



**Academic Handbook
Section 4F
Unit Approval and Course
Modifications: Making Changes to Units
and Courses**

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
LIMITATIONS ON MAKING MODIFICATIONS.....	4
MODIFICATION CATEGORIES	5
CRITERIA FOR APPROVING A MODIFICATION REQUEST	6
ACADEMIC YEAR FOR THE MODIFICATION TO TAKE EFFECT.....	6
TIMEFRAMES FOR REQUESTING AND APPROVING MODIFICATIONS	7
ANNEX 1: PROCESS FOR APPROVING A CATEGORY 1 MODIFICATION.....	8
ANNEX 2: PROCESS FOR APPROVING A CATEGORY 2 OR 3 MODIFICATION	9

INTRODUCTION

1. A modification is a change to the University's course and/or unit provision; these changes are made in accordance with the University's policy regarding Unit Approval and Course Modification and the types of changes that can be made under this policy are referred to in paragraph 5 below. For the University's full policy please refer to the Academic Handbook:

[Unit Approval and Course Modification \(Academic Handbook: Section 2F\).](#)

2. The policy is aligned with Chapter B8 of the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code relating to mechanisms used by HE institutions to reflect on courses that are running and how they can be improved, it also addresses matters relating to the closure of existing courses.
3. The policy has also been aligned to guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) on the consumer rights of students. The CMA have clarified that the relationship between the University and students is contractual and regulated by consumer law. The contractual obligations begin from the point a student makes an application, therefore it is very important that modifications to existing provision are made in accordance with this policy.
4. Occasionally it may be necessary to alter the normal operation of a unit or course for an individual student only (i.e. the change is not to be applied to all students). In such a circumstance, the Unit Approval and Course Modification policy is not appropriate and the request for exceptional treatment should be processed in line with the exemption process. Individual student exemptions will be processed through either the Assessment or Student Records team, please refer to the exemptions guidance.
5. The Unit Approval and Course Modification policies and procedures cover:
 - a. **Approving changes to units and courses (modifications)**, including
 - changes to unit descriptors for existing credit bearing units (both traditional and standalone professional development units), such as changing assessments, learning outcomes
 - new traditional units
 - changes to a course structure (removing/adding/closing units, core/option changes, etc)
 - designating an existing standalone professional development unit as a traditional unit and adding it to a course.
 - b. **Approving new standalone professional development units** (including designating an existing traditional unit to be delivered as a standalone professional development unit, either at the same time or subsequently).
 - c. **Approving new, and changes to, non-credit bearing short courses** (except Warsash courses approved under the WMA ISO 9001 process).

NOTE: changes to validated partner provision are covered in Academic Handbook: Section 2G and are subject to different arrangements.

6. This document covers a) above - Approving changes to units and courses (referred to as “modifications” below).

LIMITATIONS ON MAKING MODIFICATIONS

7. Changes to units and courses (modifications) made through the Unit Approval and Course Modification process must consider the consumer rights of each individual student and can only be made in relation to:
- a) Changes to the requirements of external sector bodies;
 - b) Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements;
 - c) Student feedback;
 - d) External examiner feedback; and/or
 - e) Other changes for which the school has evidence will enhance the students’ experience and/or achievement
8. The following modifications can be approved:
- i. Minor clarifications/corrections;
 - ii. changes to the learning and teaching strategy, learning outcomes or assessment of units;
 - iii. changes/additions to the mode of unit delivery;
 - iv. changes to credit weightings of units;
 - v. changes to unit level;
 - vi. removing, replacing or adding units in the course/programme structure, including moving units between years of study on part-time and flexible courses; and
 - vii. changes to course aims and course/level learning outcomes.
9. Modifications are used to deliver year-on-year enhancements that do not have a significant impact on a course’s learning outcomes, assessment strategy, course/programme aims, resource requirements and/or the student learning experience. Changes must ensure units and courses comply with the regulations and guidance set out in the Academic Handbook.
10. Where modifications have a significant impact on a course or student learning outcomes, or where continuous change has occurred over the last few years, the Academic Registrar may decide, on the recommendation of the UACMG, that the course should go through the course approval process - this process is detailed in Academic Handbook Sections 2D/4D. The Quality Operations Team maintains a change history record: before further modifications are initiated this should be checked by anyone wishing to propose a modification. The change history record enables the University to guard against an accumulation of minor changes to units and courses resulting in significant changes to the original course as validated. This is received and reviewed by the UACMG at each of its meeting.
11. Modifications affecting study abroad or work-based learning requirements may require additional checking for UKVI compliance. Any implications should be identified and addressed before the modification request is submitted.

