

UCO HE Policy and Procedure

Course Closure, Change or Suspension

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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.

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

This Policy and Procedure applies to all applicants and students of University Campus Oldham, Higher Education at Oldham College. 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 Management Team 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 HE Management Team'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 Quality and Standards Manager 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

Any decision to close a course at University Campus Oldham would be recommended to the HE Curriculum Management Panel and authorised by the College Senior Management Team. 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.

A course must not be closed once there are confirmed offer holders unless there are exceptional circumstances. 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 College as a result.

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 their 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 courses, 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's 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

5.1 Responsibilities

- The relevant Faculty Lead initiates and ensures coordination of the course closure process including communication with current students.
- The HE Administration Team communicates with applicants and offer holders about course closures.
- The HE Management Team recommends approval of course closures, considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for closing the course, and recommends changes to current policy to the College Principalship, via the Curriculum Management Panel.

5.2 Obtaining Approval for Course Closure or Suspension

The Faculty Lead must complete the course closure form for submission to the Curriculum Management Panel. The Curriculum Management Panel will consider the proposal on the basis of the information provided on the course closure form, taking into account:

- the rationale for closure
- the proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the course
- the proposed arrangements for applicants
- the proposed arrangements for any courses sharing modules with the course it is proposed to close.

The Curriculum Management Panel will recommend approval of the proposal if the rationale is sufficiently strong to justify the potential disruption to students and applicants, and if the arrangements for students and applicants satisfy the requirements set out above. If the proposal is agreed by the Curriculum Management Panel, the proposal will be sent for approval to the College Senior Management Team.

Once approval to close a course has been granted by the College Senior Management Team, the HE Quality Department will report the decision to the relevant staff, e.g., Faculty Lead, Course Leader, HE Student Services Team and Marketing Team.

The HE Quality Team will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are informed.

5.3 Arrangements for Enrolled Students

Other than in the most exceptional circumstance, enrolled students (including those who are currently suspended) must be allowed to complete their studies on the course for which they are enrolled (subject to normal progression requirements).

The Faculty Lead and Course Leader must inform students enrolled on the course about the proposed closure and where possible the awarding partner institution Link Tutor should be invited to participate in meetings with students. The Course Leader should explain the reasons for the proposal, and discuss the implications for the students at the earliest opportunity. Students should be informed of plans for teaching-out the course and provided with details of how the 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.

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. Course Leaders must obtain written agreement from students confirming their agreement to a transfer.

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; and
- Confirmation that the previously stated learning outcomes of the course, as detailed in the Programme Specification, will still be achievable by current students.

5.4 Arrangements for Prospective Students

All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by the HE Student Services Team, and the Course Leader must ensure that the HE Quality Department are fully informed and involved in all discussions which have potential implications for applicants.

The HE Student Services Team 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, the HE Student Services Team must advise UCAS.

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 the College Senior Management Team. Once approval has been given, these applicants should then be informed, in a timely manner, of their options in regard to transferring their application to another institution. If the student has applied through UCAS, the HE Student Services Team must advise UCAS.

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 the College Senior Management Team.

6. Circumstances Beyond the College's Control

In very exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for a course or courses to close which are beyond the College's control, and for teaching-out within the institution to be impossible.

In these circumstances the Faculty Lead and the HE Management Team will discuss the arrangements to identify:

- whether the College can offer alternative courses within the institution
- how the College will help students to transfer to other institutions, including support for transfer of credit/recognition of prior learning
- any financial recompense as appropriate.

7. Amending College publications/marketing material

Once a course closure proposal has been approved it is the responsibility of the Course Leader, in liaison with Marketing, to ensure all necessary amendments are made to all College publications and the website, and that any external references to the course (e.g., publicity through external websites) are amended.

8. Ongoing Monitoring

The course must continue to be actively managed and the quality assurance framework should continue to be followed, with regard to student surveys, annual evaluation, course and module evaluation 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.

9. 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.

10. Related Documents

- Course Closure Form
- HE Terms and Conditions

Version History:

Issue	Changes	Author	Approved at	Date of Issue
1	Policy Implemented	Head of HE Quality and Registry	QIC / C&Q	April 2018
1.1	Scheduled Review - No Changes Required	Head of HE Quality and Registry	QIC / C&Q	May 2020
1.2	Scheduled Review - No Changes Required	Head of HE Quality and Registry	n/a	June 2022
1.3	HE Senior Management Team amended to HE Management Team. College Principalship amended to College SMT. Quality Improvement Committee amended to Curriculum Management Panel. Inclusion of Procedure.	HE Quality and Standards Manager	CQSC / Governors C&Q	June 2025

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