

Programme Suspension and Closure Policy

Policy Category:	Academic and Student
Subject:	Programme Suspension and Closure
Approving Authority:	Academic Portfolio Oversight Committee
Responsible Officer:	Vice-President (Education & Student Success)
Responsible Office:	Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (ARQS)
Related Procedures:	N/A
Related University Policies:	Programme Post-Launch Review Policy
Effective Date:	1 September 2025
Supersedes:	30 May 2018 - Policy for closing or suspending a programme
Next Review:	1 September 2028

I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the guiding principles, key requirements and responsibilities for suspending or closing all taught and research programmes. The principle underpinning this policy is that, in all cases, the experience of students on the programme should be monitored and assured.

Programme suspension and closure requests for all programmes (both taught and research) must be submitted in accordance with the procedures set out within the [QA Handbook](#).

The policy uses the sector agreed principles and practices set out in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) published by the QAA. It takes account of [Competition & Markets Authority \(CMA\) guidance](#) and the [King's Student Protection Plan](#) and enables us to meet our ongoing [Conditions of Registration](#) with the Office for Students as follows:

B Conditions: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students:

- *B1a. each higher education course is up to date*
- *B1 c. each higher education course is coherent*
- *B1 d. each higher education course is effectively delivered*

C1: Protecting the interests of students:

- *The provider must demonstrate that in developing and implementing its policies, procedures and terms and conditions, it has given due regard to relevant guidance about how to comply with consumer protection law.*

The policy is applicable to:

- On campus provision i.e. programmes which are delivered and supported entirely by King's College London staff and which lead to an award from King's College London.
- Offsite delivery (including online) i.e. programmes which are delivered and supported entirely by King's College London staff irrespective of the location of delivery and which lead to an award from King's College London. Where the programme also exists in an on-campus delivery mode and only one of the versions is closing, this should nonetheless be put through the programme closure process in order to safeguard the experience of students on that particular iteration of the programme.
- Programmes delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement, whether this is on-campus or online provision. Where, for a programme delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement, the intention is also to close the partnership, the collaborative provision procedures should also be followed.

The policy is **not** applicable to:

- Short courses.
- Removal of programme variants (such as part-time versions of programmes).
- Removal of a pathway within an over-arching programme. The request to remove a pathway should have due regard for the students experience and CMA advice and must be undertaken in discussion with any other Faculties involved in the delivery or which depend on modules which will cease to run as a result of the closure.

Requests to suspend or close these must follow the procedures set out within the [QA Handbook](#) and the Short Courses Policy.

II. Definitions

Suspension A programme is suspended when a decision is taken not to recruit or deliver the programme for a defined period. The standard defined period of suspension is one academic year. If the defined period reaches its end but further suspension is required, the suspension process must be repeated. A Programme should be closed if it has been suspended beyond two academic years. Programme suspensions of more than two academic years can only be agreed by exception by the Director of Academic Quality.

Closure There are two stages to programme closure.

1. The programme is closed to applicants and new entrants
2. The programme is fully closed when there are no students enrolled and all students have left the programme (including those who have interrupted).

The term 'Closure' should only be used when referring to the deletion, permanent withdrawal or discontinuation of programmes.

III. Policy

1.	Introduction
1.1	<p>A Faculty's decision to close or suspend a programme must take full account of the needs of existing students, applicants and offer holders. This includes interrupted students, deferred applicants and repeating students. It should support students through to completion of their intended study wherever possible or put in place appropriate alternative arrangements.</p> <p>In either case, arrangements must be made to guarantee the quality of experience for such students during the period of any teach-out. These arrangements should also ensure that the programme continues to address the requirements of any PSRB or government agency which accredits the programme.</p>
2.	General Principles
2.1	<p>Before commencing the formal procedures to suspend or close a programme, the Faculty must ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with impacted students, offer holders and applicants has taken place. • Arrangements are in place for interrupted and deferred students so that they can complete their studies. This may include alternative provision to complete their studies. • Provisions have been made for students who require the opportunity to re-sit or to repeat a year of their studies. • Any other Faculties relying on modules from the programme in question (e.g. a joint honours programme taught across more than one Faculty) have been consulted. • Any other Faculties offering modules as options from programme to be suspended or closed have been informed
2.2	<p>All decisions to suspend or close programmes must be taken in good time, with due regard for the need to address the position of existing students and potential applicants / offer holders. Admissions must be involved and consulted as part of discussions.</p> <p>Where applications have been received but offers not yet made, a decision to suspend or close a programme must be made early enough in the cycle so as not to disadvantage applicants. It must be remembered that undergraduate applicants may apply for entry to a programme up to two years before taking up their place.</p> <p>If a decision to suspend or close a programme is taken late in the admissions cycle, the availability of suitable alternatives at the University or at other institutions may be limited and applicants may be able to claim financial compensation from the university, thereby causing potential reputational damage.</p>

