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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Changes to taught provision, including suspension or withdrawal of modules or programmes, are a natural result of the University's Quality Framework (which promotes continuous enhancement of taught provision via annual and periodic review) and strategies and planning at all levels of the Institution.

1.1.2 Changes to programmes and modules may arise as a result of:

- annual module review;
- annual programme review;
- periodic programme review;
- PSRB accreditation events;
- consideration of reports of external examiners;
- annual School learning and teaching enhancement reports;
- University and School strategies and operational plans; or
- other developments, such as changes to QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and engagement with the QAA Scotland Quality Enhancement Themes.

1.2 Policy objective

1.2.1 The objective of this Policy and Guidance on Changes to Taught Provision is to provide effective pathways for making changes that take appropriate account of the need to assure quality and to safeguard the interests of students. The Policy and Guidance takes account of the advice to higher education providers from the Competition & Markets Authority (March 2015) on consumer protection law.

1.3 Reporting and approval of changes to taught provision, including emergency powers and exceptions

1.3.1 The University’s Quality and Academic Standards Committee (QASC) has authority delegated from Senate (agreed at the meeting of Senate 14 October 2015) to formally approve changes to taught provision. All module and programme changes must be reported to the QASC from the Schools.

1.3.2 School Boards are the ultimate decision-making body on academic matters at the level of the Schools. Schools may choose to delegate authority for decision-making on quality assurance matters, including changes to taught provision, to their School Quality and Academic Standards Committee (SQASC) in which case reporting to the QASC may come directly from the SQASC. Where Schools do not delegate authority for decision-making to their SQASC reporting to the QASC will be from School Boards. Associate Deans (Quality and Academic Standards) are responsible for ensuring that the QASC is notified about the reporting structures at the level of their individual School.

1.3.3 For the purpose of this Policy the term ‘relevant School committee(s)’ will be used to reflect the arrangements described above.

1.3.4 The University’s Emergency Powers Procedure covers the situation where changes need to be made outwith the normal reporting process. Emergency powers should only be used under exceptional circumstances and should include as much of the consultation described in the relevant sections below as possible.

1.3.5 Any exceptions to this Policy and Guidance should be agreed in advance with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards.
2. Student engagement

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Students must be fully involved in the development of all proposals for substantive changes to taught provision. Consultation with students on proposed changes should be taken forward through the University’s student representation system, with School Presidents, Vice-Presidents and/or class representatives being involved in discussions for change at the early stages of the proposals.

2.2 Consultation with students

2.2.1 Where substantive changes are proposed that will impact on the learning experience for current students, Schools must ensure that there is an appropriate consultation (e.g. through on-line surveys, email communications and/or face-to-face discussions) with affected students. In such circumstances, the University will use its best endeavours to ensure that changes to taught provision or regulations will only be applied where a majority of the affected student population agree to the proposed changes. Students should be reminded that non-response to a consultation will be interpreted as agreement with the proposed changes.

3. Changes to modules

3.1 Guidance on consideration of minor or substantive changes to modules

3.1.1 The Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should decide which category a change falls into, where necessary in consultation with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards.

3.1.2 Certain types of change may be designated as ‘minor’ and reported in the minutes of the relevant School committee(s) via updated module specification documents. This category includes, for example:

- changes to spelling or grammar;
- minor changes to the module title;
- coding changes;
- names of contacts;
- updates to reference points for academic standards (where those do not impact on intended learning outcomes);
- updates to links to further information;
- slight changes to the balance of teaching modes;
- slight changes to the structure and timing of assessments; or
- changes to dates.1

3.1.3 Minor changes must be reported by the School to the University’s Quality and Academic Standards (QAS) office via revised module specifications.

3.1.4 Substantive changes to modules may include, for example:

- changes to credit rating;
- changes to aims or intended learning outcomes;
- changes to the content described in the module specification;
- changes to the balance of assessment types;
- changes to prerequisites, co-requisites or anti-requisites;
- changes to dates.2

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1 Where there are circumstances outwith the University’s control, every effort will be made to mitigate against any adverse impact on current students and applicants.

