

COURSE CLOSURE AND SUSPENSION POLICY

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POLICY FOR COURSE CLOSURE AND SUSPENSION



General

1. In any instance of closure or suspension, the fundamental principle which underpins this policy is that the quality of experience of students on the course and those currently going through the admissions process during the closure period should be protected. Any impacts of closure or suspension should be assured and closely monitored and if required, that remedial action is taken by the department(s) concerned or Marketing and Communications for applicants to mitigate any negative impact on the students' experience.
2. In this respect the policy seeks to ensure that the University meets the Competition and Marketing Authority's (CMA) guidance¹ on informing students of material changes to their courses and adheres to the principles of contract law and consumer protection law. The policy also meets the commitment the University has made in its [Student Protection Plan](#)² as part of its registration with the Office for Students.
3. The University monitors the viability of all degree courses on an ongoing basis with a view to refreshing the University's offering as required. It is expected that consideration of a course's ongoing viability will most often lead to closure and a proposal to suspend a course will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Scope

4. This policy applies to:
 - Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses validated, delivered and supported by staff of Royal Holloway and leading to an award of Royal Holloway, University of London;
 - Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses validated, delivered and supported by staff of Royal Holloway and leading to an award of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College;
 - Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses that are delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement, including but not restricted to, validated and franchised courses and courses taught by 'flying' faculty. Course closure in this context would normally follow from a decision to terminate the collaborative provision arrangement.

Definitions

5. A course **closure** occurs when a course of study is permanently closed for recruitment. This includes those cases where a course (or a named pathway) in a particular discipline is closed and replaced with a new one/ a differently named one with a revised curriculum.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers> and <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/consumer-protection-review-of-higher-education>

² <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/studying-here/applying/admissions-policy-and-procedures/>

6. Normally course closure will involve the immediate cessation of recruitment activity and a clear external message that the course has been closed, with a phased teaching out of the course over a limited number of years to afford currently enrolled students (including repeating and resitting students), and those on interruption, the opportunity to complete their course of study. Where this is not possible, the University may offer students other options.
7. A course **suspension** occurs when recruitment to a course of study is closed for a set period of time, normally one year. However, the course continues to be delivered to currently enrolled students until all have completed their course of study. The course would also need to be made available to students who have returned/ are planning to return from a period of interruption and those resitting and repeating so that they can complete their course of study.
8. A course can only be suspended for one year at a time and suspensions will not be permitted to roll over. In exceptional circumstances, Curriculum Development Committee may approve an application to suspend the course for an additional year. Before the period of suspension has elapsed, the Faculty must confirm whether the course will be re-opened for recruitment, put through revalidation, or closed. Timelines for this are located in the associated procedures.

Criteria for closure or suspension

9. A proposal to close or suspend a course of study must address the following criteria:
 - Strategic – the proposal is in alignment with the strategic direction of the Faculty/ Department; a collaborative provision agreement has not been renewed
 - Academic – the course no longer contributes to the academic direction of the Faculty/ Department; there are failings in quality or standards; there are failings in relation to regulatory requirements; key staff are unavailable or unable to teach on the course
 - Economic – the course no longer financially benefits the University
 - Market – the course no longer recruits strongly, either numerically or in terms of the standard of students

A proposal should also consider the practical impact of the potential closure or suspension, including:

- number of students or applicants affected;
 - number of overseas students or applicants affected, including CAS/ visa status of those applicants;
 - a proposal for alternative courses available to these students, including the level of course fees for alternative courses relative to the course fees for the course being closed or suspended and proposals for mitigating any losses incurred as a result e.g. fee reductions
10. A proposal to close or suspend a course of study may be generated by one or more of the following:
 - Faculty Strategic Plan (or previous School Strategic Plan)
 - Annual planning process
 - Annual review process (quality assurance)
 - Curriculum Development Committee annual portfolio review

Responsibilities

11. The Faculty Dean and Faculty Executive are responsible for completing the Faculty Strategic Plan and the Annual Planning Process. The completion of these documents will require review of the Faculty's academic offering and the ongoing delivery of all courses of study.
12. The Associate Deans (Education and Student Experience) are responsible for, in cooperation with the Academic Quality and Policy Office, completing the Annual Review Process and identifying courses which repeatedly fail to deliver against set metrics.
13. The Curriculum Development Committee is responsible for completing an annual review of the courses of study delivered by the University. This review will consider qualitative and quantitative data about the courses and may lead the Committee to propose the closure of one or more courses, using the criteria identified above. The Committee may consult with the Student Recruitment Group. The Faculty Dean will respond to the proposal.
14. The Committee will normally propose the automatic closure of any degree which has no students enrolled in the first year, projected to enrol and which holds no Firm offers from applicants. The Faculty Dean will respond to the proposal.
15. The Committee is responsible for approving the closure of courses of study.

Policy Schedule	
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