	<p>It is not possible to suspend or close a programme once applicants have placed King's as their firm choice unless it can be documented that all potential alternative arrangements have been exhausted. This must include specifically supporting students to find an alternative programme at another provider.</p> <p>To ensure any communications are CMA compliant, advice should be sought from the Regulatory Compliance Manager within the Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (ARQS) team.</p>
2.3	The programme must continue to be actively managed and subject to the university's requirements of module evaluation, annual monitoring and external examining and must therefore retain a Programme Leader for the duration of the programme.
2.4	Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for students on the programme is maintained. If the programme is due for review during the teach-out phase the Faculty should contact the ARQS team for guidance.
3	Rationale for suspension or closure
3.1	<p>Programmes may be suspended or closed for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining student applications and/or enrolments • Key staff leaving the university/being on sabbatical • Creation of a new programme that merges a number of existing programmes • Changing strategic priorities at Department, Faculty or University level • Concerns about the quality and academic standards on the programme • Termination of a memorandum of agreement and/or termination for another reason of a collaborative provision arrangement which also results in the closure of a programme • The outcome / recommendation of Periodic Programme Review Panels
4.	Suspension and Closure Process <p>Programme closure/suspension is a five-stage process as detailed below.</p>
4.1	<p>Authority to make decisions about suspension or closure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For taught programmes the decision is initially made by the relevant Faculty Education Committee (FEC) and then approved by Academic Portfolio Oversight Committee (APOC). • For research programmes the decision is initially made by the relevant Faculty Research Student Committee (FRSC) and then approved by Postgraduate Research Students Sub-Committee (PRSS).
4.2	<p>Proposal to suspend or close a programme during, or just prior to, a recruitment cycle</p> <p>On rare occasions, Faculties, Admissions and Marketing may agree during, or just prior to, an admissions cycle that it would be desirable to suspend or close a programme.</p> <p>In these circumstances it may be appropriate to stop additional applicants applying to</p>

	<p>the programme and additional steps must be followed as below.</p> <p>The Faculty Associate Director of Education (or Faculty Associate Dean for Doctoral Students) must send an email to the Associate Director of Admissions and the Director of Brand & Marketing requesting that a temporary hold be put in place, whilst the rest of the programme closure/suspension process is followed as below.</p> <p>Marketing will remove the programme temporarily from the Online Prospectus.</p> <p>Admissions will remove the programme temporarily from the Admissions Portal (and UCAS, or DfE Apply where appropriate).</p> <p>It is essential that remaining stages of the programme closure/suspension process are then completed.</p> <p>If the programme closure/suspension does not go ahead the Associate Director of Education must send an email to the Associate Director of Admissions and the Director of Brand & Marketing requesting that the temporary hold is removed, and the actions above reversed.</p>
4.3	<p>Stage 1: Consultation & Faculty Consideration</p> <p>Stage 1 involves consideration of the rationale, an assessment of the impact of the proposed closure/suspension and approval by the relevant FEC/FRSC.</p> <p>Before any suspension or closure is submitted, full impact assessment and consultation must have taken place.</p> <p>This includes determining the number of students enrolled on the programme, as well as any applicants, offer holders or deferred offer holders who would be affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Where there are applicants and/or offer holders (including deferred offer holders), Admissions must be contacted and anyone impacted must be consulted.</p> <p>Where programmes are closing and there is an impact to offer holders, ARQS must be consulted before approval is requested.</p> <p>Where staff terms and conditions or service are affected or there are potential redundancies, Human Resources must be consulted at the earliest opportunity. A programme cannot be closed before all HR processes are completed.</p> <p>Where there are current students on a programme, student representatives should be included in the process and students on the programme must be consulted on the proposals and any alternative options at a formative stage of deliberations. In the rare event that teach out is not possible, affected students should be offered the opportunity to transfer to suitable alternative programmes at King's and/or at another institution. Arrangements must be made for students who have suspended</p>

