

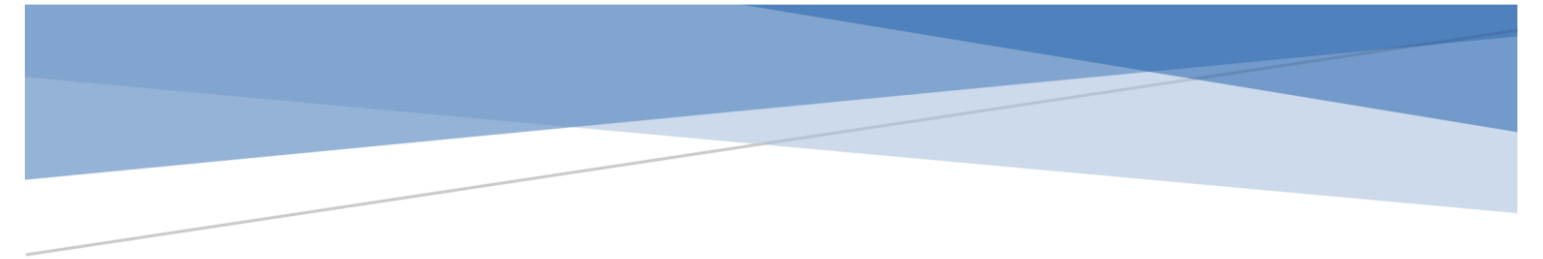
north west
regional college

Derry~Londonderry • Limavady • Strabane

COURSE CHANGES, SUSPENSION AND CLOSURE PROCEDURE

Karen Moore
Karen.moore@nwrc.ac.uk

Author/Responsibility	Document Version	Date Reviewed	Next Review Due
QEU	V3	November 2021	November 2024



Introduction	2
Aims	2
This procedure aims to:	2
Definitions	3
Course Suspension	3
Suspension of a course; this means that admissions will be suspended for a set period.	3
Course Closure	3
Circumstances that may lead to course changes, suspension and closure	3
Changes made to courses that may impact on consumer legislation include:	3
Management of a course suspension or closure	6
Approvals	9
Record of Changes	9
APPENDIX 1: COURSE CHANGE, SUSPENSION AND CLOSURE FORM	10
Refer to procedure for course suspension or closure in section 6.0 (stages 1 - 9).....	14

Introduction

The College is committed to promoting and supporting the best outcomes for students by providing quality learning opportunities, reducing barriers to education, supporting widening access and lifelong learning and participation of marginalised groups. In order to maintain quality of provision education programmes are subject to periodic review and revalidation (university validated courses) which may result in minor changes in order to maintain quality and best practice.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to make substantial changes to a course, suspend or close a course. In these circumstances, the College will ensure clear and transparent consultation and communication with students and stakeholders affected by the change or closure, and to protect students' interests.

This procedure takes account of the College's responsibilities in accordance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations, Competition Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on consumer law (2015) and the Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice HEFCE (2015). This procedure should be read in conjunction with the College Admissions and Enrolments Policy and Terms and Conditions.

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.

Course changes, closures or suspensions are considered to be significant change according to consumer legislation. To ensure the College complies with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations, students should be given the fullest information, advice and guidance.

Aims

This procedure aims to:

- ensure a transparent, fair and accessible procedure governing course closure and changes;
- ensure that there is consultation with students and clarity of options when changes or closures occur, recognising that students invest time, personal effort and cost in their studies and need timely dialogue;
- ensure arrangements for informing and consulting with students about material changes to continuing courses;
- ensure arrangements for continuity of provision for students in the event of the closure of a higher education course, and clear options provided to applicants.

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

Definitions

Course Changes

Changes to a programme that could potentially affect the decision of an applicant to take up their place and/or significantly change the information provided to the applicants/students regarding the nature of the programme and its contents/structure.

Course Suspension

Suspension of a course; this means that admissions will be suspended for a set period.

