

The University of Manchester: Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: The University of Manchester

Provider's UKPRN:10007798

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Student protection plan for the period 2025-2030

Definitions

Key Terms

Mode of study: The way in which a student attends and engages with their programme of study or research (examples include full-time, part-time, blended, distance-learning)

Programme: A programme of study/research leading to the award of a university degree, diploma or certificate

Senate: Senate acts as the University's principle academic authority and plays a key role in the governance of the University

Acronyms

OfS: Office for Students

PGR: Postgraduate researcher

PSRB: Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Body

UEB: University Exam Board

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UKVI: UK Visas and Immigration

What is the Student Protection Plan and what does it mean for you? How is this related to the Student Terms and Conditions?

The University's Student Protection Plan outlines how we will ensure the continuation of your programme, even in the unlikely event that unforeseen circumstances require changes. The University is a well-resourced, world-leading institution, so the risk of changes that affect you is very small. The Student Protection Plan does not replace any existing documents or policies and complements our student Terms and Conditions.

The Student Protection Plan does not apply if you decide to withdraw from the University, interrupt your studies or if it becomes necessary for us to withdraw your registration (for example, because you have been unable to pay your tuition fees).

The Student Protection Plan sets out what we believe to be the possible risks, apart from your own personal circumstances, which could in theory limit or stop you being able to study for your programme. It explains some of the measures we have in place to reduce these risks and prevent them from occurring. It also sets out our approach to the refund of tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students; to providing

compensation where necessary in the event that the University is no longer able to maintain continuation of study.

Our approach to changes that affect the continuity of your programme

We will notify you of changes at the earliest possible opportunity. We will take reasonable steps to minimise the impact of any changes including by providing reasonable and proportionate support which could include helping you to find an alternative Programme with us, or suitable alternative provision with another higher education provider. For undergraduate applicants that may mean we make representations to UCAS on your behalf.

Our primary focus is on ensuring continuation of study. Where that is not possible, or where we consider circumstances justify it, we will consider payment of refunds and/or compensation. We will consider, on a case-by-case basis, paying (for example) reasonable travel, maintenance and/or tuition fee costs associated with transfer to another provider. If you have any concerns in connection with any such changes then you are encouraged to raise these in the first instance with your School (for undergraduate and PGT students) or with your Faculty Doctoral Academy (for PGR students) to explore options around resolution. If you remain concerned, you may raise a formal complaint under the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

Summary of risks and the impact on students after mitigation	
Risk	Impact on students after mitigation
a) The risk that the whole university closes	Very low
b) The risk of a changes of programme title	Low
c) The risk of complete withdrawal of a programme of study	Low
d) The risk that specific components of a programme can no longer be taught	Low
e) The risk of module or programme content changes	Low
f) The risk of losing external accreditation of a programme	Very low
g) The risk of changes to module availability	Low
h) The risk of a changes or closure of location of study	Low
i) The risk that a programme taught/delivered in collaboration with another university or organisation cannot continue	Low
j) The risk of a change to the number of academic sessions, method of delivery, timing of assessments, or method of assessment	Low
k) The risk of a change to the mode of study	Low
l) The risk that the amalgamation or closure of schools or departments affects the delivery of programmes	Low
m) The risk of being unable to recruit or teach a particular type of student	Very low
n) The risk of significant staffing vacancies or issues	Low
o) The risk of being unable to continue to supervise a PGR student	Low
p) The risk of changes to or the replacement or withdrawal of placements, fieldtrips and other in-programme activities	Low
q) The risk that an exceptional event disrupts the normal academic processes and procedures	Low
r) The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our programmes	Low

1. Risks and Mitigations

In this section we have set out an assessment of the range of risks that might impact the ability for you to continue to study the programme and programme content that you had originally chosen.

We have also explained how likely we believe these risks are and what plans we have to try to reduce their likelihood and impact.

The risks identified below may potentially affect your ability to continue your studies. The 'risk likelihood' indicates the possibility of these risks occurring in the future.

1. Very Low: No indication that the risk will occur and it has not occurred previously.
2. Low: Risk is highly unlikely and has not previously occurred.
3. Medium: Risk is possible but not likely to be frequent.
4. High: Risk is likely to occur frequently.
5. Very High: Risk is highly likely.

(a) The risk that the whole university closes

The University of Manchester is a world-leading institution and a member of the UK's prestigious Russell Group, with approximately 30,500 undergraduate students, 11,500 postgraduate taught students and 4,000 postgraduate research students. We are ranked 34th in the world, tenth in Europe and sixth in the UK in the 2024 Academic Ranking of World Universities. We are also ranked second in the world in the 2024 Times Higher Education University Impact rankings.

There are a number of risks that could impact on the University's ability to operate as it does now, including the loss or restriction of university status, a pandemic or other unforeseeable event or cancellation of our Office for Students (OfS) registration. However, the risk that the University as a whole is unable to operate is considered **very low** because of our long history, global reputation, strong governance and policies and procedures in place. Our response to the COVID pandemic, a significant cyber incident in 2023 and sustained strong student recruitment and outcomes provides additional assurance as to our resilience. Our financial performance is in a healthy and sustainable position as evidenced in our publicly available financial statements: [Financial Statements Year ending July 2024](#), and as monitored by the OfS.

(b) The risk of a change of programme title

With the measures we have in place, the impact on students in the event of a change of programme title is expected to be **low**, even though the risk of a change of programme title is medium. Such changes are rare and will not normally be made less than three months before the scheduled start of the Programme. We will let applicants or those who have accepted offers know as soon as possible once the change has been approved, so you can consider if you still wish to accept our offer or to enrol. Programme title changes would usually only apply to new entrants, unless the change is made as a result of the requirements of a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body ('PSRB'). For example, if you are unable to progress on an accredited programme, you may need to transfer to an unaccredited programme, which would have a different programme title. In that instance we may have no choice but to make the change, but students will be able to follow our [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if you are unhappy with the change.

(c) The risk of complete withdrawal of a programme of study

With the measures we have in place, the impact on students in the event of programme withdrawal is expected to be **low**, even though the risk of complete withdrawal of a programme of study is medium. If, in the unlikely event, it becomes necessary to close a Programme (for example, for reasons including insufficient student interest, loss of PSRB accreditation, replacement with a new Programme, loss of contract with a commissioning body (such as the NHS), or if the Programme is deemed to be no longer viable (for academic, regulatory, legal or financial reasons), we will engage with you at the earliest possible opportunity.

We will usually know some time in advance that a Programme may need to close and so will not normally advertise the Programme to new applicants. If you're an offer holder who hasn't enrolled yet and a Programme does close, then we will notify you as soon as practicable and do our best to offer you an alternative Programme with us. If that is not possible, we will assist you to find a Programme at another higher education provider. We may also compensate for evidenced

expenditure incurred in your attempt to find an alternative higher education provider. If you are an existing student, we will let you know what is happening with your Programme and what this means for you. In almost every case we will continue to 'deliver-out' the Programme so that you can complete it as planned. This means that the Programme continues to be delivered to you until such time that you complete it. Where that is not possible for particular students (for example, if you are on a period of interruption or have deferred your entry) we will consult with you individually about the impact on you and your options, and we will make every effort to identify another suitable Programme with us, or if that is not possible, with another higher education provider. On the very rare occasion that it is not possible to 'deliver-out' a Programme, we might merge the Programme with another and will work closely with students to assist you in understanding the implications of that, or we may assist you in transferring to another Programme with us instead (if this meets your needs), support you in rescaling your research, or assist you in transferring to another higher education provider. We will provide targeted support in relation to students in receipt of a bursary or studying on a Student route visa. Our [Policy on Refunds and Compensation](#) sets out more details on the above and the steps we will take and the support we will provide if we close a Programme, whether that is planned or unexpected, and your rights as an existing student or as an applicant in the event that we do so.

(d) The risk that specific components of a programme can no longer be taught

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver individual components of our programmes is **low**. We would usually only normally make changes to these components as part of ongoing curriculum review and development, but in the unlikely event that a component of a programme that was integral to achieving the intended learning outcomes could no longer be delivered, those outcomes would be delivered in a different way and the [Procedure for Protecting the Interests of Students and Postgraduate Researchers during 'Exceptional Events'](#) would be invoked.

(e) The risk of module or programme content changes

With the measures that we have in place, the impact on students in the event of module or programme content changes is expected to be **low**, even though the risk of module or programme content changes is high. Our culture of continuous enhancement means that changes are usually made to Programme content and syllabus every year/cycle. This is usually to maintain academic standards or as a result of feedback from the student body, from external examiners, from PSRBs, from employers/industry, or following developments in research and practice. Such changes are discussed and approved at Faculty and School Programme Approval Committees and reported to Senate. Once changes have been approved, they will be published in the module and Programme descriptors for the following academic year/cycle. Our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding any such amendments with your School/Department in the first instance and refer students to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

(f) The risk of losing external accreditation of a programme or accreditation not being renewed

The risk that we will not be able to award degrees or will lose accreditation for one or more of our programmes is **low**. We are an experienced and long-standing provider of degrees and other awards and have regular engagement with all relevant Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. Programmes are also subject to the University's quality assurance framework: <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/>. In the unlikely event that we were to lose accreditation, decide to withdraw an accredited Programme or accreditation is not renewed, then 'deliver-out' arrangements will normally apply. This means that the Programme continues to be delivered to you until such time that you complete it. Where that is not possible for particular students (for example, if you are on a period of interruption or have deferred your entry) we will consult with you individually about the impact on you and your options, and we will make every effort to identify another suitable Programme with us, or if that is not possible, with another higher education provider, alongside considering any other appropriate remedies. We will follow the same

process, and consider similar options, for applicants who have accepted an offer from us but are unable to start due to loss of PSRB accreditation.

(g) The risk of changes to module availability

Core Modules

With the measures that we have in place, the impact on students in the event of module availability is expected to be **low**, even though the risk of changes to module availability is medium. We will always aim to ensure these are delivered as advertised. On the rare occasion that this is not possible (for example due to staff unavailability, specialist equipment / other resource unavailability, or unpredictable events such as fires and floods) we will engage (and where possible consult) with you about the situation and the potential options available to you. The options might include the module being replaced with a new or alternative module which continues to meet the intended learning outcomes for the Programme or identifying suitable optional modules which again meet the Programme's intended learning outcomes. In such circumstances, any changes will be discussed and approved at Faculty and School Programme Approval Committees and reported to Senate (which plays a key role in the governance of the University and acts as the University's principal academic authority). With both core and optional modules our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding any such changes with your School/Department in the first instance and refer you to the complaint process if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

Optional Modules

We aim to ensure that options are available as advertised, but sometimes this is not possible (for example due to staff unavailability, specialist equipment / resource unavailability, or unpredictable events such as fires and floods, timetabling clashes, or over or under subscription of students on a particular module which would impact the student experience negatively). In such circumstances, we will inform affected students about the situation and engage with you about your options, and any changes will be discussed and approved at Faculty and School Programme Approval Committees and reported to Senate. With both core and optional modules our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding any such changes with your School/Department in the first instance and refer students to the complaint process if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

(h) The risk of a change or closure of location of study

The University owns and operates all of the land and buildings on its main teaching campus in Manchester. Business continuity plans are in place to support the relocation of activities in the event of disruption to one or more buildings. The risk that we are no longer able to relocate teaching activities in the event of disruption to one or more buildings is **very low** due to the size of the University main campus and the business continuity plans we have in place.

The University has four international centres that support our delivery of blended learning programmes. The risk that we are no longer able to use these centres or operate in a particular country is **low**. There are additional spaces in each of the four host cities that could be leased if necessary. There is a small risk that governmental policy in the host countries has an adverse impact on our ability to operate, but we maintain good relationships with the relevant education ministries.

We also have University staff employed in each of the centres. If it became no longer possible to continue operating in a particular country, then we would reconfigure the course to wholly online provision and offer online tutorial support from staff based in Manchester.

(i) The risk that a programme taught/delivered in collaboration with another university or organisation cannot continue

We offer some programmes in collaboration with other universities (e.g. architecture) but we have

assessed the risk to the continuation of such programmes as **low** and these programmes are subject to regular review and a formal collaboration agreement. The other universities are also OfS registered and have their own Student Protection Plans.

Our collaborative provision is subject to well-managed and regularly reviewed contractual arrangements and to the University's well-established and publicly available quality assurance framework, i.e. annual monitoring, External Examiner reporting, in depth review every five to six years: <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/quality/collaborative-validated-provision/>. If the University decides to withdraw from a collaborative agreement, or if the validated partner closes or is unable to deliver the course as planned, then the 'deliver-out' arrangements described above would also come into effect.

(j) Risk of a change to the number of academic sessions, method of delivery, timing of assessments, or method of assessment

With the measures that we have in place, the impact on students in the event of changes to the number of academic sessions, method of delivery, timing of assessments, or method of assessment is expected to be **low**, even though the risk of these changes is high. Changes may be made to improve the delivery of Programmes as part of the University's process of continuous improvement and enhancement (including in response to student feedback). Changes might also be made to allow us to continue delivering Programmes, while mitigating the impact of an unexpected event or of strikes and industrial action by University staff, (for example, we might move to online classes and assessments or need to re-scope aspects of our Programmes' content, approach and delivery in the event of a pandemic preventing in-person teaching, research and assessments).

Wherever possible, changes will be made following engagement and consultation with students. Whatever the reason for change, we will always aim to provide an experience of at least equivalent quality with intended credits and learning outcomes met, as could reasonably be expected compared with the original planned delivery. In such circumstances, we will notify you as to why changes are happening and what options are available to you if you are unhappy. Our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding amendments made with your School/Department in the first instance and refer you to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

(k) The risk of a change of the mode of study

The University offers a wide range of programmes with various modes of study. While the majority of programmes are offered on a full-time basis, a number of programmes are offered part-time or off campus via online/blended learning. Programmes of Study often use more than one mode of study and students are successfully integrated on either full or part-time modes of study. Employing these differing modes of delivery ensures that the likelihood of the University having to suspend Programmes is minimal and the student experience is protected. The risks to students are therefore **low**.

(l) The risk that the amalgamation or closure of schools or departments affects the delivery of programmes

If the University were to make strategic decisions to combine or close schools or departments, any such change would be undertaken in a planned way to minimise any impact on programme delivery or the wider student experience. The risks to students are therefore **low**.

(m) The risk of being unable to recruit or teach a particular type of student

The University has a detailed [Access and Participation Plan](#) that sets out the risk to recruitment of

a range of under-represented student groups and our mitigating actions.

The ability to sponsor international students depends on compliance with UK Visas and Immigration licencing arrangements. The University complies with all [UKVI requirements](#) and tracks the engagement of its sponsored students to ensure they continue to meet their visa requirements. We use our internal auditors to conduct periodic reviews of institutional compliance.

However, in the very unlikely event that the University was at risk of losing its licence, we would proactively work with affected students and applicants to minimise disruption, and we would work with UKVI to enable enrolled students to complete their studies.

If you are a Student route visa sponsored student, we would contact you to advise you whether you could continue your studies under existing sponsorship arrangements or advise you that alternative arrangements would need to be made. Where Student route visa regulations permit, the University would provide support to any affected students to enable you to transfer to an appropriate alternative programme with an alternative sponsor. It is anticipated that, only in extremely exceptional circumstances, would a student be required to return home to make a new visa application. The risks to students are therefore **very low**.

(n) The risk of significant staffing vacancies or issues

While individual members of staff may be unavailable for a time, or may leave the University, we design our Programmes to be taught, and our postgraduate researchers to be supervised, by integrated teams of academic staff so the risk that we will not be able to deliver a Programme or a particular component is **low**. We have robust procedures in place for the recruitment and replacement of teaching and research staff. While there may be inevitable gaps between academic staff members leaving and being replaced, we ensure that vacancies are identified and filled as soon as possible; where it is appropriate, we enable other employed subject experts to cover vacancies or use other experienced members of staff with the appropriate skills and experience to cover teaching sessions. Our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding any such changes with your School/Department in the first instance and refer you to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

These measures mean that the University is normally able to continue its delivery of programmes in the event of staff members leaving the University, consequently resulting in a **low** risk to the student experience.

(o) The risk of being unable to continue to supervise a PGR student

For PGR students, the Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees provides details of the steps that will be taken, and the available options, in the event that a supervisor leaves the University or if, for example, the relationship between you and your supervisor was unfortunately to breakdown. The options include identifying an alternative supervisor, transferring you to the supervisor's new institution, and the supervisor continuing as co-supervisor in their new institution. Where no appropriate alternative can be found at the University, we will support you in exploring options for continuing your research through registration at another higher education provider, e.g. by providing a list of institutions undertaking similar research. We will also consider whether sufficient research has been completed to enable you to submit your research for a lesser award and, where no other feasible options are available, it may be necessary to consider a termination of your registration. The Supervision Policy is accessible here: <https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=615>. The risks to PGR students are therefore **low**.

(p) The risk of changes to or the replacement or withdrawal of placements, fieldtrips and other in-programme activities

With the measures that we have in place, the impact on students in the event of changes to or the replacement or withdrawal of placements, fieldtrips and other in-programme activities is

expected to be **low**, even though the risk of these changes is **medium**. Some of our Programmes involve placements, fieldtrips, fieldwork and other in-programme activities. Information about these will be included in the Programme Information, Programme handbook and/or Programme webpages. For PGR students, fieldwork is individual to each student and will be discussed and planned with your supervisor throughout your Programme. We will do our best to deliver these in line with the information included in these sources (and, for PGR students, in accordance with the plan developed). However, it might become necessary for us to make changes – for example, because:

- of changes to the rules and guidance on travel and activities implemented and published by the UK and overseas governments;
- a risk assessment conducted by or on behalf of the University identifies unmanageable risk;
- changes would enhance the educational value and student experience of the activity;
- changes to the situation of a placement provider (for example, which cause them to be unable to accept students);
- of the unavailability of appropriate insurance cover;
- of the unavailability of appropriate travel and accommodation and any significant changes to their financial costs.

