

Chapter 15

Guidelines and Procedures on Programme Discontinuation

I. Introduction

1. An existing academic programme is subject to regular reviews, and, if deemed appropriate, could be discontinued after due consideration and procedures of approval.
2. For discontinuation of an undergraduate programme (or a Major in BBA or BSocSc programme), a Minor programme regardless of its funding mode (UGC-funded, self-financed, or both), or a taught postgraduate programme, a proposal shall be prepared to seek approval following the procedures and timeframe as described in the following sections.
3. This set of guidelines is not applicable to programme suspension when a programme cannot be offered temporarily, e.g. failed to recruit adequate number of new students and so suspended for a certain intake. However, if an undergraduate programme has suspended admission for two consecutive years, the relevant Programme and Curriculum Committee (PCC)/Department Board (DB) has to deliberate and make its recommendation on continuation or discontinuation. For continuation of undergraduate programmes, the PCC/DB shall submit a proposal, with reason(s), suggestion(s) for enhancement/improvement and relevant data given, to seek approval following the procedures and timeframe described in paragraph 7 under Section III below. For discontinuation, the guidelines under Sections II and III should be followed.

II. Contents of a Proposal on Programme Discontinuation

4. A proposal for discontinuation of an undergraduate programme (or a Major in BBA or BSocSc programme) or a taught postgraduate programme should include reason(s) for discontinuation, impact on students, a detailed phasing-out plan and effective timeline.

Reasons for discontinuation

The reasons may include but are not limited to the followings:

- the UGC-funded programme is to be discontinued as decided by the University as a result of a critical review of its undergraduate programme provision during the Triennium Planning Exercise; or
- the self-financed programme is suffering from low student enrolment that is below the minimum viable level and/or continued budget deficits.

Impact on existing students

- information on the number and lists of courses to be completed for graduation by remaining students; and
- information on whether a student consultation has been arranged, and, if yes, students' concerns and preference.

A phasing-out plan

To ensure smooth discontinuation of a programme and assure academic quality in the phasing-out period, a detailed phasing-out plan should be prepared to specify relevant arrangements in the best interest of affected students. The phasing-out plan should include:

- arrangements and options to cater to the need and preference of affected students for meeting course requirements for graduation, including such details as a course-offering plan during the phasing-out period illustrating implications to students (e.g. less choices in electives); and
- for those courses with low student enrolment expected (e.g. only a few students failed a required course and need to retake it) and hence undesirable learning environment or effectiveness for regular class arrangement, an alternative study arrangement, e.g. course substitution or a guided study, etc.

III. Procedures and Timeframe for Programme Discontinuation

5. For a UGC-funded undergraduate programme (or a Major in BBA or BSocSc programme) that the University decided to discontinue in the Triennium Planning Exercise (TPE) process, the decision is incorporated in the Planning Exercise Proposal (PEP) to the UGC about one and a half year before the commencement of the next triennium. The host unit(s) should take prompt action to look into details and plan for the phasing-out of the programme, and submit the proposal on programme discontinuation, focusing on coping with impact on existing students and phasing-out arrangements.
6. For discontinuation of a self-financed programme, the host unit(s) should work out relevant details and draw up a programme discontinuation proposal with a target of obtaining the approval of the Senate in December preceding the academic year in which the phasing-out or discontinuation will take effect. The Registry (for UG programmes) and the School of Graduate Studies (for TPg programmes) should be informed of the intention of discontinuation as early as possible for advanced planning and arrangements.
7. The programme discontinuation proposal shall be endorsed by the PCC/DB concerned before seeking endorsement by the Faculty Board (FB) concerned/Board of Graduate Studies (BGS)/School of Interdisciplinary Studies Management Board (SISMB). Afterwards, endorsement of the Academic Quality Assurance Committee for Undergraduate Programmes (AQAC)/Postgraduate Studies Committee (PSC) and approval by the Senate should be sought. An indicative timeframe is shown below:

a) Endorsement by the PCC/DB	By September
b) Endorsement by the FB/BGS/SISMB	By October
c) Endorsement by the AQAC/PSC	By November
d) Approval by the Senate	By December

IV. Discontinuation of a Minor Programme

8. For discontinuation of a Minor programme, the proposal shall contain the reason(s) for discontinuation (e.g. no or low student enrolment for a certain period) and handling of existing students. Discontinuation of a Minor programme shall seek the endorsement of the PCC/DB concerned and the AQAC and approval of the Senate. It is preferable to get the approval by February preceding the academic year in which the discontinuation will take effect.

[Note: This set of guidelines focuses on academic related matters, not dealing with other related issues such as staffing, financing (e.g. budget deficit), resources (e.g. equipment purchased).]

Approved by the Senate in April 2023