

## PROCEDURE: COURSE SUSPENSION AND CESSATION

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### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document sets out guidance on the suspension and cessation of Falmouth University courses, including those operated collaboratively or franchised to partners.
- 1.2 The University recognizes that, in a rapidly changing higher education environment, it may be necessary and appropriate to suspend or cease offering a course (or mode of delivery).
- 1.3 This can be problematic because such decisions will have an impact on potential applicants, applicants, students, academic and administrative staff. Where cessation is planned, there will be a particular need to consider how to meet commitments to existing students – often described as the ‘teach-out’.
- 1.4 The University is committed to ensuring that suspension and cessation is conducted in a clear and sympathetic manner, and that all parties are informed in a timely and appropriate manner.

### **2 Scope of Policy**

- 2.1 These Guidance Notes apply to all staff, students and other users associated with the University.
- 2.2 These Guidance Notes apply to all courses offered by the University, including those operated collaboratively or franchised to partners.

### **3 Key contacts and responsibilities**

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive is empowered to make decisions regarding the suspension and cessation of courses by virtue of the powers invested by the Board of Governors.
- 3.2 This authority may be delegated to the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive’s deputy or deputies. This would normally be to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, whose remit specifically includes responsibility for the strategic development and delivery of a successful academic portfolio.
- 3.3 Proposals for the suspension and cessation of courses may emanate from the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group, Directors of academic departments, Departmental Boards, Academic Board and its sub-committees, or elsewhere in the University. However, the

- authority to decide on suspension and cessation remains with the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive.
- 3.4 Directors of Academic Departments are responsible for ensuring that the suspension and cessation of courses within their department is managed in accordance with this Guidance. Where a Director is unable to take the lead, responsibility will lie with their line manager(s).
- 3.5 Sales, Events & Communications is responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to amend promotional materials, including the University's website, and that communications are managed to ensure the context for the decision is understood and to avoid any damage to the University's reputation.
- 3.6 Human Resources is responsible for dealing with staffing issues resulting from suspension and cessation.
- 3.7 The Academic Quality & Standards Committee is responsible for the approving this Guidance on Course Suspension and Cessation and monitoring its operation.

## **4 Definitions**

### **4.4 Suspension**

- The decision to cease offering a course to applicants for one or more academic sessions. Any recommencement of a course is always subject to its period of approval.

### **4.2 Cessation**

- The decision to cease the delivery of a course, usually following a period of teach-out designed to allow all enrolled students to complete their studies successfully.

### **4.2 Teach-out**

- The process of ensuring that all currently enrolled students may complete their studies as planned and obtain their intended award.

## **5 Procedure for suspension and cessation**

- 5.1 Proposals for suspension or cessation should contain a clear rationale for cessation, establishing the context, and outlining the key steps to be followed.
- 5.2 Proposals to suspend or cease a course must be supported by appropriate evidence. This may include (but is not limited to):
- Annual course monitoring reports and other quality assurance reports
  - Staff-Student Liaison Group and Departmental Board minutes
  - External Examiners' comments and recommendations
  - NSS, DLHE or other external surveys and returns

- Financial and resource modelling and projections
- Recruitment levels and market demand
- Employment opportunities for graduates of the course, and graduate salaries
- The course's place in relation to the University's mission and strategic aspirations/objectives
- The course's place within its subject area and the University's broader portfolio of current and proposed courses

4.3 Initial discussions with staff and student representatives (FXU, UCU, GMB, etc.) may be held whilst a proposal to suspend or cease a course is under consideration. However, these are to be conducted in confidence, and do not preclude or prevent formal consultation once the decision to suspend a course has been taken.

4.4 It is essential that all parties to such discussions recognize that the University's prime concern is to its applicants and enrolled students, who should be the first to be informed once a formal decision to suspend or cease a course has been taken.

4.5 The procedure will normally follow the following path:

- Submission of proposal and evidence to Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive
- Decision to suspend recruitment only, or to suspend recruitment with a view to proceeding to cessation
- Preparation of action plan, either for suspension only, or for suspension/teach-out/cessation
- Communication and consultation with applicants, students and staff re suspension
- Necessary adjustments to decision and final approval of action plan

## **5 Suspension of recruitment**

5.1 As soon as a decision has been taken to suspend recruitment to a course, the Director of the Academic Department shall prepare an action plan, covering

- Communication plan for applicants (in collaboration with Admissions)
- Reassurance of enrolled students (in collaboration with Brand Communications and Quality Assurance & Enhancement)
- Consultation with affected staff (in collaboration with HR)
- Review of online publicity and other materials (in collaboration with Brand Communications and Quality Assurance & Enhancement)

5.2 The action plan shall consider how best to co-ordinate communications to ensure that applicants, students and staff are informed in a timely manner and an appropriate sequence.

- 5.3 It shall be made clear whether the suspension is for one or more academic sessions.
- 5.4 It shall be made clear whether the objective is to suspend requirement whilst reassessing or re-writing the course or whether the intention is to proceed to cessation.
- 5.5 On notification of the suspension of recruitment, the Admissions Office will make applicants to the course aware of the situation and advise them that the course is being withdrawn.
- 5.6 Particular care will be taken with anyone holding offers (e.g. deferrals from the previous cycle). Wherever possible, they will be assisted to find an alternative course, either within the University or elsewhere.
- 5.7 For undergraduate courses, UCAS will also be informed in writing by the Admissions Office.
- 5.8 Wherever possible, decisions to suspend recruitment shall be made at the beginning of, or early, in the recruitment cycle to enable potential applicants to make alternative plans.

## **6 Teach-out and cessation**

- 6.1 The Director of the Academic Department is responsible for preparing and implementing the exit strategy.
- 6.3 The exit strategy must:
- Ensure that the student experience is secured;
  - Ensure that the quality and standard of award maintained for the remaining cohorts
  - Take into account intermitting students and those requiring late or re-assessment
  - Indicate a clear and appropriate timescale of cessation of the course and cohort completion
  - Be discussed with Students' Union representatives and with all affected student cohorts
  - Be communicated to academic and administrative staff and their representatives
- 6.4 There is an expectation that the exit strategy will enable students currently registered on the course to continue and complete their studies. On occasion, and with the agreement of the enrolled students, it may be possible to provide transfer to an alternative completion course or route. In such cases, the rationale must be fully articulated, together with a mapping of course learning outcomes to the proposed alternative course or route, to ensure that standards are maintained and that students are not disadvantaged. Where neither of the above arrangements is available, the University will record the amount of credit the student has achieved and advise on any options that may be available for transfer to another institution. Exceptionally, where teaching cannot

be completed or where none of the proposed options are acceptable to the student, the University may refund all or part of paid fees (as outlined in the University's Fees Policy).

- 6.5 The Director of the Academic Department is responsible for informing students on the course in writing of the decision and advised of the timescale. This includes those students intermitting from the course.
- 6.6 The Director will liaise with and be supported by professional services departments and service providers as necessary to ensure that the interests of current students are prioritised, and that the exit strategy is appropriately planned and realised to protect the student experience until all cohorts have completed their studies.

## **7 Review**

- 7.1 All suspensions and cessations will be reported to the Board of Governors.
- 7.2 The process of teach-out will be closely monitored by the University and its committees and departments to ensure that the quality of the student experience is safeguarded. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee has oversight of the academic quality of the student experience.

**VERSION CONTROL**

PURPOSE/CHANGE	AUTHOR	DATE
Original document for approved by AQSC chair's action.	QAE	February 2016