

## University Centre Weston

### Higher Education Programme Discontinuation Statement

There are a range of reasons for the discontinuation of a higher education programme which could include:

- Business viability based on the number of applications.
- Poor quality performance for two consecutive years, not addressed through actions. This may be based on student outcomes that are significantly below national benchmarks, poor satisfaction ratings through the national student survey, and other metrics that are used to measure programme performance.
- External influences such as changing jobs market/ skills needs.
- A no confidence judgement through Periodic Review and/or inability to meet any conditions set.
- Restructuring at the awarding body or University Centre Weston (UCW).
- Failure to recruit or retain appropriately qualified staff.

In the event of any of the above applying, UCW will enter into a dialogue with the relevant awarding body and a recommendation will be made at Higher Education Board of Study (HEBS) and/or the equivalent committee at the awarding body.

In most cases the decision to discontinue a programme should be straightforward. There may be scenarios which would necessitate the consideration of the HE curriculum offer, based on a change in circumstances with the awarding body. In all instances UCW will consider the potential impact on existing students, and students for whom the programme would be a progression route.

In the **Case for Discontinuation** it will be made clear whether the decision is to:

- Permanently discontinue the Named Award in its entirety.
- Discontinue modules.
- Temporarily suspend modules and or the Named Award with a view to reviving the named award at some point in the future.

The **Case for Discontinuation** will outline what the implications are for full and part-time students, and identify the date by when the award and individual modules will be discontinued (appendix 4). The Case will also make it clear if any of the modules that make up the programme are delivered on other programmes, necessitating the continuation of these modules.

The **Case for Discontinuation** will specify when the named award will no longer be available to applicants.

The discontinuation process will take into account cases where students have suspended their studies, with the intention of returning at a specified date.

UCW and awarding body (if the programme is indirectly-funded) shall provide clear communication to applicants and those who have been made an offer and/or accepted a place regarding the discontinuation of the programme. This will be carried out in compliance with the relevant Higher Education Terms and Conditions.

In terms of timing, a decision to discontinue a programme will be agreed with the awarding body and will be identified to minimise disruption to applicants. When a decision is made to discontinue a programme, an action plan will be developed with a series of checks to ensure that all necessary actions are implemented in a planned and structured fashion (appendix 5). This will include checks to ensure that the marketing and promotion of the programme is addressed. The situation will also be carefully managed with existing students.

Quality assurance mechanisms will ensure that students studying on a programme that is being 'taught out' are not disadvantaged. Applicable HE policies and procedures will continue to apply throughout all stages of the discontinuation of the programme.

The discontinuation paperwork will be completed by the Assistant Director Higher Education: Curriculum and Quality, supported by the Assistant Director HE: Academic Registry for consideration at Higher Education Directorate Team (HEDMT) prior to discussions with the awarding body. Once agreement is reached with the awarding body, the decision to discontinue an award will be ratified at HEBS. Any resource implications will be brought to the attention of Corporate Management Team (CMT) by the Assistant Principal Higher Education.

In all cases UCW will comply with the requirements of the awarding body.

Internal and external communication will be clear and precise. Once a decision has been made and an action plan agreed both parties shall be committed to and bound by the decision to discontinue.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Discontinuation of a Names HE Award - Flowchart

