

## Academic Policy Statement APS 28:

### Making Changes to Published Programme Related Information

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#### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to strike the balance between the reasonable expectations of students who, based on information given to them, have accepted places on a University programme (or who are progressing through a programme); and changes made to programmes due to the need to:

- (i) keep the curriculum current;
- (ii) enhance learning, teaching and assessment;
- (iii) respond to legal, PSRB<sup>1</sup>, UK Quality Code or Office for Students (or similar) requirements;
- (iv) unforeseeable events and/or circumstances that are beyond the University's reasonable control, that has a disruptive effect on the University's ability to deliver academic or other services also known as "**Force Majeure Event**"<sup>2</sup>
- (v) respond to student demand; and
- (vi) address other challenges such as low demand for programmes

This policy defines the undertaking that is made by the University to prospective or enrolled students in terms of delivering the programme curriculum as described to prospective students, and to those progressing on programmes.

This policy applies to all students (whether full time or part time) on any University programme taught at any University campus, or on any franchised, joint and validated programmes delivered by University partners.

#### 2. Commitments to students by the University

##### 2.1 Programme information

For students offered places on a programme, or enrolled on a programme, the following should normally be guaranteed throughout the normal period of a student's enrolment on the programme (unless changes are necessary to meet obligations related to legal, PSRB, UK Quality Code, Office for Students (or similar) requirements or "Force Majeure Event"):

- the title of the programme and the qualification to which it leads;
- the programme aims;
- the programme learning outcomes;
- any professional recognition (subject to continuing PSRB approval);

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<sup>1</sup> Professional/statutory/regulatory bodies

<sup>2</sup> Such events may include but are not limited to health related epidemics/or pandemics, war, changes to the law, or any actions taken by the government or other public authority, that unavoidably impacts on our ability to deliver business as usual. If an event occurs which is disruptive but it can be reasonably managed with little or no disruption to services, then the University would not treat such an event as a force majeure event

- the overall structure, e.g. years of study, overall credit structure, exit qualifications etc.;
- delivery location (though not necessarily a specific campus);
- fees and additional costs throughout the normal period of a student's enrolment (including any planned increases in fees and/or additional costs); and
- any compulsory special features of the programme such as intercalated years etc.

The exception to this requirement is a programme that is undergoing validation or review, in which case it should be clearly indicated to prospective and currently enrolled students that the precise details of the above might change as a result of the programme validation or review.

## 2.2 Point of reference for programme information

The points of reference for the description of the programme overall, are for:

- **prospective students:** the programme specification and marketing materials that describe the programme for the academic year the prospective student is applying for;
- **enrolled students:** the programme specification and module narratives that apply to the student's current year, and the marketing materials that described the programme when the prospective student applied (with due regard made for any changes as allowed as per section 2.1).

## 3. Programme Change process

### 3.1 Notice of intent to change programmes via validation and review or major change process

Programme changes may occur as a result of scheduled programme review, major changes to programmes (in line with procedures set out in the University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook) or via the replacement of a validated programme with a replacement. This is likely to result in changes to some of the items as described in 2.1.

In the case of such changes, successful applicants and students must be given as much notice as possible of proposed changes and all reasonable steps must be taken to minimise disruption to the applicants.

#### 3.1.1 Consultation

Enrolled students who may be affected by such changes should be consulted, normally with at least two weeks response time (not including vacation periods), in addition to the formal student meeting required as a result of the programme review process. Consultations should be (as a minimum) by email, possibly augmented by face-to-face meetings. No more than 25% of the students who are enrolled and could potentially be affected by the change should explicitly withhold consent for the changes. In such cases, it may be necessary to roll out the intended new arrangements starting with the next cohort, and old programmes will need to be taught out.

If a Force Majeure Event occurs, the University will seek to consult on its response to the Force Majeure Event on what decisions it may have to make concerning programmes, where it is reasonably practicable to consult before changes have to be made. If we cannot consult we will provide reasons for this.

#### 3.1.2 Supporting applicants or students affected by changes

If applicants or students are adversely affected by changes to the items described in 2.1, they

will be supported by the University if they wish to apply for similar programmes within the University, or at other HEIs.

### **3.2 Programme changes in response to “Force Majeure Events”**

**3.2.1** For applicants to courses and for enrolled students, it may be necessary during the course of the academic year to make changes to courses and/or use of premises and facilities as a result of events occurring beyond our reasonable control. Such changes may be needed to

- comply with future government health advice;
- comply with changes to the law

**3.2.2** The University will also undertake its own risk assessments in response to changing circumstances, (including in relation to course provision and use of facilities) and this will also influence decisions it may have to make which may include changes in relation to how courses are delivered and how facilities and premises are used.

### **3.3 Timescales**

All changes must be completed within the timescales set out in the University’s programme change quality processes, currently 31 May in any academic year.