MODIFICATION CATEGORIES

12. Modifications fall into 1 of 3 categories and requests for each follow a specific approval process. Each process is designed to ensure that modification requests are subject to an appropriate level of scrutiny to safeguard the student experience and the University's standards.
13. The categories are briefly defined in this paragraph; a more extensive indicative list of the types of change that fall into each category is provided in Academic Handbook Section 2F Annex 1. **BEFORE SUBMITTING A MODIFICATION REQUEST THE UNIT/COURSE LEADER SHOULD REFER TO THE INDICATIVE LIST TO IDENTIFY THE APPROVAL PROCESS TO FOLLOW- THE QUALITY OPERATIONS TEAM CAN ASSIST IF THIS IS UNCLEAR:**
 - a. Category 1: Documentary updates- modifications to provide minor clarifications or to correct typographical/grammatical errors. These changes do not affect the delivery of the provision.
 - b. Category 2: Minor modifications- minor modifications that do not have an impact on overall course aims, intended learning outcomes, objectives, structure and balance of a course, subject benchmarks and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements, i.e. the fundamental character of a course is unchanged.
 - c. Category 3: Major modifications- more extensive changes, may be across multiple units where a course's overall aims, intended learning outcomes, structure and balance may be impacted.

NOTE: In addition to these categories, there may be occasional changes to University templates affecting course/unit documentation. In these circumstances, the Quality Management Department will implement/oversee any required changes.

14. If a modification request contains a mix of category types, the approval process for the highest category will apply.
15. The Head of Quality Management may determine that a proposal submitted as a Category 2 is treated as a Category 3 request where the changes proposed may have a greater impact than originally considered.

REQUESTING A CATEGORY 1 MODIFICATION

16. See the process map at Annex 1.

REQUESTING A CATEGORY 2 OR 3 MODIFICATION

17. See the process map at Annex 2. This process requires the completion of the Modifications Form and the consultation requirements are contained within the form; this includes consultation with external examiners and all students impacted by the change, this normally includes all students on that course and not just limited to the

level the unit is taught on. Students who have secured a place on the course for a future entry point, i.e. those holding offers, must be explicitly informed of the changes, this will be done via the Admissions team. Modifications that disadvantage students are unlikely to be approved unless they are unavoidable; a plan should be put into place to protect student interests as far as possible and to avoid such changes in future.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVING A MODIFICATION REQUEST

18. For Category 1 modifications, approval depends on the presentation of a clearly defined proposal and rationale for minor documentary alterations.
19. For Category 2 and 3 modifications, requests will be considered and approved based on the following basis:
 - a. The reason(s) behind the modification fall into 1 or more of the list in paragraph 7 of this document;
 - b. Clear and coherent rationale;
 - c. Maintenance of academic standards - changes must result in units/courses that continue to meet the University's policies and regulations. New units must have appropriate learning outcomes, assessment and content for their credit value and level;
 - d. Enhancement of the integrity of the unit and/or course(s);
 - e. Enhancement of the students' learning experience and/or performance, enabling them to more clearly demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
 - f. Improvement in the overall quality of provision;
 - g. Improvement in the operational effectiveness of the unit and/or course;
 - h. Extent of changes to a traditional course, signifying a need for course approval process to be applied;
 - i. The presentation of correct documentation
 - j. Consultation process completed and evidence of consultation, including student consultation, provided to Quality Operations Team;
 - k. Evidence of School approval by the Head of Subject or Director of School for a Category 2 or 3 (respectively) modification.

ACADEMIC YEAR FOR THE MODIFICATION TO TAKE EFFECT

20. Normally modifications (other than Category 1 changes) should be implemented from the next academic year but they can be made for a later academic year.

Modifications within the Academic Year

21. There may be occasions where an emergency situation requires a Category 2 or 3 modification to take effect within the current academic session, an in-year change. These may arise at any time and will be dealt with outside the timeframes set out above.
22. Category 1 modifications will follow the same process as for non-emergency requests. Category 2 and 3 requests will require documentation and consultations to be completed

as prescribed for those types of modifications and, in addition, the agreement of students.

23. Modification requests will be considered by the Chair of the Unit Approval and Course Modification Group (UACMG), who may take Chair's action to approve requests which meet the requirements set out here and where considered appropriate. Modifications approved under these arrangements will be reported to the next UACMG meeting.