2 Changes to the dates must be proposed well in advance to allow inclusion in the central timetabling for the relevant academic year. Where modules are shared with other programmes there must be appropriate consultation with all of the relevant programme leads.
changes to the pedagogic approach; or
changes to the mode of teaching or assessment (for example, use of the VLE or online assessment).

3.2 Consultative procedure for substantive changes to modules

3.2.1 The process involves consultation both inside and outside the School, approval by the relevant School committee(s) and ratification by the QASC. It is similar to the process for approving a new module. Some proposed module changes will fall into the ‘substantive changes’ category but are in fact relatively small. The consultation process should be proportionate, and the Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should exercise discretion on how the consultation should be undertaken.

3.2.2 The Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should decide who needs to be consulted regarding the proposed changes. This should normally include the following:
- staff with School level executive roles relating to learning and teaching, and quality and academic standards;
- all relevant programme teams, including programmes which include any of the module(s) as options (particular care should be taken with modules that span Schools);
- student representatives; and
- Admissions and Student Recruitment Services (ASRS), Registry and any other Professional Services relevant to the proposed changes.

3.2.3 This process should include clarification of the following:
- proposed timescale for change;
- who will undertake the consultation;
- how and when the consultation will be done (the consultation need not require face-to-face meetings — electronic correspondence may be appropriate); and
- target dates of meetings of the relevant School committee(s) to consider the proposals and the target date for ratification by the QASC.

3.2.4 If Emergency Power Procedures are being used, as much as possible of this consultative process should be carried out, where necessary through direct contact with relevant stakeholders. Where Emergency Powers are being used, the University Emergency Powers pro forma must be completed and signed by all relevant parties. The QAS office will ensure that decisions made through Emergency Powers are communicated to the relevant School office, Registry and External Relations.

3.2.5 The appropriate new module documentation should be prepared as detailed under the New Taught Provision pages of the Quality Framework and posted on Box through the University’s e-consultation process.

3.2.6 The completed pro forma for approval of substantive changes to modules, programmes or regulations, along with the relevant supporting documentation, should be submitted to the relevant School committee(s) for discussion and approval. If the relevant School committee(s) approve the proposed change(s), the secretary to the Board or committee should ensure that the completed pro forma along with the revised module specification(s) are passed to the University QAS office for reporting to the QASC. All parties involved in the consultation should be advised of the outcomes, with a note of the timescale for formal confirmation by the QASC.

3.2.7 Changes to modules approved at the level of the School will be ratified by the QASC after which the QAS office will inform ASRS and Registry and provide the updated module documentation.

3.3 Timeframe for proposing and implementing substantive changes to modules

3.3.1 Changes to modules are usually a result of enhancement-focused activities including annual and periodic review. Such changes are normally informed by internal feedback and reflection activities as
well as external reference points including subject benchmark statements, PSRB requirements, feedback from external examiners and feedback from external reviewers.

3.3.2 Where substantive changes to modules are proposed there must be a full consideration of whether the proposed changes will impact on the terms and conditions that prospective and current students may have understood from the material in prospectuses and other sources of public information. Where such proposed changes to a module(s) will impact on the reasonable expectations of students there should be a consultation with the affected cohorts (see Section 2 above). If there is not agreement from such affected cohorts implementation of the proposed changes should normally be phased so that the changes are aligned with the descriptions in promotional material and other sources of public information.

3.3.3 Module changes that will result in material changes to public programme information for applicants must be ratified by the QASC at least 18 months in advance of the start date for the cohort to which the change will apply. The only exceptions to this are described in paragraph 3.3.4 below.

3.3.4 Certain module changes may be required more urgently as a result of quality enhancement activities, external examiners’ reports, PSRB requirements and/or circumstances beyond the University’s control such as changes to teaching staff. It may not be possible, desirable or in the best interests of students to delay implementation of such changes. Under such circumstances, the module changes should be ratified by the QASC at least six months in advance of implementation of any change with a note on whether the proposal will require changes to public programme information.

4. Changes to programmes

4.1 Guidance on consideration of minor or substantive changes to programmes

4.1.1 The Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should decide which category a change falls into, where necessary in consultation with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards.

