



**Higher Education Services
Modifications to Existing Programmes,
Suspensions
& Closure**

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Higher Education Services Modifications to Existing Programmes, Suspensions & Closure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Typically, changes and suggestions will fall into one or more of the categories listed in the table at the conclusion of this document. Each category includes details about the necessary documentation, the steps required for approval, and the administrative actions to be taken once approval is granted.

2.0 Guidance When Making Changes

2.1 Seek Early Advice: Due to the wide variety of potential changes, proposers are encouraged to consult the Academic Quality Lead early in the process to clarify specific requirements for their case. The [Changes Policy](#) should be consulted for guidance.

2.2 Common Sources of Modifications:

Changes typically stem from:

- Module evaluations and feedback
- Programme committee discussions
- Student satisfaction surveys
- Input from external examiners or professional bodies
- Recommendations from examination boards
- Findings from annual monitoring or internal reviews

2.3 Stakeholder Involvement:

- Students and other key stakeholders should be actively engaged in decisions involving substantial changes to programmes.
- The extent of involvement will vary based on the nature and justification for the proposed change.
- Refer to the guidance at the end of this document for details on required levels of engagement for different types of changes.

2.4 Cumulative Modifications:

- If multiple changes are proposed during a programme's current approval cycle that collectively impact more than 50% of the student experience, a periodic review will typically be triggered.
- The Quality Team monitors such cumulative changes.

2.5 Approval Requirements:

- The Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee must first approve all proposed changes.

3.0 Types of Changes and Documentation

3.1 Validations and Revalidations normally require prior planning approval which is obtained as if for a new programme by the partner university.

3.2 Module and Programme Modifications are further categorised as minor or major. There is a single template at the end of this document to assist in the presentation of these changes.

4.0 Minor Modifications

4.1 Minor modifications to programmes and modules are permitted four times per academic year. Proposals for changes are submitted and subsequently reviewed by Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committees.

4.2 In exceptional circumstances, proposals for changes may be submitted outside of the designated windows. Such cases require approval from the Academic Registrar, who will assess whether the situation warrants an exception. Typically, this kind of approval is only granted when there are compelling reasons, such as compliance with external regulatory demands or requirements from Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

4.3 Proposed changes must be endorsed by the appropriate External Examiner before they can be formally reviewed by the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee. This multi-step process ensures that all modifications are thoroughly vetted and supported by both internal and external academic stakeholders before implementation.

5.0 Major Modifications

5.1 Significant changes to programmes may be proposed at any time throughout the academic year. The timing for implementing these changes will be determined by FutureLearn and the partner university, considering feedback and input from relevant stakeholders involved in the process.

5.2 All proposals for major modifications must be thoroughly documented and submitted with a complete set of programme materials. This includes updated module descriptor forms, the current programme specification, and the programme handbook. Additional supporting information may also be required to justify and explain the proposed changes. The Academic Quality Lead will provide guidance on the specific documentation and procedural requirements, which may vary depending on the scope and nature of the modification being proposed.

6.0 Administrative Changes

6.1 Administrative updates may be introduced at any time during the academic calendar. To enact such changes, a revised version of the module descriptor form or programme specification must be submitted to the Academic Quality Lead. These documents should include visible track changes to clearly highlight the amendments. Once received, the updated materials will be processed, published, and made available to relevant audiences.

7.0 Pre-Launched Programme Changes

7.1 For programmes that have not yet commenced, modifications can be proposed at any stage. These proposals are reviewed by the chair of the appropriate validation panel, who will assess whether consultation with external subject experts on the panel is necessary. Based on this evaluation, the chair will decide whether to approve the proposed changes. The outcome of this decision is then formally reported to the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee for record-keeping and oversight.

8.0 Entry Requirements Adjustments

8.1 Proposals to alter entry requirements are treated as minor modifications and can be submitted at any point during the year. These changes are reviewed and approved by the Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee at its next scheduled meeting, ensuring that updates are considered in a timely and consistent manner.

