

Imperial College London

Programme Suspension & Withdrawal

Undergraduate and Master's Level Programmes

Senate has delegated authority to the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee (QAEC) for the approval of both the suspension and withdrawal of programmes of study. QAEC will consider recommendations for suspension and withdrawal via the Programmes Committee.

Programme suspension and withdrawals are considered **major modifications** and therefore must be approved by **31st March** annually (or, for programmes with non-standard start dates, six months before the start of the programme). However, where there are applicants holding offers or deferred students, the department must seek advice from the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team before taking any action.

Process for Programme Suspension or withdrawal

Programme Suspension

Proposals to suspend a programmes of study can only be made when there is the support of the Head of Department (or equivalent). To request the suspension of a programme of study (including a named pathway with award title), a [programme modification form](#) should be submitted to the Programmes Committee for consideration. Please note: all Faculties now require suspensions and withdrawals to be approved by their Faculty Education Committee (FEC) before the final proposal can be considered by the Programmes Committee. When applying for a suspension, please provide:

- the rationale for the suspension;
- an indication of the proposed duration of the suspension (can be up to 3 years – see below);
- confirmation that there are no applicants holding offers of places on the programme for the year(s) of entry affected;
- confirmation that there are no deferred entry students who would be affected;
- confirmation that the department will make satisfactory arrangements to support any continuing students (including existing students who may be required to undergo reassessment) to complete the programme.

Where there are applicants (bullet point 3) or deferred entry students (bullet point 4) on a programme for which a suspension of programme is being considered, adequate provision needs to be made for those students prior to a suspension request being forwarded for agreement (see **Communicating with Applicants, Offer holders, deferred entry and current students** section below). If this cannot be achieved, the programme may not be suspended.

When suspensions are approved, these are recommended by the Programmes Committee to the QAEC who makes the final decision on behalf of Senate. No programme can be suspended without QAEC approval. Only after QAEC approval has been given can the programme be suspended on the website and College systems.

An established programme can be suspended for a **maximum of three years** only. After this time, the programme must either be withdrawn or re-introduced. Departments must confirm annually with the Registry whether they wish the programme to remain suspended or be re-introduced.

The College's programme modification procedures also apply to suspended programmes prior to their re-introduction. However, departments wishing to re-introduce the programme after three years of suspension must normally follow new programme approval process including consideration by external reviewers. This documentation must be accompanied by a rationale why the department wishes to re-open the programme and how the situation and programme have changed since the original suspension.

Programme Withdrawal

Proposals to withdraw a programmes of study can only be made with the support of the Head of Department (or equivalent). To request the withdrawal of a programme (including a named pathway with award title) a [programme modification form](#) should be submitted to the Programmes Committee secretary for consideration by the Programmes Committee. Please note: all Faculties now require programme withdrawals to be considered by their Faculty Education Committee (FEC) before the final proposal can be considered by the Programmes Committee. The Programmes Committee will then recommend to QAEC that the programme is to be withdrawn. No programme can be withdrawn without QAEC approval. Only after QAEC approval has been given can the programme be withdrawn from the website and College systems.

When applying for a withdrawal of a programme of study (including a named pathway with award title), please provide:

- the rationale for the withdrawal;
- confirmation that there are no applicants holding offers of places on the programme;
- confirmation that there are no deferred entry students who would be affected by the programme closure;
- confirmation that the department will make satisfactory arrangements to support any continuing students (including existing students who may be required to undergo reassessment) to complete the programme.

Where there are applicants (bullet point 2) or deferred entry students (bullet point 3) on a programme for which a suspension of programme is being considered, adequate provision needs to be made for those students prior to a suspension request being forwarded for agreement (see Communicating with applicants, offer holders, deferred entry and current students section below). If this cannot be achieved, the programme may not normally be withdrawn.

Where there are students on a programme that is to be withdrawn (bullet 4), it is normally expected that the programme is 'taught out' and the Department is expected to suspend rather than withdraw the programme, The programme would be suspended from the admissions cycle, but current students will be able to complete their programme. The programme may then be formally withdrawn once all students have completed. This forms part of the College's [Student Protection Plan](#).

Communicating with applicants, offer holders, deferred entry and current students

Where there is a proposal to suspend or withdraw a programme with applicants holding offers, deferred students, students on an interruption of study or the department must discuss this with the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team before taking any action to ensure that the Department meets its obligations under the consumer protection legislation. Departments should consider the following when proposing to suspend or withdraw a programme:

Applicants, offer holders and deferred entry students

Applicants holding offers and deferred students: The Department must communicate with all affected applicants who are holding offers and deferred students that the programme they intend to study will be suspended. All applicants must be informed of the following points:

- explain the rationale for the suspension
- offer suitable alternative options, such as a comparable programme within the Department/College
- refunding paid deposits

Current students

Where a programme is being suspended (or in exceptional cases withdrawn) whilst there students that are registered for study including those with active enrolments and those that are resitting or on an Interruption of Study, it is important to communicate with these students to explain why this is occurring, provide reassurance that the quality of the programme will be maintained and explain any potential impact that this may have on their studies if any. This may include, for example:

- A reduction in elective modules available
- Impact should the student be required to complete reassessment over a new year of the programme prior to progressing or take an interruption of studies
- Any changes to structure or management to support teach out of curricula

It is the Department's responsibility to account for all students on an interruption of study, the Department should have a transition plan in place for students for their return to a programme which is proposing a suspension. Students registered on the affected programme will normally be expected to complete their period of registration on their target award for the full length of their programme of study, including further approved interruptions of study (noting the maximum period of registration). All students on an interruption of study should be informed of the following points:

- when a student notifies the Department of their return, the Department should make the student aware that their programme will be suspending (including modifications made to the programme during the student's absence) and that the student will have the opportunity to complete their programme. As part of the return the Department will discuss the modules the student will be registered on as part of their return (this may include a limited elective choice).

Support and advice for staff

Where a suspension or withdrawal of a programme is being considered, for whatever reason, staff can seek support and guidance on the process and its implications on students and applicants from the Quality Assurance Team in Registry. They may either contact the secretary to programmes committee or contact the team through the quality@imperial.ac.uk mailbox.

Office Use:

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