



Student Protection Plan 2018/9

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1. Introduction: Purpose of the Student Protection Plan

Northumbria University is committed to supporting our students achieve the best academic outcomes from their studies. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires universities to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, campus closures, or institutional closure. This Student Protection Plan sets out what measures we have in place to protect our students in the event that a risk to the continuation of studies should arise. The type of event or changes, which might cause such a risk, are detailed below.

A Student Protection Plan is requirement of the University's registration with the Office for Students and it will be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis by the University in collaboration with students as part of ongoing registration with OfS.

The measures contained in this plan are in addition to the protections available to students under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on consumer rights.

2. Our commitments to our students

In line with our [Student Charter](#), we commit to:

- being open and transparent with students should any risk to the continuity of studies arise; we will inform students of risks in a timely manner
- taking reasonable steps to protect students and their study should we discontinue a programme, close a location (building or campus) where a programme is primarily taught, or if we close altogether
- taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures (including students on placement or on an approved interruption to their studies)
- considering students when deciding to implement any substantial changes to a programme or discontinuing it, or closing a location
- supporting our students, by the provision of advice and guidance and other support as appropriate, in the event of significant changes that impact their studies

We commit to informing the OfS of material changes to 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. Any views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan should be sent to the Academic Registry via the above email address.

This Plan will be made publicly available to all students on our website, along with enrolment terms and conditions and other key documents.

3. What type of events will prompt this student protection plan?

We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to programme and module content year on year, and these in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures – see below.

The Student Protection Plan will be triggered in the event of major changes; these include circumstances in which Northumbria University:

- decided to discontinue a specific programme on which students are currently enrolled and teach-out arrangements are not assured
- decided to close the location (building or campus) in which a programme is primarily taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location
- decided to cease operating altogether.

We may also invoke this plan if:

- the University's Tier 4 licence to recruit international students was revoked by UKVI
- accreditation of a programme by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory body (PSRB) was withdrawn
- there are serious issues with an educational partner – e.g. the educational partner becomes insolvent.

Any other circumstance in which we can no longer provide a programme to students would also trigger this plan.

We will take into consideration the needs of all our students, including those with mobility considerations or special educational requirements.

Should any of the measures in this plan need to be implemented, this will be overseen by the Academic Registrar, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the President of the Students' Union, the Head of Legal Services and others as appropriate.

Normally, this Plan will not be triggered for minor changes to the curriculum made in line with the [University's policy](#) and detailed within in our [Enrolment Terms and Conditions](#) (listed under Handbook of Student Regulations), or for changes which are evidently in students' best interest (e.g. the addition of external accreditation). Nor will the Plan be triggered for circumstances specific to individual students e.g. changes to a research student's supervisors or insolvency of an employer sponsoring a Degree Apprenticeship or research student – in these circumstances the University will always seek arrangements which enable students to complete their studies. In all cases there will be communication and consultation with students. Where the Student Protection Plan is not triggered but students feel the programme as delivered varies significantly from what they expected, there are both internal and external complaint processes available to students (see section 11).

4. Likelihood of major changes triggering the Student Protection Plan

Northumbria University is an established UK provider of higher education, tracing its origins to 1969. A Polytechnic from 1969, the University was formally established in 1992. Since

that time, Northumbria University has successfully sustained quality HE provision in the UK and internationally. The University's [annual report](#) and accounts demonstrate a history of strong financial performance and a robust financial position. Noting the University's dedicated mission to offer higher education, its ongoing monitoring of financial sustainability risks and going concern requirements by the University Executive and the Board of Governors, it is therefore extremely unlikely that the University will close due to financial issues.

For international students, the University has a dedicated professional support team focussed on visa and UKVI compliance. We have held our UKVI licence since 2008 (when they were introduced) and have successfully satisfied all UKVI audits. We proactively manage our UKVI licence and we consider there is currently little risk to its retention.

Accreditations by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are actively managed by the University, and particular attention is paid to accreditation with licence to practice implications. We are also committed to maintaining a portfolio of programmes which are enriched by optional PSRB accreditation. The full list of PSRB accreditations and the programmes covered is available [here](#). We reserve the right to review the range of PSRB accreditations on a periodic basis, including when a PSRB periodically adjusts its accreditation requirements. Consequently, and exceptionally, PSRB accreditation may occasionally change. If accreditations change during a period of study by a cohort of students, the University will seek to negotiate with the PSRB to enable current students to complete their studies if possible.

The University's estate in Newcastle, and partner's facilities used for teaching by Northumbria in London and Amsterdam, is actively managed to ensure that it is fit for purpose. We reserve the right to close, refurbish and build new buildings. Northumbria's commitment to enhancing the student experience means that teaching facilities will be improved and adjusted over time. During any periods of change or disruption, the impact on students will be minimised through the guarantee of alternative nearby facilities of equivalent standard. There is also an ongoing refreshment of IT tools and facilities. There is therefore an assurance of continuity of service to students even if classrooms, buildings or other teaching resources are adjusted.