We will always seek to limit changes to those which are identified as being necessary, and where the proposed activity cannot proceed, we will do our best to offer a suitable alternative and ensure that the intended learning outcomes of the Programme are met. Where a trip or placement is a compulsory element of the Programme, it will be replaced with something academically similar. Where a trip or placement is not a compulsory element of the Programme, it may not be replaced. We will consult with affected students at the earliest possible opportunity and explore the options available to you (for example, alternative options, refund of costs where the necessary changes are significant, etc.). You will be referred to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if it has not been possible to resolve your issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

(q) The risk that an exceptional event disrupts the normal academic processes and procedures

With the measures that we have in place, the impact on students during exceptional events is expected to be **low**, even though the risk that an exceptional event disrupts the normal academic processes and procedures is medium. The University has a [Procedure for Protecting the Interests of Students and Postgraduate Researchers \(PGRs\)](#) during exceptional events. This specifies that the University will take all steps to protect the rights and interests of our students during any events such as industrial action or a global pandemic.

When this procedure is invoked, a University Examination Board (UEB) will be set up with overall authority and responsibility for all assessment and examination processes across the University. In particular, the UEB will have the authority to agree student outcomes in situations where the relevant procedures or parts of them have, in the judgement of the President and Vice-Chancellor, become unworkable (i.e. it is no longer possible to implement relevant procedures or parts of them due to the circumstances). The UEB will also have authority to agree all other matters relating to the progression of an award or non-award of degrees and other distinctions to students/PGRs who have been impacted by the exceptional event.

(r) The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our programmes

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our programmes is **low** because we design our units to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff. We offer both on campus and online/blended learning programmes to enable a wider range of choices to students. In the event that we are unable to deliver material components of our programmes, we will work with affected students to identify a suitable alternative. If affected students are not satisfied with the alternative arrangements, our usual approach is to invite students to raise any questions you may have regarding any such changes with your School/Department in the first instance and refer you to the [Student Complaints Procedure](#) if it has not been possible to resolve the issue and you wish to consider raising a formal complaint.

2. Information about the policy the University has in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that the University is no longer able to maintain continuation of study

The University has a policy on refunds available at:

<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=42808>.

The University has well established and publicly available Student Terms and Conditions (<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=74415>). Our Student Terms and Conditions are regularly reviewed, most recently in 2025.

We have policy and procedure in place for circumstances in which students withdraw from their studies (<http://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/finances/tuition-fees/payments/interruptions-and-withdrawals/>) and a student complaints procedure (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=1893>), which was last reviewed in February 2019.

3. Information about how the University will communicate with you about our student protection plan

This Student Protection Plan is approved by the University Executive. It will be reviewed and updated annually alongside our Student Terms and Conditions, with a comprehensive review conducted every 5 years.

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future applicants and students by amending our Student Terms and Conditions (<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=74415>) to include it and by publishing the Plan on the student portal My Manchester. Our Students' Union will also bring this plan to the attention of students through their usual communication channels.

Our Students' Union has been involved in the development of this Student Protection Plan via their membership of, and contributions to, the Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Group, and Planning and Resources Committee.

Student Protection Plan: Version amendment history

Version	Date	Reason for change
1.0	July 2018	Creation and approval by PRC.
1.1	October 2020	Updates to document relating to dates and statistics, web links, and providing more detail.
2.0	September 2025	Comprehensive review undertaken, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an easier to navigate format, with additional signposting throughout the document.• More student-friendly language, using plain, concise English wherever possible.• introduction of a risk likelihood for all risks.• An assessment of the impact to students after mitigation for all risks.• Updated data to support risk assessments, providing more detail.

Document control box

Policy / Procedure title:	Student Protection Plan
Date approved:	September 2025

Approving body:	University Executive
Implementation date:	September 2025
Version:	2.0
Supersedes:	Version 1.1, October 2020
Previous review dates:	October 2020, July 2018
Next review date:	2026
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	N/A
Related Policies:	Student Protection Plan – Policy on Refunds and Compensation
Related Procedures and Guidance:	The University's Quality Framework, including specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and review of educational provision
Policy owner:	Director of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact:	Teaching and Learning Officer (Policy and Procedure), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk