



## **Non-Prescribed Higher Education programmes / courses**

### **Policy for closing or suspending a programme 2020-21**

## **1. Introduction**

This is a policy which all Non-Prescribed Higher Education courses are required to follow. It sets out the College's principles which determine the closure or suspension of a Non-Prescribed HE course and provides an overview of the procedures to be adopted.

The policy is aligned with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education, and Programme Monitoring and Review. The principle underpinning the policy is that in all cases the experience of those who are affected by the programme closure or suspension, to include: those students who have accepted an offer but not yet enrolled; those students who have deferred their offer; and those students who are current should be assured and monitored.

## **2. Scope of the Policy**

The policy is applicable to:

- Programmes / Courses which are delivered by Bolton College staff, which are based at the Bolton Campus;
- Offsite delivery i.e. Programmes / Courses which are delivered entirely by Bolton College staff irrespective of the location of delivery;

## **3. Principles**

Before commencing the formal procedures to close or suspend a programme the Subject Area Head of Area must ensure that current students who are on the programme are consulted (including those who have suspended their studies for a period of time or are referred) and must 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 ("Prospective Students"). 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 programme is breaching the terms of the contract.

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

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

Any other Subject Area which rely on modules from the programme in question, and to avoid any unintended impact on other programmes, must also be consulted. External stakeholders must also be consulted. The awarding Body must also be invited to comment.

Current and Prospective Students will be given adequate notice of any changes.

#### **4. Rationale for the closure or suspension of a programme**

There are a number of reasons why the College may close or suspend a programme, for example:

- Declining student numbers;
- Replacing an existing programme with a new one;
- Changing strategic priorities at Subject Area, or College level;
- Concerns about the quality and academic standards of the programme.

Recommending programme closure or suspension is also an option as part of the Review process. If the Subject Area or Review Panel recommend closure of an existing programme, this Policy on Programme Closure and Suspension would then be followed.

The College will make all efforts to ensure that the impact on Current and Prospective Students is mitigated as far as this is possible. The planning timeline for managing the closure or suspension process is required to take into account the experience of Current and Prospective Students with the aim and intention that students would be protected from adverse impact of such closures or suspensions.

In the event of a programme closing or being suspended, unless beyond the control of the College, the closure or suspension in terms of new intake would not be in place until the following academic year with no new applicants having been accepted and Students would be supported to complete their programme of study or in the event that this was not possible due to circumstances beyond the control of the College, transitional arrangements would be made in consultation with the student(s) affected.

#### **5. Authority to make decisions about closure**

The final decision to close or suspend a programme is made by the Director of Adult and Higher Education (in consultation with the SMT), having received recommendation and appropriate documentation from a Subject Area or as a result of a Review recommendation.

#### **6. Communicating the decision to close, or suspend recruitment to, a programme**

Once the decision has been reached by Director of Adult and Higher Education, the programme is removed from the website (by Marketing Department) for future enrolment and the status of the programme is updated to reflect the change i.e. suspended recruitment or closure of the programme on internal record systems (by MIU).

#### **7. Procedure**

The procedure is described in the document Non-Prescribed HE Process for Course Closure Guidelines.

#### **8. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed after the first year, and every three years thereafter, to judge its effectiveness and updated in accordance with changes in the law by the HE Academic Quality Leader, and subject to the HE Quality Assurance Committee.