



Course Closure and Suspension of Courses Policy and Procedures

Purpose

This document sets out the AECC University College policy for the closure of existing courses.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 **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). Students currently enrolled on a suspended course will continue to progress and complete the course
- 1.2 **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 College. Existing students will other than in the most exceptional circumstance complete their studies on the course for which they are enrolled (see under 'arrangements for enrolled students' below).
- 1.3 Course closures and suspension of courses 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 course closure or suspension.
- 1.4 In considering whether to close or suspend a course the University College must consider the arrangements from the point of view of affected students, applicants and potential applicants, as well as from an academic and financial perspective.

2 Responsibilities

- 2.1 Advice regarding the operation of this policy and procedure may be sought from the Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance), the Vice- Principal or the Academic Registrar.
- 2.2 References in this policy to any University College role or office holder include their appointed nominee.
- 2.3 The relevant Head of School initiates the closure or suspension process in discussion with the Programme Leader and other relevant colleagues
- 2.4 The Senior Management Group may recommend closure or suspension of courses on financial grounds. Where this applies the Head of School will then progress this decision through the procedure set out in this document, to ensure the position of applicants offer holders and current students (where applicable) is considered and protected.
- 2.5 The relevant Programme Leader ensures coordination of the closure or suspension process including, for course closure, communication with current students.
- 2.6 Registry communicates with applicants and offer holders about course closures or suspensions.
- 2.7 Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) approves course closures and course suspensions, considers the effectiveness of the arrangements and recommends changes to current policy to Academic Board via the Education Committee
- 2.8 Academic Board approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to course closures and course suspensions.

3 Rationale for closing or suspending courses

- 3.1 A decision to close or suspend a course may be appropriate for a number of reasons, for example:

- Declining student numbers
- Lack of recruitment
- Concerns about financial liability
- Changing strategic priorities
- External funding changes
- Staff involved in teaching the course are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them
- Concerns about the quality and academic standards on the course
- Changing requirements of external bodies, which leads to a recommendation to close the course
- As a result of periodic course review

4 Procedures for closing or suspending courses

- 4.1 A decision to close a course must take full account of the needs of existing students (including suspended students), 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. These arrangements must ensure that the course continues to address the requirements of any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) which accredits the course.
- 4.2 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). In the case that units delivered for that course are undertaken by students on other courses, or by students at Partner institutions (where applicable), the School must obtain the agreement of other affected Schools/Partners to the proposal for closure and, where appropriate, it must be explained how any unit requirements for other Schools/for Partners will be addressed following the closure.
- 4.3 A course 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 course must be made early enough in the cycle so as not to disadvantage applicants. If a decision to close a course 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 University College as a result.

Arrangements for enrolled students

- 4.4 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 course for which they are enrolled (subject to normal progression requirements).
- 4.5 The Programme Leader must inform students enrolled on the course 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 course and provided with details of how the AECC University 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.
- 4.6 In instances where a course is closed and a replacement introduced, students who wish to do so may be permitted to transfer to the new course if appropriate arrangements for transfer have been agreed as part of the course approval process.
- 4.7 The proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the course (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the course) 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 course will still be achievable by current students.

Arrangements for prospective students

- 4.8 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Registry, and the Head of School must ensure that Registry are fully informed and involved in all discussions which have potential implications for applicants.
- 4.9 Registry must inform applicants at this stage that the course is being considered for closure and provide them with information about their options. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.
- 4.10 If exceptionally a course 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 ASQC. 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.
- 4.11 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 course 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 ASQC. UCAS should be notified by informing the University College's UCAS correspondent when the closure proposal has been approved by ASQC.

Recommendations arising from periodic review of the course

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

Obtaining Approval from Academic Standards and Quality Committee

- 4.14 The Head of School must complete the course closure form for submission to ASQC.
- 4.15 Where there are no students registered on the course being closed, there are no applicants who have accepted offers on the course, and there is no impact from the closure on other courses, the proposal to close a course will be approved by ASQC.
- 4.16 In all other cases, ASQC will consider the proposal on the basis of the information provided on the course closure form, taking into account:
- the rationale for closure, including any recommendation from SMG for closure on financial grounds
 - the proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the course
 - the proposed arrangements for applicants
 - the proposed arrangements for any courses sharing units with the course it is proposed to close.

- 4.17 In reaching its decision ASQC will pay particular attention to the the arrangements proposed for students and applicants.
- 4.18 Once approval to close a course has been granted, the Secretary to ASQC will report the decision to Registry, the relevant Head of School and Programme Leader and Marketing.
- 4.19 The Programme Leader will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are informed.
- 4.20 The Programme Leader should advise students on the course formally that the course is going to be closed and provide confirmation of the way in which they will be supported to complete the course.

Ongoing Monitoring

- 4.21 The course must continue to be actively managed and our quality assurance framework should continue to be followed, with regard to student 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 students on the course is maintained.

5 Suspending an Existing Course

- 5.1 A decision to suspend a course must take full account of the needs of applicants to the course and offer holders, including deferred applicants and deferred offer holders. Decisions on course suspensions must be made in a timely manner to ensure that the number of people affected is kept to a minimum
- 5.2 The recommendation to suspend a course must be put forward by the relevant Head of School for that course, in discussion with relevant colleagues. SMG may recommend suspension of a course on financial grounds, in which case the Head of School is responsible for progressing the recommendation through the procedure below,
- 5.3 In the case that units delivered for that course are undertaken by students on other courses, or by students at Partner institutions (where applicable), the School must obtain the agreement of other affected Schools/Partners to the recommendation for suspension. Where appropriate, it must be explained how any unit requirements for other Schools will be addressed following the suspension.
- 5.4 The recommendation to suspend must be made to ASQC. A template form is available and should be used to make the request.
- 5.5 Once approval to close a course has been granted, the Secretary to ASQC will report the decision to Registry, the relevant Head of School and Programme Leader and Marketing.
- 5.6 The Programme Leader will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are informed.
- 5.7 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by Registry, and the Head of School must ensure that Registry are fully informed and involved in all discussions which have potential implications for applicants and/or offer holders.
- 5.8 Registry must inform applicants and /or offer holders about the suspension and provide them with information about their options. If the student has applied through UCAS, Registry must advise UCAS.

6 Amending College publications/marketing material

- 6.1 Once a course closure or course suspension 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 University College publications and the website, and that any external references to the course (eg publicity through external websites) are amended.

7 Circumstances beyond the University College's control

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

in line with the relevant provisions of the University College's Student Protection Plan.

8 Associated forms and documentation

Course closure form

Course suspension form

Course Consideration, Approval and Periodic Review Policy

Version:	2.0
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
Date approved	11 March 2020
Effective from	12 March 2020
Review date	Spring 2023
Target	Framework/Programme Leaders, Registry, members of Academic Standards and Quality Committee, Marketing
Policy location	SIP, public website
Equality Impact	No direct impact – the associated forms provides an opportunity to reflect on any impact