Code of practice for programme suspension and withdrawal

Academic year 2016/17
Introduction

1. The purpose of programme suspension and withdrawal is to record and monitor the life cycle of programmes, ensure that due process is being followed and maintain the quality of the students’ learning experience. Programme suspensions need to be monitored to ensure that programmes are constantly reviewed to remain viable and where necessary the need for programme withdrawal is promptly identified. Programme withdrawals must be monitored to ensure that students are given every opportunity to finish their studies without compromising the quality of their learning experience and the academic quality of their award.

2. The completion of the suspension or withdrawal form gives formal notice to the University of the programme team’s intention, which then enables the programme team and the University to ensure that the interests of continuing students are safeguarded and that appropriate measures are taken to notify applicants at the earliest opportunity.

3. Programmes should be constantly reviewed to ensure that they are current and viable. The need to temporarily suspend or close a programme may be due to a number of factors:
   - the annual programme review or periodic programme review process could identify a strategic or viable need to close a programme
   - changes in industry and/or subject demand
   - changes in staffing
   - a change to the University’s strategic aims, objectives and mission
   - no/low numbers of students recruited
   - postponement of the programme following successful completion of the validation process
   - resourcing implications

4. For the process flow charts on programme withdrawal and programme suspension please see Appendices 2 and 4. Process templates can be downloaded from http://www.surrey.ac.uk/quality_enhancement/validation/withdrawals/index.htm. It is advisable that templates are always downloaded from the website and not stored locally to ensure the most recent template is used. If an incorrect template is used, the documentation will be sent back requesting that the correct template is utilised.

Programme suspension

The process

5. Once the programme team have identified the need to temporarily suspend a programme, the programme suspension form (Appendix 1) should be completed by the Programme Leader or nominated alternate. The form can be utilised for one programme or several at programme, School/Department or Faculty level.

6. The form should clearly convey the reasons for the programme suspension, how long the programme is to be suspended for and whether the programme has previously been suspended.

7. The form should also detail what the future plans for the programme are, for example, whether at the end of the period of suspension the plan is to re-advertise the programme or permanently withdraw it. Evidently this may change over the course of the suspension, and if this is the case, the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards (QES) must be informed.

8. If a programme is suspended with a view to re-advertising after the suspension period is at an end but the current approval period for the programme has finished, the programme must go through the appropriate quality approval procedure before it
can be re-advertised. The deliberation of which quality approval procedure is appropriate will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards.

9. The programme suspension should be brought to the attention of all parties involved to ensure that they are aware of the suspension and support it, both at School, Faculty and University level.

10. For undergraduate programmes, a request for suspension forms will be sent to the Faculties for completion annually with a deadline in order to meet the requirements of programme management processes such as: the Key Information Set (KIS), admissions and timetabling. Postgraduate programmes will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

11. Once the form is complete and all signatures have been obtained, it should be forwarded to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards for processing. The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards will circulate the form to the Quality Systems Group e-mail list to inform all relevant parties so that records and systems can be updated.

**Timescales**

12. All suspension forms that relate to undergraduate programmes that are being suspended for the upcoming academic year must be submitted by no later than the end of February, seven months prior to the start of the new academic year.

13. All suspension forms that relate to postgraduate programmes that are being suspended for the upcoming academic year must be submitted by no later than the end of July, one month prior to the start of the new academic year. Ideally suspension forms would be submitted as soon as a need to suspend a programme has been identified.

14. It would be atypical for a suspension form to be submitted after the deadlines above; however, it is recognised that this might be necessary in exceptional cases, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In these instances a clear rationale must be provided.

15. In instances where a programme is being suspended applicants must be informed by no later than the 5th August prior to the commencement of the suspension.

**Approval**

16. Once the form has been completed, it must be submitted to the relevant Board of Studies meeting for consideration and approval. The Chair of the relevant Board of Studies signs the form to confirm that the suspension is supported by the School.

17. Once signed by the Board of Studies Chair, the form should be submitted to the Faculty Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) for consideration and approval. They sign the form to confirm that the suspension has been brought to the attention of, and has the support of, the Faculty.
Programme withdrawal

The process

18. When the decision is made to withdraw a programme, the programme withdrawal form (Appendix 3) must be completed by the Programme Leader or nominated alternate.

19. During the withdrawal process every effort must be made to support continuing students. All changes should be discussed with affected students at the earliest opportunity to assess the potential impact on the remainder of their studies. The outcomes of the discussions should clearly be recorded on the form.

