



Suspension and Closure of Programme Procedure

Procedure and Guidance Notes

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1. Introduction

The University of Buckingham is committed to protecting the interests of students, applicants and its own reputation in the event of the suspension or closure of a course. These procedures and guidance notes have been established to provide a clear statement of the arrangements to secure both the quality of academic provision and the student experience following a decision to close a course.

The **Student Protection Plan** [Student Protection Plan | University of Buckingham](#) provides the main reference point for consideration of any potential impact on the student experience; see 'Risk Mitigation Measures' in particular.

The termly update of decisions made will be reported to the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC, for taught provision) and University Research Committee (URC, for research provision).

This procedure has been written in alignment with the University of Buckingham's **Scheme of Delegation**, in particular power 17.12 which specifies the authorities able to sanction the discontinuation of all taught and research provision under Statute 18.3 (k).

The policy is also written in alignment with the expectations set out in the **Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration**, as well as taking into consideration the **Quality Assurance Agency Quality (QAA) UK Quality Code**.

2. Scope

This policy covers the procedure for suspension and closure within the University of Buckingham. It is applicable to all university faculties and schools including all the provisions which are managed under the University Collaborations Department. The change procedure is also applicable to Programmes which fall under the remit of the University Apprenticeships team.

3. Background

Suspension may be considered as a temporary measure to pause recruitment or delivery of a course, while strategic, academic, or operational reviews are undertaken. Reasons for suspension may include temporary staffing constraints, curriculum redevelopment, review of PSRB requirements, or planned restructuring of academic provision. A period of suspension of two or more years will lead to the programme being considered for closure. Should Faculty leadership look to reinstate the programme after this period it will need to go through the New Programme approval and validation procedure.

Reasons for suspension or closure may vary but will usually fall into one of two categories: commercial or academic (or both):

Commercial reasons for programme suspension or closure include but are not limited to:

- The programme is not financially viable.
- Decline in student demand sustained over time.



- Failure to recruit viable numbers to a new course.
- The introduction of a replacement course.
- A reduction in funding or funded numbers.
- Breaches of regulatory requirements.
- Reputational damage caused by commercial, academic or other failure.

Academic or quality assurance reasons for programme suspension or closure include but are not limited to:

- Staff changes with resulting loss of expertise.
- The programme ceases to meet the needs of students.
- The programme ceases to meet the needs of employers and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs).
- Documented concerns over quality which threaten the course's integrity.

4. Definitions

In exercising the Programme Suspension or Closure Procedure, the University needs to consider the impact of suspension or closure upon the following stakeholder groups:

- Students:** Any existing students enrolled on the programme and any offer holders to the course.
Applicants: Individuals who have applied or who are in the process of applying to the course.
Staff: Everyone employed by the University with responsibility for the delivery, management and/or administration of a programme of study.

5. Consultation

- a. **Commercial Consultation:**
Where a programme is considered for suspension or closure due to commercial reasons, the Dean should present the proposal to the Executive Group (or in certain instances a member/ selected member of the Executive Group), such proposal to include the rationale for the suspension or closure along with an implementation plan. Authority to close courses for commercial reasons lies with the Vice-Chancellor (or their nominee). The Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic and Provost may also present the Executive with the proposal to close a number of courses as part of a wider portfolio review process.
- b. **Academic Consultation:**
Where a programme is considered for suspension or closure due to academic or quality assurance-related reasons, the Dean, in conjunction with the Programme Director, should present the proposal to an Appropriate Faculty Level Committee, such proposal to include the rationale for the suspension or closure along with an implementation plan. Authority to close courses for academic reasons lies with the University Assessment Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC, for taught provision) and the University Research Committee (URC, for research provision).



Rationale

In preparing the rationale, the Dean may in their discretion utilise such quantitative or qualitative information as they determine to be appropriate; such information may be obtained by way of existing reports and/or the commissioning of an investigation.

Implementation Plan

In preparing the implementation plan, the Dean (or nominee), in conjunction with the Programme Director, will normally consider the following:

- A clear statement of the rationale for the course's suspension or closure, specifying the basis or bases for suspension or closure (see above).
- A clearly defined phasing-out period which includes start and end dates. In instances of a programme closure, the phasing out period shall be no longer than the duration of a full undergraduate degree (2 years).
- The arrangements for providing students enrolled on the programme and all staff with information on the proposed suspension or closure.
- The arrangements for providing UCAS applicants with timely advice and guidance to enable them to transfer their offer to an alternative programme at the University of Buckingham or to apply to another institution.
- A clearly defined list of options available to students to enable them to either complete their original programme of study or transfer with their agreement to an alternative programme and/or institution.
- The assessment and re-assessment arrangements for any students, particularly part-time students, who will not have completed their intended programme by the suspension or closure date.
- The arrangements to ensure that the quality of the student learning experience will continue to meet The University of Buckingham's and any PSRB's expectations as well as the OfS Conditions of Registration.
- The mechanism to ensure that any proposed reduction in overall staffing levels will not impact unreasonably on the student experience, particularly with regard to ensuring that the intended learning outcomes of the programme will still be achievable by current students.
- The mechanism to ensure that adequate resources continue to be provided to maintain the quality of the student experience during the phasing-out period.
- Evidence of consultation internally and/or externally with key stakeholders including the programme director, the student body, external examiner and other schools or departments reliant on the provision of the programme e.g., affected modules or minor streams.