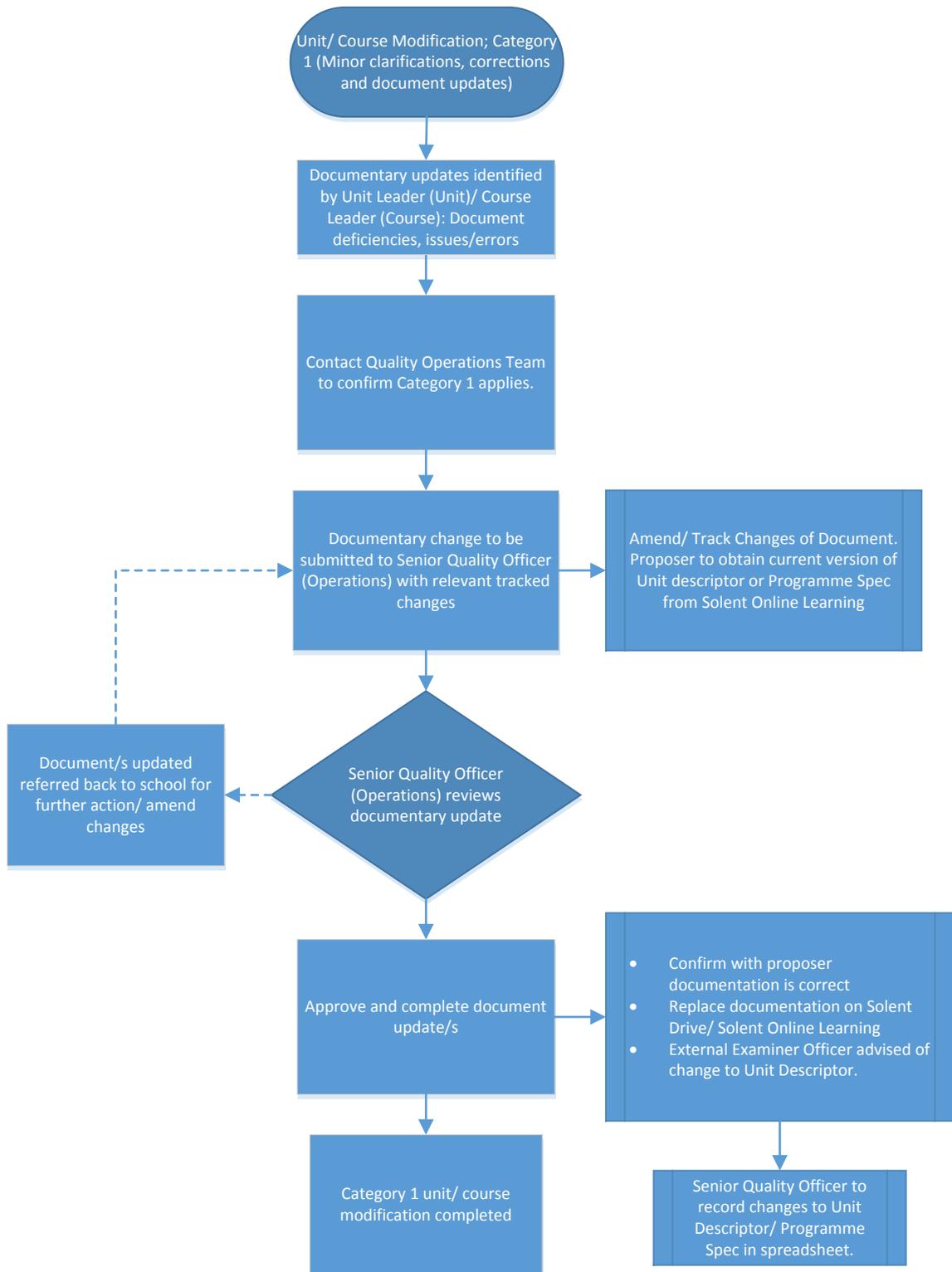
TIMEFRAMES FOR REQUESTING AND APPROVING MODIFICATIONS

24. Category 1 requests can be made at any time during the academic year (although please note there may be occasions where Quality Management is heavily engaged in other work leading to short delays in processing requests). Category 1 changes are likely to take effect within the same academic year as the request.
25. Category 2 and 3 changes can be requested at specified times, as follows. Quality Management will advertise in advance the deadline dates for category 2 and 3 modification proposals to be presented for consideration and approval. Category 2 and 3 requests are expected to take effect in the following or later academic year.

Note: The request process should be started as early as possible and sufficient time should be allowed to complete consultations and to draft documents to meet the set deadlines for requests- in some cases this includes consulting with external examiners.

