

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:

- 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;
- forecast of change 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) changes in the normal length of a programme;
- (c) addition of options and/or Majors (in an undergraduate programme)/streams (in a taught postgraduate programme) and/or concentrations;
- (d) addition of required/core/new elective courses (not including actual topics under Special Topics courses);
- (e) a significant change to the programme structure and content;
- (f) a significant reduction in the provision of resources (e.g. staff, finance or equipment) for the programme;
- (g) deletion of options and/or Majors (in an undergraduate programme)/streams (in a taught postgraduate programme) and/or concentrations;
- (h) deletion of required/core courses;
- (i) a change in the programme entrance requirements;
- (j) a change in the number of credits assigned to a course.

5.2.3 It is important that students and any other department(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; and
- resource implications[#], if any.

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

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 Teaching and Learning Centre 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 Science Unit for the courses/programmes offered by the Science Unit 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 not hosting the programme. Please refer to Section 5.4 for endorsement procedures for major changes to courses offered for more than one programme.
- 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.
- 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 (d), (h) and (j). 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.
- 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 could 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[#]:

[^] 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) 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.

[#] As the actual term dates may vary among taught postgraduate programmes, the time frame can be adjusted.

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| • endorsement by the PCC/UBPC/Department Board [@] /
Board of CEAL/CLEAC/Science Unit/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):

- (a) a minor change in the programme structure;
- (b) addition of elective courses (which are existing courses);
- (c) deletion of elective courses;
- (d) a change in the regulations governing the choice of Majors (in an undergraduate programme)/streams (in a taught postgraduate programme)/options/electives;
- (e) change of prerequisite/co-requisite for a course;
- (f) change to the number or format of contact hours of a course;
- (g) change to 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.]
- (h) change in course title, class contact hours, assessment methods/tasks, weighting of assessment tasks, and the examination duration of a course.

[Note: If changes to assessment details such as those mentioned in (h) 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/Science Unit/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 (h) 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) 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;

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

- 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/Science Unit/WBLMP. This procedure is applicable also to minor changes to a course offered specifically for a programme by a department not hosting the programme. Please refer to Section 5.4 for approval procedures for minor changes to courses offered for more than one programme.

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/Science Unit/WBLMP of both courses.

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 purposes and/or publication in the University Calendar.

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 in the preceding April or November respectively.

5.4 Courses for more than one Programme

5.4.1 Some courses are required for all students in credit-based undergraduate programmes, e.g. 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 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.

5.5 Notification of Changes

5.5.1 Generally, the Registry will be responsible for informing students of major changes to undergraduate programmes (including Minor programmes), while the PCC/UBPC/Academic Unit concerned will notify students in their (Major) Programme

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

[~] Changes proposed for taught postgraduate (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).

of the minor changes including changes to a course offered by an academic unit not hosting the programme.

- 5.5.2 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.
- 5.5.3 As for changes to taught postgraduate programmes, individual taught postgraduate programmes will inform any programme/course changes to their own students.