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Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

Procedure

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the procedures for module / unit and programme amendment and discontinuation. The procedure should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The procedure is designed to meet the expectations for standards and core practices as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

2. Module / unit and programme amendment

As outlined in the Code of Practice, it may be necessary to make amendments to module / units and programmes as a result of enhancements identified as part of Programme Review or to reflect external factors such as changes to QAA Subject Benchmark Statements or Ofsted inspection framework or changes introduced by an accrediting professional body. Any changes must be fully documented and follow the procedure set out below. Changes to programmes must not be advertised or implemented until the programme amendment procedure is successfully completed.

Module / unit and programme amendments are considered by different routes depending on the type and / or volume of amendment. Amendments are divided into the categories of editorial; minor and major as detailed below with examples of what falls into each of the three categories below. The level of change will dictate the process for approval of the change and what level of signoff of the change is required.

The categories also include information about whether applicants and students will need to be informed or consulted over the proposed change which are defined as follows:

- Unlikely – In most cases it will not be necessary to inform applicants or students.
- Possibly – There are circumstances where applicants and prospective students should be informed / consulted. Please seek guidance from AQU.
- Yes – Applicants and students should be consulted or informed / consulted about the proposed / approved change.

Students will be informed of a change only after it has been approved. In contrast, consultation will occur prior to final approval. The period for students to provide responses to the consultation must be no shorter than 2 weeks.

UCEM operates a window each year where changes can be requested; changes outside of this window will only be approved if they are clearly in the best interests of students and following consultation with students and applicants, if required. The window will **run between 1 September and 31 January** in each academic year for autumn implementation. Any changes that are required outside of this window must be discussed with the Dean - School of the Built Environment and full written case as to why the change must be made outside of the change window.

When making amendments it is important that consideration is given to:

- the impact on students and applicants including those with specific protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010;
- compliance with Competition and Markets Authority Consumer Law;

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- timelines for implementation and the impact the changes will have on other UCEM programmes and modules / unit;
- UCEM Terms and Conditions of Contract; and
- UCEM Student Protection Plan.

2.1 Editorial changes

The following categories of minor modification may be approved by the **programme leader(s)** concerned:

Example of editorial amendment	Applicants & students to be informed / consulted?	Additional notes
Amendments to address typographical errors, clarify wording or inconsistencies or to amend module / unit codes.	Unlikely	Only inform if the error has the potential to mislead applicants or students.
Amendments to a programme specification to incorporate items approved under sections 3.2 and 3.3 below.	Unlikely	
Alterations to module / unit descriptors to update topics, staff details or other module / unit resources.	Unlikely	

The above is not a definitive list of editorial amendments. Any other similar amendments should be discussed and agreed with the Academic Quality Unit. Amendments to a programme specification to incorporate items approved under sections 3.2 and 3.3 below can be approved by AQU.

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2.1.1 Process for making editorial amendments

Programme / Module / Unit Leader prepares **Form S Programme Change Form** within the programme change window of **1 September – 31 January** outlining the amendments required.



Programme / Module / Unit Leader updates the module / unit descriptor using track changes to show the changes required.



Programme / Module / Unit Leader submits completed and signed Form S and updated module / unit descriptor to AQU.



AQU checks and records changes requested and liaises with Projects and Delivery Performance Directorate to confirm capacity for implementation of these changes. AQU arranges for the changes to be signed off by the **Associate Dean – School of the Built Environment**.



Following signoff, **AQU** to accept all changes in the module / unit descriptor and to ensure that the updated version is saved in the appropriate repositories and email to relevant teams (including VLEadmin; SITS; Module Leader; Registration Team). AQU also ensures that the signed Form S is saved and logged and organises any resulting updates to Programme Specifications or UCEM website.

