Student protection plan

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Student protection plan for the period 2018/19

1 Introduction and scope

1.1 The University is committed to ensuring that it offers courses relevant to students and employers. As part of this it has processes to review and renew (and in some cases close) courses which it considers to be a vital part of maintaining a dynamic curriculum. It has processes in place to ensure that these changes are managed and that applicants are kept informed and that the interests of those students already on course are protected.

1.2 This Student Protection Plan has been drawn up to set out what action the University would take if it became necessary to close a course or to stop teaching on a particular site for reasons beyond its control. This Plan covers all provision offered directly by UWL and that sub-contracted to academic partners. It does not cover provision validated by the University.

1.3 The University is committed to delivering the course of study to which students have been admitted. In the event of a course closure, its policy is to put provisions in place to teach registered students so that they can complete the course. However, this Plan also sets out how the University would support students in the event that it is not able to deliver this commitment.

2 Risk assessment

2.1 Overall risk

2.1.1 In 2016-17, the University had an overall income to £96m with a surplus of 10% to allow for re-investment in the estate and the student experience. The reputation of the institution continues to be enhanced with significant improvements in student satisfaction and league table rankings. This has enabled UWL to deliver planned strategic growth in the annual student intake of 18% in the last three years. In view of this, the University considers that the risk that it would be unable to operate is very low as our financial performance is in line with planned strategic growth.

2.1.2 The University does not consider that it will be required to stop teaching at its three sites of Ealing, Brentford and Reading. The site in Reading, while its intake is at present wholly for Nursing and Midwifery Courses, it has very strong links with health providers in the region and its numbers are increasing.

2.1.3 The University has a risk management framework to manage major business risks which it reviews regularly as well as an internal control framework to manage University processes. These frameworks are overseen by the Board of Governors and also reviewed by our internal audit service. The internal auditor gave full assurance to the University in 2016/17. These risks include monitoring the University’s ability to meet quality and standards of its courses.
and also to recruit students. At present it does not consider these risks require specific mitigation.

2.1.4 In addition to effective management on ongoing activities, UWL has active business continuity plans to ensure that it can manage unforeseen incidents and protect the student experience. It has plans at both institutional and school/college level to monitor and respond to major business risks, in particular loss of premises, complete IT failure, major pandemic affecting high numbers of staff, and combination of loss the above. Business Continuity Planning is updated regularly to deal with changes in structures, estate, systems and services.

2.1.5 The University does not consider that it will be required to close courses apart from those that need to be refreshed as a result of changes to student and employer demand. In these cases, the University has a commitment to ‘teach out’ all students already registered to ensure the student experience. However, if the University was required to close a course as a result of issues beyond its control and it could not find suitable provisions elsewhere, it would have sufficient funds to provide appropriate refunds and compensation in line with this above policy.

2.2 Risks to Courses and Modules

2.2.1 The risk that UWL is no longer able to deliver courses in any particular area is very low. The Schools and Colleges are currently undertaking managed growth in all areas of provision.

2.2.2 The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver key components of our courses which students may have relied upon in their decision to choose UWL is also low because:

- At approval stage, the risks to module delivery is assessed and most modules are designed to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff and where appropriate are shared between courses.
- Many of our courses are vocationally orientated and designed to provide students equipped to work in local and regional industry and business and we have a large pool of part-time staff with specialist professional or industry knowledge we can draw on as required.
- Courses and modules are closely monitored each year and changes made to improve and develop courses are made as appropriate to ensure that they remain current.

2.2.3 In courses leading to professional registration (eg Nursing and Social Work), the University works very closely with placement providers to ensure that appropriate placements will be available. For other courses with a placement element, it has developed networks with employers and provides students with appropriate support to find placements. Where necessary, non-placement routes are available so students may complete an award where they have been unable to secure appropriate placement.

3 Closure of Courses

3.1 In the event that the University is unable to run a course, it would undertake the following actions to protect the student experience:

- For new provision, any course which is still subject to approval is clearly marked. Applications are monitored on a regular basis and those which are not attracting applications will not be run for that year and applicants will be offered a deferred place or an alternative course in line with our advertised terms and conditions.
- If a course were to close, this would be undertaken in accordance with UWL Course Closure Policy which includes our commitment to ‘teach out’ any cohorts already recruited. Any closure would be agreed by the Vice Chancellor’s Executive and would include consideration of how the course could be delivered to the remaining students. There would be a managed closure which includes quarterly checks on student
progression and achievement, and face-to-face meetings with all students who are affected by the closure. This process is set out in Quality Assurance Handbook.

4 Changes to courses

4.1 The University does modify its courses to ensure that they remain current and to ensure the best student experience. Where such changes are proposed, these are thoroughly assessed and require support from external examiners. All changes are considered by the appropriate Course Committee giving student representatives an opportunity to comment. They are also considered by the School Quality Committees and School Boards. A communication plan is required for any major changes to ensure that students are aware of why the course is changing.

