

Key Commitments change request form

Community radio station name:	Radio LaB
Licence number:	CR000197
Licensee (company name):	University of Bedfordshire
Contact name:	Terry Lee
Date of request:	05/05/2023

Details of requested change(s) to Key Commitments

A community radio operator may apply to Ofcom to have the station's Key Commitments amended.

Please complete the table overleaf by including your current Commitment in the left hand column and your proposed revised Commitment in the centre column. In the right hand column please give a brief explanation as to why you wish to make each change.

We also require you to complete a second table which asks you to explain your proposed changes with reference to the statutory framework.

If you do not provide an explanation for your proposed changes and a completed comparison table, Ofcom cannot consider a Key Commitments change.

Please complete this form and return it to: broadcast.licensing@ofcom.org.uk

Existing Commitment (as in your published Key Commitments) Please only include one commitment change per row, and add more rows as necessary into the table.	Proposed revised/new Key Commitment	Reason for proposed change
Music. The main type of music broadcast over the course of each week is: 'alternative' music, mixed with other specialist genres. Music from local musicians also features.	Music. The main types of music broadcast over the course of each week reflect the interests of local young people and students, with genres including: alternative, pop, R&B, rock, and dance. Music from local musicians also features.	Our target community of local young people and students are keen that the radio station is not pigeon-holed into being an alternative music station. 'Alternative' will still remain a key part of our music output.
Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: interviews/discussions, news and current affairs, community information, social action features. Some output is for the over-55 audience including advice and discussion in particular.	Speech. The main types of speech output broadcast over the course of each week are: interviews/discussions, current affairs, sport, community information, social action features. Some output is for the over-55 audience.	Recent changes in courses at the University of Bedfordshire have led to the closure of 'Journalism' course. Whilst the news is often discussed on air, there are likely to be fewer bulletins from our student-based volunteers in the future. Changes in volunteers since COVID-19 mean that, whilst there are still programmes for the over-55 audience, there is less content featuring advice and discussion.
The service provides original output for a minimum of 10 hours per day during term time. Outside of term time the service provides original output for a minimum of 4 hours per day.	The service provides original output for a minimum of 56 hours per week during term time. Outside of term time the service provides original output for a minimum of 28 hours per week.	We would like to move from a daily minimum, to a weekly minimum. This also helps for when there are complications with live or pre-recorded programming on particular days of the

		<p>week, such as weekends and bank holidays.</p> <p>We also request to slightly reduce the total original hours to be in line with an average of 8 hours per day. The impacts of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, on top of aforementioned changes to courses at the University, mean that our students and young people may not be able to commit to as much time on-air.</p>

Statutory requirements

Under section 106(1A)(a)-(f) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as amended and modified¹) Ofcom must be satisfied that your proposed changes **meet at least one of the criteria referred to below**.

Please indicate which of these criteria you believe your proposed changes satisfy by deleting YES or NO as applicable and provide an explanation for why you consider a particular criterion is met in the relevant box. You should note that even if Ofcom is of the opinion that your explanation of your proposed changes meets one or more of these criteria, there may still be reasons why Ofcom is unable to consent to the change. When explaining your proposed changes, it is not enough to state that you believe one of the criteria is met. You must also demonstrate *why* you consider that at least one of these criteria is met.

In particular, if Ofcom is not satisfied that the changes would not substantially alter the character of the service (criterion (a) below), Ofcom cannot consent to the change without consulting on your proposals.² If this is the case, we will contact you to confirm that you are happy for us to consult on your proposed changes, and whether you wish to make any changes to your request in light of the need to make it public.

As part of our consideration of your request to make changes to your Key Commitments, we require applicants to provide an explanation for **at least one** of the criteria below.

(a) In your judgement would the proposed changes substantially alter the character of the service?	NO (Please explain why below)
The character of service would not change. The proposed changes are to update the descriptions of some of the station output, and offer flexibility with how the original content hours are met.	
(b) Do you consider that the proposed changes would narrow the range of programmes available by way of relevant independent radio services to persons comprising the relevant community?	NO (Please explain why below)
On the contrary, the changes should serve to increase the range of programmes available to our target community of local young people and students, & hopefully encourage more to get involved in volunteering with us. Radio LaB's award-winning output over the years has been eclectic, including radio drama, documentaries and podcasts played on air – the proposed changes are about ensuring our volunteers' creativity isn't restricted.	
(c) Do you believe that there is evidence that, amongst persons comprising that community, there is a significant demand for, or significant support for, the changes that you have proposed?	YES (Please explain why below)

¹ As amended by sections 312 and 313 of the Communications Act 2003 and modified by the Community Radio Order 2004.

² Ofcom may approve a change under any of criteria (b), (c), (d) and (e) without consultation, or after a consultation of less than 28 days, if Ofcom considers that to hold a consultation at all, or for 28 days or more, would result in a delay that would be likely to prejudice the interests of the licensee. Ofcom may also remove for the purposes of consultation any confidential information submitted by the licensee.

