

# Course Lifecycle - Course Suspension and Closure Policy (Expires 31/10/18)

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy establishes an orderly approach to the suspension and closure of courses that protects the interests of stakeholders, especially students

## Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy covers:

- a. all campuses
- b. all coursework programs, excluding professional doctoral degrees
- c. all students

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(3) The University may, via the Coursework Committee and the Academic Board, suspend courses for up to three years or close them permanently, normally on the advice of the relevant College Academic Committee.

(4) When a course is suspended or closed, the University will take all appropriate measures to ensure timely notification of stakeholders and to protect their interests. Those measures will include, as relevant, teaching out students who were enrolled in the course at the time of the suspension or closure decision, or transferring them by mutual written consent into a satisfactory alternative course.

(5) A course that has been closed may be revived only by re-accreditation through the University's normal course approval processes.

## Section 4 - Procedures

### General

(6) These Procedures set the principles and standards to inform internal and external stakeholders (including enrolled, admitted or applicant students) and to protect their interests.

(7) In general, once the University has enrolled a student in a course, the University has a contractual obligation to enable the student to complete that course so long as the student is maintaining an active enrolment. The University must either 'teach out' the enrolled students or, where the students give voluntary informed consent, transfer them into a satisfactory alternative course.

(8) When the University decides to suspend or close a course, appropriate measures must be taken to:

- a. notify applicants for the course;
- b. notify students who have been offered a place in the course;
- c. protect the interests of students who have active enrolments in the course. For purposes of these policy and procedures, 'active enrolments' includes students who are on any form of leave of absence approved by the University.

(9) Colleges must maintain a record of each students' transition plan.

### **Identification of Proposing College**

(10) In circumstances where more than one School and/or College are preparing the proposal together, one College and one School should be identified as the proposing College and proposing School. This needs to be indicated on each form, and references in this document are to the proposing College/School /etc.

(11) Where the course is conjointly delivered by both Colleges, an endorsement to close or suspend must be referred by both College Academic Committees.

### **Consultation with Other Areas of the University**

(12) Other areas of the University may need to be consulted before deciding whether to close or suspend a course. This includes discussions with:

- a. Enrolled students
- b. TAFE Partnerships Coordinator and/or International Relationships Coordinator (Agreements) -
- c. articulations and other educational partnerships matters
- d. ICT - ICT resource changes
- e. Market Strategy Unit
- f. Library - library resource changes
- g. Buildings and Grounds -teaching space changes
- h. La Trobe International - compliance with the National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students
- i. marketing and advertising commitments and offers already made
- j. Other College/Schools as necessary - for cross-disciplinary courses, service teaching matters etc.
- k. Regional Coordinator(s) - impact on regions

### **Consultation with Students**

(13) Students should be consulted on course suspension and closure proposals. Consultation should include various student cohorts impacted by the suspension or closure.

### **Timing of Course Suspension or Closure**

(14) In general, a proposal to suspend or close a course should be processed by the College Academic Committee of the college responsible for the course no later than 31 July of the year prior to the year in which new admissions are to cease.

(15) Applications for course suspension or closure after 31 July will be approved only in exceptional circumstances.

(16) The timing of course suspensions or closures should also take account of publication schedules. Courses handled through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) and/or the Universities Admission Centre (UAC) are subject to the dates advertised by VTAC and UAC each year as the last date for cancellation of courses.

(17) Some of the relevant deadlines\* follow:

March	deadline for inclusion in the VTAC/UAC Guide for the following year (changes reported later than March are communicated through separate periodic VTAC/UAC bulletins)
May	deadline for all UG and PG entries in the International Prospectus
August	deadline for insertion of text related to no further intakes in the University Handbook
November	deadline for registering the changes on the VTAC system without incurring a substantial fine.

## **Fees Associated with Course Suspension or Closure**

(18) If a course handled through a Tertiary Admissions Centre (TAC) is suspended or cancelled before the deadlines fixed by the TAC (normally the end of November), no fee applies. Where a college causes the University to incur a late cancellation fee imposed by a TAC, the fee will be charged to the relevant college.

## **Suspensions or Closures Affecting Multiple Awards**

(19) Where the course to be suspended or closed is offered not only as a single award but also jointly with one or more other awards, the requirements set out in this policy apply to each of the award combinations.

## **Part A - Suspensions**

### **Authority for Course Suspension**

(20) A College Academic Committee may suspend a course (that is, cease to admit new students) for up to three years, subject to approval by the Academic Board's Coursework Committee. The College Academic Committee must certify that students already in the program will continue to be taught and that no student enrolled in the course will be disadvantaged by the suspension.

### **Process for Course Suspension**

(21) When a College Academic Committee resolves to suspend a course, it is responsible for taking all necessary measures for the notification and protection of students and other significant stakeholders. In particular, it must notify:

- a. the Executive Director, Student Services and Administration (or nominee), who must give notice to the VTAC and UAC where applicable and update the Student Information System
- b. any third parties who may be impacted by the decision to suspend the course
- c. the Director, Schools Engagement and Recruitment (or nominee), who must ensure that information officers are properly briefed
- d. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) (or nominee) (if the course to be suspended is available to international students), who must ensure that information officers are properly briefed
- e. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional) (if the course to be suspended has any impact of regional campuses).

