

# UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

## STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN 2023-2024

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 What is this document for?

- 1.1.1 A Student Protection Plan is a document that outlines what the University will do if a situation arises that risks the continuation of students' studies such as if the course, campus or institution should close. The higher education regulator, the Office for Students, requires every higher education provider to publish a Student Protection Plan. The Student Protection Plan applies to applicants and current students on a programme of study at University of East London.
- 1.1.2 The University of East London as a registered provider of higher education is committed to ensuring that our students access the transformational outcomes of higher education. We have put this document in place to explain to students how we will protect them to ensure that they can continue and complete their studies or compensate them should unforeseen circumstances arise, as required by the Office for Students.
- 1.1.3 If a situation arises which is likely to trigger the Student Protection Plan, we will:
- be transparent about the likelihood of a trigger situation arising;
  - inform the Students' Union;
  - work with the Students' Union to consult with affected students in good time to gain a better understanding of how the proposed changes could affect them and what solutions are appropriate;
  - fully consider the impact on affected students before coming to any decision to make a significant change;
  - make every effort to ensure that students can continue their studies with us or at a suitable alternative provider;
  - provide a refund or compensation if we are unable to provide a solution that works for students (refunds of fees would be paid to the original payer, e.g., Student Finance England).

## 2 Mitigation of Risk

### 2.1 How we mitigate against a risk

- 2.1.1 At UEL, we adopt a risk-based approach to managing many aspects of our business. This risk-based approach is managed via an institutional risk register overseen by the University Executive Board and the Board of Governors. Risk management is a key part of our strategic planning framework. We are continuing to implement the strategic objectives within our Vision 2028. Each business unit produces an annual plan and is required to predict, mitigate and monitor risks associated with all aspects of delivery. Key risks identified out of this process are recorded in a top-level risk register, which is reported to our Audit & Risk Committee and our Board of Governors.
- 2.1.2 UEL also operates a business continuity plan, which outlines what we would do in potentially high-risk situations. In addition to our risk register and business continuity plan, UEL reports its financial performance to our regulatory body on an annual basis and have regularly shown that we meet the regulatory requirements in this regard.
- 2.1.3 The strategic plans, risk register, and business continuity plans are reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and issues which would adversely impact on the student experience are considered in these updates. This enables us to change a course of action to provide extra mitigation against specific issues where the likelihood or impact of the risk has grown.
- 2.1.4 Student representatives are amongst the elected members of our Board of Governors, and therefore central to our decision making, and support our work in monitoring and updating of the risk register.

### **3 Types of risk covered by this Student Protection Plan**

#### **3.1 What happens the University closes or has its degree awarding powers revoked?**

3.1.1 We do not foresee a situation where the University would close, particularly from an unplanned event. We similarly do not expect a situation where the University would have its awarding powers revoked. We robustly manage the various risks via our planning process and risk register. We can take action to mitigate against circumstances which might cause possible issues with our sustainability and the quality of the provision we offer. We manage our financial position to ensure continued solvency and have always met legal requirements to publish annual audited financial statements. We regularly review our governance and processes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. This includes the processes that underpin the quality and academic standards of our degrees.

3.1.2 In the unlikely event that the University has to close or has its degree awarding powers revoked, we will make every effort to ensure students can continue their studies at the University ('teach out'). If this is not possible, we will support students to transfer to another provider in London or other acceptable location and we will liaise closely with such providers to help students' transition. If this cannot be achieved, we will refund students' tuition fees. If necessary, and as appropriate, we would provide affected students with exit awards and certification relating to their period of study at the University, and assured access to evidence of their academic achievements in the future.

#### **3.2 What happens if a campus is closed or relocated?**

3.2.1 We currently have no plans to close any campus. If a natural disaster or a major event outside of our control occurs that results in us having to temporarily close a campus, we will make alternative arrangements to minimise disruption to students and their studies.



