

POLICY 5405 Toolkit: **Responding to Program** **Suspension or Cancellation**

INTRODUCTION

In January 2025, BCIT management announced that it would implement budget cuts across the institution. By the spring, it became clear that management intends to achieve these cuts, at least in part, through targeted program suspensions and closures (governed by BCIT Policy 5405).

This toolkit is intended for FSA members working with or in programs facing elimination, suspension, or service reduction. The final section includes recommendations to help members respond to plans for program cuts.

POLICY 5405

BCIT Policy 5405 and 5405-PR1 outline, among other things, the consultation process, criteria, and procedures for program suspension and cancellation at BCIT. They can be found at www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/5405.pdf and www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/5405_pr1.pdf. It is important to read these documents fully and carefully to understand the process.

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Consultation

Consultation is the serious exchange of ideas and information before a decision is made. The decision to suspend or cancel a program is preceded by a consultation period with “stakeholders” as defined in the Policy, including FSA members delivering the program. When members receive notice of a program cancellation or suspension, this begins a 30-day consultation process, after which recommendations are delivered from the Dean to the VP Academic. If you require more time than the 30-day allotment to provide feedback, you can request an extension from the VP Academic. The employer is not required to grant extensions but doing so could give you time to help build a better case. We recommend that, after the consultation window has closed, members ask their dean to view the recommendation prior to it being sent to the VP Academic.

To recommend suspension or cancellation to the VP Academic, your dean must summarize the consultation process, including stakeholder participation, stakeholder input including alternative suggestions for the program, and the impact consultation had on their final recommendation. They must also summarize alternatives to suspension or cancellation that were considered.

Criteria

It is important that management provide evidence for their recommendation. A dean's recommendation to cancel or suspend a program should identify the issues driving their recommendation. Policy 5405 lists the following criteria for assessment when considering program suspension or cancellation:

- The advice sought and received by Education Council
- Institutional Mandate, Vision, Goals, and Strategic Plan
- Financial effectiveness
- Student demand
- Graduate employment data
- Labour market demand
- Program's relationship to other programs
- Alternate program providers
- Recommendation from the program area; or
- Any other criteria the Board considers relevant

Procedures

Policy 5405-PR1 details how program suspension and/or cancellation are to proceed and therefore where members can intervene in the process. Most important is the consultation process, mentioned above, which requires fact finding and discussion on the part of management. Your dean or their delegate leads this process and should be receiving your feedback throughout. They need to show that they've considered alternatives and justify why the alternatives will not work. The best time to influence the process is before the recommendation is finalized.

After consultation comes the decision-making process, where the dean's recommendation is delivered to the VP Academic. In the case of the cancellation of BCIT Board of Governor approved programs, the recommendation is then delivered to the Board who make the final decision after seeking the advice of the Education Council. For suspension, the VP Academic is the final authority.

At this time, it appears that program suspensions may be more prevalent than cancellations; therefore, the VP Academic will generally be the 5405 decision-maker (once a program is suspended, a review process is to begin within two years, after which the VP Academic will decide its fate). There is no language compelling the VP Academic to seek further consultation after what's been completed by a dean; however, they may determine that further input is necessary. We recommend, in any case, that the VP Academic receive your feedback on the program being considered for suspension.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend thorough and consistent communication with your dean (or their delegate) and the VP Academic at the relevant stages. We have two overarching recommendations, with guidelines below.

1. Submit a list of questions to your dean, which can include items like:

- As you know, 5405-PR1 provides detailed instructions for deans to follow if/when recommending program suspension. Please provide us examples of how you plan to follow 5405-PR1.
- If revenue/enrollment dropped recently, what attempts were made to restructure the program or generally address the drop?
- (further to the above and if applicable) how has enrollment been measured? By student FTE count, registration into individual courses, or other?
 - (further to the above) we request enrollment data from present-day, dating back 5-to-10 years.
- Has management in our Department incentivized agents to recruit students into FT and PTS diploma, degree, or certificates? If so, how has this practice evolved in the past decade?
- We request financial data going back at least a decade, including line items for revenue, salaries, and expenses for all years of financial data. Please include revenues or expenses processed under any other org codes, if there are any.
- Please provide us the alternatives to cancellation that you considered and why they were not deemed adequate. Please send us this documentation.

2. We also recommend that, as a program group, you produce a package opposing suspension or cancellation, which you present to your dean and the VP Academic. It is important to offer alternatives in writing, including maintaining the status quo, or any ideas to save programs or how to alter them for the better. This package may:

- Consider alternatives to suspension or cancellation. These don't necessarily need to be fully fleshed out, but the more detail (including why the status quo is viable) the better.
- Include letters of support from students, former students, industry, colleagues, and/or politicians.
- Use dissenting research to demonstrate the viability of the program.
- Ask for a receipt and timeline for response.

The FSA has obtained a copy of a similar research package, used in 2024 to successfully delay the suspension of a Department at BCIT. Please contact us (fsa@bcit.ca) for more information.

Please forward any submissions that you make under 5405 to the FSA, copying Senior Labour Relations Representative George Talbott. We may endorse and send to BCIT as union submissions. If you need any further advice or guidance, please contact the FSA. We meet weekly and will discuss your situation.

