

Course closure procedure at Sandwell College

Introduction

Sandwell College regularly reviews and updates its course and module portfolio to ensure relevancy and to reflect best practice, simultaneously taking account of student and external views. In exceptional circumstances, a course or programme may cease to exist or the College may no longer be able to teach a programme or an aspect of a programme to a specific group of students.

There are a number of reasons why the College may need to close a course, these may include but are not limited to:

- Course demand is too small to cover the cost of delivery
- Failure to approve the course
- Staff involved in the delivery of the course are temporarily/permanently unavailable and it is not possible to substitute them
- External bodies require changes that result in course being suspended/closed
- External funding has altered
- Concerns around the quality and academic standards of the course
- Replacing an existing course with a new one
- Changes to strategic priorities

In instances where courses being are being considered for closure, the following procedures are to be used. This applies to courses delivered through partner organisations as well as University based provisions.

The procedures seek to protect the interests of applicants and students by ensuring clear and transparent processes for the management of course closure.

Timing of course closure

As applicants may apply for entry to a course up to one year before taking up their place at the College it therefore should be noted that if a decision to discontinue a programme is taken late in the admissions process, this could have significant consequences for applicants (e.g. there may be limited places at other institutions, or they may have given up employment with the intention of studying that specific course). Sandwell College is therefore reluctant to discontinue a programme at the later stages of the admissions process and will seek alternative arrangements where it is reasonably possible.

When a department is considering closing a course, the department should consult with all other departments that have a vested interest within that course. It is also our view that in light of a department's decision to close a programme they must take full account of the needs of existing students and take measures to support students through to the completion of their intended study or put in place appropriate transitional arrangements.

Course closure procedure

When a department internally takes a decision that it wishes to close any higher education course, its Head of Section should complete the Programme Closure form and submit this to the Head of HE.

The course closure proposal should be considered by the Senior Leadership team, with particular attention being given to how existing students can be supported through to completion, including

arrangements for students who have suspended studies or are following a part time route. Students should also be advised of any transitional arrangements which may be implemented to support them through to completion of their studies.

For undergraduate programmes, the Head of Section and Curriculum Leader should ensure that the programme is removed from the UCAS database and that notification of the discontinuation is reported to all relevant departments (e.g. Marketing, MIS, Student Services and ALS teams). Similarly, if the course is due to be replaced with another, the change should be notified and all students and prospective students should be notified of the change.

Informing Applicants

Course teams should identify any applicants who will be affected by the decision to close a course by completing a Notification of a Discontinued or Suspended Programme form, sent with a covering letter. (shown under appendix 1). If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial letter, Course teams should issue a reminder letter (shown under appendix 2), advising the applicant that their application will be withdrawn if no response is received within a specified timescale.

For undergraduate courses, the UCAS procedures summarised below must be followed when corresponding with the applicant.

4 UCAS Procedures

In the event of a decision to discontinue an undergraduate programme, the Head of Section and Curriculum Leader will notify UCAS Research and Statistics Department, using a course amendment form. This ensures that the course is removed from the UCAS database and notification of the discontinuation is included in the next set of UCAS Handbook amendments issued to Schools.

UCAS regulations require the College to follow specific procedures when a student has applied for or are holding an offer of a place on the discontinued course. As soon as agreement to discontinue a course has been reached, the Head of Section and Curriculum Leader responsible should take steps to ensure that these are followed.

The steps taken will vary depending on applicants' status and the timing of the decision and are described in detail in the UCAS Admissions Guide.

Typically, **where a student has already accepted an offer for the discontinued course**, Departments will be asked to contact him or her with an offer of a place on a suitable alternative course.

If this is not possible or the applicant does not wish to accept the alternative course, they should be given the opportunity to switch to an alternative choice of institution or course on their UCAS application form. **Where an applicant has not yet received an offer or has received an offer but not replied to it**, the applicant may ask the College to consider their application for an alternative course or to reject the application, so that a substitution of institution and course may be made. In both cases, the form shown under appendix 3 should be sent to the applicant.

Appendix 1

Letter Notifying an Applicant of a Discontinued Course

Date

Application code:

Course code:

Dear

It is with regret that we need to inform you that the course that you have applied for at Sandwell College has unfortunately been discontinued. We hope that you find this letter helpful in explaining the options that are now open to you.

We would be absolutely delighted to consider you for an alternative course at Sandwell College. However, if you'd prefer to study your original choice of course at an alternative institution you can also do this.

It would be really helpful if you could let us know how you would like to proceed by completing the enclosed form, selecting one of the following options:

- Choose an alternative programme at Sandwell College (if you choose this option, please return the form to us at the above address);
- Choose an alternative Institution (if you choose this option, please return the form to UCAS);
- Withdraw your choice completely (if you choose this option, please return the form to UCAS).

Please accept our sincere apologies for any inconvenience and disappointment this may have caused you.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via email Heather.Brown@sandwell.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

Heather Brown
Head of Higher Education & Academic Standards

Appendix 2

Follow-Up Letter to an Applicant for a discontinued course

Date

Application code:

Course code:

Dear

I am writing to you following your recent application to Sandwell College and the subsequent letter I sent out to you informing you that the course you have applied for has been discontinued.

Our records show that we are still awaiting your reply to this letter, so we would really appreciate it if you could now complete the discontinued course form sent to you to notify us of your intentions as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, if we do not hear from you within the next two weeks, we will have to assume that you no longer wish to be considered for a place at Sandwell College and your application will be withdrawn.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Heather Brown
Head of Higher Education & Academic Standards

**Appendix 3
Notification of a Discontinued Course**

UCAS cannot make changes of institution (Part C) after 30 June or changes of course (Part B) after 31 July

Part A – to be completed by institution

Institution Sandwell College

Name

Course Title

UCAS Code

The above course has been discontinued at Sandwell College. Please let us know if you wish to be considered for an alternative course by completing Part B only and return the whole of this form to me at Sandwell College, 1 Spon Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B70 6AW by [date]. If I do not hear from you by this date I will assume you no longer wish to attend Sandwell College.

If you would now prefer to apply to an alternative institution, please complete Part C only and send the **whole of this form** to UCAS. Please refer to the UCAS Directory and website (www.ucas.com) before selecting your alternative choice.

If you don't wish to be considered at Sandwell College or an alternative institution then please complete Part D and indicate that you wish to withdraw from the course that has been discontinued and send the **whole of this form** to UCAS..

Signature

NameDate.....

Part B – to be completed by applicant and returned to Sandwell College

To Sandwell College

From (Name of applicant)

UCAS Application Number

Please consider my application for the following alternative course:

Course Code

UCAS Code

Signature

Name.....Date.....

Part C – to be completed by applicant if substitute choice of institution required

To: UCAS, PO Box 40, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 3ZB

Please detail below the institution and course that you would now like to be considered at:

Institution

Course Title

UCAS Code

Signature

NameDate.....

UCAS Application Number:

Part D – to be completed by applicant if want to withdraw from Sandwell College and alternative institution is not required

To: UCAS, PO Box 40, Cheltenham, Glos GL52 3ZB

I wish to withdraw from the discontinued course as detailed in Section A and I do not wish to be considered at an alternative institution.

Signature

NameDate.....

UCAS Application Number