4.1.2 Certain types of change may be designated as 'minor' and reported in minutes of the relevant School committee(s) minutes via updated programme specification documents. This category includes, for example:

- changes to spelling or grammar;
- names of contacts;
- updates to reference points for academic standards (where those do not impact on intended learning outcomes);
- updates to links to further information;
- slight changes to the balance of teaching modes; or
- slight changes to the structure and timing of assessments.

4.1.3 Minor changes must be reported by the School to the QAS office via revised programme specifications. The QAS office will inform External Relations and Registry and provide them with the updated documentation.

4.1.4 Substantive changes to programmes may include, for example:

- changes to the credit requirement;
- changes to aims or intended learning outcomes;
- changes to the structure;
- changes to the schedule of modules;
- changes to the title of the award;
- changes to the pedagogic approach; or
- changes to the mode of teaching or assessment.

4.1.5 Where substantive changes to a programme are being considered that could potentially mean that the reasonable expectations of students will not be met, implementation of any changes should
normally be delayed and phased accordingly. Where that is not desirable or possible, there should be extensive consultation with the affected students with the aim of reaching a position where the majority agree to the proposed changes (see also Section 2).

4.2 Consultative procedure for substantive changes to programmes

4.2.1 The process involves consultation both inside and outside the School and approval by the relevant School committee(s) and the QASC. It is similar to the process for approving a new programme. Some proposed programme changes will fall into the ‘substantive changes’ category but are in fact relatively small. The consultation process should be proportionate, and the Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should exercise discretion on how the consultation should be undertaken.

4.2.2 The Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should decide who needs to be consulted regarding the proposed changes. This should normally include the following:

- staff with School level executive roles relating to learning and teaching, and quality and academic standards;
- the programme team(s), encompassing any other programmes which share elements of the programme(s) for which the changes are being proposed;
- student representatives; and
- External Relations, Registry and any other Professional Services relevant to the proposed changes.

4.2.3 This process should include clarification of the following:

- proposed timescale for change;
- who will undertake the consultation;
- how and when the consultation will be done (the consultation need not require face-to-face meetings — electronic correspondence may be appropriate); and
- target dates of meetings of relevant School committee(s) and QASC to consider the proposals.

4.2.4 If Emergency Power Procedures are being used, as much as possible of this consultative process should be carried out, where necessary through direct contact with relevant post holders. Where Emergency Powers are being used, the University Emergency Powers pro forma must be completed and signed by all relevant parties. The QAS office will ensure that decisions made through Emergency Powers are communicated to the Registry and External Relations.

4.2.5 The appropriate new programme documentation should be prepared as detailed under the New Taught Provision pages of the Quality Framework and posted on Box through the University’s e-consultation process.

4.2.6 The completed pro forma for approval of substantive changes to modules, programmes or regulations, along with the relevant supporting documentation, should be submitted to the relevant School committee(s) for discussion and recommendation for approval. If the relevant School committee(s) recommend approval of the proposed change(s), the secretary to the Board or committee should ensure that the pro forma along with the revised programme specification(s) and the minute of the discussions are passed to the University QAS office for reporting to the QASC.

4.2.7 Changes to programmes recommended for approval at the level of the School will be considered by the QASC. Once approved by the QASC the QAS office will inform External Relations and Registry and provide them with the approved programme documentation. If the QASC does not approve the proposed change(s), it will be referred back to the relevant Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards).

4.2.8 Where a programme is delivered jointly with another School(s) the Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) from the lead School should liaise with their counterpart(s) in the relevant...
School(s) to ensure that there is appropriate consideration of the proposals within the collaborating School(s). The minutes of the relevant School committee(s) meetings from the collaborating School(s) should note endorsement (or otherwise) of the proposed changes and be communicated to the QASC.

4.2.9 The Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards), from the lead School where more than one School is involved, should ensure that all parties involved in the consultation are advised of the outcomes.