20. The process requires that the programme team closing the programme details on the programme withdrawal form whether any additional resources will be needed to ensure the continual support of any students that are still registered on the programme. The arrangements are then agreed at Faculty level, confirming any additional resources.

21. The closure of a programme should be underpinned by clear reasoning. If it is being replaced by an enhanced programme, due to the existing programme not recruiting well, clear evidence will have to be presented to demonstrate why the new programme will attract more students. This is usually accomplished through the pre-validation process detailed within the Code of practice for the design and approval of new programmes.

22. In instances where a programme is being closed and is being replaced by a new programme, students must be notified as soon as possible and a withdrawal form submitted. The form will need to detail whether students on the old programme will be given the opportunity to transfer to the new programme. This will evidently depend on whether the old programme maps to the new programme. If existing students wish to transfer, then a process will need to be developed and detailed within the withdrawal form explaining how this will be managed.

23. If a programme is closed but still has students that remain on the programme outside of the periodic review approval period, the programme will still need to undergo a periodic review. This is to assure the University that the programme still meets the University’s requirements. Usually the programme will be reviewed with others within the same department.

24. All programme withdrawals must be submitted to a Board of Studies meeting for consideration; this is to ensure that all relevant parties are aware of the proposed withdrawal and are all in agreement. The Board of Studies can also facilitate a discussion around the teach-out arrangements for the programme, if there are still registered students.

25. Once the form is complete and the relevant signatures have been obtained, it should be forwarded to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards for processing. The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards will circulate the form to the Quality Systems Group e-mail group to inform all relevant parties so that records and systems can be updated. This includes the discontinuation of all advertising materials.

26. All programmes that are withdrawn will be reported annually to the Quality and Standards Sub-committee and the University Learning and Teaching Committee. The number of withdrawals will also be annually noted at Senate.
**Timescales**

27. Irrespective of whether the withdrawal form has been completed, the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards should be informed as soon as possible, especially if offers have been made to applicants.

28. Due to Marketing and Recruitment deadlines, the suggested time scale for the submission of programme withdrawals is in December, one and a half academic years prior to the year of closure (e.g., if the programme was to close in September 2018, the withdrawal would need to be submitted by December 2016). This is to allow enough time to cease marketing activities and avoid the necessity of informing any students who have applied to the programme that is due to be withdrawn.

29. It would be atypical for a programme withdrawal form to be submitted for immediate closure once it has been advertised for the first time or re-advertised for further recruitment. However, the University recognises that this may occur in exceptional circumstances. In these instances, a clear rationale for the closure will need to be provided and a detailed plan of how prospective students, who may have applied to study on the programme, will be informed and managed, i.e., whether they be offered an alternative. The Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards, Admissions team, and Marketing team should be informed as soon as possible.

30. In instances where a programme is being withdrawn, applicants must be informed by no later than the 5th August prior to the commencement of the withdrawal.

**Approval**

31. The form must be approved by: the Programme Leader/Head of School/Department, Chair of the Board of Studies, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching); Executive Dean; collaborating Faculty/School/Department’s Executive Dean or Head of School/Department.

32. Once the withdrawal has been approved, the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards will circulate the form for action to all relevant parties, i.e., the Student Services and Administration Directorate, Admissions, and Marketing. A process flow chart detailing the involvement of professional support teams in the modification process can be found on the programme life-cycle web pages.

**Roles and responsibilities**

33. It is the responsibility of the Faculty to ensure that due process is followed and the relevant people are consulted before a programme suspension or withdrawal is processed.

34. If there are any remaining students on the programme that is being withdrawn, it is the responsibility of the Faculty to manage the teach-out period once it has been closed. All programme closures should be reported and monitored through the annual programme review process.

35. It is the responsibility of the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards to inform the wider University of the programme closure so that the relevant departments can update their data.

36. All documentation will be filed on the Quality Assurance Programme Documentation website, which all University staff have read access to.

37. This Code of practice has been written in line with the Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code for Higher Education and informed by sector-wide practice. Any feedback on how this process can be improved or general feedback can be sent to: gesadmin@surrey.ac.uk.
# Appendix 1 – Programme suspension form

**PROGRAMME SUSPENSION FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Programme title(s) and award(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Faculty / School/Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Name of person who is requesting the suspension(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Date of the commencement of the programme suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Length of programme suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Has the programme(s) listed previously been suspended? If so, when and for how long?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Following the completion of the suspension period will the programme potentially be re-advertised or permanently withdrawn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Have relevant parties at School, Faculty and University level been consulted? Eg Recruitment, Admissions, Marketing and Strategic Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Has the programme suspension been communicated to applicants and students (if applicable)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reason for the programme suspension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signatures required**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board of Studies Chair</strong> – to confirm the Schools/Departments support for the proposed suspension and that it has been brought to the attention of all relevant parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)</strong> – to confirm the Faculty’s support for the proposed suspension and that it has been brought to the attention of all relevant parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the decision to suspend a programme, the programme suspension form must be completed and all relevant parties must be consulted / informed.

