

Section 10: Course Closure

- 10.1 This section sets out the process to be followed when a course is closed. It outlines the reasons that contribute to such a decision being made, the processes and governance in place to protect applicants and students. It should be read in conjunction with the University's Student Protection Plan.
- 10.2 The decision to close a course is assumed to be any degree title that will cease to be awarded. However, there are also similar factors to be considered where courses are identified as suspending recruitment (10.6) or where a mode of study has changed (10.7). This section also covers such scenarios. This recognises the student protection expectations required on all such decisions.

Permanent Closure of a Course

- 10.3 The permanent closure of a course¹ normally involves the ceasing of recruitment for a course, but the continuation of the course for existing student cohorts. The University has an obligation to allow students to complete the courses they enrolled on. In exceptional cases the closure of both recruitment and the continuing cohorts may take place (refer to section 10.11.3), this will be clearly identified at the time of the proposed closure.
- 10.4 A College cannot close a course under its own authority. All course closures are subject to consideration by the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) and the Teaching Committee on behalf of Academic Council. The Portfolio Planning Committee has oversight of the University portfolio and authority to approve course closures recommended by the College. The Teaching Committee has responsibility to ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place to help safeguard the continued student experience.

Criteria for Closure

- 10.5 Recommendations for the permanent closure of a course may be based on one or more of the following criteria:
- poor student recruitment;
 - poor student experience results;
 - inadequate resources;
 - financial non-viability;
 - changing market;
 - changing requirements within the subject discipline;
 - the introduction of a replacement course;
 - quality assurance risks.

¹ assumed to be any award title

Procedure for Course Closure

10.6 It is expected that course closures would normally be identified by the College through the Portfolio Review and would be initiated, wherever possible, in advance of standard recruitment cycles. It is however recognised that this is not always possible; where this is not the case a clear timeline will be agreed with the Director of Marketing, Communications and Development or nominee, recognising the applicant position of each course may be different. Colleges are expected to know the applicant position as early in the process as possible, noting for example there may be applicants holding deferred entry offers.

10.7 A notification of the intention to close a course should be approved by the Head of College by submission of the approved course closure form to the Chair of PPC or their nominee, the completed form should include:

- (i) the basis on which the decision has been reached;
- (ii) the risk assessment of the impact of any closure and evidence of consultation with relevant departments including Strategy Planning and Performance, Global, Recruitment and Admissions (Admissions statistics), Finance;
- (iii) the proposed arrangements for current students.

Note once a decision has been made by PPC, evidence that students have been informed of the decision will be required by the Teaching Committee including evidence of how the decision affects current students (10.5.5).

- (iv) an overview of the arrangements that will be used to inform applicants of the decision to close the course and details of other courses they may be offered;
- (v) Details of the quality assurance arrangements which are in place for the continued student experience for remaining cohort(s) where applicable, including the expected final course closure date;
- (vi) In the case of courses delivered jointly by more than one College, agreement must be reached by both, or all, Heads of College and the closure recommended by the host College.

10.8 The Portfolio Planning Committee has the authority to make the decision to close a course identified by a College. Following the decision, the following will be informed in writing:

- Head of College
- Head of School
- Director of College Operations
- Head of Registry Services
- Transnational Education Team
- Marketing and Communications
- Business Partners
- Strategy Planning and Performance
- Timetabling Manager
- Student Funding Team

10.9 The Human Resource impacts of a course closure are the responsibility of the College to take forward directly with HR in line with normal management led HR processes.

- 10.10 The Teaching Committee has remit to consider the ongoing student experience and quality assurance mechanisms in place once the PPC decision to close a course has been made.
- 10.11 In the case of quality assurance risks recommendations for either the suspension or permanent closure of a course may be made where serious concerns are identified and evidenced:
- as part of the integrated planning processes (including continuous improvement process)
 - by an External Examiner
 - by a Professional of Statutory and Recognition Body;
 - by the Office for Students (OfS)
- 10.12 In such cases the Head of College will be invited to make a written submission to the Teaching Committee. The Chair of the Teaching Committee will liaise with the Head of College and the Academic Registrar or nominee to make recommendations to Academic Council and University Executive Board (UEB).
- 10.13 Following the Planning Process and as part of the University Portfolio discussions the Portfolio Planning Committee can also make recommendations to close courses that may not have been identified by a College. These recommendations will still be based on the course closure criteria.
- 10.14 All course closures will be reported to Academic Council normally by way of the Teaching Committee and the Portfolio Planning Committee minutes.