4.3 Timeframe for proposing and implementing substantive changes to programmes

4.3.1 Changes to programmes may be as a result of enhancement-focused activities, including annual and periodic review, or School-level strategic planning. Such changes are normally informed by internal feedback and reflection activities, subject benchmark statements, PSRB requirements, feedback from external examiners and reviewers, and School and University strategies and operational plans.

4.3.2 Where substantive changes to programmes are proposed there must be a full consideration of whether the proposed changes will impact on the terms and conditions that prospective and current students may have understood from the material in prospectuses and other sources of public information. Where such proposed changes to a programme(s) will impact on the reasonable expectations of prospective and current students there should be a consultation with the affected cohorts (see Section 2 above). If there is not agreement from such affected cohorts implementation of the proposed changes should normally be phased so that the changes are aligned with the descriptions in promotional material and other sources of public information.

4.3.3 Programme changes that will result in material changes to public programme information for applicants must be approved by the QASC at least 18 months in advance of the start date for the cohort to which the change will apply. The only exceptions to this are described in paragraph 4.3.4 below.

4.3.4 Certain programme changes may be required more urgently as a result of quality enhancement activities, external examiners’ reports, PSRB requirements and/or circumstances beyond the University’s control such as changes to teaching staff. It may not be possible, desirable or in the best interests of students to delay implementation of such changes. Under such circumstances, the programme changes should be approved by the QASC at least six months in advance of implementation of any change with a note on whether the proposal will require changes to public programme information.

5. Changes to degree regulations

5.1 Outline of process

5.1.1 Where degree regulations are changed as a result of substantive changes to a programme(s) or as a result of changes to University policy a separate consultation need not be undertaken and the revised regulations, once approved by the relevant School committee(s), should be passed on to the QAS office for ratification by the QASC.

5.1.2 Where substantive changes to degree regulations are proposed which are not as a consequence of substantive programme or University Policy changes, the consultation, reporting and implementation processes described above for substantive programme changes should be followed.

6. Withdrawal or suspension of modules

6.1 Preamble

6.1.1 The definitions are described as follows:

- ‘Withdrawal’ means removing the details of the module from future ASRS and Registry databases and not accepting students on to it.
• 'Suspension' means keeping details of the module in the External Relations and Registry databases but not accepting students on to it.

6.1.2 Where the proposed withdrawal or suspension of a module could potentially mean that the expectations of applicants and current students will not be met, implementation of the withdrawal or suspension should, where possible, be delayed and phased accordingly. Where that is not desirable or possible, there should be extensive consultation with the affected students with the aim of reaching a position where the majority agree to the proposed alternatives. Core modules that have been formally offered to prospective or current students should not normally be withdrawn for those cohorts.

6.1.3 At all stages in the withdrawal or suspension procedures maximum efforts should be made to safeguard the interests of prospective and current students. Where negotiations are carried out with individual students regarding alternative arrangements, their agreement to these arrangements should be confirmed via a signed document, which should be retained by the School.

6.2 Procedure for the withdrawal or suspension of modules

6.2.1 Whoever is proposing the module withdrawal should discuss the proposal in principle with the relevant Associate Dean (Quality and Standards) and the relevant School Manager. This discussion should include clarification of the following:

• module(s) to be withdrawn or suspended;
• reasons for withdrawal or suspension;
• proposed timescale for withdrawal or suspension;
• identification of students and prospective students affected, including those who have been provided with information indicating likely availability of the module, either as core or an optional choice;
• proposed alternative arrangements for these students and prospective students;
• who should be consulted regarding the proposed withdrawal;
• who will undertake the consultation;
• how this consultation will be done (it need not require meetings—electronic correspondence may be appropriate; and
• target dates of meetings of the relevant School committees and the QASC to consider the proposals.

6.2.2 The consultation should normally include staff with School level executive roles relating to learning and teaching and quality and academic standards, all relevant programme teams; all relevant Deans of School, student representatives (and the affected student body where appropriate), External Relations, Registry and other relevant Professional Services.

6.2.3 The pro forma for approval of withdrawal of modules or programmes should be submitted to the relevant School committee(s) of the lead School for discussion and a recommendation for approval. Where more than one School is involved, the proposals should be considered at the relevant School committee(s) meetings of each of the relevant Schools. The minutes of the Board or committee meeting(s) from the collaborating School(s) should note endorsement (or otherwise) of the proposed module withdrawal and be communicated to the QASC.

