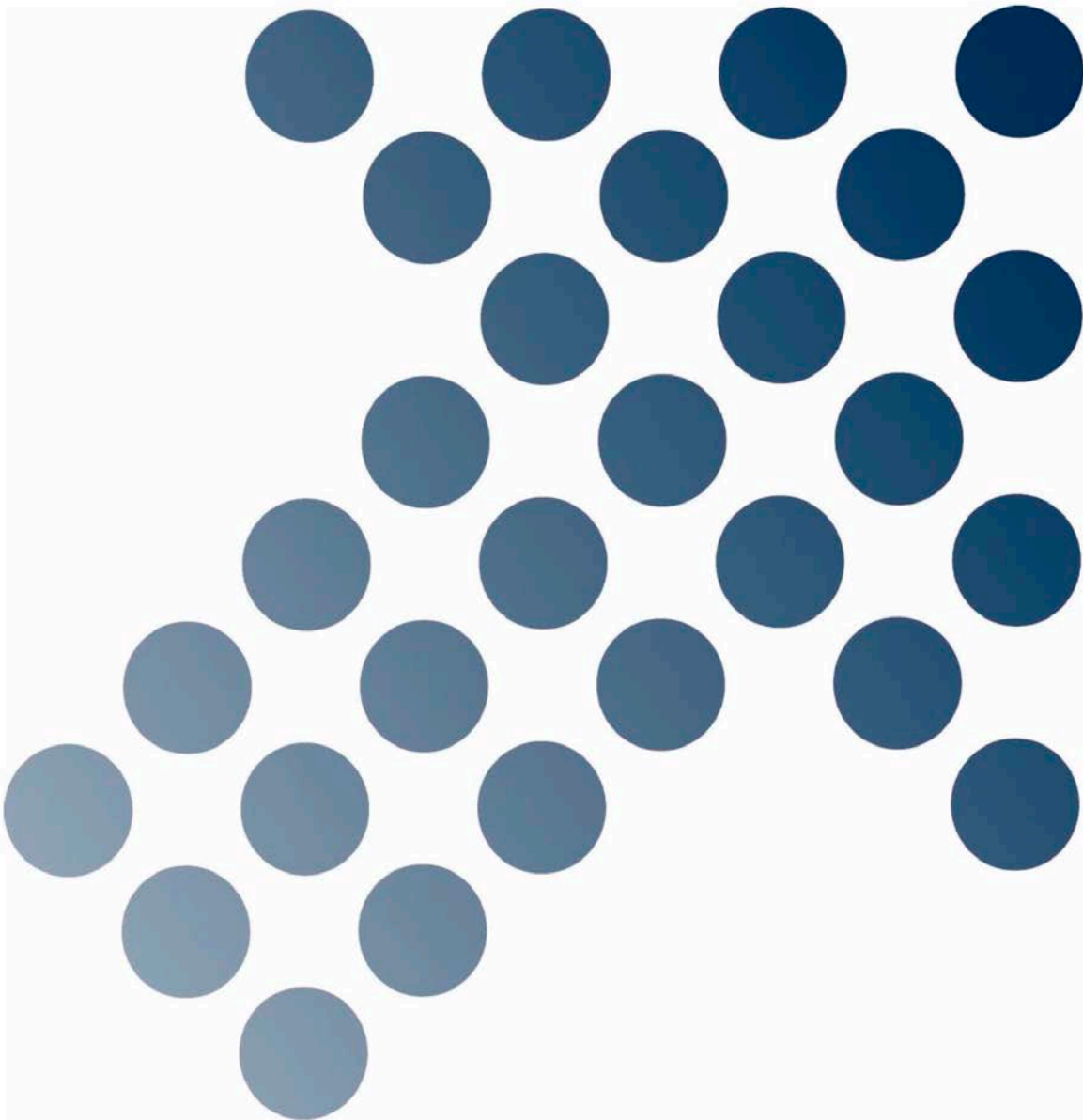


# **Programme modifications A guide for education providers**



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Current provider submission guidance

In our [Standards for Education](#), education providers have a framework to manage the quality of their programme(s). This includes a structure for ensuring that changes made to the programme and curriculum continue to meet current General Dental Council (GDC) learning outcomes and adapt to changing legislation and external guidance. In addition, the Standards for Education includes a requirement for education providers to contact the GDC should any serious threats to delivery of the programme be identified.

Education providers planning to deliver a brand-new programme, or a different level of qualification that is vastly different to their existing offering, are required to complete a full new programme submission. This involves completing Annex One Standards Mapping Table, Annex Two Learning Outcomes Mapping Table relevant to the programme, and submitting supporting evidence. These requirements are outlined in the Providers Guidance for Submissions document that the GDC sends to education providers when a submission is needed.

Where a revision to a qualification will involve a major change, or a significant restructure of the delivery of the qualification, the GDC must be contacted and advised of the changes in writing. This is to ensure that GDC Learning Outcomes continue to be met.

### 1.2 Rationale

Where education providers want to make changes to programmes, clarification is needed as to whether the level of proposed change warrants a full new programme submission. The programme modification process provides a formalised, consistent approach. This will enable a proportionate level of submission to be made that reflects the nature and scale of the proposed change. This guidance describes the criteria for major, medium, and minor changes, and when to inform the GDC of changes to programmes.

Key activities education providers carry out internally that can lead to programme modifications are:

- Periodic programme review – conducted every five years for ongoing approval through monitoring of quality and standards and compliance. Internal provision is reviewed in subject clusters, and changes only apply to the next student intake.
- Programme and module approval - ensures appropriate academic standards are set and maintained.
- Curriculum review – review of the viability and validity of taught programmes, also quality and standards including trends in External Examiner reports or data relating to assessment.
- Taught programme modification (minor) – for example changes of Programme Director or External Examiner.
- Taught programme modification (major) – significant changes to programmes.
- Annual Review of programmes - Changes to units and confirmation of specifications.
- School scrutiny events.

These activities are carried out by a range of committees within the school, including Academic Registry and School Directors, Academic Board, Curriculum Quality Assurance Committee and Executive Boards, undertaking various detailed stages of review and extensive scrutiny. Some education providers divide modifications to taught programmes into two categories: Major and Minor. For example, minor modifications can be approved by the Faculty Education Committee before being sent to Quality, Standards and Enhancement for routine processing. Major modifications generally require sign-off from the Programme Development and Approval Sub-Committee. Complex modifications will usually be referred to full Committee scrutiny. We acknowledge variations in the names and terminology of such committees/groups may vary, so this is an indication.

In most cases, minor modifications will not have an impact on students meeting GDC Learning Outcomes and can be implemented without notification as indicated in the below submission categories.

## 2. Submission Categories

### 2.1 Minor modifications: No submission categories

- Addition of an optional module(s).
- Change to the title of a core or optional module.
- Change to the delivery method of a core or optional module.
- Introduction of new lectures and lecture material.
- Providing additional study days for students.
- Introducing new *methods* of course delivery e.g., new software.
- Modifying the course timetables (but maintaining clinical hours).
- Changing formative assessments.
- Changing methods of feedback from students and patients.

#### **Guidance to Schools:**

No formal approval is needed – The School **does not need to** inform the GDC of the change.

### 2.2 Medium modifications: Part submission categories

- Changing the learning objectives (not GDC objectives).
- Changing the method of establishing the pass mark for summative assessments.
- Restructuring an existing summative assessment.
- Changing of External Examiner / Reduced number of External Examiners.
- Changing of Course Director. Programme Lead or Head of School.
- Minor extensions to programmes.
- Change to the first intake of programme.

**Guidance to Schools:** The School **should inform** the GDC of the changes made. The nature and scope of change may flag that a discussion is needed.

