



Internal Approval, Suspension and Closure of Higher Education Credit Bearing Programmes Policy and Procedure

Doc No. To be completed by Quality

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This document can also be produced in alternative formats upon request.

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1. Internal Approval of Higher Education Programmes

1.1. All South West College academic departments that aspire to develop or offer new Higher Education programmes must initially seek internal approval from the Higher Education Academic Board using a standard course proposal template (**Appendix 1**). College Departments must provide a rationale for the new course, predicted numbers, resources required to support the students and staff, staffing requirements, market demand and clearly demonstrate how the new course proposal fits within the strategic context and Higher Education Strategy of the College. This process must also be followed if a Department wishes to expand a Higher Education programme to another campus.

1.2. The Board will consider the new proposal and if approval has been granted course teams may approach the relevant University Faculty or Awarding Organisation to progress the development of the new programme. The Higher Education Academic Board will monitor periodically the progress of all new course proposals and developments.

2. Policy and Procedure for the Suspension and Closure of Higher Education Credit Bearing Programmes

2.1. Timing

All decisions to close programmes must be taken with due regard for the need to address the position of existing and potential students. This includes students who may have already applied for, or be currently studying on, courses or programmes from which they may have reasonably expected to progress. For example, any decision to close a Bachelor's Degree must be made with the due consideration of students on Foundation Degrees or Higher Nationals who may have been expected, or be expecting, to join the second or final year of a part BA/BSc upon completion of their current or intended programme of study. As the potential for significant consequences increases (e.g. applicants may have given up employment with the intention of taking up the programme), and the availability of suitable alternatives at South West College or other institutions reduces the later in the admissions cycle that any closure decision is taken, no closures should be made after applications have been acknowledged if at all possible.

Any decision to close a programme must take full account of the needs of existing students and should, as far as possible, aim to support these students through to the completion of their intended, and possibly subsequent, programme of study or put in place appropriate transitional arrangements. In considering the closure of a programme, the Head of Department responsible must consult with all other Departments that may have any direct interest either as a progression route into or from it (or possibly as part of the existing provision's academic or monitoring arrangements), and maintain written records for submission to the Higher Education Academic Board.

2.2. The following procedures must be followed for any course discontinued at less than two years' notice as applicants may apply for entry to a course up to two years before taking up their place even if any of the following apply:

- a decline in student demand is such that the viability of the provision is threatened;
- a new programme is planned or approved which replaces existing provision;
- a reduction in funding or in funded student numbers;

- documented concerns about the standards and/or quality of the provision, which may affect its credibility;
- a change in the College's (or one of its partner's) priorities for academic development.

3. Procedures

3.1. No decision to proceed with any plans, or intentions, to close a programme for any reason whatsoever should be taken without initial consultation with the Head of Higher Education and the Head of Curriculum.

3.2. Suspension of recruitment to a programme is possible if the relevant Head of Department has reason or reasons to believe that the issues underlying any proposal to close are temporary admissions, and that there is separate process for suspension of recruitment. In the event of a programme being suspended a course suspension form must be completed (**Appendix 2**) by the Higher Education Course Director endorsed by the Head of Department and submitted to the Higher Education Academic Board for approval.

3.3. If the Head of Higher Education and Head of Curriculum agrees in principle to the possible closure of a credit bearing Higher Education programme, the Head of Department responsible should complete the Programme Closure form (**Appendix 3**) and submit this to Higher Education Quality Officer who will schedule it as a minuted item at the next meeting of the Higher Education Academic Board.