- 3.2.2 If there is a strategic decision to permanently change, or substantially alter, the location of delivery for a course, we will consult with students to assess the impact on them. Moving between the two Stratford campus sites is not regarded as a trigger event. If a move from a Stratford site to Docklands or vice versa results in students incurring additional expenses relating to travel, accommodation or study materials, we will cover these expenses on a case-by-case basis through our refund and compensation policy.
- 3.2.3 In any situation resulting in a move from Stratford to Docklands or vice versa, we will conduct an early equality impact assessment to ensure the needs of different groups of students are considered and that students are not directly or indirectly discriminated against.

### **3.3 What if a course, or a particular mode of delivery of a course is discontinued?**

- 3.3.1 From time to time, we must decide if it is viable to continue to run a course, or a course in a particular mode of delivery. This could be due to low student numbers, poor outcomes or negative feedback. We continually review our portfolio of courses in order to monitor their performance and minimise any risks, and use this process to identify when the likelihood of a strategically planned course closure is high.
- 3.3.2 If a course closure is proposed, it is discussed at course committees, and we ensure that all affected students are consulted. If we decide to close a course, we continue to run the course for the original duration plus one year. During this period, we do not accept new students on to the course. The 'teach out' process is closely monitored to ensure any negative impact on students remaining on the course is minimised and their experience is not negatively affected.
- 3.3.3 If a high-quality student experience cannot be guaranteed during teach out, we discuss with students options such as transferring to another course at the University or at an alternative provider. If necessary, and as appropriate, we provide affected students with exit awards and certification relating to



their period of study at the University, and assured access to evidence of their academic achievements in the future.

- 3.3.4 Any decision to close a course is made prior to the relevant UCAS deadline to accept offers, to minimise the impact on applicants. In the event of any offers being made prior to the decision to close the course, we immediately contact applicants to explain the situation and provide advice and guidance on alternative options.

### **3.4 What happens if a course changes substantially?**

- 3.4.1 All courses are reviewed regularly to enable them to be updated and support continuous improvement. Changes which amount to less than 25% of the course content do not necessitate re-validation and are thus not regarded as trigger events.
- 3.4.2 If substantial changes are made to a course, it will be treated in the same manner as a course that is discontinued.

### **3.5 What happens if Government emergency regulations restrict access to study on-campus (e.g., in response to a health pandemic)?**

- 3.5.1 The University has well-established arrangements which provide for safe continuation of study and support for students, through a mix of face-to-face teaching where possible and online resources. We would continue to involve our Students' Union in developing the University's strategy for managing any future study restrictions and would discuss the implications for individual courses with the students concerned.

### **3.6 What happens if a course loses its professional, statutory or regulatory body accreditation?**

- 3.6.1 University of East London has a strong record of delivering courses that are regulated by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. These are external organisations that prescribe the way in which we deliver, assess and managed courses to meet specific competencies to practice. If a course



loses its professional, regulatory or statutory body accreditation, we will discuss options with affected students. These options may include transferring to another course in the University or supporting students to transfer to another institution that holds the relevant course accreditation.

### **3.7 What happens if the University loses its Student Visa licence?**

- 3.7.1 The Student Visa licence is granted by the UK Home Office Government Department to permit us to recruit and register students from outside the UK. Maintaining this licence requires the University to comply with a set of Home Office regulations. We regularly review our data and processes to ensure continued compliance with these regulations.
- 3.7.2 The University has mechanisms in place to carefully monitor activities relating to our Student Visa licence and we are therefore able to address any potential issues before they become significant concerns. While we do not foresee a situation where we would lose our Student Visa licence, we do recognise that there is a small possibility that this could happen.
- 3.7.3 If the University were to have its Student Visa licence revoked, current students may be able to continue to study with us for 6 months or until the end of the academic year. If students are not able to complete their course within this timeframe, we will discuss other options including transferring to a similar course at an alternative provider. If this is not possible, we will refund tuition fees and cover additional expenses on a case-by-case basis through our refund and compensation policy.

### **3.8 What happens if there is industrial action or staff absence?**

- 3.8.1 If staff are unavailable due to illness, industrial action or other reasons, we will make every effort to minimise the disruption to students and we will take reasonable steps to ensure learning opportunities are not missed. We will ensure that we provide suitable alternative learning opportunities for students to meet their course learning outcome.





