

Annex D: Template for a student protection plan

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Student protection plan for the period [2024/25]

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students, how those risks may differ based on your students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

Recent financial risk assessments do not identify a higher financial risk category for the University. As such, the University is confident that it would be able to deliver any of its current and planned programmes within its current financial commitments. The University has an annual external audit which includes a review of going concern, and an internal audit programme which also provides assurance.

The University's own internal audit and review processes do not identify a high risk to being able to deliver specific programmes across the University. The risk assessment process would show appropriate mitigation actions if needed and Business Continuity Plans are in place for major incidents.

Risk to teaching on specialist programmes is managed by a planned process, both within programme approval and the cyclical Planning and Performance Cycle. Significant changes to teaching provision are approved in sufficient time in advance for any changes to be advertised to potential students in all but exceptional circumstances.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our programmes is low because we are a large institution with critical mass in our academic units.

Recruitment processes ensure that we have staff expertise to cover for staff departures or absences. We already utilise this flexibility where, for example, we cover parental leave or research leave.

For periods of major disruption, e.g. pandemic situations or industrial action, the University has a specific annexe to its [Regulations](#) that are used in order to manage disruption appropriately. Major disruption guidelines would be drafted for that incident and students would be consulted with and informed regarding the ongoing delivery and assessment of their programmes. This communication would detail explicitly any changes that students can expect to their programme under the situation in place.

The University currently delivers one Level 7 apprenticeship programme in the School of Allied Health Professions and Nursing. The risk of the University not being able to deliver the programme is low. If for any reason the programme was discontinued, alternative provision would be sourced, and apprentices transferred to a new provider if necessary. As part of our statutory requirements, the University complies with apprenticeship funding rules.

Students on programmes delivered by collaborative partners would be offered the same support and access to learning opportunities to complete their programmes as students on any other University programmes. This would be detailed in the collaborative agreement which all contain information regarding closure and teach out arrangements.

The University has a major strategic partnership with Kaplan Open Learning for delivery of online postgraduate programmes. Detailed consideration of any teach out activity is contained within the Institutional Agreement and subject to the oversight of the Online Education Partnership Joint Strategic Board.

Assessment of risk

Closure of the University: the University considers that the risk of the University not being able to operate as a whole institution is very low. This includes financial risk, loss or restriction of University status and loss of access to University premises or facilities. The University is a long-established provider of Higher Education and its external assessments support this low risk analysis, e.g. financial audit, REF and TEF outcomes.

Closure of programmes in specific areas/departments or modes of study: overall the University considers this risk to be low. We are confident in our market position and our recruitment targets. The University accepts that as part of normal business, it may become necessary to discontinue programmes to reflect market trends and its strategic priorities. Where this happens there are processes in place and students would be provided with appropriate advance notice.

Loss of accreditation by a regulatory body: the University is subject to review and reaccreditation processes by many regulatory bodies, and we consider the risk of loss of accreditation to be low. This is due to our experience as a provider of many accredited programmes, as our provision is currently accredited by 129 Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies, and the rigorous approach to reaccreditation activity and continuous monitoring of programmes.

2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

All students and apprentices are covered within the requirements of the University's [Policies on Withdrawal and Suspension of programmes](#).

All withdrawals and suspensions are approved in line with the University Policy as a means of managing the size and quality of the portfolio and taking due consideration of the student experience. All approved withdrawals or suspensions make provision for students to complete their studies.

The student experience is always fully protected and teach out provisions have to be made and approved as part of the withdrawal or suspension of programmes.

Fundamental to the process is that all stakeholders are consulted: students and staff involved in the delivery of the programme plus any current applicants. This is to ensure there is effective and appropriate communication of the rationale for a programme withdrawal or suspension and to understand the teach out requirements.

Endorsement is then sought from the appropriate Curriculum Board and supported by the Dean of the relevant School. In addition, Faculty Management Teams then need to endorse before consideration and approval by a School Scrutiny Panel. This level of activity is deemed appropriate due to the considerations that need to take place for such a decision to be approved. For information and noting, the decision of the School Scrutiny Panel is reported to the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Any applicants are then contacted by the Recruitment team, deadlines are in place to ensure that the University can provide timely communications to students and applicants.

Additional information regarding closure of collaborative programmes run with other institutions or bodies are covered explicitly in institutional agreements between all partners.

Measures to mitigate risk

The University will endeavour to take all reasonable steps to deliver the education and learning opportunities as outlined in our offer to students. However, in circumstances where this is not possible, one or more of the following approaches will be adopted:

- teach out of any programmes which are to be withdrawn - all students registered on a programme that is to be withdrawn will be able to complete their studies before the programme as a whole is closed. All proposals to close a programme must specify how a teach out will be provided. This process is outlined in the Policy above.
- facilitate transfer or direct-entry to another provider – where appropriate to better protect the student experience, we would work with other providers, including our fellow Russell Group members and our strategic partners to accommodate student transfers to another provider, subject to any entry requirements. We would provide support to ensure any appropriate credit transfer was considered.
- closure of collaborative partnerships - as detailed above, closure arrangements are covered in full in discussion of collaborative partnerships. All students would be offered the same opportunities to complete their programmes as our on-campus students.

- Loss of accreditation by a regulatory body – although the likelihood of this is low, in the event of this happening, the University would expect to receive appropriate advance warning of the possibility of loss of accreditation and to be provided with the opportunity to address concerns with the relevant body. If this could not be prevented, or loss of accreditation was immediate, the University would take steps to seek alternative options for affected students, including consideration of transfer to other suitable programmes or providers.

3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

The processes the University has in place are there to ensure that the student experience is protected and that there would not be instances where students would be left without the opportunities to complete a programme. Due to the stringent demands of the process of Withdrawing or Suspending a programme, the University has a planned set of procedures so that students are not left without a programme of study.

If students are not happy with the planned activity, there are complaints policies in place for them to use to address any concerns.

The University's Refund Policy is included in its [Terms and Conditions](#).

Further information is contained within the [Payment Policy 2024-25, Student Fees, Fines and Charges](#). This Policy is referenced and linked to within the Terms and Conditions.

The University does not have a specific Compensation Policy and each request for compensation from a student is considered on a case-by-case basis, based on the outcomes of a robust Student Complaints Policy or Student Appeals Process, the outcome of which may be a consideration of appropriate compensation to a student. The University has a robust [Complaints Policy](#) which ensures a consistent, standardised approach to the consideration of complaints and outcomes. Students are made aware of the Policy via various communications, and it is available on the University website.

If students feel that they wish to leave the University and transfer elsewhere, the University would fully support them by providing all appropriate information to support their transfer.

The University's Policy is to retain cash reserves of at least £60 million in order to ensure that we can meet our financial obligations, including any necessary refunds to students. The University's cash reserves as at 31 July 2023 were £114.1 million.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

The University will make the student protection plan available to current and future students by publishing appropriate information on the University's web site and adding a reference to the Plan to the student Terms and Conditions information.

The University will continue to ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose programme changes, and we will add reference to the Plan to the Policies for Suspension and Withdrawal of Programmes.

The University will review our student protection plan by considering the content annually at the Education Committee. The Guild of Students has representation on the Committee and will ensure that student views are fully considered and there are lay members of Council for a wider oversight.

Arrangements to inform students of any changes in their programmes, particularly suspension or withdrawal of programmes, are covered in the Policy listed above. All arrangements have to be received at University level.