

POLICY

Policy for course closure, suspension and major change

Contact Officer

Director of Quality and Educational Development and Academic Registrar

Purpose

To inform members of the University including students, potential students and other external interested parties, of the principles recognised for closing, suspending or making major changes to courses or programmes of study.

Overview

The University regularly reviews and updates the courses and modules offered in order to ensure that they remain current and reflect best practice. In exceptional circumstances this means that a course or programme may cease to exist or the University may no longer be able to teach a programme or an aspect of a programme to a specific group of students, or the University may introduce a substantial change which will impact on applicants and/or current students.

Scope

All members of the University.

The Policy

1. In all instances where courses are being considered for closure, suspension or substantial change to an undergraduate or taught postgraduate course, the University will follow a set, published, procedure.¹ These procedures align with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and take account of the HEFCE statement of good practice on course change and closure (2015), as well as the Competition and Markets Authority guidance on consumer law for UK HE providers (2015).
2. In particular the procedures seek to protect the interests of applicants and students by ensuring clear and transparent processes for the management of course closure, suspension or substantial change in relation to the experience of applicants who have accepted an offer of a place, but not yet registered, and those that have

¹ [Procedures for Course Closure, Suspension and Substantial Change](#)

deferred their offer; and the experience of students who are current or have temporarily withdrawn from the course. As such, the procedures align with the University [Terms and Conditions for Applicants](#).

3. It should be noted that whilst these procedures set out the usual process, the University reserves the right to use discretion in applying these in order to ensure that all obligations are met, particularly if circumstances are complex or deemed to be of high risk.

Definitions

Course Closure

4. Closing a course means that there will be no further intakes to the course and it will no longer be offered by the University (or partner organisation). Those students already registered on the course will continue to progress and complete the course (teach out), or where this is not possible will be offered an alternative course or transfer to another provider.

Course Suspension

5. Suspension of a course means that there will be no intake to the course for a specified period (normally the following academic year). Students currently registered on the course will continue to progress and complete the course.

Substantial Change

6. Substantial changes constitute alterations to a course that could potentially affect the decision of an applicant to take up their place and/or significantly vary the information provided to applicants or to students regarding the nature of the course and its component parts.
7. A substantial change might include:
 - change of course location (eg. to another campus or partner college);
 - change to the title of a course and/or associated award;
 - change to the accreditation of a course;
 - change to the mode of delivery of a course (eg. full-time to part-time, or through distance-learning)
 - substantial change to the curriculum, assessment or modules within a course (eg. substantial changes to mandatory modules which results in a significant change to the course offer).

Key Principles

8. For details of how these principles translate into normal operational practice, readers should refer to the University Procedures for Course Closure, Suspension and Substantial Change.
9. An academic Institute (or collaborative partner organisation) can not close, suspend

or make substantial changes to a course themselves. Any such decision will only be made by the University Executive who will normally be given sufficient notice to ensure that there have been appropriate consultations and communications with all stakeholders.

10. The only exceptions to this are:
 - a. Where a decision is made to suspend recruitment to a course late in the recruitment cycle (eg. after 1st July where the course commences in September). In these instances, the Head of Institute (or nominee) will liaise directly with the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Academic Registrar for approval to suspend the course. In such cases a report will be made to the University Executive notifying them of the exceptional circumstances requiring such action.
 - b. Proposals for substantial change relating to changes in accreditation arrangements, and/or to the content of programmes, learning outcomes and or assessment. These proposals for change are subject to the agreement of the Director of Quality and Educational Development (DQED) who will consult with stakeholders (or recommend same) or refer to the University Executive as necessary.
11. Course closure, suspension or substantial change will normally be initiated for the following academic year unless there are circumstances beyond the University's control. In the event of closure or suspension, no new applicants will be recruited. Students already on the course will be supported to complete their course successfully or if this is not possible due to circumstances beyond the control of the University, transitional arrangements will be made in consultation with the student(s) affected.
12. The University will endeavour to mitigate the impact that course closure, suspension or substantial change will have on current and prospective students. In the event of course closure, a planned timeline and action plan for managing the closure and for communicating with applicants and current students will be drawn up by the Institute; this will explicitly consider the experience of current and prospective students.
13. In the case of Joint Honours subject combinations, all Institutes involved must agree to the closure or suspension before the procedure commences.
14. In cases where collaborative partners wish to close or suspend courses, assessment of the strategic, contractual and operational implications will still be made and the University procedure will still be followed.
15. Typically, the relevant Institute (in liaison with the partner organisation where appropriate) will be responsible for communicating course closure, suspension or substantial change to current students. Registry Services (in liaison with the partner where relevant) will be responsible for communicating course closure, suspension or substantial change to applicants.

Reinstating courses or removal of suspension

16. Courses that have been suspended will automatically become available at the end of the period for which the suspension was originally agreed unless the Institute applies for an extension. Where a course has been suspended for two consecutive years, the Institute should consider whether it would be appropriate to close the course.
17. Should the Institute wish to reinstate the course before the end of the period of suspension, an application can be made to this effect.

Date Approved	26th April 2017
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Date of Commencement	April 2017
Amendment Dates	
Date for Next Review	April 2020
Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates	Procedures for Course Closure, Suspension and Substantial Change
Policy/Policies Superseded by this document	N/A