



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



PROGRAMME SUSPENSION AND / OR CLOSURE

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Related forms

- Request for Programme Suspension and / or Closure Form

Note: For other documents referred to (in italics) please see the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>).

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This document has been designed to be accessible for readers. However, should you require the document in an alternative format please contact the Academic Registry.

Introduction

- 1 The University needs regularly to review and update its portfolio to ensure that it remains relevant, current, competitive, and aligned with the University's strategic direction. This review and update process involves the consideration of a wide range of factors relating to the academic programme including: fit to University strategic priorities; current and future student demand; resourcing and investment requirements; and quality and effectiveness of delivery.
- 2 The changing nature of student demand and competitor provision means that academic areas must continually review their course portfolio in order to maintain attractiveness relative to competitors and improve student recruitment. This will involve close scrutiny of all sources of evidence of changing market position (e.g. applications, offers and acceptances, student satisfaction, retention, etc.) as well as of course provision at competitor institutions.
- 3 Data to support such reviews are routinely circulated by the Strategic Development and Planning office. These data are available to support the University's revised programme monitoring and review processes, in which all course teams make an active contribution, and which is designed to enhance the competitive position of the University's portfolio.
- 4 Successful and continuous review of the course portfolio should reduce the need for course closure or course suspension. However, as a result of review there will be occasions when it is necessary for the University to remove some elements of provision either temporarily or permanently through operation of its *Programme Suspension and / or Closure Policy*. This will normally be because new courses have been developed to replace those being closed.
- 5 All staff are required to adhere to this policy in accordance with their areas of specific responsibility. This will ensure that the University:
 - protects the interests of current students, applicants and staff
 - ensures that the University meets its legal obligations
 - minimises reputational damage when programmes are suspended or closed
- 6 This policy aligns with and takes account of the:
 - UK Quality Code for Higher Education
 - HEFCE statement of good practice on course change and closure (2015)
 - Competition and Markets Authority guidance on consumer law for UK HE providers (2015)
 - Office for Students, Securing Student Success (2017)
 - Buckinghamshire New University's Terms and Conditions for Admission
 - Equality Impact considerations
 - The requirement to consult with staff in accordance with legislation and the University's staffing terms and conditions.

Scope

- 7 The principles set out in this policy apply to the suspension and / or closure of all undergraduate, postgraduate and post-experience taught programmes of study which lead to an award by Buckinghamshire New University, whether full-time, part-time or short courses, and whether delivered on campus, off-site or through a collaborative provision arrangement.

Note: It is not possible to give a definitive statement of the timelines by which this policy should be applied. However, consideration should be taken to minimise the impact on prospective students, existing students, and staff.

Commercial CPD courses are exempted from this policy.

- 8 The policy also covers programme closures which involve the replacement of a programme in a particular discipline with a new one.

Definitions

- 9 **Programme Suspension:** Suspension of a programme means that there is no intake to the programme for a specified period (normally one academic year). Students currently registered on a suspended programme will continue to progress and complete the programme.

Note: A programme suspension will not normally be agreed for longer than two academic years or two successive intakes for programmes shorter than an academic year. If a suspension is requested within two years of the re-validation date, it is likely to be rejected in favour of closing the programme completely.

Where a suspended programme is not to be re-instated after its period of suspension the Academic Planning Committee will revisit the original proposal to suspend together with an updated rationale and confirm closure.

- 10 **Programme Closure:** Closure of a programme means that there are no further intakes to the programme and it will no longer be offered by the University. Those students already registered on the programme will continue to progress and complete the programme ('teach out'), or where this is not possible, be offered either transfer to an alternative programme at Buckinghamshire New University or assistance to transfer to another provider.

Note: Where the decision is taken to suspend or close a programme which is also approved for delivery by a partner organisation the decision as to whether the programme will continue to be delivered by the partner organisation will be considered separately.

Accountabilities

- 11 Authority to suspend or close programmes is vested in the Academic Planning Committee (APC), acting on behalf of the Senate.