	<p>their studies or need to repeat or those who have deferred entry.</p> <p>Additionally, Admissions will consult the UCAS Admissions Guide for specific information relating to UCAS applicants. They must identify any applicants who will be affected by the decision and notify them. If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial letter, Admissions should issue a reminder letter advising the applicant that their application will be withdrawn if no response is received within a specified timescale.</p> <p>Where there are Firm Offer Holders, individual conversations, which must be documented, must be held between the applicant and the Faculty to offer these individuals a place on other programmes at King's and/or elsewhere or, in the case of programme suspension, to offer deferred admission for the following year.</p> <p>If this is not successful, then the programme may need to be continued and not suspended or closed. For specialist programmes reliant upon one academic, Faculties must contact ARQS for guidance.</p> <p>Generally, colleagues should ensure they have consulted the Student Protection Plan.</p> <p>Joint Degrees</p> <p>In the case of joint programmes, all Faculties must agree to the suspension / closure before procedures commence. The external examiner(s) must also be invited to comment. Documentation will then be submitted by the lead Faculty's FEC/FRSC.</p> <p>Collaborative Provision</p> <p>In the case of a collaborative provision arrangement, the Faculty should refer to the Memorandum of Agreement on the teach out arrangements should the partnership end. It is expected that arrangements will be put in place with the Partner for continuing students and any prospective students who have been offered a place on the programme. To minimise any risks, the plan should adhere to any expectations set out in the University's Student Protection Plan and Student Terms and Conditions. The Faculty must contact ARQS to take advice on what timeframe will be needed to enable students to complete their programme, what arrangements will be put in place to teach out the programme with consideration given to student expectations, financial arrangements, reporting requirements, legal and regulatory obligations and future relationship with the Partner, prior to communicating with the partner institution, students or other stakeholders. This is to ensure that programme suspension or closure is conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement and to identify whether the agreement will need to be renegotiated, varied or terminated.</p>
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4.4	<p>Stage 2: Approval</p> <p>Initial approval is by the Lead Faculty's FEC/FRSC (following approval by the FEC/FRSCs of other relevant Faculties for joint honours taught across more than one Faculty) and can only be given if arrangements are in place to support any existing, continuing, deferred, interrupted or repeating students.</p> <p>For both taught and research programmes, the programme suspension / closure is submitted on the Curriculum Management System.</p> <p>ARQS will review and seek final approval from APOC.</p> <p>The King's Doctoral College will review and seek approval from PRSS.</p> <p>APOC/PRSS approval is conditional on any Firm offer holders being agreeable to be transferred to another programme either at King's or elsewhere.</p>										
4.5	<p>Stage 3: Internal Communications</p> <p>Once APOC has approved a suspension or closure of a taught programme and this has been processed, automated emails are generated via the Curriculum Management System to relevant staff to alert them to the decision. If a research programme is closed, the King's Doctoral College will notify relevant parties via email.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Recipient of automated notification</th><th>Action to be taken up upon receipt of notification</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Marketing</td><td>Remove programme from online prospectus</td></tr> <tr> <td>Admissions</td><td>Remove programme from UCAS and application portal</td></tr> <tr> <td>Course Information Team</td><td>Update SITS and close programme on relevant systems</td></tr> <tr> <td>ARQS</td><td>Update spreadsheets for APOC reporting</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Faculty's Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) must ensure that relevant teams within the Faculty are notified, along with any other Faculties which have been involved with the delivery of the programme.</p> <p>For taught postgraduate programmes, in some specialist areas (e.g. teaching,), there might be additional procedures dictated by the relevant application scheme or PSRB. The QAM should ensure additional procedures are followed and that PSRBs (where applicable) are notified.</p> <p>For collaborative provision (all arrangements except for those study abroad arrangements managed through the Global Mobility Office), ARQS should be consulted to ensure that the relevant process is followed and notified as appropriate for the arrangement.</p> <p>A list of programme suspensions and closures will be reported annually to APOC/PRSS.</p>	Recipient of automated notification	Action to be taken up upon receipt of notification	Marketing	Remove programme from online prospectus	Admissions	Remove programme from UCAS and application portal	Course Information Team	Update SITS and close programme on relevant systems	ARQS	Update spreadsheets for APOC reporting
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4.6	<p>Stage 4: Applicant and Student Communications</p> <p>Once APOC / PRSS approval has been granted:</p> <p>Applicants / Offer Holders</p> <p>Admissions will confirm to any applicants / offer holders that the programme is being suspended or closed and provide them again with information about alternative programmes of study available (where possible) through the Admissions Portal.</p> <p>If the applicant wishes to withdraw their application this should be permitted and any application fee, or deposit fee paid should be refunded in full. If the student has applied through UCAS, the Admissions Team must advise UCAS to let the applicant make a substitute choice.</p> <p>Please note the substitute choices can only happen in the UCAS equal considerations window. The deadline for this is usually at the end of January each year. Requests made after the equal consideration deadline in January will be dependent on whether the programme continues to have spaces available and is accepting applications via UCAS Extra.</p> <p>Current / Deferred / Interrupted / Repeating Students</p> <p>The Faculty must notify students enrolled on the programme (and any linked programmes) that the suspension / closure has been approved and remind students of the plans which have been made for teaching-out the programme. They must also be provided with details of how the Faculty intends to maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the teach out phase.</p>
4.7	<p>Stage 5: Final Closure</p> <p>An audit will be carried out every year by the Course Information Team to check if all students have completed the programme(s) due for closure.</p> <p>Once all students have completed, the programme(s) (and modules directly associated with it provided these are not used on other programmes) will be closed and marked as 'not in use' on SITS, the student record system.</p> <p>If students are still active on the programme or if it is suspended, only the applicant/admissions SITS records are taken out of use.</p> <p>When a programme is taken out of use, the Course Information Team will email relevant QAMs to notify them that the final closure of the programme has been processed.</p>

