

## PROGRAMME SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL

### GUIDANCE

#### Overview

The University's procedures for the suspension or withdrawal of programmes are articulated in the [Code of Practice for the Development, Approval and Modification of Taught Provision](#) (paragraphs 70-76). These procedures are designed to ensure that the interests of students registered on a programme are protected and programmes which are being suspended/withdrawn are carefully managed, enabling the University to meet its obligations with respect to consumer protection law, the Office for Students and the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

**Suspension of intake to a programme which has been advertised and which has applicants and/or offer-holders must be regarded as exceptional, given the direct adverse effects on individuals, the potential legal (and financial) liabilities and given the possible reputational risk to the University.**

**Consideration must be given to progression from programmes delivered by partners such as Navitas, and programmes with Foundation years, to ensure the future intake of all students has been taken into account.**

#### Options for Suspension or Withdrawal

##### Suspense: One intake only

Where short-term issues arise, such as staffing gaps or unusually low applications, the School may decide to suspend intake for one cohort, and recommence the programme once these issues have been resolved. Where insufficient applications have been a reason for programme suspension, the School should undertake careful consideration of its marketing, recruitment and retention strategy.

##### Suspense: Fixed Term

Where there is a need to suspend a programme, but retain it for future use, a School may wish to suspend intake for a specific amount of time, with approval from the Quality and Standards Sub Committee. The time limit for suspensions of this nature should normally be no longer than two academic years. After this point, the School should consider the case for re-opening the programme, or withdrawing. Programmes under suspense for two academic years or more will need to be reviewed in terms of currency ahead of re-opening, and a re-approval event will therefore be required.

A decision to suspend an intake to a programme can be taken when for good and sufficient reason it would not be to the advantage of applicants or the University to run the programme. This might be on the grounds of loss of academic expertise and/or on the grounds of insufficient potential student numbers. The decision-making process is explained below. Final approval for the suspension of a

programme is given by the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee (QSSC) and a report is made to the University Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate.

### **Programme withdrawal**

A School may take the decision to withdraw a programme completely, which will result in no further intakes. Existing students should be not affected by the withdrawal of a programme and the University has an obligation to ensure that any current students are able to complete their intended award within the period of registration remaining to them. As such, any request to withdraw a programme must include a plan for how remaining students will be taught out and supported to complete the programme. Following the establishment of the Office for Students the University may also be required to report to the Office for Students certain programme withdrawals where a whole subject area is closed as a result of the withdrawal. It must be established with the Quality Office [qualoffice@le.ac.uk](mailto:qualoffice@le.ac.uk) if the requested withdrawal is a reportable event.

Final approval for the withdrawal of a programme is given by the Quality and Standards Sub-Committee (QSSC) and a report is made to the University Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate. When calculating the teach out period and associated staffing and support requirements Schools and Colleges should pay particular attention to the maximum possible periods of registration that cohorts or individual students have to complete their studies and have plans in place to ensure that all students are supported.

The following table indicates the period that should be taken into consideration when programmes are withdrawn:

<b>Type of Provision</b>	<b>Max period of registration</b>
<b>Full Time</b>	
UG bachelors programme	5 years
UG with integrated year (Industry / Abroad)	6 years
Integrated Masters	6 years
Integrated Masters with Industry / Abroad	7 years
Campus based Masters	2 years
<b>Part time / DL</b>	
Masters	4 years
UG	Up to 7 years
Interim awards	Variable - check with Quality Office

### **Timescales**

Programme suspense/withdrawal should be approved prior to the admission cycle for the affected intake, to ensure that applicants and offer-holders are not adversely affected. Where a programme

is open to 'live' applicants, they must be contacted at the earliest possible opportunity. Applicants must be given as much notice as possible and where appropriate, offered alternative routes.

For undergraduate programmes, the deadline for a decision to suspend intake to a programme starting in September/October is the preceding 31 March. Decisions to suspend or withdraw a postgraduate programme should be made no later than the end of July prior to a September start, and the end of October for a January start.

### **Process of Suspension or Withdrawal**

1. Discussion to suspend or withdraw initiated at College Operational Group (or equivalent), and approval provided by Head of College
2. Suspension/withdrawal discussed at School Learning and Teaching Committee; approval given by Head of School
3. Programme Suspension/Withdrawal Form submitted to [qualoffice@le.ac.uk](mailto:qualoffice@le.ac.uk) for presentation to Quality and Standards Sub-Committee for final approval
4. Notification of approval communicated via the Quality Office
5. Commence with implementation plan as set out in the Programme Suspension/ Withdrawal form

### **Communication with Students**

When deciding to suspend or withdraw a programme, primary consideration should be given to applicants and offer holders. Suspension of intake or withdrawal of a programme may adversely affect the confidence of continuing students in the subject area. Where this is a possibility the School should liaise with student representatives to put into place an appropriate communication plan to reassure continuing students. Schools may also wish to consult with current students prior to making a decision on whether to suspend/withdraw a programme, where appropriate. Where the plan is to withdraw and teach out the programme, it is particularly important that these communication and support strategies are in place.

Practical guidance on the process for student communication, and the University's obligation to recognise students' consumer rights, is provided in [ANNEX A – CMA GUIDANCE FOR PROGRAMME CLOSURE](#).

### **Communication with colleagues**

Once approved, the decision to suspend/withdraw a programme must be communicated to the following stakeholders:

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>To be informed by</b>
School staff	Head of School
Current students	Programme Director
Marketing/Admissions	Quality Office
Applicants and offer holders	Admissions
UCAS/other clearing house	Admissions
Partnership programmes or pathways	Programme Director
Timetabling	Quality Office



## PROGRAMME SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL

### FORM

#### PART A: Programme Details

Programme title:	
College:	School/Dept:
Qualifications awarded: (e.g. BA, MSc PG Dip etc.)	UCAS Code: (if applicable)
Collaborative Partner (if applicable)	

Intake suspended/withdrawn from (date):					
One intake only <input type="checkbox"/>	Fixed term <input type="checkbox"/>		Withdrawal <input type="checkbox"/>		
Expected completion date of last cohort of students, assuming normal progression:			Latest potential end date: (Refer to maximum period of registration outlined on programme specification)		
Numbers of students currently registered on each level of the programme:	L3:	L4:	L5:	L6:	L7:

#### PART B: Supporting Information

Reason for suspension or withdrawal: (E.g. Strategic, academic, economic, market etc.)
Finance and resource: (What are the costs/benefits attributable to suspension or withdrawal? Please consider fee income, teaching space, staff teaching time, consumables, library resource. What alternative use will be made of these resources?)
Affected students/applicants on other programmes: (Are any modules on the suspended/withdrawn programme shared? Is this programme offered with a Foundation Year?)
External Examining arrangements: (Please indicate the planned external examining arrangements for the period until the last cohort of students has completed their studies)

Plan for Programme Reinstatement (in the event of suspension only)  
 (If re-commencing, what changes will need to be made?)

Date to recommence recruitment:

Office for Students notification:

The University may be required to notify the Office for Students of certain programme withdrawals. Please confirm discussions with the Quality Office indicating the extent to which this withdrawal represents closure of a subject or School.

**Endorsement**

Head of Department:

Date:

Head of College:

Date:

**PART C: Implementation Plan**

Stakeholder	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Progress
School staff	<i>Head of School to notify all staff at School L&amp;T Committee</i>	<i>20/09/2019</i>	<i>B Smith</i>	<i>In progress</i>
School staff				
Applicants/offer holders				
Current students				
Partnerships				
Other				

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## ANNEX A

### PROGRAMME SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL

#### Guidance in relation to Competition and Markets Authority advice

*The following guidance is for Schools who are considering withdrawal or suspension of a programme(s).*

*When considering withdrawing or suspending a programme, it is advised that the proposed intake affected is not yet accepting applications. We enter into a contract when an applicant accepts their offer of a place of study and so it is advisable to honour the intakes currently accepting applications. However, we recognise that this is not always possible and we may need to consider programme closures for intakes currently accepting applications. Advice is given below for both scenarios. This advice assumes operation of a teach-out for all current students.*

**I am considering withdrawing/suspending one or more of the programmes in my School. The programme/s are not yet accepting applications. What do I need to think about or do from a CMA perspective?**

If nothing about the programme will change for current students and there are no offer holders affected, there are no CMA issues. However, you should still consider drafting some communication to current students, reassuring them that they will be able to continue their programme to completion and no changes are currently expected. Please note that this communication should **not be sent** until formal approval of the closure/suspension is given by the Quality office.

**I am considering withdrawing/suspending one or more of the programmes in my School. The proposed programme is currently accepting applications and we have already made offers. What do I need to think about or do from a CMA perspective?**

If we have made an offer of study to an applicant and they have accepted this offer, we are now in a contract and have an obligation to continue to run the programme, or support these students in finding a new programme of study. You should:

- Contact the Admissions Office on [admissions@le.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@le.ac.uk) to identify the number of students who are currently holding offers, even if they have not yet accepted their offer. If this is a significant number, you may want to consider whether closing the programme for this particular intake is the best course of action;
- Consider the timeline you are working to. Our [terms and conditions of an offer](#) state that we will inform students of any changes ‘...as soon as possible and no later than 25 days before the change takes effect.’ We would consider the date the change takes effect to be the official start date of the programme. If we are unable to meet this, we will be in breach of contract and Legal Services should be informed;

- Consider alternative programmes that UoL offer that affected applicants could be considered for;
- Consider alternative courses that affected applicants could apply for outside of UoL;
- Consider the timing of when we notify applicants – will they have enough time to find a new programme and start with their originally requested intake?;
- Consider preparing a draft communication to offer holders about why the programme is closing and suggested alternatives. Although nothing should be sent until formal approval is given by the Quality Office, this communication will be sent by the Admissions Office (or Distance Learning Hub as appropriate) and they will ask for your proposed text once advised by the Quality Office, so it is suggested to start thinking about the text for this communication beforehand to speed up the eventual process of contacting applicants and offer holders.

**We have decided to close or suspend a particular programme and are about to submit our paperwork to the Quality Office. Can I tell current students and offer holders about the proposed closure/suspension?**

You must wait until formal confirmation is given by the Quality office that the closure/suspension request has been approved before you contact offer holders. You may have already sought consultation from existing students, where appropriate.

**Can I ask Marketing to un-publish the programme from our 'Study With Us' webpages or the 'Apply now' link?**

Marketing will only amend the webpages once formal approval has been received from the Quality Office. Until this has been given, no changes will be made to the webpages.

**Formal approval has now been given by the Quality Office. What happens next?**

- The Quality Office will issue a memo sent to all stakeholders including Admissions and Marketing
- Admissions will contact the School and ask for the text that will be sent to offer holders, including alternative courses
- Marketing will remove the course webpage so that no more applications can be made. Admissions will also remove undergraduate programmes from UCAS.
- Admissions will contact offer holders informing them of the closure/suspension and offering alternative courses. Offer holders will be invited to contact the School for more information on alternative courses. School
- The Schools should send a communication to all current students, advising of the teach out and formal confirmation of any changes (ideally, already consulted on).
- The School may be required to respond to any queries that come in from offer holders or current students.