- 12 Authority to propose the suspension and / or closure of programmes for consideration by, and the approval of, the Academic Planning Committee lies with the senior manager of the specific academic area.
- 13 Responsibility for the implementation of the *Programme Suspension and / or Closure Policy* and procedures lies with the Academic Registry in consultation with the responsible academic areas and relevant support directorates.
- 14 Where a programme suspension or closure may impact on staff resource (i.e. staffing numbers or a significant change to job roles such that their current role may be deemed to be at risk of redundancy) responsibility for leading consultation with University staff and their representatives lies with the Director of Human Resources in conjunction with the relevant senior manager of the academic area. Responsibility for notification and discussion of changes to workload allocation resulting from programme suspension or closure will lie with the senior manager of the academic area.

Rationale for suspending or closing a programme

- 15 There are a number of reasons why the University may suspend or close recruitment to a programme. These may include but are not limited to the following:
 - The demand for the programme is insufficient to cover the cost of delivery (see paragraph 33 below)
 - External bodies (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) make changes that lead to a recommendation to suspend or close the programme
 - Updating of the University's portfolio has led to a change in the range of programmes the University wishes to provide
 - Staff involved in teaching the programme are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them
 - Changes in location meaning that uneconomic new investment costs would be required to transfer the course to a new location
 - Changes in the mode of delivery meaning that the previous delivery approach is untenable
 - Replacing an existing programme with a new one
 - Changing strategic priorities at Subject, School or University level
 - Concerns about the quality and academic standards of the programme
 - Closure (termination of a collaborative partner agreement or termination for other reasons) of a collaborative provision arrangement which results in withdrawal of a programme
 - External funding changes
- 16 In addition, a programme which has no registered students and for which there are no outstanding applications should normally be closed automatically. Programmes that fall into this category will be identified as part of the annual curriculum planning process and confirmed as suspended or closed by APC.

Process

- 17 Whenever the need to suspend or close a programme has been identified, a four stage process will be followed:

Stage	Action
1	Gathering evidence, undertaking equality impact analysis, and preparing the case including completion of the Request for Programme Suspension and / or Closure form for submission to the Academic Planning Committee
2	Consideration and decision by Academic Planning Committee
3	Consultation with key internal and external stakeholders to inform the development of a detailed suspension or closure implementation plan which addresses the needs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current students • applicants who have been offered a place but not yet accepted • applicants who have accepted a place but not yet enrolled • staff involved in the delivery of the programme
4	Implementation, management and monitoring of the programme suspension or closure plan and communication with internal and external stakeholders

- 18 Where suspension or closure of a programme affects staff terms and conditions or service the process must accommodate the University's obligations to consult with staff and their representatives.

Stage 1: Gathering evidence / preparing the case

- 19 The senior academic manager is to make an assessment of the rationale for, and impact of, a proposed course suspension and / or closure, and ensure consultation with relevant parties including other academic areas in the case of Joint Honours subjects, and shared modules, partner representatives and managers in the case of collaborative provision, and staff in Academic Registry and Marketing & Student Recruitment, as relevant.
- 20 The senior academic manager (or nominee) must complete the '**Request for Programme Suspension and / or Closure**' form and submit it to the Academic Planning Committee, via the Academic Registry.

Stage 2: Consideration by Academic Planning Committee

- 21 Academic Planning Committee is responsible for considering all requests for programme suspension and closure and for taking the decision to:
- Approve the proposed suspension or closure
 - Reject the proposed suspension or closure
 - Refer the proposed suspension or closure for further information
 - Make alternative recommendations for the academic area to consider

Stage 3: Consultation

- 22 The academic area must take full account of the needs of existing students (including those who have interrupted their studies temporarily), and applicants to the

programme (including those who have deferred offers), ensuring that quality, academic standards, and PSRB requirements, where relevant, are maintained. Student representatives should be involved in planning for managing course suspension and / or closure and 'teach out'.

Note: Where students have temporarily interrupted their studies, the University's Interruption, Withdrawal or Transfer of Studies Procedure advises that when they return to their studies they will be governed by the curriculum and the rules and regulations in force at the time of their re-enrolment with due regard to the University's responsibilities under the Consumer Rights Act, 2015.

