

Course Closure and Suspension of Courses Policy and Procedures

1 Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out the University policy and procedure for the suspension and closure of existing courses.
- 1.2 Where a course team undertakes a review of an existing course, it is standard practice for changes to be made to content and structure. Periodic Review will lead to the introduction of a new version of the course. This will not be regarded as a Course Closure. The procedures set out in this policy and procedure are not required as this will be managed via the Periodic Review or Course Approval procedures. The new version of the course will either:
 - Be offered to new applicants only (whilst the previous version runs concurrently, referred to as 'running out'); or
 - Be introduced for all existing students and new applicants in year one of delivery. This requires student consultation and sign-up as it constitutes an amendment to the Student Agreement. This will be managed in accordance with the principles set out in Section 11 of the Course and Unit Modifications Policy and Procedure- 'Consumer law requirements: information provided to learners, applicants and potential applicants'.
- 1.3 When a course team undertakes a review of an existing course and the decision is that the scope of the proposed changes determine that the course should be closed and **replaced with a new course**, the two courses should be treated as entirely separate and the existing course should be closed through this policy and procedure. The new course should be presented as a new course and the Course Approval Policy and Procedure will apply.
- 1.4 This policy and procedure is applicable to courses delivered via an approved Educational Partnership and to Apprenticeship courses.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 **Course Suspension:** Suspension of a course means that there is no intake to the course for a specified period (normally one academic year in the first instance). Learners currently enrolled on a suspended course will continue to progress and complete the course
- 2.2 **Course Closure:** Closure of a course means that there are no further intakes to the course and it will no longer be offered by the University. Existing learners will, other than in the most exceptional circumstance, complete their studies on the course for which they are enrolled (see under 'arrangements for enrolled learners' below).

3 Regulatory Context

- 3.1 Course Closure and Suspension is considered a significant change according to consumer legislation. In order to ensure full compliance with the obligations under consumer protection law – in particular, the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 (CCRs), applicants and learners must be given the fullest information, advice and guidance to enable them to make well-informed decisions in the event of Course Closure or Suspension.

- 3.2 In considering whether to close or suspend a course the University must consider the arrangements from the point of view of affected learners, applicants and potential applicants, as well as from an academic and financial perspective.
- 3.3 Where units on a course proposed for closure or suspension are common with courses that will continue, including where these are delivered via an Educational Partnership, arrangements for management of these units must be discussed as part of the closure activity by the relevant Course Leaders and Heads of School and Partners where applicable. If amendments are required to enable continued delivery of common units in relation to courses that are not proposed for closure, the *Course and Unit Modification Policy and Procedure* should be followed.

4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 **The Head of School** initiates the course closure or suspension process in discussion with the Course Leader and other relevant colleagues. The Head of School ensures coordination of the course closure or suspension process including, for course closure, communication with current learners, and presents the proposal to SROG and ASQC (as applicable) at the appropriate time in the academic year.
- 4.1 The **Student Recruitment Operations Group (SROG)** recommends Course Closures and Course Suspensions for business-related reasons (including low recruitment), to the Executive Group.
- 4.2 **The Executive Group** approves recommendations from the Student Recruitment Operations Group (SROG) for Course Closures and for Course Suspensions for business-related reasons (including low recruitment).
- 4.3 **The Academic Standards & Quality Committee (ASQC)** considers and recommends Course Closures and Suspensions for reasons related to the academic standards and quality of a course to the Executive Group. When the Executive Group has approved a Course Closure or Suspension, and the course has existing learners enrolled, ASQC approves arrangements to ensure the quality of the learning experience for learners already enrolled on the course, and/or, where applicable, that any arrangements for transfer to an alternative course are appropriate. ASQC also oversees the run-out of closing courses to ensure the quality of learner experience is maintained during the closure period.
- 4.4 **Registry (Admissions)** communicates with applicants and offer holders about course closures or suspensions.
- 4.5 **The Head of Marketing and Communications** has overall oversight of all information in the public domain in relation to the closure and suspension of courses.
- 4.6 Advice regarding the operation of this policy and procedure may be sought from the Quality or Admissions teams within Registry.
- 4.7 References in this policy to any University role or office holder include their appointed nominee.

