Student Protection Plan - Policy on Refunds and Compensation

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Effective From September 2026

Read this if:
You are a current student or applicant who has accepted an offer with the University to understand your rights and the University's commitments regarding tuition fees and other relevant costs in the rare event that your programme of study is threatened with closure or unexpected discontinuation.

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Definitions

Key terms

Continuation of study - For the purposes of this policy, continuation of study refers to the University's ability to deliver a programme of study, or ensure a programme is not oversubscribed.

Planned mid-programme withdrawal - when the University is able to plan and align the withdrawal of a programme of study with the end of an academic year. More information on withdrawal of a programme of study can be found in section c of the Student Protection Plan.

Student Protection Plan - the document that outlines the University's risk assessment of situations that could disrupt students' studies, such as the closure of a course, campus, or the institution itself.

Unexpected programme withdrawal - when an unforeseen risk to continuation of study occurs, and the University has no alternative but to withdraw a programme of study during the course of an academic year.

Unexpected withdrawal of a supervisor - when a supervisor unexpectedly leaves the University of Manchester during an academic year.

Acronyms

CMA - Competition and Markets Authority

OfS – Office for Students

OIA – Office of the Independent Adjudicator

PGR – Postgraduate Researcher

PGT – Postgraduate Taught

UG - Undergraduate

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 This policy explains how the University decides whether to refund tuition fees or other relevant costs (for example, mandatory programme related costs), or offer compensation, when it cannot support a student's continuation of study. The University's primary focus is on ensuring continuation of study and the University considers refunds and the payment of compensation to be a remedy of last resort.

1.1.2 This policy must be read alongside the Student Protection Plan. The University is committed to protecting the continuation of study for all students, and the University's Student Protection Plan sets out the arrangements in place to help ensure the achievement of that objective.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This policy applies where the University is unable to protect the continuation of study, or award a degree for one or more of the reasons specified in Appendix 1.[1]It does not apply to changes to programmes of study, where students have completed their programme of study, or where students choose to withdraw voluntarily from their programme of study.

1.2.2 The University's Student Finance team (part of the Division of Student and Academic Services) has responsibility for considering all other requests for the refund of tuition fees (for example, where a student takes a period of leave of absence or withdraws from their programme part way through the academic year), which will be considered in accordance with the University's guidance on interruptions/withdrawals, as well as guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). (See Section 10).

1.3 Applicability

1.3.1 The Student Protection Plan assesses the risks to the continuation of study for students to be low and, for that reason, coupled with the measures the University has in place to mitigate those risks, this policy is likely to apply in only very exceptional circumstances

[1] (these grounds reflect the details specified by the Office for Students (OfS) in its Regulatory Advice document 3 for details, please see section 10 of this document).

This policy applies to:

1.3.2 Individuals who have been offered, and have accepted, a place on a programme of study with the University; and

1.3.3 Registered students (including UG, PGT and PGR students) who have not completed their programme of study or received an award from the University.

2.0 Registered students: non-continuation of study

2.0.1 The University recognises three sets of circumstances that may lead to the non-continuation of study for registered students: planned mid-programme withdrawal; unexpected programme withdrawal; and unexpected withdrawal of a supervisor.

2.0.2 If a planned mid-programme withdrawal happens, the University will, when preparing its plan for dealing with the withdrawal, clearly consult and communicate with the students registered on the programme.

2.0.3 Where an unexpected programme withdrawal happens, the University will treat communication with the students registered on the programme as a priority.

2.0.4 Where an unexpected withdrawal of a supervisor on a research programme happens, every effort will be made to find a new supervisor with the appropriate academic background and supervisory experience. In exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to appoint a new supervisor. In this scenario, the University has no alternative but to discontinue the student during the course of an academic year. In such circumstances, the University will treat communication and consultation with the students registered on the programme as a priority.

2.1 University Procedure

As a minimum, the University will:

2.1.1 Ensure all students on the affected programme have the opportunity to receive the University award (for example, certificate or diploma), if they are entitled to one, that recognises the stage they have reached at the point at which the programme is withdrawn.