(22) All websites, information and promotional publications, including on-line documents and databases must be updated by the division normally responsible for them.

### **Re-activation of Suspended Courses**

(23) Student Services will contact the College Education Teams six months before the date for reactivation of a suspended course to confirm that intakes will recommence from a given date. If no change to the original request for a suspension is required, intakes will commence from approved date. If a college requires an extension or closure to

the suspended course, then a formal approval following the steps outlined in these procedures is required.

## **Part B - Closures**

### **Authority for Course Closure**

(24) Applications to close a course must be made to the University's Coursework Committee for referral to the Academic Board using the Proposal to Suspend or Close a Course Template.

(25) If satisfied that the course closure is in the best interests of the University and its students, the Coursework Committee will forward its recommendation to the Academic Board. The Academic Board will notify its decision to:

- a. the proposing College, which must take all necessary measures for the notification and protection of students and other significant stakeholders.
- b. the Executive Director, Student Services and Administration (or nominee), who must give notice to the VTAC and UAC where applicable and update the Student Information System
- c. the Director, Schools Engagement and Recruitment (or nominee), who must ensure that information officers are properly briefed
- d. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) (or nominee) (if the course to be closed is available to international students), who must ensure that information officers are properly briefed
- e. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional), if the closure has an impact on a regional campus
- f. Director of MSU

(26) All websites, information and promotional publications, including on-line documents and databases must be updated by the division normally responsible for them.

(27) The Council has authority to close courses, subject to the Special Requirements section below and upon advice of the Academic Board.

### **Conditions for Course Closure**

(28) Subject to the Special Requirements section below, a proposal to close a course may be approved under any of the following conditions, or under other conditions that the Council may determine:

- a. The course no longer accords with the University's strategic plan or operational priorities.
- b. The course has been identified for closure as part of a structural review.
- c. The course has been identified for closure as an emergency financial measure.
- d. The specialist knowledge and/or facilities or other resources required to run the course are no longer available.
- e. The course can no longer meet external accreditation criteria.
- f. Market conditions make the course unviable.
- g. A recommendation for closure emanating from the annual Strategic Course Portfolio Review processes overseen by the CPSC and the Colleges.
- h. Course has been replaced by a new course under the conditions specified under section 18 of the Course Revision Procedures.

### **Special Requirements for Courses of National Significance**

(29) Annual funding agreements require universities to seek permission from the Australian Government through DET before closing a course that meets certain criteria of specialisation or national significance. The requirement relates to courses that:

- a. prepare students for entry to any occupation that is experiencing a national skill shortage; or
- b. would likely create a national skill shortage if closed, because the provider is a sole or dominant provider of the national skill base for that occupation; or
- c. are directed at the regional economy and would, if closed, create a serious detriment to the skills base of that economy; or
- d. teach a nationally strategic language.

## **Industrial Implications**

(30) Where a course is to be closed because of major structural change or financial emergency, additional considerations apply. Refer to the [University's Collective Agreement 2014](#), Part G.

## **Teach-out Provisions**

(31) The University will allow students to complete the qualification or course in which they originally enrolled. Every attempt will be made to provide the original program; however, where that is not possible, course requirements will be adjusted so that students are not disadvantaged.

(32) The teach-out period is determined by identifying the students remaining in the course, considering the mix of full-time and part-time enrolments, and developing a reasonable timeline. The teach-out period will be no less than the normal full-time duration of the course less one year. This provision will apply pro rata in the case of courses offered on a part-time basis.

(33) If a student who is enrolled in a course that has been approved for closure does not complete the course within the approved teach-out period, the relevant college will provide advice to the student on alternative arrangements that the student may wish to pursue at the University or elsewhere.

(34) The University may confer the discontinued award on students who are taught out, provided that the relevant registration is maintained (see section regarding De-registration of closed course).

## **Transfer Provisions**

(35) Where appropriate, students who remain enrolled in a course that is to be closed may be offered the opportunity to transfer into another course. Any such transfer may only be by voluntary informed consent. Students who take up the transfer option will, on graduation, receive the qualification into which they have transferred.

## **Revival of Closed Course**

(36) A course that has been closed may be revived only by re-accreditation through the University's normal course approval processes.

## **De-registration of Closed Course**

(37) A course closed by the Council will remain on the University's books, and on relevant registers such as the CRICOS, until the last of the students enrolled in the course has been taught out, transferred to another course or discontinued studies at the University. At that point the course will be de-registered.

# **Section 5 - Definitions**

(38) Not applicable

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – College Pro Vice-Chancellors Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (Coursework); Heads of School; College General Managers; Executive Director, Student Services and Administration.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee; Coursework Committee; Academic Board.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	8th December 2016
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