9.0 Competition and Markets Authority

9.1 As a higher education provider, FutureLearn is obligated to comply with regulations set by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and other consumer protection laws that govern the promotion and delivery of academic programmes. A fundamental aspect of these regulations is ensuring that prospective and enrolled students are able to make informed choices. The programme they receive must align with the expectations set by the information provided prior to their enrolment. When changes to a programme are necessary, especially those that differ from what students were originally led to expect, it is essential that we actively engage with them and consider their perspectives. The [Changes Policy](#) will apply.

9.2 There are three distinct levels of student engagement that may be required depending on the nature of the proposed change: communication, consultation, and consent. Each approach serves a different purpose and is suited to different types of modifications.

9.2.1 In cases where a change is minor and does not significantly affect the student experience, it is sufficient to simply inform students of the update. This is typically done via email or other direct messaging platforms. No feedback is required from students under this category as this step is purely informational. Link tutors should be kept up to date with any module or major changes.

9.2.2 For changes that may impact students more directly, it is important to seek their input. Students should be notified about the proposed modification and invited to share their views. Their feedback should be considered when finalising the proposal. Consultation should be inclusive, reaching all students who may be affected, not just a select few. While focus groups can be useful, broader outreach methods such as email surveys, online questionnaires, face-to-face meetings, webinars, or virtual Q&A sessions are recommended. These sessions should be offered at various times to accommodate different schedules and ensure accessibility. Although there is no strict requirement for the volume of feedback received, if responses are minimal, teams are encouraged to follow up using alternative methods to improve engagement.

9.2.3 When a proposed change is significant enough to require student approval, consent must be obtained. This involves not only informing and consulting students, as described above, but also securing their agreement to proceed. Consent can be collected through tools such as Google Forms, email responses, or other digital platforms. In some cases, students may be informed that their consent will be assumed unless they actively opt out by a specified deadline. For changes requiring consent, it is recommended that students be given the chance to speak directly with academic staff to discuss the implications of the modification in more detail. This personal interaction helps ensure that students fully understand the change and its potential impact.

9.3 In some cases, one proposed change may necessitate another adjustment to maintain the structure and integrity of the programme. For example, removing a core module will require either the introduction of a new core module or the addition of optional modules unless suitable options already exist. When changes are interconnected like this, only one form of student engagement is required for the complete set of changes. However, the engagement must follow the more rigorous requirement of the two changes involved.

9.4 If a modification is mandated by a Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Body (PSRB) or another external authority, then consultation with students will be sufficient even in cases where consent would normally be required. This reflects the necessity and urgency of complying with external standards.

9.5 Engagement efforts should focus solely on those stakeholders who are directly impacted by the proposed change. For instance, students who have already completed a module do not need to be formally involved in the engagement process. However, it may still be considered good practice to gather their feedback or inform them of the change, especially if their input contributed to the decision.

9.6 Modules may be shared across multiple programmes and can hold different statuses depending on the context being core in one programme and optional in another. In such scenarios, all affected students must be included in the engagement process, but the level of engagement will vary depending on how the module is classified within their specific programme.

9.7 If a change to an optional module is proposed after students have already made their selection, the engagement process must follow the criteria used for core modules. This ensures that students are adequately informed and consulted when a change directly affects their academic choices.

9.8 Stakeholder Engagement

Type of change	Details/Examples	Category of change	Stakeholder Engagement									Rationale
			Current students			Offer holders			Applicants			
			Communicate	Consult	Consent	Communicate	Consult	Consent	Communicate	Consult	Consent	
Change to programme/module leader		Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Minor changes to wording within the specifications that provide clarity but do not change content or outcomes		Administrative	N/A			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Correction of typographical errors		Administrative	N/A			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Updates to reading lists and online resources		Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			We are required and expected to ensure that resources are up to date
Update reference to QAA subject benchmark statements (where no programme updates are required)	This will normally be reviewed and updated through the AMR process	Administrative	N/A			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Reference to PSRB accreditation	Updating information with reference to PSRBs to confirm a pending accreditation	Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			This is simply confirming previously communicated information