4.2 Where a core component is changed, all students should be consulted on this change and their views taken into account before it is implemented (if students do not agree, the module may run as originally intended to ensure that the University complies with its obligations under consumer protection law). Where other changes are necessary, the University will, in accordance with the Terms and Conditions, give students reasonable notice of the changes which will include details of why the change was necessary, and what has changed.

4.3 The above issues are covered by the University’s Terms and Conditions for Admissions which are available here.

5 Student transfer

5.1 Where the University is not able provide students with tuition to complete their course, it will work with other institutions to find a suitable alternative elsewhere which will enable students still enrolled at the point of closure to complete their award.

5.2 The University will also provide a transcript of a students’ academic credits so that their learning is recognised and that they may if appropriate gain recognition for their learning at another institution.

6 Refunds

6.1 Where the University is not able to provide tuition to students to complete their course, the University will make a full refund of any tuition fees paid for modules that have not been delivered to students who are still enrolled on the course at the point of closure:

a. Where students have had their fees paid by the Student Loans Company (SLC), the refund will normally be made direct to the SLC.

b. Where students have paid the tuition fees themselves, these will be refunded to the bank account from which they were paid.

c. Where students’ tuition fees have been paid by a parent, sponsor or other third party, any refunds will be returned to this third party.

7 Additional travel costs

7.1 If a student has been required to change their location of study or to change institution as a result of a course closure, the University will consider reimbursing reasonable additional travel costs. Such costs will normally be paid from the term-time residence of the student.

8 Bursary/fee waiver commitments

8.1 If students have been granted a bursary, the University will honour the bursary provided they remain eligible.
For students who would otherwise been able to claim a bursary or tuition fee waiver for the duration of their course, the University will consider the continued payment of the bursary/fee waiver if they change institution upon the closure of a course where the University is unable to teach out all of the cohorts.

**9 Compensation**

9.1 In the unlikely event that a student is required to move to another University as a result of course closure and/or the University is unable to continue to teach out all remaining students, the University will consider applications for compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where these are greater than they would have been for the course provided by the UWL.

9.2 The University would also consider applications for compensation where a student has additional costs for maintenance where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study (ie it is not possible for a student to move from one institution to another in the next academic year).

9.3 The University will not normally provide compensation in cases where a student has chosen to transfer to another institution where the course continues to be provided by the University.

9.4 The University will also take into account a student’s level of engagement with study where they are unable to finish a course due to retakes.

9.5 Claims for compensation should be made through the Student Complaints Procedure. Where students are dissatisfied with the outcome of any complaint they will be able to take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

**10 Students on sub-contracted courses at academic partners**

10.1 The University will ensure that institutions which offer courses on its behalf have appropriate Student Protection Plans where appropriate. It will monitor the risks that the academic partner will be unable to continue teaching students to ensure that such any risks identified are mitigated in order to protect the student experience. Such risks and the requirement to teach out courses are covered in the contract between the sub-contracted partner and the institution.

10.2 If the sub-contracted institution is not able to teach out a course that has to close, the University will where possible teach the course directly. Where this is not possible, it will seek alternative providers for students.

**11 Implementation**

11.1 If UWL needs to implement the measures in this Student Protection Plan and close a course or remove key material elements of the curriculum without teaching out, the University will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to students. It will:

- Ensure, in collaboration with the Students’ Union, that all students have access to advice on the impact on their studies including their right to refunds, compensation or alternative replacement study under the Terms and Conditions and broader Consumer Law.

- Support students, by providing a consultation forum to discuss the implications to the students’ study. It will provide the opportunity for one-to-one planning and tutorial sessions where options can be discussed and staff can support the implementation of students’ choices.

11.2 Students will have the opportunity to raise complaints about the way that the course change or closure is being handled will be able to raise these in the consultation forum and indeed will
be encouraged to raise all issues in order that they may be resolved. Students who are not satisfied with this approach may use the University’s Complaints Procedure to bring a formal complaint. Where students are dissatisfied with the outcome of any complaint they will be able to take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

11.3 In order that students are able to plan their response to the closure or change, the University will endeavour to give at least one semester’s notice unless the change or closure is for reasons beyond its control.

12 Review of the plan

12. The plan will be reviewed annually both by Academic Board and the Student Liaison Committee of the Board of Governors. The Students’ Union President is a member of both the Academic Board and also the Committee along with other members of the SU and can therefore input into its review.

13 Communication

13.1 This plan will be communicated to applicants through the University’s website for applicants alongside other key documents such as the University’s terms and conditions. It will be available to applicants in a downloadable PDF format so that they may retain it for their records.

13.2 The plan will also be published on the Student Policy page on the website and reference will be made to it in the Student Handbook which is updated each year.

13.3 Staff will be made aware of the plan through publication on the website, reference to the plan in the Quality Assurance Handbook and also through regular briefings.

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