

Annex I: Vested interests

1. When considering a change to a course it is important to consider the impact that it might have on students and their 'vested interests'. The change could relate to the course description as contained within the *Examination Regulations*, Examination conventions, course handbook or syllabus. Whether that change is allowable will depend on the nature of the change and the timing of its implementation. Education Committee's primary concerns are to avoid impeding desirable developments in the syllabus unnecessarily, and at the same time to ensure that candidates are treated fairly and not disadvantaged by any change.
2. For all types of changes (excluding minor textual corrections) it is expected that students would be consulted in advance through the normal mechanisms such as Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs). This consultation is particularly important for Type 2 changes. Only in the case of expedited changes is consultation of individual students required.
3. For a more detailed breakdown of the types of changes, levels of approval, and consultation with students/notification of applicants required please see *Annex N Guidance on types of course change*.¹
4. All changes to *Examination Regulations* should follow the guidance note and template provided on the *Examination Regulations* website.² Further information is provided in *Annex H Guidance on delegated responsibility for the approval of changes to Examination Regulations*.

Type 1: Changes with no impact or only benefit to students

5. A change which has no material impact or is only of benefit to students may be made at any time (within reason) and with immediate effect. These changes should be approved through the normal mechanisms in divisions.
6. This type of change might include:
 - presentational changes e.g. re-formatting or re-ordering of information;
 - revision in the title (but not substance) of a paper, e.g., 'The anthropology of medicine' to 'Medical Anthropology';
 - extension of a submission deadline (unless it causes deadlines to become clustered). However, any significant change to deadlines should be considered a Type 2 change;
 - addition of reading time in an exam;
 - minor corrections, e.g., duplication, spelling, errors in editing previous changes etc.;
 - a merely formal or cosmetic change, e.g., an overdue correction of the prescribed edition of a text which is in fact no longer in use (where there is any doubt this should be treated as Type 2 'expedited change');

¹ www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pgnewcourses/

² <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/information/publishingchangestoregulations/>

- confirmation of available options where students are clearly advised in advance that not all options will be offered in all years, for instance, because of small numbers.

Type 2: Changes with a material or negative impact for students

7. Any change which could have a material or negative impact on students if introduced with immediate effect can only normally be introduced prior to the students starting the first term of their course of study for the examination concerned.³ These changes should be approved through the normal mechanisms in divisions (and except for expedited changes do not require approval from Education Committee).
8. This means that:
 - for a course's FPE or for a Masters by coursework, changes can only be introduced for new entrants;
 - for courses with a single-part FHS, changes can be made to the FHS whilst students are undertaking their FPE; and
 - for courses with a multi-part FHS changes can be made to a later part whilst students are taking an earlier Part, for example, changes can be made to Part B for students currently studying Part A (unless the change relates to a pre-requisite requirement i.e. a proposed change in Part B cannot be made if it relates to choices students will have already made at Part A unless no material or negative impact can be shown).
9. This type of change might include:
 - addition or removal of an option paper;
 - addition or deletion of an element of the syllabus;
 - changes to assessment including:
 - increase, decrease or rebalancing of assessment workload;
 - change in assessment schedule e.g. submission deadlines;
 - change in assessment methodology e.g. from submitted essay to timed written exam (but for introduction of a novel form of assessment consult paragraph 2.4 in the main *Policy and Guidance*);
 - creation of an optional exit award, for example, students may *choose* to leave after the 3rd year with a BA but no new progression hurdle is required for continuation to 4th year.
10. Multiple Type 2 changes may constitute a fundamental change (Type 3, see below). When assessing the balance between Type 2 and Type 3 changes it might be valuable to reflect on how the change might be perceived by applicants.

Expediting a change

11. There may be situations where a change may need to be expedited and be applied to students who have already started their first term of their course of study for the examination concerned. This may be the case, for example, where new teaching

³ Other than for students whose normal course of study for the examination has been extended on account of illness or other cause.

resources make it desirable for a change to be introduced or where sudden and unexpected changes in staffing make a change necessary.

12. In these circumstances the divisional board is required to make a special case to Education Committee, to show that it has consulted the affected students individually, and to include a summary of responses received.

Type 3: Fundamental changes

13. Any change which has a fundamental impact on the nature or structure of the programme cannot be made for students who have already begun their course. In many cases the change should only be made for the next applicant cycle to allow for marketing and publicity material to be updated. Should there be a need for a fundamental change to be applied to applicants already in the application cycle, all applicants would need to be individually informed of the change. Such changes cannot be made less than three months before the start of the course.
14. These changes would be considered internally through the major change process of the *Policy and Guidance on new courses and major changes*.
15. This type of change might include:
 - addition or removal of a core paper;
 - change of a paper from core to option and vice versa;
 - change of course title;
 - significant restructuring or change in the course content;
 - introduction or raising of a progression hurdle, e.g., only students achieving a 2.1 are allowed to progress from the 3rd year to 4th year.