
CLOSURE AND MATERIAL CHANGES TO PROGRAMMES PROCEDURE

Issue 9

Introduction

The integrity and security of the learning process is a fundamental tenet of the UCB approach to quality. Where programmes are replaced or discontinued or are subject to unavoidable material change, UCB will seek to maintain the 'contract' with those students by seeking to give sufficient notice that the last cohort of students are able to complete the final phase of their programme or acceptable alternatives are provided to minimise disruption to the student learning experience. The stability and financial strength of UCB has enabled this approach to be practised for many years and has ensured that students continue to have a high degree of confidence in the qualifications we deliver.

It is prudent to recognise that a situation may exist where circumstances require a programme or group of programmes to be withdrawn, or material changes to be made to a programme, before completion by the final cohort of students and this process should be managed and controlled by an agreed procedure.

Changes are made to programmes on a regular basis in response to student comment, external examiner comment, industry practice and curriculum currency for example. These changes are made to enhance the programme and/or the learning experience and are subject to the approval of the Validation and Approvals Committee before implementation. It is expected that students will welcome such enhancements to the programme and the identification and implementation of improvements to the quality of provision. However, for the purpose of this procedure a 'material change' refers to substantial changes that may be made to a programme for reasons other than for quality enhancement. For example, an unavoidable material change made for operational necessity that may substantially change the student learning experience.

This procedure details the protocol to be followed for a programme to be withdrawn or materially changed and the actions, responsibilities and decision-making powers of individuals and committees to ensure a fair and acceptable outcome for students is achieved.

Aims

To ensure consistency of judgment and decision making in identifying programmes for closure within the normal completion timescale for existing students or for material changes to be made to a programme.

To enable the proper and systematic debate of the UCB mission and evolving programme portfolio content by senior management and involved partners.

To provide transparency and accountability in decisions that impact on the learning experiences of students.

To help ensure that the currency and relevance of UCB's programme and qualification offer are maintained over time.

Responsibilities

Academic Management is responsible for identifying programmes to be closed or materially changed and for the preparation of the proposal submission. This will involve a structured consultation with stakeholders where relevant, including students, teaching staff and industry partners.

The Academic Board through its Validation and Approvals Committee is responsible for approving proposals for programme closure and programme changes. Programmes considered for closure or material changes may be delivered by UCB or through a collaborative arrangement with other providers.

The Quality Team are responsible for facilitating the process by providing advice and support where necessary and for ensuring this procedure is implemented.

Procedure

1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (HE Curriculum and FE Principal) or nominee will present an initial proposal for the closure or the material change of a programme to the Executive Deans of the Academic Management Team.
2. If the Academic Deans accept the initial proposal for closure or material change, the relevant Deputy Dean of School and nominees will prepare a formal proposal to be presented to the Validation and Approvals Committee.
3. The formal proposal will address the following requirements and evidence and arrangements must be specified.
 - a. Programme name(s) and description
 - b. Nature of student cohort and target markets
 - c. Enrolment trends and current cohort data (including equal opportunity analysis)
 - d. Current application/offers data (if applicable)
 - e. Evidence of consultation with students, staff, and employers (if appropriate)
 - f. Summary of reasons for proposing programme closure or material change
 - g. Details of proposed closure dates and implications for student cohorts including any proposals for alternative or substitute award(s) availability
 - h. Human resource implications
 - i. Physical resource implications
 - j. Financial implications
 - k. Proposal for the management of the closure or material change process, including liaison with students, staff and other stakeholders, and any necessary support and communication resources
 - l. Forecast implications if programme(s) is (are) allowed to continue.
4. The formal proposal will be presented and discussed at a meeting of the Validation and Approvals Committee. The meeting will be constituted and follow the protocol as specified by the Validation and Approvals Procedure. The decision of the Validation and Approvals Committee may be to:
 - a. Approve the proposal to close the programme(s) or to implement/allow the material change to the programme

- b. Approve the proposal but with conditions relating to arrangements and/or process and/or timescales.
 - c. Withhold a decision until the proposing team submit additional information as determined.
 - d. Reject the proposal for closure or material change.
5. The Academic Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee of the Academic Board will monitor and record that the specified conditions and/or actions have been addressed.
6. In all cases the decision to close a programme will prioritise the completion of the programme learning 'contract' with students. So, a closure decision will involve the removal of the programme from all marketing information with no new students being recruited and the existing cohorts on the programme will be allowed to complete or 'run-out' the programme to ensure no students are disadvantaged. Students who hold an offer for a place on the programme will be offered an appropriate alternative programme. The programme will continue to be supported financially and with all appropriate resources including staffing resources to ensure the student learning experience is not compromised.
7. A decision to make a material change to a programme will be taken in consultation with current students. Students may agree to accept the material changes to their current programme. If students do not agree to the proposed material changes, wherever possible the existing programme will be run-out for those students.
8. If for any unavoidable reason the programme cannot continue to be delivered until the final cohort complete their studies or the existing students do not accept the material changes to the programme, the following will apply.
 - a. Every effort will be made to offer students a transfer to a similar programme at the same level and period of their study. Wherever possible this will be at UCB but may involve a transfer to another institution. UCB will work on behalf of individual students to ensure this takes place as smoothly as possible with minimal disruption to the student's period of study and learning experience.
 - b. UCB will ensure that no student is disadvantaged financially by such a transfer (or withdrawal with the award of a fall-back qualification and/or appropriate recognition of credits if a student so chooses). This may involve the reimbursement of tuition and/or accommodation fees for any period of uncompleted study.

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