Introduction and scope

1. A Validation Panel must approve a programme and the modules within it before students can be enrolled onto the programme. The defining features of the programme are recorded in the course documentation and Programme Specification approved by the Validation Panel at the end of the validation process. The course documentation contains many features that can be changed year-on-year without re-approval. In fact, programmes are expected to evolve to take into account advances in the discipline and in response to comments from students, from external examiners and the initiatives of staff. However, a number of features of a programme are fixed at the point of validation and it is not possible to change these features without prior approval either by a Validation Panel or, more commonly, by a monitoring committee (i.e. by UPC or TPCC).

2. Programme regulations and Schemes of Assessment are considered in draft form by a Validation Panel. In a formal sense, Senate approves programme regulations and the monitoring committees (UPC, TPCC) approve the Scheme of Assessment. In practice, course committees carry out the detailed work on drafting programme regulations and Schemes of Assessment. Changes to the programme regulations and the Scheme of Assessment cannot be made without the agreement of the approving board or committee although in many cases authority for considering and recommending changes is delegated to the course committee.

3. This procedure applies to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and other educational activities that result in the award of academic credit. It does not cover:
   - The withdrawal of a programme; approval of new modules, pathways or awards (see Section A of the Quality Manual)
   - Changes to modules or programmes delivered under a collaborative agreement (refer to the Director of Quality and Partnerships for advice)
   - Changes to short courses (refer to the Head of Centre for Technology in Education for advice)

Consumer Protection Law and Office for Students

4. Universities are under an obligation to provide applicants with the information they need to make decisions about where to study. If applicants accept an offer and subsequently enrol as a student, the information provided to them throughout the application process forms part of the student's "terms and conditions" of study. The obligation to deliver the programme as advertised limits the discretion of universities to change important aspects of a programme if those changes are disadvantageous to students.

5. More information about the constraints resulting from consumer protection law is available on the Competition and Markets Authority website.

6. Universities are required by the Office for Students to publish a Student Protection Plan (SPP). The purpose of the plan is to provide assurance to our current and future students,

as well as the OfS, that SGUL will protect the quality and continuation of study for students. In most cases, the types of modifications described in this section of the Quality Manual will not trigger action under the SPP. However, if there is any doubt, the Director of Quality and Partnerships will offer advice.

Types of Modification

7. The following tables provide examples of types of modification and indicate where those modifications should be approved.

8. The required route of approval represented below will vary, depending on the scale of the modification. Changes that affect the contract between St George's and its students or significantly alter the nature and purpose of the programme require careful scrutiny. Limited or technical changes to the programme regulations may only need to be reported to Senate following earlier consideration by the monitoring committee. Advice can be obtained from the relevant member of Registry staff or from the Director of Quality and Partnerships.

Table 1 – Programme changes

Type of modification	To be approved by
Programme title	Senate following scrutiny by the monitoring committee
Aims, outcomes, the modules that comprise the programme, the structure of a programme	Validation Panel or Monitoring Committee
Operational changes to a programme such as the sequencing of modules	Monitoring committee
Change in entry requirements or admissions procedure	Monitoring committee
Changes to the Scheme of Assessment	Monitoring committee
Changes to the programme regulations	Senate following scrutiny by the monitoring committee
Membership of the Board of Examiners	Senate

Table 2 – Changes to Modules

Type of modification	To be approved by
Changes to teaching delivery method (which might have an implication for type/number of rooms required)	Monitoring committee
Updating the content or the teaching pattern of the module without changing the learning outcome of the module	No approval required
Assessment strategy for the module (including form(s) of assessment; weightings between elements*)	Monitoring committee
Changing the status of a module (e.g. from core to optional)^	Monitoring committee
Changing the credit-rating or level of a module^	Monitoring committee
Withdrawal of a module^	Monitoring committee

Developing an online or blended version of a module currently delivered face to face^	Monitoring committee
Changes to individual elements of assessment (e.g. word length of assignment; duration of examination; form of examination)*	Monitoring committee
Changes to the contact hours for a module including the balance between directed learning, independent learning and contact time	Monitoring committee
Bibliography and basic learning resources	Course committee
Change to a module title	Monitoring committee

9. Some operational changes to the way in which programmes are delivered may not require formal approval through the academic governance structures of St George's (Senate, QAEC, TPCC, UPC). They may nonetheless have significant timetabling or scheduling implications and, as such, require independent scrutiny before they can be implemented. Examples are provided below in Table 3.

