

Procedure for Withdrawing or Suspending Higher Education Programmes

Introduction

1. The College continually reviews its Higher Education (HE) curriculum to ensure it delivers to student demand (local, national and international) and student expectations, and aligns with strategic objectives, pedagogical developments, and emerging academic and professional practice. The College is committed to ensuring the quality of learning opportunities and supporting students towards achieving the best possible academic outcomes. Beyond the normal academic practice of reviewing and updating modules and programmes, in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to close a programme.
2. In such circumstances the College would ensure that existing or potential students would be fully informed, consulted and supported to protect their interests.

Definitions

3. The following terms are used to define non-continuation of a programme:
 - Closure - a programme is closed when it ceases to be one for which a student may apply.
 - Suspension - a programme is suspended when a decision is taken not to recruit to the programme or to deliver the programme for a defined period.

Academic Board approval

4. The recommendation to close or suspend a programme must be made by the Vice Principal. The recommendation to close or suspend must be discussed initially at SLT followed by a consultation period with current students who are affected. Academic Board would then be required to approve. If there are strategic implications for the College, the Chair of the Board of Governors should be informed at an early stage.
5. In all other cases, the recommendation to close or suspend a programme must cover the following areas:
 - the rationale for closure or suspension (see paragraph 7)
 - the proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (see paragraphs 8-11)
 - the proposed arrangements for applicants who have accepted offers of a place on the course (see paras 12-14).
6. Academic Board will only accept the recommendation if the rationale is sufficiently strong to justify the disruption to students and applicants, and if the arrangements for students and

applicants satisfy the requirements set out below. The rationale should include proposals outlining timescales for closure and measures to engage students and maintain the highest quality of the academic and general College experience.

Rationale for closure or suspension of a programme

7. The following may be regarded as sufficient cause for closing or suspending a programme:
- the demand for the programme is too small to cover the cost of delivery (declining student numbers)
 - staff involved in teaching the programme are permanently unavailable (for example the lack of the sole subject specialist on a niche programme) or temporarily unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace that individual.
 - concerns about the quality and academic standards on the programme
 - external bodies (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) make changes that lead to a recommendation to close or suspend the programme
 - if recommended at a Programme Review event.

Arrangements for students currently registered on the programme

8. Unless there are exceptional circumstances the College will always plan to 'teach out' any programme accepted for closure [*the course continues to be accredited but no new students can be enrolled, and arrangements are in place to ensure all existing students can either complete the course of study, or transition to a mutually agreed course at no disadvantage*]. Therefore, where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme to new entrants only then current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of registration on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure or suspension recommendation has been agreed by Academic Board.

9. Where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme and current students will be affected, a consultation period should be put in place with the views of all current students on the proposed arrangements sought by the College and included with the recommendation to Academic Board. The consultation must begin as soon as possible after consideration to close a programme ensuring all students have the opportunity to feed into the process. Timescales for closure and arrangements for managing the programme to closure need to be carefully considered and discussed with students, by face-to-face contact where possible. Expectations must be managed and any views expressed listened to and responded to accordingly. From a student's perspective this period will be extremely unsettling. Proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) must encompass the following:

- confirmation that the standard of provision to current students will be maintained throughout their period of registration (ie programme taught out)
- confirmation that the previously stated learning outcomes of the programme will still be achievable by current students, even if the range of module choices is smaller because of staffing reductions
- options provided for current students in regard to transferring to another programme within the College or to another institution.

10. As part of this process, a number of other factors must be taken into account:
- impact on remaining student cohorts once new entrants cease (or if programme suspended) - to include impact on mental health and wellbeing
 - impact on interrupted students (for instance those who intend to return to study after illness)
 - student perception of the validity of the ongoing programme in terms of quality of award and future employment/career
 - ongoing arrangements for tutors, and maintaining staff:student ratios, contact time, programme resources
 - academic standards and quality of learning opportunities
 - impact on specific groups of students taking into account educational and personal backgrounds and protected characteristics, and including part time students, potential new entrants, repeaters, deferrals, etc - to include impact on mental health and wellbeing
 - information for alumni and other stakeholders including industry partners such as sponsors or employers.
11. The College is committed to ensuring the continuity of studies as far as is reasonably practicable.

Arrangements for prospective students (including deferred entrants)

12. All communications with applicants on these matters must be undertaken by the Admissions Office team. Applicants who have accepted offers, including those who have deferred offers, should not be contacted until a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted and approved at Academic Board. These applicants should then be informed of their options in regard to transferring their application to another programme within the College or to another institution.

13. Applicants who have been made offers, but have not yet accepted them may be contacted at an earlier stage to be informed that a closure/suspension recommendation has been made. Such applicants should be told that the offer of a place is suspended until a decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the recommendation is accepted.

