

University of Westminster – Student Protection Plan

The University must have in force a Student Protection Plan that has been approved by the Office for Students (OfS), and sets out the actions we will take to minimise any impact on your continuation of study should we discontinue the course, subject, discipline or exit the market completely. We commit to taking all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of this plan.

Name and Address of Provider: University of Westminster, 309 Regent St, London, W1B 2HW

Website: westminster.ac.uk

Date of plan: 1 September 2018

1: Introduction - University of Westminster

The University of Westminster has a strong focus on delivering high quality, relevant learning, excellent student experience and focussed research in our areas of excellence. Since becoming a University in 1992, we have graduated more than 100,000 learners into the work force, from all walks of life and many non-traditional backgrounds. We have always recognised the importance of the University experience in preparing young people and mature learners to derive maximum personal benefit and to make significant contributions to society, as well as supplying talented graduates to meet the demands of employers for employees with higher level skills in professional roles.

We are committed to the delivery of our existing provision but we regularly and actively review our academic offering to ensure that it is providing a high quality experience that is delivering to the requirements of our current and prospective students and other partners. We regularly undertake portfolio reviews, to ensure that it is fit for purpose, addresses any areas of poor performance and drives higher standards.

2: 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 applicable to all current and future 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.

3: Our commitments to you as a University of Westminster student

As detailed in this plan, we commit to:

- Being open and transparent with you should any risk to the continuity of your studies arise, and we will inform you of this in a timely manner.
- Taking reasonable steps to protecting your studies should we discontinue a course or discipline, close a location (building or campus) where a course is taught, or close altogether.
- Considering students' views before deciding either to implement any substantial changes to a course or to discontinue it, or before stopping teaching a discipline, or closing a location.
- Taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures.

- Informing the OfS of any changes that may necessitate a review of the plan or any of the measures contained within it. We will regularly seek students' views on this plan as part of our student feedback processes. If you have any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, please contact the **PA to the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (Samantha McDonald s.j.mcdonald@westminster.ac.uk)**

4: Why is this plan necessary?

We wish to ensure that all students have confidence that when they begin a course of study at Westminster they have a reasonable expectation of being able to complete it at Westminster, or in extreme circumstances at a substitute provider.

In designing and seeking approval for this plan, we have worked with our regulator, the OfS, to ensure it addresses our specific circumstances and will provide you with appropriate protection.

5: An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students

We have well developed and proactive risk management processes in place. These are aligned with our priorities and objectives.

University priorities:

- 1: High quality transformative learning
- 2: Exceptional experience for all students
- 3: Focused, high performing institution

University objectives:

- 1: Drive high quality, relevant teaching
- 2: Create an outstanding student experience that enhances employability
- 3: Maximise connections with key London and global partners
- 4: Targeted research and enterprise engagement for excellence and impact
- 5: Deliver value for money, financial and organisational sustainability

6: Our approach to risk management

Risks are identified that could impact on delivery of these objectives. A single risk owner is assigned to each risk identified to mitigate anything that might affect achievement of the objective.

Effective mitigation plans are developed and put in place against each identified risk and these risks and mitigations are reviewed, proactively managed and amended regularly.

Three specific risks have been identified as being of particular relevance to the requirements of the Student Protection Plan. As this Student Protection Plan is a live document these risks and mitigations are regularly reviewed, managed and revised in line with the risk register review process to ensure that they remain up to date. It is considered that there are effective mitigations in place to manage these risks and make it unlikely that these will crystallise.

1: The risk that the provider as a whole is unable to operate is very low because the University has made a surplus in the financial year 2017/18 and is forecast to make surpluses in the period 2018/19-2022/23. The University has provide the Office for Students with a statement of financial adequacy which details our assets and which underpins our financial wellbeing.

2: We are currently developing a long term strategy for our estate. This work recognises that our estate needs to be better aligned to the future requirements of the University and our students. This work will

address areas of excess estate capacity and cost, and will realign our estate to ensure that it is most effectively supporting delivery of our priorities, objectives and measures of success.

We are taking a long term view of our estates requirements and these plans are intended to address anticipated requirements to 2030. There is accordingly potential for these plans to impact on locations of courses and programmes during your period of study with us. However, this risk is considered low as it is anticipated that these plans are more likely to impact back office operations. We undertake to ensure that you will be consulted at an early stage and updated as plans are developed and refined. Consultation and information arrangements are detailed in section 8

3: The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes is considered low as the University has recently restructured from five Faculties into three Colleges. This restructure included a comprehensive review of the overall academic offer, the staffing requirements to deliver this effectively and also included the closure of several long term poorly recruiting programmes. The University accordingly considers the portfolio fit for purpose subject to adjustments and improvements to course and module content in accordance with the University modifications process. The University modification process can be accessed on the University public website. <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/corporate-information/policies-and-documents-a-z/quality-assurance-and-enhancement-handbook>

7: Student protection measures

- We commit to working with students on planned course closures.
- We will ensure that a sufficient notice period is provided.
- We undertake to provide clear and timely information on changes to students.
- We will adopt teach out of provision as its default position.
- We will identify suitable alternatives if it is not possible to teach out.
- We will support students in finding alternative courses.
- We have a clear fee refunds policy and robust arrangements for recording of credit/academic progress if transfer not possible. This can be accessed on the University website. <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/corporate-information/policies-and-documents-a-z/quality-assurance-and-enhancement-handbook>

In the event that the risks materialise, we will take one or more of the following measures to protect your continuity of study.