Change to module code	Changing the module code	Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Change to owning school	Changing the school that owns a specific module	Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Change to owning programme	Changing the programme that owns a specific module	Administrative	X			N/A			N/A			No change to material information
Change to programme content/LOs	Updating the content or LOs of programme to maintain currency	Minor	X			X			X			Updating the content and LOs to maintain currency and reflect developments in the field is both expected and required to maintain quality of education
Change to module content/LOs	Updating the content and LOs of a module to maintain currency	Minor	X			X			X			Updating module content and LOs to reflect developments in the field and in response to stakeholder feedback is required to maintain the student experience and quality of education
Changed module title	Changing a module title to better reflect the content or common practice in the field	Minor		X			X		X			This is a change to material information so requires consultation
Withdrawal of core module	Completely withdrawing a current core module from a programme	Minor			X			X	X			This is a change to the material information
Core module to become optional	Changing the designation of a module from core to optional	Minor		X			X		X			Whilst this changes the material information, students can still choose the module so do not lose out
Addition of new core module	Adding either an entirely new module or changing an	Minor			X			X	X			This is a change to the material information

	optional module to a core module											
Withdrawal of optional module	Withdrawing a previously offered optional module	Minor		X			X			X		As this is an optional module there is scope to change the offering. Please note, if a module has moved from core to optional and then is withdrawn then the process for withdrawing a core module will apply for those students who applied at the time it was core and who would be affected by the change
Addition of new optional module	Adding a new module to the list of optional modules	Minor	X			X				X		Whilst this changes the material information it is providing increased choice
Change to assessment weighting	Changing the weighting of components on a multi-part assessment	Minor	X			X				X		Where assessment types remain the same but the weighting changes there is no change to the material information
Change to assessment type – core	Changing the assessment type, either in whole or in part, on a core module	Minor		X			X			X		Changing assessment types is a change to the material information that may have affected students' decisions on where to study
Change to assessment type – option	Changing the assessment type, either in whole or in part, on an optional module	Minor	X			X				X		As the change is to an optional module and students can choose not to study it, they simply need to be informed
Change to running order or to pinned/paired modules	Changing the module running order or which modules are pinned and paired	Minor	X			X				X		No change to material information
Change to entry requirements	The entry requirements are	Minor	X				X			X		This is a change to the material information but does not impact on

	changed either to make them tighter or looser											current students; offer holders should have their offers honoured (even if they would no longer be eligible) but should be consulted in case they want to choose a different programme, applicants must be informed as soon as possible
Change to programme title or award	Changing 'Business' to 'Business and Management', or a BA to a BSc (includes renaming a named route)	Major			X			X	X			This is a significant change to the material information
Creation of new target award	Addition of Cert HE/Dip HE or PG Cert/PG Dip	Major	N/A		N/A		N/A			No change to material information		
Creation of named route	Adding a new named route to a programme	Major	N/A		N/A		N/A			No change to material information		
Addition of delivery mode	Adding a new delivery mode	Major	N/A		N/A		N/A			No change to material information		
Contextualisation of programme for specific cohort/market	Making changes to an existing programme to tailor it to a specific cohort or market	Major	N/A		N/A		N/A			No change to material information unless existing students will be transferred to the new version; in this case, please consult Senior Quality Officer		
Removal of delivery mode	Removing a previously validated delivery mode	Programme Closure	N/A		N/A		N/A			Removing a delivery mode means closing delivery of that version of the programme and follows the programme closure process		
Removal of named route	Removing a previously offered named route	Programme Closure	N/A		N/A		N/A			Removing a named route means closing that version of the programme and follows the programme closure process		

Loss of or change to PSRB status	PSRB accreditation being withdrawn or a change to the benefits offered by a PSRB	N/A	Consult with Senior Quality Officer	Consult with Senior Quality Officer	Consult with Senior Quality Officer	The nature of engagement will depend on the nature of and the reason for the change, please consult with the Quality Team
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10.0 Programme Closure or Suspension

10.1 Before formally closing or suspending a programme especially one delivered via FutureLearn and its validated provision the Higher Education Services Division must consult current students, including those on leave or with referrals. Prospective students (applicants, offer holders, and deferrals) must also be considered, as accepting an offer forms a contract.

