

Policy for closing or suspending a programme

This policy sets out the King's procedures for closing or suspending all taught and research programmes. Programme closure and suspension requests for taught programmes must follow the established [process for programme modifications](#) and be submitted via OPAMA on a Programme Modification Form (PMF). For research programmes a [Research Degree Modification Form](#) should be completed, signed by the Vice Dean for Doctoral Studies and forwarded to the [Centre for Doctoral Studies](#).

The policy aligns with the [QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and takes account of Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) advice¹. It also aligns with the King's Student Protection Plan. The principle underpinning the policy is that in all cases the experience of students on the programme should be assured and monitored.

Programme closure/suspension is a five-stage process, unless action is taken within the admissions cycle in which case an additional stage is required (Stage 0)

1. Scope of the Policy

1.1 The policy is applicable to:

- on campus provision i.e. programmes which are delivered and supported entirely by King's College London staff and which lead to an award from King's College London;
- offsite delivery (including online) i.e. programmes which are delivered and supported entirely by King's College London staff irrespective of the location of delivery and which lead to an award from King's College London. Where the programme also exists in an on campus delivery mode and only one of the versions is closing, this should nonetheless be put through the programme closure process in order to safeguard the experience of students on that particular iteration of the programme;
- programmes delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement. Where, for a programme delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement, the intention is also to close the partnership, the collaborative provision procedures should also be followed.

1.2 The policy is not applicable to:

- the removal of programme variants (such as part-time versions of programmes). The request to remove a variant must follow the [standard programme modification process](#).
- the removal of a pathway within an over-arching programme. The request to remove a pathway should have due regard to CMA advice and be undertaken in discussion with any other Faculties involved in the delivery or which depend on modules which will cease to run as a result of the closure. The request must follow the [standard programme modification process](#).
- Short courses

2. Definitions

2.1 Closure² A programme is closed when there are no students enrolled on the programme, including those who have interrupted. There are therefore two stages to a programme closure.

2.1.1 The programme is closed to applicants and therefore also to new entrants on to the programme

¹ CMA advice on consumer protection law applies to the relationship between HE providers and prospective and current students. Universities that fail to meet their obligations may be in breach of consumer protection law.

² Only the term 'Closure' should be used when referring to the deletion, permanent withdrawal, discontinuing of programmes.

- 2.1.2 The programme is fully closed when all enrolled students have left the programme.
- 2.2 Suspension A programme is suspended when a decision is taken not to recruit to the programme or to deliver the programme *for a defined period*³.
3. Principles
- 3.1 A Faculty's decision to close a programme must take full account of the needs of existing students, applicants to the programme and offer holders, including deferred applicants and offer holders. It should support students through to the completion of their intended study wherever possible or put in place appropriate alternative arrangements. In either case arrangements must be made to guarantee the quality of experience for such students during the period of any teach-out. These arrangements should also ensure that the programme continues to address the requirements of any PSRB or government agency which accredits the programme.
- 3.2 *Before* commencing the formal procedures to close or suspend a programme, the Faculty must ensure that arrangements are in place for interrupted and deferred students so that they can complete their studies. Provisions must also be made for students who require the opportunity to re-sit or to repeat a year of their studies. Any other Faculties relying on modules from the programme in question (e.g. a joint honours programme taught across more than one Faculty) must also be consulted. In the case of a collaborative provision arrangement, the Faculty must contact Quality & Academic Support to take advice on the termination clauses in the memorandum of agreement prior to communicating with the partner institution, students or other stakeholders. In the case of joint programmes, all Faculties must agree to the closure before procedures commence. The external examiner(s) must also be invited to comment.
- 3.3 Once applicants have placed King's as their firm choice it is not possible to close or suspend a programme unless it can be documented that all potential alternative arrangements have been exhausted. Admissions must be consulted in such cases. Where applications have been received but offers not yet made, a decision to close or suspend a programme must be made early enough in the cycle so as not to disadvantage applicants.
- 3.4 Where staff terms and conditions or service are affected or there are potential redundancies, Human Resources must be consulted at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.5 If a taught programme is suspended and a decision is taken at a later date to close it, a PMF noting the revised decision should be submitted to the Faculty Education Committee (FEC)⁴ for initial approval, and then forwarded to Quality & Academic Support who will seek final sign-off from the Chair of the Programme Development & Approval Committee (PDAC). For research programmes, the Research Degree Modification Form, once approved by the appropriate Faculty Research Committee (FRC)⁵, should be submitted to the Centre for Doctoral Studies for approval by the Postgraduate Research Students Subcommittee (PRSS).

³ If the defined period reaches its end but further suspension is required, the suspension process must be repeated.

⁴ For the purpose, the term 'Faculty Education Committee' (FEC) will be used as a catch-all term to describe the panel that approves programme modifications at Faculty, Institute or School level.

⁵ For the purpose, the term 'Faculty Research Committee' (FRC) will be used to describe the panel that approved research programme modifications at Faculty, Institute or School level.

- 3.6 All decisions to close or suspend programmes must be taken in good time, with due regard for the need to address the position of existing students and potential applicants. It should be remembered that undergraduate applicants may apply for entry to a programme up to two years before taking up their place. It should be noted that if a decision to close or suspend a programme is taken late in the admissions cycle, the availability of suitable alternatives at the College or at other institutions may be limited and the applicant might be able to claim financial compensation from the university, thereby causing potential reputational damage.
- 3.7 The programme must continue to be actively managed and subject to the university's requirements of module evaluation, annual monitoring and external examining and must therefore retain a Programme Leader for the duration of the programme.
- 3.8 Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for students on the programme is maintained. If the programme is due for review during the teach-out phase the Faculty should contact Quality & Academic Support for guidance.
4. Rationale for closure or suspension
- 4.1 Programmes may be closed or suspended for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:
- declining student applications and/or enrolments;
 - key staff leaving the university/being on sabbatical;
 - creation of a new programme that merges a number of existing programmes;
 - changing strategic priorities at Department, Faculty or university level;
 - concerns about the quality and academic standards on the programme;
 - termination of a memorandum of agreement, termination for another reason of a collaborative provision arrangement which also results in the closure of a programme.
- 4.2 Recommending programme closure is also an option available to Programme Review Panels.
- 4.3 In addition, a programme which has no students enrolled in its first year, or projected to enroll, and for which there are no Firm offer holders should normally be closed. Programmes that fall into this category will be identified as part of the annual planning process. Faculties will be required to demonstrate why a programme should remain open if they disagree.
5. Authority to make decisions about closure or suspension
- 5.1 For taught programmes the decision is made by the relevant FEC and approved by PDAC⁶.
- 5.2 For research programmes the decision is made by the relevant FRC and approved by PRSS.
6. Stage 0: Proposal to close or suspend a programme *during, or just prior to*, a recruitment cycle
- Faculties, Admissions and Marketing may agree during, or just prior to, an admissions cycle that it would be desirable to close or suspend a programme. In these circumstances it may be appropriate to stop additional applicants applying to the programme. In this case, the Faculty Education Manager must send an email to the Director of Admissions & Registry Services and the Director of Brand & Marketing requesting that a temporary hold be put in place, whilst the rest of the programme closure/suspension process is followed.

⁶ Approval of programmes closures and suspensions is delegated from the Academic Board to PDAC

Marketing will remove the programme temporarily from the Online Prospectus.

Admissions will remove the programme temporarily from the Admissions Portal (and UCAS where appropriate).

It is essential that remaining stages of the programme closure/suspension process are completed.

If the programme closure/suspension does not go ahead the Faculty Education Manager must send an email to the Director of Admissions & Registry Services and the Director of Brand & Marketing requesting that this temporary hold be removed and the actions above reversed.

7. Stage 1: Faculty Consideration

7.1 Stage 1 involves consideration and approval by the relevant FEC/FRC of the rationale and an assessment of the impact of the proposed closure/suspension. A PMF/Research Degree Modification Form must be submitted to the FEC/FRC which includes the number of students enrolled on the programme and confirmation that there are not any applicants, offer holders or deferred offer holders who would be affected by the proposal. Where there are, applicants, offer holders (including deferred offer holders), and Admissions must be consulted. Students on the programme must be consulted on the proposals and any alternatives at a formative stage of deliberations. In the rare event that teach out is not possible, affected students should be offered the opportunity to transfer to suitable alternative programmes at King's or at another institution. The Faculty should identify these alternative as part of stage 1 of the programme closure process.

Joint Degrees

7.2 For joint degree programmes the template should be considered by the lead Faculty's FEC/FRC but only after discussions have taken place with the other relevant Faculties and students consulted.

Collaborative Provision

7.3 For collaborative provision arrangements, the Faculty must contact Quality & Academic Support to take advice on the termination clauses in the memorandum of agreement before communicating with the partner institution, students and other stakeholders. This is to ensure that the programme closure is conducted in accordance with the memorandum of agreement and to identify whether the agreement will need to be renegotiated, varied or terminated.

Renewal of Suspensions

7.4 Quality and Academic Support will contact the Faculty Education Manager when the requested suspension period of a programme is due to expire, to prompt the renewal of the suspension, re-introduction of the programme or permanent closure of the programme.

8. Stage 2: Approval

8.1 Initial approval is by the Lead Faculty's FEC (following approval by the FECs of other relevant Faculties for joint honours taught across more than one Faculty) and can only be given if arrangements are in place to support any deferred, interrupted or repeating students.

8.2 For taught programmes, the programme closure/suspension documentation is then forwarded via OPAMA (with Faculty approval attached) to Quality, Standards & Enhancements for final

approval by PDAC⁷.

- 8.3 For Research programmes, the Research Degree Modification Form should be forwarded to the Centre for Doctoral Studies for approval by PRSS.
- 8.4 PDAC/PRSS approval is conditional on any Firm offer holders being agreeable to be transferred to other programmes either at King's or elsewhere.

9. Stage 3: Internal Communications

- 9.1 Once the approval to close or suspend a taught programme has been processed, automated emails are generated in OPAMA to relevant staff to alert them to the decision. If a research programme is closed, the Centre for Doctoral Studies will notify relevant parties via email.

Recipient of automated notification ⁸	Action to be taken up upon receipt of notification
Marketing	Remove programme from online prospectus
Admissions	Remove programme from UCAS and application portal
Registry Services	Update SITS, close the programme on MCF
Quality & Academic Support	Update spreadsheets for PDAC reporting

- 9.2 The Faculty's School Quality Administrator (SQA – or equivalent) must ensure that relevant teams within the Faculty are notified, along with any other Faculties which have been involved with the delivery of the programme.
 - 9.3 The Lead Faculty's SQA should notify relevant PSRBs (where applicable).
 - 9.4 For collaborative provision arrangements, Quality & Academic Support (for UK arrangements) and/or the Global Mobility Office (for study abroad arrangements) should be consulted to confirm the appropriate person that the Faculty must notify.
 - 9.5 A list of programme closures and suspensions will be reported annually to PDAC/PRSS.
 - 9.6 If there are no students active on a programme, all associated SITS records⁹ can be taken out of use immediately on both CRS and MCR. If students are still active on the programme or if it is suspended, only the applicant/admissions SITS records are taken out of use on MCR¹⁰.
- ## 10. Stage 4: Applicant and Student Communications
- 10.1 Where there are Firm Offer Holders, individual conversations, which must be documented, must be held between the applicant and the faculty to offer these individuals a place on other programmes at King's or elsewhere. If this is not successful then the programme may need to be

⁷ By delegation from the Academic Board

⁸ The 'Proposer' of closure/suspension, Faculty SQA, Programme Leader, Timetabling, Planning, Library Services will also receive the automated email.

⁹ Currently, these are MCR, IPP and IPO (applicant/admissions related records) and CRS and CBO (student related records)

¹⁰ An audit will be carried out every year by the Student Data Quality Team to check if all students have completed the programme(s) scheduled for closure, after which the programme(s) closure will be finalized

continued and not suspended or closed. For specialist programmes reliant upon one academic, Faculties must contact Quality & Academic Support guidance.

- 10.2 Admissions will then inform any applicants that the programme is being closed or suspended and provide them with information about alternative programmes of study available (where possible) through the Admissions Portal. If the applicant subsequently wishes to withdraw their application this should be permitted and any application fee, or deposit fee paid should be refunded in full. If the student has applied through UCAS, the Admissions Team must advise UCAS in order to let the applicant make a substitute choice.
- 10.3 Once the decision has been made to close or suspend a programme, Admissions should consult the UCAS Admissions Guide for specific information relating to UCAS applicants. They should identify any applicants who will be affected by the decision and notify them. If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial letter, Admissions should issue a reminder letter advising the applicant that their application will be withdrawn if no response is received within a specified timescale.
- 10.4 For taught postgraduate programmes, in some specialist areas (e.g. teaching,), there might be additional procedures dictated by the relevant application scheme or PSRB and the Faculties concerned should ensure that they adhere to these as well as to the internal procedure.
- 10.5 The Faculty must inform students enrolled on the programme (and any linked programmes) and discuss the implications with them at the earliest opportunity. Students should be informed of any plans for teaching-out the programme and provided with details of how the Faculty intends to maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the teach out phase. In addition, appropriate student representatives should also be included in this process. If teaching out the programme is not possible, affected students should be offered the opportunity to transfer to suitable alternative programmes at King's or at another institution. Care should be taken not to forget the need for arrangements for students who have suspended their studies or need to refer or those who have deferred entry.

11. Stage 5: Final Closure of programme

- 11.1 A yearly process will be run in SITS to determine if there are still students on the programme(s) due for closure. Once all students have completed, the programme(s) will be closed with all associated SITS records taken out of use on CRS and future CBO screens.
- 11.2 The Student Data Quality Team will send an email to the relevant SQA(s) to notify them that the final closure of the programme has been processed.