

## Programme Closure Policy and Procedures

### Purpose

This document sets out the College's policy for the closure of existing programmes.

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Programme closures are considered to be a significant change according to consumer legislation. 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.

### 2 Responsibilities

- 2.1 Advice regarding the operation of this policy and procedure may be sought from the Quality and Enhancement Manager or the Vice-Principal Undergraduate Studies and Quality.
- 2.2 References in this policy to any College role or office holder include his or her appointed nominee.
- 2.3 The relevant Programme Leader initiates and ensures coordination of the programme closure process including communication with current students.
- 2.4 Registry communicates with applicants and offer holders about programme closures.
- 2.5 Academic Development and Quality Committee (ADQC) approves programme closures, considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for closing programmes and recommends changes to current policy to Academic Board via the Academic Audit Committee (AAC).
- 2.6 Academic Board approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to programme closures.

### 3 Procedures for closing programmes

- 3.1 A decision to close a programme may be appropriate for a number of reasons, for example:
  - declining student numbers
  - key staff leaving the College
  - changing strategic priorities
  - concerns about the quality and academic standards on the programme
  - changing requirements of external bodies, which leads to a recommendation to close the programme.
  - as a result of periodic programme review
- 3.2 In considering whether to close a programme Programme Teams should consider the arrangements from the point of view of affected students, applicants and potential applicants, as well as from an academic perspective. A decision to close a programme must take full account of the needs of existing students (including suspended students), applicants to the programme 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. These arrangements must ensure that the programme continues to address the requirements of any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) which accredits the programme.

- 3.3 A programme must not be closed once there are confirmed offer holders unless there are exceptional circumstances. Registry must be consulted in such cases. Where applications have been received but offers not yet made, a decision to close a programme must be made early enough in the cycle so as not to disadvantage applicants. If a decision to close a programme is taken late in the admissions cycle, the availability of suitable alternatives at other institutions may be extremely limited and the applicant might be able to pursue a complaint or financial claim against the College as a result.

#### Arrangements for enrolled students

- 3.4 Other than in the most exceptional circumstance (see section 4) enrolled students (including those whose registration is suspended) must be allowed to complete their studies on the programme for which they are enrolled (subject to normal progression requirements).
- 3.5 The Programme Leader must inform students enrolled on the programme about the proposed closure, explain the reasons for the proposal, and discuss the implications with them at the earliest opportunity. Students should be informed of plans for teaching-out the programme and provided with details of how the College will maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the teach-out phase. This must include consideration of arrangements for students who have suspended their studies or need to refer or those who have deferred entry.
- 3.6 In instances where a programme is closed and a replacement introduced, students who wish to do so may be permitted to transfer to the new programme if appropriate arrangements for transfer have been agreed as part of the programme approval process. (See para 3.13).
- 3.7 The proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) must encompass the following:
- Confirmation that the standard of provision to current students will be maintained throughout their period of registration.
  - Confirmation that the previously stated learning outcomes of the programme will still be achievable by current students.

#### Arrangements for prospective students

- 3.8 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Registry, and the Programme Leader must ensure that Registry are fully informed and involved in all discussions which have potential implications for applicants.
- 3.9 Registry must inform applicants at this stage that the programme is being considered for closure and provide them with information about their options. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.
- 3.10 If exceptionally a programme is to be closed and applicants have accepted offers, those who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a proposal for closure has been approved by ADQC. These applicants should then be informed of their options in regard to transferring their application to another institution. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.
- 3.11 Applicants who have been made offers but have not yet accepted them may however be contacted at an earlier stage to be informed that a programme is being considered for closure and provide them with information about their options. Such applicants should be told that the offer of a place is suspended until a decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the proposal for closure is approved by ADQC. UCAS should be notified by informing the College's UCAS correspondent when the closure proposal has been approved by ADQC.

## Recommendations arising from periodic review of the programme

- 3.12 Recommendation for closure of a programme may emerge as a result of the process of the periodic review of the programme. If the programme affected is a stand-alone programme (ie not part of a framework), does not share units with any other programme, and there is no proposal to bring in a replacement then no Evaluation Panel need be held. The Programme Leader should complete the programme closure form and submit this to ADQC for consideration.
- 3.13 In circumstances when it is proposed that a programme be closed and replaced with another cognate programme; or where a framework review is leading to proposals to close one or more programmes within the framework the Programme Approval and Review Policy should be followed in full. In addition a programme closure form for the closing programme must be submitted as part of the documentation for the Evaluation Panel. All stipulations set out in paras 3.2 apply with regard to protecting the interests of applicants and current students. The evaluation panel will pay particular attention to section 7 of the briefing and resources document (Managing change). If current students are to be permitted to transfer to the proposed new programme a mapping of learning outcomes must be provided.

## Obtaining approval from Academic Development and Quality Committee

- 3.14 The Programme Leader must complete the programme closure form for submission to ADQC.
- 3.15 Where there are no students registered on the programme being closed, there are no applicants who have accepted offers on the course, and there is no impact from the closure on other programmes, the proposal to close a programme will be approved by ADQC.
- 3.16 In all other cases, ADQC will consider the proposal on the basis of the information provided on the programme closure form, taking into account:
- the rationale for closure
  - the proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme
  - the proposed arrangements for applicants
  - the proposed arrangements for any programmes sharing units with the programme it is proposed to close.

ADQC will approve the proposal if the rationale is sufficiently strong to justify the potential disruption to students and applicants, and if the arrangements for students and applicants satisfy the requirements set out above.

- 3.17 Once approval to close a programme has been granted, the Secretary to ADQC will report the decision to Registry, the relevant Programme Leader and Marketing.
- 3.18 The Programme Leader will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are informed.
- 3.19 The Programme Leader should advise students on the programme formally that the programme is going to be closed and provide confirmation of the way in which they will be supported to complete the programme.

## 4 Circumstances beyond the College's control

- 4.1 In very exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for a programme or programmes to close due to circumstances which are beyond the College's control, and for teaching-out within the institution to be impossible.
- 4.2 In these circumstances the Programme Leader and the Executive will discuss the arrangements to identify:

- whether the College can offer alternative courses within the institution
- how the College will help students to transfer to other institutions, including support for transfer of credit/recognition of prior learning
- any financial recompense as appropriate.

## 5 Amending College publications/marketing material

5.1 Once a programme closure proposal has been approved it is the responsibility of the Programme Leader, in liaison with Marketing, to ensure all necessary amendments are made to all College publications and the College websites, and that any external references to the programme (eg publicity through external websites) are amended.

## 6 Ongoing Monitoring

6.1 The programme must continue to be actively managed and the College's quality assurance framework should continue to be followed, with regard to student surveys, annual unit and programme monitoring and external examining for the duration of the teach-out phase. Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for students on the programme is maintained.

## 7 Associated forms and documentation

- Programme closure form
- Programme Approval and Periodic Review Policy

Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Owner	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Reference source	<p>This policy has been designed to reflect the following external reference points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QAA UK Quality Code, Part B Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review</li> <li>• Competition Marketing Authority: UK higher education providers - advice on consumer protection law Helping you comply with your obligations 12 March 2015 CMA33</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul> <p>Examples from other institutions used as source material (in particular Bournemouth University and University of Southampton)</p>
Date approved	28 June 2017
Effective from	29 June 2017 for programmes leading to AECC awards
Review date	Spring 2020
Target	Framework/Programme Leaders, Programmes Offices, Registry, members of Academic Development and Quality Committee, Marketing
Policy location	SIP, public website
Equality Impact	No direct impact – the associated form provides an opportunity to reflect on any impact of a specific course closure on those with protected characteristics