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2.2 Minor amendments to an approved programme

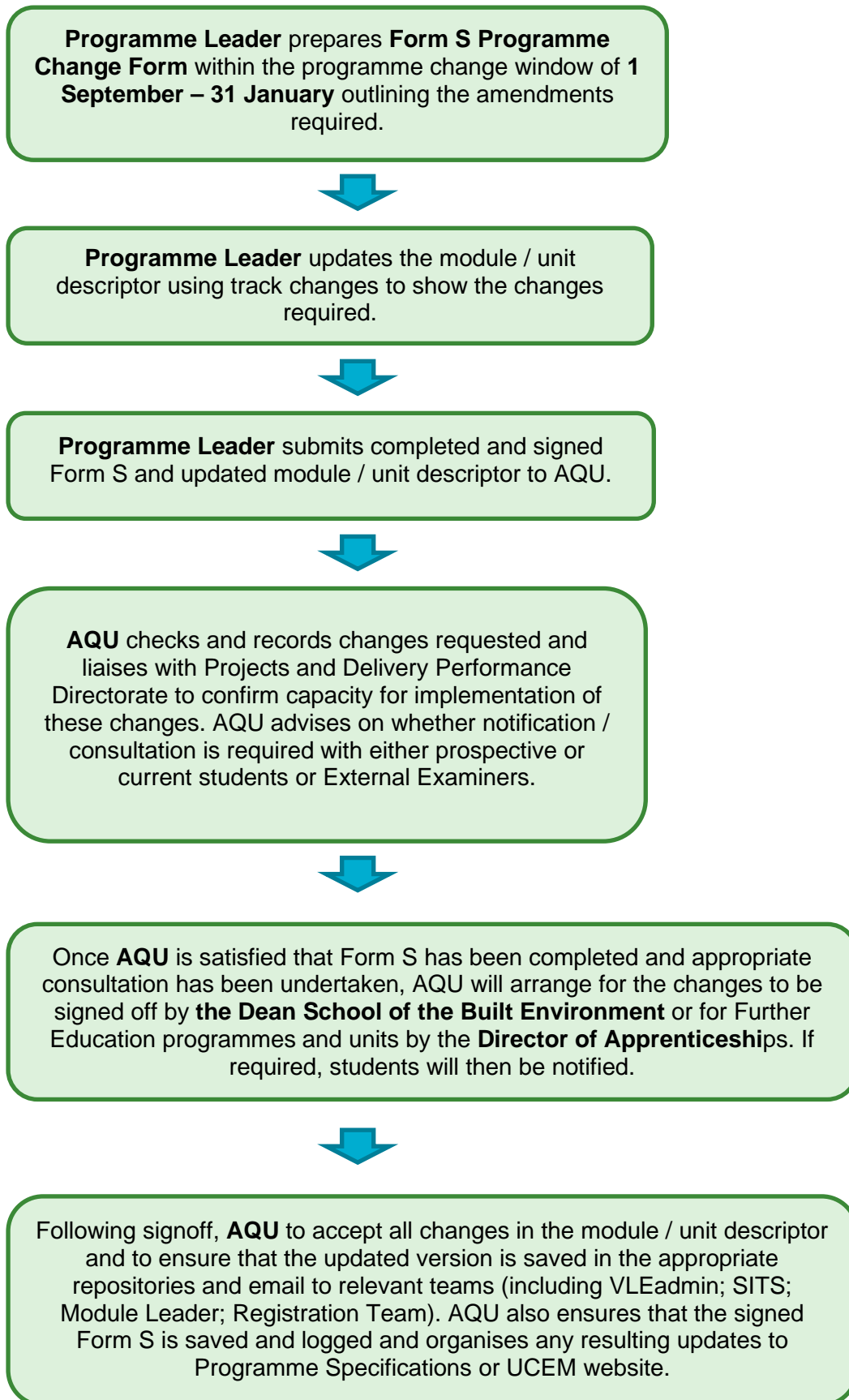
The following categories of modification require approval by the relevant Dean - School of the Built Environment, or for Further Education programmes or units by the Director of Apprenticeships:

Example of minor amendments	Applicants & students to be informed / consulted?	External Examiners to be informed / consulted?	Additional notes
Addition of an individual option unit / module within the programme that does not affect mapping against programme learning outcomes or PSRB accreditation.	Possibly	Yes	Students selecting their option modules should be notified of the availability of a new option module
Deletion of individual option unit / module within the programme that does not affect mapping against programme learning outcomes or PSRB. (See section 3.4 Module and unit suspension or closure if this deletion will cause the module not to be attached to any programme)	Yes	Yes	There should be consultation around the removal of the option unit / module and student feedback should be reviewed in order to mitigate the impact of this change. External Examiners should also be consulted.
The addition of or changes to the learning outcomes of a unit / module within a programme that do not affect mapping against programme learning outcomes.	Yes	Yes	Students should be notified of this change. External Examiners should be consulted.
Changes to the assessment methods or weighting for unit / module.	Yes	Yes	If the information is available to applicants, they should be notified of the change. Students should be notified of the change. External Examiners should be consulted.
Changes to the title of a unit / module.	Yes	Yes	If the information is available to applicants, they should be notified of the change. Students should be notified of the change. External Examiners should normally be consulted.

The above is not a definitive list of minor amendments. Any other similar amendments should be discussed and agreed with the Academic Quality Unit.

Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

2.2.1 Process for making minor amendments



Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

AQU is responsible for monitoring the cumulative impact of all changes to a programme and where a series of minor changes exceeds 25% of the total programme credit it will be treated as a major amendment and may trigger a revalidation of the programme (see section 2.3 below).

2.3 Major amendments to an approved programme

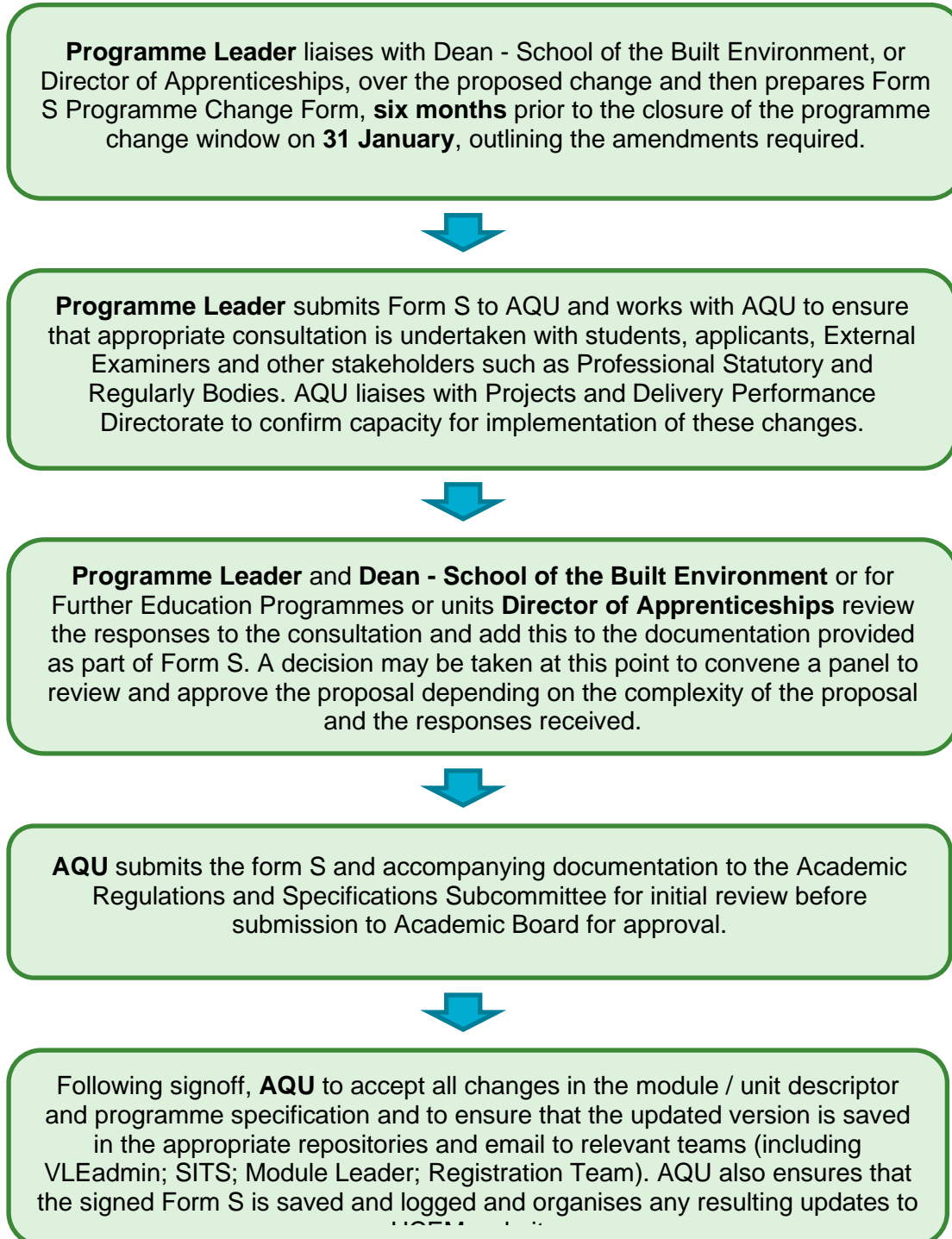
The following categories of amendment require review by the Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee prior to final approval and signoff by Academic Board. The changes below are major, and their implementation will require input from, and may affect, many areas of the organisation, as well as applicants and students. Therefore, staff are encouraged to begin the amendment process as soon as possible prior to the desired implementation date.

