



## Higher Level 4/5 Course Procedure for Closing or Suspending a Programme 2022-23

### 1. Purpose

This document sets out the College procedure for all Higher Level 4/5 courses, in accordance with the Higher Level 4/5 Policy for Closing or Suspending a Programme.

### 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 Advice regarding the operation of this procedure can be sought from the HE Academic Quality Leader or the Director of Curriculum and Quality.
- 2.2 The relevant Head of Area initiates and ensures coordination of the course closure process including communication with current students.
- 2.3 The HE Head of Area or Curriculum Leader communicates with applicants and offer holders about course closures.
- 2.4 The Senior Management Team (SMT) recommends approval of course closures, considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for closing the course and, if required, recommends changes to the current policy to the College Principalship, via the HE Quality Assurance Committee.
- 2.5 The Quality Assurance Committee approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to course closures.

### 3. Procedures for closing courses

- 3.1 A decision to close a course may be appropriate for a number of reasons, for example:
  - 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 course
  - key staff leaving the College
  - concerns about the quality and academic standards on the course
- 3.2 In considering a decision to close a course, the College 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. It 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 programme.

- 3.3 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.

#### Arrangements for enrolled students

- 3.4 Other than in the most exceptional circumstance (see section 4) 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).
- 3.5 The Head of Area, Curriculum Leader, and Course Leader must inform students enrolled on the course about the proposed closure and where possible the awarding organisation Link 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.
- 3.6 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. The Head of Area and Curriculum Leader Leaders must obtain written agreement from students confirming their agreement to a transfer.
- 3.7 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, as detailed in the Programme Specification, will still be achievable by current students.

#### Arrangements for prospective students

- 3.8 All communications with applicants and offer holders on these matters must be undertaken by the HE Head of Area or Curriculum Leader, and the Course Leader must ensure that the HE Academic Quality Leader and Director of Curriculum and

Quality are fully informed and involved in all discussions which have potential implications for applicants.

- 3.9 The HE Head of Area and Curriculum Leader must inform applicants at this stage that the course is being considered for closure and provide them with information about their options.
- 3.10 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 SMT. 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.
- 3.11 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 the SMT.

#### Obtaining approval from SMT, HE Quality Assurance Committee and Principalship

- 3.12 The He Head of Area must complete the course closure form for submission to SMT.
- 3.13 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 recommended by SMT to the HE Quality Assurance Committee and, if agreed at the committee, approved by Principalship.
- 3.14 In all other cases, SMT 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.
- 3.15 SMT 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.
- 3.16 Once approval to close a course has been granted by Principalship, the Director of Curriculum and Quality will report the decision to the relevant Head of Area, Curriculum Leader, Course Leader, and Marketing.
- 3.17 The HE Academic Quality Leader and Head of Area will ensure that, where applicable, relevant PSRB/s are informed.

3.18 The Head of Area and Curriculum 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. Where applicable, the awarding organisation Link should attend any meetings with the students.

#### **4. Circumstances beyond the College's control**

4.1 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.

4.2 In these circumstances the Head of Area and the SMT 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.

#### **5. Amending College publications/marketing material**

5.1 Once a course closure proposal has been approved it is the responsibility of the Curriculum 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.

#### **6. Ongoing Monitoring**

6.1 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.

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