10. Changes of this kind should be submitted to the Quality and Partnerships Directorate (QPD) on the Programme Modification Form (Appendix D1) in the usual way. If academic approval is not required (eg by the monitoring committee), QPD will refer the proposal to further consideration on a case-by-case basis following consultation with senior staff as appropriate. Some proposals may require formal consideration by ESSC, RAG and/or the Educational Infrastructure Group (EIG).

Table 3 – Operational changes

Type of modification
Significant changes to the intakes to a programme or a module;
Changes to the start and end date for a programme or module
Increased frequency of intakes
Changes to the delivery pattern for an aspect of a programme (e.g. the duration of a session, the day or time of the day on which a session is delivered, the semester of delivery)
Changes to the teaching and learning strategy for an aspect of the programme (e.g. a reduction in small group teaching accompanied by an increase in lectures)
Proposals to make greater use of specialist resources or non-specialist resources that are already used intensively.

Updates to course pages

11. The SGUL website includes individual pages for each course. These course pages are primarily aimed at prospective students and are intended to help them make decisions about what to study. They include information about entry requirements, how the course is taught, the facilities and support provided, and career opportunities.

12. The MSA (Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions) Team completes an annual update of the undergraduate and postgraduate course pages, liaising with each course team to ensure that all information on the course pages is up-to-date. This process is

typically completed by the end of August, in advance of the opening of UCAS applications in September.

13. Course teams can request ad-hoc changes to their course pages at any point in the year. This does not require formal approval, provided that the course page continues to accurately describe the course in the way that it was validated. Examples of such changes are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Course page changes

Types of course page changes that wouldn't typically require formal approval
Clarifying key points of information, for example to make it clearer on the course page that students are responsible for their own private accommodation whilst on placement
Moving information around on the course page to better highlight different aspects of the course
Adding staff bio information

Consultation with students

14. Students must be consulted about modifications and evidence of the outcome of that consultation must accompany any proposal. The way in which students are consulted may vary depending on the significance of the proposed modification, its scale and impact on continuing students. Students might be consulted individually (e.g. through open meetings or online surveys) or through course or year reps. Consultation should start as soon as possible to allow feedback from students to be taken into account. In addition:
    a) Students should be told how their feedback will be used especially if students take differing views on the proposal.
    b) Any requirement for students to consent to a proposed change should be considered.
    c) It should be clear whether feedback from students will prevent or delay the approval of a proposed modification.
    d) Obligations to professional bodies should be explained. For example, from time to time a policy change introduced by a professional body may have a bearing on the way in which a programme is designed or delivered.

Externality in modifications procedures

15. External examiners may be consulted on proposed modifications to a programme or its constituent modules if it is appropriate to do so. However, externals are not normally involved in considering modifications to programmes unless the proposed modifications are so extensive that approval by an SGUL validation panel is required. Course teams proposing extensive changes to a validated programme should seek the advice of the Director of Quality and Partnerships.

Process and deadlines

16. Modifications for the subsequent academic year must be approved before <u>the second Friday in December</u> in the academic year prior to their implementation.

17. Course teams seeking to modify programmes which have been accredited by PSRBs must refer to the PSRB's processes for reporting modifications to ensure that any additional requirements set by the PSRB are met. These may include consultation with additional stakeholders and could also impact on timescales.

18. Modifications are usually approved on the basis of the submission of the Programme Modification Form (Appendix D1). The form will usually explain:
    - The nature and rationale for the modification.
    - Whether quantitative data (e.g. performance in assessment, NSS outcomes or employability data) has informed the modification proposal.
    - How students, External Examiners and, where relevant, professional bodies and other stakeholders have been consulted.
    - The outcome of the consultation.
    - How advice from professional support services staff has been sought.
    - The timescale for the implementation of the modification**.**
    - Transitional arrangements for students affected by the modification.

19. Programme Modification Forms should be submitted to QPD. QPD receives all completed forms and is responsible for ensuring that forms are submitted to the relevant monitoring committee, where required. To ensure that adequate time is available for Forms to be considered by the monitoring committee, course directors are advised to submit Forms to QPD at their earliest convenience.

20. Forms should be accompanied by draft Programme Regulations, Schemes of Assessment and Programme Specifications where relevant.