Example of major amendments	Applicants & students to be informed / consulted?	External Examiners to be informed / consulted?	Additional notes
A change to the title of a programme.	Yes	Yes	Consultation is required with students, applicants and External Examiners and feedback reviewed to mitigate any adverse impact on students.
The addition of a new pathway within an existing programme.	Yes	Yes	Notification to students and External Examiners.
Changes to the means of delivery affecting either all students or a proportion of them (e.g. those within a particular geographical area).	Yes	Yes	Consultation is required with students, applicants and External Examiners and feedback reviewed to mitigate any adverse impact on students.
The deletion of a core module / unit within a programme that may affect mapping against programme learning outcomes and/or any PSRB accreditation.	Yes	Yes	Consultation is required with students, applicants and External Examiners and feedback reviewed to mitigate any adverse impact on students.
The addition of one or more previously un-validated option modules / units.	Yes	Yes	Notification to students and applicants. Consultation with External Examiners.
The deletion of a group of option modules / units at one time that do not affect mapping against programme learning outcomes and as long as this does not affect accreditation or pathways accreditation unless this accreditation is no longer available.	Yes	Yes	Consultation is required with students, applicants and External Examiners and feedback reviewed to mitigate any adverse impact on students.

Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

The above is not a definitive list of major amendments. Any other similar amendments should be discussed and agreed with the Academic Quality Unit.

2.3.1 Process for making major amendments



AQU will monitor the cumulative impact of all changes to a programme. In the event of a series of minor and major changes collectively affecting more than approximately 25% of the total programme credits, any further proposal for amendment may require the programme to be reviewed and revalidated, following discussion with the Vice Principal Learning, Teaching and Apprenticeships.

3. Module / unit, programme/ apprenticeship programme and award discontinuation

Programmes / apprenticeship programmes, awards and modules / unit may be either temporarily suspended for a defined period of time or permanently discontinued.

Discontinuation of a programme / apprenticeship programme normally starts with a decision to suspend recruitment thus allowing students already enrolled on the programme to complete within the normal timeframes or transfer to another programme.

3.1 Suspension of recruitment

To request suspension of recruitment on a programme the **Programme Leader** or **Associate Dean - School** of the Built Environment or **Dean - School of the Built Environment** must complete **Form V Request for Programme Closure or Suspension of Recruitment**. It must be made clear on the form that the request is to suspend recruitment. The form must make clear when the last full intake and last entry onto the programme will be and provide a clear rationale and wider institutional implication of the suspension of recruitment. The consultation section must be completed detailing what internal and external consultation has been undertaken.

Once the form is fully populated it should be submitted to AQU who will arrange for the following approvals to be sought. Approval by:

- Dean - **School** of the Built Environment
- Chair of Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee
- Vice Principal Learning, Teaching and Apprenticeships
- Chair of Academic Board

Once all the above approvals have been sought AQU will arrange with relevant teams to implement the suspension of recruitment. AQU will also notify External Examiners and relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

Recruitment will only commence again once **Form W Request for Recommencement of a Suspended Programme of Study** has been completed and approved to overturn the decision to suspend recruitment.

