

Title: Program Closure

Category: Academic Affairs

Responsible Cabinet Member: Provost

Purpose

Provide guidance on the process and procedures for managing the closure, suspension and potential reopening of academic programs, program modalities, programs offered at off-campus instructional sites and the closure of off-campus instructional sites. It provides a clear, consistent framework to ensure compliance with institutional policies, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Policy. This policy ensures transparency, consistency and adherence to accreditation requirements and the University's mission.

Scope

This policy applies to all academic units of the University and to any employee with the authority to initiate, review, recommend or approve the closure, temporary suspension of admissions and reopening of academic programs, program modalities, programs offered at off-campus instructional sites and off-campus instructional sites at the University of Kentucky. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty; department chairs; assistant and associate deans; deans; assistant, associate and vice provosts; vice presidents; and other chief administrative officers.

Definitions:

- **Academic Degree Program:** An academic degree program, as defined by SACSCOC, is a structured, for-credit course of study leading to a credential (e.g., degree, certificate or diploma). It includes the degree level, designation (e.g., BA, BS) and major (CIP code), with optional minors or concentrations in specific or interdisciplinary areas.
- **Academic Degree Modality:** The method of instruction and delivery of education. This includes on-campus, online or hybrid courses.
- **Closure:** Close to admission or entry, not the cessation of instruction (i.e., not the date instruction ends).
- **Off-Campus Instructional Site:** SACSCOC defines an off-campus instructional site as a location separate from the main campus where instruction occurs. It is considered independent if it has its own budget and hiring authority.
- **Modality:** The method in which course instruction is delivered (online, in-person, or hybrid).
- **Teach-out Plan:** A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it was decided to end a program, a program offered at an off-campus instructional site, the method of delivery (Academic Degree Modality) or to close the institution. A teach-out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion. The plan must be approved by SACSCOC.
- **Stop-outs or Readmitted Students:** Students who have stopped taking classes or are seeking readmission into a program that has been designated for deactivation and eventual termination will be

evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine their ability to complete the program within the two-year teach-out period.

Policy: All academic degree programs (including tracks/concentrations/specialization within a degree program) at the University of Kentucky that suspend admission to a program, a program modality/length or a program offered at an off-campus instructional site are required to develop a teach-out plan, regardless of the reason for suspension or the anticipated length of time. A teach-out plan for all current students is required regardless of the number of students enrolled in the program, including programs with no students.

- Exceptions:
 - Programs with regular, defined admissions cycles (e.g., cohort-based or programs that admit every other year) are not considered to be suspending admissions when operating within their standard cycle. These programs are not required to submit a teach-out plan unless a deviation from the established cycle occurs.
 - For purposes of this policy, closures or suspensions limited to *program modalities* (e.g., online, hybrid, off-campus delivery format) or programs administered through off-campus instructional sites that do not constitute termination of the underlying academic degree program are considered administrative actions rather than academic program closures and do not go to the Board of Trustees.

Procedures:

Teach-out Plan: Programs initiating a suspension of admissions must submit a teach-out plan to the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OSPIE). This should be completed as soon as a decision to close or suspend admission to the program, modality or program offered at an off-campus instructional site is made, in order to minimize the impact on students.

- The teach-out plan will include:
 - A rationale for the suspension/closure.
 - A timeline ensuring that all currently enrolled students can complete their program of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
 - A detailed communication plan specifying how all affected parties (including currently enrolled students, students with lapsed enrollment, prospective students, faculty and staff, and community partners) will be informed of the closure.
 - A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.
- OSPIE will review the teach-out plan to ensure that it meets accreditation requirements and provide a final teach-out.
- The Office of the Provost, in coordination with OSPIE, will review the teach-out plan to determine whether the suspension must be reported to SACSCOC.
- As a general rule, all teach-outs will be reported to SACSCOC with the exception of:
 - Temporary pauses undertaken solely to control enrollment levels; or
 - Closure of a specialization embedded within a discipline-specific program.
- Suspension of admissions for the purpose of evaluating the future sustainability of a program does not constitute an enrollment-control pause and will require reporting to SACSCOC.
- The teach-out will be submitted to SACSCOC for approval.

