

## Student Protection Plan 2020-21

### What is a Student Protection Plan?

A Student Protection Plan sets out how a university protects its students, and what its students can expect to happen, should a course, campus or university close.

The purpose of these plans is to ensure that students can continue and complete their studies, or can be compensated if this is not possible. All universities are required to have an approved Student Protection Plan as a condition of their registration with the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#).

### How have students shaped Winchester's Student Protection Plan?

This Student Protection Plan was developed in partnership between the University and Winchester Student Union.

It is reviewed annually by the Student Academic Council, an advisory group to the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Management Team that includes the [Student Union sabbatical officers](#), student representatives from each academic subject area at the University and representatives from prescribed student demographics (e.g. disabled students, mature students and commuting students). If you have any questions about the Student Protection Plan, please contact [SU\\_education@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:SU_education@winchester.ac.uk) or [studentservices@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@winchester.ac.uk)

### Who is covered by the Student Protection Plan?

The Student Protection Plan covers:	It does not cover
Enrolled undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students on a course leading to a recognised qualification from the University of Winchester, who are taught by its staff.	Students who are no longer enrolled as a student at the University for any of the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at their request</li> <li>• in the normal completion of their course</li> <li>• as a result of student discipline, non-payment of tuition-related fees, academic misconduct, academic failure or other similar matters</li> </ul>
Students who are enrolled on a Schools Direct programme.	Students who are studying a school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) programme.
Applicants who have accepted an offer to study at the University of Winchester but who have not yet enrolled.	Students who are enrolled at a partner provider and are taught by their staff. They will instead be covered by the partner provider's Student Protection Plan.
	Students who are enrolled on an apprenticeship course.

## What types of risks are covered by the Student Protection Plan?

The University has considered risks that could result in course, campus or university closure. It has evaluated the likelihood of these risks materialising (low, medium, high) and the potential impact on students in terms of [continuation of study](#).

Examples of risks covered by this plan	Risks not covered by this plan
The University could no longer operate due to financial reasons.	Adjustments and improvements to a course (this could include no longer accepting new students onto a version of the course).
The University loses the power to award degrees.	Adjustments to module content.
One or more of the locations at which the University operates would become unavailable.	Changes to the optional modules available.
The University could no longer deliver courses to students in one or more subject areas or departments.	Changes to the timetable, including rooms, buildings or locations.
The University loses its licence to recruit and enrol international students.	Changes to supervision for research students.

More information on the risks identified, and the measures in place to mitigate those risks, are on page 5.

The University has also considered how its approaches to a pandemic/catastrophic event will affect its students: particularly those who might be most vulnerable to disruption. These include:

- international students
- students unable or less able to access and effectively participate in blended learning for whatever reason
- care leavers
- students estranged from their families
- students with disabilities
- students suffering from coronavirus or who need to self-isolate

## How are students protected?

The University has a contractual agreement with each student to provide them with a course, therefore it will make every effort to preserve a student's continuation of study should risks materialise. If the situation cannot be rectified and continuation of study cannot be preserved, it will ensure that:

- students will receive the University award or certificate that recognises the stage they have reached
- students will be supported in transferring to an alternative course, either at Winchester or at another university, if possible
- bursaries will be protected, in cases of course transfer
- a [refund and compensation plan](#) will be prepared for the students affected.

## What happens if the University is no longer able to preserve continuation of study?

The University will do all it can to ensure that its students are able to complete their studies with the University. In the event that it is no longer able to preserve continuation of study, the University has a [Refund and Compensation Policy for Enforced Termination of Courses](#) in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where appropriate. The University considers itself a [going concern](#) and financially sustainable and not at risk of being unable to operate due to financial instability.

The University's historical financial performance has been strong and can be reviewed at <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/our-future/the-university-in-numbers>. As a long established and respected University, the University is experienced in preserving continuation and quality of study for affected students on those rare occasions when it has ceased to offer an area of curriculum. The University also operates an active Business Continuity Planning group that tests its resilience to business interruption scenarios and develops mitigation plans.

The University's [Complaints Policy](#) supports students if they are dissatisfied with the protections provided relating to their circumstance, should a risk materialise.

## How would the Student Protection Plan be activated?

Should any of the risks identified materialise and not be mitigated (see page 5), the risk owners will notify the Assistant Vice-Chancellor, who will convene a meeting with the Sabbatical Officers of Winchester Student Union and relevant parties, as appropriate to the circumstance. The group will agree whether to activate the Student Protection Plan and the steps to take, then submit recommendations to the University's Senior Management Team for approval.

On activating the Student Protection Plan, the University will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the needs of different groups of students were considered. For example, if a course that had a large cohort of mature students was impacted, the assessment might flag that there would be a larger impact, as these students may be carers, and so this would be considered.

The [Refund and Compensation Policy for Enforced Termination of Courses](#) sets out the principles that the University will follow when considering the refund of tuition fees (or a proportion thereof) and/or award of compensation upon the Student Protection Plan being activated.

If the Student Protection Plan was activated, the University would seek and listen to students' views and, based on their feedback, may decide to amend aspects of the original decision or the steps that it had been intending to take.

## **How the University communicates with students about the Student Protection Plan**

- The plan will be on the University's website, under the [Policies and Procedures section](#). The Policies and Procedures section is referred to several times in the communications that applicants receive from the University pre-arrival.
- On arrival, as part of the enrolment process, students have access to a digital copy of the Student Handbook which will include information about the Student Protection Plan. Alternative formats are available on request from the Communications and External Relations department.
- The Student Protection Plan will also be available via an intranet search.

## **How the University communicates with staff about the Student Protection Plan**

- The Student Protection Plan is published on the staff intranet pages.
- It will be incorporated into the University's policy and procedures for course changes
- It will be incorporated into the University's policy and procedures for course withdrawal
- It will be included in relevant staff training activities.

## Risks identified, and the measures in place to mitigate those risks

### Institution-level Risks (1 – 4)

#### Risk owner: Senior Management Team

##### 1) The risk that the University would be unable to operate.

This risk of this scenario materialising is low. The University's financial performance is strong, with a strong record of financial management and income growth year on year. The University's Integrated Report sets out its financial performance <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/about-us/our-future/the-university-in-numbers/>. The University has strong governance in place to oversee its financial performance.

This risk would affect all students equally.

#### To manage this risk:

The University routinely reviews its business continuity approach and has plans in place to respond to a range of scenarios that would impact on it being able to operate.

##### 2) The risk that the University would lose the power to award degrees.

This risk of this scenario materialising is very low as the University is an established HE provider with a successful track record of awarding both teaching and research degrees. It was commended in its last QAA review of quality and standards, is rated 'Outstanding' by OFSTED and is awarded Silver in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.

This risk would affect all students equally.

#### To manage this risk:

The University's internal academic quality assurance processes are regularly reviewed and rigorously monitored through its Faculty and Senate academic development committees and informed by sector best practice.

##### 3) The risk that one or more of the locations at which the University operates would become unavailable.

This risk of this scenario materialising is low. The University owns the majority of the land on which its buildings are situated and has business continuity plans in place in the event of teaching spaces or student accommodation becoming unexpectedly unavailable, including premises which the University leases. There may be an emergency need to suspend or reduce campus activity (for example, when there is a pandemic/catastrophic event) until the campus is made safe.

This risk would affect all students and may disproportionately affect:

- students with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities as they generally have less flexibility with regards to location and timing of teaching
- students unable or less able to access and effectively participate in online learning for whatever reason
- students living on campus

#### To manage this risk:

Alternative arrangements would be put in place for students, which may include relocating to online learning delivery. There is a robust IT plan to ensure the reliability of IT service provision to students receiving online delivery, and business continuity plans to address an issue with on-campus University Managed Housing (the location from which students would need to access their blended or online learning). A Student Support Fund, accessible via Student Services, is in

place that could meet additional costs to students incurred in this scenario. Student Services' provision would continue to be available, to offer advice and support to students.

#### **4) The risk that the University of Winchester would no longer be able to recruit or teach international students**

The risk of this scenario materialising remains low, pending any major changes to Government policy. The University is an established and trusted holder of a licence to recruit and enrol international students and has an excellent track record of successful visa applications. In the event of a pandemic/catastrophic event, restrictions on international travel may present barriers to teaching international students.

This risk disproportionately affects international students.

##### To manage this risk:

The University continually reviews its processes to ensure they meet Home Office requirements. It also closely monitors its compliance data against targets set by the Home Office. The University has plans in place to support international students should restrictions on international travel present barriers to students returning to the UK to study.

### **Course-level risks**

#### **Risk owner: Deans of Faculties**

#### **5) The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver courses to students in one or more subject areas or departments**

The risk of this scenario materialising is low. The University regularly reviews its portfolio, and changes to course provision may be made to reflect changes in demand for certain subject areas. However, if these changes do lead to the University not taking new students into certain courses, it is committed to maintaining the course for those students already on it until they have graduated. In the event of a pandemic/catastrophic event, there is a low risk that the availability of staff to support course delivery across one or more subject areas or departments could be impacted, and a risk to courses which include work placements for students may materialise, should a placement site be affected by a pandemic/catastrophic event.

This risk would affect all students equally.

##### To manage this risk:

Any decision to discontinue a course with students enrolled on it would only be taken in exceptional circumstances and the University would always endeavour to teach out current students. If the University could not do this, [students would be offered a refund and compensation plan](#).

If a decision was taken to discontinue a course with applicants enrolled on it, applicants should refer to the Student Terms and Conditions to understand how the University would support them. Student Terms and Conditions are accessible on the University's website, under [Policies and Procedures](#).

In the event of a pandemic/ catastrophic event, the risk to staff availability is managed through the health and safety measures within the Risk Management Plan. For students on courses with placements that may be affected by a pandemic/catastrophic event, the course would continue to be offered. Students should refer to the Placements and Work Experience Policy to understand how the University supports students whose placements are disrupted.

**6) The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more courses**

The risk of this scenario materialising is medium. The University is a relatively small institution and therefore does have some single person dependencies for teaching in some areas. As a smaller institution, it is well-practised at managing these risks. Some changes to a course's material components may be necessary, for example, when there is a pandemic/catastrophic event.

This risk would affect all students equally.

To manage this risk:

In these instances, students will be contacted in writing to request their consent to these [contractual] changes. Students would be consulted in advance wherever possible and the University would take all reasonable steps to mitigate the impact on students. If a student does not agree that the change is fair they are able to seek redress under the [University's Complaints Policy](#).

If a student does not give their consent to these [contractual] changes, they should refer to the Student Terms and Conditions to understand how the University would support them. Student Terms and Conditions are accessible on the University's website, under [Policies and Procedures](#).

**7) The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver one or more [modes of study](#)**

The risk of this scenario materialising is low, with full time and part-time modes of study planned to continue. The University routinely reviews its business continuity approach and has plans in place to respond to a range of scenarios that would impact on it being able to continue to deliver its courses. A blended learning approach (a blend of in-person and online delivery) or an online approach would be adopted for both modes of study, to preserve continuation of study in the event of a pandemic/catastrophic event.

This risk affects all students, and may disproportionately affect;

- students with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities as they generally have less flexibility with regards to location and timing of teaching
- students unable or less able to access and effectively participate in remote learning for whatever reason

To manage this risk:

In the event of a pandemic/catastrophic event, we recognise that working conditions for students would have changed and this may present challenges for successful blended or online learning. A Student Support Fund, accessible via Student Services, is in place that could meet additional costs to students incurred in the transition to blended or online learning. Student Services' provision would continue to be available, to offer advice and support to students.

## Key terms explained

The terms below are referred to in the Student Protection Plan.

Term	Definition
Cash flow	<b>Cash flow</b> is the money that is moving (flowing) in and out of the University at any point in time. A positive level of cash flow should be maintained for the University to remain financially sustainable.
Continuation of study	In the Refund and Compensation Policy, a reference to the University no longer being able to preserve <b>continuation of study</b> means that the University has terminated or intends to terminate either: (i) a University course of study on which an individual has been offered or accepted a place before that individual can register as a student or (ii) a University course of study on which a student is registered before that student has completed that course.  The University recognises two sets of circumstances: planned mid-course termination and unexpected course termination.
Going concern	An entity is a <b>going concern</b> unless management either intends to liquidate the entity or to cease trading, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.
Material component	A significant component or inclusion in the 'material' of which a course is made. Examples of <b>material components</b> include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Award</li> <li>- Course title</li> <li>- Professional accreditation</li> <li>- Core modules</li> <li>- Additional costs (for example the addition of a DBS clearance check)</li> <li>- The range and balance of assessment types and weightings' patterns</li> </ul>
Modes of study	<b>Mode of study</b> refers to the study load of the student, whether full-time or part-time.
Net liquidity	<b>Liquidity</b> describes the degree to which an asset can be bought or sold in the market at a price reflecting its market value. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash is universally considered the most liquid asset</li> <li>• Fixed assets, such as buildings and land, are all relatively illiquid.</li> </ul> <b>Liabilities</b> are obligations of the University; they are amounts owed (or bills that need to be paid) for a current or past transaction. Staff wages and tax are examples of liabilities. <b>Net liquidity</b> is a strict measure of an immediate or near-term liquidity position of the University, calculated as liquid assets less current liabilities.
OfS	The Office for Students ( <b>OfS</b> ) is a non-departmental public body of the Department for Education, acting as the regulator and competition authority for the higher education sector in England. The University also receives funding from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills ( <b>OFSTED</b> ) is a non-ministerial department of the UK government, reporting to Parliament. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting a range of educational institutions, including state schools and some independent schools.
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education ( <b>QAA</b> ) is the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education.



Term	Definition
Refund and compensation plan	<p>The refund and compensation plan may include appropriate provision for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) loss of earnings and / or interest costs associated with a course termination;</li> <li>(ii) additional tuition costs and costs associated with that tuition;</li> <li>(iii) living costs specifically associated with your studies;</li> <li>(iv) travel costs as a result of relocation of provision.</li> </ul> <p>Refunds will normally only be made to the bank and account holder (or other financial institution) that originally paid the tuition fee and will not be paid in cash.</p>
Reserves	<p><b>Reserves</b> - the accumulated funds (historic surpluses less deficits) produced from the University's activities.</p> <p><b>Restricted reserves</b> - these come from funds which must be spent in accordance with the funding body's instructions. Any expenditure from these funds will decrease the restricted reserve</p> <p><b>Unrestricted reserves</b> - these arise from the funds which have been earned or received with no imposed restrictions. We do have to spend these funds for the University's charitable purpose, which is the advancement of education.</p>
Student Union sabbatical officers	<p>A <b>sabbatical officer</b> is a full-time officer elected by students (i.e. the members of a students' union). There are 3 sabbatical officer roles at Winchester Student Union: President; Vice President, Education and Welfare and Vice President Activities.</p>
Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework	<p>The <b>Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)</b> 'is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how each higher education provider ensures excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study' (OfS).</p>
Valuable fixed asset estate	<p><b>Asset</b> - an item of property or resource owned by the University, regarded as having value and available to meet our commitments.</p> <p><b>Fixed asset</b> - assets which are purchased for long-term use and are not likely to be converted quickly into cash, such as land, buildings, and equipment.</p> <p>The University's estate (buildings and land) is a <b>fixed asset</b>.</p>