

Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes

1 Timing

All decisions to close programmes must be taken with due regard for the need to address the position of existing and potential students. This includes students who may have already applied for, or be currently studying on, courses or programmes from which they may have reasonably expected to progress. For example, any decision to close a Bachelor's Degree must be made with the due consideration of students on Foundation Degrees or Higher Nationals who may have been expected, or be expecting, to join the second or third year of a BA/BSc upon completion of their current or intended programme of study.

As the potential for significant consequences increases (e.g. applicants may have given up employment with the intention of taking up the programme), and the availability of suitable alternatives at Solihull College and University Centre or other institutions reduces the later in the admissions cycle that any closure decision is taken, no closures should be made after applications have been acknowledged if at all possible.

Any decision to close a programme must take full account of the needs of existing students and should, as far as possible, aim to support these students through to the completion of their intended, and possibly subsequent¹, programme of study or put in place appropriate transitional arrangements.

In considering the closure of a programme, the Head of School responsible must consult with all other Schools that may have any direct interest either as a progression route into or from it (or possibly as part of the existing provision's academic or monitoring arrangements), and maintain written records for submission to the HE Strategy Group.

The following procedures **must** be followed for any course discontinued at less than two years' notice as applicants may apply for entry to a course up to two years before taking up their place even if any of the following apply:

- a decline in student demand is such that the viability of the provision is threatened;
- a new programme is planned or approved which replaces existing provision;
- a reduction in funding or in funded student numbers;
- documented concerns about the standards and/or quality of the provision, which may affect its credibility;
- a change in the College's (or one of its partner's) priorities for academic development;

¹ Students may have enrolled on Foundation Degrees or Higher Nationals intending to complete "top-up" full degree courses.

2 Procedures

No decision to proceed with any plans, or intentions, to close a programme for any reason whatsoever should be taken without initial consultation with the Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation.

Suspension of recruitment to a programme is possible if the HE Strategy Group has reason or reasons to believe that the issues underlying any proposal to close are temporary. However, it should be noted that the option to suspend programmes is primarily one which prevents the use of a UCAS code and its potential use in relation to student admissions, and that there is separate process for suspension of recruitment.

If the Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation agrees in principle to the possible closure of a credit bearing Higher Education programme, the Head of School responsible should complete the Programme Closure form and submit this to HE Administration who will schedule it as a minuted item at the next meeting of the HE Strategy Group.

In considering proposals, particular attention must be paid to the arrangements made to support existing students through to completion, including arrangements for students who have suspended studies (for whatever reason) or are following a programme by a part-time or non-traditional route.

The proposal for closure will be considered by the HE Strategy Group, and must include:

- Clear rationale for closure;
- Arrangements for phasing out the provision, or the identification of alternative provision, bearing in mind the College's contractual obligations to existing students and applicants holding offers; Measures to be taken to protect the quality of the provision being phased out;
- Evidence of consultation with all relevant stakeholders such as current and prospective students;
- A completed Formal Risk Assessment Record for Programme Closure/Suspension.

Once the decision has been made by the HE Strategy Group to close a programme with current students and/or applicants, the Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation will in consultation with the relevant Head of School:

- Ensure that appropriate consultation is carried out with students; and clear information is provided about the arrangements that are to be put in place for the remainder of their programme of study;
- Agree a timescale within which applicants informed of a decision to close or suspend will be expected to have informed the College of their decision, and or intentions, with regards to further study;
- Agree on the necessary teach-out and quality assurance arrangements for existing students to complete their programme of study;
- Inform statutory, regulatory and funding bodies and other key stakeholders such as partner organisations;
- Agree on the point at which applications to the provision should be suspended, and on the means and content of communications to applicants who are already in the system

- Ensure that all relevant legal, financial, quality assurance issues are taken into consideration;
- Advise continuing students of any transitional arrangements which will be put in place to support them to completion.

It is also vital to ensure that the College is compliant with consumer legislation in respect of providing early communication about any programme changes to applicants and students.

Note also that no programme can remain in suspension for longer than two years (during which time it is subject to the normal QA processes). After that time, the HE Strategy Group must make a decision to re-open, replace, or close the programme as Suspension cannot be either carried forward or extended.

For undergraduate programmes, the Head of School and HE Course Leader should ensure that the programme is removed from the UCAS database and that notification of the discontinuation is reported for information to the appropriate meetings of Marketing, MIS, HE Administration, and Student Support. If a replacement programme is planned note the change to the provision and ensure that prospective students are notified of the change.

3 Informing Applicants

Course teams should identify any applicants who will be affected by a course or programme Closure or Suspension Decision, and notify them by letter, or by e-mail with an attached pdf², and copy in both the HE Officer and HE Administration.

The notification must include the Applicant's Name, the Application Code, The Course Title, The Course Code, the timescale within which a reply is expected, and make clear that the applicant has three alternatives:

- Choose an alternative programme at Solihull College and University Centre;
- Choose an alternative Institution and that they should therefore inform both UCAS and Solihull College and University Centre;
- Withdraw completely and inform both UCAS and Solihull College and University Centre.

If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial e-mail (or letter), Course teams should issue a reminder letter, or e-mail with a pdf attachment³, advising the applicant that their application will be formally withdrawn if no response is received within ten working days.

For undergraduate programmes, the UCAS procedures summarised below must be followed in corresponding with the applicant.

4 UCAS Procedures

In the event of a decision to discontinue an undergraduate programme, the HE Admissions Officer will notify UCAS Research and Statistics Department, using a course amendment form.

² Formal letters should only be sent out if no e-mail address is held, or if e-mails are 'bounced back as undeliverable' to help maintain full electronic record integrity.

³ Copied to both the HE Officer and HE Administration.