5 Rationale for closing or suspending courses

- 5.1 A decision to close or suspend a course may be appropriate for a number of reasons, for example:
 - Declining learner numbers
 - Lack of recruitment
 - Concerns about financial viability
 - Changing strategic priorities
 - External funding changes
 - Concerns about the quality and academic standards on the course
 - Changing requirements of external bodies, which leads to a recommendation to close the course

6 Procedures for closing a course

- 6.1 It is best practice to propose a Course Closure or Suspension before the start of an application cycle. Where this is not possible, such proposals should be made, considered and approved in good time to allow applicants to find alternative provision.
- 6.2 As outlined above, Course Closure may be prompted by concerns relating to academic standards and quality. Where this is the case, it is expected that the concerns will be considered and overseen by ASQC. In these instances, relevant information relating to ASQC deliberation should be provided by the Head of School within the case for Course Closure.
- 6.3 A decision to close a course must take full account of the needs of existing learners (including those on a study break), applicants to the course and offer holders, including deferred applicants and deferred offer holders and should as far as possible, aim to support these learners through to the completion of their intended study or put in place appropriate arrangements.
- 6.4 These arrangements must ensure that the course continues to address the requirements of any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) which accredits the course. It is the Head of School's responsibility to ensure this is the case.
- 6.5 In considering closure of a course the Head of School should liaise with all relevant stakeholders, including members of the course team, Marketing, Registry, Finance, other Schools (for example, where units on the course to be closed are used on other courses) and Educational Partners (where applicable).

