PLANNING OFFICE

Policy for Programme Suspension and Withdrawal

Updated August 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the University of York procedures for suspending or withdrawing any programme of study in order to protect the interests of applicants, current students and the University.

1.2 A Department may not suspend or withdraw a programme on its own authority, because of the consumer law obligations and contractual liabilities between students and applicants and the University.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Before beginning a proposal for withdrawal or suspension of a programme of study, departments should talk to their Planning Officer who will provide guidance and advice on completing the appropriate document.

2.2 The proposal to withdraw or suspend a programme of study requires consultation with a number of stakeholders including: students; Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Outreach (MRAO); International Recruitment, Partnerships and Mobility; the respective Management Accountant; and, in cases where the programme is included in the International Pathway College (IPC) prospectus and therefore available for students to progress on to, the Director of the IPC. The proposing department(s) must allow sufficient time (two weeks minimum) for this consultation to be undertaken.

2.3 Once the form has been completed (including comments from the relevant Professional Support Services) it should then be sent to the Planning Officer (to seek Planning Approval) or York Graduate Research School (YGRS) approval (for Research provision).

2.4 In accordance with Condition C3 of our registration, the University's Student Protection Plan makes clear the University's commitment to using all practical means to ensure that students can complete the programme of study for which they enrolled. Details of proposed 'teach-out' arrangements; offering transfers to alternative programmes either at York or facilitating transfer to enable the completion of the qualification elsewhere must be outlined.

2.5 In any rare cases where it is not possible to 'teach out' enrolled students, the University is committed to supporting applicants and enrolled students to transition to a comparable programme within the University or at another institution.

2.6 In line with the Statement of Good Practice: Higher Education course changes and closures (produced by HEFCE, GuildHE, the Association of Colleges, the National Union of Students, Study UK, the Independent Universities Group and Universities UK, 2015), it is a University requirement that students affected by a proposed suspension or withdrawal are consulted.

2.7 Programmes should not normally be withdrawn or suspended once the application cycle for that year has commenced (further details are provided under Section 4).

2.8 Applicants should not be contacted until any withdrawal or suspension has been approved.

2.9 If the programme to be withdrawn or suspended is a shared programme between departments then each department must complete the relevant sections of the form.

3. Conditions that have to be met

3.1 The following may be regarded as sufficient cause to consider the suspension or withdrawal of a programme:

- A sustained decline in student numbers.
- Staff involved in the delivery of the programme are unavailable and it is unduly difficult or impossible to replace them.
- The programme is being replaced.
- A misalignment to the Department/University Strategy.
- A termination of a memorandum of agreement through a partnership provision arrangement
- External bodies (such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies) make changes that lead to a recommendation to close or suspend the programme.

4. The timescale

4.1 The request for suspension or withdrawal must be submitted no less than one calendar year (normally), and ideally 18 months prior to the first entry point at which no students will be enrolled (unless there are no applicants).

4.2 A department needs to ensure that they have a clear papertrail of what was advertised to applicants and understand how the proposed suspension/ withdrawal deviates from this (for example, entry in the prospectus, inclusion within external course listings, etc.). Furthermore, what we are bound to deliver for contractual and consumer law purposes needs to made clear to decision makers before any suspension/ withdrawal request.

4.3 For requests for a programme suspension or withdrawal that are past the deadline noted in 4.1 (i.e. mid-cycle) then these requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances by Planning Committee. These requests must give full detail of:

- How reputational damage will be mitigated against.
- What the University can offer as an alternative and/or compensation.
- How lost income in the current/ future academic years will be substituted.

5. The Approval Process

5.1 For Planning approval, all suspension and withdrawal requests are considered in all instances initially by the Dean's Support Group. All approvals will be made formally by Planning Committee. In order to promote agility and rapid decision making whenever possible, decisions will be delegated from Planning Committee to the Faculty level through the Dean (with all decisions reported to Planning Committee as Category II business).

5.2 For Academic approval, Approval by Action of Dean of York Graduate Research School (for research provision) will be required.

6. Arrangements for current and prospective students

6.1 For current students

6.11 Where the recommendation is to withdraw or suspend the programme to new entrants only then current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of registration on the programme unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a suspension or withdrawal recommendation has been agreed by Planning.

6.12 Where the recommendation is to withdraw or suspend the programme and current students will be affected, the views of current students on the proposed arrangements must be sought by the Department and included with the request.

6.13 The Department's proposed arrangements for students currently registered on the programme (including those whose registration is suspended but have not yet completed the programme) must ensure the following:

- Confirmation that the standard of provision to current students will be maintained throughout their period of registration.
- Confirmation that the Programme Learning Outcomes will still be achievable by current students, even if the range of module choices is smaller because of staffing reductions.
- Options for current students in regard to transferring to another programme within the University or to another institution.

6.2 For prospective students

6.21 All communications with applicants on these matters must be undertaken by the Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Outreach (MRAO) team.

6.22 Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until a suspension/withdrawal recommendation has been approved.

6.23 These applicants should then be informed of their options in regard to transferring their application to another programme within the University or to another institution. Applicants who have been made offers, but have not yet accepted them, may however be contacted at an earlier stage to be informed that a suspension/withdrawal recommendation has been made. Such applicants should be told that the offer of a place is suspended until a decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the recommendation is accepted.

6.24 For UG programmes, UCAS should be notified by MRAO when the suspension/withdrawal recommendation has been approved.