

Title: **Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes**

Type: Policy, Procedure

Purpose: To confirm the policy and procedure for closing any Credit Bearing Programmes

Scope: Staff and Students

Responsibility: Head of Higher Education & Research

Note: Legal Context

Policy Statement

Solihull College & University centre (SCUC) is committed to protecting the interests of students, applicants and its own reputation in the event of the closure of a Higher Education programme to new entrants and continuing students. These procedures have been established to provide a clear statement of the arrangements to secure both the quality of provision and the student experience following a decision to close a programme. The Student Protection Plan provides the main reference point for consideration of any potential impact on the student experience. With the exception of SCUC being given notice to close a programme by one of its awarding bodies, the decision to close a programme will be made by the Executive Management Team and the Dean of HE and Research.

The basis of proposals for programme closure may typically be one or more of the following:

- Decline in student demand over a period of time to the point where the programme's viability is threatened.
- The programme ceases to meet the needs of employers and/or professional bodies.
- Failure to recruit viable numbers to a new programme
- Documented concerns over quality which threaten the programme's integrity.
- A reduction in funding or funded numbers
- The introduction of a replacement programme

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.

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.

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.

2 Procedures

Suspension of recruitment to a programme is possible if the Executive Management Team and the Dean of HE and Research has reasons to believe that the issues underlying any proposal to close are temporary or permanent. 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.

In considering proposals, particular attention must be paid to the arrangements made to support:

- Students who have temporarily withdrawn,
- Students who have failed modules and would normally be allowed to retake these the following year
- Students under mitigating circumstances who have been granted an extension beyond the end of the academic year
- Students planning to progress from a Foundation Degree to an Honours Degree

Decisions related to course suspensions or closures are considered by providing:

- 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 made by the Head of School.

Once the decision has been made to close a programme with current students and/or applicants, the Head of Higher Education and Research will in consultation with the relevant Head of School monitor that:

- Clear information is provided about the arrangements that are to be put in place for the remainder of their programme of study.
- An agreed 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. The necessary teach-out and quality assurance arrangements for existing students to complete their programme of study are maintained.
- Timely communication to inform statutory, regulatory and funding bodies and other key stakeholders such as partner organisations are held and evidenced.
- 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
- The advice provided to continuing students of any transitional arrangements which will be put in place to support them to completion.

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

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, a decision will be made 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.

Franchised courses offered in conjunction with Oxford Brookes University should use the appropriate paperwork for [suspension or closure](#), and send this to the Partnerships Manager.

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 and copy in HE admission. The timing of this notification should give due consideration to the UCAS cycle, allowing applicants to reapply to an alternative university within the UCAS Extra window, or enter clearing.

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, 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 must be followed in accordance to UCAS regulations and handbook.

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

All Public Information relating to the programme should be either removed or amended in line with the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance, to inform potential applicants that the programme has been withdrawn. The following list provides a reference as to where this information is currently published:

- College Website
- Higher Education Programme Guide
- Programme leaflets – web based and hard copy
- UCAS listing
- Discover Uni (formerly Unistats)
- Awarding body website and prospectus
- Third party e.g. employers, Aim Higher West Midlands

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

This template should be used to inform 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 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			

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