

PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE

*References: Education Code Sections 70902 (b) and 78016;
Title 5 Sections 51022 and 55130;
ACCJC Standard II.A.15 (revised 2014)*

I. INTRODUCTION

College districts are required by current statute and regulation to develop a process for program discontinuance and minimum criteria for the discontinuance of occupational programs (California *Education Code* §78016 and *Code of Regulations* Title 5 §51022). Additionally, the College District's accrediting agency requires the institution make appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption when programs are eliminated or program requirements are significantly changed. This procedure explains the process by which the College District complies with these regulations.

II. DEFINITIONS

There are several important terms that must be agreed upon by the Academic Senate and administration for a successful process. Most important are the following: **discontinuance** (permanent removal of a program); **suspension** (temporary removal of a program from the catalog); and **inactivation** (a record-keeping term used the by the California Community College Chancellor's Office).

Program: Title 5 §55000(m) defines an educational program as "an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education." Title 5 refers to other pathways to achieving an outcome as "programs"; however, for purposes of this procedure, an educational program is defined strictly by §55000(m). This does not include student support or instructional services programs that do not lead to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education.

Viability: Program viability is the ability of an education program to function adequately and serve students effectively. Viable programs show a capacity to serve students at the same or increased level of effectiveness and to maintain relevance in the workplace over time.

Discontinuance: A program that has been discontinued is defined as a program that will no longer be offered by the College District and will be removed permanently from the College Catalog.

Suspension: Program suspension is defined as temporary removal of a program from the College Catalog to prevent new students from enrolling.

Inactivation: The term "inactivation" is the current term used by the California Community College Chancellor's (CCCCO) Office's Program and Course Approval Handbook, 5th Edition

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(PCAH), to refer to courses and programs that have been determined by a district to be no longer viable and are no longer offered at the district. For the purposes of this procedure “suspension,” “discontinuance” and “inactivation” are synonymous because the record-keeping software used by the CCCCO does not make a distinction. The Academic Senate chooses to use the term “program discontinuance” as adopted by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges in the ASCCC paper “Program Discontinuance: A Faculty Perspective Revisited” (Adopted FA 2012) in order to align with the best practices explained in that document. Discontinuance is also the term found in Title 5 §55130(d).

III. CONSTITUENT ROLES

The Role of Faculty:

College District Policy and Procedure No. 2515 BP & AP “Role and Scope of the Academic Senate” provides for the College District to rely primarily upon the Academic Senate in curriculum development, degree and certificate requirements, educational program development, standards and policies regarding student preparation and success, and the process for academic program review. In addition, the criteria and process for the discontinuance of an approved educational program is the responsibility primarily of the Academic Senate. Faculty primacy in this process creates greater opportunity for a collegial, student-centered, and academically relevant process informed by reliable, longitudinal data regarding metrics such as, but not limited to, student enrollments, student success, and workforce needs. Faculty primacy and the involvement of the Academic Senate is especially crucial in disciplines composed of only part-time faculty who are often less likely to be involved in College District planning processes causing their voices and perspectives to be absent or diminished.

The Role of Administrators in Program Discontinuance and Suspension:

Because they may be aware of issues such as environmental changes or workforce data regarding a program, administrators need to ensure that programs are routinely reviewed, advisory boards are consulted (in the case of CTE programs), plans are developed, and actions are taken to ensure the strength and vitality of programs are sustained. The role of the Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) is to provide support for faculty during the review of a program, and if a recommendation from faculty for discontinuance results from this process, administrators facilitate the implementation of program discontinuance processes by providing necessary resources and support. Administrators make certain recommendations are carried out and all contractual and legal requirements regarding employees are met and students’ needs accommodated. Faculty have the responsibility to consider programs for suspension or discontinuance when student demand or other factors have led to a loss of viability and to work collegially with the Dean when

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concerns regarding program viability are brought forth by representatives of the administration.