Once the form is completed, it must be submitted to a Board of Studies for consideration and signed by the Board of Studies Chair confirming the support of the Board and the School/Department.

If approved, the form is then submitted to the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) to obtain their signature to confirm the support of the Faculty.

Once all signatures have been obtained, the form should be submitted to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards for processing.

ALL COMPLETED FORMS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES TO BE SUBMITTED TO QES BY NO LATER THAN THE END OF FEBRUARY.

Once submitted, QES will circulate the form electronically to ‘Quality Systems Group’ e-mailing list which notifies all relevant parties, such as the Student Services and Administration Directorate, Marketing and Admissions, of the suspension and prompts them to update all relevant records.

End
## Appendix 3 – Programme withdrawal form

### PROGRAMME WITHDRAWAL FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Programme title and award</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Mode of study</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Faculty / School / Department / Associated Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Name of person who is requesting the withdrawal</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Proposed date of closure</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Date of last student intake (eg. September 2014)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Number of students remaining on the programme as of the proposed closure date eg from September 2014 - if more than one programme is being withdrawn, you will need to clearly state which programmes the student numbers below relate to</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHEQ Level 4</td>
<td>FHEQ Level 5</td>
<td>Level P</td>
<td>FHEQ Level 6</td>
<td>FHEQ Level 7</td>
<td>FHEQ Level 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Date the last cohort / student is due to complete, taking into consideration any possible re-sits or deferrals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Number of current applications (if applicable)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Rationale for the discontinuation of the programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 When were students consulted and how were they informed?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Are the students content with the proposed transitional arrangements (only applicable when an existing programme is being replaced by a new programme) / teach-out arrangements of the withdrawn programme?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Provide details on how any applicants will be informed of the withdrawal and whether they will be offered an alternate programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Provide details of how continuing students will be supported during the teach-out</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15 Is the programme being replaced by a new programme? If so, specify the replacement and whether continuing students will be given the opportunity to transfer to the new programme

16 Will any other programme(s) be affected by the closure of this programme?

17 Have any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and / or collaborative partners been informed of the withdrawal (if applicable)?
*Please state when they were consulted*

18 Have Recruitment, Admissions, Marketing and Strategic Planning been consulted prior to the completion of the withdrawal form?

19 Signatures required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Leader or Head of School / Department</strong> – to confirm that appropriate discussions have taken place and that the withdrawal has the support of the programme team and any other relevant members of staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chair of the Board of Studies</strong> – to confirm the Board’s and School / Department’s support for the withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)</strong> – to confirm that all quality checks have been carried out at Faculty level and all processes are in place to manage the transitional period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Dean</strong> – to confirm that appropriate discussions have taken place at Faculty level and that it is supported by the Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborating Faculty / School / Department’s Executive Dean or Head of School/Department</strong> - to confirm support for the withdrawal of the programme(s)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All forms should be completed and returned to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards*
Appendix 4 – Programme withdrawal process flow chart

Start

Following the decision to withdraw a programme, the programme withdrawal form must be completed and all relevant parties must be consulted / informed, this includes:
- Members of staff who are involved in the running of the programme and relevant departmental staff
- Heads of School / Department
- Student Services and Administration
- Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)
- Student applicants
- Continuing students

Once the form is completed, it must be signed by the Programme Leader or Head of School / Department to confirm that the necessary discussions have taken place and the withdrawal has the support of the programme team and any other relevant members of staff.

Following consideration of the withdrawal by the Board of Studies, signatures must be obtained from the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Executive Dean to confirm that due process has been followed, and the support of the Faculty.

If the programme(s) being withdrawn are delivered collaboratively with another Faculty/School/Department, then a signature is also needed from the collaborating Executive Dean or Head of School to confirm that they are aware of the withdrawal and support it.

If approved, the form is then submitted to the relevant Board of Studies meeting and signed by the Chair to confirm the support of the Board and the School / Department.

Once all signatures have been obtained, the form should be submitted to the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and Standards for processing.

Once submitted, QES will circulate the form electronically to ‘Quality Systems Group’ e-mailing list which notifies all relevant parties, such as the Student Service and Administration Directorate, Marketing and Admissions, of the withdrawal and prompts them to update all relevant records.

End