This will ensure that the programme is removed from the UCAS database and notification of the discontinuation is included in the next set of UCAS Handbook amendments issued to Schools.

UCAS regulations also require the college to follow specific procedures in respect of any students who have applied for or are holding an offer of a place on the course concerned. As soon as agreement to discontinue a course has been reached, the HE Course Leader and Head of School responsible should take steps to ensure that these are followed.

The steps to be taken will vary according to applicants' status and the timing of the decision and are described in detail in the UCAS Admissions Guide.

Usually, **where a student has already accepted an offer for the discontinued course**, the HE Admissions Officer will liaise with the applicant to determine if there is a suitable alternative course at the college, and arrange an interview with the delivering/management staff responsible.

If this is not possible or the applicant does not wish to accept the alternative course, he or she should be given the opportunity to substitute an alternative choice of institution or course on their UCAS application form. **Where an applicant has not yet received an offer or has received an offer but not replied to it**, the applicant may ask the College to consider their application for an alternative course or to reject the application, so that a substitution of institution and course may be made. In both cases, the UCAS Programme Closure Form should be sent to the applicant.

5 Notifying the Office for Students

Should any course closure⁴⁴ constitute part of a wider strategic decision which requires the implementation of the College's Higher Education Student Protection Plan, the Office for Students must be informed initially by e-mail, with a subsequent written notification sent within two working days.

⁴⁴ The OfS Guidance at https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1094/ofs2018_04.pdf page 41 states that notification is not necessary for the closure of an individual course.

Formal Risk Assessment Record of for Programme/Course Closure or Suspension Decisions

This template should be used by the HE Strategy Group to inform their decision(s) with regards to the risks associated with course closure or suspension, and carry out a risk assessment, and for the Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation in consultation with the relevant Head of School to ensure that the procedures described in the Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes are followed and managed effectively.

It should also be used to manage risks associated with suspending recruitment to a programme.

Note: This template includes some **common examples** of risks associated with programme closure and/or suspension, but all potential risks should be identified and added as required.

All actions must be clearly described, allocated a completion date, and given a specific named owner (this cannot be a School, Faculty or Course Team).

Possible Risk	Action(s) identified to manage the risk	Action Owner (named person)	Date of next review or of completion
Failure to manage and minimise impact on applicants			
Failure to manage and minimise impact on students having accepted an offer but not yet started			
Failure to manage and minimise impact on progressing students			
Failure to manage and minimise impact on students in the last stages of the programme particularly if prejudicing their final result			
Failure to be in a position to handle any complaint or to offer an appropriate remedy			



Possible Risk	Action(s) identified to manage the risk	Action Owner (named person)	Date of next review or of completion
Loss of key staff (course and admin assistance)			
Inadequate planning for continuation of activity with a transferred provider			
Failure to provide for consequences of closure (e.g. any right to reside, residential requirements or impact on students with particular disabilities)			
Failure to provide work environment promised as part of the course but not proposed replacement			
Failure to provide promised placement			
Failure to provide, arrange or find suitable replacement course, programme or other opportunity			
Failure to maintain accreditation with professional, regulatory or statutory bodies			
Failure to maintain agreed relationship with partner HEI (either course numbers or possible progressions)			



Possible Risk	Action(s) identified to manage the risk	Action Owner (named person)	Date of next review or of completion
Failure to manage or cooperate with joint communications to third parties/public			
Failure to plan for and manage personal data movements			
Failure to observe internal compliance processes			
Failure to design effective exit plan			
Failure to manage exit plan effectively			
Add identified risks and delete those which don't apply			

Undergraduate Programme Notification of a Discontinued or Suspended Course Form

UCAS cannot make changes of institution (Part C) after 30 June or changes of course (Part B) after 31 July

Part A – to be completed by institution

Institution Solihull College and University Centre

Name

Course Title

UCAS Code

Campus Code

The above course has been discontinued at this institution. Please notify me if you wish to be considered for an alternative course.

If so, please complete Part B only and return the **whole of this form** to reach me by **[date]**. If I do not hear from you by this date I will assume you no longer wish to be considered by this institution.

If you would prefer to be considered by an alternative choice of institution, please complete Part C only and send the **whole of this form** to UCAS. Before selecting your alternative choice please refer to the UCAS Directory and the UCAS website (www.ucas.com).

If you do not wish to have an alternative choice then please complete Part D to indicate that you wish to withdraw the choice that has been discontinued and send the **whole of this form** to UCAS.

Signature

.....

Name

Date.....



**Solihull College
& University Centre**

**Stratford-upon-Avon
College**



Part B – to be completed by applicant and returned to Solihull College and University Centre

To Solihull College and University Centre

From (Name of applicant)

UCAS Application Number

Please consider my application for the following alternative course:

Course Code

UCAS Code

Campus code

Signature

.....

Name.....Date.....

...

Part C – to be completed by applicant if substitute choice of institution required

To: UCAS, PO Box 40, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 3ZB

Please substitute the institution named in Part A with the following new choice:

Institution

Campus code

Course Title

UCAS Code

Signature

.....

Name

.....Date.....

UCAS Application Number:

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I confirm that I wish to withdraw my choice detailed in Section A, which is now discontinued. I do not wish to replace it with an alternative choice

Signature

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NameDate.....

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UCAS Application Number

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Revision History

1. Created 6/7/14 – by Ian
2. Revised 28 June 2017 Sue McG
3. Revised 22/9/17 – Ian
4. Revised 1/10/17 – Ian/Sue McGregor (sample letters & form removed)
5. Revised 11/10/17 – Ian/Sue McGregor (Risk Assessment Template update to suit)
6. Revised 18/4/18 – Stratford Logo included
7. Revised 30/4/18 – Possible notification to the OfS added