PROGRAMME AND MODULE AMENDMENTS AND COVID-19

1. Introduction
The purpose of this paper is to provide a concise overview of the current process for making amendments to existing approved modules and programmes in the context of COVID-19.

2. Current process for making and approving module and programme amendments
The process for considering minor module amendments and minor programme amendments is delegated to School Education Committees (SECs) and requires the completion of a Module Amendment Form or Programme Amendment Form. Programme Directors must also provide an updated Programme Specification to the School Education Committee when making structural programme amendments to the modules that form part of a programme (e.g. changing the year of study a module is taken). These approvals are reported to the College Programmes Committee (CPC).

SECs can consider minor module and programme amendments by chair’s action where appropriate to help speed up the processing of changes. This includes changes to the assessment scheme for modules (e.g. changing the weightings of assessment elements and/or the number of assessed elements). It is particularly important changes to assessment schemes are accurately recorded and reported by using the established form and procedures for amending modules, as depending on the nature of the change it may affect learning outcomes and is also likely to necessitate changes to module records on SITS.

Departments should ensure that they follow the revised College’s Guidance for complying with Consumer Protection Law when considering making changes to programmes and modules. This is particularly important where material changes (see above guidance for examples) are made to the programme structure i.e. changing core and compulsory modules. Applicants and students need to be informed or consulted about changes where a change affects the key details of the programme or module that are made available to students. This would be information contained on the courses page on the prospectus, the programme specification or in the Confirmation of Study Agreement (COSA). The COSA is a download of the prospectus entry at a point in time, capturing ‘what a student signed up for’ and is required to comply with consumer protection law under guidance issued by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

Amendments to modules and programmes that have been approved by SECs should be sent via normal process to ASQ via SECs as soon as possible to record amendments and update the MAPs, enact any necessary changes to SITS, and, where appropriate, publish updated Programme Specifications.

ASQ have always adopted a flexible approach in processing amendments and amendments will be considered on a rolling basis in 2020 as part of COVID-19 mitigating where there are good grounds to do so (having due regard for consumer protection law) and where a change is in the interests of students. It may also be possible to submit one module amendment form or programme amendment form if the same change applies to a number of modules or programmes to streamline the process for a light touch approach.

3. Temporary module amendments and suspensions for 2020/21
In the case of any temporary amendments made to modules for 2020/21 only¹ these amendments should be made using the existing Module Amendment Form and process detailed above. The form can be updated so that colleagues can easily indicate if the proposed amendment is meant to be of a temporary nature. This includes, for example, changes to the assessment for a module. If identical

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¹ Such amendments will revert back to their currently approved tasks/weightings for 2021/2
amendments are proposed to a group of modules it may be possible to submit this on one form to streamline the process for a light touch approach. Please contact Karen Rubin in ASQ if you need any further advice or guidance.

Where there is a decision made to temporarily suspend a module for delivery in 2020/21 this should be done via a Module Amendment Form. Consideration should also be given to the College's Guidance for complying with Consumer Protection Law as outlined above. If a number of modules are intended to be suspended for delivery it may be possible to submit details of all relevant modules on one form to streamline the process for a light touch approach.

4. **Combining existing approved modules**

Where a decision is taken to combine elements of existing approved modules this should be done via the submission of a Module Proposal Form and can be approved via SECs. Departments can use content from existing modules to complete the combined forms and should indicate if the combined module is to stay in place post 2020/21 on the forms, and whether existing modules the combined module replaces can be withdrawn or need to stay in use for 2021. Please contact Karen Rubin in ASQ if you need any further advice or guidance.

5. **Online delivery of modules and programmes**

The Teaching Preparation Project briefing document for 2020/21 outlined plans to be able to deliver Autumn term induction, teaching and assessment fully online. Both changes are born out of necessity and take into account relevant government guidelines available at the time.

Where an enforced change to the mode of delivery of a module or programme has taken place from the normal mode of in-person delivery to online delivery a module/programme amendment form is not required. However, if, for example, there is a desire to offer a new distance learning mode of study for an existing approved programme a Programme Amendment Form should be submitted in line with the current process. If you are unsure about whether an amendment is required, please contact Karen Rubin in ASQ.

