

Policy and procedures for Closure, Suspension and Changes to Higher Education programmes

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These processes articulate the College and Partner University's procedures for applicants and learners.

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy sets out the Burton and South Derbyshire College's procedures for closing, suspending or changing any programme of study. 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

The following may be regarded as enough cause for closing or suspending a programme:

- The demand for the programme is too small to cover the cost of delivery.
- Staff involved in teaching the programme are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them.
- External bodies (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) make changes that lead to a recommendation to close or suspend the programme.
- Updating of the College's curriculum has led to a change in the range of programmes the Directorate wishes to provide.

2.1. The College/University or Directorate may wish to close and remove a programme of study from its portfolio. Closure of a programme, at undergraduate level, means that the College or University 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 the programme will not be delivered.

2.3. A Directorate may not close or suspend a programme without College/University approval because of the implications for the contractual relationship between current and prospective learners and the University.

2.4. A request to close or suspend a programme must be made by the Deputy Director in which that programme is located. In the case of joint programmes that span more than one Directorate, the relevant Directorate must consult on the closure or suspension. The Directorate should approve the proposal in line with their strategic plans. The Deputy Director is required to make a business case to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who will make the final decision.

2.5. A request to suspend or remove a programme should be made by the Dean and then submitted to a member of the SLT, on the approved proforma and shall be accompanied by the following information; (For Partner University please use, Request to Close or Suspend Recruitment to a Course)

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

2.6. The proforma shall also confirm that consultation will take place with academic staff affected by the request.

2.7. Where there are any expected changes to staff/staffing structure consultation with P&P must be sought

2.8 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/University 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/University will draw these changes to the attention of applicants as soon as possible and advise them of their right to seek entry to another University 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/University 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 enrolment, but where this is unavoidable, learners and their representatives shall be consulted at the earliest opportunity on the changes and, where practicable, their views shall be considered.

3.5. If a learner reasonably believes that a material changes to their programme adversely affects them, they may cancel their contract with the College/University. In such circumstances the College/University will offer suitable information, advice and guidance to a learner 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 a learner's studies, the College/University 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/University will consult with or inform students and their representatives of these changes, as appropriate, and in line with College/University quality assurance processes.

4. Student Protection

4.1. Current learners

4.1.1. Current learners 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/University's proposed arrangements for learners currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) must comply with the following:

4.1.3. Current learners should be informed of their option. The College/University will provide all necessary information, advice, guidance and support to facilitate learners in deciding which option to follow.

4.1.4. The standard of academic provision and the student experience must, as far as is reasonably practicable, be maintained throughout their period of enrolment. In particular, the conditions must be maintained to enable the stated learning outcomes in the relevant Programme Specification to be achievable by learners who are being 'taught out'.

4.1.5 To ensure the student experience and to support the students, the Assistant Principal and Dean, together with the Quality department 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.

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/University 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. UCAS should be notified when the closure or suspension request has been finalised by SLT.

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 to produce 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 learner interest is paramount and full consultation should be undertaken with all affected learners and their nominated representatives.

5.4. In order to ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations, learners 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.

6. Partner Provision

6.1 Where the University is the owning party (i.e. registers the learners as the University's students), but the delivery is undertaken by a partner institution the processes as detailed above in section 4 will apply:

Current learners should be informed of their option to complete their programme of study or transfer to another programme within the University or to another institution. The University will provide all necessary information, advice, guidance and support to facilitate learners in deciding which option to follow.

The standard of academic provision and the learner's experience must, as far as is reasonably practicable, be maintained throughout their period of enrolment/registration. In particular, the conditions must be maintained to enable the stated learning outcomes in the relevant Programme Specification to be achievable by learners who are being 'taught out'.

6.2 To ensure the learner experience and to support the learners, the designated Academic Programme Advisor, together with Partnerships will monitor their experience.

6.3 Where the partner institution through staff changes/resources is unable to deliver the programme at their premises, at least one full academic year's notice is expected, and the partner is expected to bear any expenses related to supporting the learners in completing their studies.

The University will provide all necessary information, advice, guidance and support to facilitate learners in completing their studies.

7. Refunds

7.1 Refunds of the tuition fees (whether to the Student Loans Company, the learner's sponsor, or the learners themselves) previously paid to the University for tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification

7.2 Payment of reasonable travel costs to learners where a change of location in study is requiring additional travel on the part of learners continued.

7.3 Payment of any bursaries to which the College is committed

7.4 Payment of any maintenance costs associated with past attendance at the College that are over and above what the student could in any case have been expected to incur had they not been in attendance

7.5 Individually calculated payments (considering the opportunity costs involved) in recognition of time previously spent on tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification.