HÖGSKOLAN
I SKÖVDE

Discontinuation of subjects and study programmes and cancellation of programme instances[1]

These guidelines were ratified by the Vice-Chancellor on 18 May 2021 and have been in effect since the same date.

Reg. number HS 2026/517

[1] [1] This is a translation of the Swedish version (Avveckling av ämne och utbildningsprogram och inställande av programtillfälle, registration number HS 2021/430). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

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1 Introductions

The courses and programmes provided at the University of Skövde (the University) must, according to the Higher Education Act, maintain high quality and have a close connection to research. Furthermore, in accordance with the objectives outlined in the appropriation directions, the range of course and programme offerings should correspond to student demand and labour market needs.

At the local level, education should be designed and conducted in accordance with the University's development plan. The educational activities must also be adapted to the available resources, which primarily consist of government funding.

New courses and study programmes are continuously introduced, and in some cases, courses and programmes must also be discontinued. It is important that formal decisions regarding discontinuation are made to ensure clarity for staff, students, and the surrounding community regarding which courses and programmes are included in the University's educational offerings.

These guidelines regulate how and when the discontinuation of subjects[2] and study programmes occurs at the University. Additionally, they include a description of the process for cancelling a programme instance. The discontinuation of courses is regulated in separate guidelines.

2 Process for discontinuation

The main steps in the discontinuation process are:

1. Initiation of a discontinuation case
2. Internal investigation
3. Decision on discontinuation

The following sections describe these steps in more detail.

2.1 Initiation of a discontinuation case

The initiation of cases concerning the discontinuation of subjects or study programmes is normally carried out by the head of the relevant school. The Vice-Chancellor may also mandate the Head of School to initiate a discontinuation process. The Faculty Board may also initiate

[2] At the University, education is conducted within subjects. A subject may be a resource subject (subjects in which the University only offers education at the G1N and G1F levels), a main field of study (subjects in which the University awards degrees at the first-cycle or second-cycle level), or a subject at doctoral level. In these guidelines, the term subject is used as a collective term.

discontinuation cases if systematic quality deficiencies in the subject or study programme have been identified.

If no education has been carried out within the subject or study programme for the past three years, the issue of discontinuation must always be raised[3]. The Head of School is responsible for verifying this. Educational Issues Officers at the Academic Affairs and Student Support Office can support the school in this work. If there are no plans to resume education in the subject in the near future or to reintegrate the study programme into the programme offerings, a discontinuation process must be initiated.

When initiating a discontinuation case, information must be provided to all relevant parties, including the Senior University Officers, the Faculty Board, the relevant Head of School, affected staff, the Educational Issues Officer responsible, employee organisations, the Human Resources Office, and the Student Union.

The function that initiated the discontinuation, i.e. the Head of School, the Vice-Chancellor or the Faculty Board, is responsible for ensuring that information is provided at this stage. More information about communication can be found in section 2.2.4.

2.2 Internal investigation

A decision to discontinue a subject or a study programme should be preceded by an internal investigation. Exceptions can be made in certain cases, for example if education within the subject or programme has not been included in the current range of courses and programmes during the past three years. If the discontinuation may lead to a redundancy situation, an internal investigation must always be carried out.

The investigation should relate to the grounds for the discontinuation (see below). If the grounds are lack of quality, the documentation normally consists of material produced within the framework of the University's quality assurance procedures for education, or documentation from an external review.

The investigation must always be documented in writing and serve as a basis for a potential decision on discontinuation. The internal investigation is carried out and documented by the relevant Head of School and the Head of Division

The internal investigation should normally include the following:

[3] If a study programme has been inactive for two years or more, a quality review must be carried out by the Faculty Board before the programme can be resumed (More information can be found in the University's guidelines for the establishment of education.) If the study programme is undergoing major revisions before being resumed, it should be assigned a new programme code to clarify which students were admitted to each version of the programme. Whether a new programme code is required is determined by the relevant Curriculum Committee.

- Grounds for discontinuation
- Impact assessment
- Transitional provisions for students
- Information to those concerned

2.2.1 Grounds for discontinuation

There may be several reasons why a subject or study programme needs to be discontinued. The internal investigation must therefore include a justification for the discontinuation. The justification should normally be based on one or more of the grounds for discontinuation listed below.

As a rule, there should be a certain permanence linked to the reason for discontinuation.

Strategic considerations

Strategic considerations may be based on changes in profiling or re-prioritisation within the framework of the University's and/or the School's limited resources.

Lack of quality

An external or internal review has identified a lack of quality – or a clear risk of such a lack of quality in the near future.

Aspects indicating deficiencies in quality may relate to the conditions for delivering the education. (e.g. weak research linkage or lack of teacher capacity or teacher competence), the implementation of the study programme (e.g. persistently low throughput), or the outcomes of the education (e.g. inadequate goal fulfilment in degree projects).

Insufficient financial resources

The subject or study programme has not covered its costs over a longer period of time.

Insufficient demand from students and the labour market

The number of applicants is too low.

The labour market demand for competence in the subject is too low, i.e. students or doctoral students have difficulty establishing themselves in the labour market after completing their studies.

Overlap

The subject or study programme overlaps with another subject or study programme. As a result, the education in the subject or

study programme can be integrated into another subject or study programme.

Discontinued main field of study

The main field of study of the programme has been discontinued.

Depending on the grounds for discontinuation, a main field of study, i.e. a subject in which the University can award degrees, may either be completely discontinued or converted into a resource subject. For subjects at doctoral level and for resource subjects, full discontinuation is always required.

2.2.2 Impact asessment

In certain cases, an impact assessment must be carried out in connection with the internal investigation. This is particularly important if the discontinuation process may result in a redundancy situation. In such cases, the Human Resources Office provides support with the impact assessment.

The impact assessment must also include consultation with the management of other Schools if the discontinuation of the subject or study programme affects other Schools. This applies, for example, when the subject is part of a study programme at another School, or when subjects at other Schools are included in a study programme that is subject to discontinuation (see also section 2.2.4).

2.2.3 Transitional provisions for students and doctoral students

When a subject or study programme is discontinued, transitional provisions for students and doctoral students must be specified. This means that the University must clarify the means that enable students to complete their studies within the programme or courses in the subject. If a subject is discontinued, coordination must take place with regard to any decision to discontinue the study programme leading to a degree in the main field of study.

When applying the transitional provisions, special consideration should be given to students with a guaranteed place following a leave of absence, students with disabilities, and students who have been granted an individual study plan. Students who have been registered on a study programme that is discontinued, and who have not completed the programme, must receive specific information about this. This applies to students who have been registered on one of the programme instances of the past five academic years.

If a long time has passed since education in the subject or study programme was last offered (five years or more), an assessment must be made as to whether it is necessary to inform the students as stated above. This assessment is made by the Programme Coordinator or the

Subject Coordinator, in consultation with the relevant Educational Issues Officer.

In practice, discontinuation of education often occurs gradually, through the discontinuation of the courses offered in the subject. Specific guidelines exist for the discontinuation of courses.

2.2.4 Communication

It is very important to inform those concerned at an early stage that a discontinuation process has been initiated.

If the subject or study programme is part of the current range of courses and programmes, and several students/doctoral students and external stakeholders are affected, a communications plan must be established with the support of the Marketing and Communications Office.

If education in the subject is included in study programmes offered by another School, consultation must take place with the management of the School in question. Consideration must be given to how different programmes may be affected and for how long (see also section 2.2.2).

The groups/functions listed below must always be informed, normally, during the internal investigation. In some cases, however, information may be provided after the investigation. Guidance on the timing of the distribution of the information may be provided by the Human Resources Office (in cases that may lead to redundancy), the Marketing and Communications Office, and the officer who provides administrative support for the process (section 2.3). Below is some guidance for communication efforts.

Information to affected staff

Staff within the subject or study programme and other affected staff must be informed as early as possible. Normally, affected staff should be involved in the investigation preceding the proposal for discontinuation. Particular attention must be given to informing the relevant Subject Coordinators as well as the relevant Programme Coordinators. If needed, the relevant manager must provide special support to staff, with the assistance of the Human Resources Office.

Information to employee organisations

The employee organisations at the University should be informed as early as possible. The employee organisations must also be informed of, or involved in, the investigation that normally precedes the proposal for discontinuation.

Before the final formal decision on discontinuation, negotiation must take place, or information must be provided, in accordance with the Swedish Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act

(MBL). The Human Resources Office provides support on MBL matters.

Information to the Student Union, external stakeholders, and other interested parties

Information about the discontinuation of a subject or study programme must always be provided to the Student Union. The Student Union should be informed as early as possible.

If needed, information must also be provided to relevant external stakeholders for the programme and to other interested parties in the field.

2.3 Decision on discontinuation

The Vice-Chancellor decides on the discontinuation of subjects and study programmes. A proposal in the matter is normally submitted by the relevant Head of School, following consultation with the Faculty Board. If the discontinuation of the subject or programme is prompted by quality deficiencies, the proposal may be submitted by the Faculty Board.

The administrator at the Faculty Board provides administrative support in drafting decisions regarding the discontinuation of subjects and study programmes.

Once the Vice-Chancellor has made a decision on discontinuation, the affected students must be informed of the decision and the applicable transitional provisions within two weeks. Information must always be provided to students and doctoral students if education in the subject or study programme has been conducted during the past five years. In other cases, an assessment must be made in accordance with section 2.2.3.

3 Cancellation of programme instances

By 15 March each year, the Vice-Chancellor decides on the range of study programmes. The decision specifies which programmes will be included in the portfolio for the following year. This means that programme instances for these programmes will be available to new students.

If circumstances so require, the Vice-Chancellor may decide to cancel a programme instance prior to each admission round, for example due to insufficient numbers of applicants to the programme. A justification for the decision must always be provided. If the programme instance is cancelled as a first step in a planned discontinuation, an internal investigation must be initiated (section 2.2).

Decisions on cancellation of a programme instance are made by the Vice-Chancellor, following a proposal from the Head of School at the relevant School. The decision must also be preceded by consultation with, or information to, the relevant Head of Division, Subject Coordinator(s), Programme Coordinator, and the Student Union.

Administrative support for the process is provided by the relevant Educational Issues Officer.

4 Division of responsibilities

This section provides a summary of the responsibilities described in more detail above.

Head of School:

- Initiates a discontinuation matter.
- Carries out and documents the internal investigation in a discontinuation matter, in collaboration with the relevant Head of Division.
- Submits a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor for the discontinuation of a subject or study programme.
- Submits a proposal to the Vice-Chancellor for the cancellation of a programme instance.

Head of Division at the School in Question:

- Carries out and documents the internal investigation in a discontinuation matter, in collaboration with the Head of School.

Programme Coordinator/Subject Coordinator:

- In consultation with the relevant Educational Issues Officer, assesses whether information should be provided to students in cases where no education has been offered in the subject or study programme during the past five years.

Academic Affairs and Student Support Office:

- Consults with the Programme Coordinator, Subject Coordinator on whether information should be provided to students, in cases where no education has been offered in the subject or study programme during the past five years.
- Provides administrative support in drafting decisions on the discontinuation of study programmes.

Human Resources Office:

- Provides support in discontinuation matters that affect staff, for example in cases of potential redundancy.

Marketing and Communications Office:

- Provides support in the development of a communications plan, if necessary.

Faculty Board:

- Initiates discontinuation matters if systematic quality deficiencies have been identified, e.g. through six-year reviews of subjects and related study programmes.
- Provides administrative support in drafting decisions on the discontinuation of subjects and study programmes.

Vice-Chancellor:

- May mandate the School to initiate a discontinuation matter.
- Decides on the discontinuation of subjects and study programmes.
- Decides on the cancellation of programme instances.

5 Effective date of the document

This document has been in effect since 18 May 2021 and replaces the Guidelines for the Discontinuation of Subjects (ref. no. HS 2016/477) and Guidelines for the Discontinuation of Study Programmes and Cancellation of Programme Instances (ref. no. HS 2016/478).