



The Inns of
Court College
of Advocacy

Bar Course Closure Policy

Version 2.0

Introduction

This policy sets out the ICCA's procedures for closing or suspending the ICCA Bar Course.

The policy aligns with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education and takes account of Competition & Markets Authority (CMA) advice¹. It also aligns with the ICCA Student Protection Plan. The principle underpinning the policy is that, in all cases, the experience of students on the ICCA Bar Course should be assured and monitored.

ICCA Bar Course closure/suspension is a five-stage process.

1 Scope of the Policy

1.1 The policy is applicable to:

- The ICCA's Bar Course which is delivered and supported entirely by ICCA staff and which leads to an award of PGDip in Bar Practice from King's College London (KCL);
- Offsite delivery of Part One of the ICCA Bar Course which is delivered and supported entirely by ICCA staff irrespective of the location of the student;
- The ICCA's Bar Course which is delivered under a collaborative provision arrangement with KCL. Where the ICCA bar Course will close and the intention is also to close the partnership, the collaborative provision procedures under the Validation Agreement between the ICCA and KCL will also be followed.

1.2 The policy is not applicable to:

- Any other ICCA training provision, courses or materials

2 Definitions

2.1 **Closure**

The ICCA Bar Course is **closed** when there are no students enrolled on the ICCA Bar Course, including those who have interrupted.

2.2 **Suspension**

The ICCA Bar Course is **suspended** when a decision is taken not to recruit to the ICCA Bar Course or to deliver the ICCA Bar Course for a defined period.

3 Principles

3.1 The ICCA's decision to close the ICCA Bar Course must take full account of the needs of existing students, applicants to the ICCA Bar Course and offer holders, including deferred applicants and offer holders. It should support students through to the completion of their intended study wherever possible or put in place appropriate alternative arrangements. In either case, arrangements must be made to guarantee the quality of experience for such students during the period of any teach-out. These arrangements should also ensure that the ICCA Bar Course continues to address the requirements of the BSB which accredits the ICCA Bar Course.

¹ CMA advice on consumer protection law applies to the relationship between HE providers and prospective and current students. Universities that fail to meet their obligations may be in breach of consumer protection law.

- 3.2 Before commencing the formal procedures to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course, the ICCA must ensure that arrangements are in place for interrupted and deferred students so that they can complete their studies. Provisions must also be made for students who require the opportunity to re-sit or to repeat assessments. In the case of a collaborative provision arrangement, the ICCA must contact the Quality, Standards and Enhancement team (QSE) at KCL to take advice on the termination clauses in the Memorandum of Understanding, prior to communicating with students or other stakeholders. The external examiner(s) must also be invited to comment.
- 3.3 Once applicants have confirmed their acceptance of a valid offer by the ICCA of a place to study the ICCA Bar Course, it is not possible to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course unless it can be documented that all potential alternative arrangements have been exhausted. ICCA Admissions and any external Portal Admissions must be consulted in such cases. Where applications have been received but offers not yet made, a decision to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course must be made early enough in the cycle so as not to disadvantage applicants.
- 3.4 Where staff terms and conditions or service are affected or there are potential redundancies, Human Resources (HR) must be consulted at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.5 If the ICCA Bar Course is suspended and a decision is taken at a later date to close it, a 'Bar Course Modification Form' noting the revised decision should be submitted to the ICCA's Education Committee for initial consideration, and then forwarded to the ICCA Governors and (via the QSE) to the KCL Programme Development & Approval Committee (PDAC) for notification and consultation. Any decision to close the course will be made by the Trustees of the Council of the Inns of Court (COIC).
- 3.6 All decisions to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course must be taken in good time, with due regard for the need to address the position of existing students and potential applicants. It should be noted that if a decision to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course is taken late in any admissions cycle, the availability of suitable alternatives at other institutions may be limited and the applicant might be able to claim financial compensation from the ICCA, thereby causing potential reputational damage.
- 3.7 The ICCA Bar Course must continue to be actively managed and, subject to the ICCA's requirements of module evaluation, annual monitoring and external examining and must therefore retain a Course Leader for the duration of the ICCA Bar Course.
- 3.8 Ongoing monitoring must ensure that the equity of experience for students on the ICCA Bar Course is maintained. If the ICCA Bar Course is due for review during the teach-out phase the ICCA should contact KCL QSE for guidance and the ICCA Education Committee (EC) must be notified.

4 Rationale for Closure or Suspension

- 4.1 The ICCA Bar Course may be closed or suspended for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:
- Declining student applications and/or enrolments;
 - Key staff leaving the university/being on sabbatical;

- Creation of a new ICCA Bar Course that merges a number of existing Bar Courses;
- Changing strategic priorities at the ICCA;
- Concerns about the quality and academic standards on the ICCA Bar Course;
- Termination of a Memorandum of Understanding, termination for another reason of a collaborative provision arrangement which also results in the closure of the ICCA Bar Course.