Course Closure

This means that a course will be withdrawn and closed indefinitely to applications or enrolments

Circumstances that may lead to course changes, suspension and closure

Normally it would be expected that plans to develop new courses, close or make changes to courses would follow lengthy discussion and consideration in the previous academic year. However, on occasions in exceptional circumstances, changes are required more quickly. This may be due to:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes necessary to comply with awarding body requirements
- Loss or illness of key staff
- External Examiner or other quality process recommendations
- Low application levels for particular course(s)
- Changes in funding structures
- Other exceptional circumstances outside College control

Management of Course Changes

The Consumer Protection Regulations (2008) and Consumer Contracts Regulations (2013) protect the rights of students to study the programme the College contracted with them to deliver in accordance with an offer made and accepted, based on information provided to the student which informed their choice.

The important note here is the status of the 'offer' and not whether or not the student has actually commenced study. This has implications for the accuracy of the College's published offer to students and the communication of any changes to the published offer that impact on applicants and/or existing students.

Changes made to courses that may impact on consumer legislation include:

- Change delivery location
- Change in pathways
- Change in module content/title/delivery pattern/assessment
- Change in module delivery e.g. blended learning, change of day/times

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

- Change in Units- e.g. Pearson/City and Guilds
- Change of delivery pattern of course
 - Merge year 1 and 2
 - Merge fulltime and part time groups
 - Change in days
 - Significant change in times e.g. from morning to full day

The College procedure must be followed in **all cases of course change**

In addition, Awarding Bodies/Universities have their own procedures that must also be followed:

For **Ulster University**, a CA3 must be completed; see guidelines [here](#)

For **Queen’s University** and **LYIT**, contact should be made with the relevant academic office.

For Non-university validated courses, for example City and Guilds or Pearson, the College may be permitted to make some changes within the awarding body course specification limits, but should ensure consultation with the awarding body.

If change is required, usually this will be planned in the previous academic year, allowing time for accurate information to be included in publicity materials.

Occasionally, changes may also be required after public information has been made available or change that may affect existing students enrolled on a course.

The key consideration must be to protect the best interests of students who may be impacted by the change proposed.

In all cases of proposed course changes, follow the process below (stages 1-8) and complete and retain the attached form (**Appendix 1**)

Stage	Process/task	Staff Involved	Timeline
1	<p>Consultation with students, particularly consultation with existing students that may be affected.</p> <p>Evidence of consultation must be documented and retained by the Course Director/Curriculum Manager</p>	CM/CD	As soon as possible after change is proposed
2	<p>Proposal for changes to be submitted to Leadership and Management Team (LMT) by Head of Department (or nominee) for review and consideration, see attached form in appendix 1</p> <p>LMT may approve changes, approve with conditions, or refuse proposed changes.</p>	<p>HoD</p> <p>LMT</p>	As soon as possible after change is proposed

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

3	If proposal accepted by LMT Consultation with awarding body If Ulster validated course consult with FPM and complete CA3	CD	Within 5 working days of LMT decision
4	If proposal is accepted, the priority will be to inform students at the earliest opportunity, this will be the responsibility of the Course Director/ Coordinator with support from the relevant Curriculum Manager	CD/CM	Within 5 working days of awarding body approval
5	The course director/coordinator must ensure admissions inform all applicants and ensure applicants are made aware of the changes, potential impact and any options they have. Careers/student services staff should be involved as appropriate.	CD Careers	Within 5 working days of awarding body approval
6	The Course Director must ensure that any students who are on Leave of Absence, have a deferred offer or have to repeat modules and/or assessment are informed of the change and supported to make appropriate decisions.	CD	Within 10 working days of approval
7	Public Information; Ensure Marketing informed of changes to course information, check that information is changed on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Leaflets • Course Handbooks • College Websites • Prospectus entries Ulster Courses-ensure Head of Quality Enhancement and FPM receive copies of changes to public information.	CD CD Marketing Marketing/CM	Within 5 working days of awarding body approval
8	Internal Communication; The following must be informed of course change; Admissions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers academy/student services • Head of Quality Enhancement • Finance (if applicable) 	CD/CM	

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

Management of a course suspension or closure

A proposal to suspend or close a course should normally be considered prior to publication of course materials and prior to applications opening.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to suspend or close a course after applications have been received and/or offers made. This may be due to insufficient applicants to make a course viable, loss of staff or a number of other reasons. The Consumer Protection Regulations (2008) and Consumer Contracts Regulations (2013) protect the rights of students to study the programme the College contracted with them to deliver in accordance with an offer made and accepted, based on information provided to the student which informed their choice.

