



# **Programme Suspension and Withdrawal Policy**

## Documentation Management

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### Version Control

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1.4	Amendments to SASP Process	Senior Quality Officer	March 2023	Pro Vice Chancellor Education

# Programme Suspension and Withdrawal Policy

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out further details regarding the University's procedures for closing or withdrawing any programme of study, in order to protect the academic interests of students, applicants and the University.
- 1.2 Responsibility for this Policy and for the development of clear and effective processes and procedures in relation to the suspension or withdrawal of programmes lies with the University Education Committee.
- 1.3 Programmes are constantly reviewed to ensure that they are current and viable, and that they align with the University's mission and strategic priorities. Underpinned by analysis of management information, the need to suspend or withdraw a programme may be due to a number of factors:
  - The Periodic Programme Review or strategic review of a College's provision could identify a strategic or viable need to close a programme
  - Changes in the industry/sector and/or subject demand
  - Changes in staffing
  - Change to the University's strategic aims
  - No/low numbers of students recruited
  - Resourcing implications
  - Termination of a collaborative arrangement
- 1.4 Programme suspension means that there will be no intake of students onto a programme for the period of the suspension, being a maximum of two years. Please see Section 7 for guidance on the reactivation of suspended programmes.
- 1.5 Programme withdrawal means the permanent suspension of the intake of students onto a programme.
- 1.6 There are two routes for the suspension or withdrawal of a programme:
  - **Route A:** If a programme suspension or withdrawal is not associated with a reduction in the learning or teaching resources available to remaining or prospective students on that programme, for example because the programme being suspended or withdrawn has no remaining students or any remaining students are transferring onto a newly-approved replacement programme, then the route A process should be followed.
  - **Route B:** Where suspension or withdrawal of a programme is associated with a reduction in the learning and teaching resources available to remaining or prospective students on the programme, the Route B process should be followed.

- 1.7 Circumstances may arise in which the decision to withdraw a programme is beyond the University's control. However, this guidance will help ensure that the situation is appropriately managed and that the academic and wider interests of students are protected.
- 1.8 Withdrawal or suspension of a programme requires approval by Senate, following scrutiny of the request for approval by the Strategic Approval Scrutiny Panel ('SASP').
- 1.9 For programme suspensions and withdrawals of Brunel University London Pathway College (BPC) programmes, the final scrutiny and approval body will be SASP. Proposals for the suspension and withdrawal of a BPC programme must be submitted by BPC, and approval by the associated Brunel Boards of Studies and Department Management Boards must be gained and evidenced.
- 1.10 Programme suspension or withdrawal is requested using the Programme Suspension or withdrawal Form available [here](#).
- 1.11 Where a programme being considered for suspension or withdrawal is a joint programme, each Programme Leader, Head of Department, Boards of Studies and Department Management Board affected by the decision to suspend or withdraw should be involved as appropriate in the process.
- 1.12 The particular steps to be followed, and their order, may need to be adapted as appropriate depending on all the circumstances of the proposed suspension/withdrawal. However, the principles applicable to students and prospective students as outlined in section 4 should always be followed.

## **2 Timescales**

- 2.1 The request for suspension or withdrawal must be submitted no less than **one calendar year (normally)** prior to the first entry point at which no students will be enrolled (unless there are no applicants).
- 2.2 If a request for a programme suspension or withdrawal is submitted after the deadline above, it will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and a clear rationale must be provided.

## **3 Equality Impact**

- 3.1 The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 impose a legal duty on universities to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster

good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.2 This duty requires the University to assess the impact or likely impact of its policies and practices on staff and students with protected characteristics by carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment. Any decision to close or suspend a programme of study must be made in such a way as to minimise unfairness and to ensure that it does not have a disproportionately negative effect on, for example, people from different ethnic groups, men, women or disabled people.
- 3.3 When requesting a programme suspension or withdrawal, Colleges will need to consider at the beginning of the planning and decision-making process any equality impact on applicants/students who have protected characteristics or priority areas such as: age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion/belief, pregnancy/maternity, students with caring responsibilities and those from more deprived social economic backgrounds. The outcome of that consideration must be presented in the Programme Suspension and withdrawal Form.
- 3.4 Where required, SASP may request that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is conducted before the request can be recommended to Senate, and in such a case, engagement with the University's Student Equality and Diversity Manager will be required.
- 3.5 An EIA should:
- Consider the impact on existing staff and students as well as potential new ones
  - Be supported by internal equality data as well as local, regional and national research
  - Inform the decision-making process- the EIA needs to be considered alongside options presented to the decision-making bodies including the College Education Committee, SASP and Senate.
  - Consider how any adverse effects identified through equality analysis can be mitigated
- 3.6 It is essential that assessments of impact on equality are robust, and that any potential negative impacts on people with protected characteristics are considered and thoroughly mitigated wherever possible.
- 3.7 Advice on carrying out an EIA should be sought from the Student Equality and Diversity Manager as soon as the requirement for one has been confirmed by SASP.

## **4 Principles applicable to Programme Suspension and Withdrawal**

### **Current Students**

- 4.1 Current students must be allowed to complete their remainder of their period of registration on the programme unless they give their explicit, written consent to withdrawing from it. Where a programme is being closed to new entrants only, the department's proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended or who are in abeyance but have not completed the programme) must include the following:
- Current students should be informed of their options in regard to transferring to another suitable programme within the University for which they are qualified or another institution
  - The standard of provision to current students must be maintained throughout the period of registration
  - The previously stated learning outcomes of the programme must still be achievable by current students even if the range of module options is smaller because of staffing reductions

### **Prospective students**

- 4.2 All communications with applicants must be undertaken by the Marketing and Communications Department. Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until SASP has recommended the suspension/withdrawal of the programme to Senate.
- 4.3 Applicants who have accepted offers should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity of the proposed withdrawal of the programme, and of their options in regard to transferring their application to another programme within the University for which they are qualified or to another institution.
- 4.4 If an applicant does not wish to continue with their application, he/she is entitled to withdraw their application and receive a refund of any tuition fees and deposits paid
- 4.5 Applicants who have been made offers, **but have not yet accepted**, can be contacted and advised that the offer is withdrawn.

## **5 Programme Suspension/Withdrawal process**

### **Route A (no associated reduction in learning or teaching resources for continuing or prospective students)**

- 5.1 When the need to suspend or withdraw a programme has been identified, a Programme Suspension or Withdrawal Form (available [here](#)) must be completed on behalf of, and signed by, the Dean or Vice-Dean Education of the relevant College.
- 5.2 Where a programme is being withdrawn and is being replaced by a new programme, students must be consulted as soon as practical. The form should detail whether students on the old programme will be given the opportunity to transfer to the new programme. If existing students wish to

transfer, then a process will need to be developed and detailed within the withdrawal form explaining how this will be managed.

- 5.3 Before completion of the relevant form, consultation must take place with:
- The Head of Marketing regarding the marketing of the programme.
  - The Head of Admissions regarding the number of prospective students who have been offered or accepted places on the programme, including deferred entry.
  - Quality Assurance regarding any issues relating to assessment or awarding; other related programmes; or plans for affected students/applicants to transfer or join another programme
  - Where appropriate, the University's Student Equality and Diversity Manager
- 5.4 In addition to any consultation recommended above, the possible need to suspend or withdraw a programme should be discussed as appropriate at the Boards of Studies and the relevant Department Management Board to ensure staff and student involvement, and with other relevant stakeholders.
- 5.5 Those involved in the above consultations should be mindful of the principles outlined in section 4 above.
- 5.6 Any collaborations relevant to the programme including with PSRBs and placement providers must also be considered, especially if students on the programme are received through an Articulation Agreement.
- 5.7 The decision to seek formal approval for the suspension or withdrawal of a programme must be made by the College Education Committee ('CEC') and endorsed by the College Management Board ('CMB'). Once this decision has been made, the Request for Approval form should be sent, via the Vice-Dean Education of the relevant College, to Quality Assurance at [quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk) who will arrange for consideration by SASP and approval by Senate.

**Route B (likely associated reduction in learning and teaching resources for continuing or prospective students)**

- 5.8 When the need to suspend or withdraw a programme has been identified which is likely to have an associated reduction in the learning and teaching resources available for continuing or prospective students, the Dean or Vice-Dean Education of the relevant College will convene a 'Continuity Group' in order to oversee the closure arrangements. The Continuity Group will be chaired by the Vice Dean Education of the College and will report to the CEC and the CMB.
- 5.9 If the programme suspension or withdrawal involves the closure of a collaborative partnership, reference should be made to the process described in the [Managing Partnerships: Code of Practice](#).

5.10 The membership of the Continuity Group will depend on the circumstances of the proposed suspension or withdrawal, and the potential level of reduction in teaching and learning resources.