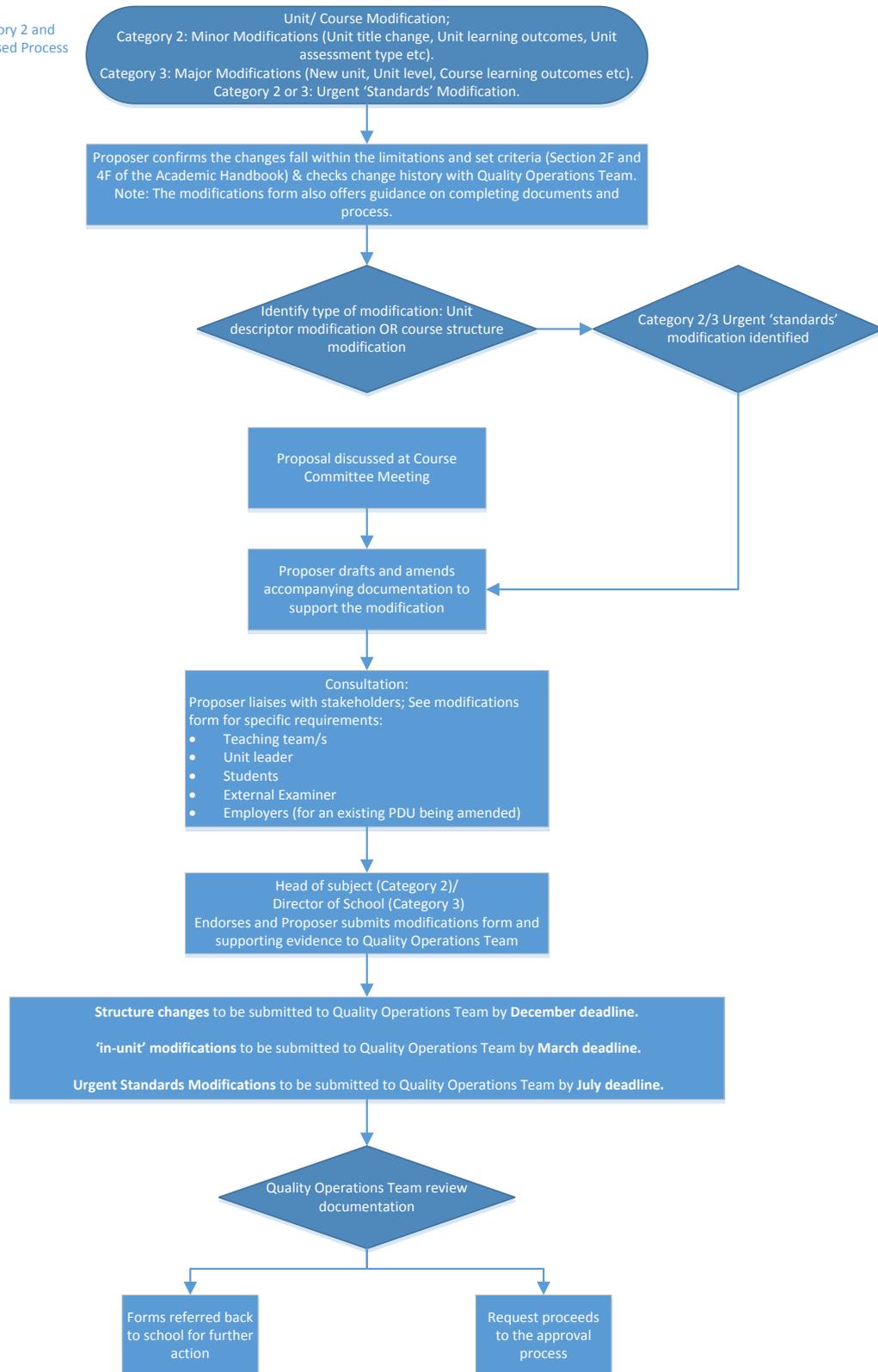
Type	Information	Date
Course Structure change	Either a category 2 or 3 modification that results in change to the course provision. For example removing and adding new or existing units, changing cores to options.	By advertised December deadline. Approved Category 2 changes will be reported to the January UACMG meeting. Category 3 change requests will be presented to the January UACMG meeting for consideration and approval.
Unit descriptor change	Either a category 2 or 3 modification that results in a change to an individual unit- e.g. assessment change, weightings, learning outcomes, unit designation.	By advertised March deadline. Approved Category 2 changes will be reported to the April UACMG meeting. Category 3 change requests will be presented to the April UACMG meeting for consideration and approval.
Urgent modifications	Either a category 2 or 3 modification resulting from issues identified by assessment boards or by an external examiner regarding the standards of a course or unit.	July- for emergency modifications only. Approved Category 2 changes will be reported to the next UACMG meeting. Category 3 change requests will be presented to UACMG (completed online) for consideration and approval.

ANNEX 1: PROCESS FOR APPROVING A CATEGORY 1 MODIFICATION



ANNEX 2: PROCESS FOR APPROVING A CATEGORY 2 OR 3 MODIFICATION

Process Map: Category 2 and
 Category 3: School based Process



Southampton Solent University Academic Handbook

Section 4F: Unit Approval and Course Modification

Process Map: Category 2 and Category 3: Quality Management Process

