Principles for Discontinuing a Degree Program or a Field of Study within a Degree Program

The department or program making a recommendation to discontinue a degree program or field of study (referred to hereafter as “program”) must submit a proposal to the following committees for review, in the order listed:

• The educational steering committee for that program, if any (e.g., MPH Steering Committee)
• the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP)
• the Academic Council.

Depending on the review of these bodies, the Dean of the Faculty or the Dean for Education may require that the proposal be submitted to the Faculty Council and, at the Faculty Council’s discretion, to the full Harvard Chan faculty.

Timing

Any proposal to discontinue a degree program or field of study must be submitted at least 12 months in advance of the date on which it is proposing that the program would no longer be open for new applications. Because the school finalizes its program listing in SOPHAS by August 1 each year, so this means that any proposal must be submitted no later than by August 1 of the proceeding year.

For example: a program proposes to stop taking applications for new students for the incoming class of AY 2022-2023. These students would have applied in the fall of 2021 admissions cycle. The proposal to discontinue the program would need to be submitted by August 2020.)

Required Submission Material

All proposals to discontinue a degree must include the following information:

• A letter of support from the relevant department chair or program director

Summary information on the degree program or degree, including:

• an overview of the role of the program in the school’s educational offerings
• the educational goals of the program
• the number of enrolled students in each of the 3 most recent academic years
• the number of applications to the program in the 3 most recent admissions cycles

The rationale for the proposed elimination of the program or field of study

• What specific goals would be achieved by discontinuing the program or field of study?
The implications of the proposal for the school’s educational mission

• How does the program currently contribute to the school’s educational mission?
• How will the school fulfill this part of its educational mission without the program?
• What group of current applicants would now not be eligible for admission to the school?
• What proportion of applicants to the school does this represent?

A description of the process that was undertaken to develop the recommendation to discontinue the program, including:

• Any analysis of data or other information that was conducted or reviewed as part of the review process. A summary of any such data or analysis should be included in the proposal.
• Were current students in the program consulted as part of this process? If so, what were their views?
• Were alumni of the program consulted as part of this process? If so, what were their views?

Alternatives to discontinuing the degree or field of study

• What alternative to discontinuing the degree program were considered? What criteria were used to decide among the possible alternatives?

Implications of the proposal for other degree programs

• Does the school offer other degree programs that might be appropriate alternatives or substitutes for interested applicants?
• If so, do these programs have capacity to accept additional students?
• Have these programs been consulted about the proposal? If so, what were their views?

Enrollment Implications

• What are the enrollment implications of discontinuing the degree?
• How will the department/program/school make up for any decline in enrollment from discontinuing the program?
• Has the Admissions Office been consulted about the proposal? If so, what was its view?

Financial implications

• Would the department/program/school realize any cost savings from discontinuing the program (e.g., elimination of courses, reduction in administrative expenses, etc.)?
• Has the school’s office of financial services been consulted as part of the process of developing the recommendation to discontinue the program? If so, what was its views?

Impact on current students, incoming students and alumni

• How will the proposal affect current students? What actions would be taken to mitigate any potential negative impact on current students?
• How will the proposal affect incoming students? What actions would be taken to mitigate any potential negative impact on incoming students?
• How will the proposal affect alumni of the program? What actions would be taken to mitigate any potential negative impact on alumni of the program?

Communication

• If approved, what explanation will be given to these groups to explain the decision to discontinue the degree?
• When and how would each group be informed about the decision?