

## **Student Protection Plan**

Edge Hill University

UKPRN: 10007823

Legal address:

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Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan:

Lynda Brady, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary

## 1 Purpose of the Student Protection Plan

The purpose of the Student Protection Plan is to preserve the continuation and quality of study for all our students.

In the highly unlikely event that it is not possible to preserve the continuity of your studies, we have a 'Refund and Compensation Policy' which provides for refund of tuition fees, other relevant costs, and payment of compensation, as appropriate, to affected students.

Throughout this document we use the word 'course' to mean a programme of study leading to the award of a qualification.

## 2 Overall risk to continuity of your studies

The University has assessed the overall risk that we will be unable to preserve continuity of your studies as **LOW**.

## 3 How we have assessed the risks

The University has assessed the risks to continuation of your studies by using a common method of risk assessment which takes into account:

- the likelihood that a risk we have identified will actually occur; and
- the severity of the impact on students if it does occur.

We assess the overall level of a particular risk on the following scale:

**LOW                      MODERATE                      HIGH                      EXTREME**

If the University assesses any of the risks as *reasonably likely to occur*, then this Plan will include the steps we will take in order to reduce that risk and preserve the continuity of your studies.

None of the identified risks to which this Plan applies have been assessed as reasonably likely to occur.

## 4 The range of risks we have assessed

We have assessed a range of possible risks to the continuation of your studies. We have taken into consideration how those risks may differ based on the individual needs of our students.

We acknowledge that the same risk, if it were to occur, could have a different impact on individual students depending on their needs, characteristics and personal circumstances.

For example, the risk of being unable to continue to deliver a course part-time might have a bigger impact on students with responsibility for caring for children or elderly relatives as they may be unable to study full-time.

### 4.1 University closure

The risk we have assessed is whether the University, as a whole, is no longer able to operate, or will decide to cease to operate.

The risk that your University, as a whole, will no longer operate is **LOW**.

**It is NOT AT ALL LIKELY that your University will no longer operate.**

The reasons for our assessment are:

- the University's primary strategic aim is to remain a highly valued and financially sustainable organisation that provides an exceptional student learning and living experience;
- our financial performance is strong, our financial statements and reports are published on our website;
- we have a sector-leading surplus, and strong cash balances which puts the University in a robust and resilient position;
- our financial position allows the University to maintain its consistent focus on the student experience;
- we use business continuity management processes to manage any risks to our normal operations in the event of an incident or emergency and to manage any disruption and resume teaching and assessment quickly;
- we have Business Continuity Plans in place across the University;
- the University makes an annual financial return to the Office for Students (OfS) as part of the conditions of registration. The OfS have had no cause to raise concerns about the University's financial health.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### **4.2 Awarding qualifications**

The risk we have assessed is whether the University will lose its power to award degrees or that it will no longer be validated to run one or more of its degree courses.

We have assessed this risk as **LOW**.

**It is NOT AT ALL LIKELY** that your University will be unable to award degrees.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- the University has robust processes in place for approving, developing and assuring the quality of its courses;
- these processes are in our Quality Management Handbook and are aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and ensure compliance with sector recognised standards;
- new academic staff receive an induction to the University's approach to, and systems for, academic quality and enhancement;
- in June 2017 the University was awarded a Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF);
- the TEF assessment panel found that *"course design and assessment practices provide scope for outstanding levels of stretch and secure optimum levels of engagement and commitment to learning, enabling students to achieve their full potential"*;

- the University's Governing Body endorsed the University's continued excellent academic quality and standards in receiving the annual report prepared by the Director of Governance and Assurance; and
- the University does not offer any courses which are subject to validation by an external organisation.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

### 4.3 Professionally accredited courses

The risk we have assessed is whether the University will lose accreditation from any of its courses accredited by professional bodies. For example, we offer courses which lead to Qualified Teacher Status, Registered Nurse Status and qualification as a Social Worker. Other courses, which do not lead to professional qualification, are recognised by professional bodies, for example our law degree is recognised by the Solicitors' Regulation Authority and Bar Standards Board. We note that currently the Government has legislated that students who have not been vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus may not be able to meet the requirements of our professional health care programmes. The University will fully explore alternative options but unvaccinated students considering healthcare programmes leading to professional status should speak to the University in the first instance.

The University has assessed the risk of losing professional accreditation as **LOW**.

