g. sectional approach, lectures, tutorials, seminars and workshops) of a course;
- (h) a change in teaching methods to involve blended learning as shaded in blue in the table in Appendix 2 of the paper entitled “Blended Learning Policy and Guidelines: Learning and Teaching in a Digital Age”; [Note: A Blended Learning Template (in Appendix 1 of the paper) has to be completed by any staff member proposing to incorporate blended learning into the course. More details are given in Section 2.3 of the paper.]
- (i) a change in assessment methods/tasks, weighting of assessment tasks, or the examination duration of a course.

[Note: If changes to assessment details such as those mentioned in (i) above lead to changes to assessment rubrics, the revised assessment rubrics shall be attached as part of the proposal for minor changes to go through relevant course modification procedures which only require approval by the relevant PCC%/UBPC/Department Board/Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP and reported to the AQAC/PSC. It is possible that minor fine-tuning and revisions in wordings and/or criteria weightings are necessary without changes to the assessment details as mentioned in (i) above. For such minor fine-tuning, no reporting to the AQAC/PSC is necessary after approval.]

5.3.3 It is important that students and any other department(s)/unit(s) affected by the proposed change be consulted prior to the submission of the proposal. A proposal of a minor change needs to specify the following:

- the rationale and/or reason(s) for such a change;
- details of the change with the revised syllabus attached;
- the time when the change is to become effective;
- effects of the change on the students;
- the means for dealing with students affected; and
- resource implications[#], if any.

5.3.4 Generally, a proposal of a minor change should be considered and approved by the relevant PCC%~UBPC/Department Board/Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP. This procedure is applicable also to minor changes to a course offered specifically for a programme by a department/unit not hosting the programme. Please refer to Section 5.4 for approval procedures for minor changes to courses offered for more than one programme and for courses jointly offered by two or more departments/units.

5.3.5 When a course is set as an exclusion of a course under another programme, approval should be given by the relevant PCC/UBPC/Department Board/Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP of both courses.

[%] Changes proposed for Core Curriculum courses require endorsement by the Core Curriculum Committee.

[#] Request for resources should be separately submitted to relevant Committees, e.g. University Administrative and Planning Committee.

[~] Changes proposed for TPg courses offered by the School of Graduate Studies but not administered by any TPg programmes require endorsement by the BGS.

5.3.6 The approved minor changes should be reported to the AQAC/PSC. The Registry shall be notified of any modifications to programmes/courses, including change in the assessment methods, for timetabling and/or publication purposes. For TPg programmes and courses, the minor changes approved by the PCC concerned should be submitted to the PSC for noting via the relevant Faculty/School Board.

5.3.7 As a general guideline, minor changes to take effect from Term 1 or Term 2 should be submitted for noting by the AQAC/PSC before the preceding April or November respectively.

5.4 Courses for More Than One Programme and Courses Jointly Offered by Two or More Departments/Units

5.4.1 Some courses are required for all students in credit-based undergraduate programmes, e.g. University English I and II, and Chinese Communication I and II. Besides, an academic unit may also offer elective courses open to students of all programmes. Any major/minor changes to these courses should be considered and endorsed/approved by the PCC/UBPC/Department Board/Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP of the offering unit concerned (viz. not necessary to seek endorsement/approval of all programmes). The subsequent procedures and time frame for major/minor changes as stipulated in paragraphs 5.2.5-5.2.8/5.3.5-5.3.7 should be followed.

5.4.2 Any major/minor changes to a course offered for more than one programme have to be approved/endorsed just by the Department Board of the offering Department/PCC or UBPC of the programme for which the course is primarily designed. However, the Programme Director/Department Head of the affected programme(s) has to be notified as early as possible of any changes before they are put into effect. The subsequent procedures and time frame for major/minor changes as stipulated in paragraphs 5.2.5-5.2.8/5.3.5-5.3.7 should be followed.

5.4.3 Any major/minor changes to a course jointly offered by two or more departments/units have to be approved/endorsed by the PCC/UBPC/Department Board/Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Division of Science/WBLMP of the offering departments/units concerned. The subsequent procedures and time frame for major/minor changes as stipulated in paragraphs 5.2.5-5.2.8/5.3.5-5.3.7 should be followed.

5.5 Notification of Changes

5.5.1 Generally, the Registry will be responsible for informing students of major changes to undergraduate programmes (including Minor programmes) and new courses, while the academic departments/units concerned will notify i) students in their (Major) programme of minor changes to the programme, ii) students concerned of changes to courses in the programme including changes to a course offered by an academic unit not hosting the programme, and iii) students concerned of changes to Core Curriculum courses offered by the academic department/unit.

5.5.2 For minor changes to a course jointly offered by two or more departments/units, the relevant departments/units shall decide among themselves which one of them will be responsible for informing students concerned.

5.5.3 For minor changes to a Minor Programme or to a course offered/required university wide, the PCC/UBPC/offering/coordinating unit should be responsible for informing all students concerned.

5.5.4 As for changes to taught postgraduate programmes, individual taught postgraduate programme office will inform relevant students of any programme/course changes.

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