

## UCO HE Policy

### Course Closure, Change or Suspension

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Originator:	HE Head of Quality and Registry
Approved by:	Quality Improvement Committee
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## 1. Introduction

Course changes and closures are considered to be a significant change according to consumer legislation. To ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 our students will be supplied with information, advice and guidance to enable them to make well-informed decisions in the event of a major change to a course. This policy conforms to the *Higher education course changes and closure: statement of good practice*, endorsed by HEFCE, AoC, UUK, Guild HE and the NUS in 2015.

The College is committed to ensuring the quality of learning opportunities for its students. Beyond the normal academic practice of reviewing and updating courses and modules, in exceptional circumstances it may become necessary to close a course or make changes to a specific cohort of students.

## 2. Scope

The principle underpinning the policy is that in all cases the experience of those who are affected by the course closure or suspension should be assured and monitored. This includes: those students who have accepted an offer but not yet enrolled, those students who have deferred their offer and those students who are currently enrolled on a course.

## 3. Principles

Before commencing the formal procedures to close or suspend a course the HE Senior Management Team (SMT) must ensure that current students who are on the course are consulted (including those who have suspended their studies for a period of time or are referred). They must also take full account of the needs of prospective students i.e. applicants, those who are holding an offer and those who have deferred their enrolment. The point at which a student accepts an offer from the College, the initial contract between the College and the student is made, therefore the decision to close or suspend a course is breaching the terms of the contract.

The SMT's decision to recommend closure or suspension of a course must take full account of how current students are to be supported through to the completion of their intended course of study or put in place appropriate transitional arrangements in consultation with the students. These arrangements should ensure that the course continues to address the requirement of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) that accredits the course.

A decision to recommend closure or suspension of a course must also take full account of how Prospective Students are to be supported in making a decision about an alternative course or releasing themselves from their place and their contract to the College.

The HE Head of Quality and Registry will contact the awarding partner organisation, to advise of the decision and work with them in relation to the above.

#### **4. Rationale**

##### **4.1 Course Closure**

The College may wish to close or suspend a course, the implications for the contractual relationship, whether for existing or potential students will be at the centre of the process.

These decisions would be recommended by SMT to the Quality Improvement Committee and authorised by the College Principalship. Such decisions would always be taken as a last resort.

Evidence required would include:

- changing strategic priorities and financial implications
- declining student numbers
- the impact of the relationships with awarding partner institutions and/or PSRBs
- the impact on current and prospective students
- arrangements for any replacement programme
- key staff leaving the College
- concerns about the quality and academic standards on the programme

The formal processes and documentation of the relevant awarding partner would be followed for approval through the appropriate deliberative structures.

##### **4.2 Changes before and after entry**

In exceptional circumstances material changes may be required between the advanced published materials and enrolment. These changes would be communicated to applicants as soon as possible, advising them of their right to apply for entry to a suitably alternative course or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.

In highly exceptional circumstances, such as the loss of key staff, it may be unavoidable to have to make material changes to course after enrolment. In all cases, students would be consulted at the earliest opportunity and, where practicable, their views taken into account.

Should a student reasonably believe that a material change to the original course would have an adverse impact, they may cancel the contract with the College. Advice and guidance, including the transfer of credit and academic progress, would be provided to assist the student(s) in seeking transfer to another institution.

It is normal academic practice to make minor modifications and amendments to course, which would be implemented during the next academic year. Such changes are designed to improve the quality of learning opportunities, to meet the requirements of an awarding partner or in response to student feedback. The College will consult with or inform students of these changes, as appropriate, and in line with College quality assurance processes.

The College is committed to ensuring the continuity of studies as far as is reasonably practicable. In all cases, the College would work with the relevant awarding partner in relation to the above.

#### **5. Procedure**

The full procedure is described in the document Course Closure Procedure.

## **6. Timing of Course Major Changes or Closures**

The College will always seek to ensure that major changes or course closure would be a decision of last resort and would be made in a timely manner. Current students would be informed of their options and offered advice and guidance should they wish to transfer their academic credit to another institution. Academic standards, learning outcomes defined in the Programme Specification, and the student experience, as far as reasonably practicable, would be maintained throughout any teach-out period.

## **7. Related Documents**

Course Closure Procedure  
Course Closure Form  
HE Terms and Conditions