The Role of the Governing Board:

The California *Education Code* and *Code of Regulations* Title 5 establish specific roles for the Governing Board regarding program discontinuance, and the decision to discontinue a program ultimately rests with the Board. However, that decision must be based on a collegially agreed upon, deliberative process that ensures College District planning documents and policies are consulted and followed, including this procedure, the College District's mission statement, strategic plan, educational and facilities master plans and other planning documents. After discontinuance, Governing Board members are responsible for responding to concerns from the community and upholding the collegial processes used to come to that conclusion.

PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE AND PROGRAMS NOT FUNDED BY THE GENERAL FUND:

The program discontinuance process for College District-funded programs may be initiated at any time, if and when it is determined that a particular program, including long-standing grant-funded programs, is experiencing factors that have a negative impact on academic offerings. For grant-funded programs, pursuant to Policy No. 4020 BP "Educational Program Development," program discontinuance will be considered if the program meets the criteria established by the Senate or if the program's funding has ended. The coordinator of the grant-funded program must request that the program be institutionalized by the College District prior to the end of the grant funding in order to be considered for ongoing funding by the College District pursuant to 4020 BP; if this is not done, then the grant-funded program will terminate with the end of its funding.

IV. CRITERIA, EVIDENCE, DATA AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

A. Criteria

A program may enter suspension of discontinuance if it meets one of the following criteria established by Policy No. 4021 BP "Program Discontinuance." The criteria for program suspension and program discontinuance are based on guidelines for program viability in the current edition of the Program and Course Approval Handbook (PCAH) 5th edition and are as follows:

1. The goals and objectives of the program are no longer appropriate to the mission of the California Community Colleges nor are they congruent with the Institutional Strategic Plan of the College District.

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2. The program no longer meets industry needs, lacks demand in the current job market, and is not considered an emerging industry or career or the program curriculum no longer aligns with university transfer majors or general education requirements.
3. The program does not meet curriculum standards as defined by Title 5 §55100.
4. There are insufficient resources to realistically support the program at a sufficient level of quality, and the program has experienced continued low or declining enrollment (55% of class max or more) for a sustained period of time (generally four or more semesters), which is demonstrated by continued low persistence and completion rates in the program supported by reliable, valid and longitudinal data.
5. The program has been determined to be out of compliance with existing state or federal laws, i.e. Title 5 §55130(d), or licensing laws in particular occupations.

B. Additional Criteria

A program may be discontinued when the criteria established by Policy No. 4021 BP "Program Discontinuance" are present and any of the following standards also apply:

1. Discipline faculty include as a component of their annual snapshot or comprehensive program review a request to discontinue a program;
2. The faculty and Dean agree not to enter suspension, but to discontinue the program;
3. A suspension was implemented and assessed, and all relevant parties agree the program's outcomes did not improve sufficiently.

C. Important Considerations

Certain considerations should be a part of all discussions of discontinuance or suspension, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. There should be clear agreement among constituents on the goals, benchmarks or measureable outcomes of a program in order to reach a consensus on program viability during the discontinuance or suspension discussion.
2. There should be specifically defined measures that can be applied fairly to all programs that are based on trends over time, typically five or more years.
3. Accurate and relevant internally-compiled and externally-compiled data should be made available and used to inform decision making. This data should include all completions offered by a discipline including degrees, Certificates of Achievement, and Certificates of Proficiency.

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4. Industry needs should be considered and there should be timely consultation with advisory committees for CTE programs.
5. Constituents should consider how a program relates to the mission of the College District and local community needs
6. There should be a determination of specific steps to strengthen at-risk programs that the College District wishes to save, including resource needs.
7. The current and long-term economic outlook of the institution should be considered.
8. The impact on students in the affected program and the availability of counseling services.
9. The impact on other programs that may share courses in the program being considered for discontinuance.
10. The impact on issues relevant to all bargaining units including adequate notification of affected full-time and part-time faculty, availability of retraining for displaced full-time faculty, and impacts on Faculty Service Areas.
11. Any disproportionate impact on minority and/or “at-risk” students
12. A “teach-out” plan must be created prior to agreement to discontinue a program or a plan for students to meet their educational objectives through alternative means while the program is under suspension.

