Program Discontinuation and Suspension Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This procedure supports the Governance Rule, the Awards and Graduation Policy, and their associated Schedules. In the event of an inconsistency between this procedure and a Rule(s) or Schedule to the Rule(s), the Rule(s) made by the Council prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

(2) This procedure supports the University of Newcastle's (University's) compliance with its statutory obligations under the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011, the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 and regulatory instruments associated with these Acts, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the University of Newcastle Act, and the University's strategic priorities.

(3) This procedure is designed to provide clear and concise directions for the staff of the University when recommending the discontinuation or suspension of coursework programs and areas of study offered by the University.

(4) The purpose of this procedure is to document the processes through which a program or areas of study is:

a. temporarily closed to applicants (suspension);
b. permanently closed to applicants at a specific campus; or
c. permanently closed to applicants and no longer offered by the University (discontinuation).

Section 2 - Scope

(5) This procedure applies to coursework programs and awards created and offered by the University including:

a. enabling programs; and
b. undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs.

(6) This procedure also applies to the areas of study within programs that are proposed for suspension or discontinuation.

(7) This procedure does not apply to individual courses, non-award programs or Higher Degree by Research programs.

(8) This procedure makes references to College structures and positions. Equivalent structures and positions may exist in Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre and are referenced where relevant.

(9) This procedure applies to programs offered in Australia and offshore including those in which students enrol through a partner institution.

Section 3 - Definitions

(10) In the context of this procedure:

a. “area of study” means a major, specialisation, minor or teaching area.
b. “suspension” means the temporary closure of the offering of a program or area of study to applicants, at all locations or a specified location, for a specified period of time.
c. “teach-out” is the term for the process used when the University decides to discontinue a program or area of study that has active students who will be subject to teach-out arrangements. No new students are admitted to the relevant program or area of study, and existing students will be able to complete their current program or area of study within the teach-out period.
d. “teach-out and transition plans” are the arrangements implemented to either ensure that current students can finish their program or area of study within the teach-out period, or identify the options to move students from their current program or area of study to a new or alternative program or areas of study following a curriculum change.
e. “teach-out period” is the duration during which students can finish the discontinued program or area of study. If students cannot finish within this period, they must be provided with a transition plan to complete their studies in a new or alternate program or area of study.
f. “teach-out program” is a program that has ceased admitting students, also referred to as a discontinued program.
g. “teach-out students” are students active in a program subject to teach-out arrangements.
h. “transition” is the process where students will be managed, advised and/or moved to a new or alternate program or area of study following a curriculum change.
i. “transition period” refers to the anticipated time required to manage, advise or move students to a new or alternate program or area of study following a curriculum change.
j. “transitioning students” is the term for current students in a program or area of study identified to be moved to a new or alternate program or area of study following a curriculum change.

Section 4 - Principles

(11) Continuing students should be transitioned to the new or revised program to ensure they benefit from the updated program or area of study.

(12) The implementation of a teach-out and transition plan should aim to keep the number of students remaining in the discontinued program or area of study to a minimum, ensuring that students are not disadvantaged.

(13) In the development of teach-out and transition plans consideration must be given to the:

a. impact on existing students;
b. resourcing required to implement the plan;
c. expected teach-out period for the program or area of study;
d. academic and non-academic support that will be provided to students;
e. academic risk, financial risk, and reputational risk;
f. impact on existing pathways, associated programs or areas of study;
g. implications for contractual partners;
h. implications for external professional accreditation bodies (where relevant); and
i. ESOS legislative framework for international students.

(14) The suspension or discontinuation of a program or area of study must:

a. be subject to a transparent process including consultation or external review where appropriate;
b. be approved in accordance with the University's delegations of authority;
c. comply with any contractual obligations between the University and any third parties and the Commonwealth, including the Higher Education Standards Framework and ESOS legislative framework; and
d. ensure that teach-out and transition plans can be adequately resourced to meet the learning needs of students impacted by the suspension or discontinuation.