6.2.4 If the relevant School committee(s) of the lead School recommends approval of the proposed module withdrawal(s), the secretary to the Board or committee should ensure that the completed pro forma along with the minute of the discussions are passed to the University QAS office for reporting to the QASC.

6.2.5 Withdrawal of modules approved at the level of the School will be considered by the QASC for approval on behalf of Senate. Once approved by the QASC the QAS office will inform External Relations and Registry and provide them with the agreed timeframe for withdrawal and the revised schedule of
modules for the programme where appropriate. If the QASC does not approve the proposed withdrawal(s), it will be referred back to the relevant Associate Dean(s) (Quality and Academic Standards).

6.2.6 The relevant Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should ensure that all parties involved in the consultation are advised of the outcomes.

6.2.7 If Emergency Power Procedures are being used, as much as possible of the consultative process outlined above should be carried out, where necessary through direct contact with relevant stakeholders. Where Emergency Powers are being used, the University Emergency Powers pro forma must be completed and signed by all relevant parties. The QAS office will ensure that decisions made through Emergency Powers are communicated to the Registry and External Relations.

6.3 Timeframe for proposing and implementing the withdrawal or suspension of modules

6.3.1 Withdrawal of modules may be as a result of changes to programmes (see above), changes to the availability of specialist knowledge within the School or repeated poor take-up of the modules by students. Suspension of modules may be as a result of student numbers not reaching a required threshold for the module to run or the temporary lack of availability of specialist knowledge within the School.

6.3.2 Where module withdrawals or suspensions are proposed there must be a full consideration of whether the withdrawals or suspensions will impact on the terms and conditions that students may have understood from the material in prospectuses and other sources of public information. Where such proposed module withdrawals or suspensions will impact on the reasonable expectations of prospective and current students there should be a consultation with the affected cohorts (see Section 2 above). If there is not agreement from such affected cohorts implementation of the proposed changes should normally be phased so that the changes are aligned with the descriptions in promotional material and other sources of public information.

6.3.3 Where modules are withdrawn or suspended for prospective or continuing students great care must be taken to ensure that the affected students are appropriately qualified to successfully undertake the proposed alternative modules.

6.3.4 Withdrawal or suspension of modules which will result in material changes to public programme information for applicants must be approved by the QASC at least 18 months in advance of the start date for the cohort to which the change will apply. The only exceptions to this are described in paragraph 6.3.5 below.

6.3.5 Under certain circumstances withdrawal of modules may be required more urgently (e.g. as part of a substantive programme change that has been proposed as an outcome of periodic programme review or where there are circumstances beyond the University’s control such as changes to teaching staff), and it may not be possible, desirable or in the best interests of students to delay implementation. For such situations, proposals for module withdrawals should be made to the QASC at least six months in advance of implementation of the change with a note on whether the proposal will require changes to public programme information.

7. Withdrawal or suspension of programmes

7.1 Preamble

7.1.1 The definitions are described as follows:

- ‘Withdrawal’ means removing the details of the programme from future External Relations and Registry databases and not recruiting or admitting students.
- ‘Suspension’ means keeping details of the programme in the External Relations and Registry databases but not recruiting or admitting students.
• ‘Programme’ means a programme of study leading to a named award of the University and includes named programme pathways.

7.1.2 Withdrawal or suspension of a programme should be planned well in advance and be part of the School’s strategic and operational planning framework (see Section 7.3 below). Unplanned withdrawal of programmes where there are applicants or continuing students who would be unable to complete their intended degree will only be considered under exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Under such exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, formal agreement should be sought from the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) who will liaise with the Directors of Quality and Academic Standards, Legal, Strategic Planning and ASRS, and the relevant Dean(s) in reaching a decision. Consideration will be given to the potential impact on any continuing students or prospective students and the proposed alternative arrangements for those individuals.

7.2 Procedure for the withdrawal or suspension of a programme

7.2.1 Whoever is proposing a programme withdrawal should discuss the proposal in principle with the relevant Dean(s), Associate Dean(s) (Quality and Academic Standards), Associate Dean(s) (Learning and Teaching) and School Manager(s). This discussion should include clarification of the following:

- the programme(s) to be withdrawn or suspended;
- the reasons for withdrawal or suspension;
- financial implications;
- the proposed timescale for withdrawal or suspension;
- identification of any students and prospective students who may be affected, including those who have been provided with information indicating likely availability of the programme;
- who should be consulted regarding the proposed withdrawal;
- who will undertake the consultation;
- how this consultation will be done (it need not require meetings—electronic correspondence may be appropriate); and
- target dates of meetings of the relevant School committee(s) to consider the proposals.

7.2.2 The consultation should normally seek, consider and respond to feedback on the proposal from the relevant Dean(s), the School Manager(s), the relevant Associate Dean(s) (Quality and Academic Standards), the relevant Associate Dean(s) (Learning and Teaching), other staff with School level executive roles relating to learning and teaching or quality and academic standards, all relevant programme teams, student representatives, External Relations, Registry and other Professional Services as appropriate.

7.2.3 The completed pro forma for approval of withdrawal of modules or programmes should be submitted to the relevant School committee(s) for discussion and development of a recommendation to the QASC for approval on behalf of Senate. Where more than one School is involved, the proposals should be considered at the relevant School committee(s) meetings of each of the relevant Schools.

7.2.4 If the relevant School committee(s) recommends approval of the proposed programme withdrawal(s), the secretary to the Board or committee should ensure that the pro forma and the minute of the discussions are passed to the University QAS office for reporting to the QASC.

7.2.5 Withdrawal of programmes approved at the level of the School will be considered by the QASC. Once approved by the QASC the QAS office will inform External Relations and Registry and provide them with the agreed timeframe for withdrawal. If the QASC does not confirm the proposal, it will be referred back to the relevant Associate Dean(s) (Quality and Academic Standards).

7.2.6 The relevant Associate Dean (Quality and Academic Standards) should ensure that all parties involved in the consultation should be advised of the outcomes.
7.2.5 If Emergency Powers Procedures are being used, as much as possible of the consultative process outlined above should be carried out, where necessary through direct contact with relevant stakeholders. Where Emergency Powers are being used, the University Emergency Powers pro forma must be completed and signed by all relevant parties. The QAS office will ensure that decisions made through Emergency Powers are communicated to the Registry and ASRS.

7.3 Timeframe for proposing and implementing the withdrawal or suspension of programmes

7.3.1 Withdrawal or suspension of programmes is normally a result of strategic planning at the level of the School and University.

7.3.2 Proposed programme withdrawals or suspensions should, ideally, be approved by the QASC at least 18 months in advance of the implementation date so that the University is able to provide accurate public information about its portfolio of programmes and ensure that the relevant programme(s) does not attract new applicants.

7.3.3 Programmes should normally only be withdrawn for future cohorts. Where proposals are made that will affect continuing students or applicants the guidance described in paragraph 7.1.2 should be followed.

Dr Lesley McLellan
Director of Quality and Academic Standards
Approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee 18 Jan 2016
Appendix 1

Process flow charts

### Substantive changes to taught provision

**Modules**
- Initial discussion with AD (QAS)
  - Consultation – including intranet posting
  - Consideration and approval of *pro forma* and documentation by relevant School committee(s)
  - Ratification by QASC
  - Notification and final documentation to External Relations, Registry and School(s)

**Programmes/regulations**
- Initial discussion with AD (QAS)
  - Consultation – including intranet posting
  - Consideration of *pro forma* and documentation by relevant School committee(s). Recommendation to QASC for approval
  - Ratification by QASC
  - Notification and final documentation to External Relations, Registry and School(s)

### Withdrawal or suspension of programmes or modules

- Initial discussion with AD (QAS)
  - Consultation – including intranet posting
  - Consideration of *pro forma* and documentation by relevant School committee(s). Recommendation to QASC for approval
  - Ratification by QASC
  - Notification and final documentation to External Relations, Registry and School(s)