

DN COLLEGES GROUP

The University Centre at **North Lindsey College**
University Centre **Doncaster**

Higher Education programme changes and closures policy

Introduction

This policy summarises the procedures to be adopted within the DN Colleges Group (**'the College'**) University Centres for the closing, suspending or changing of any programme of study. The position reflects the *Higher education course changes and closure: statement of good practice* endorsed by HEFCE, AoC, UUK, Guild HE and the NUS in 2015. An associated reference point will be to the Higher Education Admissions Policy and Terms and Conditions.

The College is committed to ensuring the quality of learning opportunities and supporting students towards achieving the best possible academic outcomes. Beyond the normal academic practice of reviewing and updating modules and programmes, in **exceptional circumstances** it may be necessary to close a programme or make changes for a **specific group of students**.

In such circumstances the College would ensure that existing or potential students would be fully informed, consulted and supported to protect their interests.

1 Programme Closure and Suspension

The College may wish to close and remove a programme of study. Suspension of a programme may be requested for a fixed period of time.

The implications for the contractual relationship, whether for existing or potential students, will be at the centre of the process.

These decisions would be taken by The University Centre Leadership Teams and endorsed through the College Senior Leadership Team formal meetings. Such decisions would always be taken as a last resort. Evidence required would include:

- Market rationale
- Strategic and financial implications
- The impact of the relationships with partner institutions and/or PSRBs
- The Impact on current and prospective students
- The impact on any employer relationships
- Arrangements for any replacement programme

In the case of University partnerships, the formal processes and documentation of the relevant institution would be followed for approval through the appropriate deliberative structures.

2 Programme changes before and after entry

In exceptional circumstances material changes may be required between the advanced published materials and enrolment. These changes would be communicated to applicants as soon as possible, advising them of their right to apply for entry to a suitably alternative programme or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.

Should the applicant have already accepted an offer for entry to the affected programme, comprehensive information, advice and guidance would be provided.

In highly exceptional circumstances, such as the loss of key staff, it may be unavoidable to have to make material changes to programmes after registration. In all cases, students would be consulted at the earliest opportunity and, where practicable, their views taken into account.

Should a student reasonably believe that a material change to the original programme would have an adverse impact, s/he may cancel the contract with the College. Advice and guidance, including the transfer of credit and academic progress, would be provided to assist the student(s) in seeking transfer to another institution.

It is normal academic practice to make minor modifications and amendments to programmes during the enrolment term. Such changes are designed to improve the quality of learning opportunities, to meet the requirements of an external body or in response to student feedback. The College will consult with or inform students and their representatives of these changes, as appropriate, and in line with institutional quality assurance processes.

The College is committed to ensuring the **continuity** of studies as far as is reasonably practicable. In all cases, the College would work with the relevant awarding body (University partner) in relation to the above.

3 Consideration and protection of the student/applicant interest

Those students already enrolled must be allowed to complete the original programme of study. The College would always seek to present suitable alternative programmes for students to transfer into; however, this would require the explicit written consent confirming the suitability of the new programme.

3.1 Current students should be informed of their options: to complete the programme of study; transfer to another programme within The University Centre; apply for entry, with transfer of appropriate academic credit to another institution.

The College would ensure that academic standards and the student experience, as far as is reasonably practicable, be maintained throughout the remaining enrolment period. The original programme learning outcomes, as defined in the Programme Specification, would remain achievable for students who would be being 'taught out'.

3.2 Applicants would be all communicated with by formal letter sent by either the Assistant Principal for Higher Education or a Director of Higher Education and always be relayed through the University Centres' administrative function. Those applicants who have accepted offers would be informed of the options to either transfer their applications to another programme within the University Centre or to another institution. Applicants who have been made offers but have not yet accepted them would be advised of the same options.

The Quality and Data Administrator would notify UCAS.

4 The timing of programme changes and closures

The College would always seek to ensure that significant material changes and closure of programmes would be a decision of last resort and be made in a timely manner.

There are, however, rare unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. loss of specialist staff) which result in the decision to close or suspend a programme. The student interest is paramount and full consultation would be undertaken with all affected students.

The College recognises the requirement to ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and to observe the *Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice*.