

Management of Closure or Suspension of a Programme of Study

Relating to: UCSH

Document reference: UCSHPoIUcs06

Document owner: Director of Adults & HE

Date of approval: 4 July 2024

Date of next review: 4 July 2025

Scope

This policy and procedure covers all campuses of St Helens College that deliver higher education programmes. All Schools are required to follow this policy and procedure.

The principle underpinning both the policy and procedure is that in all cases, students' interests are protected, and the quality of their learning experience safeguarded. The policy and procedure provide a structure to ensure timely communication with students regarding the potential or actual closure of their course or programme of study.

This policy does not apply to the closure of modules.

Purpose

The policy and procedure set out St Helens College's process for closing or suspending undergraduate programmes. This document also covers programme closures, which involve the replacement of a programme in a particular discipline, with a new one. The policy is aligned with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education advice and guidance sections - 'Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access'; 'Assessment'; 'Enabling Student Achievement'; 'Expectations and Practices for Monitoring and Evaluation'; and 'Student Engagement'; and reflects the sector advisory guidance within the CMA UK Higher Education Providers-Advice on Consumer Protection Law (March 2015).

Policy

A School may not close or suspend a programme on its own authority, because of the contractual liabilities between students and applicants and the College.

The College will automatically close any programme, which has not had sufficient students registered upon it for three years, unless the School is able to demonstrate future recruitment of significant numbers of students onto that programme.

St Helens College adheres to the course closure policies, procedures, and timescales of all awarding bodies.

Timescales for course closure will vary for each programme. All partner HEIs adhere to their own policies as regards notification. University Centre St Helens will at all times ensure that students are aware of potential changes to their programme. Formal agreement through a validating university or through the Governing Body Curriculum & Quality Committee will determine the process for current students or applicants.

Obtaining approval from Curriculum & Quality Committee

The recommendation to close or suspend a programme must be made by the administering School for that programme. The recommendation to close or suspend must be made to the Governing Body Curriculum & Quality Committee. A template form is available from the Governance Director and should be used to make the request.

Where there are no students registered on the programme being closed or suspended, there are no applicants who have accepted offers on the course, and there is no impact from the closure on other Schools or Campuses, a written recommendation signed by the Head of School to close or suspend a course will be automatically accepted on behalf of the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

In all other cases, the recommendation to close or suspend a programme must cover the following areas:

- The rationale for closure or suspension (see section 3 below)
- The proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the course (see section 4 below)
- The proposed arrangements for applicants who have accepted offers of a place on the course (see section 5 below).
- The proposed arrangements for any related programmes delivered on other campuses (see section 6 below).

The Curriculum & Quality Committee will only accept the recommendation if the rationale is sufficiently strong and is assured in all cases that the students' interests are protected, the quality of their learning experience safeguarded, and if the arrangements for students and applicants satisfy the requirements set out below.

Conditions under which a programme may close

The following may be regarded as sufficient cause for closing or suspending a programme:

- The demand for the programme is too small to cover the cost of delivery.
- Staff involved in teaching the programme are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them.
- The validating University makes changes that lead to a recommendation to close or suspend the programme.
- Updating of the School's curriculum has led to a change in the range of programmes the School wishes to provide.
- An issue with quality assurance, which affects the continued running of the programme.

Where a School seeks to close a financially viable, successful, or strategically important programme for any reason, the recommendation should only be submitted to SLT, and Governors after the Head of School has discussed and documented the proposed course of action with the relevant Vice Principal.

Arrangements for current students

Where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme solely for new entrants, then current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of registration on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure or suspension recommendation has been agreed by Curriculum & Quality Committee. All current students should be communicated with in a timely manner to ensure that the information regarding the decision and any support is put in place quickly.

Where the recommendation is to close or suspend the programme and current students will be affected, the views of current students on the proposed arrangements should be sought by the School and included with the recommendation to Curriculum & Quality Committee.

The School's proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) 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 programme will still be achievable by current students, even if the range of module choices is smaller because of staffing reductions.
- Options for current students regarding transferring to another programme within the College or to another institution.

Arrangements for prospective students

The Admissions Team must undertake all communications with applicants on these matters in a timely manner. Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted on behalf of Curriculum & Quality Committee. These applicants should then be informed of their options regarding transferring their application to another programme within the College or to another institution. This will be in accordance with the timescales outlined in the 'Conditions of Offer' document.

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 closure/suspension recommendation has been made.

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 recommendation is accepted. UCAS should be notified by informing the College UCAS Correspondent when the closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted on behalf of Curriculum & Quality Committee.

Closing or suspending a programme delivered on multiple campuses

The closure of a programme, which is offered across a number of campuses, should be discussed, and agreed by SLT prior to the submission of a formal request to Curriculum & Quality Committee, so that the impact of the decision on students and the College as a whole is taken into consideration.

Amending college publications/marketing material

Once a closure/suspension recommendation has been accepted, the School must ensure all necessary amendments are made to School and College publications and websites.

The Procedure for the management of course closure or suspension of a programme of study

University Centre St Helens adheres to the timescales for course closure and suspension of a course of study stipulated in the policy and procedures of the appropriate awarding body.

