

PROGRAMME CHANGES POLICY

Academic Year 2021-22

1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out the circumstances in which the College may make changes to its published module/programme information and regulations, and its processes for doing so.

In accordance with consumer protection law and with Middlesex University guidance, the aim of this policy is to maintain an appropriate balance between the College's commitment to the continual enhancement of its provision and the reasonable expectations of:

- Applicants who have been offered a place on a College programme (or an individual module or modules) on the basis of its published information; and
- Registered students who are already enrolled at the College and are progressing through one of its programmes (or through an individual module or modules).

All of the College's programmes are reviewed with Middlesex University (hereafter 'the University') every six years as part of the normal programme (re-)validation cycle. Outside of that normal pattern, changes will occasionally be made to modules and programmes in order to:

- Keep the curriculum current (e.g., content, resources, relevance for ministry);
- Respond to student feedback on the quality of their learning experience;
- Enhance learning, teaching and assessment in accordance with sector best practice; and
- Respond to changes required by the QAA, the University, the Church of England etc.

All changes to modules and programmes which are approved by the College's own Academic Board will subsequently be referred to the University for review and final ratification and will *not* come into effect until the University's approval has been received.

All changes must be approved by the University by 31 May in the year preceding the effect of the change, e.g., by 31 May 2022 for a change to be implemented in 2022-23.

In addition changes may occasionally be made to College regulations - normally in response to wider changes in the higher education sector or with a view to ensuring that our regulations remain aligned with those of the University.

All changes to regulations which are approved by the Academic Board will be referred to the University Academic Registry and will not come into effect until Registry approval has been received.

This policy applies to all registered programme students (full-time or part-time) and to Flexible Learners (crediting or auditing) who are studying on any part of the College's validated provision. It also applies to applicants who have been offered a place at the College based on its published module and programme information.

2. Changes at Programme Level

The following should normally be guaranteed throughout a student's normal period of enrolment on a College programme:

- The title of the programme and the qualification to which it leads;
- The programme aims and learning outcomes;
- The structure in terms of years of study, exit qualifications, overall credit structure;
- Fees and additional costs (including planned increases, announced ahead of time).

There are three possible exceptions to this:

- a) Where changes are required to meet external obligations placed on the College by the QAA, University, Church of England or UK Government (for example the Office for Students);
- b) Where a programme is currently undergoing regular programme (re-)validation;
- c) Where a student withdraws temporarily from a programme: depending on the length of the withdrawal, the College cannot guarantee that the programme will be exactly the same when the student chooses to recommence their studies.

2a. Changes Required to Meet External Obligations

In situations where change(s) to provision are required in order to meet obligations placed upon the College by external bodies (such as the QAA), in particular changes to any of the items listed above, registered programme students and applicants who have been offered a place on one of the College's awards will be given as much notice as possible of the required changes and all reasonable steps will be taken to minimise disruption.

2b. Changes Made as Part of Programme (Re-)Validation

In situations where the College itself is considering changes to its provision as part of the process of programme (re-)validation, in particular changes to any of the items listed above, a period of formal consultation will normally be arranged. At a minimum, consultation will take place by email; ideally, face to face meetings will be arranged as well. Progression and completion routes for existing programme students will be carefully considered as part of this process.

If more than 25% of registered programme students object to the changes proposed, the College will undertake to review its proposals in the light of the feedback received; however, the College reserves the right to proceed with the changes if it genuinely believes that these are in the best interests of students present and future and are appropriately aligned with the training needs of the denominations that the College serves. Wherever possible, the College will offer existing programme students the opportunity to remain on their current awards rather than transferring to the new provision; if this proves impossible for any reason, then the College will support those who wish to transfer to a similar programme offered by another institution (such as another theological college), as set out in its Student Transfer Policy.

During periods of programme review, applicants who have been offered a place on one of the College's awards will be kept informed of any changes made. Applicants who have already accepted a place at the College will be released from their obligation if they conclude that the amended programmes will no longer fulfil their training requirements.

2c. Programme Closure/Withdrawal

The College is committed to delivering all of the provision it has offered and publicised. However if, due to extreme and unforeseen circumstances, College and University agree that a programme needs to be cancelled or withdrawn, the College will give as much notice as possible to applicants who have been offered a place on that programme and will provide support as they seek alternative provision elsewhere. All registered programme students will be offered the opportunity to complete their award (or at least achieve a recognised exit qualification) as part of the College's Contingency Planning arrangements with the University and under the terms of the College's Student Protection Plan.

3. Changes at Module Level: Compulsory Modules

The compulsory modules offered for programme students at each level of study will normally be those listed in the relevant Programme Specification, as approved by the University at programme validation. The following elements of compulsory modules may be subject to change as part of the College's commitment to the continuing enhancement of its provision:

- Module Tutor(s)/Coordinator(s)
- Brief Module Content/Learning Teaching & Assessment Strategy
- Learning Materials

Student approval is not normally required for changes to Assessment Tasks and Weighting; however, in line with University policy, the College will normally undertake a period of consultation for such changes as a matter of good practice.

