

A Level Programme Continuation and Reduction Policy

Responsible Senior Manager: Assistant Principal

Effective Date: September 2026

Related Policies:

Approved By: Executive

Next Review Date: Summer 2029

HS
DC

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1. Policy Statement

HSDC expects students who enrol on a three A Level programme to continue with and complete all three subjects. Reducing a programme from three A Levels to two is an exceptional measure and will only be considered on evidenced medical grounds.

The College's normal response to academic difficulty, attendance concerns, examination pressure or workload challenges will be targeted support and intervention, not programme reduction.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'A levels' includes A level equivalent vocational courses.

2. Rationale

Continuing with three A Levels demonstrates commitment, builds resilience and provides a broad and ambitious programme of study. It also gives students the widest possible range of future destination options.

Reducing to two A Levels may significantly restrict access to:

- University courses;
- Higher and degree apprenticeships;
- Competitive employment opportunities; and
- Other education and training routes.

Students are enrolled on three A Levels because the College believes they can succeed. The College will therefore prioritise academic, pastoral and wellbeing support to help students overcome challenges and remain committed to their full programme.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled on a three A Level programme at HSDC.

A reduction from four A Levels to three may be considered separately through the College's normal programme review arrangements.

4. Grounds for Programme Reduction

A reduction from three A Levels to two will only be considered where:

- There are significant medical circumstances;
- A current medical report has been provided by an appropriate medical professional;
- The report clearly explains why continuing with three A Levels would be medically inappropriate;
- The report supports or recommends a reduction in the student's programme; and
- Reasonable academic, pastoral and wellbeing support has been considered or provided.

Academic underperformance, poor attendance, examination pressure, workload concerns, loss of confidence or a preference to discontinue a subject will not normally constitute grounds for programme reduction.

5. Application and Approval Process

Stage 1: Application

The student or their parent/carers must submit a written application directly to the relevant Head of Faculty.

Applications should not be made through individual subject teachers or Student Progress Mentors.

Stage 2: Medical evidence

The application must include a current report from an appropriate medical professional. The report must provide sufficient information to demonstrate the effect of the medical condition on the student's ability to continue with three A Levels.

Applications without appropriate medical evidence will not progress for consideration.

Stage 3: Head of Faculty review

The Head of Faculty will review:

- The student's written application;
- The medical report;
- The student's attendance, progress and engagement;
- The support and interventions already provided; and
- The possible effect of a reduction on the student's intended destination.

The Head of Faculty may meet with the student, parent/carers and relevant staff. Following the review, the Head of Faculty will either decline to recommend the application or submit a formal recommendation to the Assistant Principal.

The Head of Faculty cannot approve a programme reduction.

Stage 4: Assistant Principal decision

The complete application, supporting medical evidence and Head of Faculty's recommendation will be submitted to the Assistant Principal.

Only the Assistant Principal can approve a reduction from three A Levels to two. The Assistant Principal's decision is final.

Stage 5: Outcome and implementation

The outcome will be confirmed in writing to the student and parent/carer and recorded on the student's file.

Where a reduction is approved, the Head of Faculty will:

- Confirm which subject will be discontinued;
- Ensure the student understands any effect on their destination options;
- Coordinate the required programme and timetable changes; and
- Put appropriate ongoing support in place.

6. Staff Responsibilities

Teachers and Student Progress Mentors must focus on helping students remain on their full programme. They may identify concerns, coordinate support and refer a student to the Head of Faculty, but they must not approve, promise or routinely recommend a reduction from three A Levels.

A consistent message should be given to students:

"We enrolled you on this programme because we believe you can succeed. Our focus is on helping you achieve success, maintain your commitment and keep your future options open."

Appendix 1- Infographic

THREE A LEVELS: CONTINUE, COMMIT, SUCCEED



Completing three A Levels shows commitment, builds resilience and keeps the widest range of university, apprenticeship and employment options open.

Reduction to two A Levels: exceptional medical grounds only

1



1 APPLY

Student or parent/carer applies directly to the Head of Faculty.

2



2 PROVIDE MEDICAL EVIDENCE

A current medical report must explain why three A Levels are medically inappropriate and recommend a reduced programme.

3



3 HEAD OF FACULTY REVIEW

The application, evidence, support provided and impact on future destinations are reviewed.

4



4 ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL DECISION

Only the Assistant Principal can approve a reduction. The AP's decision is final.

5



5 OUTCOME

The decision is confirmed in writing and recorded. If approved, programme changes and ongoing support are arranged.



NOT GROUNDS FOR REDUCTION

Academic underperformance • Poor attendance • Examination pressure • Workload concerns • Loss of confidence • Preference to drop a subject



Our first response is support – helping every student remain on their full programme.