Whenever possible, we will make arrangements to ‘teach out’ current students where we have voluntarily decided to leave the market or close a course. This means that we commit to ensuring the course of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students, even though the course is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.

And/or:

We will support you in seeking another provider and continuing your studies with them, utilising student transfer arrangements.

All of these measures have been tested and we are confident they are viable. We will take into consideration the needs of all our students, including those with mobility considerations or special educational requirements.

Measures contained in the plan may be brought into play at any time, if, for example, doing so would reduce the impact or likelihood of any interruption to students’ studies.

8: Engagement with students

We have a very positive and valued relationship with the University of Westminster Students' Union based on mutual support and partnership. Jointly with the Students' Union, we have established a Student Experience Committee. This is a sub-committee of the Academic Council. The Committee is chaired jointly by the President of the Students' Union and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience. Its primary focus is to promote student engagement and sense of community and to review, monitor and enhance student satisfaction and all aspects of the student experience.

The Committee has an important role in the identification, consideration and development of appropriate student communications. Its membership is drawn from the Students' Union, student representation (drawn from each Faculty Student Experience Forum), and senior Academic and Professional Services representatives. It is intended that the Committee will be given explicit additional responsibility to keep this Student Protection Plan under review. Where it is considered necessary, a working group comprising University and Students' Union representatives will be convened to address issues arising from the Student Protection Plan.

We have agreed with the Students' Union that these channels will be used to represent students' interests in maintaining the Student Protection Plan and determining the most appropriate channels for communicating with and updating students.

The plan will be displayed on the University website. It will be accessible in the study – fees and funding section. Reference to the SPP will also be made as part of the “Great Start” programme during welcome week for new students.

Following consultation with students we will inform our students annually if there are to be material changes to their course on or around 15th March or 180 days in advance of the start of the course. The University modification process can be accessed on the University public website.

9: What types of events will prompt this Student Protection Plan?

This plan will be triggered if:

- We decide to discontinue your specific course in accordance with our course closure process.
- We stop teaching the discipline.
- We decide to close the location (building or campus) in which the course is taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location.
- We decide to cease operating altogether.
- We can no longer provide the course to you for any other reason, for example, if we cease operating through no choice of our own, or we lose the right to provide the course or qualification, or we lose our tier 4 licence.

We retain the right to make adjustments and improvements to course and module content year on year in accordance with the University modifications process, and these in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures. However, if you feel the course as delivered varies materially from what you expected, you may be able to seek recourse under consumer or contract law.

10: Specific events which will trigger the plan

Our default position is that we will offer teach out of your course to enable you to complete your studies and graduate with a University of Westminster Degree. In the event that this is not possible, we will support you in transferring to another suitable provider to enable you to continue your studies. In the event that this leads to you incurring additional expense, we will reimburse you subject to our Refund and Compensation Policy. If transfer is not possible, we will compensate you for reasonable losses incurred in accordance with our Refund and Compensation Policy underpinned by our Statement of Financial Adequacy and Viability.

Course closure –

We confirm our commitment to teach out of existing provision. In exceptional circumstances, and if this is impractical or deemed not to be in the best interests of students, a transfer will be explored. In these circumstances we undertake to identify higher education partners within reasonable geographical proximity to the University and to engage in constructive dialogue to effect this.

Subject closure –

We confirm our commitment to teach out of existing provision. In exceptional circumstances, and if this is impractical or deemed not to be in the best interests of students, a transfer will be explored. In these circumstances we undertake to identify higher education partners within reasonable geographical proximity to the University and to engage in constructive dialogue to effect this.

Campus or location closure –

We are currently undertaking a strategic review of our current estate provision to ensure that it is most effectively aligned with our long term ambitions. In the event that this is likely to lead to campus or location closure, or relocation of a current offer to an alternative location, this will be undertaken in a consultative and informed manner and suitable notice will be provided. If applicable, provisions detailed under course and subject closure will also apply.

Market exit –

In the extremely unlikely event that financial sustainability is threatened and institutional closure is possible detailed engagement will take place with merger partners to seek to effect an orderly handover subject to the Insolvency Act 1986.

11: Notification, advice and support

We will notify you of any changes which may affect your studies in a timely manner and in accordance with our modification and course closure policy.

Advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the relevant College Academic Registry office

Additional, independent, advice and support is available from Student Services.

12: What can I do if I have a complaint?

In the first instance you can raise a complaint through our complaints process.

If you are not content with the proposed outcomes, you can raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.