Appendix 2: UWE Policy of the Discontinuation and Suspension of Programmes

Appendix 3: BSU Policy on the Discontinuation and Suspension of Programmes

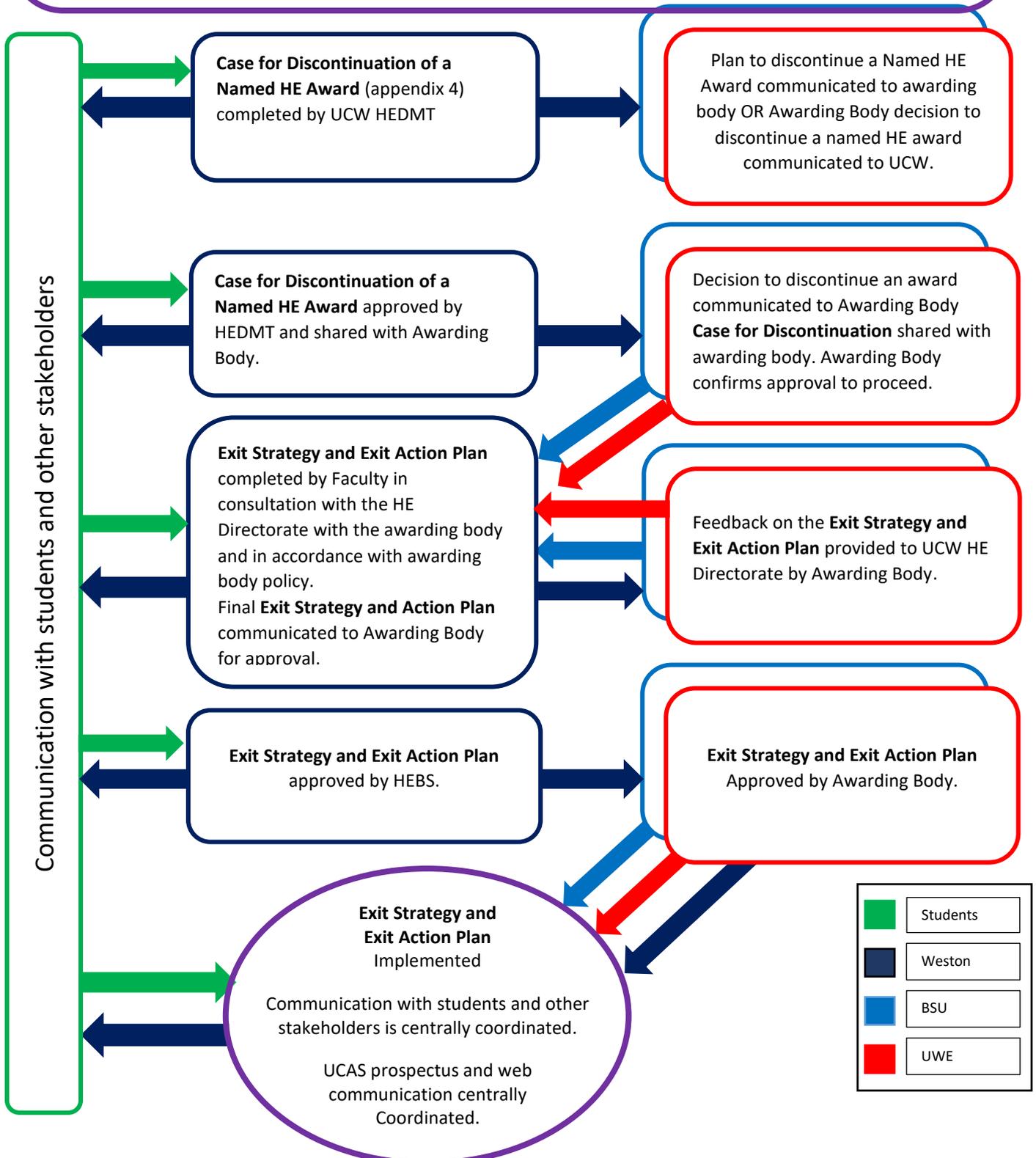
Appendix 4: Case for the Discontinuation of a Named HE Award

Appendix 5: Exit Strategy and Exit Action Plan following a Discontinuation or Suspension Decision

## Appendix 1: Discontinuation of a Named HE Award Flow Chart

Together with the Head of Faculty, HE Directorate Management Team (HEDMT) undertakes an analysis of the health of the Named Award based on performance over its lifecycle. A range of factors is taken into account including recruitment history, NSS outcome trend analysis, external examiner reports, periodic review, pass rate trend analysis, achievement, progression, employment, destinations, physical and human resources.

External factors may be taken into account such as changing context of delivery and changing context of curriculum content. Other factors may relate to restructuring ucw or awarding body strategic planning needs. The decision to commence Discontinuation process may be initiated at UCW or the awarding body.



