PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY
APPROVAL OF CHANGES TO EXISTING PROGRAMMES AND MODULES

1. FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculties have delegated authority to approve changes to modules and programmes (sample minor change form attached) with the following exceptions:

- changes requiring an exception to University regulations
- changes to award titles and any consequent changes to subject codes
- changes which involve changing or adding progression routes from a Foundation Degree.

There are two categories of changes which Faculties can approve – Major and Minor (see Guidelines for Changes to Existing Programmes and Modules)

The Faculty Office is responsible for updating, maintaining and holding the approved version of all programme documentation, including the Student Handbook. Programme specifications and Module Records (MRs) should be lodged in the Document Management System.

2. CHANGES TO FACULTY PROVISION

Faculty procedures must involve:-

- documentation, including a rationale, details of changes proposed, analysis of impact and date(s) of implementation
- a process for ensuring that where a module is a core or elective option on more than one programme, the proposing Programme Leader has obtained the written agreement of the Programme Leader(s) responsible for all affected programmes. Following the above, the ‘home’ Faculty Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) would then sign off the change.
- a process for ensuring that where a change impacts on a programme which is an approved progression route from a Plymouth University Foundation Degree, appropriate notification has been sent to the partner and Academic Partnerships.
- Timely consideration of proposed changes by Programme Committees
- independent external scrutiny of changes to programme aims and/or learning outcomes
- a means of checking changes to existing modules against programme specifications to ensure that the mapping of programme outcomes is not lost
• a process for allocating a new module code where changes impact on credit-rating, level or title of an existing module
• authorisation of changes by the relevant Faculty Changes Panel and by Faculty Executive before end December
  • all changes to modules (including any late changes once approved) and programmes (including programme specifications) recorded on the appropriate template (Changes to modules-programmes template). The appropriate UNITe template will also need to be completed for direct loading into UNITe. (NB: It is also recommended that Faculties maintain accurate detailed records of each change made to help them with the process of updating UNITe)

Following approval by Faculty Executives and no later than end-December in the session preceding introduction of the change, faculties must:
• update curriculum structures in line with the Academic & Administrative Timetable (AATT) deadlines. Gateway Services Data Support will update structured routes. Structured routes in UNITe are used to create enrolments from applications. They indicate which programme, stage and mandatory modules the applicant will be enrolled on when BATE takes place. They are set up after curriculum maintenance is complete at the beginning of March. If any mandatory modules are added or removed from a programme after 1st March it is essential that Gateway Services Data Support is informed otherwise applicants will be enrolled on the wrong modules.
• submit an electronic copy of the template, plus revised MRs (Module Records), to Gateway Services Data Support
• update definitive documentation held in the Faculty or on the University’s Document Management System

3. CHANGES TO ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS’ PROVISION

All proposed changes to programmes offered by partner colleges must be considered by the relevant Joint Board of Studies, in accordance with the principles underlying the process requirements outlined above, and must be countersigned by the relevant Academic Liaison Person, Associate Head of School (Teaching and Learning) or equivalent, and Faculty Partnership Manager. Issues identified by the Faculty Partnership Manager and/or the cognate subject faculty may be referred to the Head of UK Partnerships or Associate Dean – International (Plymouth Global), as appropriate and appropriate Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) for consideration.
Proposed changes to programmes which have an approved progression route to another Plymouth University programme will also require the written agreement of the appropriate Associate Head of School (Teaching and Learning) responsible for the ‘top-up’ programme.

The Head of UK Partnerships or Associate Dean – International (Plymouth Global) will ultimately be responsible for signing-off changes. Once approved, Academic Partnerships will submit notification of changes as indicated in 2 above and will maintain updated documentation.

Please note that where progression is to another HEI the college should first check with the HEI to ensure that proposed changes do not adversely affect progression to its award.

4. CHANGE TO AN AWARD TITLE (see also guidelines)

- Where a new title for an existing programme is proposed, assurance is needed that it is consonant with the programme outcomes in the programme specification, which requires specialist advice. The external examiner of the existing programme should be provided with the old and new versions of the programme specifications and be asked to comment on:
  
  a) the appropriateness of the new title for the proposed programme specification and its intended programme learning outcomes
  
  b) the consonance of the new title/programme learning outcomes with the core curriculum/pathway
  
  c) the clarity of the explanation of the differences in outcomes and pathways in the related programme specification/s for students who have to achieve them and
  
  d) To confirm that the new title and associated programme specification/s is appropriate and not misleading for potential students/ employers (or recommend amendments, as appropriate).

- Changes to titles during a student’s course are not allowed under the ‘changes to programmes and modules’ procedure; instead title changes should be introduced as the programme is advertised with the new title and new cohorts recruited. Where changes are thought necessary within a cohort’s
experience then the advice of Central Quality Office should be sought.

- Where a new title/ alternative titles are proposed, the normal expectation would be that the intended programme learning outcomes would be differentiated (e.g. from those in the old programme specification). (A Proposal for a change of award title proforma is attached.) Students and external examiners/ internal examiners and future employers need to know what the difference in title means: how the pathways, learning experiences AND their outcomes may be differentiated.

The Faculty Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning, or Postgraduate, as appropriate) will then need to consider the completed pro-forma and the external’s advice, and decide whether a full programme approval process is needed, or whether the new programme is sufficiently close to the old programme in structure and outcomes for a full approval process not to be warranted, in which case the Associate Dean can amend /approve the new programme specification without further investigation. However, where significant changes are proposed, e.g. changes to core modules, new pathways or new additions to the student learning experience are involved (e.g. work experience, field studies, changes to core modules, distance or e-learning) then a full approval meeting with external input should be invoked (see also guidelines.)