

Provider's name: University of Surrey

Provider's UKPRN:

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## **Student protection plan for the period 2018/19**

### **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**

The risk that the University is unable to continue teaching existing students is low. Our latest *financial statements* show cash generated from operational activities of £27.4m, and we maintain robust processes to determine the use of cash with clear thresholds and sign-off procedures by the Executive Board, Finance Committee and University Council. In 2016 the University secured a £120m private placement which is ring-fenced to fund strategic and transformational spend. Additionally, the University has robust risk management processes in place that operate in accordance with national requirements for HE, supported by a suite of business continuity plans to deal with a wide range of circumstances.

The risk that the University's Tier 4 Sponsor Licence is suspended or revoked would impact on all international students. However this risk is very low because the University recently commissioned an audit by a firm of immigration lawyers to help us to ensure ongoing compliance and best practice. The audit concluded that whilst there were a small number of areas that needed addressing, it was clear that the University had taken a number of steps towards significantly strengthening this area. The audit also noted that if the University continued to strengthen its approach to sponsorship across the areas that were highlighted in the audit report, it should help it to both protect its sponsor licences and ensure that it has a good chance of being regarded by the Home Office as being amongst the most compliant sponsors. The University has an action plan which is addressing the small number of weaknesses.

There may be specific circumstances in which programmes and modules are materially changed, withdrawn, suspended or are partially delivered. These circumstances include but are not limited to:

- the outcomes of the University's periodic review of its academic portfolio as part of good governance and strategic planning processes
- the loss of accreditation by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB)
- industrial action
- disruption caused by flood, fire or other disaster
- the unanticipated departure of members of staff

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

Where the University is unable to deliver a programme or modules either temporarily or permanently for reasons outside our control, then the University's relevant business continuity plan will be put into action.

The University will mitigate the risk of losing accreditation by a PSRB by a process of thorough preparation for accreditation events that utilises where appropriate external experts in the discipline.

If programmes or modules are to be materially changed, withdrawn or suspended as a result of a periodic review, the process will be carried out in accordance with the relevant procedures which specify timescales and consultation with and notification of affected students (see the *Code of practice for programme and module modification* and the *Code of practice for programme suspension and withdrawal*).

An escalating series of measures will be put in place in order to mitigate the risks as follows:

- new staff will be recruited where programmes or modules are at risk of withdrawal due to lack of appropriate staff expertise
- programmes to be withdrawn will be taught-out for existing students and closed to new students
- where programmes are to be withdrawn and teach-out arrangements are not possible students will be offered the opportunity to transfer to another programme at the University subject to normal entry requirements and the capacity of the receiving programme to accept more students
- where the above is not possible, students will be supported to transfer to another institution subject to normal entry requirements and the capacity of the receiving programme to accept more students. The University is currently negotiating with a number of institutions of similar academic profile within in the region to establish a memorandum of understanding that will facilitate such transfers.

### **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's *Student fee and debt management policy* makes provision for the refund of tuition fees where appropriate. The University's *Procedures for complaints* allows for a remedy to be offered at the various stages of the complaint process which can include financial compensation. Policies and procedures are subject to regular review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and take account of changes in national regulatory requirements.

The University maintains detailed cash flow forecasts which include a buffer to allow for variation in the cash cycle as well as unforeseen circumstances. This, combined with appropriate insurance arrangements for business disruption are sufficient to provide any refunds and compensation if necessary.

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

The University's Student Protection Plan will be made available to prospective and current students on the University's *external facing web pages*. Additionally it will be drawn to the attention of prospective students in Contract 1 issued at offer stage and in Contract 2 issued at acceptance stage.

Staff will be made aware of the implications of the Student Protection Plan via reference in the University's *Code of practice for programme and module modification* and the *Code of practice for programme suspension and withdrawal*. Programme and module modifications and requests for suspension and withdrawal are processed via an automated on-line system which will flag when proposed actions could require invocation of the Plan.

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed via the University's management and governance structures, the latter of which include student members at all layers.

The *Code of practice for programme and module modification* requires that consultation should take place with students prior to any material change to their programme. The method used to collect this information is required to be documented as part of the modification approval process. All modifications are considered and approved at Boards of Studies meetings which include student representatives. In addition students can also be consulted or kept informed through other means such as Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings. Material changes to a programme are introduced at the beginning of an academic year, unless there are exceptional circumstances outside of our reasonable control which make this unavoidable, and so students will be aware before the end of the academic year of any changes to be introduced for the following year.

If material changes to be introduced will affect prospective students then the on-line system will flag up the need to contact applicants to inform them of such changes.

If the University needs to implement the measures in our Student Protection Plan students will be supported collectively and individually via a range of measures. This will include initial discussion within their local department and, information and advice from professional service areas such as student support, money advice, wellbeing, careers and employability, accommodation.

The *Student Union* provide independent advice for all students on any matter relating to their experience at the University.