21. Advice can be obtained from the Director of Quality and Partnerships about these procedural arrangements and the requirements for any supporting documents. Reference should also be made to sector guidance on course changes (Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice (Appendix A12)).

22. If approved, QPD will ensure that Programme Modification Forms are forwarded to the following departments, where applicable to the type of modification being made:
    - Timetabling (to model changes, if required)
    - Student Systems Team (SST)
    - Learning Technology Services (where a change may impact Canvas)
    - MSA (Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions)
    - Exams team
    - Admissions
    - Administrative teams

Approval criteria

23. In considering a proposed modification, monitoring committees will usually consider:

- Whether the rationale for the proposed modification is academically sound and will enhance the learning opportunities of students and secure academic standards;
- Whether the consultation process was commensurate with the scale of the proposal;
- Whether feedback from stakeholders endorsed the proposal;
- For modifications affecting continuing students, whether the grounds for making the modification warrant immediate implementation or whether the implementation can be delayed;
- Whether the impact of the modification should be evaluated.

24. It is open to the monitoring committee to (i) approve the proposal (ii) approve the proposal with conditions (iii) reject the proposal.

Early implementation

25. A modification would normally be approved before December in the academic year preceding its implementation (December 2020 for rollout in 2021-22). In rare cases, there may be a need to consider implementing a modification in the same academic year (ie approval in 2020-21 for implementation in 2020-21). Additionally, there may be cases where the December deadline has been missed, but approval is still sought for the following academic year (approval after December 2020 and implementation in 2021-22). In such cases, early implementation can be considered.

26. If a proposal is submitted to a monitoring committee after the December deadline, then the Committee may choose from the following options:
- Approve the modification for implementation in the academic year after the next (i.e. a proposed modification received in January 2021 may be approved for implementation in September 2022).
- Submit a recommendation to QAEC that the modification be considered for early implementation (in the current or the following academic year), provided that it meets one or more of the criteria listed in paragraph 27.

27. Early implementation of a modification may be considered on the following grounds:
- it relates to the requirements of a regulatory or professional body like the GMC or the HCPC;
- it relates to a critical issue highlighted in student feedback as having a negative impact on the student experience,
- an assessment issue which, if uncorrected, might put standards at risk. Issues of this kind might for example be identified by external examiners;
- its implementation would not require action from other stakeholders such as timetabling, SST or Learning Technology Services/ Alternatively, stakeholders might favour early implementation
- implementing it early would not impact on the University's obligation to comply with Consumer Protection Law.

28. Proposed modifications recommended to QAEC by the monitoring committee should be submitted by forwarding the Programme Modification Form and ensuring that it demonstrates:

- there is a clear rationale for early implementation of the proposed modification
- stakeholders who will be affected by the proposed modification have been consulted (including students and those whose support will be required to implement the modification, such as the Timetabling Manager and SST)

29. Programme Proposal Forms received by QAEC will be considered at the next meeting or by circulation.

Recording and communicating outcomes

30. Course teams are responsible for informing PSRBs of the outcome and updating all sources of information pertaining to the programme. These include course handbooks (on Canvas or in print); programme specification; programme regulations; Schemes of Assessment and course pages on the University website.

31. Affected students should be informed that a change to the programme has been made on an individual basis.

32. Where a modification affects applicants and offer holders, QPD will ensure that the Programme Modification Form is forwarded to External Relations and Communications and the Admissions teams.

Forms and guidance notes
Programme Modification Form (Appendix D1)

Modification Procedure Flowchart

Course Director submits Programme Modification Form to QPD, following consultation with stakeholders (paragraphs 14-18).

Form received ahead of 2nd Friday in Dec, with sufficient time for consideration (paragraphs 18 and 21)?

Yes

No

Is Monitoring Committee approval required (tables 1 -4)?

Is Monitoring Committee approval required (tables 1 -4)?

Yes

No

No

Yes

Form considered by monitoring committee (paragraphs 23-241).

QPD submits form to interested parties for implementation.

QPD submits form to interested parties to determine when the request may be accommodated.

Form considered by monitoring committee (paragraphs 23-24).

Form referred to QAEC for early-implementation (paragraphs 25-29).

Approved for implementation in **following** academic year.

Approved for **in-year** implementation.

Approved for implementation in academic year **after next.**

QPD submits approved form to further departments, as required (paragraph 22).