

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
Student Protection Plan for the Period 2023/24

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 provider as a whole is no longer able to operate or no longer intends to operate

This risk is low. The financial performance of Manchester Metropolitan University is very strong. If, at any point in the future, the University had no option other than to close, it would undertake this in a managed way, over a sufficient period of time to allow current students to complete their studies at Manchester Met. During this time, the University would work with the Office for Students to ensure that students were aware of other appropriate providers and if any student wished to transfer their studies, the University would provide the necessary support for this to occur.

The provider is no longer able to award the qualifications for which its students are registered because the OfS has varied or revoked the provider's degree awarding powers

This risk is low. The University has well-established quality assurance processes and a history of successful quality review engagements. The University's annual processes for the monitoring of programmes enable the implementation of timely action plans to address any areas of concern. If, at any point in the future, significant quality concerns were identified by Designated Quality Body (DQB), the University would work with the OfS and the DQB to address any emerging problems and put the necessary actions in place.

One or more of the locations at which the provider delivers courses to students is no longer available

As the University owns its campus this risk is close to zero for the majority of programmes and therefore does not require specific mitigation. Very occasionally, third party spaces would need to be used if there were loss of function to a building. The risk to the student experience is low.

Whilst programmes offered through the University's Joint Institute (JI) are based at Hubei University in China, all programmes are Joint Awards which are made up of curriculum that has been mapped to existing programmes delivered on campus at Manchester Met. If it was no longer feasible to deliver these awards at the JI, provisions could be made to provide online delivery by Manchester Met staff (either those based in China or in the UK), whilst alternative arrangements were sought in country. Students would also have the option to articulate to programmes delivered on campus. Rigorous due diligence has been undertaken in the establishment of the JI and the risk of this happening is low.

Industrial Action

The University is committed to providing clear and timely information and maintaining positive and effective relationships with its employees. It will work with the recognised trades unions to achieve outcomes that minimise the impact on the student experience. Established arrangements are in place for consultation and negotiation. However, occasionally industrial action does occur. In such a situation, the PSLT and Governance Oversight Group will convene to consider risks to the student experience and apply solutions to minimise those risks. The key focus is to:

- ensure that disruption is minimised;
- maintain normal operations where possible;
- ensure that students are not disadvantaged by the action; and
- replan teaching sessions to ensure all learning outcomes can be covered and, if necessary, revise assessment submission dates.

The University has established protocols for providing clear and timely communications to students in the event of industrial action.

The provider is no longer able to deliver courses to students in one or more subject areas and/or departments

The size of the institution, depth and breadth of provision on the Manchester Campus is such that the risk of the University being unable to deliver Programmes in one or more subject areas or departments is extremely low.

Should the University at any point make a strategic decision to amalgamate or close Departments, such a change would be administrative and undertaken in a planned way to ensure that it would not impact upon the student experience. The risk to students is therefore low.

Staffing Vacancies

The University has in place robust procedures for the recruitment and replacement of teaching staff through its People and Organisational Development Directorate. Whilst it is expected that there will be a gap between members of staff leaving and being replaced the University does:

- identify and fill vacancies as quickly as possible;
- where appropriate use other subject expert teaching staff to cover vacancies;
- if necessary, use subject expert fixed-term cover for vacancies;
- use other experienced members of staff with appropriate skills and experience to deliver teaching sessions.

These procedures mean that the University is normally able to continue to deliver Programmes if staff leave during an academic year and there is consequently a low risk to the student experience.

The provider is no longer able to deliver one or more courses to students, particularly if course closures are likely in the next three years

The University keeps the size and shape of its taught portfolio under ongoing strategic review. Where there is a market or institutional need, new Programmes are developed. Existing Programmes are subject to the Education Annual Review process to ensure they remain contemporary, support the University's strategic objectives and comply with the requirements of the Designated Quality Body (DQB). This planned approach means that Programmes are approved, or material changes made to existing Programmes, in good time to ensure that prospective applicants and existing students are not affected by any change. Programme closures are planned so they do not affect current students, and teach-out arrangements guide Programme closure to ensure that staffing and resources are in place to deliver a high-quality experience for students. The risk is low.

There are also specific considerations in relation to Apprenticeship provision. The University has an extensive Apprenticeship portfolio and a well-developed infrastructure for ensuring the quality of its Apprenticeships. It therefore has a high level of confidence in its ability to meet the requirements for remaining on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP). In the highly unlikely event that the University were removed from the RoATP, it would ensure that existing apprentices were able to complete their Programmes either within the University or at other institutions.

Each Degree Apprenticeship includes an agreement between Manchester Metropolitan University, the student and their employer. The employer is responsible for work-based learning opportunities and support. The University will proactively engage with employers on their obligations to support Degree Apprentices. However, the University is not responsible if an employer does not fulfil their Degree Apprenticeship obligations. Nor is the University responsible if an employer ceases trading, and the Apprentice loses their employment. Where a student ceases to be employed as an Apprentice, the University will support the student to completion of the Degree where possible; including transfer to another degree programme. However, the student will not be permitted to continue as a Degree Apprentice unless they secure an alternative sponsoring employer.

The provider is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more courses, particularly if there are areas of vulnerability, such as single person dependencies for teaching

Whilst the University does have a number of specialist Programmes, the risks of not being able to deliver these are low as permanent teaching staff are in place and sufficient cover is available to deliver Programmes. Programmes are designed with named unit leaders and, where necessary, with a unit team to support and therefore the risk of being unable to deliver material components is low.

The provider is no longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to students, particularly if withdrawal of a mode of study is likely

The University offers a wide range of Programmes with varying modes of study. Most provision is offered on a full-time basis, but many Programmes offer part-time study or on-line / distanced learning. Frequently, Programmes use more than one mode of study and the University successfully integrates students studying on either

full or part-time modes. Such delivery protects the student experience and reduces the likelihood of the University having to suspend Programmes.

The provider is no longer able to recruit or teach a particular type of student

The University delivers Programmes to a wide variety of students, including home and international, those from widening participation groups, mature learners, apprentices, and learners studying full or part-time modes or studying at a distance. In all cases, the University is committed to supporting these students and the risk of being unable to recruit or teach a particular type of student is low.

Suspension or Removal of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence

The University complies with UKVI requirements and tracks the engagement of its sponsored students diligently to ensure they continue to meet the requirements of their visa so the risk of suspension or removal of the Tier 4 Sponsor Licence is low. However, in the event of suspension or withdrawal of Tier 4 sponsor status, the University would proactively work with affected students and applicants to minimise disruption and to work with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their studies. Sponsored students would be contacted, to:

- advise them of whether they can continue their studies under existing sponsorship OR
- advise them that alternative arrangements will need to be put in place;
- where Tier 4 regulations permit, provide support to affected students to transfer to an appropriate Programme with an alternative sponsor.

Only in very exceptional circumstances should students be required to return home to make a new visa application.

Withdrawal of Designation for Student Support Purposes

The University is committed to adhering to the terms of its agreement regarding the financial support of students. If, at any point, it is judged there is a breach, the University would commit to work with the Office for Students to put in place steps to resolve such a breach to avoid de-designation. In the exceptional event of the withdrawal of designation, the University would minimise the disruption to students by:

- working with the Student Loans Company to allow enrolled students to complete their Programme; OR
- where this is not possible, supporting students to transfer to other HEIs where they can continue to gain financial support.

Collaborative Partner Students

The University has a number of collaborative partners delivering Manchester Metropolitan University Programmes. Whilst recognising that those collaborative partner organisations regulated by the Office for Students will be putting in place their own Student Protection Plans, the University remains committed to supporting

its partner institutions to teach-out any Programme leading to a Manchester Metropolitan University award. Teach out arrangements are considered as part of the governance process for the approval of collaborative partnerships. When a collaborative programme is discontinued, or a collaborative partnership terminated a detailed teach out plan is implemented, to ensure that: the academic standards and quality of the programme are protected; and appropriate support for any students still enrolled on the programme is maintained. As a result of these measures, the risk to the student experience is low.

Loss of Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) Accreditation

The University has accreditation with a wide range of PSRBs and works proactively to maintain accreditation. The risk is low.

In the event of an adverse inspection or monitoring report, the University, through a dedicated working group, would work proactively with the PSRB to address all issues of concern. Ongoing communications with the PSRB would be maintained.