3.8.2 If a member of staff were to leave the University or to take long term sick leave, we will make every effort to find suitable replacement staff to minimize the disruption to students. If this is not possible, we will discuss other options including transferring to an alternative course at the University or at an alternative provider.

3.8.3 If a PhD candidate's supervisor is likely to be absent for a significant period, we will make every effort to allocate a suitable alternative supervisor. If this is not possible, we will discuss other options including supporting affected students to transfer to an alternative provider. If this happens, we will refund tuition fees and cover additional expenses on a case-by-case basis through our refund and compensation policy.

### **3.9 What happens if services, resources or supports essential to study are permanently or temporarily unavailable?**

3.9.1 We understand that students require a wide range of resources and support to study effectively. These include buildings, library and learning resources, IT services, academic services, student support and other facilities.

3.9.2 Our business continuity plan outlines what we will do if there is a risk to buildings or services. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that students can access services at suitable nearby locations. Such locations may be on the same campus, a different campus or off campus. If this results in students incurring additional expenses relating to travel, accommodation or study materials, we will cover these expenses on a case-by-case basis through our refund and compensation policy.

### **3.10 What about students studying at one of the University's collaborative partners?**

3.10.1 The University considers students studying under collaborative arrangements at our partner institutions to be our own students. Therefore, we will make all reasonable efforts to protect these students in the same way that we would for students studying locally.



### **3.11 What about students studying on an apprenticeship course**

3.11.1 The University considers students studying on an apprenticeship (including under collaborative arrangements at our partner institutions) to be our own students. Therefore, we will make all reasonable efforts to protect these students in the same way that we would for students studying non-apprenticeships courses.

3.11.2 In order to deliver apprenticeship programmes we must meet the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) requirements, including mapping these programmes' delivery against the apprenticeship standards.

### **3.12 What about students on placements as part of their course?**

3.12.1 Some UEL courses include a requirement for students to complete a placement during their period of study. The University considers students undertaking these placements to be a UEL student during the duration of their placement and will make all reasonable efforts to protect these students in the same way that we would as when they are completing other aspects of their course.

3.12.2 The locations of each placement are communicated to students, and these are typically in the London region or as agreed in line with the requirements of the course.

3.12.3 Where placement providers are not part of UEL, the actions or lack of actions, or withdrawal of availability of those placement providers may be beyond UEL's reasonable control. In the event that a placement provider withdraws or is unable to provide a placement we will take reasonable steps to minimise the impact to any students affected and will seek an alternative placement opportunity where possible.

## 4 Complaints

### 4.1 What can students do if they do not agree with the proposed solutions?

- 4.1.1 We will make all reasonable efforts to resolve any issues arising from a trigger event under this Student Protection Plan. However, students are able to make a complaint if unhappy with the solution implemented after a trigger event.
- 4.1.2 The Students' Union can provide independent advice on complaints.
- 4.1.3 The University has a [complaints procedure](#) available for students.
- 4.1.4 Students can also access support from our [Student Wellbeing Service](#).

## 5 Communicating this plan

### 5.1 How will students be notified about this plan?

- 5.1.1 The Student Protection Plan will be highlighted to students throughout their student journey via the following means:
- as part of the enrolment/re-enrolment process;
  - circulated annually via a student newsletter; and
  - our website and student intranet.
- 5.1.2 If any event arose within our control where we could no longer deliver a degree course, we would provide students with a notice period. This notice period would be dependent on the specific circumstances of the course closure, but we would endeavor to manage any course closure in a timely manner. As outlined in this plan, we would take reasonable steps to provide a notice period that enables students to complete their studies or transfer to a suitable alternative course at UEL or at an alternative institution.
- 5.1.3 If a trigger event happens or is likely to happen, affected students will be contacted either individually or as a group, depending on the nature of the trigger event.

## **6 Review**

### **6.1 Reviewing this Plan**

- 6.1.1 35. We will review this plan annually with the Students' Union and the Office for Institutional Equity.