



Student Protection Plan

Policy and procedures for closure, suspension and changes to programmes

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

These processes articulate the College's procedures for applicants and students.

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy sets out the College's procedures for closing, suspending or changing any of Higher Education programmes that it is either approved (via an Awarding Body), franchised or validated (via a Partner University). It is designed to reflect the Statement of Good Practice adopted by HEFCE, UUK, Guild HE, NUS in October 2015. It is also designed to meet the requirements for the CMA Student Protection Plan.

2. Closure and Suspension

2.1. The College may seek to close and remove a Higher Education programme from its offer. The closure of a programme means that the College will cease to recognise the programme as one for which a student may be registered.

2.2. Suspension of a programme of study is defined by a fixed timeframe in which a programme will not be delivered.

2.3. Decisions to close or suspend a College Higher Education programme approved by the Awarding Body must be formally approved by the College's Higher Education Academic Board and ratified by the Senior Leadership Team because of the implications for the contractual relationship between current and prospective students and the College.

2.4. Decisions to close or suspend a College Higher Education programme that is franchised or validated by a Partner University must be formally approved by the College's Higher Education Academic Board and ratified by the Senior Leadership Team. Once these steps have been taken due process linked to the Partner Universities relevant Student Protection Plan are to be followed because of the implications for the contractual relationship between current and prospective students and the Partner University.

2.5. Any request to close or suspend a programme must be made by the Head of School in which that programme is located. In the case of joint programmes that span more than one school, the relevant school must consult on the closure or suspension. The Head of School is required to make a business case to the Academic Board who will make a proposal for the Senior Leadership Team who will make the final decision. Any such request should incorporate the following:

- Market rationale
- Strategic and financial implications
- Impact, if any, on arrangements with partner institutions
- Impact on current and prospective students
- Impact on existing or proposed programmes
- Impact on relationships with employers
- The expected impact on staff and resources

2.6. Where there are any expected changes to staff/staffing structure consultation with People Services must be sought

2.7 On receipt of a request to close or suspend a programme, SLT may agree one of the following:

- Decline the request
- Approve the request without condition(s)
- Approve the request with condition(s)

3. Programme Changes Prior to Registration

3.1. The College may be required to make changes to programmes at the following times:

- between publication of the prospectus and registration
- after registration

3.2. Where material changes (such as a number of changes to the structure of the programme, or the removal or addition of a number of modules) are made between the publication of the prospectus and registration, the College will draw these changes to the attention of applicants as soon as possible and advise them of their right to seek entry to another College programme for which they may be qualified or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.

3.3. Where the applicant has already accepted an offer, they shall be furnished with all necessary information, advice and guidance by the College to help them make an informed decision on their future course of action.

3.4. In normal circumstances, material changes to programmes should not be made after registration, but where this is unavoidable, students and their representatives shall be consulted at the earliest opportunity on the changes and, where practicable, their views shall be taken into account.

3.5. If a student reasonably believes that a material change to their programme adversely affects them, they may cancel their contract with the College. In such circumstances the College will offer suitable information, advice and guidance to a student and, where possible, facilitate their transfer to another institution which offers an appropriate programme for which they are qualified.

3.6. Further to commencement of the programme and during the course of a student's studies, the College may make minor amendments to programmes in order to improve the quality; to meet the latest requirements of an accrediting body; or in response to student feedback. Where such minor amendments to the delivery of a programme are necessary, the College will consult with or inform students and their representatives of these changes, as appropriate, and in line with College quality assurance processes.

4. Student Protection

4.1. Current students

4.1.1. Current students should normally be allowed to complete the programme of study for which they are registered unless each gives their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure or suspension recommendation has been agreed.

4.1.2. Where a programme is being closed to new entrants only, the College's proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) must comply with the following:

- Current students should be informed of their options. The College will provide all necessary information, advice, guidance and support to facilitate students in deciding which option to follow.
- The standard of academic provision and the student experience must, as far as is reasonably practicable, be maintained throughout their period of registration. In particular, the conditions must be maintained to enable the stated learning outcomes in the relevant Programme Specification to be achievable by students who are being 'taught out'.
- To ensure the student experience and to support the students, the HE Academic Co-ordinator, together with the Quality Team will monitor their experience.

4.2. Applicants

4.2.1. In the event of a programme closure, suspension or material changes to programme content, all communications with applicants must be undertaken via Admissions and the quality of these communications will be subject to review by the HE Academic Coordinator.

4.2.2. Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until the closure or suspension process has been fully completed.

4.2.3. Applicants thus affected should then be informed of their options to transfer their applications to another programme within the College or to another institution.

4.2.4. Applicants who have been made offers, but have not yet accepted them, may however be advised that a closure or suspension request has been made. Such applicants should be advised that the offer of a place is suspended until a final decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the request is accepted. They should also be advised that they may choose another programme or institution.

4.2.5. Where relevant UCAS should be notified when the closure or suspension request has been finalised, either by SLT for a Pearson programme or the Partner University for a franchised or validated programme linked with that partner.

5. Timing

5.1. Wherever possible, requests to delete, suspend or make material changes to the content of programmes should be made in a timely manner.

5.2 Since preparation for the production of the printed prospectus takes place sometime ahead of publication, the process of strategic planning should identify those programmes which are likely to be closed prior to the commencement of the prospectus production process.

5.3. As a result of unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. loss of specialist staff) it may be necessary to close or suspend a programme within a foreshortened timescale. In such circumstances, the student interest is paramount and full consultation should be undertaken with all affected students and their nominated representatives.

5.4. In order to ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations, students should be given the fullest information, advice and guidance to enable them to make well-informed decisions in the event of programme closure or suspension.