Changes which go beyond these limits (for example changes to the Threshold Learning Outcomes for a compulsory module) will be subject to consultation: programme students who will be affected by the change will be invited to share their views by email and will be given at least one week to respond (not including holiday periods): in such cases, the nature of the proposed changes will be explained in full, along with the rationale behind them. If more than 25% of affected programme students object to the proposed changes, the College will undertake to review the proposals in the light of the feedback received and may re-submit them for further consultation at a later date.

4. Changes at Module Level: Optional Modules

The optional modules offered for students at each level of study will be drawn from those listed in the relevant Programme Specification, as approved by the University. It may not always be possible to deliver optional modules during every academic year for a variety of reasons (for example, viability due to (lack of) demand, teaching staff availability and so on). As such, Programme Specifications and other published information will always make it clear that the optional modules offered during any given year may be subject to change, and that only a selection of optional modules will be offered at any one time.

Should it be necessary to withdraw an optional module after students have made their module choices for the year (if, for example, only a small number of students select a given module, making the class non-viable on this occasion), the College will speak to the affected students, explain the situation and offer them meaningful alternative module choices. In the case of programme students, this will mean module choices which will allow them to meet the Programme Learning Outcomes for their particular award or level of study.

The following elements of optional modules may be amended as part of the College's commitment to the continuing enhancement of its provision:

- Module Tutor(s)/Coordinator(s)
- Brief Module Content/Learning Teaching & Assessment Strategy
- Learning Materials

As with compulsory modules, student approval is not normally required for changes to Assessment Tasks and Weighting; however, in line with University policy, the College will normally undertake a period of consultation for such changes as a matter of good practice.

Changes which go beyond these limits (for example changes to the Threshold Learning Outcomes for an optional module) will be subject to consultation: the nature of the proposed changes will be explained in full, along with the rationale behind them.

Where it is possible to identify which students will be affected by the change (for example, if students have already registered for the next module run), they will be invited to share their views by email and will be given at least one week to respond (not including holiday periods): If more than 25% of affected students object,¹ the College will undertake to review the proposals in the light of the feedback received and may re-submit them for further consultation at a later date.

In cases where it is not possible to identify which students will be affected by the change (for example, if the proposal relates to a module run in a future year, or if the change is being proposed before students have submitted their next round of module choices), the proposals will be discussed with the current team of student representatives instead. Again, if more than 25% of the team (currently two out of the six student representatives) object to the change, the College will undertake to review the proposals and may re-submit them at a later date.

5. Changes to College Regulations

Changes to regulations will normally be implemented in between years of study rather than during an academic year, and programme students will be consulted as far as possible (bearing in mind that not all students will be available or contactable during College breaks). Where an in-year change is necessary for any reason, programme students will be consulted and given an opportunity to feed into the discussion. A new regulation will not be imposed on a current student if it places them at a significant disadvantage compared to the terms of the previous set of regulations.

6. Force Majeure Events

From time to time, the College may need to take action in order to respond appropriately to unforeseeable events and/or circumstances which are beyond the College's reasonable control but which have the potential to disrupt the delivery of the College's academic provision, at module or at programme level (for example, in terms of how courses are delivered and how facilities and premises can be used): these are sometimes known as *force majeure* events.

Depending on the speed and scale of the events, the way in which such changes are managed may necessarily differ from the procedures set out here (for example, a change may need to be made after the normal 31 May cut-off point). If a force majeure event occurs, the College will endeavour to consult where it is reasonably practicable to do so, or will provide reasons for why this was not possible.

As appropriate, the College's response will be guided by its Student Protection Plan, Refunds & Compensation Policy and Critical Incident Plan, and in accordance with the terms of the College's Contingency Plan with the University; where necessary, it will also be guided by changes in legislation, and by instructions/guidance from the University, the Government and from regulators (such as the Office for Students). Students will be kept fully informed throughout, in as timely a manner as possible.

¹ In the case of very small module cohorts, the 25% threshold may be varied in the interests of fairness: any change to the threshold for a particular module will be advertised in advance when the consultation is issued.

7. Information about Fee Increases

Details about planned increases in tuition and other fees (e.g., for rental accommodation) are clearly set out in the annually-published Fees Information document, which is available both to registered programme students and to applicants who have been offered a place on one of the College's awards. Once the fee structure and any planned fee increases have been agreed, the College will commit itself to those figures for the period set out in the fee documents. In the event that there is a need to increase fees over and above the annual increases already outlined in the Fees Information document, the College will provide clear, specific and timely information about the change to both current registered students and to applicants who have been offered a place.

8. Who to Contact for More Information

Please contact the following individuals at any time for further information:

- Prospective students and applicants with queries (whether for programme study or flexible learning modules) should contact Rosie Cowan (Admissions Officer) who can be reached on (020) 8449 0467 ext. 206 or at admissions@oakhill.ac.uk.
- Registered programme students and Flexible Learners with queries about contingency planning arrangements with the University or about College regulations should contact Caroline Hinch (Senior Registrar) on (020) 8449 0467 ext. 204 or at carolineh@oakhill.ac.uk.
- Registered programme students with queries about proposed changes to modules or programmes should contact Anne Andrews (Quality Assurance & Enhancement Manager) on (020) 8449 0467 ext. 207 or at annea@oakhill.ac.uk.

Students and prospective applicants should note that, during the present Covid-19 pandemic, many staff continue to work from home. As such, we would advise you to contact the staff listed by email in the first instance rather than by telephone.

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