The key consideration must be to protect the best interests of students and applicants who may be impacted by the suspension or closure of a course.

In all cases of proposed course suspension or closure, follow the process below (stages 1-9) and complete and retain the attached form (**Appendix 1**).

Stage	Process/task	Staff Involved	Timeline
1	<p>Proposal for suspension/closure to be submitted to LMT by Head of Department (or nominee) for review and consideration Form in appendix 1.</p> <p>If there are students currently on the course, the proposal will need to contain evidence of student consultation and any concerns raised, clear explanation of how the students already on the course will be protected, will the course be 'taught out', and if not what arrangements will be in place to allow students to complete their course.</p> <p>LMT may approve suspension/closure, approve with conditions, or refuse proposed suspension/closure. <i>On occasions, decisions regarding course suspension may need to be taken quickly-if necessary a meeting of LMT will be called at short notice.</i></p>	<p>HoD</p> <p>LMT</p>	As soon as suspension/closure is considered

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

2.	Inform Admissions, Finance, Careers/Student Support Services about course suspension or closure and organise arrangements for informing and supporting all applicants (offered courses) and students (stages 3-7)	CD/CM	Within 3 working days of LMT approval
3.	Inform all applicants to the course Ensure all applicants are informed of available options; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is same course available at another institution, provide support to student/applicant to transfer • Possible alternative courses within NWRC • Ensure support from careers is available as required. 	Admissions CD/Careers	Within 3 working days of LMT approval
4.	In the event of a course being suspended or closed, those in receipt of offers will be entitled to a full refund of any fees or deposits paid.	Admissions /Finance	
5.	Inform existing students that may be affected. Existing students on a course will normally continue and complete their course as expected. If this is not possible, students need to be given all help and support to either transfer to a suitable course within the College, transfer to the same course in another institution or withdraw from the course and receive record of progress and academic credit/units achieved.	CD	Within 3 workings days of LMT approval

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

6.	In the event of a course closure where the course cannot be 'taught out', and where none of the alternative arrangements are satisfactory to the student, the student may be entitled to a partial fee refund in accordance with the NWRC Fees and Charges Policy. The College must ensure academic credit can be obtained from the awarding body to record students achievement The College must ensure that evidence of informing students is documented and retained by the Course Director or Curriculum Manager	CD/CM Finance CD CD/CM	
7.	The Course Director must ensure that any students who are on Leave of Absence, have a deferred offer or have to repeat modules and/or assessment are informed of the suspension/closure and supported to make appropriate decision.	CD	Within 10 working days of approval
8.	Public Information; Ensure Marketing is informed of changes to course information and check that information is changed on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Websites • Prospectus entries 	CD/CM Marketing Marketing	Within 5 working days of awarding body approval
9.	Inform Awarding Body Ulster courses-inform FPM Inform other external stakeholders e.g. work placement providers, Business Support Unit (BSU).	CD	As soon as possible after LMT decision, within 5 working days

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

Approvals

This guideline document was prepared by the North West Regional College to provide guidance on the Appeals process. This procedure complies with applicable internal College policies and audit requirements.

The College will provide this procedure in alternative formats on request where reasonably practicable, e.g., Braille, Large Print, Computer Disk, Audio formats, etc, and/or alternative language.

The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This procedure should be interpreted in a manner consistent with the aforementioned legislation.