## Appendix 2: BSU Policy for Discontinuation/Suspension of Programmes

### Approved: AQSC June 2014

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The University recognises that, occasionally, it may be necessary and/or appropriate to cease offering a named award (including a pathway or mode of delivery).<sup>1</sup> This may take the form of a suspension of recruitment, which is for a maximum of one year, or discontinuation of the named award.
- 1.2 Suspension of recruitment or discontinuation of an award may be prompted by any one of a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:
- a particular award being unviable in terms of applications/number enrolling;
  - an award becoming obsolete or irrelevant, either academically or professionally; or
  - an award no longer aligning with the University's or a partner provider's strategic ambitions.
- 1.3 Only the Vice-Chancellor can authorise either the suspension of recruitment or discontinuation of an award. Proposals for suspension or discontinuation may only be made by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group or a Dean of School. In both instances, the University's Registrar & Director of Student Services must be consulted prior to the request being made.
- 1.4 Proposals to suspend recruitment or discontinue a named award at a partner provider may be initiated by either the University or the provider. When they are initiated by the University, the process is as per awards delivered by the University but, in addition, the Dean of School must ensure that the partner provider is fully consulted and has the opportunity to contribute throughout considerations. Where proposals are initiated by the partner provider, the partner is still expected to follow the process within the timeframes set out, submitting the request via a member of VCEG or the appropriate Dean of School but the role of the Vice-Chancellor is formally to confirm the request.
- 1.5 The University recognises that whilst suspension of recruitment will not inevitably result in the discontinuation of an award, there is a reasonable possibility that discontinuation will follow a suspension. Thus, neither decision is to be taken lightly and particular care must be taken to safeguard the academic experience of students enrolled on the award in question through to their completion.
- 1.6 In the event of a suspension of recruitment or discontinuation of an award, the standard of provision to current students must be maintained throughout their period of registration and the previously-stated intended learning outcomes and aims of the award must still be achievable by current students.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the term 'award' should be considered also to include pathways within an award and modes of delivery

- 1.7 Note: the procedure does not necessarily apply to the discontinuation of every award title. In some instances, re-approval may be more appropriate depending on the level of other changes proposed for the award under consideration.<sup>2</sup>

## **2 Timing and implications for prospective and current students**

- 2.1 The timing of suspension of recruitment or discontinuation of an award should, as far as possible, be such that applicants are not adversely affected. For example, the UCAS application cycle must be considered so that, where avoidable, students do not apply through UCAS for an award that is subsequently withdrawn. The expectation is that the final decision and announcement of the discontinuation of an award will normally be made a minimum of six months before the entry of the final cohort of students. A suspension of recruitment may, by necessity, be made fewer than six months before the entry of a cohort. In such circumstances, the University will make every effort to offer affected applicants a place on an appropriate alternative award or to support applicants in finding a place at another institution.
- 2.2 Current students must be allowed to complete their designated period of registration on the award for which they originally registered unless they give their explicit written consent to the contrary. Thus, every effort must be made to support appropriately any current students who are re-taking or intercalating. This may include counselling such students on their options, such as transferring to another award within the University.

## **3 Suspension of Recruitment**

- 3.1 As noted above, only the Vice-Chancellor can authorise suspension of recruitment and only a member of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group or a Dean of School can request suspension of recruitment. The expectation is that such a recommendation will normally be on the advice of the Registrar & Director of Student Services. Suspension of recruitment is not intended as a quick alternative to discontinuation of an award. Rather, it should be used in particular circumstances where a situation could not reasonably have been foreseen or where there is a reasonable chance that recruitment could be recommenced.
- 3.2 When a suspension of recruitment has been agreed, whether for BSU-delivered provision or at a partner provider, the next School Board will formally consider any necessary arrangements and support for students currently enrolled on that award in recognition of the fact that the absence of a cohort will have implications for those students. As far as possible, students should be consulted and they must be assured that the impact on their experience will be managed carefully to minimise the effects of a suspension of recruitment. Where the provision is in a partner provider, the School should be working closely with the provider on this, normally through the Link Tutor.
- 3.3 During the academic year following a suspension of recruitment, timely consideration must be made as to whether recruitment will recommence for the following academic year or whether discontinuation of the award is sought. If the latter, the process for the discontinuation of an award must be followed and the timeframes set out in that process should be observed.
- 3.4 If the decision is made to begin recruitment again but, during the recruitment cycle, another suspension becomes advisable (for example, owing to the likelihood of an unviable cohort), the award will automatically progress to the process for the

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<sup>2</sup> See Minor Modifications Policy <http://www2.bathspa.ac.uk/services/academic-office/quality-and-standards/processes/minor-mods/default%20CURRENT.1.asp>

discontinuation of an award. As such, a formal request for discontinuation of an award should be made as per the process set out below to ensure that all relevant parties are aware of the situation and that the School Board is fully informed, and to inform the exit strategy.

