



Programme and Module Revision Policy

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| Document Area | Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| Document Function/ Owner | Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar |
| Author | Academic Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team (qaet@atu.ie) |
| Required Approval | Academic Council |

Issued Document Location

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Internal Staff Portal / Hub | Yes (default repository) |
| Internal Student Portal / Hub | No |
| ATU Website | Yes |
| Issue Date | 27 June 2023 Effective Date 01 September 2023 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| 1. Purpose..... | 4 |
| 2. Scope | 4 |
| 3. External Reference Documents..... | 5 |
| 4. Policy | 5 |
| 4.1 Guiding Principles..... | 5 |
| 4.1.1 Principle of Academic Excellence..... | 6 |
| 4.1.2 Principle of Student-Centred Experience and Values..... | 6 |
| 4.1.3 Principle of Stakeholder Engagement | 6 |
| 4.1.4 Principle of Sustainability, Agility and Responsiveness | 6 |
| 4.2 Definitions | 7 |
| 4.2.1 Programme Monitoring | 7 |
| 4.2.2 Differential Validation..... | 7 |
| 4.2.3 Approved Programme Schedule (APS) | 7 |
| 4.3 Revising Programmes and Modules | 7 |
| 4.4 Classification of changes to programmes and/or modules..... | 8 |
| 4.4.1 Type A: Major Changes to Programmes | 8 |
| 4.4.2 Type B: Minor Changes to Programmes | 9 |
| 4.4.3 Type C: Major Changes to Modules..... | 9 |
| 4.4.4 Type D: Minor Changes to Modules | 9 |
| 4.4.5 Learning resources..... | 10 |
| 4.5 Process for approval of changes to programmes and modules..... | 10 |
| 4.5.1 Approval for Type A Changes: Differential Validation | 10 |
| 4.5.2 Approval for Type B Changes: Academic Council Academic Programmes Committee Approval..... | 10 |
| 4.5.3 Approval of Changes to Modules..... | 11 |
| 4.5.4 Annual Audit of Changes..... | 11 |
| 4.6 Implementation of Changes..... | 11 |
| 4.7 Responsibilities..... | 12 |

4.7.1 Programme Board..... 12

4.7.2 Head of Department 12

4.7.3 Faculty Academic Planning Committee (FAPC) 12

4.7.4 University Planning Team Academic Programme Provision Committee 13

4.7.5 Office of VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar 13

4.7.6 Academic Council..... 13

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Policy 14

6. Revision History 14

1. Purpose

This purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and processes for making changes to ATU's validated programmes and modules outside of its periodic review process. The policy establishes mechanisms for the quality assurance of continuous improvement and enhancement measures undertaken at ATU.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff involved in the management and delivery of taught programmes and modules at ATU, including collaborative and joint programmes, stand-alone modules, and taught modules undertaken as part of research degrees. The policy applies to all programmes leading to awards from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

All taught programmes and modules must undergo periodic review. In the interim, the outcome of continuous monitoring and review processes undertaken by Programme Boards may necessitate proposed changes to a programme and/or the modules of a programme.

Revising programmes and/or modules of study aims to ensure that programme content remains current and relevant, and that an effective learning environment is maintained for students. In ATU, programmes are regularly and systematically monitored and reviewed to assess their continuing currency and validity in light of the following:

- industry and professional practice and pedagogy,
- changes in the external environment such as requirements of professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PRSBs),
- developments in disciplinary research, and
- continued alignment with ATU's mission and strategy.

Changes to programmes and/or modules may also arise as a result of evaluation of:

- student progression and completion data,
- the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students and student workload,
- student feedback in relation to expectations, needs and satisfaction,
- the Programme Board's deliberations on the effectiveness of pedagogy, and/or
- the learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

Additional policies that apply to the quality assurance of taught programmes at ATU are:

- *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy,*
- *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy,* and
- *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy.*

Other policies to be developed will address collaborative and joint awards, periodic programme reviews and specific requirements for blended and online programmes.

3. External Reference Documents

The development of this policy is informed by the following documents, which are available on the Staff Portal:

- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016)
- Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Designated Awarding Bodies (QQI, 2016)
- Principles for Professional Engagements with Education Providers, including Programme Validation, Professional Accreditation and Approval (QQI, 2021)

4. Policy

4.1 Guiding Principles

This policy is guided by the four principles which underpin the ethos of Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Programmes at ATU.



Figure 1. Principles underpinning Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Programmes.

These principles are:

4.1.1 Principle of Academic Excellence

The principle of academic excellence establishes the academic, professional, and personal development of the student and faculty as fundamental to the rationale for programme provision, and by extension to continuous improvement and enhancement of programmes. ATU is committed to offering a diverse range of programmes of study that meet the highest academic standards by seeking to continually assure that the quality of its programmes is maintained and enhanced.

4.1.2 Principle of Student-Centred Experience and Values

This principle places the student perspective as a key stakeholder in the revision and enhancement of academic programmes at ATU. Relevant and appropriate feedback from students on all aspects of programme provision and delivery, at all stages of the programme, is systematically gathered through our monitoring and review process and used to inform necessary changes to programmes and modules. Students and potential students must also be informed in a timely manner of any changes to programmes of study.

4.1.3 Principle of Stakeholder Engagement

This principle establishes our commitment to engaging with internal and external stakeholders to inform revision to programmes and modules. Stakeholders include subject matter experts, industry representatives, professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), civic and community organisations, linked providers, other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and external quality assurance agencies. Recognising their role as key stakeholders, students will be represented on Programme Boards and other committees in which monitoring, and enhancement of programmes is considered.

4.1.4 Principle of Sustainability, Agility and Responsiveness

This principle recognises the role that programme provision has in honouring the commitment that our university makes in its mission to *'enabling sustainable economic, social and cultural development; connected to our region and with a mindset that reaches far beyond it'*. Therefore, ATU will continually seek to ensure that programmes remain sustainable, current, and responsive to current and future needs.

These principles also underpin *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy* and *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy*.

4.2 Definitions

4.2.1 Programme Monitoring

Programme monitoring is an annual, systematic process which provides a check on ongoing learning and teaching provision at an operational level. This differs from a programmatic review which occurs in a five-year cycle.

4.2.2 Differential Validation

Differential Validation is the process by which major changes to validated programmes are approved. Differential Validation should apply in cases where significant structural changes are proposed to a programme, but the changes do not run contrary to the aims, rationale and/or programme learning outcomes (PLOs).

4.2.3 Approved Programme Schedule (APS)

The Approved Programme Schedule (APS) defines the set of prescribed modules (together with their associated credits, contact hours, pathways, types of assessment and any special regulations) that make up a full programme of study.

4.3 Revising Programmes and Modules

All taught programmes are reviewed, revised, and re-validated during periodic programme review. Validation and re-validation processes may result in recommendations that the Programme Boards may review and implement following the validation of the programme. Outside of this, Programme Boards may propose changes to a programme and/or modules. Such changes to programmes and/or modules should not normally be proposed within 2 years following validation or periodic re-validation.

Exceptional changes such as those in response to requirements of legislation or regulatory bodies may be considered on case-by-case basis.

The process of revising modules and/or programmes has three stages:

1. Documenting the proposed changes module(s) / programmes
2. Approval for the changes
3. Implementation of the change

All changes to a programme, constituent module or standalone modules are drafted by the module author and/or programme author in the *Academic Module Manager (AMM)* system. The *Request for Modification of a Programme and/or Module Form* is drafted to outline the nature of the change(s), the impact (if any) on the module and/or programme, classification of the change type and links to the draft changes in *AMM*.

Following drafting the change is submitted for approval. All changes to programmes and constituent modules must be approved. The approval process is related to the type and extent of the changes proposed, and are classified as types A, B, C and D as shown schematically in Figure 2. An approved change takes effect from the beginning of the following academic year. Changes are not implemented mid-academic year.

