

# STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

Provider's name: University of Reading

Provider's UKPRN: 10007802

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## INTRODUCTION

### What this Student Protection Plan is for

This Student Protection Plan sets out what measures we have in place to protect you as our students in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies should arise. The type of event or changes, which might cause such a risk, are also detailed below.

This plan has been approved by our regulator, the Office for Students, and is available to all current and potential students.

The measures contained in this plan are in addition to the protections you have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on your consumer rights.

**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 of Reading is unable to operate is very low. The University is long established, having received its Royal Charter in 1926, and is financially secure, with a strong asset base and effective structures and processes for financial management. It has consistently received the highest possible judgement on its financial security from HEFCE. It has an ongoing, affordable plan for reinvestment in buildings. The financial risk that the University as a whole is unable to operate is very low because:

- We have generated £70.3m of surpluses (reported under FRS102) in the three financial years to 31st July 2017.
- At 31st July 2017 the University had total net assets of £411m and cash/current investments totalling £83m.
- The University has a rolling three year financial plan at all times.
- The University has a ten year cashflow model and proposal capital programme at all times. The current version shows a total of £450m of cash being generated from operating activities in the next ten years supplemented by £152m of cash from asset sales (net of any costs), with a closing cash balance of £226m after all currently approved capital projects are delivered.
- The University currently has access to a £50m revolving credit facility that is currently unused.
- The University had a clean external audit opinion in 2016/17 and prior years.

The University has business continuity plans to deal with a range of contingencies. The University has consistently delivered high quality education, fully satisfying the quality requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE).

The risk that the University closes a programme prior to completion by the last cohort of students is very low. The University has a consistent track record of ensuring continuation of study for its students. The University normally 'teaches out' its programmes (i.e. continues to deliver the programme until the last cohort has completed), and, in the few cases where it has not been possible to do so, the University ensured continuation of studies in other ways.

The risk that a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body withdraws its accreditation is low given the University's track record in meeting the requirements of such bodies and its actions to address any recommendations or conditions.

The University offers a number of programmes outwith the United Kingdom, whether on the university's own campuses or in collaboration with partners. These programmes are subject to the continuing approval of the relevant national jurisdiction and to the continuation of the arrangement with the relevant partner. Due to these factors, there is naturally a higher risk to continuation of study. Students on such programmes may be unable to transfer to other locations and there may not be an equivalent programme available within their region or country. The University has, however, an established record of enabling students to complete their programme, either through 'teaching out' the programme in collaboration with the partner or, in the case of blended learning programmes, by supporting students directly from the UK. The risk that we are no

longer able to deliver core components within our programmes is low because the University takes the necessary steps to ensure that such core components can be taught.

In relation to doctoral students, the University ensures continuity of study by appointing two supervisors for each student, and, in the event that necessary expertise central to the research is no longer available within the University, the University appoints an external supervisor to complement the internal supervision.

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

If a programme on an overseas campus or delivered in collaboration with an international partner were no longer able to operate, we would seek to ensure the continuation of study by teaching out a programme, subject to the availability of appropriate staff and the feasibility of maintaining a high quality student experience, or by facilitating the transfer of students to other providers in-country. If such arrangements were not feasible, we would support students to transfer to an alternative in-country provider, if possible, or arrange the transfer of the student to the equivalent programme in the UK. In doing so, we would ensure equitable provision across our diverse student body and would have particular regard to students with protected characteristics.

**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***

## **REFUND AND COMPENSATION POLICY**

The University will make refunds in line with any stipulations from external bodies such as the Student Loans Company, and in line with any contractual obligations into which it has entered with its students. It will follow this principle for all of its students, having due regard to how each student's fees are paid. If a student wishes to request a refund, they should contact the relevant student support centre in the first instance. The University will where it is unable to offer a programme or compulsory part of a programme, and where it deems it impossible to provide an alternative satisfactory educational alternative, consider refunds on a case by case basis.

If through decisions made by the University, any students had a significant change to their location for where their education was provided, the University would pay for reasonable additional travel or, if the instance justified it, relocation costs.

If in the highly unlikely event that the University chose to close a programme, department or campus, or to cease a particular mode of delivery, and decided not to teach out all of the affected students, it would transfer student bursaries if students transferred elsewhere, and would meet reasonable costs of students seeking alternative educational provision.

The University considers compensation as part of its complaints process. It is informed by how it deals with compensation matters by the advice and guidance issued by the OIA.

The University will, if it considers that there has been a material interruption in study for any student caused by a matter for which it is responsible, and if it exceptionally considers that there cannot be an adequate way of providing any missed learning at a later date, or that assessment cannot be fairly adjusted to compensate for that material interruption, or that consideration of academic performance cannot be properly exercised without that material interruption having been met, provide compensation on a case by case basis, having due regard to advice and guidance from the OIA.

The University can deliver the financial implications of its refund and compensation policy because of its financial strength, as detailed in section 1 of the Student Protection Plan.

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

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by publishing a copy on the website (with an archive of previous versions applicable to the year of entry to the programme of all current students), by providing a link to the plan(s) in the prospectus (print and online versions) and on the website directed at current students, and by providing a copy in a durable format with offer letters.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose course changes by providing relevant information in the Programme Life Cycle Policy, which includes a requirement that Schools proposing withdrawal of a programme specify arrangements for protecting the interests of current students and offer-holders.

Sabbatical officers of the Students' Union will participate in the consideration and eventual approval of the draft Student Protection Plan through consultation and the committee approval process. Sabbatical officers are members of the University Board for Teaching and Learning and the Council, and both sabbatical officers and students are members of the Senate. They will be involved in subsequent reviews of the student

protection plan both through the group tasked with reviewing the plan and through the committee approval process.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course by writing to them and subsequently by discussing any issues and supporting them in making any decisions which they may need to make.

We will give students a minimum 120 days' notice if we need to make changes to their programme which affect the continuity of their study on the programme or which involve the withdrawal of compulsory modules in the programme. (Optional modules for which teaching has not yet begun may be withdrawn without notice.)

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will support students collectively and individually by ensuring that they are fully informed of the situation, engaging them in discussion of the relevant issues (including academic and personal dimensions), and providing academic and professional advice and guidance to inform their consideration and decision-making.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan, we will ensure that our students have access to independent advice through Reading University Students Union and/or the relevant student association at branch campuses.

1 May 2018