- 23 Where it is envisaged that a programme suspension or closure may impact on staffing numbers or result in a significant change to job roles such that their current role may be deemed to be at risk of redundancy, consultation will take place in accordance with employment legislation and the University's *Redundancy Policy and Guidelines*.
- 24 The senior academic manager (or nominee), in liaison with the Academic Registry, must ensure that consultation is undertaken and an implementation plan is developed for managing and monitoring the suspension or closure. The implementation plan must cover:
- notification and communications to current students (including those who have interrupted their studies) and to applicants (including those who have been offered a place on the course but not yet accepted and those who have accepted a place but have not yet registered)
 - notification and communications to other stakeholders, e.g. partners, placement providers, PSRBs, external examiners
 - communications with internal University departments / directorates including staff who deliver the affected programmes
 - implications for course management and delivery
 - implications for progressing and completing students, including those required to repeat modules.
- 25 In the event that it is not possible to 'teach out' the programme, alternative arrangements must be considered and discussed with the Academic Registry.
- 26 The academic area must also give full consideration to how applicants will be supported in making a decision about an alternative programme or releasing their place and their contract with the University.

Stage 4: Implementation, management and monitoring

- 27 Once agreement has been reached by APC that the programme will be suspended or closed, the Secretary, via Academic Registry, will formally notify the appropriate University academic area(s) and support directorates who are responsible for undertaking the following actions:

Area	Action
Academic Registry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the University's Definitive Portfolio List to reflect the status of the programme (i.e. suspended / closed) • Informing external examiners and PSRBs (unless agreed otherwise with the academic area)
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing key words from advertising campaigns (to defray costs at the earliest opportunity, advertising runs 365 days of the year so incur costs on a daily basis) • Removing courses from relevant online directories • Removing courses from relevant print communications (UG prospectus, PG guides, Mix it up etc.) • Removing courses from online forms used online and at all events • Contacting all enquirers booked on an open day for specific course
Senior Manager of the academic area (or nominee) in liaison with the Academic Registry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing current students and those who have temporarily interrupted their studies of the programme suspension or closure and arrangements for 'teach out'. <p><i>Note: Students should be informed of how the School intends to assure the quality of the student experience, how matters such as reassessment, interruption of studies etc. will be handled.</i></p> <p><i>Students must be provided with opportunities to raise queries and concerns.</i></p>
Admissions (in liaison with the School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with all applicants including offering places on alternative University programmes where necessary or facilitating applications to other providers. <p><i>Note: UCAS regulations mean that specific procedures need to be followed in respect of any student who has applied for or is holding an offer of a place on the programme concerned</i></p>
Director of Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with the relevant senior academic manager undertaking consultation with staff and recognised representatives in relation to staff affected by the decision to suspend or close a programme.

Ongoing monitoring and teach out

- 28 Where a programme is to be suspended or closed the programme must continue to be actively managed and:
- be subject to the University's requirements of module evaluation, annual programme monitoring and external examining
 - must retain a Programme Leader for the duration of the 'teach out' phase
- 29 Ongoing monitoring must ensure the quality of experience for students on the programme is maintained.
- 30 If the programme is due for re-validation during the 'teach-out' phase the academic area can apply to Senate for an extension to the period of validation to cover the 'teach-out phase'.
- 31 If the programme is due for re-validation during the 'teach-out' phase but still has one or more cohorts of students on it or where significant changes need to be made to allow the programme to be taught-out, a light- touch validation must be conducted in order to ensure the programme continues to meet the standards of the University and that it will continue to provide a high quality experience for the students.

Timing

- 32 All decisions to suspend or close a programme must be taken in good time, with due regard for the need to address the position of current students and applicants taking account of advertising and application timelines and deadlines.

Note: It should be remembered that applicants may apply for entry to a programme up to two years before taking up their place.

- 33 A programme must not normally be suspended or closed once there are confirmed offer holders. In such cases, the academic area must consult the Head of Admissions before any steps are taken to close or suspend the programme and the decision to close or suspend a course in these circumstances must be confirmed by APC.

Appendix: Process Map