14. Once the decision has been made to close or suspend a programme, the Student Recruitment and Admissions team should consult the UCAS Admissions Guide for specific information relating to UCAS applicants. They should identify any applicants who will be affected by the decision and notify them. If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial letter, the Admissions team should issue a reminder letter advising the applicant that their application will be withdrawn if no response is received within a specified timescale. The Deputy Registrar (HE) will close or suspend on UCAS any programmes that are affected.

Arrangements for Staff

15. Where staff terms and conditions or service are affected or there are potential redundancies, the Head of Human Resources must be consulted at the earliest opportunity in

considering any programme closure. Head of Human Resources would ensure that any staff affected are well supported throughout the process.

Communications

16. If approval to close or suspend a programme is granted, the Registrar will notify the following to alert them to the decision:

- Director of Communications
- Director of Finance

17. The Registrar will ensure that all other personnel affected within the College are notified along with academic partners as appropriate (awarding bodies, accrediting institutes, external examiners etc).

18. The Vice Principal should inform the students on the programme that is going to be closed in writing together with confirmation of the way in which they will be supported to complete the programme.

19. Director of Communications will liaise with Director of Development to inform any external agencies allied to the programme affected (employers, research partners etc).

Other considerations

20. If a decision to close or suspend a programme is taken late in the admissions cycle, the availability of suitable alternatives at the College or at other institutions may be extremely limited and the existing student may consider claiming financial compensation from the College, with a potential risk or damage to reputation and financial status. Referral should be made to the [Tuition Fee Refund and Compensation Policy](#)

Publications and Marketing

21. When a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted, the Registrar will consult with Director of Communications to ensure all necessary amendments are made to College publications and the website and UCAS will be notified.

Appendix:

A. Proposal for Withdrawal or Suspension of a Programme of Study

Appendix A

Proposal for Withdrawal or Suspension of a Programme of Study

Items to note:

- programmes should not normally be withdrawn or suspended once the application cycle for that year has commenced.
- the impact of any withdrawal / suspension of programmes should be discussed with relevant colleagues in Admissions to confirm how any prospective, current, or deferred applicants will be handled, including applicants, and students on Extended BA programmes leading to the programme.
- applicants should not be contacted until any withdrawal or suspension has been approved.

1. Is this proposal for a withdrawal or suspension of programme(s)? (Please tick)				
Suspension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Withdrawal
2. Name of programme(s) to be withdrawn or suspended:				
3a. Proposed date of commencement of suspension or withdrawal				
3b. If a suspension, what is the duration of the suspension?				
3c. If a suspension, will the programme be the same as the current approved version when it is reintroduced? (if not, Academic Board will make a decision as to whether its reintroduction should be considered as a new programme)				

4. Proposal for programme withdrawal or suspension made by:

5. Proposal approved by:

Notes:

Vice Principal (signature)

Date:

6. How will any applicants (including prospective applicants, offer holders and those with deferred entry, including those that may enter through the Extended BA) be handled? Please detail alternative programme options that may be available.

7. Will the proposal affect current students? If 'Yes', how will they be treated? e.g. are there part-time students, or students on leave of absence / interrupted study, who will still be on the programme, or students on the Extended BA?

8a. Number of home students on the programme(s):

Current Year - 3

Current Year - 2

Current Year - 1

8b. Number of overseas students on the programme(s):

9. Associated fee income

Current Year - 3

Current Year - 2

Current Year - 1

£

£

£

10. Please explain how any net income lost from this proposal will be recovered and detail any other financial implications:

11. What is the rationale for suspension / withdrawal of the programme:

12. Does this proposal have implications for other programmes within the department or other departments? (e.g. modules that are available to other programmes)

**13. Which academics an/or which support staff are involved with the programme(s)?
How much of their time is used?**

14. Please identify any reduction in costs accompanying suspension / withdrawal of this programme:

15. Please provide information on any space freed up by suspension / withdrawal of this programme - (e.g. office space, timetabled space (please consult with Student Administration Office / Timetabling as appropriate)):

16. Please explain how any reputational damage will be avoided due to through suspension / withdrawal of the programme(s):

17. Is the programme in the current prospectus?

18. Director of Finance comments:

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19. Any other comments and or supporting information?

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Approval by Chair of Academic Board:

Signature:

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Date:

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Approval by Chair of Board of Governors (if required):

Signature:

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Date:

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Related Statutes, Ordinances, & General Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● QAA Quality Code - Admissions, Recruitment & Widening Access ● QAA Quality Code - Course Design & Development ● QAA Quality Code - Student Engagement ● Handbook for Validated Awards ● Student Protection Plan
Related policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Admissions Policy (HE) ● Tuition Fee Refund and Compensation Policy
Related procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Validation and Revalidation Procedures (HE)
Related information:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HE Strategy
Policy owner and Lead contact:	Deputy Registrar (Quality Systems & Performance) Email: jwright@pca.ac.uk