If a Force Majeure Event occurs, the University will seek to make decisions concerning its continuing service delivery to students of the University (including in relation to student progression or final awards) as timely as possible and having regard to any changes in applicable legislation, instructions and guidance that may come from the government and regulators

### **3.4 Effect on progression routes**

Any changes made must still allow for progression to completion of the programme or an agreed equivalent for part time students, or for students entering with advanced standing.

## **4. Module information**

### **4.1 Compulsory modules**

#### **4.1.1 Offering compulsory modules**

The suite of compulsory modules to be offered will normally be those as listed in the programme specification handbook and marketing materials current at the time of application.

#### **4.1.2 Delivering compulsory modules**

All compulsory modules will normally be offered as per the description in the programme specification, module narratives marketing materials and current handbook other than the:

- syllabus content;
- learning materials;
- members of staff;
- assessment tasks;
- assessment type and weighting (which may change subject to continuing to be consistent with the programme learning, teaching and assessment strategy); and
- location;

which may be subject to change.

#### **4.1.3 Changes to compulsory modules**

Exceptionally, e.g. to meet legal requirements or respond to a Force Majeure Event, it may be necessary to withdraw a compulsory module, or to amend it beyond the limits as prescribed in 4.1.2.

### **4.2 Optional modules**

#### **4.2.1 Offering optional modules**

As it may not always be possible to deliver optional modules due to student demand, availability of staff etc. not all advertised option modules may be delivered. Publicity and programme material should indicate that the suite of available optional modules may be subject to change.

The decision to withdraw an option module for delivery should be made at the earliest possible opportunity when students select their option choices for the following academic year.

Consideration will be given to the learning experience for students should the number of students selecting an option module fall below a number which would provide a meaningful learning experience.

#### **4.2.2 Delivering optional modules**

All optional modules that are offered will normally be delivered as per the description in the programme specification and module narrative, marketing materials and current handbook<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.2.3 Changes to modules**

Exceptionally, e.g. to meet legal requirements or respond to a Force Majeure Event, it may be necessary to amend an optional module beyond the limits as described in 4.1.2.

### **5. Module change process**

Module changes will take place according to the University's quality processes set out in the Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook (LQEH).

All changes must be completed within the timescales set out in the University's programme change quality processes, currently 31 May in any academic year, unless the changes are a result of a Force Majeure Event or circumstance occurring. In this situation the University will seek to make decisions concerning its continuing service delivery to students of the University as timely as possible and having regard to any changes in applicable legislation, instructions and guidance that may come from the government and regulators.

#### **5.1.1.1 Consultation**

Students who may be affected by such changes should be consulted, normally with at least two weeks response time (not including vacation periods). Consultations should be (as a minimum) by email, possibly augmented by face-to-face meetings. No more that

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<sup>3</sup> That is the academic year in which the student is taking the modules

25% of the students who are enrolled and could potentially be affected by the change should explicitly withhold consent for the changes.

If a Force Majeure Event or circumstance occurs, the University will seek to consult where it is reasonably practicable to do so. If we cannot consult we will provide reasons for this.

#### **5.1.1.2 Effect on progression routes**

Any changes made must still allow for progression to completion of the programme for part time students, or for students entering with advanced standing.

#### **5.1.2 Point of reference for modules**

The points of reference for the changes identified in 4.1.2 are the programme specification and module narratives and marketing materials that applied when the student applied for the programme, and the current programme handbook.

### **6. Notice of intent to change programmes/modules**

All intended changes should be published to students as early as possible and the reasons for the changes fully explained.

If a Force Majeure Event or circumstance occurs, the University will give students as much advance warning of the changes occurring to any aspects of their course, including content delivery, assessment and where and how the course will be delivered in different circumstances. This means:

- We will as far as we reasonably can, provide as much of this information to enrolled students and applicants before the start of the academic year.
- However, if for reasons beyond our reasonable control, further changes need to be made after the start of the academic year, we will give students as much advance notice as we can before the change happens, so that students have an opportunity to make decisions in an informed way with as little inconvenience to them as possible, and where possible we will consult with students before changes are made.

### **7. Withdrawal or cancelling of a programme before it commences**

The University is committed to delivering the programmes that it has offered, however, if, due to unanticipated developments, such as a Force Majeure Event, legal or PSRB requirements, or changes in demand for the programme, the University determines that a programme should be withdrawn or cancelled, then the University will give as much notice as possible to applicants who have accepted places, and will make every effort to offer alternative programmes to such applicants or support them in finding an alternative. The University will fulfil all of its obligations as noted in the University's Financial Regulations for Students, and in the University Regulations.

### **8. Information on fee increases**

The University will provide clear information as to the planned increases in fees for students recruited onto any University programme, and will be committed to meet this fee information. This information will be made clear in pre-applicant information, offer information and upon enrolment.

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