6. **January starts and additional intake points**

If a programme amendment is made to change the start date of an already approved programme or add an additional intake and is intended to apply to several programmes with the same rationale for the change then only one Programme Amendment Form should be submitted (i.e one form per department for a light touch approach).

If the change proposed relates to the start date of an already approved programme that runs in the Autumn term, such as a move from October 2020 to January 2021 for 2020/21 academic year, a business case needs to be made by the HoD to the planning group.

Where an amendment proposes an additional intake to an already approved programme, such as a new intake in January 2021 in addition to the normal October 2020 intake, a Programme Amendment Form should be submitted. Where an additional intake is proposed the programme amendment form should be submitted ASAP to allow sufficient time to advertise and promote the programme in order to recruit students. It is suggested an absolute cut-off off point for the submission of amendments is the 17th July.

7. **Alternative assessments and COVID-19**

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2 Note: enforced change to the mode of delivery of a module or programme due to COVID-19 has not changed the existing designation of a module/programme to distance learning where this was in-person delivery originally.
College Guidance on Teaching and Assessment in response to COVID-19 disruption was approved by Academic Board on 30th March 2020. Alternative assessments were set in place of face to face examinations at the end of both the spring and summer terms. Key principles included the provision of alternative assessments for all exams that were scheduled for summer term and that wherever possible exams that have already been set and approved by external examiners should be uploaded to Moodle as an open-book, take home test. The pivot to alternate assessment in the form of open-book, take home tests did not require a module amendment to be submitted as this was a temporary and emergency measure in response to COVID-19 disruption and took into account relevant government guidelines available at the time. Whilst the format of assessment may have changed from the original and intended exam-based assessment, the learning objectives assessed by the alternative assessment have not.

The Teaching Preparation project (TPP) briefing document made it clear that there is an expectation to deliver Autumn term assessment fully online. For 2020/21 where a standard exam is replaced by an alternative assessment, such as an online take-home exam, on a temporary basis for 2020/21 only because of the COVID-19 situation at the time, a module amendment form will therefore not be required. Last minute changes to planned assessment should be avoided wherever possible. Any changes should also be communicated to students in good time so students are clear what kind of assessment to expect from the beginning of their modules and can prepare accordingly.

Given the alternative scenarios the College may be faced with in 2020/21, which may mean ‘in-person’ exams are unlikely, Module Convenors should be mindful that it may be necessary to use alternative assessment in lieu of ‘in-person’ exams for the duration of 2020/21, and should factor this into consideration when setting exam questions.

If there is a decision made to change assessment for a module permanently to take-home exams irrespective of the COVID-19 situation then a module amendment form should be submitted to ensure that the change is recorded in the systems and module specification for the future.

8. Emergency temporary module amendments to 2019-20 assessment schemes

An online, simplified form was quickly developed for module amendments to 2019-20 assessment schemes that were impacted by the COVID-19 situation. All departments were contacted via ADs Education and HoDs about the process, which involved completion of a very basic paired down online module amendment form that was due to be submitted by the 20th May. This focused on where Departments reduced the number of planned assessments and consolidated them into one piece of assessment that assessed learning outcomes of the module as a whole, or reduced the number of assessments, or changed the type of assessment. The form was brought in to deal with a specific situation where assessment was being changed after the module had started, and marks may have been partially entered, which required different types of technical changes on the SITS system, than changes which are processed earlier in the year.

In total only 15 amendments of this type were collected via the online form. The use of an online form was, however, a temporary measure to deal with the specific situation outlined above. In practice, there were a number of drawbacks of the online form as it was found to be slower to use for processing than the standard forms, frequently coming in without the clarity of information afforded by the design of the standard form, and requiring additional time spent in the collection of further necessary information by email.

Completion of the forms resulted in a spreadsheet output for ASQ/BSIS to process, although this information was difficult to view and process in the spreadsheet format – not lending itself to processing large numbers quickly, and was bypassing other module details, checks and processes within existing
quality systems that are needed to maintain module records centrally accurately. Work will be carried out later this year on the development of an online form and workflow process on the Module and Planning System (MAPs) for future use which will require significant staff time and resources. The standard Module Amendment Form will therefore be used for all future amendments as this allows more efficient processing of module amendments currently.

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