

Management of Closure or Suspension of a Programme of Study

Relating to: UCSH

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Scope:

The scope of this policy and procedure is to cover all campuses of St Helens College that deliver higher education programmes. All Faculties are required to follow this policy and procedure.

The principle underpinning both the policy and procedure is that in all cases, students' interests are protected, and the quality of their learning experience safeguarded. The policy and procedure provide a structure to ensure timely communication with students regarding the potential or actual closure of their course or programme of study.

This policy does not apply to the closure of modules. These should be closed with due regard to CMA guidance and in discussion with any other Faculties involved in their delivery or which depend on modules proposed for closure.

Purpose:

The policy and procedure set out University Centre St Helens' process for closing or suspending undergraduate programmes. This document also covers programme closures, which involve the replacement of a programme in a particular discipline, with a new one. The policy is aligned with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education chapters B2 'Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education', B8 'Programme Monitoring and Review' and B10 'Managing Higher Education with others' and takes account of recent CMA guidance.

1. Policy

This policy sets out University Centre St Helens' process for closing or suspending any programme of study, in order to protect the interests of students, applicants, and St Helens College. A Faculty may not close or suspend a programme on its own authority, because of the contractual liabilities between students and applicants and the College Group.

The College Group will automatically close any programme, which has not had sufficient students registered upon it for three years, unless the Faculty is able to demonstrate future recruitment of significant numbers of students onto that programme.

University Centre St Helens adheres to the course closure policies, procedures, and timescales of all awarding bodies.

Timescales for Course Closure will vary for each programme. All partner HEIs adhere to their own policies as regards notification. University Centre St Helens will at all times ensure that students are aware of potential changes to their programme. Formal agreement through a validating University or through the Governing Body

Quality and Outcomes Committee will determine the process for current students or applicants.

2. Obtaining approval from Quality and Outcomes Committee

The recommendation to close or suspend a programme must be made by the administering Faculty for that programme. The recommendation to close or suspend must be made to the

Governing Body Quality & Outcomes Committee (Q&OC). A template form is available and should be used to make the request.

Where there are no students registered on the programme being closed or suspended, there are no applicants who have accepted offers on the course, and there is no impact from the closure on other Faculties or Campuses, a written recommendation signed by the Head of Faculty to close or suspend a course will be automatically accepted on behalf of the Q&OC.

In all other cases, the recommendation to close or suspend a programme must cover the following areas:

- The rationale for closure or suspension (see 3 below)
- The proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the course (see 4 below)
- The proposed arrangements for applicants who have accepted offers of a place on the course (see 5 below).
- The proposed arrangements for any related programmes delivered on other campuses (see 6 below).

The Quality & Outcomes Committee will only accept the recommendation if the rationale is sufficiently strong and is assured in all cases that the students' interests are protected, the quality of their learning experience safeguarded, and if the arrangements for students and applicants satisfy the requirements set out below.

3. Conditions under which a programme may close

The following may be regarded as sufficient cause for closing or suspending a programme:

- The demand for the programme is too small to cover the cost of delivery.
- Staff involved in teaching the programme are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them.
- The validating University makes changes that lead to a recommendation to close or suspend the programme.
- Updating of the Faculty's curriculum has led to a change in the range of programmes the Faculty wishes to provide.

- An issue with quality assurance, which affects the continued running of the programme.

Where a Faculty seeks to close a financially viable, successful, or strategically important programme for any reason, the recommendation should only be submitted to SLT, and Governors after the Head of Faculty has discussed and documented the proposed course of action with the relevant Vice Principal.

4. Arrangements for Current Students

Where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme solely for new entrants, then current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of registration on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure or suspension recommendation has been agreed by Quality & Outcomes Committee. All current students should be communicated with in a timely manner to ensure that the information regarding the decision and any support is put in place quickly.

Where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme and current students will be affected, the views of current students on the proposed arrangements should be sought by the Faculty and included with the recommendation to Quality & Outcomes Committee.

The Faculty's 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, even if the range of module choices is smaller because of staffing reductions.
- Options for current students regarding transferring to another programme within the College Group or to another institution.

5. Arrangements for Prospective Students

The Admissions Team must undertake all communications with applicants on these matters in a timely manner. Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted on behalf of Quality & Outcomes Committee. These applicants should then be informed of their options regarding transferring their application to another programme within the College Group or to another institution. This will be in accordance with the timescales outlined in the Conditions of Offer document.

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 closure/suspension recommendation has been made. 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 recommendation is accepted. UCAS should be notified by informing the College Group UCAS Correspondent when the closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted on behalf of Quality & Outcomes Committee.

6. Closing or Suspending a Programme Delivered on Multiple Campuses

The closure of a programme, which is offered across a number of campuses, should be discussed, and agreed by SLT prior to the submission of a formal request to Quality & Outcomes Committee, so that the impact of the decision on students and the College Group as a whole is taken into consideration.

7. Amending College Group Publications/Marketing Material

Once a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted, the Faculty must ensure all necessary amendments are made to Faculty and College Group publications and websites.

The Procedure for the Management of Course Closure or Suspension of a Programme of Study

University Centre St Helens adheres to the timescales for course closure and suspension of a course of study stipulated in the policy and procedures of the appropriate awarding body.