2.1.2 Provide all affected students with advice and support to help them decide whether to transfer to another programme at the University or, where possible, move to a suitable external provider to complete their studies (this may not be possible for

professionally accredited programmes).

2.1.3 Put in place the relevant 'Programme Withdrawal Plan' or 'Withdrawal of Supervisor Plan' that includes provision for a refund of tuition fees and compensation, where appropriate, applying the principles identified in sections 5 and 6.

2.1.4 Ensure that any student who is in receipt of a University-funded bursary / studentship or similar funding and who would have continued to receive that bursary/studentship or funding had the programme/supervisor not been withdrawn, receives the remainder of that bursary or funding whether they transfer to a different programme at the University or to an equivalent programme at an alternative provider.

2.1.5 For planned mid-programme withdrawals, in circumstances where a third party is providing the bursary/studentship, the University will make representations to the provider to ensure the student is not disadvantaged by the action of the University. If students are not satisfied with this, they can refer to the University Complaints process (see section 7.)

2.1.6 In circumstances where a student is in receipt of a Student Visa, ensure conditions are adhered to and that the student receives support and advice regarding their immigration status.

2.1.7 The University will ensure student wellbeing is prioritised with transparent and compassionate communications and wellbeing support. This will include tailored approaches for students with additional learning needs and those with disclosed disabilities, particularly mental health disabilities in line with best practice guidance published by the OIA: Putting students first: Managing the impact of higher education provider closure - OIAHE

3.0 Offer holders: programme withdrawal and oversubscribed programmes

3.0.1 The University may be required to withdraw programmes to offer holders in particular circumstances, including where it has failed to recruit sufficiently. Refunds will not be given as fees would not yet have been paid to the University.

3.0.2 In the event of a programme being withdrawn, the University will communicate with offer holders who have been offered or who have accepted a place on the

programme, to offer advice and support to help them decide whether or not to apply for a different programme at the University or seek a suitable alternative at another institution.

3.0.3 If a taught programme is withdrawn after the 30th of June in any recruitment cycle, the University may compensate for evidenced expenses relating to attempts to find a suitable programme at another institution, up to the end of September in the same academic year, applying the principles in section 5.

3.0.4 If a research programme is withdrawn less than 8 weeks before the start date in any recruitment cycle, the University may compensate for evidenced expenses relating to attempts to find a suitable programme at another institution, up to the end of the month the programme was due to start in the same academic year, applying the principles in section 5.

3.0.5 In the rare event that an applicant has accepted an offer with the University and the University is then not able to accommodate them on their programme (this will usually only happen if there is a UK Government or Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body imposed limit on numbers), the University will provide support and advice to the applicant to help them to either defer their place to a later year, join a different programme with the University, or find a place on a similar programme with another higher education provider. The University will also consider paying financial recompense depending on the options the applicant chooses, for example paying evidenced expenses for finding a suitable course at another institution. In doing so, the University will apply the principles in section 5 of this document.

4.0 Policy on refunds of tuition fees and other relevant costs

4.0.1 In the event that the University is unable to protect the continuation of study for students at the end of an academic year (i.e. a planned mid-programme withdrawal), then the University will **not** normally refund any tuition fees previously paid by or on behalf of students on the basis that the University will ensure continuity through the transfer of credits/research within the University or to an appropriate alternative provider.

4.0.2 In the event that the University is unable to protect the continuation of study for students during the course of an academic year (i.e. an unexpected programme withdrawal or a supervisor leaving) and is unable to offer arrangements at the University or with an appropriate alternative provider to preserve continuity of study,

then the University **will** refund in full tuition fees paid in respect of that academic year. This applies to all categories of students listed below, subject to the conditions set out in 7.0.1:

- Students in receipt of a tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company;
- Students who pay their own tuition fees; and
- Students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor (depending on the terms and conditions of the sponsor).

5.0 Policy on payment of compensation

5.0.1 When applying this policy, the University may require students to provide written evidence (for example, financial statements, travel receipts) in support of any costs or losses they may have incurred. The University is responsible for identifying and supporting students who may need particular assistance with this process. The Students' Union advice centre can also provide additional support to students during this process.