Seeking approval

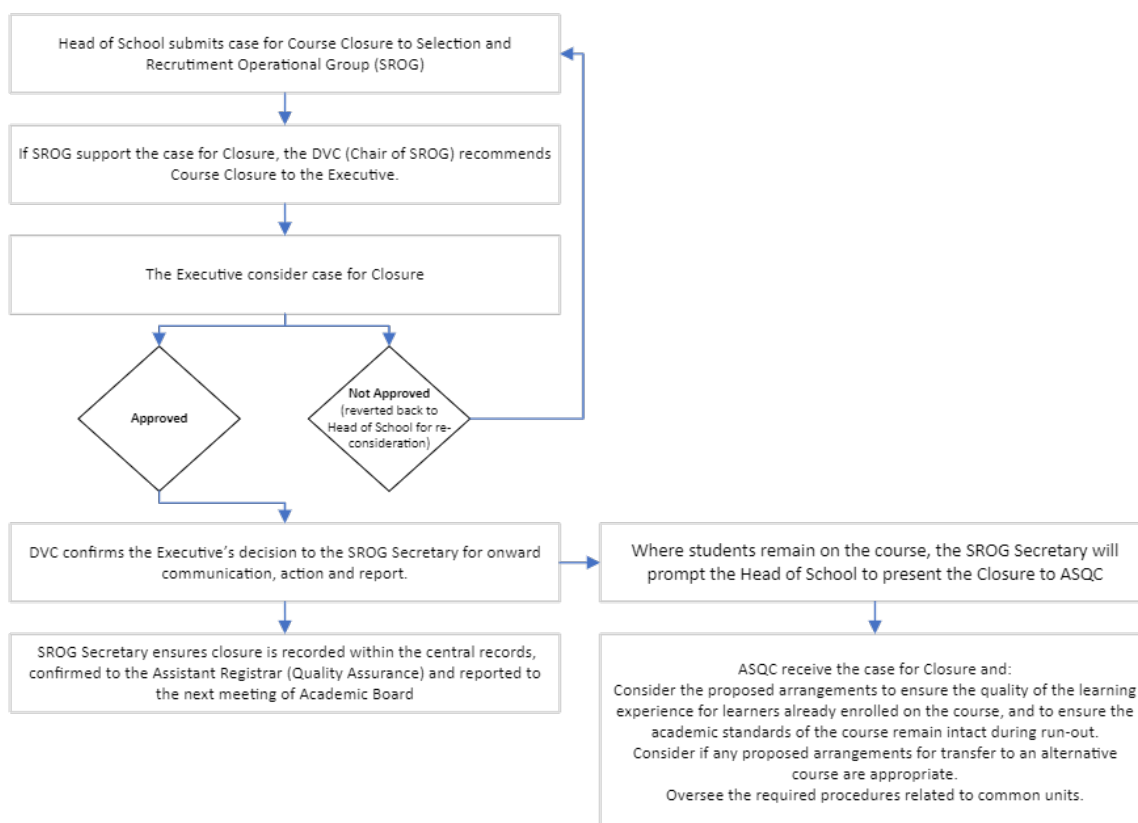
- 6.6 the relevant Head of School should submit the case for Course Closure to the **SROG** for consideration.
- 6.7 The case made must take into account the needs of existing learners and offer holders as well as financial/business rationales. Consideration must be given to any implications for access and participation of learners from disadvantaged groups. Where units on the course proposed for closure are common with courses that will continue (including courses in other Schools or delivered with or for Educational Partners), arrangements for the delivery of these units must be addressed within the proposal. The normal expectation is that units will continue to be delivered to meet the commitments made to existing students.
- 6.8 SROG may:
- Accept the case and recommend the course is closed.
 - Request further information and reconsider the case.
 - Reject the case (in which case the course should continue to run – although a separate case may then be made for its suspension).
 - Agree to recommend suspending rather than closing the course, for a specified period.
- 6.9 Where agreed, SROG / ASQC, through the Deputy Vice Chancellor as SROG/ASQC Chair will make a recommendation on closing the course to the **Executive Group**, with whom the final decision to close the course will rest. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will confirm the Executive Group's decision to the SROG / ASQC Secretary for onward communication, action and report. The SROG/ASQC Secretary will ensure that the closure is recorded within the central records, confirmed to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and reported to the next meeting of Academic Board.
- 6.10 The Head of School will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB's are informed.
- 6.11 Following approval from the Executive, if there are any students remaining on the course, the SROG Secretary will prompt the Head of School to present the Course Closure to ASQC.
- 6.12 ASQC will receive the case for Course Closure, confirming SROG consideration and Executive Group approval and consider the proposed arrangements to ensure the quality of the learning experience for learners already enrolled on the course, and to ensure the academic standards of the course remain

intact during run-out. ASQC will also consider if any proposed arrangements for transfer to an alternative course are appropriate.

6.13 ASQC will oversee the required procedures related to common units.

6.14 ASQC may request further information, require modification of the proposed arrangements, or require alternative arrangements to be put in place, but may not change the Executive Group's decision to close the course.

6.15 Course closure process flowchart



Ongoing Monitoring

6.16 The course must continue to be actively managed and the quality assurance framework should continue to be followed with regard to learner surveys, annual unit and course monitoring and External Examining for the duration of the teach-out phase. Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for learners on the course is maintained.

6.17 ASQC will routinely monitor 'closing' courses as part of the standing agenda. Special attention is given to courses in 'closing' mode to ensure students continue to benefit from high quality learning experiences.

Arrangements for enrolled learners

6.18 Other than in the most exceptional circumstance (see Section 7) enrolled students (including those whose registration is suspended) must be allowed to complete their studies on the course for which they are enrolled (subject to normal progression requirements).

6.19 The Head of School must ensure that all learners enrolled on the course are informed about the proposed closure, that the reasons for the proposal are explained, and that the implications are discussed with them at the earliest opportunity. Learners should be informed of plans for running-out the course and provided with details of how the University will maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the run-out phase. This must include consideration of arrangements for learners who have suspended their studies or need to refer and those applicants who have deferred entry.

6.20 The Head of School should ensure that learners on the course are advised formally that the course is going to be closed and that they are provided with confirmation of the way in which they will be supported to complete the course.

Arrangements for prospective learners

6.21 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Registry (Admissions).

