

POLICY ON ENGAGING AND CONSULTING STUDENTS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

Introduction

Effective engagement with students in programme development, design and approval is based on the following principles:

- Positive and timely engagement of students in programme and module design should be promoted
- Engagement that is pro-active and constructive rather than reactive should be encouraged
- Students should be appropriately informed to enable them to provide feedback that is effective and useful
- Engagement opportunities should be provided through a range of communication streams
- There should be effective communication to students where and when their feedback has been acted upon, or when change is not possible, the reasons why this has not happened

The policy provides guidance to level 1 units on engaging with students on the design and approval of curricula and situations in which students' consent should be obtained for programme changes that will affect them. The policy applies to engagement of and communication with all students, inclusive of the diversity of protected characteristics, whether on-campus, online, in collaborative provision and whether research or taught. The policy also sets out requirements for keeping students informed of approved programme changes.

This policy has four sections:

- (i) **engaging** with students in curriculum design, approval and review;
- (ii) **consulting** with students on programme changes that will affect them;
- (iii) programme changes that require the **consent** of affected students; and
- (iv) informing students of changes once they are approved.

Good practice on student engagement is included in the Appendix.

Curriculum Boards, School Scrutiny Panels and training for student representatives

Student members of Curriculum Boards (CBs) and School Scrutiny Panels (SSPs) should be actively encouraged to contribute to the scrutiny and review of programme and module proposals submitted to these Boards and Panels. Providing student members of advance notice of proposals coming to each meeting and advance copies of the documentation will help this. Training for student representatives to support this role will be provided by the Liverpool Guild of Students with support from the University's Academic Quality and Standards Division.

Section One: Engaging with students in curriculum design, approval and review

Where there are plans to develop new provision or to modify existing provision, staff should seek to engage with students in a positive and constructive way as early as possible in the planning, design and development of it.

1.1 New programmes

When a new programme is planned the following should be considered as part of the development of the programme:

- (i) At an early stage, preferably before the Outline Approval application has been made, provide the relevant Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) with details of the planned programme and a timetable of planned further opportunities for the students to engage with the programme development and approval procedures.
- (ii) Establish student focus groups or other forms of discussion groups to consider the proposed programme, these should be part of, or at least contribute to, the design workshops.

1.2 Programme and module modification

When a programme revalidation or major module changes are planned, the following should be considered:

- (i) At an early stage, provide the SSLC with details of the proposed development and the rationale for it.
- (ii) Provide the SSLC with a timetable of planned further opportunities for the students to engage with the programme development and approval procedures.
- (iii) Establish student focus groups or other forms of discussion groups to consider the proposed modifications.

Section Two: Consulting with students on programme changes that will affect them

2.1 When to consult with students

It is often necessary and/or desirable for operational reasons or on academic grounds or due to external factors to make changes to programmes of study that will affect students already studying on the programme concerned. The necessity for and/or desirability of change needs, however, to be balanced against students' expectations concerning their programmes of study that are derived from the University's Prospectuses, and pre- and post-entry information provided to them. The information provided to students, for example programme or level 1 handbooks, must indicate that programmes of study may be liable to change and must set out the circumstances in which students will be consulted about such changes. Consultation of students about proposed programme changes should take place in the following circumstances:

- (i) When the proposed changes require revalidation of the programme. Programme revalidations are approved by the University Approval Panel (UAP) via the School Scrutiny Panel.
- (ii) When exemption is sought to the requirement to provide a re-sit opportunity affecting registered students. Re-sit exemptions are approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee via FAQSC/FEEAC.
- (iii) When the introduction of a new mandatory or required module is proposed, for example the introduction of a compulsory dissertation or fieldwork module. Approval for this will depend on whether it constitutes a programme modification (approval by SSP) or revalidation (approval by UAP).

- (iv) When the withdrawal of a mandatory or required module is proposed. Approval for this will depend on whether it constitutes a programme modification (approval by SSP) or revalidation (approval by UAP).

2.2 Consultation requirements

Level 1 units are free to determine how they conduct the consultation with students. It might be appropriate, for example, to email all the students concerned inviting feedback on the proposals, or to hold an open meeting at which students can offer comments. It is also good practice to involve the Guild, via the Student Voice Coordinators, in supporting and coordinating consultation activity and events. The consultation process selected must target those students who will be affected by the proposed changes. Further requirements for the consultation process include the following:

- (i) The proposals set out in 2.1 above should document the method of consultation used and the outcomes of that consultation and the approving body will take into account this information when considering the approval of the proposed changes.
- (ii) In respect of (ii) above, if exemption is sought from the requirement to provide a re-sit opportunity, students already registered on the module must be consulted on the proposed change; this should include any students who are undertaking a placement or year abroad and, where possible, any students who have suspended their studies.
- (iii) Where AQSC has waived the requirement for the written consent of affected students, all students affected by the proposed changes must be consulted; this includes part-time students, students who have suspended their studies, and those who have to repeat a year of study (see Section 3 below).
- (iv) In the situations set out in (ii) and (iii) above, there must be evidence that all affected students have been informed of the changes and consulted on them; in respect of the latter the consultation process should show that all such students were given a reasonable and realistic timescale within which to provide their response and comments. Evidence that consultation has taken place and a summary of the feedback should be included in the proposal documentation submitted through the approval process. The relevant approving body will review this documentation in determining whether the consultation process was adequate.