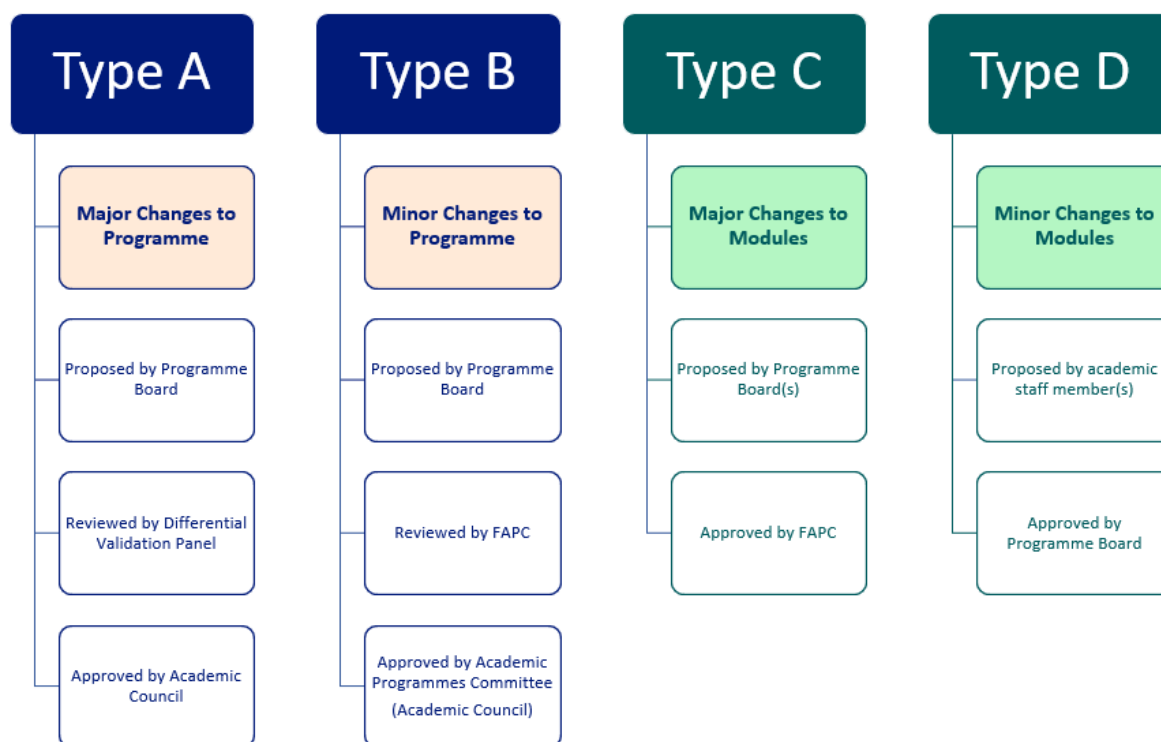


Figure 2. Classification of changes to programmes and/or modules.

4.4 Classification of changes to programmes and/or modules

4.4.1 Type A: Major Changes to Programmes

A major change to a programme is a change, or an accumulation of changes which has a substantial impact on the entire programme in terms of content, delivery, assessment and/or PLOs. Such changes run contrary to the programme aim and rationale which underpinned the previous validation decision.

Examples of Type A changes include, but are not limited to:

- a change to the programme title because of substantive change to the theme or discipline focus of the programme,
- a change to the award type,
- changes to the PLOs,
- a change to the delivery mode,

- a change to the allocation of ECTS within the approved programme schedule,
- changes to the weighting of assessment of the majority of modules in a stage, and
- the introduction of a new module and consequent removal of a module.

4.4.2 Type B: Minor Changes to Programmes

A minor change to a programme is a change, or small number of changes which has a very minor impact on the content, delivery, or assessment of the programme, and no impact on the existing PLOs.

Examples of Type B changes include, but are not limited to:

- changes to the programme title without a substantive change to the theme or discipline focus of the programme,
- the creation of a new embedded award,
- change to the scheduling of modules within a stage or between stages,
- a change in access, transfer and progression requirements and opportunities (i.e., entry requirements, pathways for transfer),
- the addition and/or removal of an elective module,
- a change to the prerequisite status of module(s),
- the addition of, or changes to a special regulation, and/or a new derogation from ATU Marks and Standards, and
- changes that have been recommended following a PSRB accreditation process.

4.4.3 Type C: Major Changes to Modules

A major change to a module is a change which will necessitate a change to the APS and/or the Module Learning Outcomes (MLOs).

Examples of Type C changes include, but are not limited to a change to the:

- module title,
- delivery mode and/or duration,
- MLOs because of changes to the indicative content, teaching strategy and/or assessment strategy,
- grading mode, and
- the assessment weighting i.e., balance of final exam and coursework assessment weighting.

4.4.4 Type D: Minor Changes to Modules

Type D changes to modules must not result in changes to the APS and/or the MLOs.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- changes to indicative syllabus that does not result in change to the MLOs,

- changes to the assessment strategy /type that does not result in changes to the MLOs or the assessment weighting,
- corrections to grammar or spelling to address typographical errors or unintentional contractions, and
- amendments to the *Module Short Title* for clarity of transcripts.

4.4.5 Learning resources

Changes to update the learning resources can be made at any time by the module author and do not require approval.

4.5 Process for approval of changes to programmes and modules

All proposed changes to programmes and/or modules must be documented using the *Request for Modification of a Programme and/or Module Form*, and should include the draft revised supplementary documentation, Programme Specification, APS, and modules. Details may be found on the documentation requirements in the relevant procedure.

Additional approval from the UPT Academic Programme Provisions Committee is required when the changes will require additional resources for delivery.

Advice from the Quality Office should be sought at an early stage in the process by the Programme Board to determine the required approval process. The final determination, if required, is made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar (VPAAR).

4.5.1 Approval for Type A Changes: Differential Validation

Differential Validation is the process by which major changes (Type A) to validated programmes are approved. The Head of Department must submit a request for Differential Validation to the Faculty APC.

The Faculty APC must convene a panel of assessors, to include at least one external panel member to complete the Differential Validation process. The process is detailed in the *Procedure for Approving and Implementing Changes to Programmes*.

Once the validation processes have successfully concluded, the changes must be formally approved by Academic Council.

4.5.2 Approval for Type B Changes: Academic Council Academic Programmes Committee Approval

Type B (minor changes to programmes) must be agreed by the relevant Programme Board and submitted by the Head of Department to the Faculty APC for review. Thereafter, as appropriate, the Faculty APC recommend the proposal to the Academic Council Academic Programmes Committee (ACAPC) for approval.

4.5.3 Approval of Changes to Modules

Primary responsibility for modules is with the Programme Board, where discipline expertise resides. All changes to modules must be agreed by the Programme Board. Changes to modules that are common across multiples programmes must be reviewed and agreed by each Programme Board. The process for approval of changes to modules are detailed in the *Procedure for Approving and Implementing Changes to Modules*.

4.5.3.1 Approval of Type C Changes: Faculty APC Approval

Major changes to modules (Type C) must be agreed by the relevant Programme Board(s). The Programme Board(s) must seek the recommendation of an external discipline expert (who may be the External Examiner), for the proposed changed. The proposed changes must then be approved by the Faculty APC.

4.5.3.2 Approval of Type D Changes: Programme Board Approval

Minor changes to modules (Type D) may be proposed by a lecturer and reviewed and approved by the relevant Programme Board(s).

4.5.4 Annual Audit of Changes

Each Faculty shall compile an annual report detailing all changes made to programmes and modules. The report should be submitted to the ACAPC for review annually, in the first semester of each academic year.

Where multiple Type B, C and D changes are made across a programme over time, the cumulative effect of these changes may warrant a Differential Validation of the (now) changed programme. In this instance, the Faculty APC may consult with the Quality Office to determine if a Differential Validation is required.

4.6 Implementation of Changes

Once changes to a programme and/or modules have been formally approved, the Head of Department (or nominee) will notify the Quality Office and provide the approved documentation.

Programme Boards must revise programme documentation once all changes have been made in *AMM*.

The Quality Office, on behalf of the VPAAR, will update the required systems and make the changes live. Once complete, they will communicate this to the Head of Department who will in turn communicate to all relevant functional areas.

For type A changes, the revised programme will be in place for students entering Stage 1 of the programme only. Continuing students will complete the version of the programme they started on.

Changes which alter a programme on which students are registered and which affect the completion of their studies are exceptional and are usually due to the requirements of a regulatory body or because of a legislative change. In these circumstances, students must be formally advised prior to the change and directly informed once the change has been approved. Departments, typically via the Programme Board, are responsible for ensuring students are informed of such changes.

4.7 Responsibilities

4.7.1 Programme Board

Programme Boards are responsible for ongoing review of programmes and their constituent modules and identifying proposed changes to be made.

In making changes to programmes, Programme Boards have the following specific duties:

- reviewing programmes and proposing necessary changes,
- drafting the changes in the *AMM* system in line with QA requirements,
- completing the *Request for Modification of a Programme and/or Module Form* and submitting to the Head of Department to initiate the required approval procedures,
- participating in the approval process for changes, as detailed in the relevant procedure,
- advising and informing students of changes to a programme on which they are registered, and
- revising programme documentation.

4.7.2 Head of Department

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring quality assurance processes for changes to programme and modules, as set out in this policy and the associated procedures, are adhered to. The Head of Department shall provide relevant functional areas with appropriate information regarding changes to programmes.

4.7.3 Faculty Academic Planning Committee (FAPC)

The function of this committee is to advise, support and evaluate academic planning, in particular the development, validation, management, and monitoring of programmes within the faculty.

The Faculty APC will be responsible for:

- the conduct of the Differential Validation process for the approval of Type A changes to programmes
- the review of Type B changes and approval of any Type C changes to modules, and
- the production of an annual report of the changes to programmes and modules.

4.7.4 University Planning Team Academic Programme Provision Committee

The University Planning Team Academic Programme Provision Committee (UPT APPC) will be responsible for the review and approval of changes that require additional resources.

4.7.5 Office of VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar

The VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar is responsible for the quality assurance and enhancement of all academic programmes.

In support of this policy, the Office of the VP for Academic Affairs & Registrar, through the Quality Office, must

- maintain *Academic Module Manager (AMM)*, the document management system for programmes and modules, and the student record management system (SRMS),
- oversee and support faculties in the implementation of the policy requirements, and
- undertake a review of this policy, as required.

4.7.6 Academic Council

Academic Council has a statutory responsibility to control the academic affairs of our university, including the curriculum and instruction and education provided by ATU.

Accordingly, the Academic Council has the following specific roles:

- approval of this policy and all other relevant policies,
- formal approval of changes to programmes, and
- review of Faculty annual reports on changes to programmes and modules.

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Policy

- *Procedure for Approving and Implementing Changes to Programmes*
- *Procedure for Approving and Implementing Changes to Modules*
- *Request for Modification of a Programme and/or Module Form.*

6. Revision History

| Revision No | Description of Change | Approval Date |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| 000 | New Policy approved by Academic Council | 14/06/2023 |
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