D. Evidence, Data and Program Viability

Program viability discussions must be based on evidence, including reliable and complete data, to be comprehensive and authentic. The following qualitative and quantitative data elements should be considered whenever possible in a program discontinuance or suspension process:

1. Enrollment trends, including FTES comparisons between the program being considered and other programs, over a five-year period when possible
2. A history of resource allocations, including Perkins funding for CTE programs
3. Term-to-term persistence for those students in courses in the major
4. Demand in the workforce or availability of the transfer major
5. Services currently being provided to students in the program
6. Resources available to support the program
7. Satisfaction surveys from industry, students, and others in contact with the program
8. The need for workers in the region with skills taught in the program
9. The number of graduates and job placement rates for graduates of the program for CTE programs
10. The number of transfer slots available at four-year schools in the region
11. The availability of the program at other community colleges offering the major within the region

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12. Potential collaboration with business and industry in the region to strengthen the program
13. The possibility of joint programs with other community colleges in the region
14. The possibility of encouraging students at neighboring community colleges not offering the program to enroll in the program
15. The effects on UC/CSU transfer students' ability to complete specific lower division subject areas and general education requirements when eliminating a program
16. The effects on local industry and local recruitment efforts by employers seeking to find individuals with entry level occupational skills
17. Assessment results of Program Student Learning Outcomes
18. Relationship between the Program Student Learning Outcomes and Institutional Student Learning Outcomes, including a discussion regarding the balance of curriculum opportunities available to students.

E. Program Review and Program Discontinuance

Program Discontinuance is a separate process from program review because ongoing program improvement, the focus of program review, is distinct from considerations of discontinuance. Certain types of evidence, including enrollment trends, student demand, and occupational outlook may be common to both program review and program discontinuance, and institutional data typically used in periodic program review may be necessary. However, program review should not be used to engage program discontinuance and in order to ensure the integrity of both processes they should be constructed and implemented separately.

F. Program Discontinuance and the Inactivation of Courses

The discontinuance of a program does not require the inactivation of the courses that make up the program. Discipline faculty may include the inactivation of a course as part of a plan for improvement or as part of the program discontinuance process. However, they are required to notify Instructional Support Services (ISS) and Department Chairs in other Departments whose programs will be impacted by the course inactivation. Courses that are not offered for six consecutive semesters are considered for inactivation automatically.

G. "Teach Out" Plan

Prior to making the decision to discontinue a program, the discipline faculty, working with the Dean, must provide a plan establishing appropriate arrangements so that enrolled students may complete their education in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption. The plan must include, but is not limited to, the following information:

1. Effective date for program termination;

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2. Names and student identification numbers for students currently enrolled in the program;
3. The name of a counselor that has been identified to work with the affected students;
4. A schedule of sections of core courses demonstrating when students will have an opportunity to take their remaining courses. This schedule must include the location for those courses.

V. STEPS LEADING TO THE PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE OR SUSPENSION PROCESS

A. *Process Initiation*

At any time, discipline faculty, in consultation with the Dean, or the Governing Board in consultation with the Superintendent/President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) may request a program viability meeting. Any request to initiate program viability from faculty must be the result of prior discussions between discipline faculty and the Dean. A request by the Governing Board must be the result of the Board's review of a program's biannual Career Technical Education CTE Governing Board Report pursuant to its obligations established by Education Code §78016.