Following the approval to suspend recruitment, the programme must be removed from the website and communications sent to any prospective students or applicants at the earliest opportunity and with their options in regard to transferring their application to another programme.

If an applicant does not wish to continue with their application, they should receive a full refund of any tuition fees paid. Applicants that have been made offers but not accepted can be contacted to state that the offer is withdrawn.

Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

3.2 Request for programme / apprenticeship programme closure

There are a variety of reasons why a decision may be made to close a programme, including:

- A decline in student demand making the programme no longer financially viable;
- Changes to funding so that a programme is no longer eligible for student financial support;
- Resource availability for example Key staff leaving the institution;
- Changes to institutional strategic priorities;
- A new programme is being offered which replaces the existing programme;
- Concerns around the quality and standards of provision,
- Closure of a collaborative arrangement.

Authority to close a programme / apprenticeship programme rests with either the Academic Board, on academic grounds, or the Principal, who has authority to discontinue a programme on grounds of financial viability or resource availability please see the full processes set out below.

Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

3.2.1 Request for closure on the grounds of academic viability

A decision may be made to close a programme on the grounds of academic viability this could be for example where a new programme has been validated to replace it or where there are concerns around the quality and standards of provision. Requests for closures on academic grounds must follow the process set out below.

The proposal must include a clear rationale for the closure; include details of any arrangements to phase out provision or transfer students to alternative programme, must include information on how the quality of provision will be protected in the run-out and evidence of consultation with students, staff, External Examiners.

Where there is approval to close multiple programmes, this must be brought to the attention of the Deputy Principal who will make a decision, in consultation with the Board of Trustees as appropriate, as to whether this should be brought to the attention of the Office for Students as a reportable event.

Request to close a programme on academic grounds may originate from the **Annual Programme Review process** which reports into **Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (QSEC)**, or concerns that concerns that QSEC has around quality and standards.



A **Form V Request for Programme Closure or Suspension of Recruitment** must be completed and signed by the **Dean - School of the Built Environment**.



The Form V Request for Programme Closure or Suspension of Recruitment is reviewed and endorsed by **QSEC** and signed by the **Chair of QSEC**.