3.4. In considering proposals, particular attention must be paid to the arrangements made to support existing students through to completion, including arrangements for students who have suspended studies (for whatever reason) or are following a programme by a part-time or non-traditional route. The proposal for closure will be considered by the Higher Education Academic Board, and must include:

- Clear rationale for closure;
- Arrangements for phasing out the provision, or the identification of alternative provision, bearing in mind the College's contractual obligations to existing students and applicants holding offers; Measures to be taken to protect the quality of the provision being phased out;
- Evidence of consultation with all relevant stakeholders such as current and prospective students;
- A completed Formal Risk Assessment Record for Programme Closure/Suspension.
- Once the decision has been made by the Higher Education Academic Board to close a programme with current students and/or applicants, the Head of Curriculum will in consultation with the relevant Head of Department.
- Ensure that appropriate consultation is carried out with students; and clear information is provided about the arrangements that are to be put in place for the remainder of their programme of study;
- Agree a timescale within which applicants informed of a decision to close or suspend will be expected to have informed the College of their decision, and or intentions, with regards to further study;
- Agree on the necessary teach-out and quality assurance arrangements for existing students to complete their programme of study;
- Inform statutory, regulatory and funding bodies and other key stakeholders such as partner organisations;
- Agree on the point at which applications to the provision should be suspended, and on the means and content of communications to applicants who are already in the system;

- Ensure that all relevant legal, financial, quality assurance issues are taken into consideration;

Advise continuing students of any transitional arrangements which will be put in place to support them to completion. It is also vital to ensure that the College is compliant with consumer legislation in respect of providing early communication about any programme changes to applicants and students. Note also that no programme can remain in suspension for longer than two years (during which time it is subject to the normal Quality Assurance processes). After that time, the Higher Education Academic Board must make a decision to re-open, replace, or close the programme as Suspension cannot be either carried forward or extended. For undergraduate programmes, the Head of Department and Higher Education Course Director should ensure that the programme is removed from the UCAS database (Queens courses only and consultation with link tutor is required) and that notification of the discontinuation is reported for information to the appropriate meetings of Marketing, MIS, Higher Education Administration, and Student Support. If a replacement programme is planned note the change to the provision and ensure that prospective students are notified of the change.

4. Informing Applicants

4.1. Course teams should identify any applicants who will be affected by a course or programme Closure or Suspension Decision, and notify them by e-mail, or by e-mail with an attached pdf, and copy in both the Head of Higher Education and Higher Education Administration.

4.2. The notification must include the Applicant's Name, the Application Code, the Course Title, the Course Code, the timescale within which a reply is expected, and make clear that the applicant has three alternatives:

4.2.1. Choose an alternative programme at South West College;

4.2.2. Choose an alternative Institution and that they should therefore inform both UCAS (via Queens University Belfast) and South West College;

4.2.3. Withdraw completely and inform both UCAS and South West College.

4.3. If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial e-mail (or letter), Course teams should issue a reminder e-mail, or e-mail with a pdf attachment, advising the applicant that their application will be formally withdrawn if no response is received within ten working days. For undergraduate programmes, the UCAS procedures summarised below must be followed in corresponding with the applicant.

5. UCAS Procedures (for Queen's University Belfast programmes currently)

In the event of a decision to discontinue an undergraduate programme, the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator will notify UCAS Research and Statistics Department via Queens, using a course amendment form. This will ensure that the programme is removed from the UCAS database and notification of the discontinuation is included in the next set of UCAS Handbook amendments issued to Schools. UCAS regulations also require the college and Queens to follow specific procedures in respect of any students who have applied for or are holding an offer of a place on the

course concerned. As soon as agreement to discontinue a course has been reached the Higher Education Course Director and Head of Department responsible should take steps in Collaboration with Queens University Belfast to ensure that these are followed. The steps to be taken will vary according to applicants' status and the timing of the decision and are described in detail in the UCAS Admissions Guide.

6. Advice and Guidance

For Further advice and guidance regarding this policy and associated procedures please contact:

Mrs Julie Kelly, Higher Education Quality Officer at: Julie.kelly@swc.ac.uk

or

Mr Liam Curran, Head of Higher Education and Chair of the Higher Education Academic Board
at: liam.curran@swc.ac.uk

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1. The College will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Policy.

7.2. The College will ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote this Policy effectively and is committed to reviewing this Policy on a regular basis, in consultation with the recognised trade unions, statutory organisations such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and in line with models of good practice.