<p>The station is led day-to-day by a group of students. They are the key driver for these changes. They want to ensure that Radio LaB is able to broadcast a wide range of programming that reflects the rich diversity of young-Luton.</p>	
<p>(d) Do you consider that your proposed changes would be prejudicial to the access by members of that community to the facilities used for the provision of the service and for training in the use of those facilities?</p>	<p>NO (Please explain why below)</p>
<p>These changes would help to enable our students and volunteers more time to train new members – there would be no negative impact on access to our facilities.</p>	
<p>(e) Do you consider that the proposed changes would be prejudicial to the delivery of social gain resulting from the provision of the service provided under your licence?</p>	<p>NO (Please explain why below)</p>
<p>Radio LaB is proud to deliver social gain, in areas such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the promotion of employment; -the provision of opportunities for the gaining of work experience; -the promotion of social inclusion; -the promotion of civic participation and volunteering. <p>We are also committed to providing a platform for those who are broadly under-served elsewhere. The proposed changes have no negative-bearing on our delivery of social gain.</p>	

<p>Please set out below any additional information and/or evidence you wish to provide in support of your proposed changes. In particular, you may wish to outline how you think your proposed change(s) fit(s) within Ofcom’s published guidance on changes to Key Commitments.</p>
<p>We haven’t updated our Key Commitments in nearly 7 years. This change request was made following discussion from students and young people involved in providing the service.</p>

Data Protection

We require the information requested in this form in order to carry out our licensing duties under the Broadcasting Act 1990, Broadcasting Act 1996 and Communications Act 2003. Please see Ofcom’s [General Privacy Statement](#) for further information about how Ofcom handles your personal information and your corresponding rights.

Ofcom notes on the request

The request was AGREED, because Ofcom was satisfied in relation to Section 106(1A)(a) of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (as modified by the Community Radio Order 2004, and further modified by the Community Radio (Amendment) Orders 2010 and 2015) i.e. that the changes would not substantially alter the character of the service, and for the policy reasons given below.

The Licensee is requesting to amend its music output, from primarily alternative music with other specialist genres, to instead broadcast a wider mix of genres, including alternative music, without a specific focus. In making this request, the Licensee has stated that its target community is keen that the station should not be 'pigeon-holed' into being a purely alternative music station, while alternative music will remain a key part of the music output. The Licensee's proposed music output requirement would focus explicitly on "the interests of local young people", and Ofcom is satisfied that the genres listed are likely to appeal to the target community. We note that the station's character of service does not describe it as a specialist alternative music station, and we believe that the revised music output will continue to target young people in Luton successfully. The Licensee will continue to broadcast alternative music and local music, and we are therefore satisfied that the overall character of the service would not be substantially altered by this change.

The Licensee is also seeking to amend its speech output requirements, removing a reference to the broadcast of news, and removing the requirement that the output aimed at over-55s will include 'advice and discussion in particular'. The Licensee also proposes to include sport in its speech output over the course of the week. In requesting to drop its requirement to broadcast news, the Licensee notes that the 'Journalism' course from which it sourced the majority of its newsreaders has closed, and so it is likely fewer bulletins would be available in future. Ofcom accepts that the closure of this course is likely to affect the volunteer pool available to the Licensee, and is satisfied that 'news' in a broad sense will continue to be discussed on the station given its continued commitment to broadcast current affairs over the course of each week.

The Licensee has requested to remove the specific requirement to broadcast 'advice and discussion in particular' in its content aimed at over-55s, citing changes in its volunteer pool since the COVID-19 pandemic. Ofcom accepts that the impacts of the pandemic have affected the volunteer makeup of a number of stations, and that this may require them to change the range of programming available in some cases. However, we expect that the programming targeted at over-55s will continue to include advice and discussion features, even if these are not the primary focus of this programming.

The Licensee has not provided any information regarding its request to include sports programming as part of its speech output. However, Ofcom believes that this additional programming will be of interest to some members of the target community, and will not constitute a substantial change to the character of the service.

Finally, the Licensee has requested to convert its original output from daily to weekly requirements. In doing so, it has asked to reduce its requirement in term time from 70 hours per week (equivalent) to 56 hours per week, a relatively modest reduction of 20% over the course of each week. The Licensee's out-of-term requirement will remain the same. Ofcom is generally happy to approve Licensees' requests to convert their output from daily to weekly requirements, recognising that this improves their flexibility without affecting the service delivered to listeners over the course of each week. In making this request, the Licensee has stated that the impacts of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, as well as specific circumstances at the University of Bedfordshire, have impacted the amount of time which volunteers can

commit to the station. Ofcom is satisfied that this change is a relatively modest response to the station's changing circumstances and will not have a substantial effect on the service provided to listeners.

Ofcom is therefore satisfied that these changes, both individually and in combination, will not substantially alter the character of the service, and we are therefore satisfied that these changes meet Section 106(1A)(a) of the 1990 Broadcasting Act. We have also considered these requests under our policy criteria, and consider that there are no policy reasons to refuse this request. We consider that the Licensee will continue to provide a service within the characteristics of community radio, and that the changes will not hinder the station's ability to focus on its target community. We have therefore decided to exercise our discretion and approve these changes.

June 2023