

The University of Manchester: Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: The University of Manchester

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Student protection plan for the period 2020-2025

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

Institutional closure

The University of Manchester is a world-leading institution and a member of the UK's prestigious Russell Group, with in excess of 26,000 undergraduate students, 9,000 postgraduate taught students and 4,000 postgraduate research students. We are ranked 33rd in the world, eighth in Europe and sixth in the UK in the 2019 Academic Ranking of World Universities. We are also ranked seventh in Europe in the 2018 Reuters Top 100 Most Innovative Universities.

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 OfS registration. However, the risk that the University as a whole is unable to operate is considered extremely unlikely because of our long history, global reputation, policies and procedures in place. Our response to the recent COVID pandemic has provided additional assurance as to our resilience and our financial performance is in a healthy and sustainable position as evidenced in our publicly available financial statements:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=46451>, and as monitored by HEFCE.

Programme of Study (Course) closure

There are times when the University decides to withdraw applications to a programme in response to changes in market demand.

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.

Location or mode of study closures

The University has a number of 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.

We offer some specialised programmes in collaboration with other universities (e.g. architecture) but we have assessed the risk to the continuation of such programmes as low.

A number of our programmes are accredited by professional and statutory bodies (e.g. medicine, engineering) but we have assessed the risk to the continuation of such programmes as low.

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.

Being unable to recruit or teach a particular type of student

The University delivers programmes of study to a wide variety of students, including home and international, mature learners, those from widening participation groups and students studying full or part-time, on campus or at a distance. The risk of being unable to continue to recruit or teach any of these types of student is deemed to be low, due to the policies and procedures in place.

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

Institutional closure

We are satisfied that measures are not required here given our analysis in Section 1.

Programmes (Course) closure

Where the University decides to close applications to a programme, our existing procedure requires that the programme continues to be taught to existing students until such a time that they complete the programme. Student consultation and ratification by Senate are required as part of this.

Feedback indicates that these arrangements for 'teach out' are effective.

In the event that a student's programme of study is closing and teach out arrangements are not appropriate, we will seek to support the student/s in question to transfer to a comparable programme at another institution with broadly similar entry tariffs. Alternatively, there may be opportunities for the student/s to switch to another course at our institution if this meets their needs. In both cases, this would be subject to normal entry requirements, the capacity of the receiving programme to accept more students, and to consultation with students.

- Amalgamation or closure of schools or departments

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

- Staffing vacancies or issues

The University has robust procedures in place for the recruitment and replacement of teaching 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.

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

Location or mode of study closures

The leasing of premises utilised by our international centres is subject to tightly controlled and regularly reviewed contractual arrangements. We also have University staff employed in each of the centres. In the unlikely event that the premises became unusable or unavailable in a particular country then we would source alternative space. 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.

Similarly, 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 then the 'teach out' arrangements described above apply.

Our professional body accredited 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 or to decide to withdraw an accredited programme, then the 'teach out' arrangements described above would apply.

The University also has procedures 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.

In particular, we will work to allow students on undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes to continue their programme of study, in the standard timeframe, as far as possible.

Being unable to recruit or teach a particular type of student

There are no concerns about the ability to continue to recruit or be able to teach students from a particular group, including home/international, mature, from a widening participation background, etc.

The University complies with UKVI requirement and tracks the engagement of its sponsored students to ensure they continue to meet their visa requirements. However, if 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 the UKVI to enable enrolled students to complete their studies. Student route visa sponsored students would be contacted to advise them whether they could continue their studies under existing sponsorship arrangements or advise them 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 them to transfer to an alternative appropriate programme with an alternative sponsor. It is envisaged that, only in extremely exceptional circumstances, would a student be required to return home to make a new visa application.

Summary

We are not currently tracking an increased level of risk that is likely to crystallise anywhere across our programmes/locations/student cohorts that would merit additional mitigating actions above those mentioned. This will be kept under regular review by appropriate governance.

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 University has well established and publicly available Student Terms and Conditions (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=11173>). Our Student Terms and Conditions are regularly reviewed, most recently in 2020.

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.

Any refunds or compensation offered would initially be paid from operating budgets in year. If the refunds were of a magnitude that could not be absorbed by in year budgets (and associated offsetting savings elsewhere) and/or if they were considered of an exceptional nature from an accounting perspective, they could be paid for from reserves (see Financial Statements for details).

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

This Student Protection Plan is approved, and will be reviewed on a five-year cycle, by the Planning and Resources Committee.

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future applicants and students by amending our Student Terms and Conditions (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=11173>) to include it and by publishing the Plan on the student portal My Manchester.

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 Group, Manchester Doctoral College Committee, 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.

Document control box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Student Protection Plan
Date approved:	October 2020
Approving body:	PRC
Implementation date:	October 2020
Version:	1.1
Supersedes:	Version 1.0, July 2018
Previous review dates:	July 2018
Next review date:	2025
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 Manager (Policies and Degree Apprenticeships), Teaching and Learning Delivery, Division of SAS <i>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</i>