



HE COURSE CLOSURE, SUSPENSION AND MAJOR CHANGE POLICY

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1 Statement of Principles surrounding Course Closure or Suspension

- 1.1 It is essential for the College to ensure that its course portfolio is current and that closure or suspension of courses is managed fairly, equitably and proportionately, with risks managed transparently. The policy applies to all provision offered within HE, although courses franchised from University Partners will be additionally subject to their regulatory regime. It reflects the document 'Higher Education course changes and closure: statement of good practice' endorsed by HEFCE, AoC, UUK, Guild HE and the NUS in 2015.
- 1.2 This policy requires that all reasonable steps must be taken to protect the academic interests of all students currently studying the course (including those who have taken leave of absence or who could potentially repeat the course).
- 1.3 The policy also requires that clear arrangements are established in each instance to ensure that the quality of the learning experience is explicitly maintained during the period in which the course is being closed or suspended.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Closing a course means that there will be no further intakes to the course and it will no longer be offered by the College. Those students already registered on the course will continue to progress and complete the course, or where this is not possible will be offered an alternative course or transfer to another provider.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Major changes are those changes which materially affect the delivery of a course, and which may relate to changes in modules, teaching, or the location at which courses will be delivered.

3 Policy for Course Closure or Suspension

- 3.1 This process is for the withdrawal or suspension of courses, initiated by programme areas. The Principalship, in some circumstances, shall also have scope to close courses. Nonetheless, the same operational policy will apply. The implications for the contractual relationship, whether for existing or potential students, will be at the centre of the process.
- 3.2 As the College develops and revises its validation documentation on a cyclical basis, each such document will contain a plan for continuing students in the event of closure or suspension of the provision, which may include transfer to the University, or mutual support arrangements with another local College.
- 3.3 Academic teams seeking to permanently close or suspend a course shall at the earliest possible stage discuss the proposed action with the Assistant Principal and Learner Manager-HE and Access, who will also seek the views of the University Link Tutor for appropriate courses. Course closure or suspension proposals regarding programmes with current students should normally complete the approval cycle no later than the autumn term of the year preceding implementation.
- 3.4 A written outline proposal will be prepared, and submitted to the next meeting of the HE Management Team for consideration. This outline must encompass:
 - The rationale for the decision;
 - The key risks involved;
 - The proposed timetable;
 - Potential impacts on current and prospective students, relationships with Partner Universities, and relationships with key employers;
 - The plan for consultation and liaison with students and their representatives;
 - Steps proposed to protect the academic interests of all students currently studying the course;

- Steps proposed to maintain the quality of the learner experience during the closure period.
- 3.5 Following deliberation at HE Management Team, a decision will be made to reject the proposed closure or suspension, or to approve it to go to consultation.
 - 3.6 Following consultation, a report of the outcomes will be jointly produced and submitted to HE Management Team by the appropriate Learner Manager and Student representatives. After due deliberation, a recommendation will be made to the governors, which will make the final decision on whether or not to accept the closure or suspension proposal. As a key part of this process, governors shall receive assurance that appropriate management and resourcing is in place for the final student cohorts in the course being closed or suspended.
 - 3.7 In the case of University partnerships, the formal processes and documentation of the relevant institution would be followed for ratification of the governors' decision through the appropriate deliberative structures.
 - 3.8 Once the closure or suspension is agreed, HE Management Team will be tasked with receiving periodic reports from the Head of HE and Access to provide assurance that the agreed conditions associated with the closure process are being met. All communication of the decision to students and other key stakeholders will be via the Head of HE and Access.

4 Policy for Major Changes to Courses

- 4.1 The College would always seek to ensure that significant material changes to programmes would be a decision of last resort and be made in a timely manner. Requirements for such changes will be submitted to the Vice Principal Curriculum with responsibility for HE for approval to proceed and reported to the next meetings of HEM and Governors for ratification.
- 4.2 Where a major change is required to an advertised provision, but occurs before enrolment, the Head of HE and Access, working with the Learner Manager concerned, will advise all applicants in writing of their right to apply for entry to a suitably alternative programme or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.
- 4.3 In exceptional circumstances, where a change occurs after registration, the Head of HE and Access, working with the relevant Learner Manager, will arrange to consult with the affected students and their representatives at the earliest opportunity and, wherever practicable, to take their views into account.
- 4.4 In such circumstances, students will be advised by the Head of HE and Access, in writing of their specific entitlements to cancel their contract with the College, to receive a certified statement of credits earned to date, and to obtain a refund of fees paid.