Suspension of Recruitment

- 10.15 Courses can temporarily suspend recruitment, this may be for a variety of reasons but are broadly the same as those of course closure (10.4), but there will be a plan to overcome the factors identified for recruitment in future years. In deciding to suspend recruitment, the college will consider the applicant position, including any deferred offer holders. Any course suspended for more than two years shall be considered permanently closed. Any decision to re-start the course after the two-year period will require PPC approval. If the period of validation exceeds the two-year suspension a review process will still be expected.
- 10.16 Before deciding to suspend recruitment to a course it is the responsibility of the Head of College to ensure that the College has consulted with the relevant recruitment and admissions offices to ensure the full applicants' position is known. The College must also ensure that the continuing student experience is carefully considered, particularly students who may have to retrieve a year. Deliberate steps to ensure retrieving students can integrate with other cohort years or courses will be expected.

Mode of Study

- 10.17 The closure or change of a particular mode of study should be approved by the Head of College or nominee, noting the impact on any applicants and the continuing student cohort experience. The withdrawal of a mode of study (e.g. evening only) should be submitted in writing to Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards. Confirmation of the associated applicant numbers and continuing student experience (current students and applicants) will be considered, alongside the timeliness of the request. This recognises that applicants will have made decisions based on the existing published information. The risks associated with a change therefore need to be carefully considered and may require completion of a full course closure form.

Title Change

- 10.18 Where a title change form has been completed for approval by PPC, and the course is continuing under a new name, all applicants must be told in writing of the change, the reasons for the change, and their options. Continuing students will normally be assumed to remain on their current title, however can have the option, if felt appropriate, to transfer to the new title. This will be made clear on the proposal to PPC. No associated course closure form is normally required.

Communication and Arrangements for Continuing Students

Course Closures Current Students

- 10.19 Current students will normally be expected to complete their designated period of registration as set out in the Academic Regulations. Current students should include students who have interrupted studies (within the timeframe permitted) but not yet completed the course. Where a course is being closed to new entrants only, the College arrangements should include the following:
- (i) Current students should be informed of the reasons for the course closure and their options in terms of completing the course they are registered on, transferring to another course within the University where this is feasible or transferring to another institution;
 - (ii) The academic standards of the courses throughout their remaining period must be maintained; this includes an expectation that arrangements are still in place for external examiners, student feedback opportunities and the continuous improvement process (annual monitoring for collaborative provision). Additional support may be required for some groups of students. For example, it is anticipated that additional personal tutoring, or more deliberate opportunities to engage with other courses may be appropriate for retrieving students.
 - (iii) The previously stated learning outcomes for the course must still be achievable by the current students. All proposed changes to the course structure will still be expected to undergo the same process, which includes student consultation and external examiner comments. In addition, the Deputy Registrar, Quality and Standards will be required to approve any modifications to courses identified as closing.
- 10.20 Communication relating to the closure of particular modes of study will follow the same principles outlined above.

Communication and Expectations Prospective Students/Applicants

- 10.21 All communications with prospective students must be undertaken by Admissions to ensure compliance with agreed procedures. Applicants who have accepted offers should be contacted after the closure has been approved.
- 10.22 Applicants should be informed of the following:
- the reason for the closure
 - their options in respect of transferring their application to another course within the University

- the opportunity for one-to-one discussions with an appropriate member of staff
- their possible options with another institution

10.23 In exceptional circumstances the University may decide to close a course, including for either all or some continuing cohorts. This will normally be where there are significant concerns raised or where the expected duration of the course cannot be met by the College, all such cases will be referred to UEB. In such cases the University will ensure all efforts are made to find students' alternative providers on a case-by-case basis, ensure prompt communication of the decision, support available and expected financial compensation.

10.24 It is recognised that unforeseen circumstances often beyond the University's decision making may result in significant changes to the Universities ability to uphold its intended provision e.g. a serious fire. In such highly exceptional cases UEB will work with Professional Services to ensure clear, timely communication of alternative arrangements to students. The University will also, where possible, assist other OfS listed Higher Education providers facing similar issues.