

**Student Learning & Experience Committee**

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| **Guidance on the Impact of Title Changes Mid-Cycle – UCAS Regulations** |

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**Impact of Title Changes Mid-Cycle – UCAS Regulations**

**1.** Changes of title for UCAS courses should be implemented by the 31st of May before the next annual UCAS cycle (i.e., 18 months before the start of the annual UCAS Cycle). Once a definitive set of titles has been lodged with UCAS, they should remain unchanged throughout the cycle.

**2.** When a course title is discontinued for a new cycle and there are applicants with deferred entry from a previous cycle, then the School should make strenuous attempts to accommodate their needs and ensure the student receives support. Schools should liaise with Finance and SRM on any applicant record updates required. If an applicant is not satisfied with all alternatives offered, the University should liaise with other institutions to see if they can accommodate the student.

**3.** On the basis of the above, changes of title will not be allowed to be implemented in mid-cycle where there are any applicants with offers, particularly where there are firm acceptances of these offers (this includes deferred entry).

**4.** Where a course has received applications, but no offers have been made or offers made and none accepted as insurance/firm, a change of title may be agreed with a view to attracting late applications or applications through Clearing.

**5.** Schools will inform SRM Admissions which alternative courses applicants should be given an alternative offer for if they are dissatisfied with the course title change. SRM Admissions will contact the applicants to notify them of the course title changes. A deadline is specified to the applicant asking them to contact admissions to discuss alternative options if they are unhappy with the change in course title. Alternative options will be offered by e-mail if the applicant is unwilling to accept the offer for the new course title. The School must ensure this has taken place and records updated before they submit a web amend request to SRM (Marketing) for the website and UCAS to be updated. For course information to be amended on the University website, School marketing contacts should formally log the request through the [**University Webpage Amendment Request Form**](https://ems.tees.ac.uk/tas/public/ssp/content/serviceflow?unid=934ee9f32dea4e2cae40871daa45db2b&from=bb8b4e97-a98d-4d1a-9a2f-382081837848). Please note that it is a requirement for audit and business assurance purposes that all web amends are logged in this system and so SRM (Marketing) cannot progress any web amends not received in this way.

Low levels of applications for a course are sometimes addressed by changing the title to something that is (hopefully) more marketable. This can lead to title changes being submitted for approval late in the UCAS admissions cycle. When a change of title is approved, the University is contractually obliged to inform UCAS that the old title is discontinued. The University also has contractual obligations to anyone who has applied for the ‘old’ title, particularly those to whom the University has already made an offer and from whom a firm acceptance has already been received.

**UCAS Regulations**

Once a course title has been discontinued, Institutions are required to contact applicants as soon as the decision has been taken to explain the situation. This enables each applicant to make a decision on the best course of action. Institutions should be aware that late withdrawal of a course will leave applicants with little or no hope of securing an alternative offer.

If the applicant has not replied, they may ask to be considered for another course. If the applicant does not wish to be considered for another course, they are able to choose another Institution and course substitution via Track.

If the applicant has replied – accepting an offer as Firm or Insurance – an alternative offer should be made. If the applicant does not wish to accept the alternative, the applicant may decline it or may ask UCAS to make a substitution. In substitution cases, UCAS will remove all replies and give the applicant as full a set of options as possible. UCAS will inform the Institutions affected by this via online data transfer or movements lists so that they are aware that the applicant may want to accept an offer which he or she had previously declined.

Where a course has been discontinued after 30 June, a duty of care is placed on the Institution to assist the applicants in any way possible, if necessary by contacting other Institutions that may be able to offer a suitable place. The applicant must be kept fully informed of the situation. Where the Institution can offer an alternative course, it must be discussed with the applicant before UCAS applicant or UCAS course records are changed. Alternative course offers may be subject to relevant constraints.

The situation may be even more difficult for applicants who have become UF for a discontinued course and for those who had deferred entry from the previous cycle. Institutions must pay particular attention to their needs. UCAS will not insist on reapplication if another Institution is prepared to allow the applicant UF status.

Special consideration must also be given to international applicants and the stage at which they are at in the cycle. If an international student has already been provided with a CAS this will need to be amended to ensure the correct title is shown on visa application documents.

**Implications for Applicants**

The implications for applicants of a course discontinuance (including change of title), particularly for those who have already made their Firm or Insurance commitment to the University, are far more significant than the practical application of the process outlined above is to the University.

It would be difficult to justify a change of title to an applicant if the content and/or learning outcome remains unchanged. An applicant may have chosen a particular title for specific reasons. The same title may have been applied for at another Institution which was subsequently declined by the applicant, preferring to come to Teesside. This is a poor applicant experience that does not reflect well on the University.

It is also worth considering those applicants that may have deferred entry or replied early to our offer. This category of applicant will have already made representations to the Student Loans Company (SLC) for funding. Such funding applications are made for specific-named courses and at the time of application.

All funding applications are made against a bona fide registered list of HE courses that each Institution submits to the SLC by a set date each year. The deadline for registering existing courses is usually by Christmas the year prior to intake (e.g., by December 2022 for 2024 entry). Updates to the loans course database are completed by Finance (Records). It will be possible to add new courses after this date. Discontinued courses are deleted from this list (after all students have graduated) and new titles added following approval by the Academic Registrar. In addition, all new full-time/sandwich undergraduate titles must be assigned a UCAS code, which has to be applied for, following formal approval of any title change. Updates to the UCAS course database are completed by Student Recruitment & Marketing (SRM).

Where a title has been discontinued and a new title approved, this process should be completed prior to update of the SLC approved course list. In all cases where an applicant has already applied for funding against a named course, it would be necessary for them to notify the SLC accordingly. This would certainly affect the timely payment of any monies awarded to the applicant. Additional complications would be encountered should there be any backlog of dealing with applications or reassessments by the SLC which is often the case late in the cycle.

Applicants are able to apply for student financial support at the same time as they apply for University places. This intensifies the pressure on Institutions to agree a definitive set of titles before the beginning of the UCAS cycle, and to avoid, as much as possible, any changes through the cycle.

There are also implications for various University publications. For example, for 2024 entry, the deadline for inclusion in the prospectus would be September 2022 ready for the prospectus to go to print in January 2023. Whilst online and electronic information can be amended in real-time, published literature can be out-of-date after printing.

Changes late in the cycle also have implications for international applicants who may not receive information in respect to changed courses prior to the commencement of their studies. Changes would particularly impact on international applicants who have already been issued with a "Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies" (CAS) for a specific course at Teesside University, where they have received their visa using this. Both the applicant and the University (Compliance) are required to contact the Home Office (United Kingdom Home Office Visas & Immigration (UKVI)) to inform them of the change.

Decisions on applications usually start to be made in mid-October. The main deadline for UCAS applications to be received is 15 January.

Anyone requiring further detail or clarification on the above should contact Finance (Deputy Director of Finance; Business Planning Services) or SRM (Deputy Director).