4.2 In addition, if no students are enrolled on to the ICCA Bar Course in the first year of delivery, and none are expected to enrol, and there are no firm offer holders, the ICCA Bar Course should normally be closed. In these circumstances, this will be identified as part of the annual planning process.

5 Authority To Make Decisions About Closure or Suspension

5.1 The decision is made by the COIC Trustees, following consultation with the ICCA Governors and the PDAC at KCL.

6 Stage 1: ICCA Consideration

6.1 Stage 1 involves consideration by the EC of the rationale and an assessment of the impact of the proposed closure/suspension. A report must be submitted to the EC which includes the number of students enrolled on the ICCA Bar Course and confirmation that there are not any applicants, offer holders or deferred offer holders who would be affected by the proposal. Where there are, applicants, offer holders (including deferred offer holders), the Bar Course Leader must be consulted. Students on the ICCA Bar Course must be consulted on the proposals and any alternatives at a formative stage of deliberations. In the rare event that teach-out is not possible, affected students should be offered the opportunity to transfer to suitable alternative bar vocational training courses at another institution. The ICCA should identify these alternatives as part of stage 1 of the ICCA Bar Course closure process.

Collaborative Provision

6.2 For collaborative provision arrangements, the ICCA must contact KCL QSE to take advice on the termination clauses in the Validation Agreement before communicating with students and other stakeholders. This is to ensure that the ICCA Bar Course closure is conducted in accordance with the Validation Agreement and to identify whether the agreement will need to be renegotiated, varied or terminated.

Renewal of Suspensions

6.3 QSE will contact the Dean of the ICCA when the requested suspension period of the ICCA Bar Course is due to expire, to prompt the renewal of the suspension, re-introduction of the ICCA Bar Course or permanent closure of the ICCA Bar Course.

7 Stage 2: Approval

7.1 Initial recommendation is by the ICCA's EC and can only be given if arrangements are in place to support any deferred, interrupted or repeating students.

- 7.2 The ICCA Bar Course closure/suspension documentation is then forwarded for consultation purposes to KCL QSE (for PDAC) and the ICCA Board of Governors. Their recommendation(s) regarding any closure/suspension decision must be considered by the COIC Trustees before any course closure/suspension decision can be approved.
- 7.3 The COIC Trustees' approval for the course to be closed or suspended is conditional on any firm offer holders being agreeable to be transferred to other suitable institutions elsewhere.

8 Stage 3: Internal Communications

- 8.1 Once the approval to close or suspend the ICCA Bar Course has been processed, formal notification must be sent to all relevant staff to alert them to the decision.

Action to be taken upon receipt of notification:

- Marketing remove ICCA Bar Course from any online prospectus.
 - Admissions remove ICCA Bar Course from the application portal.
 - Registry Services close the ICCA Bar Course on any internal or shared application portal.
- 8.2 The Dean of the ICCA must ensure that relevant teams within the ICCA are notified.
- 8.3 The Dean of the ICCA should notify the BSB.
- 8.4 For collaborative provision arrangements, KCL QSE should be consulted to confirm the appropriate person that the ICCA must notify.
- 8.5 Any closures and suspensions will be reported annually to KCL PDAC.

9 Stage 4: Applicant and Student Communications

- 9.1 Where there are firm offer holders, individual conversations, which must be documented, must be held between the applicant and the ICCA to offer these individuals a place on other bar vocational training courses elsewhere if at all possible. If this is not successful then the ICCA Bar Course may need to be continued and not suspended or closed.
- 9.2 Admissions will then inform any applicants that the ICCA Bar Course is being closed or suspended and provide them with information about alternative bar vocational training courses available. If the applicant subsequently wishes to withdraw their application this should be permitted and any application fee, or deposit fee paid should be refunded in full.
- 9.3 The ICCA should identify any applicants who will be affected by the decision and notify them. If the applicant does not reply within the timescale requested in the initial letter, Admissions should issue a reminder letter advising the applicant that their application will be withdrawn if no response is received within a specified timescale.
- 9.5 The ICCA must inform students enrolled on the ICCA Bar Course and discuss the implications with them at the earliest opportunity. Students should be informed of any plans for teaching-out the ICCA Bar Course and provided with details of how the ICCA intends to maintain the quality of the student learning experience during the teach-out phase. In addition, appropriate student representatives should also be included in this process. If teaching out the ICCA Bar Course is not possible, affected students should be offered the opportunity to transfer to a suitable alternative course at another institution. Care should be

taken not to forget the need for arrangements for students who have suspended their studies or need to refer or those who have deferred entry.

10 Stage 5: Final Closure of ICCA Bar Course

- 10.1 Once all students have completed, the ICCA Bar Course will be closed with all associated records taken out of use.