2.3 When consultation is not required

It is not necessary to consult students over modifications to programmes (which require SSP approval). Such changes might include the withdrawal of an optional module or modules or a change to the content of a module. Students must, however, be informed of all programme modifications.

2.4 Prospective students

When information has been provided to prospective students about a programme of study and changes to that programme that affect this information are then proposed before the students are admitted to the University, level 1 units should contact prospective students who have accepted an offer of a place to inform them of the changes. Admissions Tutors should be prepared to offer advice about alternative programmes, should this be requested. Level 1 units and Admissions Tutors should liaise with External Relations to ensure that published programme information for prospective students is correct.

Section Three: Programme changes that require the consent of affected students

- 3.1 In certain circumstances proposed changes to a programme of study may only be introduced if all the students on the programme who would be affected by the changes have consented in writing to the proposed changes. Circumstances in which the consent of students is required are:
- (i) When it is proposed to change the name of the award or of the programme of study.
 - (ii) When a radical change to the teaching and learning strategy or the assessment regime for the whole programme is proposed which would very significantly alter the nature of the programme. This might include, for example, if it were proposed to move to a problem-based learning approach for the whole programme, or from wholly continuous assessment of students to a completely examination-based regime.
- 3.2 In such circumstances level 1 units must write to all students affected informing them of the proposed changes and asking them to confirm (or otherwise) their consent in writing. Any student who objects to the proposed changes cannot be forced to accept them, although it may sometimes be possible to implement the changes for students who agree to them while retaining the existing arrangements for students who have lodged an objection. Where a student fails to respond, confirming neither consent nor objection, this may be deemed as consent, provided there is evidence that all reasonable efforts have been taken to inform the student of the changes and to give them an opportunity to respond.
- 3.3 Exceptionally, a case may be made to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) to allow radical change to the teaching and learning strategy or the assessment regime of a programme without requiring the written consent of every affected student. The case presented to AQSC should show the following:
- (i) the proposed changes to the programme will offer considerable benefits to students and/or be a demonstrable improvement on the current programme;
 - (ii) the proposed changes will not disadvantage current students;
 - (iii) there would be significant logistical or practical problems in delivering the revised programme to new students only alongside the existing programme.
- 3.4 AQSC will consider, for each case, the extent to which the above factors apply to the proposed changes in deciding whether the consent from all affected students is required or can be waived.
- 3.5 If AQSC agrees that the requirements for students' written consent can be waived all affected students should be consulted in accordance with the consultation requirements set out above. AQSC may decide to impose specific requirements for the consultation in addition to those set out above.

Section 4: Informing students of programme and module changes

When changes to programmes and modules are approved, the programme leader or team and the module coordinator are responsible for ensuring that all affected students are informed of the changes and how they will affect them. Where there has been consultation with students and/or their consent to the changes has been sought, it should not be assumed that all students are aware of the changes and when they will take effect.

APPENDIX ONE

Guidance on good practice

1. General points

- 1.1 Factor the time required to engage with students into the timescale for developing programmes and modules and getting them approved.
- 1.2 Try to engage with as wide a spectrum of students as possible and use methods of engagement that facilitate and support this, e.g. using the VLE.
- 1.3 Work with the Faculty Student Voice Coordinators to provide effective engagement opportunities and communication media and to ensure that the student representative(s) at the relevant Board and Panel meetings are appropriately briefed.
- 1.4 Record and report the nature of and results from the student engagement in the relevant proposal template form.
- 1.5 Ensure there is feedback to students on what has been done in response to their comments on and engagement with the programme/module development and approval process.
- 1.6 Ensure there is a communication plan in place for informing students of the changes once they are approved, with clear lines of responsibility for communication formats, content and sending out the communication.

2. Engagement with the development of new programmes

- 2.1 Elicit students' opinions on whether they would find the proposed programme attractive if they were applying for a programme and what would be their reasons for wanting to study the programme, or not wanting to study it.
- 2.2 Elicit students' opinions on what changes, if any, they would suggest to what is proposed.
- 2.3 As much as is possible and practicable, maintain engagement throughout the development stage and through the approval process. For example:
 - (i) the external reviewers' comments could be shared with the students
 - (ii) students could be consulted on the teaching, learning and assessment strategies to be submitted as part of the approval
 - (iii) students could be consulted on the final versions of the programmes to be submitted to the relevant Boards and Panels.

3. Engagement with programme and module modification

- 3.1 If the changes will only affect new students, ask current students if they think the changes improve the programme/module. Would they prefer to have experienced the changed provision themselves?
- 3.2 Consider whether the proposed modifications address issues or suggestions received from students through the range of available feedback mechanisms (SSLCs, module/programme evaluations, National Student Survey results, etc.)

- 3.3 If the changes will affect current students, consider setting up focus groups and open meetings with students to canvas opinion. Ensure the requirements are met, as set out in Section Two of the Policy, for consulting with affected students and getting their consent to changes.
- 3.4 As much as is possible and practicable, maintain engagement throughout the development stage and through the approval process. For example:
- (i) the external reviewers' comments could be shared with the students
 - (ii) students could be consulted on the final versions of the programmes to be submitted to the relevant Boards and Panels.

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