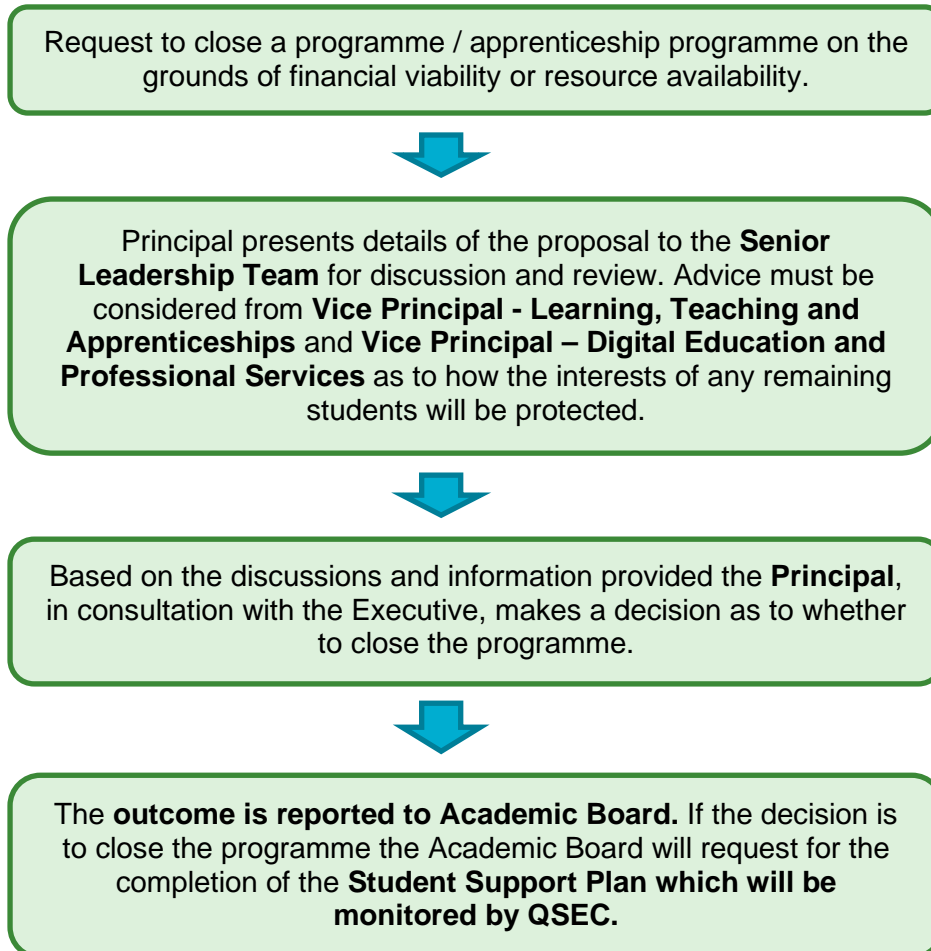


The Form V Request for Programme Closure or Suspension of Recruitment is reviewed and approved by **Academic Board** and signed by the **Principal**. If the decision is to close the programme the Academic Board will request for the completion of the **Student Support Plan which will be monitored by QSEC**.

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3.2.2 Request for closure on the grounds of financial viability or resource availability

A decision may be made to close a programme on the grounds of financial viability for example if there has been a decline in student numbers or in the event that UCEM no longer has the resources available to run the programme. Requests for closure on financial viability or resource availability must follow the process set out below. As part of this process a clear rationale must be made as to the reasons for closure.



Where there is approval to close multiple programmes, this must be brought to the attention of the Deputy Principal who will make a decision, in consultation with the Board of Trustees as appropriate, as to whether this should be brought to the attention of the Office for Students as a reportable event.

Programme Amendment and Discontinuation

3.2.3 Student Support Plans for Programme Closure

Following the request for programme closure using **Form V: Request for Programme Closure or Suspension of Recruitment with Student Support Plan** Appendix A Programme Closure Student Support Plan must be completed.

The Programme Closure Student Support Plan details the convening of a Programme Closure Group consisting of the Programme Leader, representative from AQU, a representative from Academic Operations, Student Programme Representative and a representation from Admissions and Student Registration. The Programme Closure Group must meet a minimum of once a semester to ensure the effective run-out and closure of the programme. The form instructs for consideration to be given to:

- Ensuring that the programme closed in line with UCEM's Student Protection Plan.
- Identifying risks and detailing how these risks will be mitigated.
- Student communication strategy.
- Communication strategy for other stakeholders including staff, External Examiners, collaborative partners, employers and Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies.
- Whether there will be any changes to programme management and delivery arrangements during the run-out.
- Student cohort tracking.
- Student feedback and complaints.
- Refund and compensation arrangements.

The Programme Closure Group reports into QSEC following each meeting so that QSEC can monitor the effective run-out and closure of UCEM programmes to ensure that students are continuing to receive a good quality student experience and that academic standards are not impacted.

3.3 Programme closed

When all remaining students have exited from a closing programme **Form W Programme Closed Form** will be completed detailing that there are no students remaining and the programme is closed. This form is reported to QSEC and Academic Board and then communicated to relevant internal stakeholders and relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

3.4 Module and unit suspension or closure

A decision may be taken to suspend or close an individual module or unit. Authority to suspend or close a module rests with the Vice Principal Learning, Teaching and Apprenticeships and must be reported to Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, QSEC and Academic Board.

4. Benchmarking/References

4.1 Related policies

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the following UCEM documents

[UCEM Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation \(opens new window\)](#)

[UCEM Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation \(opens new window\)](#)

[UCEM Student Protection Plan \(opens new window\)](#)

[UCEM Refund and Compensation Policy \(opens new window\)](#)

[UCEM Code of Practice chapter on Equality and Diversity \(opens new window\)](#)

4.2 Reference documents

[Competition and Markets Authority \(2015\) UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law – Helping you comply with your obligations \(opens new window\)](#)

[Ofsted \(2019\) The education inspection framework \(opens new window\)](#)

[QAA Subject Benchmark Statements \(opens new window\)](#)

[QAA UK Quality Code Guidance \(2018\) Course Design and Development \(opens new window\)](#)