

PROCEDURE FOR THE SUSPENSION, RE-INSTATEMENT OR WITHDRAWAL OF EXISTING COURSES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of its portfolio planning, monitoring and review processes, the University of Suffolk recognises the importance of reviewing the viability of course provision on a regular basis. Ongoing viability may be influenced by a range of factors, including:
- alignment with current and future strategic priorities
 - current and future market demand
 - resource and investment requirements (including staffing availability)
 - the quality and academic standard of the provision
 - changes in the relevant subject area
 - external stakeholder engagement
 - changes in Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements.
- 1.2 As a result, there may be occasions when it is necessary for the University or its partner institutions to either suspend recruitment to a course or to withdraw a course completely. This procedure outlines the ways in which decisions to suspend recruitment to courses, re-instate courses for recruitment or to permanently withdraw courses are approved within the University of Suffolk and its partner institutions. It draws on the expectations, practices, advice and guidance within the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and on relevant consumer protection legislation.
- 1.3 A key aspect of the procedure is ensuring that both applicants and students have adequate notice of the intended suspension or withdrawal of a course; that they are consulted on the implications and provided with adequate support in terms of considering their options; and that current students are provided with the opportunity to successfully complete their course, in accordance with the relevant Student Protection Plan.

2 Suspension of an existing course

- 2.1 Where an existing course is to remain in validation but is not to be open to new recruitment, the School or partner institution should seek approval for course suspension from the Portfolio Oversight Committee, using the 'course recruitment suspension' form. This should be submitted to the Quality team (quality@uos.ac.uk) to assign a form number and for onward submission to the Portfolio Oversight Committee.
- 2.2 The suspension of an existing course may not be lifted until the Portfolio Oversight Committee has agreed to reinstate the course.
- 2.3 In considering whether to apply for suspension of recruitment to a course, academic schools should liaise with all relevant stakeholders, including members of the course team, the Directorates of Marketing, Communications and International and Finance and Planning.

Where relevant, the impact on existing part-time students (particularly those who may be affected by lack of infill from subsequent cohorts), collaborative partners, feeder courses and/or modules used on other courses should be taken into consideration. Implications in terms of staffing, and any knock-on effect of staff changes on the student experience for subsequent levels of the course, should also be considered.

- 2.4 Requests for suspension of recruitment can be put forward at any point in the academic year, but it is best practice that requests should normally be submitted to the Quality team for onward submission to the Portfolio Oversight Committee at least six months before the commencement of the academic year in which suspension is to take effect. This is in order to ensure that applicants and other relevant stakeholders are provided with sufficient notice regarding the planned suspension. It is recognised that there may be circumstances in which a late decision is made to suspend recruitment, for example, because the course has not recruited a viable cohort and will therefore not provide a sound student experience. In such cases, the approval of the Portfolio Oversight Committee should be sought as soon as possible, and not less than four weeks before the start of the academic year. Where a late decision is made to suspend recruitment because of lack of a viable cohort, the suspension should be reviewed by the Portfolio Oversight Committee during the following semester with a view to determining whether permanent withdrawal would be a more appropriate option.
- 2.5 Decisions are reported to Senate for information. Once a course suspension is approved, the University and/or partner website and UCAS listing will be amended as applicable so that new applicants cannot apply for the course.
- 2.6 The University recognises its responsibilities towards any applicants who have been made offers for admission to a course that is subsequently suspended. The Admissions Policy sets out the procedures for ensuring that applicants are provided with sufficient advice and guidance to allow them to transfer to another course at the University or at another provider. The School or partner institution should recognise that where applicants are made an offer to study on a course, the University has entered into a contract to provide that course if the applicant accepts the offer and meets any conditions for entry. Decisions on course suspensions must therefore be made in a timely manner to ensure that the number of applicants affected is kept to a minimum. The School or partner institution should liaise with the Directorate of Marketing, Communications and International at the earliest opportunity to advise of the plans for course suspension, and the Quality team should communicate the decision to Marketing, Communications and International as soon as possible.

