

HIGHER EDUCATION: COURSE CHANGES, SUSPENSION AND CLOSURE POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Through the provision of quality learning opportunities, the College is committed to promoting and supporting the best outcomes for students. Internal quality processes, periodic review and revalidation by BCA's University Partners may result in minor changes to courses in order to maintain quality and best practice and thus the quality of provision.
- 1.2. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to make substantial change(s) to a course, or to suspend or close a course. In order to protect students' interests under such circumstances, the College will ensure clear and transparent consultation and communication with students and stakeholders affected by the change, suspension or closure
- 1.3. This procedure takes account of the College's responsibilities in accordance with Competition Markets Authority Guidance on Consumer Law (2015) and the Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice HEFCE (2015).
- 1.4. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the College Terms and Conditions for Higher Education Students available online at:
<https://www.bca.ac.uk/course/policies-procedures/>

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Course Changes: Changes to a programme that could potentially affect an applicant's decision to take up their place and/or significantly change the nature of a programme and its contents/structure
- 2.2. Course Suspension: Admissions to a course will be suspended for a set period of time
- 2.3. Course Closure: A course will be withdrawn and closed indefinitely to applications or enrolments.

3. Aims of the Policy

In connection with change(s) to a course, course suspension or closure, this policy aims to ensure:

- 3.1. transparent, fair and accessible process
- 3.2. clear channels for consultation with students and for informing them about material changes to continuing courses;
- 3.3. arrangements for continuity of provision for existing students and clear options for applicants in the event of course closure.

4. Circumstances Leading to Course Suspension and Closure

- 4.1. The decision to suspend or close a programme of study is normally made for one or more of the following reasons:
- 4.1.1. a decline in student numbers which puts the continued financial viability of the programme at risk;
 - 4.1.2. changes in market demand, which leads to the replacement of an existing programme with a new one;
 - 4.1.3. a reduction in funding or (externally) funded student numbers;
 - 4.1.4. staff involved in teaching the programme are temporarily or permanently unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them.
 - 4.1.5. changes in the strategic priorities of the HE department or the College;
 - 4.1.6. documented concern from an external body (professional/statutory/regulatory) about the academic standards of the programme and/ or the quality of the provision;
 - 4.1.7. termination of a collaborative provision arrangement, which leads to the closure of a programme of study.
- 4.2. The College will automatically close any programme which has not had sufficient students registered upon it for three years, unless the Programme Leader is able to demonstrate likely future recruitment of significant numbers of students onto that programme.
- 4.3. Where the Director of Higher Education seeks to close a financially viable, successful, or strategically important programme for any reason, the recommendation should only be submitted to the Board of Governors after the proposed course of action has been discussed with the College Principal and documented.

5. Circumstances Substantial Change within a Programme of Study

- 5.1. Substantial change to a programme of study may be the result of change in market or industry demand, leading to:
- 5.1.1. change to the title of a course and/or associated award;
 - 5.1.2. change to the validation and/or accreditation of a course;
 - 5.1.3. substantial change to the curriculum, assessment or modules within a course, such as substantial changes to mandatory modules which result in a significant change to the course offer
 - 5.1.4. change to the mode of delivery of a course (eg. full-time to part-time, or through distance-learning)

6. The timing of programme changes, suspensions and closures

- 6.1. The best interest of our students is paramount and thus the College will seek to ensure that significant changes/suspension/closure of programmes are made in a timely manner with full consultation undertaken with all affected students.

- 6.2. Decisions on programme closures and suspensions will ideally be made prior to the start of the UCAS student recruitment cycle for enrolment the following year.
- 6.3. In exceptional circumstances, the closure or suspension of a programme of study may be approved at a date later than described above but consideration and support must be given to applicants in order to ensure the opportunity for alternative placement.
- 6.4. Notwithstanding the above there are, however, rare unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. loss of specialist staff) which may result in the untimely closure or suspension of a programme.
- 6.5. Where possible, students already registered on a course subject to untimely closure or suspension will continue to progress and complete the course (teach out), or where this is not possible will be offered an alternative course or transfer to another provider.

7. Procedures for programme changes

- 7.1. There are normally three stages to be followed for both programme closure/withdrawal and programme suspension.
 - 7.1.1. *Stage One: departmental consultation* followed by discussion of outline plan with the College Principal
 - 7.1.2. *Stage Two: consultation with students and key internal and external stakeholders* (e.g. validating partners, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies)
 - 7.1.3. *Stage Three: formal re-validation by the Validating Partner* following submission of rationale and evidence of student consultation.

8. Procedures for programme closure and suspension

- 8.1. There are normally three stages to be followed for both programme closure/withdrawal and programme suspension.
 - 8.1.1. *Stage One: departmental consultation* followed by discussion of outline plan with the College Principal
 - 8.1.2. *Stage Two: consultation with students and key internal and external stakeholders* (e.g. validating partners, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) to include options for completing the programme such as proposed plans for 'teach out' of the programme, the possibility of transferring to other programmes of study, possibilities of completing an exit award, etc.
 - 8.1.3. *Stage Three: formal approval by the Board of Governors and Validating Partner* following submission of rationale, evidence of student consultation and support plan for existing and prospective students, as appropriate.
- 8.2. Where recruitment to a programme is suspended, consultation is only required with students who are deferred applicants or previously interrupted students who wish to return to study during the period when the programme will not be offered. It may be necessary to consult via email rather than face-to-face.

9. Communication of decision to change, suspend or close a programme

- 9.1. Following approval by the Board of Governors and/or relevant Validating Partner, the Director of Higher Education will advise the following members of staff within BCA: Director of Finance, Director of MIS, Head of Marketing, Student Support & Welfare
- 9.2. Following approval by the Board of Governors and/or relevant Validating Partner, the Director of Higher Education will ensure appropriate amendments/updates are made to UCAS Course Collect, Student Loans Company - HEP Services, Unistats and the websites of the College and relevant Validating Partner.
- 9.3. Where relevant, the appropriate PSRB will also be advised.

10. Refund and compensation

- 10.1. BCA considers refunds and compensation to be a remedy of last resort and is committed to using its best endeavours to ensure all students are able to continue and complete their studies.
- 10.2. The schedule for refund and compensation outlined within this document applies in the highly unlikely event that the college is no longer able to preserve continuation of study and is also incorporated into the Terms & Conditions for Higher Education Students. This document is available for download from:
<https://www.bca.ac.uk/course/policies-procedures/>
- 10.3. Refunds will be made where it is necessary to close a class due to numbers at enrolment falling below the viable number. Should this action prove necessary, the College will aim to contact all enrolled students at least 3 working days before the course is due to start.
- 10.4. Refund of course fees in respect of a cancelled course are issued directly to self-funding students. In the case of student loans, the College will inform the student loan company that the student will not be attending a programme.
- 10.5. Refunds will not be made for any personal 'kit' or materials which are to be retained by the student.
- 10.6. Financial compensation may be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example, where the College has made such changes to a programme of study that attendance for all or part of the programme by an individual is made impossible. This may include; 'loss of opportunity', for example, failure to complete a placement or to seek paid employment where this arises from an act or omission by the College or expenses incurred/money/lost as a result of any College/course failings or closure.
- 10.7. When considering whether financial compensation is appropriate, the College will take into account the following:
 - 10.7.1. Any reasonable steps which have or have not been taken by the student and/or the College to minimise financial loss
 - 10.7.2. Whether the student has unreasonably refused or rejected an available option
 - 10.7.3. Whether any delay in resolution may have been caused by the student
- 10.8. In all cases, the College requires the student to provide evidence of actual financial loss.