#### **4 Discontinuation of an Award**

- 4.1 As noted above, only the Vice-Chancellor can authorise discontinuation of an award. S/he will make this decision based on the advice of a stakeholders' group that will consider proposals, which must be submitted on the approved template.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.2 Only the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group or a Dean of School can propose the discontinuation of an award. Where a School is considering the discontinuation of an award, this should be indicated (with reasons) through strategic/business plans. The purpose of this is to allow the University to give initial consideration to the implications for the academic portfolio of the University as a whole and to offer advice and guidance. The University Registrar & Director of Student Services must be consulted prior to the submission of any proposal for discontinuation of an award. The proposal should also be fully discussed with the award team.
- 4.3 When the request for discontinuation of a named award is initiated by a partner provider, the partner should normally bring the request to the University via the relevant School. The School and partner provider should work together on the proposal template to ensure that it reflects the needs and interests of both parties.
- 4.4 The proposal for discontinuation of an award should be considered by the relevant School Board prior to submission. Following approval by the Vice-Chancellor, the proposal will be noted by the Academic Quality & Standards Committee and, if it refers to provision in a partner institution, the Collaborative Provision Committee.
- 4.5 The rationale should take account of the following:
- a) annual monitoring review reports;
  - b) external examiners' comments;
  - c) recruitment level/marketing demand;
  - d) employment opportunities for graduates of the award;
  - e) the award's place in relation to the University's strategic objectives; and
  - f) the award's place in the department, School and University's broader portfolio of current/proposed awards.
- 4.6 The proposed discontinuation of an award must be discussed with the student cohorts wherever possible. Students should be assured that any effects on their learning experience have been considered and will be minimised in every possible way during a discontinuation of an award. They should be consulted on and made fully aware of the exit strategy that is proposed.
- 4.7 The School should nominate an appropriate member of academic staff within the School to draft an exit strategy which should normally be considered at the School Board immediately following the Vice-Chancellor's approval to discontinue the award. The exit strategy must take consideration of consultation with current students. It must ensure that the student experience is secured and the quality and standard of the award maintained for the remaining cohorts. School Board must take a report against the exit

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex 1 for membership of the scrutiny group and Annex 2 for the template on which a proposal for suspension or discontinuation should be submitted

strategy at each meeting, until a final report at the point that there are no longer any students registered on the award. Subject-level and School-level annual monitoring should also take account of any discontinuations.

- 4.8 The University will maintain oversight of all discontinuing awards. Exit strategies should progress from School Boards to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee for internal provision and the Collaborative Provision Committee for provision at partner providers. An annual update will also be required at the end of each academic year when AQSC takes the annual report on suspensions and discontinuations, in addition to the oversight that AQSC has through the annual monitoring process.

## **5 Subsequent action**

- 5.1 Once the decision to suspend recruitment or discontinue an award is confirmed, the Registrar & Director of Student Services will notify the Head of Marketing & Communications.
- 5.2 Where the award proposed for suspension or discontinuation is delivered by a partner provider, the Registrar & Director of Student Services will formally notify the partner following confirmation by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 5.3 Academic Services will formally notify the external examiner of the discontinued award of the University's decision. The member of staff overseeing the exit strategy should ensure that communication with the external examiner is maintained.
- 5.4 Any affected students (for example, those who may be in a re-take situation or who are intercalating/planning to intercalate) and/or applicants should be notified in writing and advised of the timescale. Copies of all formal communication should be kept as part of the file supporting the suspension/discontinuation.
- 5.5 Any current students enrolled on the award must be advised of the decision and their options for return and completion discussed on an individual basis with an appropriate member of academic staff.
- 5.6 Any applicants to the award will be made aware of the situation by the Admissions Service. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that promotional materials are amended to manage internal and external communication. This is to ensure the context for the decision is understood and to avoid any damage to the University's reputation. However, the assumption is that, where possible, decisions regarding discontinuation are made with sufficient advance planning that no student is applying to an award that will not run for the next academic year. Rather, the impact will be on any applicants intending to apply for deferred entry or any student subsequently intercalating or failing to progress to schedule.
- 5.7 All students on a discontinuing award must receive an appropriate level of support until the award has completely closed. This includes those at partner providers and Schools should be cognisant of this when writing and reporting against exit strategies.

