



Agència de Qualitat de
l'Ensenyament Superior d'Andorra

Evaluation guide for programme modifications

1_20-025

JULY 2020

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR PROGRAMME MODIFICATIONS

· July 2020¹ ·

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¹ Content validated by the Working Group on Quality for Higher Education of Andorra (formed by representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Andorra, the University of Andorra, the Open University La Salle and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra) and approved by the AQUA Steering Committee at the session of 14 July 2020.

1. Presentation

According to Article 9 of Law 14/2018, of 21 June, on Higher Education, official study programmes are designed by higher education institutions (HEI) and approved by the Government with prior accreditation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of Andorra (AQUA). Article 26 of the Decree approving the Regulation of Official Higher Education Degrees (published in the Official Gazette of the Principality of Andorra no. 91, on 15 July 2020) establishes that important modifications of study programmes leading to official degrees require prior accreditation by AQUA.

The objective of this document is to be a guideline for the evaluation process of official higher education programme modifications.

2. Types of modifications

The modifications of study programmes aim to keep the official study programmes up-to-date and may be motivated by an evaluation process, by a change in teaching methods or educational model or by an update of the content, among other factors.

Modifications of study programmes can be classified according to their scope:

- **Non-substantial modifications:** these are minor modifications that improve the degree without altering the nature, objectives or structure of the study programme approved by the Government. They refer, for example, to updates in content or methodologies, etc.
 - ➔ The HEIs can manage these modifications internally and implement them without the need for prior accreditation by AQUA. However, if required, AQUA is available to the HEIs for questions or to provide advice on these modifications.
- **Substantial modifications:** these are modifications that alter the nature, objectives or structure of the study programme, or affect any aspect regulated in the decree of the study programme approved by the Government.
 - ➔ These modifications require prior accreditation by AQUA.

Depending on their nature, substantial modifications can be resolved in two ways:

- **Minor:** these are substantial modifications that affect only **the structure of the study programme in less than 30% of the teaching units** but do not affect their nature and objectives. For example, this would include changing the name of courses or shifting courses within the timeline. These modifications must be officially communicated through a study programme modification in the Official Gazette of the Principality of Andorra (BOPA).

- **Major:** these are substantial modifications that **affect the nature and objectives** of the curriculum or the structure of the curriculum by more than 30% of the total number of credits leading to the degree. These modifications will require the publication of a new study programme in the Official Gazette of the Principality of Andorra (BOPA) and the phasing out of the old one.

3. Evaluation request for programme modifications

To request the evaluation of a programme modification, the following information must be provided to AQUA:

- ➔ Identifying data of the study programme subject to modification.
- ➔ Justification and motivation for the modifications.
- ➔ Description of the modifications, referencing the current study programme memorandum. All the necessary information must be provided to assess the relevance of the modifications.
- ➔ Timeline for the implementation of the modifications.

AQUA may request additional information for the correct development of the evaluation.

It is recommended to concentrate modifications of the same study programme into a single annual request. Additionally, if the study programme is scheduled for renewal during that year, it is recommended to incorporate the modifications through this process as improvement actions.

AQUA has fifteen days to analyse and accept the application. Once accepted, the HEI proceeds with the payment of the fee that will be attached to the acceptance document of the application. The application request cannot be processed until the payment is processed. Therefore, the evaluation deadline to modify study programmes begins with the payment of the fee.

4. Process and evaluation results

The evaluation of substantial modifications will focus only on the aspects that the higher education institution has requested to modify. However, AQUA will assess the relevance of the modifications within the overall study programme approved by the Government and may make recommendations beyond the requested aspects.

The modifications will be evaluated considering the study programme memorandum that was favourably evaluated and resulted in the approval and publication of the study programme by the Government.

Depending on whether these are minor or major modifications, AQUA may request an evaluation report from external experts.

The process for evaluating modifications is carried out according to the following steps:

- 1) Modification request. AQUA receives the evaluation request for the modification of a programme and has fifteen days to accept the request and plan the process according to the type of modification proposed. In the event that an evaluation report from external experts is required, AQUA will inform the HEI of the composition of the panel of external experts, and the HEI will have five working days to submit a motivated objection, if applicable.
- 2) Review of formal aspects. Within ten days from the acceptance of the request, AQUA reviews the formal aspects and, if any deficiencies need to be corrected, AQUA notifies the HEI, which has ten days to resolve them.
- 3) Evaluation. The AQUA evaluates the modification proposal and, within a maximum period of two months since the HEI has provided the additional information requested or since the acceptance of the request, the Evaluations Commission accepts or rejects the modification.

In the event that the modification is not accredited, the HEI has ten business days to provide allegations, modifications or additional information related to the evaluated modification proposal.

The AQUA will reassess the modification proposal. Within a maximum period of two months from the receipt of the allegations, modifications or additional information, the Evaluation Commission accepts or rejects the modification.

As a result of the evaluation, **the AQUA will issue an accreditation** that may vary in format depending on the nature of the modification, but will include the following information:

- Identifying data of the study programme subject to modification.
- A brief description of the modifications subject to an evaluation.
- List of references used for the evaluation.
- Assessment of the relevance of the modifications in relation to the current study programme memorandum.
- Resolution of the evaluation, in which the acceptance or rejection of the modification is explained.

- Any information or recommendation that is considered relevant to ensure the quality of the study programme and the established modifications.

The HEI is committed to keeping the current study programme memorandum updated.

5. Description of the modification scenarios

As a guideline, and without intending to be a closed or limiting list, the most common scenarios of modifications are described together with guidelines for an evaluation.

Modified aspect	Type of modification	Information required to evaluate the modification
Centre or person in charge	Not substantial	
Teaching method	Substantial major	Justification for the change of modality Description of the resources to be used for teaching and interacting with students, in accordance with the educational model of the institution; description of the evaluation
Change of semester for certain teaching units	Substantial minor or major depending on the % of credits affected	New programme If the new programme affects the previous requirements, the contents or other characteristics of the teaching units, the teaching programmes must be provided
Updating the contents of certain teaching units without affecting the competencies	Not substantial	
Name change of certain teaching units	Substantial minor or major depending on the % of credits affected	Description and justification of the name change
Deleting and creating teaching units without affecting competencies	Substantial minor or major depending on the % of credits affected	Description and justification of the subjects that are created and deleted Teaching programmes of the subjects that are created and deleted in order to justify that the contents and competencies are maintained

6. Questions and suggestions

Any questions, comments or suggestions regarding this process can be addressed to:

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7. Document revisions

Document revisions		
Version	Description of the modification	Approval date
4_20-025	Section 3 is added (<i>Evaluation Request to Modify Study Programmes</i>) including information regarding the acceptance of the evaluation of programme modifications and the payment of fees by the HEI.	16/06/2022
1_20-025	Original document	14/07/2020