## 2.3 Major modifications: Part-submission categories

- Change to programme title and award.
- Addition/removal of an award.
- Changing the awarding authority.
- Introducing a new awarding authority (i.e.. not yet known to GDC).
- Changing the provider institution.
- Changing the length of the programme/revised delivery timeframe
  - increasing or decreasing weeks of study by more than 10%.
  - 2 years to 3 years, 3 years to 4 years, DN 1 year to 6 months.
- Remodelling programme from part time to full time.
- Changing the programme credit value.
- Replacement of a core module.
- Withdrawal/removal of an optional module.
- Introducing a new, or modifying the style of summative assessment (e.g., short answer to single best answer).
- Removing an existing summative assessment.
- Significant increase in student numbers.
- Significant decrease in staffing numbers.
- Revisions to work-based/placement modules or significant revisions to outreach.
- Multiple simultaneous medium modifications to an existing programme.

**Guidance to Schools:** The School **must inform** the GDC of the change and provide evidence of how these fit into the current programme, with the full rationale for change.

## 3 The Assessment Process

Providers intending to make medium or major modifications to programmes should contact GDC's Education and Quality Assurance (EQA) Team ([qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org](mailto:qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org)) to inform of planned changes at the earliest possible opportunity.

An acknowledgement email will be sent within 5 days of receipt and a member of the EQA Team may contact you to discuss the matter.

The Part 1 Initial Assessment Form will be sent for completion with details of the proposed changes. The relevant sections of Part 1 should be completed giving a brief overview of the changes made and sent back to the EQA Lead assigned to the activity within two weeks.

The information provided on the form will be assessed and an outcome decided based on:

- the judged scale of the proposed modification (minor, medium or major)
- whether additional evidence is needed to assure meeting GDC Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes.

Once the initial assessment has been completed, the EQA Lead will send the education provider an email informing of the outcome. Possible outcomes are:

- No further information or activity is required.
- Further evidence is required to assure that GDC Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes will be met.
- If it is deemed that a full submission is required, you will be notified that the process for a full submission will be instigated.

Where further evidence is required, Part 2.1 and 2.2 Programme Modification Submission Form will be sent to be completed with details of the evidence being submitted, to verify how meeting the specific GDC Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes is being maintained and addressed. Providers will be sent a secure file share link for documents to be uploaded. Depending on the information required, documents should be submitted within a timescale of two to four weeks.

Part 2.1 should again detail the programme change, with Part 2.2 completed to include evidencing how impacts have been considered, identification of risk and mitigations to be taken.

Documents submitted will be initially reviewed by the EQA Lead and may be subject to further assessment by GDC's Education Associates for assurance, overall assessment of risk, and a final assessment decision. Possible outcomes from this stage of the process are:

- The evidence gives assurance that GDC Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes will be met.
- The evidence does not give assurance that the GDC Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes will be met, and further information is required.

Where further evidence is requested, education providers will be required to submit this within a period of two to four weeks, demonstrating how the Standards for Education/Learning Outcomes will be met. This evidence will be assessed by Education Associates for assurance, overall assessment of risk and a final assessment decision.

Once assurance has been achieved, education providers will be sent a formal approval email with any additional findings or recommendations, and the programme modification recorded in your file.

#### **4 Monitoring**

If after assessment of evidence it is deemed that there remains a potential risk to the programme, you will be advised that it will be subject to further monitoring. Alternatively, the changes made to the programme will be monitored as part of the next monitoring cycle or at inspection, whichever is the earliest.

#### **5 Feedback**

GDC's EQA team are committed to improving the way we work with education providers and would greatly appreciate any ideas about how our procedures, documentation and communication methods can be improved. We include the collection of feedback at the end of all of our processes, however feedback can also be provided by emailing the EQA team at [qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org](mailto:qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org) or telephone on 020 7167 6110.