5.11 The membership of the Continuity Group may include as appropriate:

- Chair
- Vice Dean Education (if not the chair)
- Associate Dean Student Experience
- Associate Dean Quality Assurance
- Head of Department affected
- Programme Lead
- Director of College Operations
- Registrar
- Human Resources Business Partner
- Communications and Marketing representative
- Head of Admissions (or nominee) if applicants are holding offers for places on the programme that is to be closed
- Representative from the Union of Brunel Students

5.12 The role of the Continuity Group is to:

- Draw up and monitor an action plan for the withdrawal process, ensuring all members of the group understand their responsibilities and timescales for action
- Ensure appropriate discussion of the proposal through BoS and the DMB
- Engage with the University's Student Equality and Diversity Manager to consider the potential equality impact of the proposal, and where required, ensure that a robust EIA has been carried out
- Carry out a risk assessment of the action plan to ensure all relevant legal, financial, HR and quality assurance issues are taken into account in completing the programme closure form
- Ensure that appropriate consultation is carried out with students, and that clear information is provided about the arrangements that are to be put into place for the remainder of the programme
- Ensure that other appropriate consideration is given to the proposal taking into account all the circumstances
- Ensure that consultation with relevant PSRBs and other key stakeholders (eg partner organisations, funding bodies) is carried out
- Agree the point at which applications to the programme should be suspended, and on the method and content of communications with applicants



- Agree on the method and timing of internal and external communications, and the processes to be used for approving message content
- Draw up proposed teaching-out and quality assurance arrangements to be put in place to enable existing students to complete their programme of study, for approval and subsequent monitoring by the chair of CEC

5.13 The Continuity Group will be mindful of the principles outlined in section 4 above.

5.14 The Continuity Group will work to complete the Programme Suspension or Withdrawal Form, which will be submitted together with the initial risk assessment, an EIA (if required) and a report on phasing out costs, if relevant, to the CEC. Following scrutiny by the CEC and endorsement of the decision by the College Management Board, the Programme Withdrawal Form, action plan for the withdrawal process and the EIA (if required) should be sent to Quality Assurance via [quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:quality-officers@brunel.ac.uk) who will arrange consideration by SASP.

5.15 Following scrutiny of the proposal and the proposed arrangements, SASP can recommend the withdrawal of the programme to Senate.

## **6 Approval**

6.1 Prospective students should not be informed of any proposals to suspend or withdraw a programme and the programme must not be removed from University or other publications until SASP has formally made a recommendation for withdrawal to Senate.

6.2 Once approval to the programme suspension or withdrawal has been given by Senate, the department must ensure that all necessary amendments are made by Marketing to College and University publications and web sites.

## **7 Suspended Programmes: reactivation and withdrawal (see Appendix 1 for additional guidance)**

7.1 Programme suspension means that there will be no intake of students onto a programme for the period of the suspension, being a maximum of two years.

7.2 Programmes suspended for one year will be automatically reactivated.

7.3 Where a programme is suspended for two years, at the one-year point of the suspension, the relevant College Management Board, if not already decided should agree one of the following:

- a. To reactivate the suspended programme for the following academic year (when the 2-year suspension ends).
  - b. To make essential modifications to the programme (as per the [Programme Modification Policy](#)), with the intention to reactivate it a year after the original suspension period ends.
  - c. Withdraw the programme
- 7.4 In the event that at the 1-year point of a 2-year suspension, a College agrees to modify a programme prior to reintroducing it (option b), an exceptional year of suspension may be required and will need to be applied for (see Appendix 1, type 4).
- 7.5 In the event that College intends to modify a suspended programme (option b) but has not achieved this by the end of the suspension period, the relevant College Management Board will be required to recommend the programme for withdrawal.

## Appendix 1 Programme Suspension Timelines and Activities

Suspension Type		Year 1 Activities	Year 2 Activities	Year 3 Activities	Year 4 Activities
1	1-Year suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments</li> <li>• Marketing and Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolments</li> </ul>		
2	2-year suspension – reactivation after suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments.</li> <li>• Marketing and Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolments</li> </ul>	
3	2-year suspension, with the intention of launching a modified programme after the suspension, agreed <u>at the suspension point</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments</li> <li>• Programme modification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments</li> <li>• Marketing and Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolments</li> </ul>	
4	2-year suspension – launching of a revised programme after the suspension, agreed <u>at one year point</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments</li> <li>• Programme modification</li> <li>• Application to suspend for an additional year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No enrolments.</li> <li>• Marketing and Recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolments</li> </ul>