
Truro & Penwith College**Student Protection Policy****(Closure, suspension and changes to programmes and the management of the implications for learners).****1) Context**

Truro and Penwith College Higher Education programmes and modules are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing nature of individual subjects. In exceptional circumstances, a course or programme may close or the College may, in the short-term, no longer be able to deliver a programme or an aspect of a programme. Major changes or closures of programmes of study are the exception and not the norm.

This policy sets out the procedures for closure, suspension or changes to programmes (significant material change). The College is committed to enabling students to complete their chosen programme of studies. However, there may be unforeseen circumstances that will result in changes to programmes during those studies. On occasion it may be necessary for the college to modify, suspend or close courses or modules for a variety of reasons including:

- non-recruitment of a viable group,
- inability to run a module because small group size affects the student experience,
- closure of a campus,
- loss of support from an employer linked to module delivery,
- industrial action by college staff,
- unanticipated inability to deliver by key academic staff,
- institutional closure,
- loss of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence,
- loss of ability to award Degrees, Foundation Degrees or Higher National Certificates and Diplomas at partner institution or because of changes in relationship with partner institution,
- development of theories or practices in academic, professional and/or research areas, which will be in the interests of students,
- changes in law or compliance with the instructions of the awarding university or a professional body,
- implementation of enhancements recommended by External Examiners or identified through quality assurance processes, for example Annual Programme Review,
- response to any changes in external funding arrangements and/or to ensure compliance with best practice in the sector in the interests of students.

In such a situation all possible steps will be taken to minimise the impact on students and advice and guidance will be provided to ensure a variety of opportunities are made available to learners who wish

to continue their studies. Normally the college will aim to run an existing programme to a close so that all enrolled students are able to complete successfully. If it is impossible not to disrupt the planned operation of a course, it may be that students are offered:

- the opportunity to complete a modified version of the same programme,
- the opportunity to move to a suitable replacement programme for which the individual is qualified (and subject to the individual student meeting relevant conditions for the programme),
- the opportunity to interrupt studies where any disruption is identified as temporary,
- support for a transfer to another provider,
- the option of a degree awarded by an alternative institution (in the case of inability of a partner HEI to award degrees),
- a financial refund in accordance with college policies.

This Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by the College Board of Studies for Higher Education (CBSHE) and applicants and students will be made aware of the plan throughout the student journey from application to graduation.

We will inform students if there are to be material changes to their course by arranging a meeting with the Programme Lead and Programme Team Lead during group tutorial time, at the start of a module known to have high attendance and through College email. Normally the College would aim to make students aware of material changes to their programme of study as quickly as possible and Programme Leads would inform their students of any short-term issues that disrupt a timetable. In the medium and long-term any changes will be communicated in a face-to-face meeting with the affected students followed by an email that confirms what was said at any meeting.

If there is a need to implement the measures in the T&PC Student Protection Plan the strategy will be agreed on a group by group basis working within the framework laid down within the new policy to support students collectively and individually.

If the college has a need to implement any measures within the Student Protection Plan, the option of independent advice will be given to all students involved through the appointment of an appropriate consultant. For those students who do not need independent advice, advice, information and guidance would also be made available from the College Student Services Team and from academic staff within subject area.

2) Course modification

At various times the college may have to make changes to courses between advertisement and enrolment for reasons relating to viability of modules, student experience because of small groups, staff absence, and changes in resource availability. This may include variations to the content and/or syllabus of programmes of study or alteration of the timetable, location, number of classes and/or method of delivery of programmes of study and methods and timings of assessments of reasonable and necessary.

Our commitment is to ensure that:

- students are made aware of changes as soon as possible,
- the Lead Student Representative and Course Student Representatives are made aware of any changes,
- students are provided with advice and guidance as to how the changes will affect them and the options that are available to them.

If changes are proposed between advertisement and enrolment, the college has a duty to ensure all applicants are made aware of those changes and are offered advice and guidance to help them make an informed decision regarding their future. The college will ensure that any changes are brought to the attention of applicants as soon as possible and will advise them of the opportunity to transfer to another college programme, or to withdraw their application and seek entry to a programme at another institution.