In the event of a PSRB suspending or removing accreditation of a Programme or Programmes, the University would put in place measures to protect the experience of existing students by working with the PSRB to achieve continued accreditation for all existing students. If this is unsuccessful, the University would offer existing students the choice of the following:

- where appropriate, deliver a modified version of the same Programme, i.e., without PSRB accreditation;
- offer alternative Programme(s) within the University;
- identify other HEIs who hold relevant accreditation and assist students to transfer their studies at the most appropriate point with the relevant transcript of studies – usually at the end of an academic year.

The University would update its website and any paper-based communications.

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

The University does not consider that any of the risks listed in section 1 are likely to crystallise during the 2023/24 academic year. The mitigations listed throughout Section 1, which are part of the University's standard operations, are therefore considered sufficient.

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.

If the University is unable to preserve continuation of study owing to one or more of the trigger events identified within this Plan, the University will, in accordance with

its Terms and Conditions of study, provide as much notice as possible and work closely with the students concerned to minimise the disruption and impact on them.

In such circumstances, the University will ensure that the legal and contractual rights of students are respected. For those students who are enrolled at, and studying for a recognised award of, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University may identify circumstances in which financial compensation is appropriate.

Financial compensation beyond a full or partial refund of tuition fees will only be considered exceptionally, either where a student has experienced demonstrable loss, or to offset additional tuition or maintenance costs incurred by a student as a direct result of non-continuation of study. Students may be asked to produce evidence detailing any loss or other costs they have incurred or will incur, so the University can determine the appropriate form and level of compensation.

As a charity, the University can only provide financial compensation where it is legally obliged to do so, and any financial redress must therefore be proportionate and carefully considered. In making decisions about financial compensation that goes beyond a full or partial refund of tuition fees, the University will consider how students have met their own responsibility to minimise loss and whether they have taken up any alternative arrangements offered by the University.

The University may also make use of other forms of compensation where it is appropriate to do so. These may include an apology, a discount, or some other form of benefit. Where a refund or some other form of compensation is applicable, the University will treat students on a case-by-case basis, taking into account each individual student's specific circumstances. This may lead to individual students within a cohort receiving different forms or levels of refund or other compensation.

In all instances, claims for compensation are administered and considered through the University's Student Complaints Procedure, which provides for formal and transparent consideration, and robust mechanisms for escalation and review where a student is dissatisfied with the original outcome. Recommendations arising from the Procedure for financial compensation that goes beyond full or partial refund of tuition fees will require approval by the University's Chief Operating Officer.

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

The University will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students on its student-facing websites:

The University will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan by:

- ensuring that the student protection plan is disseminated to faculties through Academic Board and its sub-committees;
- ensuring through Faculty Education Committees that Programme teams adhere to its principles;

- ensuring through the Academic and Collaborative Partnerships Sub-Committee that those staff engaged with Partnership activity understand the implication of the student protection plan;
- including understanding of the implications of the student protection plan in Programme Approval, Review and Amendment process.

On an annual basis, the Plan will be reviewed by the Education Committee before being approved by the Academic Board. Both the Education Committee and the Academic Board include student representatives.

Material changes to Programmes may occur during defined periods of the academic year. Consultation and communication with students is built in to the cycle for Programme Approval, Review and Amendment. The published Terms and Conditions Applicable to the Provision of Educational Services provide further information about when we may make such changes.

Should we require to make a material change of sufficient magnitude to implement the student protection plan, students would be notified at the earliest possible opportunity. This would be undertaken through all reasonable media, which departments use to communicate with their students. Under such circumstances, our priority would be to ensure that our students are aware of the change, the potential impact on them, and the options available to them. Our Terms and Conditions Applicable to the Provision of Educational Services refers to the circumstances under which such notification may occur.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan, we will do the following to support students collectively and individually:

- provide financial, academic and pastoral advice and guidance through our established network of trained advisors;
- work with other providers to identify Programmes which may be appropriate for students to transfer to;
- provide careers guidance to those students who may wish to access it at this point.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan, we will work with the Students' Union to provide them with the details of the situation so that they can provide independent advice and guidance.