- The program will submit their teach-out plan in Curriculum for the curricular review process and follow one of two processes: Full Program Closure or Temporary Suspension:
 - Full Program Closure. Program closure refers to programs that are not expected to reopen in the next five (5) years. Students must be provided with a pathway to complete their program within five (5) years of the official closure. Full academic program closures go before the Board of Trustees for final institutional approval. *Closures limited to program modality or off-campus-instructional-site-administered program offerings do not require Board of Trustees approval and will instead be communicated through an official campus announcement. (Please note that closure of a track within a program does not require Board of Trustees approval.)
 - Temporary Suspension refers to programs that have a reasonable expectation of reopening within the next five (5) years. The program will have five (5) years from the suspension date (as reported to SACSCOC) to reopen the suspended program.
 - If the program is not successfully reopened within five (5) years of the suspension date, the President will make final recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which will have final approval when the action constitutes full academic program closure.
 - Suspensions or closures limited to modality or off-campus instructional site program offerings will not be forwarded to the Board of Trustees and will instead be communicated via campus announcement.

Notification to Students

- The unit must compile a comprehensive list of all students enrolled in the program within the last 12 months, including:
 - Currently enrolled students.
 - Students with lapsed enrollment who have not yet completed the program.
- For each identified student, the unit must create an individualized plan outlining pathways to program completion.
- A written notification must be sent to all identified students at their last known permanent address, institutional email address (currently enrolled student) and any other contact information available. The notification must include the reason for the suspension or closure, the student's options for completing the program and contact information for an academic advisor or designated point of contact.
- Each student must receive a clear path to completion within five (5) years that avoids significant additional financial or time burden. Acceptable options include:
 - Completing the credential in the current program with appropriate course substitutions.
 - Completing the degree in related program without loss of earned credit.
 - Transfer to another program or institution under a formalized agreement ensuring credit transfer and tuition/fee alignment.
- Students must be allowed to complete their program in the modality in which they began, whenever feasible. If the original modality is not feasible, students must be provided with alternatives that minimize disruption and do not increase costs or extend time to degree.
- Students must be allowed to complete their degree at the original location if feasible. If not feasible, students must be provided with alternative locations or programs that ensure credit preservation, minimal disruption and no additional financial burden.

- Students should not incur unreasonable additional tuition, fees or costs as a result of program, modality or site closure. The educational unit must work with the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships to ensure that students' financial aid packages, scholarships or assistantships are preserved and applied toward their adjusted completion pathway.
- Where transfer to another institution is the only viable option, the University must pursue formal agreements (e.g., teach-out agreements or transfer agreements) to guarantee that students are not financially disadvantaged.

Marketing and Advertising

- When an academic degree program, modality or off-campus instructional site is suspended or closed (after the appropriate process and notifications are filed), all marketing and advertising must be updated promptly to ensure accuracy and protect prospective students from making enrollment or financial decisions based on outdated information.
 - All marketing and advertising and recruitment materials (print, digital, social media, recruitment fairs, etc.) must be discontinued or updated within 30 days of decision and prior to the start of the next admission cycle or semester, whichever comes first.
 - The University Registrar will ensure the academic degree program is removed from the course catalog.
 - Institutional Research, Analytics and Decision Support will ensure that the program is suspended to prevent new student enrollment.
 - All application portals must be updated to reflect suspension or closure and prevent submission of new applications.
 - The educational unit must update the program website within 10 business days of the suspension or closure decision and include a clear notice of suspension or closure and a statement directing current and prospective students to appropriate contacts.
 - No prospective student should apply to, be admitted to or make financial commitments (e.g., application fee) toward a program, modality, or site that has been suspended or closed. Students must be reimbursed for any application fees that were incorrectly made toward a program that is suspended or closed.

References and Related Information:

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures [SubstantiveChange.pdf](#)
[Program Changes | Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness](#)
 SACSCOC Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution Good Practices