Normally 'on-programme' changes would not take place but if such a situation were to arise and be likely to extend beyond a 2 week period, the Programme Lead and Programme Team Lead will meet with the student body to explain the situation and to identify the solution and resulting changes to the programme. In this situation, students 'on programme' will be offered the opportunity for advice and guidance and, if appropriate, to transfer internally or to another institution.

3) Course Suspension

The suspension of a course applies on a temporary basis for one academic year and material and information will remain available to future applicants but will be amended to indicate the programme has been suspended for the current year.

Suspension may be proposed to the Director of Studies who will convene a subcommittee of College Board of Studies for Higher Education (CBSHE) to agree the suspension of a programme and report to the next full CBSHE when possible.

A programme may be suspended at any time during the application process but at that point there must be a clear written statement and timescale for action regarding: how to inform any applicants, manage the impact on any repeating students or interrupted students. The statement will include an assessment of risk and its minimisation and is signed off by the Director of Studies as chair of CBSHE.

Suspension of any programme with applicants will normally take place by the first week of June, unless there is an alternative programme available and all applicants have agreed to transfer.

Our commitment is to ensure that:

- applicants and students are made aware of changes as soon as possible,
- the Lead Student Representative and Course Student Representatives are made aware of any changes,
- applicants and students are provided with advice and guidance as to how the changes will affect them and the options that are available to them,
- provision is in place to support any students who may be required by the July or September Award Board to repeat with attendance.

4) Course Closure.

The closure of a programme is a permanent change to the portfolio of courses offered by the College and may be proposed by a Programme Team Lead to the Higher Education Co-ordinator and Director of Studies with a formal explanation and business case. The Director of Studies will then take the business case forward to CBSHE and, if approved by CBSHE, will recommend to the Senior Management Team.

The business case should consider:

- market information,

- financial implications,
- impact on other programmes,
- impact on current students,
- impact on the delivery team,
- impact on employers,
- impact on applicants,
- impact on interrupted or repeating students.

A course may not be closed if there are students who have a contractual relationship with the college remain engaged with the programme and expect to complete the course at some time in the future. Any such students must confirm in writing their agreement to transfer or withdraw from the course prior to any planned closure. If students who have interrupted their studies do not respond to multiple requests to re-engage with the programme, CBSHE will be able to consider whether they remain engaged in their studies and 'on-programme'.

On closure of a programme the Programme Team Lead (PTL) and Admissions Officer will contact any existing applicants to inform them of closure and advise them of the options available to them.

Closure of a course will result in a change of notification on the website and, after a period of one academic year, the removal of the programme from all college information, electronic or paper-based (prospectus).

The PTL and Admissions Officer will contact all existing students and interrupted students to ensure they are made aware of the changes to the programme and to explain that they will have the opportunity to complete the programme prior to its closure or, in extreme cases, that the college will arrange their transfer to another institution. Normally any closed programme would be expected to be run to completion.

5) Procedure

5.1 Purpose

To ensure that major changes to Higher Education programmes, including the closure of a programme, are carried out in such a way that affected students and/or applicants are kept fully informed from the earliest possible stage, in order to ensure that their interests are protected.

5.2 Applies to:

All Truro and Penwith College Higher Education programmes.

5.3 Responsibilities

Director of Studies and Principal: for maintaining effective oversight of major changes and closure to Higher Education programmes and reporting those changes to the Governing Body as appropriate;

HE Coordinator: for informing relevant awarding body, website, UCAS applicants and all relevant bodies.

Programme Leaders: to make proposed changes and submit to the HE Coordinator in a timely fashion.

Programme Team Leaders: To ensure the correct processes are followed and to liaise closely with the Director of Studies.

5.4 Process

- Programme Leaders to identify programme changes and submit to HE Coordinator.
- Changes to be considered at College Board of Studies for Higher Education (CBSHE)
- Changes reported at Programme Committee meetings.
- Course closure decisions to be communicated by Director of Studies to Higher Education team, Programme Team Leaders, Programme Leaders and Head of Marketing and Communications.
- Arrangements for existing students (if applicable) to be communicated by the Director of Studies via the HE Coordinator.