(15) Discontinuation or suspension of a program or area of study must not disadvantage continuing students. Arrangements for the discontinuation of a program or area of study should not require students to:

a. extend the duration of their studies;
b. rescind previously awarded credit;
c. change location to complete their studies;
d. overload or underload in study terms due to insufficient course availability; or
e. incur additional costs, beyond the standard annual fee increases.

(16) Arrangements for the discontinuation of a program or area of study should not disadvantage students with respect to eligibility for professional accreditation, where the program or area of study is promoted as accredited or leading to accreditation.

Section 5 - Procedures

(17) To support the consistent application of a streamlined process, supporting materials including a Teach-out and Transition Plan template are available from the Supporting Documents section of this procedure.

Part A - Suspension of a Program or Area of Study

(18) A recommendation for the suspension of a program or area of study may occur following an External Program Review or thematic review where there is an identified need to examine its suitability for continuation against one or more of the following criteria:

a. alignment with University resources and strategic needs and priorities;
b. viability; and/or
c. ability to meet expected institutional requirements and standards.

(19) The suspension of a program or area of study is subject to approval by a delegate (please see the Program Design and Management Manual).

(20) The suspension of a program will be recorded in the Curriculum Management System via an update to the program admission information, and the College will ensure that all relevant teams are notified of the suspension and its duration.

(21) The suspension of an area of study will be recorded in the Curriculum Management System via updates to the program structure to list the areas of study as not being available to commencing students.

(22) A program or area of study may only be suspended for a maximum of two years after which it must be made available to applicants, or a proposal to discontinue the program or area of study must be submitted.

(23) Admission of applicants into the program will be suspended from the next admission period unless a case for delay has been made and approved by the relevant delegate or, there is insufficient time to finalise such arrangements for the next admission period.

(24) Applicants may only be admitted to a program or area of study that has been suspended where the University is contractually obligated by an approved articulation or other pipeline arrangement.

(25) During the period of suspension, a program or area of study may be subject to a thematic or other curriculum focused review designed to address the reasons for the suspension.

(26) If a suspended program or area of study is to be discontinued, it will remain in suspension until approval is granted for discontinuation.

Part B - Discontinuation of a Program or Area of Study

(27) The Program Convenor, College Education and Innovation Team, in conjunction with the Program Advice team, will ensure the discontinuation proposal addresses any potential impact on students regardless of progress through the program or area of study.

(28) Before the proposal for the discontinuation of a program or area of study is considered, the Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global) will confirm that the proposal has met all legislative, regulatory, and contractual requirements.

(29) The OOffice of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global) will manage the dissolution or alteration of any program-specific third-party arrangement, or where required under the University's funding agreement, secure permission from the Commonwealth to proceed with the discontinuation of the program or area of study.

(30) The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global will manage the dissolution or alternation of any international articulation arrangements.

(31) A recommendation for the discontinuation of a program or area of study may occur following an External Program Review or other thematic review where there is an identified need to cease offering or replace a program or area of study, or because it is no longer meets the University's expectations relating to one or more of the criteria listed in clause 18.

(32) The discontinuation of a program is subject to approval by a delegate. The discontinuation of an area of study is subject to the approval as a major program revision, by a delegate. Refer to the Program Design and Management Manual.

(33) The discontinuation of a program will be recorded in the Curriculum Management System via an update to the program admission information and the Last Admit Term.

(34) The discontinuation of an area of study will be recorded via an update to the program structure and the Last Admit Term.

Part C - Planning for Discontinuation

(35) Students in a program or area of study that is discontinued will be either supported via a teach-out and transition plan, where they are able to complete their studies in the existing program or areas of study or are transitioned to a replacement offering.

(36) Teach-out and transition plans will ensure that where the discontinuation of a program or area of study is approved, students will not be disadvantaged and have a pathway to the completion of their studies.