Record of Changes

Modifications made since the last revision are as follows:

Page No.	Change/Comment	Date of Change	Initials
All	Reviewed and no changes required	June 2019	DMcE
Page 2	Changes to Introduction	November 2021	KM
Page 2	Changes to Introduction	November 2021	EC

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

APPENDIX 1: COURSE CHANGE, SUSPENSION AND CLOSURE FORM

1. Course Information of course(s) to be changed or suspended or closed

Course Closure <input type="checkbox"/> Course Suspension <input type="checkbox"/> Course Substantial Change <input type="checkbox"/>			
Department		CurriculumArea	
Awarding Body		Collaborative provision partner	
Course Code		Course Title	
Location		Mode of Study	FT <input type="checkbox"/> PT <input type="checkbox"/>
Current No of Students		Yr. 1	
		Yr. 2	
		Yr. 3	
Current No of applicants (including deferred offers)			
Current No of students re-sitting modules/ repeating assessment/on leave of absence that would be affected by course change/suspension/closure			
Will there be current students continuing on with the course after it is suspended/closes		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
If yes how many		Yr. 2	
		Yr. 3	
Public Information (is the course to be suspended/closed/proposed change currently advertised in public material?)			
	Y/N/NA	Details	
HE prospectus			
FT Prospectus			
PT Prospectus			
NWRC College Website page			
Other Publicity material e.g. leaflet(s)			
Course Information (is proposed information to be changed in student course material?)			
	Y/N/NA	Details	
Course handbook			
Module Handbook			
Other Course Material			

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

2. Rationale & Consultation (*supporting documentation can be attached to form if required*)

Outline the reasons for the course change, suspension or closure		
Have students being Consulted? Are there any issues unresolved?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Date:
Details:		
What are the implications for applicants, students currently on the course(s) (consider also students who have deferred, on leave of absence, resitting modules, assessments etc.		
Details:		
Outline the arrangements/options that will be provided to applicants and/or students		
Details:		

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

Have you consulted with Awarding Body/other external stakeholders	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Date:
Details:		
Implications for, and consultations with internal staff. Please consider consulting with the following (if applicable):		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Teaching staff . Admissions and Marketing . Other teams involved in recruitment for this course e.g. BSU . Careers/student support service . Have you consulted with Finance on the financial implications of a proposed course closure? 		
Details:		

Intended date of implementation	Date:
Signature of CD/CM/HoD	Date:

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

3. Review (to be completed at LMT)

Date of LMT:	
Present at Review:	
Approved	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> with conditions <input type="checkbox"/>
Details of conditions (if applicable, including responsible person and timeline)	
Signature HoD (<i>electronic signature acceptable</i>)	Date
Signature Vice Principal/Nominee (<i>electronic signature acceptable</i>)	Date
Signature of Principal/Nominee (<i>electronic signature acceptable</i>)	Date

LMT/HoD must notify Course Director/Curriculum Manager of review decision ASAP.
If approved;

CM/CD to complete part 4 (course changes) or part 5 (course suspension/closure) A copy should be retained by CM/CD and a copy sent to Head of Quality Enhancement

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (<i>if required</i>)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		

4. Course Suspension and Closure: Actions Required and Notification of Action Completed

Refer to procedure for course suspension or closure in section 6.0 (stages 1 - 9)

Action Required	Time line	Responsible individual(s)	Date of Completion	Signature
Evidence of informing students must be retained by Course Director or Curriculum Manager with form				
Inform Admissions, Finance, Careers/Student Support Services about course suspension or closure and organise arrangements for informing all applicants and students including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Outlining the potential impact . Informing students of their options/arrangements in place . Advice how students will be supported to make appropriate decisions . Refunds 	Within 3 working days of LMT	CD/CM		
Check with admissions all applicants were informed & provided with support via Careers/Student Services/Finance as appropriate	Within 3 working days of LMT	CD/CM/		
Ensure all current students were informed & supported (with Admissions/Careers/Student Services/Finance as appropriate)	Within 3 working days of LMT	CD/CM		
Ensure all students on leave of absence, have deferred an offer, or have to repeat a module and/or assessment were informed & supported (with Admissions/Careers/Student Services/Finance as appropriate)	Within 10 working days of LMT	CD/CM		
Inform marketing of changes required to public information –refer to Part 1 of form	Within 5 working days of LMT	CD/CM		
Inform Awarding Body (Ulster Courses inform FPM)	ASAP after LMT, within 5 working days	CD/CM		
Inform other stakeholders and internal teams if relevant e.g. work placement providers, QEU, BSU	ASAP after LMT	CD/CM		

Reference – Version – Status	QE0022	V3	Final
Date Agreed at LMT – AFTER Consultation Period (if required)	Approved LMT 22/11/2021		