## **Annex 1 – Stakeholders’ group**

Proposals for discontinuation of an award will be considered by a small group which will then advise the VC.<sup>4</sup> That group will comprise the following:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations)
- Director of Student Services & Registrar
- Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning Quality)
- Vice-Provost (Research & Enterprise) (where the proposed discontinuation is for a postgraduate award)

In addition, the President of the Students’ Union will be asked to comment on the proposals to manage the student experience and support students through to completion (see Section E of form).

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<sup>4</sup> See paragraph 4.1 above

## Annex 2 – Template for proposing suspension or discontinuation of an award

Section A – Details of request	
Award title and JACS code	
Department	
School	
Partner institution(s) delivering award	
PSRBs	
Date of request	

Section B – Nature of proposal			
Discontinuation following suspension	Yes/No	Year of suspension:	[year of entry]
		Discontinuation effective from:	[year of entry]
Discontinuation	Yes/No	Effective from:	[year of entry]

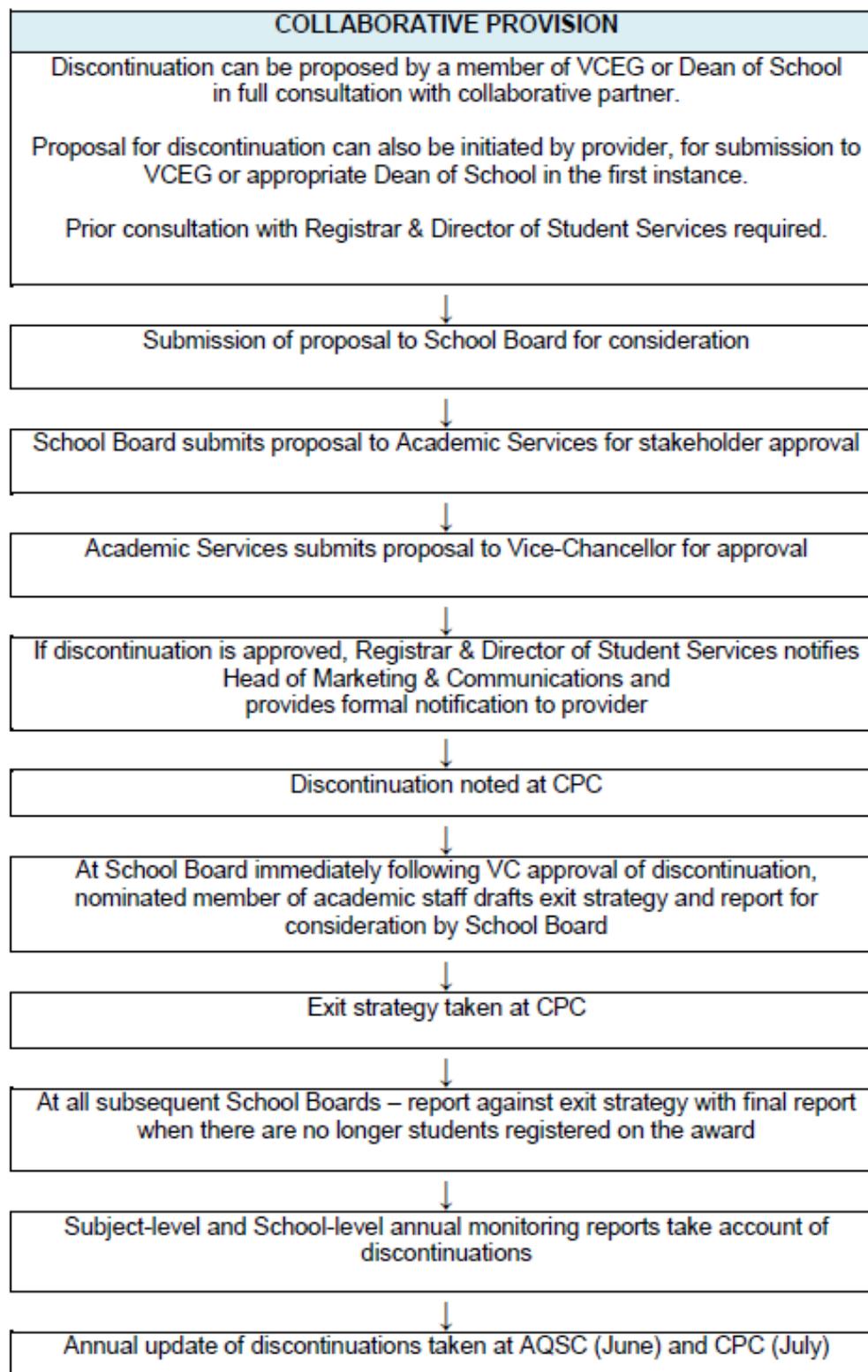
Section C – Current students and applicants	
Number of students currently enrolled per level	