(37) Planning for discontinuation must:

a. ensure there is sufficient time to communicate the changes to students;
b. include planning for any required course availability changes;
c. include planning for the different cohorts within the program, including but not limited to:
    i. students commencing as part of an articulation or other pipeline arrangement;
    ii. part-time students;
    iii. students on an approved leave of absence;
    iv. international students; and
    v. students studying at each of the campuses where the program or area of study is offered; and
d. ensure there is sufficient consultation ahead of the submission to PCAC, this should include consultation with Student Central, and Global Engagement and Partnerships Division where the University has obligations under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 for applicants who have already accepted an offer into the current program.

(38) A teach-out and transition plan template is available from the Supporting Documents section of this procedure. Depending on the circumstances, the plan may cover only teach-out, transition, or both.

(39) The teach-out and transition plans must be appended to the PCAC proposal. Any subsequent amendment to the teach-out and transition plans must be resubmitted to PCAC.

Teach-Out Plans

(40) A teach-out plan:

a. will set out how all active students, including full-time, part-time, and students on leave of absence, will be supported to complete their studies in a program or area of study that is being discontinued;
b. ensure teach-out information is made available to all active students in the affected program or area of study;
c. may reduce or remove student choice as it applies to course options;
d. may require students to study a prescribed sequence of courses to ensure students can complete their studies within the prescribed timeframe; and
e. may include provisions for recognising course equivalence, where approved.

(41) The length of time a program or area of study remains in teach-out will be determined by the teach-out plan put in place to support students in completing their studies. Where most students are transitioned under a transition plan, the duration of the teach-out period will be shorter.

(42) Teach-out advice provided to students will be stored in the program-specific folder in the Records Management System by the Program Advice Team.

Transition Plans

(43) A transition plan is required to set out how currently enrolled students can be transferred to another program or area of study to complete their studies.

(44) If the impact on the student is negligible (i.e. the student will receive the same degree and, if applicable, complete an area of study of the same or a similar name) the transition can proceed after informing the student. Additional time may be required for the transition of international students to a new offering as CRICOS registration for the program must be obtained and relevant offers reissued.

(45) Where the impact on the student is substantial (the student will be awarded a different degree, cannot complete

an area of study, or will be required to complete a different area of study) the student must be provided the option to transition. If the student elects not to transition, they will be managed under a teach-out plan.

(46) A transition plan may include provisions for recognising course equivalence, where approved.

(47) Transition advice provided to students will be stored in the program-specific folder in the Records Management System by the Program Advice Team.

Student Cohorts

(48) Teach-out and transition plans will be designed for groups of students at similar stages of progression through the program. Other means by which a unique cohort of students can be identified may be utilised and approved as part of the provisions proposed in the teach-out and transition plan.

(49) When a cohort-based solution cannot be applied, for example, due to specific individual student enrolment patterns or circumstances that make certain students atypical, individual arrangements may be proposed in the teach-out and transition plan.

Commencing and Transferring Students

(50) Students will not be permitted to enter a program that has been approved to be discontinued unless they are seeking internal transfer and their current program is an associated combined program and they wish to transfer to the associated single program and their prior study places them in an approved teach-out cohort.

(51) Students who have accepted an offer but not yet enrolled in a program, including students who have deferred their commencement, will be offered a place in an alternative program following any relevant transition plan unless there is no alternative program available and there is an existing articulation or other contractual arrangement in place.

(52) Students who are completing a University program where there is an approved articulation pathway to a higher-level program that is being discontinued, will be offered a place in an alternative program in accordance with any relevant transition plan unless there is no alternative program available and their prior study places them in an approved teach-out cohort.

(53) Students are to be advised about teach-out or transition via email. This communication should be individualised, including details of the courses required for completion and/or the courses they have received credit for in the new program or new program structure. General communications may also occur to cohorts via email, student portal, forums, or the Learning Management System. The type of communication will depend on the extent of the changes. All communication is to be approved by the Program Convenor, and facilitated by the Office of the University Registrar or the Program Advice Team.

Part D - Responsibilities

(54) The Program Convenor and the College Education and Innovation Team will:

a. propose the case for program or area of study suspension or discontinuation; and
b. design the teach-out and/or transition plans.

(55) The Program Advice Team will:

a. assist in the design of the teach-out and/or transition plans; and
b. proactively monitor the transition and teach-out cohorts.

(56) The College Board will endorse the program or area of study suspension or discontinuation.

(57) The PCAC will approve:

a. the program or area of study suspension or discontinuation;
b. any teach-out or transition plans; and
c. any amendment to approved teach-out or transition plans.

(58) The University Registrar will:

a. oversee communication plans for a discontinued program or area of study;
b. ensure appropriate communication with impacted students;
c. oversee the implementation of teach-out and/or transition plans with College input;
d. ensure proposed teach-out and transition plans do not provoke a liability for tuition and relocation as per the University's obligations under the Tuition Assurance Service;
e. liaise with responsible authorities in the case where existing offers to commencing international students have been approved to be rescinded; and
f. take appropriate action when a student is being migrated to a program with a different CRICOS code.

(59) The Senior Manager, Domestic Admissions and Conversions will liaise with the Universities Admissions Centre in the case where existing offers to commencing students need to be rescinded.

(60) The Senior Manager, International Admissions and Compliance will:

a. advise the PCAC on the process and timing requirements as they apply to international students;
b. advise the PCAC on international offers for students who have accepted an offer for a program not yet commenced that is to be discontinued;

(61) The Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global) will:

a. liaise with the Commonwealth where the program or area of study in question:
    i. is in a category listed under Closure of Courses in the University's funding agreement;
    ii. enrols international students who are protected under the provider default obligations of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 legislative framework;
    iii. has an Austudy entitlement; and
b. manage the dissolution or alteration of any program-specific third-party agreements.

(62) The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Global will manage the dissolution or alternation of any international articulation arrangement.

Section 6 - Relaxing Provisions

(63) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any case, the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global) and President Academic Senate in a joint capacity and on the recommendation of a College Pro Vice-Chancellor, may relax a provision of this procedure provided that the relaxation:

a. does not compromise compliance with external obligations (including but not limited to contractual, legislative or accreditation requirements);
b. does not override a decision made under a formal delegation of authority;

c. does not replace a decision that is subject to a formal delegation of authority; and
d. gives due consideration to the principles of procedural fairness.

Section 7 - Supporting Documents

(64) Teach-out and Transition plan template

(65) Program Discontinuation and Replacements Checklist – Planning and Approval

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	5th November 2026
Review Date	14th April 2028
Approval Authority	President Academic Senate
Approval Date	5th November 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Karen Blackmore Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Innovation
Enquiries Contact	Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Innovation

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Enabling program" - A tertiary preparation program offered to domestic students.

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Applicant" - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Campus" - means any place or premises owned or controlled by the University, but may also specifically refer to a designated operating location such as the Callaghan Campus.

"Continuing students" - Students who have completed at least 10 units of study in their program at the University of Newcastle.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Credit" - When referring to course credit, credit is the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit can reduce the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Discontinued" - When used in relation to a program, this refers to a program for which no new intakes are to be accepted. For all other uses the generic definition applies.

"Discontinuation" - When used in relation to a program, this refers to a program for which no new intakes are to be

accepted. For all other uses the generic definition applies.

"Postgraduate" - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Program Convenor" - The academic staff member with overall responsibility for the management and quality of a program.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Undergraduate" - Refers to any qualification up to and including the level of a Bachelor Honours degree.

"Major" - When referring to a program major, this is a sequence of courses approved by the Program and Course Approval Committee, which students may be required to complete as part of their undergraduate program (except undergraduate Diplomas). Each major will contain at least 80 units with at least 60 unique units. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"International student" - A student (as defined by the University) who is not an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand). This includes students who will be studying offshore and those who will be studying onshore and have a student visa, provisional residency, temporary residency, bridging visa, or any other category of non-permanent visa for Australia.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Learning Management System" - The web-based system used to help facilitate online interactions between staff and students in their learning and teaching activities.

"Delegate" - (noun) refers to a person occupying a position that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority, or a committee or body that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority.