Vocational Programme Continuation and Reduction Policy

Responsible Senior Manager:	Assistant Principal
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Related Policies:	
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Contents

1. Policy Statement 3
2. Rationale 3
3. Scope 4
4. Support Before Programme Change 4
5. Grounds for Programme Reduction 5
6. Application and Approval Process 6
7. Timing of Transfers 8
8. Students with EHCPs or Identified Additional Needs 9
9. Staff Responsibilities 9

1. Policy Statement

HSDC expects students who enrol on a vocational or technical study programme to continue with and complete their full agreed programme.

A vocational study programme may include:

- The student's main vocational or technical qualification;
- English and/or mathematics, where required;
- Tutorial and personal development activity;
- Work experience or an industry placement;
- Enrichment, employability and progression activity; and
- Any additional qualification or activity identified as a required component of the student's programme.

The College's normal response to academic difficulty, attendance concerns, assessment pressure, workload challenges or loss of confidence will be targeted support and intervention, rather than programme reduction or withdrawal.

A transfer to another programme, movement to a different qualification level or reduction in the agreed study programme will only be considered following a formal review of the student's needs, progress, support and intended destination.

2. Rationale

Vocational and technical study programmes are designed to provide students with a coherent and ambitious programme of knowledge, skills, personal development and preparation for progression.

Completing the agreed programme helps students to:

- Achieve a substantial vocational or technical qualification;
- Develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by employers;
- Progress to employment, an apprenticeship or further study;
- Meet the requirements of their intended career pathway; and
- Keep the widest possible range of progression options open.

Removing part of a programme, transferring to a smaller qualification or moving to a lower level may affect the student's ability to achieve their intended destination. It may also mean that the revised programme is no longer educationally coherent or appropriate to the student's needs.

Students are enrolled onto programmes because the College believes that the programme is appropriate and that they can succeed. The College will therefore prioritise academic, pastoral, inclusion, careers and wellbeing support to help students remain on and complete their agreed programme.

3. Scope

This policy applies to students enrolled on full-time vocational and technical study programmes at HSDC, including programmes at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

It applies where consideration is being given to:

- Withdrawal from the main vocational or technical qualification;
- Movement to a smaller qualification;
- Removal of a substantial component of the programme;
- Transfer to a different vocational programme;
- Transfer to a different qualification level; or
- A significant reduction in the student's planned hours or programme content.

This policy does not remove the requirement for students to continue with English and/or mathematics where this forms a mandatory part of their study programme. Any proposed alteration to English or mathematics must be considered separately in accordance with the College's English and Maths Policy and any applicable funding or qualification requirements.

4. Support Before Programme Change

Before a transfer or reduction is considered, the course team must demonstrate that reasonable steps have been taken to help the student continue successfully.

Depending on the student's circumstances, this may include:

- Discussion with the student to identify barriers to participation or progress;
- Review of attendance, punctuality, engagement and assessment performance;
- Clear and achievable improvement targets;
- Course Team Intervention or the appropriate stage of the Back on Track process;
- Contact and engagement with the parent or carer, where appropriate;

- Additional academic support or supervised study;
- Review of teaching, assessment and workload planning;
- Careers advice linked to the student's intended destination;
- Referral for wellbeing, safeguarding or financial support;
- Review of reasonable adjustments and additional learning support;
- Consideration of support identified through an EHCP or support plan; and
- A time-limited support plan with an identified review date.

The Pastoral & Tutorial Policy places responsibility on course teams to identify concerns, set initial SMART targets and lead Course Team Intervention. It also identifies the Tutorial Lead or Course Teacher as responsible for coordinating Stage 1 support for vocational students, with Student Progress Mentor support for students at higher risk. The Back on Track Policy similarly describes a cohesive support system intended to help students make progress and achieve their goals.

5. Grounds for Programme Reduction

A transfer or programme reduction may be considered where one or more of the following apply:

- There are significant medical, wellbeing or safeguarding circumstances;
- Evidence demonstrates that continuing on the present programme would not be appropriate or sustainable;
- An EHCP review or assessment of need identifies that an alternative programme would better support the student's outcomes and aspirations;
- The student has been enrolled on a programme or level that, following review, is demonstrably unsuitable;
- A transfer would provide a more appropriate route to the student's confirmed intended destination;
- The student has secured an apprenticeship, employment with training or another appropriate positive destination; or
- Exceptional circumstances mean that continuing the original programme is no longer in the student's best educational interests.

Academic underperformance, poor attendance, missed assessments, workload concerns, loss of confidence or a preference to discontinue part of the programme will not normally, on their own, constitute grounds for programme reduction.

Where these concerns arise, the normal response will be support, intervention and a clear improvement plan.