B. *Timeline*

Due to catalog deadlines, the decision to discontinue or suspend a program and remove it from the catalog must be reached no later than the first Monday of October. If after this date, the Curriculum Committee chairs may determine if the program can be removed from the catalog. Several steps must be taken prior to the initiation of program discontinuance or suspension including the following:

1. After receiving a written request, the VPAA convenes a meeting to discuss the viability of the program including student interest, program outcome data, resources, labor market need (if applicable), and other qualitative and quantitative data elements. A decision to discontinue cannot be taken at this meeting. The following faculty and staff must attend this meeting:
 - a. The Department Chair
 - b. The School/Center Dean
 - c. A lead discipline faculty representative(s)
 - d. The Curriculum Committee Faculty Co-Chair
 - e. The Academic Senate President
 - f. A representative of the Associated Students Organization (ASO)
 - g. A representative of the Southwestern College Education Association (SCEA)
 - h. A representative of the California School Employees Association (CSEA)

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2. At this initial meeting, constituent representatives discuss data elements and considerations outlined in the “Criteria, Evidence, Data and Important Considerations” section of this procedure. Additional meetings may be called to give representatives additional time to discuss these considerations. Substitute individual representatives are allowed, but the representatives should be as consistent as possible.
3. At any subsequent meeting after the initial meeting, the group may decide among one of the following three scenarios:
 - a. The program will be maintained in its current state.
 - b. The program will enter a period of suspension and be temporarily removed from the next academic year’s catalog. Courses may still be offered for currently declared students.
 - c. The program will be discontinued and removed from the next academic year’s catalog. A “teach-out” plan must be provided to the committee prior to choosing this option.
4. The results of these discussions must be documented in the program’s next program review by faculty and reported to the Governing Board as part of the Curriculum Summary at the next available Governing Board meeting.

VI. STEPS IN THE PROGRAM SUSPENSION PROCESS

1. When the committee agrees to a program suspension, the discipline faculty, in consultation with the Dean, must provide a “Plan for Suspension” within 60 days. that includes the following elements:
 - a. A specific and reasonable timeline for implementing improvement actions and determining program viability that includes regular meetings between faculty and administrators to discuss progress. A period of suspension may not exceed three years due to CCCCO requirements that a course not active in the CCCCO Curriculum Inventory be inactivated from the Inventory after three years.
 - b. Any relevant quantitative or qualitative data metrics and measures or benchmarks that will be used to determine the return of program viability, such as targets for increased enrollments, increased completions, increased responsiveness to workforce demands.
 - c. An explanation of any resource needs and a plan for obtaining those resources.
 - d. Plans for curriculum modifications, if applicable.
 - e. Plans for Department or program restructuring, if applicable.

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- f. Recommendations for faculty professional development goals related to program improvement, expected outcomes, and resources needed
 - g. Data and accompanying narrative analysis by program faculty.
 - h. The terms under which the program can be removed from suspension
 - i. Measurable goals for the program, incorporating specific targets involving quantitative and qualitative measures that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions taken.
 - j. A timeline for assessing progress at the mid-term point and to make mid-course corrections to the plan and budget changes.
 - k. Benchmarks to identify if significant improvement in the program has occurred to warrant the continuance of the program.
 - l. A schedule of required courses in the program for the period of the plan of improvement if there are students who have declared the program and are still working towards their degree.
2. When a program enters suspension, ISS will inactive the program in the CCCC's Curriculum Inventory. A period of suspension may not exceed three years due to CCCC requirements that a course not active in the CCCC Curriculum Inventory be inactivated after three years from the Inventory.
3. At a subsequent meeting before the completion or expiration of the agreed upon suspension period, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean, the Department Chair and discipline faculty shall meet to discuss and document whether the program has reached the benchmarks of improvement established in the plan of improvement. Minutes of the meeting must be kept. Additional meetings may be scheduled and minutes recorded.
4. If all parties agree the program has met its benchmarks, it will be activated in the CCCC Curriculum Inventory and returned to the catalog of the next available academic year. Minutes from these meetings must be scanned and included in CurricUNET with the program.
5. If all parties are in agreement that the benchmarks have not been met, then the discontinuance process will begin.
6. If all parties are not in agreement that the benchmarks have been met, the Vice President for Academic Affairs shall call a meeting with the following constituent leaders:
 - a. The Curriculum Committee Faculty Co-Chair
 - b. The President of the Associated Student Organization (ASO)
 - c. The Academic Senate President

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- d. The President of the Southwestern College Education Association (SCEA)
 - e. The President of the California School Employees Association (CSEA)
 - f. The cognizant Dean
 - g. The Vice President for Student Affairs
7. At this meeting, attendees will review the minutes of the previous meetings between the Vice President, the Dean, the Department Chair, and the discipline faculty and make a recommendation on the program's status to the Superintendent/President.
 8. The Academic Senate President will present the findings from the meetings to the Senate for action. The Senate can vote to recommend the program for discontinuance, to continue in suspension under a new suspension plan, or vote to recommend the program be reinstated. The Senate President will forward the recommendation of the Senate to the Superintendent/President in a written memo.
 9. The Superintendent/President will forward the Senate's recommendation along with his/her recommendation to the Governing Board prior to the Board taking action on discontinuance of the program. Depending on the result of that decision, the program will either be reinstated, discontinued or a new suspension plan developed.

VII. STEPS IN THE PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE PROCESS

1. If consensus is reached that a program will be discontinued, and suspension is not needed or viable, the Academic Senate President places a recommendation for discontinuance on the first available Academic Senate agenda for a first read.
2. The Department Chair or discipline faculty must attend the senate meetings at which the discontinuance is discussed or acted on in order to answer questions.
3. Longitudinal completion data must be provided to the senate prior to approval of recommendation for discontinuance.
4. Upon a second read, the Senate votes whether to accept the recommendation for discontinuance. If passed, the Academic Senate President sends a written memo to the Vice President for Academic Affairs

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announcing the result of Senate action and a synopsis of the process. The memo is sent to the following constituent leaders:

- a. The Dean of Instructional Support Services
 - b. The Instructional Support Services Supervisor
 - c. The Curriculum Committee Faculty Co-Chair
 - d. The President of the Associated Student Organization (ASO)
 - e. The President of the Southwestern College Education Association (SCEA)
 - f. The President of the California School Employees Association (CSEA)
 - g. The Dean of Student Services
 - h. The Dean of Counseling and Matriculation
 - i. The Vice President for Student Affairs
5. If discontinuance is approved, the lead faculty will input in CurricUNET the discontinuance/inactivation (for Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory) and the program discontinuance/inactivation will be added as a consent item to the next Curriculum Committee meeting.
 6. The item will then be forwarded to the Governing Board for approval as part of the Curriculum Summary.
 7. Once approved by the Governing Board, the Superintendent/President or designee shall provide written notification of Program Discontinuance to all faculty and staff.
 8. After Governing Board action, discipline Faculty and the Dean will provide the required "teach out" plan to the Counseling Department.
 9. The Dean of Student Services, in consultation with the Dean of Counseling and Matriculation, notifies students of their rights and works with counseling faculty to assist affected students regarding timely completion of their program, transfer and/or options on a case-by-case basis. Such timelines and options shall be made public to all affected students.
 10. Instructional Support Services will "inactivate" the program in the CCCCO's Curriculum Inventory, change the status of the program in CurricUNET, and attach the Academic Senate President's memo and any relevant meeting minutes or documents to the program.
 11. Instructional Support Services will remove the program from the coming academic year's catalog.

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12. Affected faculty and classified staff shall be provided sufficient time to consult with their respective union to determine their employment rights and options. Such timelines and options shall also be made public.
13. The Superintendent/President or designee shall ensure that the redistribution of faculty, staff, program funding, FTES, supplies, equipment, and facilities are addressed with the SCEA and CSEA in a manner that supports Policy and Procedure Nos. 2510 and 2515. The Office of the Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs shall be directed in writing to redirect and/or withhold College District funding as agreed by all affected parties.
14. The program will be considered officially and finally “discontinued” when funding has ceased. Future curriculum in a similar area must be created and justified on its own and cannot be a modification of a discontinued program.