In addition to the above, the University has active risk management controls and continuity plans available to ensure effective service to students.

Notwithstanding the above, the University recognises that the impact of change in smaller operations and/or within franchised/collaborative arrangements may be felt more acutely. Particular protection measures are therefore considered in respect of our:

- London Campus
- Amsterdam Campus
- Franchise and Collaborative Venture provision.

5. Student Protection Measures – Newcastle campus

5.1 If the University decides to:

- discontinue a specific programme on which students are currently enrolled or loses the right to provide a specific programme or qualification, including recognition by a PSRB;
- close the location (building or campus) in which a programme is primarily taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location

we will consult students in line with our Student Charter and the principles noted above (para 2) and take one or more of the following measures to protect continuity of study for our students:

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

and/or

- b) we will liaise with PSRBs where possible to assure teach-out with the guarantee of the accreditation; if this is not possible we will actively negotiate with other universities to seek transfer arrangements for student cohorts and also consider a partial refund to students in compensation for the loss of accreditation

and/or

- c) if the above steps are unsuccessful, we will support students in seeking another provider and continuing their studies with them, utilising student transfer arrangements.

5.2 As noted above, we do not foresee any circumstances in which the University would cease trading or close a campus, but in that unlikely event, the above provisions would also apply.

5.3 As noted above, from time to time the University will adjust teaching facilities and buildings. If this occurs, we will provide students with as much notice as possible and will provide alternative accommodation. Alternate accommodation may be at a different site in the City. We may also consider adjustments to the timetable. At this time there are no plans to close any of our campuses.

5.4 UKVI Tier 4 registration is necessary to admit international students to Newcastle or London Campuses. This is actively managed to ensure that we meet the highest possible standards. Universities are, however, subject to UKVI decisions, including changes to policy over which they have no control. In the unlikely event that the University’s Tier 4 Sponsor Licence was suspended or revoked the University will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to affected students by, for example:

- working with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme or allowing students already in receipt of a Tier 4 visa based upon an allocated Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) from the University to enrol and commence their studies;
- offering students who have not commenced their travel to the University the opportunity to postpone their application pending the resolution of the suspension;
- providing assistance to affected students to switch to an alternative sponsor;
- provision of distance learning support for completion of awards if the student is unable to remain in the UK with Northumbria or with an alternative provider.

5.5 If the University is unable to ensure a satisfactory outcome for students by the engagement described above, the University will consider refunds and compensation as necessary. This will include:

- A refund of tuition fees (to the student or their sponsor) where the programme is withdrawn and no alternative arrangements are feasible; the refund will reflect the circumstances and whether an exit awards is possible.
- Compensation for reasonable and additional travel costs for students affected by a material change in the location of their studies.
- Compensation for other reasonable costs incurred or already committed to (including where accommodation and maintenance arrangements cannot be cancelled) where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study for a programme at the University or elsewhere.

6. Student Protection Measures – London campus

Northumbria's London provision is run by a joint venture company with [QA Ltd](#), with teaching provided by Northumbria and QA academic staff. QA Ltd is an established provider of HE (since 2011) with a substantial background in training and development. QA Ltd have a substantial estate in London of (103,629m² across five sites); our current London campus currently comprises 14,952m².

6.1 We have no plans to cease the University's London provision. However, if the University decides to:

- discontinue a specific programme on which students are currently enrolled or loses the right to provide a specific programme or qualification, including recognition by a PSRB
- close the location (building or campus) in which a programme is primarily taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location

we will consult students in line with our Student Charter and the principles noted above (para 2) and take one or more of the three measures noted in section 5.1 above.

Working with QA Ltd, if appropriate, we will also:

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- ensure alternative teaching and assessment by Northumbria academic staff who are based in Newcastle, if required, including contact time in London and virtual contact as appropriate during teach-out,
- actively liaise with London based universities to support students to transfer, if required,
- secure alternative premises in London, if required.

6.2 The University has no plans to cease provision in London, but in the event that were to happen, the above provisions would also apply. They would also apply if:

- the University withdraws from the partnership with QA Ltd
- QA Ltd ceases trading or chooses to withdraw from the HE provision or its partnership with Northumbria University.

6.3 As noted above, it is probable that the University will, from time to time, adjust teaching facilities and buildings. An increase in student numbers at the London campus may require the University to adjust its estate. If this occurs, we will provide students with as much notice as possible and will provide alternative accommodation. Alternative accommodation may be at a different site in London.

6.4 In the event of the University's Tier 4 licence being suspended or revoked, the measures noted above (5.4) will apply, including liaison with other London based providers of higher education.