6. Application and Approval Process

Stage 1: Application

A request may be raised by the student, parent or carer, Course Teacher, Student Progress Mentor or another member of staff.

The matter must be referred to the relevant Head of Faculty. Individual teachers, Course Teachers, and Student Progress Mentors must not approve or promise a transfer or programme reduction.

Stage 2: Medical Evidence and intervention review

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 the study program.

Applications without appropriate medical evidence will not progress for consideration.

The Course Teacher or Tutor or SPM will provide the Head of Faculty with:

- The reason for the proposed change;
- The student's attendance, progress, engagement and assessment information;
- Details of support and interventions already provided;
- The views of the student and, where appropriate, their parent or carer;
- Relevant medical, wellbeing, safeguarding or EHCP evidence;
- Careers advice concerning the student's proposed destination; and
- Details of the proposed alternative programme or arrangement.

Stage 3: Head of Faculty review

The Head of Faculty will review:

- Whether sufficient support and intervention have been provided;
- Whether the student could reasonably remain on the original programme;
- Whether the proposed alternative is coherent and educationally appropriate;
- The effect on the student's intended destination;
- Any English, mathematics, work placement or industry placement requirements;
- Any safeguarding, inclusion or reasonable-adjustment considerations; and
- Whether the proposed programme remains a substantial and meaningful programme of study.

The Head of Faculty may meet with the student, parent or carer and relevant staff.

Following the review, the Head of Faculty will either:

1. Require further support and intervention while the student remains on their existing programme;
2. Decline the request;
3. Approve a transfer within the parameters delegated through normal programme review arrangements; or
4. Submit a recommendation for programme reduction or other exceptional change to the Assistant Principal.

Stage 4: Assistant Principal decision

Any exceptional reduction that would leave a student with a significantly reduced, incomplete or non-standard study programme must be submitted to the Assistant Principal.

The submission must include the evidence reviewed, interventions provided, the Head of Faculty's recommendation and the proposed revised programme.

Only the Assistant Principal may approve an exceptional programme reduction.

Stage 5: Outcome and implementation

The outcome will be confirmed in writing to the student and, where appropriate, their parent or carer. The decision and supporting rationale will be recorded on the student's file.

Where a transfer or reduction is approved, the Head of Faculty will ensure that:

- The revised programme is clearly identified;
- The student understands the implications for achievement and progression;
- Careers guidance has been provided;
- Required programme and timetable changes are completed;
- MIS, examinations and relevant support teams are informed;
- Any work experience or industry placement implications are addressed;
- Ongoing support and review arrangements are established; and
- The student is not left without a meaningful and appropriate programme.

7. Timing of Transfers

Transfers should normally be identified and completed as early as possible so that the student has a realistic opportunity to succeed on the receiving programme.

A transfer should not take place unless:

- The receiving Head of Faculty has agreed that the programme is suitable;
- There is capacity on the receiving programme;
- The student can reasonably complete missed learning and assessment;
- Qualification registration arrangements permit the transfer; and
- The transfer supports an appropriate intended destination.

Late transfers must be treated as exceptional and require particularly careful consideration of the student's ability to complete the receiving qualification successfully.

8. Students with EHCPs or Identified Additional Needs

Programme decisions concerning a student with an EHCP must be based on the student's potential, aspirations, readiness and intended long-term outcomes.

A student must not be moved to a lower-level or smaller programme solely because they have an EHCP, additional learning needs or require reasonable adjustments.

The College's 2026/27 Accountability Statement establishes a "No Glass Ceiling" approach, with progression decisions for EHCP learners based on potential, aspirations, readiness and long-term outcomes rather than assumptions about their ability to pass a qualification.

Where a substantial programme change is proposed, the Head of Faculty must consult the appropriate Additional Learning Support or EHCP lead and consider whether an EHCP review is required.

9. Staff Responsibilities

Teachers, Course Teachers, Student Progress Mentors and support staff must focus on helping students remain on and successfully complete their agreed programme.

Staff may:

- Identify concerns;
- Discuss barriers with the student;
- Coordinate and record support;
- Set and review improvement targets;
- Engage parents or carers where appropriate; and
- Refer the case to the Head of Faculty.

Staff must not:

- Tell a student that they can leave a course or programme component;
- Promise a transfer or reduced programme;
- Encourage withdrawal as the normal response to underperformance;
- Remove a student from a register without formal approval; or

- arrange an informal programme change outside the agreed process.

A consistent message should be given to students:

“We enrolled you on this programme because we believe it is appropriate and that you can succeed. Our first priority is to understand any barriers and put the right support in place. Any change to your programme must be carefully reviewed to ensure it remains ambitious, meaningful and appropriate for your future plans.”