5	Renewal of Suspensions / Expectation to Close Programmes
5.1	The Faculty Quality Assurance Manager (QAM) will maintain records of programme suspensions. Unless the suspension process is repeated or the programme submitted for permanent closure, the programme will be re-activated by the Course Information Team in time for the marketing and admissions cycle for the next academic year. The Course Information Team will notify the QAM when a programme is re-activated.
5.2	If a taught programme is suspended and a decision is taken at a later date to close it, documentation noting the revised decision must be submitted via the Curriculum Management System and considered by the Faculty Education Committee (FEC) or equivalent ¹ for initial approval. This will be passed onwards to ARQS who will seek final sign-off from the Chair of APOC. For research programmes, the closure should be submitted through the Curriculum Management System. Once approved by the appropriate Faculty Research Student Committee (FRSC) ² , this will be considered by the Postgraduate Research Students Sub-Committee (PRSS).
5.3	<p>It is expected that programmes which fail to recruit any students in a recruitment cycle will be closed.</p> <p>It is also expected that programmes which consistently fail to achieve the 'stable state' thresholds set by the Portfolio Simplification Exercise (30 students for undergraduate programmes and 25 students for postgraduate programmes) by the end of a 3-year recruitment period and each year following this are put forward for closure.</p> <p>Faculties must identify any Programmes that fall into these categories as part of the annual planning process. Faculties will be required to demonstrate why a programme should remain open if they disagree.</p> <p>In addition, the Programme Post-Launch Review Policy applies. Further detail is available - Programme Post-Launch Review Policy</p>
6.	Policy Review
6.1	This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. Revision may be carried out sooner where necessary or if there is a change in applicable sector best practice guidance or legislation.

¹ 'Faculty Education Committee' (FEC) is used as a catch-all term. Approvals must be made at the 'FEC' level and not a sub-group of FEC.

² The term 'Faculty Research Committee' (FRC) is used to describe the panel that approved research programme modifications at Faculty, Institute or School level.

7.	Reporting
7.1	<p>For taught degrees:</p> <p>Suspensions and Closures are approved at APOC (delegated from Academic Board) which reports to Academic Board.</p> <p>The Vice-President (Education & Student Success) is responsible for the communication of Suspensions / Closures to Academic Board.</p> <p>For research degrees:</p> <p>Suspensions and Closures are approved at the Postgraduate Research Student Sub-Committee (PRSS), which reports to CEC.</p>