Implications for current students and proposed action	
Number of applicants holding offers	
Implications for applicants and proposed action	
If this request is for discontinuation, please provide the date by which all students are expected to complete	
<b>Section D – Rationale</b>	

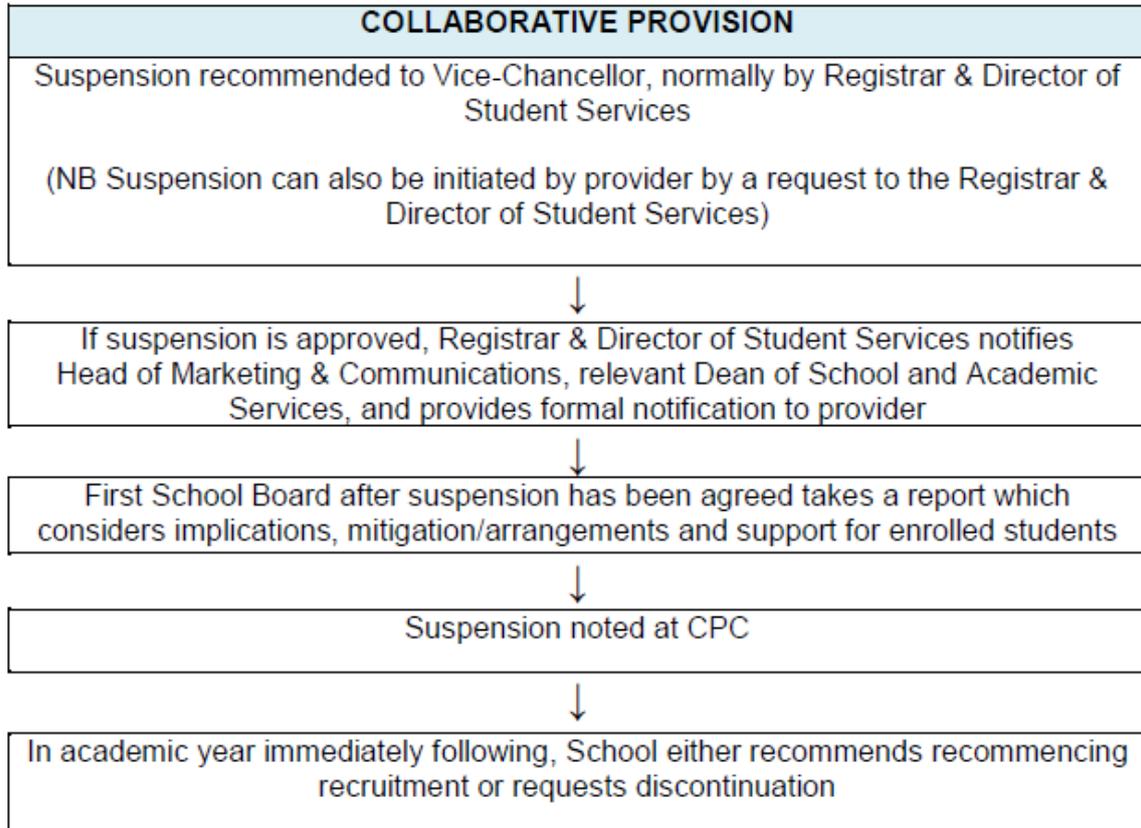
<b>Section E – Impact and management (to inform exit strategy)</b>	
Student communication and support	Please provide details of how existing students will be informed of the proposed suspension or discontinuation and any extra support or advice that will be put in place, particularly regarding implications/opportunities in the event of failure to progress to schedule or requests to intercalate.
Staffing plans to protect the student experience	Please include details of the staffing arrangements for the run-out of the award, plans for supporting students who fail

	to complete to schedule, and contingency plans for staff absence and early departure.
Accommodation & facilities	Please provide details of any changes to accommodation, including specialist facilities, and reassurance of the measures that are planned so that the quality of the learning experience of the students is maintained.
Impact on continuing provision	<p>Are any other Departments affected? If so, please provide a supporting statement from the affected Department(s).</p> <p>Please detail any plans to address the impact where modules are shared, if any subject-specialist academic or technical staff support other awards or if the withdrawal of specialist facilities has an impact on continuing awards.</p>
Collaborative Provision	Please detail any special arrangements for awards run by collaborative partners. For example, will there be any implications for TNE with the proposed discontinuation/cessation? Has account been taken of any contractual obligations in the formal Agreement between the University and its partner?

