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**Programme Withdrawal & Suspension**

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| **Policy Schedule** | |
| Policy title | Programme Withdrawal & Suspension Procedures |
| Policy owner | Toby Best |
| Policy lead contact | Portfolio & Programme Development Manager |
| Approving body | Academic Strategy and Planning Committee |
| Date of approval | 07/11/2017 |
| Date of implementation | 07/11/2017 |
| Version no. | 2.0 |
| Related Guidelines, Procedures, Codes of Practice etc. | Academic Planning Cycle  Business Planning Cycle  Competition and Markets Authority Guidance  Academic Regulations  Quality Framework |
| Review interval | Three years |

***NB. This policy is available on the University of Cumbria intranet and it should be noted that any printed copies are uncontrolled and cannot be guaranteed to constitute the current version of the policy.***

1. **Context**

The University Academic Regulations (B5) allow Academic Board to, through the Programme Withdrawal Procedures, agree the withdrawal of a programme if it has evidence that the programme is no longer meeting minimum acceptable academic standards or where recruitment levels are no longer viable.

Programme withdrawal and suspension procedures provide a formal means of withdrawing programmes from the University’s portfolio or suspending programmes from recruitment.

Programme withdrawal may be considered for a number of reasons including, lack of alignment to the strategic plan, viability or quality concerns or other external factors.

The Consumer Protection Regulations (2008) and Consumer Contracts Regulations (2013) protect the rights of students. The University enters a contractual relationship with students to deliver a programme in accordance with an offer made and accepted based on information provided.

As detailed in the ‘Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice’:[[1]](#footnote-1)

“*If a programme can no longer be offered, arrangements need to be made for existing students to be provided with suitable alternatives so that the student is enabled to learn and achieve until the end of their programme.*

*If teaching-out in the institution is not possible, policies should address the following areas:*

* *when and how the institution will offer alternative courses within the institution*
* *how the institution will help students to transfer to other providers, including transfer of credit and academic progress*
* *where teaching cannot be completed or where none of the proposed options are acceptable to the student there should be clear policies for refunding all or part of paid fees and recording the amount of credit/academic progress achieved.”*

These procedures are designed to ensure that public information on the University’s offer is accurate and that full consideration is given to any impact on prospective and current students.

The UK Quality Code has informed these procedures for Higher Education.

1. **Programme Withdrawal**

Programmes at risk of withdrawal are identified as part of the normal academic planning cycle. Timescales may vary according to the nature of the proposal and any influencing internal/external factors.

Following approval in principle by the Chair of ASPC, Heads of Department will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure consultation with all interested parties on the implications of the proposal and to agree any necessary actions to safeguard the student experience.

The Chair of ASPC will consider requests for programme withdrawal through completion of the withdrawal template prior to making recommendations to Academic Board.

Decisions about programme suspension and withdrawal are made on a case by case basis, taking into consideration implication of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance.

Where a programme is withdrawn, the University will either, ensure that standards and learning experience are maintained until all students have completed the programme, or that students are enabled to transfer to a suitable alternative programme at the University or elsewhere.

The Head of Department is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and oversight of the agreed Programme Withdrawal action plan. This will include regular reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor’s Academic Leadership Group, until all students have completed the withdrawn programme.

Programmes that are not withdrawn may remain dormant for an admissions cycle, allowing for potential recruitment in future admissions cycles.

**Collaborative Provision**

Proposals for the withdrawal of collaborative provision activity should also follow these procedures. Programme Withdrawal may be initiated either by the University of Cumbria or by the partner. The partner will be required to contribute to consultation procedures as appropriate.

**Revalidation**

The withdrawal of programmes replaced through revalidation is managed through Programme Initiation procedures.

**Re-approval**

Re-approval through periodic review does not require any withdrawal activity (the programme continues). Periodic review procedures consider the arrangements for continuing students, in line with the University’s Academic Design Principles.

1. **Programme Suspension**

There may be circumstances in which the University wishes to suspend recruitment to a programme during an admissions cycle.

When considering requests for suspension, the interests of applicants will be a significant consideration. In recognition of consumer law and in the interests of applicants, suspension will be avoided where possible where offers have been made to applicants.

Where a programme is suspended, the University will ensure that plans are in place to safeguard the learning experience of any current students.

The Chair of ASPC will consider requests for programme suspension through completion of the suspension template.

**Roles and responsibilities**

**The Proposer** is responsible for:

* Liaising with their Head of Department to discuss proposals prior to submission.
* Completing the paperwork.
* Completing required information in consultation with University Services.
* Working with the Collaborative Provision team as required.

**Heads of Department** are responsible for:

* Overseeing proposals within their Department.
* Ensuring proposals align to business plans and institutional priorities.
* Ensuring effective engagement with the procedures, including completion of all necessary paperwork.
* Making recommendations to the DVC.
* Overseeing the implementation and monitoring of programme withdrawal action plans.
* Communicating outcomes to current students.

**Finance and Resources are** responsible for:

* Identifying programmes at risk of withdrawal.
* Maintaining a record of all proposals and their status.
* Ensuring compliance with timelines and procedures.
* Internal communication of outcomes.
* Ensuring alignment of programme withdrawals with general portfolio management.
* Providing an annual report to Academic Strategy and Planning Committee.
* Reporting to Collaborative Provision Sub Committee on withdrawal of collaborative provision.

**The Director of Academic Quality and Development** is responsible for:

* Making recommendations to the DVC.

**The Chair of ASPC** is responsible for:

* Agreeing which programmes should be considered through the programme withdrawal/suspension procedures
* Approving programme withdrawal
* Approving suspension of recruitment

**Collaborative Partners**, where collaborative provision is affected there may be a requirement for a partner to contribute to the completion of the documentation.

1. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Regulation/Student,protection/Statement_good_practice.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)