10.2 Any closure or suspension must include plans to support current students through completion or offer suitable alternatives. These arrangements must meet any PSRB requirements. Prospective students should be guided toward other options or allowed to withdraw from their offer and contract.

10.3 External Examiners must be invited to comment. Other subjects using modules from the affected programme must be consulted to avoid disruption.

10.4 All affected students must receive adequate notice of the closure or suspension. Where the closure or suspension lies with the franchise partnerships FutureLearn will follow the partners processes in informing students.

11.0 Reasons for Closure or Suspension

11.1 There are a number of reasons for closing or suspending a programme, these include albeit not limited to:

- Declining student enrolments.
- Replacement of programmes with new, up-to-date programmes.
- Changes to the strategic direction of FutureLearn.
- Concerns regarding academic quality and standards.
- Termination in a partnership resulting in programme withdrawal.
- Periodic programme and portfolio reviews may recommend closure or suspension.

11.2 Every effort will be taken to minimise disruption to students. Current students will be supported to complete their studies, and where not feasible transitional arrangements will be developed in consultation with those affected.

12.0 Governance, Approval and Communication

12.1 Any proposed closures or suspensions will be approved by the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee (SEQPC) and reported to the Academic Partnerships and Admissions Committee. The Head of Programmes will be required to submit a withdrawal or suspension [form](#) to the SEQPC outlining the closure or suspension, reasons for the decision, number of students impacted, alternative programmes, and a teach-out plan to support students.

12.2 Once the SEQPC has confirmed the decision to close a programme or halt recruitment, the Student Recruitment and Admissions Departments will remove the programme from the FutureLearn website to prevent future applications. Simultaneously, the Academic Quality Lead will update internal systems to reflect the new status, either as suspended or closed. Responsibility for communicating the decision to current and prospective students lies with the Student Services team, ensuring that all affected individuals are informed in a timely and appropriate manner.

13.0 Monitoring

13.1 The policy will be kept under review and formally reviewed every three years by the Academic Registrar.

Appendix

Withdrawal or Suspension of a Programme Form

This form should be completed by the relevant Head of Programmes where a request is made to withdraw or suspend a programme from recruitment. The completed form should be signed by the Director of Academic Affairs and submitted to the secretary of the Student Engagement, Quality and Programme Committee.

This form should be used for requests for closure/suspension due to:

- Outcomes of periodic review/Annual Monitoring Review.
- Review of the portfolio by the Faculty Management.
- Change in strategic priorities, at a partner University or FutureLearn.
- Changes in the external environment (e.g. PSRB requirements).
- Insufficient demand for a programme to cover cost of delivery.
- Replacement of a programme due to revalidation.

When requesting to withdraw programmes from recruitment, the Head of Programmes should assess the impact of the programme closure and ensure there has been discussion with the relevant stakeholders, including other subject areas in the case of shared modules. A programme closure action plan should also be developed to manage the programme closure process.

Title of Programme(s)	
Subject Area	
Partner University	

Reason for closure:	Overview / Brief history of recruitment numbers, existing student numbers and an outline of student achievement. Rationale for withdrawal or suspension should fit within the overarching Faculty academic portfolio.
Proposed date of final intake:	

Provide an overview of any replacement programme and planned launch date.	
Financial Analysis:	<p>Outline of any financial implications caused by the proposal withdrawal of programme</p> <p>Outline any suggestions or counter measures that could be put in place to offset any predicted financial adjustments.</p>

Signed by Head of Programmes:	Signed by Director of Academic Affairs:
Date:	Date:

To be completed by Academic Quality Lead

Date Approved by SEQPC	
Date Approved by Executive	

Actions Required	Responsibility	Date for Completion	Update on progress
Ceasing Recruitment			
Notification to Partner University and all Departments			
Communication to Applicants and Students			
Student Progression, Leave of Absence, Mitigation, Referrals and Retakes			
Transitional Arrangements			
External Examiner Notification			
Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body Notification			