



TITLE		REF	VERSION
Procedure for the closure of a Higher Education programme		HEPRO003	3.0
DEPARTMENT	Higher Education		
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# PROCEDURE FOR THE CLOSURE OF A HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

## 1. Procedure Statement

Activate Learning is committed to protecting the interests of students, applicants and its own reputation in the event of the closure of a higher education programme to new entrants. These procedures have been established to provide a clear statement of the arrangements to secure both the quality of provision and the student experience following a decision to close a programme.

The Student Protection Plan provides the main reference point for consideration of any potential impact on the student experience.

With the exception of Activate Learning being given notice to close a programme by one of its awarding bodies, the decision to close a programme will be made by the Group Higher Education Academic Board.

## 2. Background

From time to time Activate Learning may be faced with considering the closure of a Higher Education programme of study. This may be due to:

- Notice being given to Activate Learning by one of its University partners to close one or more programmes;
- Notice being given by Activate Learning to one of its University partners to close one or more programmes; or
- Activate Learning has decided to withdraw one or more of its Higher National programmes (awarded by Pearson).

The basis of proposals for programme closure may typically be one or more of the following:

- Decline in student demand over a period, likely to be over a period of 3 years, to the point where the programme's viability from a financial and student experience perspective is threatened.
- The programme ceases to meet the needs of employers and/or professional bodies.
- Failure to recruit viable numbers to a new programme.
- Documented concerns over quality which threaten the programme's integrity.
- A breach of either party's obligations under an agreement between Activate Learning and an awarding body.
- A reduction in funding or funded numbers.
- The introduction of a replacement programme.

## 3. Definitions

**Staff** – everyone employed directly and indirectly by Activate Learning with responsibility for the delivery, management and/or administration of a programme of study.

**Students** – Any existing students enrolled on the programme and any potential applicant to the programme.

**Applicants** – Individuals who have applied, or are in the process of applying to study on a Higher Education programme at one or more of Activate Learning's Colleges

**Higher Education programme** – includes Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (awarded by Edexcel) including those offered as part of a Higher Apprenticeship, Foundation Degrees, and Honours Degrees (awarded by a partner university)

## 4. Scope

This policy covers all higher education programmes provided by Activate Learning, including those which form part of a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship and all current and prospective students, both full and part time.

## **5. Additional processes**

The programme closure procedure requires a clear statement of the rationale for closure and the arrangements to secure both the quality of provision and the student experience following the decision to withdraw the programme. The Group Higher Education Academic Board will need to be provided with a plan to show how the outgoing programme is to be phased out and the support provided to any remaining students and applicants. The Student Protection Plan provides further guidance on actions to be taken in the event of programme closure.

## **6. Obtaining approval to withdraw a programme**

Where a programme governed by a partnership agreement is suspended by the awarding body, the awarding body will notify Activate Learning in writing as detailed in the relevant institutional agreement. The Director of Higher Education will then work with the relevant Group Faculty Director or nominee to ensure that arrangements for any current and prospective students are in place (see 5.3)

Where the proposal to close a higher education programme originates from within Activate Learning, the recommendation should be submitted by the relevant Group Faculty Director or Group Director of Online to the Group Higher Education Academic Board.

In order to allow adequate time for discussion and consultation, the recommendation for closure should be submitted to the Group Higher Education Academic Board before the end of May in the year the programme is recommended for closure.

The minimum time between a proposal for closure being submitted to the Group Higher Education Academic Board and a decision being taken should normally be a minimum of three months prior to the commencement of the next academic year, or as required by the appropriate institutional agreement.

The Group Higher Education Academic Board will need to be provided with as a basis for its decision:

- A clear statement of the rationale for the programme's closure.
- A clearly defined phasing-out period which includes start and end dates.
- The arrangements for providing students enrolled on the programme and all staff with information on the proposed closure.
- The arrangements for providing UCAS applicants with timely advice and guidance to enable them to apply to another institution.
- A clearly defined list of options available to students to enable them to either complete their original programme of study or transfer with their agreement to an alternative programme and/or institution.
- The arrangements to ensure that the quality of the student learning experience will continue to meet Activate Learning's, awarding body and QAA expectations during the phasing-out period.
- The mechanism to ensure that any proposed reduction in overall staffing levels will not impact unreasonably on the student experience, particularly with regard to ensuring that the intended learning outcomes of the programme will still be achievable by current students.
- The mechanism to ensure that adequate resources continue to be provided to maintain the quality of the student experience during the phasing-out period.
- The assessment and re-assessment arrangements for any students, particularly part-time students, who will not have completed their intended programme by the closure date.
- Evidence of consultation internally and/or externally with key stakeholders including the student body.

## **7. Notification**

### **7.1. Notification of decision to outside organisations**

Once a closure recommendation has been approved by the Group Higher Education Academic Board, the Director of Higher Education must ensure that all publications and websites are amended.

UCAS should be notified by the College's UCAS Correspondent when the closure recommendation has been approved.

Partnership agreements: The College is required to notify the University partner of its intention to suspend a programme in writing, giving no less than six months' notice or whatever is set out in the relevant institutional agreement, before the end of the academic year during which the notice is given.

## 7.2. Notification of decision internally within Activate Learning

The relevant Group Faculty Director will be responsible for ensuring that all relevant parties in Activate Learning are notified of any decision to close a course. This will include but not be limited to ensuring that the appropriate documentation is raised and authorised to update Activate Learning's student and course record systems ie REMS

## 7.3. Notification of decision and arrangements for current students

All communications with current students about the closure of their course must be undertaken by the appropriate Faculty Director of Delivery or delegate.

Current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of enrolment on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure recommendation has been approved by the Group Higher Education Academic Board.

Where a programme is being closed to recruitment, the proposed arrangements for students currently enrolled on the programme (including those who have suspended studies), must include the following:

- Discussion about student options in regard to transferring to another programme within Activate Learning or to another institution, and arrangements for doing so.
- Confirmation of the student timetable for the remaining period of the programme.
- Arrangements for the staffing and resourcing of the programme for the remaining period.
- Written confirmation to all students clarifying any amendments to the programme regulations regarding assessment and progression, with particular reference to:
  - o Students who have temporarily withdrawn
  - o Students who have failed modules and would normally be allowed to retake these the following year.
  - o Students under mitigating circumstances who have been granted an extension beyond the end of the academic year.
  - o Students planning to progress from a Foundation Degree to an Honours Degree.

## 7.4. Notification of decision and arrangements for prospective students

All communications with applicants on the following matters must be undertaken by the Faculty Director of Delivery, or delegate.

Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a closure recommendation has been approved by the Group Higher Education Academic Board. These applicants should then be informed of their options in regard to transferring their application to another programme or institution.

All Public Information relating to the programme should be either removed or amended by the Marketing Business Partner for higher education in line with the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance, to inform potential applicants that the programme has been withdrawn. The following list provides a reference as to where this information is currently published:

- College websites
- Higher Education Programme Guide
- Programme leaflets – web based and hard copy
- UCAS listing
- Awarding body website and prospectus
- Third party e.g., employers

## 8. Marketing

Once a closure recommendation has been approved by the Group Higher Education Academic Board, the Director of Marketing and Communications will, where appropriate, prepare and publish a press statement.

Version date:	Summary of updates
July 2022	Clarification of responsibilities around the notification of the decision internally
July 2023	Removed PGCE