## FLOW CHART FOR DISCONTINUATION OF A NAMED AWARD



## FLOW CHART FOR SUSPENSION OF RECRUITMENT



## Appendix 3: UWE Policy Discontinuation/Suspension Of Programmes

### UWE Terminology

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|--|
| i. Discontinued: programme(s) to be permanently withdrawn  |
| ii. Suspended: programme(s) is no longer to be offered to new applicants for the immediate intake; however it may be offered for subsequent intakes. |

### 8.0 Discontinuation/Suspension of Programmes

#### 8.1 Definitions

- i. Discontinued: programme(s) to be permanently withdrawn.
- ii. Suspended: programme(s) is no longer to be offered to new applicants for the immediate intake; however it may be offered for subsequent intakes.

#### 8.2 General principles

There are a number of drivers which may precipitate a decision to remove a programme from the University's portfolio on either a permanent or temporary basis. These include, but are not limited to, as an outcome of programme monitoring or programme review, changes in patterns of demand from prospective students, or for other reasons, underpinned by analysis of management information.

Fundamentally the discontinuation of a programme is an Executive responsibility due to the potential resource implications. The Academic Governance arrangements are in place to advise the Faculty and University Executive teams and aid communication.

Whatever the rationale for the withdrawal of the programme the interests of current students' will be paramount. In the case of discontinuation students on the programme will be consulted, alongside the Students' Union, and wherever possible steps will be taken to ensure they are able to complete their chosen programme.

Consideration will also be given to how academic standards on the programme(s) will be maintained and where necessary significant external stakeholders (e.g. employers or collaborative partners) will be consulted.

Steps will be identified, at the point of decision, to support applicants holding an offer to study the programme to find an alternative programme either with the University or another higher education provider.

#### 8.3 Timelines

The suspension or discontinuation of a programme should be considered as early as possible, and ideally not less than 10 months before the next intake would be due to commence the programme.

#### 8.4 Proposal format

The Associate Dean: Learning and Teaching (or nominee) must provide a paper proposing a suspension or discontinuation to the Faculty ASQC, normally, using the programme withdrawal form, so that it may provide advice to the Faculty Executive.

In the case of collaborative provision, the programme withdrawal form should still be completed and the University would, regardless of the model of collaboration, wish to be assured that appropriate arrangements are in place to protect the interests of current students and applicants holding offers.

#### 8.5 Method of withdrawal

In most cases programmes to be discontinued will be run out. This means recruitment will cease and existing students will complete their studies as planned; normally the run out of a programme takes a minimum of three years but may be substantially longer for complex programmes or those with large numbers of part-time students.

Where a programme exists in a dormant state and there are no students or applicants holding offers, discontinuation can take effect immediately.

In the case of programmes to be suspended or discontinued from delivery by Partner (e.g. in the case of force majeure) organisations, outline business continuity frameworks for individual partnerships are held by Academic Services and the International Office.

#### 8.6 Approval

The Faculty Executive may approve the suspension of a programme after consultation with ASQC (where timescales permit).

The Faculty Executive after consultation with ASQC may endorse program discontinuation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic for approval on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.

In cases where programme discontinuation would result in a change to the academic character of the institution (e.g. the withdrawal of a subject area) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic will arrange for appropriate consideration of the proposals by Academic Board and the Board of Governors.

#### 8.7 Communication

a) Within five working days of the decision the Quality Account Manager will circulate confirmation of the programme withdrawal, the type of withdrawal, and the effective from date to:

<b>The Dean, Associate Dean (learning and Teaching) and Faculty Business Manager of the Faculty concerned</b>	For information and action as appropriate.
<b>Admissions within the Future Students Department</b>	To remove the programme from UCAS (where applicable), the UWE website and contact existing applicants.
<b>Marketing</b>	To ensure the programme is removed from the University's promotional/ recruitment literature.

<b>Academic Services SAT, CAT and Fees Team</b>	For information and to inform programme and student administration processes e.g. adding an end date to the student record system.
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b) Communication with students

In the case of discontinuation, the Faculty will write to existing students to confirm the outcome of the decision to withdraw the programme and the arrangements made to protect their interests. Particular attention should be given to articulating how student feedback as part of the closure process has been taken in to account.

c) Communication with applicants

The Future Students Department is responsible for communicating with applicants as soon as possible after the decision has been made.

Case for Discontinuation or Suspension of a Named HE Award

2015/16

To be submitted via  
Faculty → Partnership Manager → HEDMT → HEBS

Named award proposed for Discontinuation or Suspension				
Please make a clear statement concerning whether the proposal is for permanent discontinuation or temporary suspension				
<input type="checkbox"/> Discontinuation <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension		Explanation		
Case author				
Date completed				
Background and rationale				
Performance				
	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Recruitment against target				
Retention / continuation rate				
NSS Outcome against target				
Other factors				

Number of students currently enrolled per level
Number of applicants holding offers
Decision

Sign off

Faculty	Signature	Date
HE Directorate	Signature	Date

## Appendix 5

### Exit Strategy - Following the Discontinuation Decision of a Named HE Award

Note: This document is to be approved by University Centre Weston and the Awarding Body as the Exit Strategy but should be updated and considered at relevant boards throughout the Discontinuation Process.

It is a requirement that students are consulted in creating the Exit Strategy. Course Leaders and Link Tutors of the awards are expected to devise and implement the Exit Strategy, with support from Heads of Departments/Heads of Faculty where appropriate.

Document Authored by:	
Date considered by UCW Higher Education Directorate Management Team (HEDMT)	
Date for consideration by relevant committee of awarding body	

<b>Named Award Details (Section A)</b>			
Award title and JACS code		Number of students currently enrolled per level.	
Faculty		Have the implications for current students been satisfactorily explored in the discontinuation process?	
Awarding body			
Date of Approval for Discontinuation		Number of applicants holding offers.	
Discontinuation Process Timescale	Effective from:  Completed by: Anticipated completion of all students is	Have alternative solutions been given to applicants?	If applicable

## Exit Strategy Action Plan

Version	
Date:	
Document Authored by:	
Date for consideration by HEDMT:	
Date for consideration by Awarding Body:	

<b>1 - Student communication and support (Section B)</b>	
<b>Detail</b>	
<b>Action Overview</b>	

<b>Action Bullets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>	<b>Responsibility (Lead &amp; Collaborators)</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Concerns or alternative actions required?</b>
<b>Action 1</b>						
<b>Action 2</b>						
<b>Action 3</b>						

Add rows as necessary

<b>2 - Staffing plans to protect the student experience (Section B)</b>	
<b>Detail</b>	
<b>Action Overview</b>	

<b>Action Bullets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>	<b>Responsibility (Lead &amp; Collaborators)</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Concerns or alternative actions required?</b>
<b>Action 1</b>						
<b>Action 2</b>						
<b>Action 3</b>						

Add rows as necessary

<b>3 - Accommodation &amp; facilities (Section B)</b>	
<b>Detail</b>	
<b>Action Overview</b>	

<b>Action Bullets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>	<b>Responsibility (Lead &amp; Collaborators)</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Concerns or alternative actions required?</b>
<b>Action 1</b>						
<b>Action 2</b>						
<b>Action 3</b>						

Add rows as necessary

<b>4 - Impact on continuing provision (Section B)</b>	
<b>Detail</b>	
<b>Action Overview</b>	

<b>Action Bullets</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>	<b>Responsibility (Lead &amp; Collaborators)</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Concerns or alternative actions required?</b>
<b>Action 1</b>						
<b>Action 2</b>						
<b>Action 3</b>						

Add rows as necessary

<b>Concerns or alternative actions required (Section C)</b>			
<b>Action Detail</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Action Responsibility</b>	<b>Response/Outcome</b>

Add rows as necessary

## Completion Checklist

<b>Sections</b>	Check completed
<b>Named Award Details</b> (Section A)	
<b>1 - Student communication and support</b> (Section B)	
<b>2 - Staffing plans to protect the student experience</b> (Section B)	
<b>3 - Accommodation &amp; facilities</b> (Section B)	
<b>4 - Impact on continuing provision</b> (Section B)	
<b>Concerns or alternative actions required</b> (Section C)	