Signed: _____ Date _____
(Chief Executive)

Signed: _____ Date _____
(Chairman of Governing Body)

Appendix 1



INTERNAL COURSE PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM

SECTION A: COURSE OUTLINE

1. COURSE TITLE	
2. NATURE OF PROPOSAL	New Course <input type="checkbox"/> Revised Version of Existing Course <input type="checkbox"/> New Subject Strand <input type="checkbox"/> New pathway leading to a distinct award title <input type="checkbox"/>
3. PROPOSED STARTING DATE	
4. LOCATION Specify campus and/or distance learning (if fully on-line)	
5. PROPOSED AWARDING BODY Please include University School/Faculty where applicable	
6. ASSOCIATE SOUTH WEST COLLEGE DEPARTMENT	
7. MODE OF ATTENDANCE	Full-time <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time day <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time evening <input type="checkbox"/> Fast-track <input type="checkbox"/>
8. COURSE DURATION Please specify years and semesters	

<p>9. REASON FOR COURSE PROPOSAL</p> <p>(Reference should be made to the aims of the course and their relationship to the College's strategic aims and objectives. Comment on the way in which it will satisfy the community interest as regards professional, industrial or other social requirements.)</p>							
<p>10. EVIDENCE OF STUDENT DEMAND</p> <p>(Include, for example, information sources, views from existing students, former students, expert opinions (staff and networks), field research. Distinguish between campuses and modes of study where applicable.)</p>							
<p>11. PROPOSED STUDENT ENROLMENTS</p> <p>(The Department should ensure that the proposal can be accommodated within its approved academic courses plan. Distinguish between campuses and mode of study where applicable.)</p>	<p>Year of Course</p>	<p>Year of First Intake</p>	<p>Year of Second Intake</p>	<p>Year of Third Intake</p>	<p>Year of Fourth Intake</p>	<p>Year of Fifth Intake</p>	<p>Year of Sixth Intake</p>
	<p>Year 1</p>						
	<p>Year 2</p>						
	<p>Year 3</p>						

<p>12. PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS</p> <p>(Information should be provided on the potential employment, further study and training opportunities available on completion)</p>	
<p>13. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COURSES IN COGNATE AREAS</p>	<p>(a) Within the South West College</p>
	<p>(b) With other FE Colleges</p>
	<p>(c) Impact of enrolment on other courses</p>
<p>14. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS, EXTERNAL AGENCIES, INDUSTRY, PROFESSIONAL BODIES</p> <p>Outline relationships with other bodies.</p>	

SECTION B: ACADEMIC ASPECTS OF THE COURSE

<p>15. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS</p> <p>Refer to the General Entry Requirements for the award, and any subject-specific requirements</p>	
<p>16. AIMS</p> <p>Define the broad educational purposes of the course/undergraduate subject strand. (Detailed programme level learning outcomes setting out the achievements which demonstrate successful completion of the course will be provided subsequently in a programme specification.)</p>	
<p>17. COURSE STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT</p> <p>Describe the structure and outline the course content, if available, preferably in diagrammatic form, identifying modules as <u>C</u>urrent, <u>R</u>evised, <u>N</u>ew.</p> <p>Note – Appendix can be added if necessary.</p>	

SECTION C: RESOURCES

	RESOURCE	YES	NO
<p>18. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS The HE Forum will require clarification of additional resource requirements, and representatives meetings should be prepared to respond to questions.)</p> <p>Will it be possible to offer the course within existing approved resources?</p>	Staffing		
	Accommodation		
	Centrally managed IT services		
	Library		
	Careers advice		
	Recurrent/Equipment		
	Equipment – IT (including software)		
	Equipment – other		
	E-learning		
	Marketing		

SIGNED

NEW HE COURSE PROPOSER	
DATE	

SECTION D: APPROVAL

APPROVED		DEFERRED	
COMMENTS			

SIGNED:

CHAIR OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMIC BOARD	
QUALITY & PERFORMANCE MANAGER	
DATE	

Appendix 2

APPENDIX 2

South West College

COURSE SUSPENSION

(Please attach supporting documentation as appropriate)

Form CA5b

1 COURSE TITLE:

COURSE CODE:

2 LOCATION:

3 MODE OF ATTENDANCE:

(full-time, part-time, both)

4 SPONSORING FACULTY:

Sponsoring School:

5 COURSE/SUBJECT DIRECTOR:

6 REASON FOR SUSPENSION:

7 LIST ANY COURSE-SPECIFIC MODULES TO BE SUSPENDED:

7 PROPOSED DATE OF SUSPENSION: INTAKE: ACADEMIC YEAR 20 /

9 PROPOSED NEXT INTAKE: YEAR 20 / (This should be no more than 12 months from above)

10 NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS

HAVE APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS BEEN ADVISED OF THE SUSPENSION OF THE COURSE?

YES/NO/NOT APPLICABLE

WHAT ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS?

Signed :

Date:

Head of Faculty

Signed:

.....

Date:

Higher Education Academic Board Designation

The college admissions office and the external examiner should be advised of this suspension. Prospectus and other publicity material should be updated. In addition, where appropriate the relevant University Partnership Manager or Link Tutor should be informed.

The completed form should be forwarded to the Higher Education Quality Office and the Chair of the Higher Education Academic Board.

South West
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APPENDIX 3

South West College

COURSE WITHDRAWAL

(Please attach supporting documentation as appropriate)

Form CA5

1 COURSE TITLE:

COURSE CODE:

2 LOCATION:

3 MODE OF ATTENDANCE:
(full-time, part-time, both)

4 SPONSORING FACULTY:
Sponsoring School:

5 COURSE/SUBJECT DIRECTOR:

6 ASSOCIATED FACULTY OR FACULTIES:

8 REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL:

8 LIST ANY COURSE-SPECIFIC MODULES TO BE WITHDRAWN:

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Please specify any resource implications: staffing, equipment, specialist accommodation.

10 PROPOSED DATE OF WITHDRAWAL:

LAST INTAKE: ACADEMIC YEAR 20 /

11 NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS

HAVE APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS BEEN ADVISED OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE COURSE?

YES/NO/NOT APPLICABLE

IS THE COURSE TO BE CONTINUED UNTIL CURRENT STUDENTS COMPLETE?

YES/NO/NOT APPLICABLE

WHAT ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR APPLICANTS AND CURRENT STUDENTS?

Signed :

Head of Faculty

Date:

Signed:

Chair of Higher Education Academic Board

Date:

The college admissions office and the external examiner should be advised of this suspension. Prospectus and other publicity material should be updated. In addition, where appropriate the relevant University Partnership Manager or Link Tutor should be informed.

The completed form should be forwarded to Julie Kelly, Higher Education Quality Office and Liam Curran Chair of the Higher Education Academic Board.

The external examiner should be advised of this withdrawal. Prospectus and other publicity material should be updated.

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Document Development

Please complete with details regarding the development of this Policy.

D1. Working Group

Details of staff who were involved in the development of this policy:

Name	Position

D2. Consultation

Details of staff, external groups or external organisations who were consulted in the development of this policy:

Please refer to Equality Screening Consultation Guidance.

Name	Organisation	Date

D3. Approval Dates:

Details	Date Approved
Equality Screening <i>(please refer to Equality Screening Guidance)</i>	
Quality Checked <i>(please refer to Quality Checklist)</i>	
SLT	
Governing Body <i>(SLT to decide if PPS needs to go to Governing Body)</i>	

D4. Communication Plan:

Please provide details and dates as to how this policy will be communicated, implemented and disseminated:

Action:	Action by:	Date:

D5. Document History

Issue no. under review (Please see the front page)	Date of review: (Date)	Who was involved in reviewing the document? (Name/s)	Were changes made to the document after reviewing? (Yes or No)	If changes have been made, please provide brief details:	New Issue No.	If Yes, did the document need to go through consultation again? (Yes*/No)	If Yes, did the document need to be Equality Screened again? (Yes*/No)	If Yes, date those affected by document will be alerted of updated document: (Date)

* If you answered 'Yes' in columns E or F, you must forward details of additional consultation and/or screening to the Equality Officer.