6.5 In the event of the University being unable to ensure a satisfactory outcome for students or continuity of study, the University will consider refunds and compensation as noted above (5.5).

7. Student Protection Measures – Amsterdam campus

In 2018/19 the target number of students likely to be taught on the Amsterdam Campus is 100 and student protection measures have been designed accordingly. The University's Amsterdam Campus is hosted in premises owned by the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS); Northumbria space is within an AUAS teaching building in 2018/19. Northumbria programmes in Amsterdam are all taught by Northumbria staff based in Newcastle or staff contracted to teach by Northumbria University. Newcastle based Northumbria staff will travel to Amsterdam to deliver teaching and will provide additional support by virtual means. Access to digital resources for students in Amsterdam will be the same as for students in Newcastle. A small number of permanent Northumbria staff, both academic and professional support, are based in Amsterdam to ensure support for Northumbria's Amsterdam based students. Our Director of Amsterdam Campus will be based permanently in Amsterdam and has responsibility for assuring the student experience. Student accommodation agreements in Amsterdam are not dependent on AUAS.

7.1 We have no plans to cease the University's Amsterdam provision. However, if the University decides to:

- discontinue a specific programme on which students are currently enrolled or loses the right to provide a specific programme or qualification, including recognition by a PSRB
- close the location (building or campus) in which a programme is primarily taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location

we will consult students in line with our Student Charter and the principles noted above (para 2) and take one or more of the 3 measures noted in section 5.1 above. We will also:

- secure alternative premises in Amsterdam, if required
- ensure alternative teaching and assessment by Newcastle based academic staff, if required, including contact time in Amsterdam and virtual contact as appropriate,
- actively liaise with Amsterdam based universities if it is necessary to support students to transfer.

7.2 As noted above, there are no plans that the University will cease operating in Amsterdam, but if it does, the above provisions would also apply.

7.3 As noted above, it is probable that the University will adjust teaching facilities and buildings. As we have future plans to grow the provision in Amsterdam campus, the University may have to extend its estate. If this occurs, we will provide students with as much notice as possible and will provide alternative accommodation. Alternative accommodation may be at a different site in Amsterdam.

7.4 There are no current visa implications for UK students studying in Amsterdam.

7.5 In the event of the University being unable to ensure a satisfactory outcome for students or continuity of study, University will consider refunds and compensation as noted in 5.5 above.

8. Student Protection Measures - Franchise and Collaborative Venture programmes

The University has a number of programmes offered on a franchise or other collaborative venture arrangement with partners. The current list of partnerships and programmes is available: [Partnership Collaboration Information](#) [Collaboration Information](#). The University has [rigorous procedures](#) for approving and reapproving partnerships, including those in which there is additional in-country accreditation.

8.1 In most cases the partner admits, supports, teaches and assesses students; the University normally provides support for learning resources – some direct teaching by Northumbria staff may also be provided. However, the University will invoke the Student Protection Plan in the event of a partner deciding to:

- discontinue a specific programme on which students are currently enrolled or loses the right to provide a specific programme or qualification, including recognition by a PSRB;
- close the location (building or campus) in which a programme is primarily taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location
- cease operating altogether
- withdraw from the HE partnership with Northumbria University without teach-out arrangements being agreed.

The University will explore options with the partner to take one or more of the three measures noted in section 5.1 above. We will also:

- work with the partner and/or in-country accrediting agency to secure alternative in-country providers to support teach-out
- arrange virtual teaching and support by Newcastle based staff, with the support of a third party college or Distance Learning Support Centre, if appropriate.

8.2 The above measures would also apply if the University withdraws from the partnership and teach-out arrangements are uncertain.

9. Notification, advice and support

We will notify students of any changes which may affect their studies in a timely manner. Should the Student Protection Plan need to be triggered, students will be notified by the Academic Registrar. We commit to contacting students at least three months prior to the intended dates of the programme change or closure.

Advice and support will be offered in the first instance by our Ask4Help team. Additional, independent, advice and support is available from the [Northumbria Students Union](#).

10. Related key documents

The Student Protection Plan will be made available to all prospective and current students alongside the following key documents.

- [Enrolment Terms and Conditions](#) (listed under Handbook of Student Regulations)
- [The Handbook of Student Regulations](#)
- The University's Refund Policy
- [The Student Complaint Procedure](#) (listed under Handbook of Student Regulations)

11. Student complaints

Students' who are not content with the proposed outcomes of our Student Protection Plan may seek independent advice from the [Northumbria Students' Union](#) and/or raise a complaint with the University. The [complaint procedure](#) (listed under Handbook of Student Regulations) allows an opportunity for issues to be considered by the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#). Students may also have the right to complain to the Competition and Markets Authority.