5.0.2 When deciding whether to provide financial compensation, and the amount to compensate, in cases where the University cannot support a student's continuation of study, the University will consider each situation individually, considering:

- The particular circumstances of the matter;
- The nature and reasonableness of the loss which the student has incurred, and any steps taken to mitigate such loss; and
- The context in which the loss arises.

5.0.3 Losses experienced by the student may include reasonable travel, maintenance and/or tuition fee costs associated with a student's transfer to another programme of study or provider and/or any losses associated with lost time. The University will consider relevant guidance published by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education when considering its approach to the payment of compensation in individual cases.

6.0 Complaints regarding the University's approach to the provision of refunds and/or compensation

6.0.1 Should a registered student wish to challenge the University's approach to the provision of refunds or other relevant costs and/or compensation under this policy, they may raise a complaint under the formal stage of the University's Student

Complaints Procedure (Regulation XVIII). The Student Complaints Procedure outlines the steps which should be taken to raise a complaint and the timescales in which complaints should be raised.

6.0.2 Where more than one student raises such a challenge arising from the same or a similar set of circumstances, then the University may, where appropriate, consider those challenges together.

6.0.3 Offer holders who wish to challenge the University's approach to the provision of refunds or other relevant costs and/or compensation under this policy may raise a complaint via the Applicant Complaints Procedure.

7.0 Payments made under this policy

7.0.1 Tuition fees will only be refunded to the original payee using the method by which the payment was received. This will apply whether the student is self-funded, sponsored by a third party or is in receipt of a tuition fee loan.

7.0.2 All other compensation payments will be made directly to the registered student or offer holders.

8.0 Monitoring and Compliance

8.0.1 This policy is linked to the University's Student Protection Plan and forms an important part of the University's Terms and Conditions. It will be reviewed alongside those documents.

8.0.2 Adherence to this document is expected and should be monitored by Heads of Schools (or their delegates) as part of a wider quality assurance process which supports the Annual Academic Assurance Process including, Schools, Faculties, Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, the Academic Quality Sub-Committee for Teaching, Learning and Students, and Senate.

9.0 Supporting documents and sources of support

9.0.1 This policy was developed with reference to:

- OIA Guidance on Putting Things Right
- OfS Guidance: Home - Office for Students:
    - Regulatory advice 3: Registration of English higher education providers with the OfS

    - Protecting students as consumers
- Consumer Rights Act 2015 - GOV.UK
- Higher Education and Research Act 2017
- The CMA UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law:
- OIA Putting Students First: Managing the impact of higher education provider closure

9.0.2 Other relevant University documents include:

- Interruptions Procedure for PGR Students:
- Policy on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study
- Programme Withdrawal and Suspension Guidance (The University of Manchester)
- Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance

Appendix 1: Schedule

Risks to the Continuation of Study for Students

- The University as a whole is no longer able to operate or has decided to cease operating.
- The University has lost the power to award degrees or has lost validation for one or more of its programmes
- The University is, or expects to be, operating with probationary degree awarding powers.
- One or more of the locations at which the University delivers programmes to students is no longer available, particularly if the University is considering closure or significant change to a location.
- The University is no longer able to deliver programmes to students in one or more subject areas and/or departments.
- The University is no longer able to deliver one or more programmes to students, particularly if the University is considering programme closures in the next three years.
- The University is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more programmes, particularly if there are areas of particular vulnerability, such as single person dependencies for teaching.
- The University is no longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to students, particularly if the University is considering withdrawing a mode of study.
- The University is no longer able to recruit or teach a particular type of student, such as international students.

Version amendment history box and Document control box

Version amendment history: Policy on Refunds and Compensation		
Version	**Date**	**Reason for change**
1.0	April 2019	Creation and approval by Senate
1.1	October 2023	Review and updates in conjunction with TLSIG and the legal team.
1.2	June 2026	Review and updates as part of Category B annual review cycle 25/26. Minor updates including: • Restructure and transfer to student friendly template • Reference to OIA best practice in identifying students who may need further support with this policy

Document control box	
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Next review date:	June 2031
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Regulation XVII Student Complaints Procedure
Related Policies:	N/A
Related Procedures and Guidance:	Student Protection Plan
B Conditions Met:	B1; B2; B3; B4; B5; B6; B7; B8
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