3 Re-instating a suspended course

- 3.1 Where a suspended course is to be re-opened for new recruitment, the School or partner institution should seek approval for course re-instatement from the Portfolio Oversight Committee, using the 'course re-instatement form'. This should be submitted to the Quality team (quality@uos.ac.uk) to assign a form number and for onward submission to the Portfolio Oversight Committee for approval.
- 3.2 In considering whether to apply for a re-instatement, academic schools should liaise with all relevant stakeholders, including members of the course team, the Directorates of Marketing, Communications and International and Finance and Planning, to ensure the course is viable and remains up-to-date, aligning to sector/industry benchmarks. Where modifications are needed to the course, these should be made in accordance with the *Procedure for approval of changes to existing courses*.
- 3.3 Requests to re-instate a course following suspension can be put forward at any point in the academic year, but it is best practice that requests should be submitted, where possible, prior to the start of the new recruitment cycle, in which the course is to start, with consideration given to the deadlines for printed publicity materials such as the University prospectus.
- 3.4 Decisions are reported to Senate for information. Once a course re-instatement form is approved, the University and/or partner website and UCAS listing will be amended as applicable so that new applications can be made.

4 Withdrawal of an existing course

- 4.1 The decision to apply for permanent withdrawal of a course is normally agreed after discussion between relevant senior staff within the University, including the Dean of School and representatives from the Directorates of Marketing, Communications and International and Finance and Planning. Where relevant, the impact on collaborative partners, feeder courses and/or modules used on other courses should be taken into consideration. Implications in terms of staffing, and any knock-on effect for other courses, should also be considered.
- 4.2 The School or partner institution should seek approval for course withdrawal from the Portfolio Oversight Committee, using the 'course discontinuation' form. This should be submitted to the Quality team (quality@uos.ac.uk) to assign a form number and for onward submission to the Portfolio Oversight Committee for approval. The course discontinuation form should also be used when a School or partner institution does not wish an existing course that is reaching the end of its period of validation to be re-approved. Validation of courses should not just be left to expire without formal withdrawal of the course.
- 4.3 Requests for course withdrawal can be put forward at any point in the academic year, but should normally be submitted to the Portfolio Oversight Committee, via the Quality team, for approval at least six months before the intended withdrawal date (i.e. when new recruitment will cease).
- 4.4 Within the course discontinuation form, the course team will be expected to provide an exit strategy which must outline a clear plan for students to be able to complete their course without compromising academic standards and the quality of their learning experience, in accordance with the relevant Student Protection Plan. It is expected that students enrolled on the course will follow it to completion, unless transfer to a replacement course is deemed beneficial to their interests and is agreeable to the students concerned. In exceptional circumstances (for example for students returning from an extended period of intercalation), students may be asked to transfer to a comparable course.
- 4.5 The exit strategy should be informed by full and early consultation with all affected students. The proposed course withdrawal should be discussed with student representatives for the course and other relevant stakeholders via the Student Voice Forum (or equivalent at partner institutions). In addition, all current students potentially affected by the withdrawal of the course should be consulted. This should be supplemented by a notification of the proposed withdrawal of the course on the online learning environment. Students should be provided with a minimum of 10 working days in which to raise any concerns, either directly to the Module or Course Leader or via their course representative (allowing sufficient time for their course representative to pass any comments on to the Module or Course Leader by the deadline).
- 4.6 Students should be provided with an opportunity to meet with relevant members of staff within the School or partner institution to discuss any concerns. If any issues cannot be resolved, then it may be necessary to involve the Students' Union in order to support continued discussion and reach an agreement on the proposed way forward. Course discontinuation forms should clearly detail any concerns expressed by students and how

these were resolved. Course teams should note that these records (including feedback submitted by students and any associated notes of meetings with students) may have to be provided to external agencies if a student makes a formal complaint about their experience at the University of Suffolk or one of its partner institutions, and therefore the documentation should be retained for a period of ten years.

- 4.7 Withdrawal decisions are reported to Senate for information. Once course withdrawal is approved, steps will be taken to remove the course from the UCAS listing and the University and/or partner website so that new students cannot apply for the course. Any existing applicants will be contacted as appropriate in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Admissions Policy. The University recognises its responsibilities towards any applicants who have been made offers for admission to a course that is subsequently withdrawn. All such applicants must be provided with sufficient advice and guidance to allow them to transfer to another course at the University or at another provider. The School or partner institution should liaise with Directorate of Marketing, Communications and International at the earliest opportunity to coordinate this process.
- 4.8 During the period of withdrawal, it is essential that academic standards are safeguarded and that the quality of the student learning experience maintained. The course team should comply with all requirements for ongoing quality monitoring until all students have completed the course. An external examiner should remain appointed to the course throughout the teach-out period.
- 4.9 A withdrawn course may only be revived by the approval of a new course proposal, in accordance with the relevant *Procedure for the validation of new courses*.