

# STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

Provider's name: **University of Reading**

Provider's UKPRN: **10007802**

Legal address: **Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AH.**

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/>

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Alexandra Slater, Interim Director of Student Experience and Education

## **Introduction: What this Student Protection Plan is for**

This Student Protection Plan sets out what measures the University has in place to protect its students in the event that a risk to the continuation of their 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 students have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on their consumer rights.

- 1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students, how those risks may differ based on 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 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 an ongoing, affordable plan for reinvestment into its estate and infrastructure. The financial risk that the University as a whole is unable to operate is very low because:

- The University holds substantial investment assets, including unrestricted assets that could be called on if needed.
- 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 University has access to a £50m revolving credit facility, which we can use when needed.

- The University has always been given a clean external audit opinion.

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 Office for Students.

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 out of 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 the University has put in place to mitigate risks that are considered 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 the University has in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that it is no longer able to preserve continuation of study.**

## **REFUND AND COMPENSATION POLICY**

The University will make refunds it is legally required to make following demands from external bodies such as the Student Loans Company or its regulators, in line with any contractual obligations into which it has entered with its students and to those it deems reasonable to refund following its internal processes. 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 the physical 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 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 the University will communicate with students about this 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.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of this 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 Reading Students' Union will participate in the consideration and eventual approval of each update to the Student Protection Plan through the committee approval process. Sabbatical officers are members of the University Board for Teaching Learning and Student Experience and the Council, and both sabbatical officers and students are members of the Senate. Input will be sought from the President of Reading Students' Union as part of each review.

We will inform 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 that affect the continuity of their study on the programme. We will give students as much notice as possible of changes to their programmes that 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 this student protection plan, we will support students collectively and individually by ensuring that they are fully informed of the situation, appropriately 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 this student protection plan, we will ensure that our students have access to independent advice through Reading Students' Union and/or the relevant student association at branch campuses.

## VERSION CONTROL

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	Student Experience and Education directorate	Every 3 years	UBTLSE	2021
1.1	Student Experience and Education directorate	Every 3 years	UBTLSE	20/01/2025