6.22 Registry must inform applicants, and those who have not yet responded to an offer, that the course is being considered for closure and provide them with information about their options at the time when a proposal for closure is being considered by SROG. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.

6.23 If exceptionally a course is to be closed and applicants have accepted offers, offer holders should not be contacted until the proposal for closure has been approved by the Executive Group. These applicants should then be informed of their options in regard to transferring their application to another course or institution. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.

6.24 A record of these communications should be logged.

7 Procedures for suspending a course

- 7.1 A decision to suspend a course must take full account of the needs of existing learners (including those on a study break), applicants to the course and offer holders, including deferred applicants and deferred offer holders and should, as far as possible, aim to support these students through to the completion of their intended study or put in place appropriate arrangements.
- 7.2 A record of these communications should be logged.
- 7.3 These arrangements must ensure that the course continues to address the requirements of any PSRB which accredits the course. It is the Course Leader's responsibility to ensure that these requirements are met.
- 7.4 For suspensions for business reasons such as low recruitment, the relevant Head of School should submit the case for course suspension to SROG for consideration. The case made must take into account the needs of existing learners and offer holders as well as financial/business rationales.
- 7.5 Where units on the course proposed for suspension are common with courses that will continue (including courses in other Schools or delivered with or for Educational Partners), arrangements for the delivery of these units must be addressed within the proposal. The normal expectation is that units will continue to be delivered to meet the commitments made to existing students. Where appropriate, it must be explained how any unit requirements for other Schools will be addressed following the suspension.
- 7.6 Where agreed, SROG, through the Deputy Vice Chancellor as SROG Chair, will make a recommendation on suspending the course to the **Executive Group**, with whom the final decision to suspend the course will rest.
- 7.7 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will confirm the Executive's decision to the SROG Secretary for onward communication, action and report.
- 7.8 The SROG Secretary will ensure that the suspension is recorded within the central records, confirmed to the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance) and reported to the next meeting of Academic Board.
- 7.9 The Head of School will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are kept informed.
- 7.10 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Registry.
- 7.11 Registry (Admissions) must inform applicants and/or offer holders about the suspension and provide them with information about their options. If the learner has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.

- 7.12 Following approval of Course Suspension from the Executive, if there are any students remaining on the course, the SROG Secretary will prompt the Head of School to present the Suspension to ASQC.
- 7.13 ASQC will receive the update on suspension, confirming SROG consideration and Executive Group approval and consider the proposed arrangements to ensure the quality of the learning experience for learners already enrolled on the course, and to ensure the academic standards of the course remain intact during suspension.
- 7.14 ASQC will oversee the required procedures related to common units.
- 7.15 ASQC may request further information, require modification of the proposed arrangements, or require alternative arrangements to be put in place, but may not change the Executive Group's decision to suspend the course.
- 7.16 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Admissions within Registry.

8 Amending University publications/marketing material

- 8.1 Once a course closure or course suspension proposal has been approved by the Executive Group it is the responsibility of the Course Leader, in liaison with Marketing and Registry (Admissions), to ensure all necessary amendments are made to all University publications and the website, and that any external references to the course (eg publicity through external websites) are amended.
- 8.2 A record of these changes must be kept.

9 Circumstances beyond the University's control

- 9.1 In very exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for a course to close due to circumstances which are beyond the University's control, and for teaching-out within the institution to be impossible.
- 9.2 In these circumstances the Head of School, the Academic Registrar and the Executive Group will discuss the arrangements to identify:
- whether the University can offer alternative courses within the institution
 - how the University will help learners to transfer to other institutions, including support for transfer of credit/recognition of prior learning
 - any financial recompense as appropriate

This will be in line with the relevant provisions of the University Student Protection Plan.

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Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Reference source	This policy has been designed to reflect the following external reference points: QAA UK Quality Code (2018) and associated Advice and Guidance Competition Marketing Authority: UK higher education providers - advice on consumer protection law Helping you comply with your obligations 12 March 2015 CMA33 HEFCE, UUK, Guild HE, AoC, NUS, Independent Universities Group and Study UK good practice statement 'Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice' October 2015
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