6. Notification of decision to external organisations

Once a suspension or closure recommendation has been approved, the applicable Faculty Quality Manager (FQM) must ensure that all publications and websites are amended and that all stakeholders are formally notified of the details of the suspension or closure. They should also liaise with the relevant stakeholders in central Quality, Marketing and Admissions teams, and the Faculty, to ensure that all relevant parties are informed. Where applicable, collaborative partners will be notified about programme suspension or closure decisions in accordance with the contract.



UCAS should be notified by the University's Head of Admissions when the suspension or closure recommendation has been approved. Where possible, the University should endeavour to make the decision regarding a programme suspension or closure as early within the UCAS cycle as possible in order to enable applicants to seek appropriate alternative arrangements.

7. Notification of decision and arrangements for current students

All communications with current students about the suspension or closure of their programme must be undertaken by the appropriate Programme Director or Dean in conjunction with the Faculty Registrar. The Programme Director should complete the relevant Suspension or Closure Form and notify the FQM.

Current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of enrolment on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a suspension or closure recommendation has been approved by the University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee (UALTC) or the Vice-Chancellor/Executive Team.

Where a programme is being closed due to poor recruitment, the proposed arrangements for students currently enrolled on the programme (including those who have suspended studies), must include the following:

- Discussion about student options regarding transferring to another programme within the University of Buckingham or to another institution, and arrangements for doing so.
- Confirmation of the student timetable for the remaining period of the course.
- Arrangements for the staffing and resourcing of the programme for the remaining period.
- Written confirmation to all students clarifying any amendments to the programme regulations regarding assessment and progression, with reference to:
 - o students who have temporarily withdrawn
 - o students who have failed modules and would normally be allowed to retake these the following year
 - o students under mitigating circumstances who have been granted an extension beyond the end of the academic year
 - o students planning to progress from a Foundation degree to an Honours degree.

8. Notification of decision and arrangements for prospective students

All communications with applicants on the following matters must be undertaken by faculty admissions teams and programme directors, as appropriate.

Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a suspension or closure recommendation has been approved by UALTC or the Vice-Chancellor/Executive team. These applicants should then be informed of their options regarding transferring their application to another programme of study within the University of Buckingham, or their application to an alternative institution, whichever is relevant.

All public information relating to the programme should be either removed or amended by the Faculty Marketing Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the FQM, in line with the Competitions and Markets



Authority (CMA) guidance, to inform potential applicants that the programme has been withdrawn. The following list refers to the University's current publication areas:

- University website
- University Mini-Guide – web-based and hard copy
- UCAS listing
- Professional Statutory Regulatory Body's (PSRB) website and prospectus
- Find an Apprenticeship (GOV.UK)
- Third-party portals e.g. Find A Masters

9. Notification of decision and arrangements for staff

Deans must ensure that any proposed reduction in overall staffing levels will not impact unreasonably on the student experience, particularly regarding ensuring that the intended learning outcomes of the programme will still be achievable by current students and the mechanism to ensure that adequate resources continue to be provided to maintain the quality of the student experience during the teaching-out period.

In instances where programme suspension or closure will place the employment of one or more members of staff at risk of redundancy, this aspect must be managed by the Dean (or nominee) in line with the applicable HR policies. In all cases, authority to approve staff redundancy sits with the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee).

10. Roles and Responsibilities Table

Responsibility	Role
Management of the Consultation process	Dean (in conjunction with the Faculty Quality Manager, Deputy Head of Academic Services (Quality) and Programme Director)
Completion of the Programme Closure Form	Programme Director
Submission of the programme closure to a Faculty Committee	Programme Director
Submission of the programme closure to the Executive	Programme Director or Dean
Submission of the programme closure to UALTC for final approval	Programme Director
Notification of decision to close a programme to EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS	Faculty Quality Manager Head of Admissions
Notification of decision and arrangements for CURRENT STUDENTS	Programme Director Faculty Registrar



Notification of decision and arrangements for PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS	Faculty Registrar Faculty Admissions Officer
Notification of decision and arrangements for STAFF	Dean
Oversight of the closure procedure	Deputy Head of Academic Services (Quality)

NOTE: where the programme is an apprenticeship of any kind, the University Apprenticeship Manager must be consulted.