It is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** that your University will lose professional accreditation.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- the University has a strong record of developing degree courses that integrate academic study with professional competencies resulting in registered practitioner status;
- we have sufficient specialist and qualified staff in place; and
- we have robust academic quality control measures in place to ensure the University continues to meet the requirements of accreditation.

### ***Ofsted Initial Teacher Education Inspection Reports***

We have assessed the risk to continuity of studies of an adverse Ofsted judgement.

If any part (or Phase) of the University's Initial Teacher Education provision were judged by Ofsted to be 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate', the Faculty of Education would have a defined period of time (usually a year) to address the identified issues and would then undergo re-inspection. Should such a situation occur, current students MAY be adversely affected by the risk to reputation, though this could be managed. Should the Faculty be unable to achieve an improved judgement in a subsequent inspection, there would be a period of teach-out of affected courses.

We have assessed the risk of this as **LOW/MODERATE** at the present time, which reflects the challenges presented by the implementation of a new Ofsted Framework, which requires (of all providers) significant changes to the curriculum offer, and development of the already demanding QA/compliance and partnership arrangements.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- Our Initial Teacher Education was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding or good in the last inspection (2014), although it should be noted that this was under a different inspection framework and there is little continuity between this and any future inspection.
- The Faculty has implemented, and continues to review and develop, a robust range of measures and strategies to ensure that the state of readiness for inspection is maintained to as high a level as possible.
- The Faculty has appointed a new Associate Dean for Teacher Education, which ensures appropriate leadership of this area.

#### 4.4 Availability of locations

The University delivers over 90% of its courses at its main campus in Ormskirk. We deliver a small number of courses in other places such as NHS Trusts and at our premises in Manchester.

The risk we have assessed is whether any of the locations from which we deliver will no longer be available, will close, or will change.

We have assessed this risk as **LOW**.

This risk is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** to occur.

Our reasons for this assessment are:

- we have no plans to change or close locations;
- we either own or lease premises on a long-term lease;
- all our partner organisations are subject to legal agreements with the University to deliver courses at the specified location.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### 4.5 Subject or department closure

The risk we have assessed is whether the University will no longer be able to deliver courses to students in any of our subject areas or departments. Undergraduate programmes in clinical medicine are currently underpinned by provision at the University of Liverpool which acts as a contingency school in line with the General Medical Council Regulations.

We have assessed this risk as **LOW** because there are no plans to close any subjects or departments.

It is **NOT AT ALL LIKELY** that we will close a department or subject area.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### 4.6 Course Closure

The risk we have assessed is whether the University is no longer able to deliver any

of its courses to students. In particular, the University has considered whether there is a risk of course closures in the next three years.

We have assessed the risk of course closure impacting on the continuation of your studies as **LOW**.

It is **NOT AT ALL LIKELY** that your course will be closed without you being able to complete your studies.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- when we make a decision to close a course the first step we take is to stop recruiting to it;
- we guarantee to teach you to the end of your course, this is sometimes called 'teach-out'; and
- our robust quality assurance procedures ensure the quality of all our courses throughout the period of study, including any that are in 'teach-out'.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### **4.7 Rare or niche courses**

The University has considered whether it is the sole or a rare supplier of any of its courses. We have identified the following:

##### **BA (Hons) Television Production Management (sole supplier)**

We have assessed the risk of being unable to preserve continuity of study on this course as **LOW**.

It is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** that you will be unable to complete your studies.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- we have sufficient well-qualified staff to teach the course;
- the University's proximity to Media City means it is always likely to be able to recruit teaching staff with the appropriate qualifications and experience.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

##### **Post-Graduate Certificate in Dyslexia (rare supplier)**

The University is a rare supplier of this course; delivery and assessment of the course must be by specially qualified staff.

We have assessed the risk to your studies as **LOW**.

It is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** that you will be unable to complete your studies.

The reason for our assessment is because the University has sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified, specialist staff for continued delivery of the course.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to

reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### **4.8 Course Components**

We have assessed the risk that the University is unable to deliver material components in one or more courses.

We have assessed this risk as **LOW**.

This risk is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** to occur.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- we incorporate assessment of sustainability and resilience of modules in our approval, monitoring and review processes; and
- we have an established bank of Associate Tutors and Visiting Lecturers who can provide additional support in the event of an unanticipated absence.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### **4.9 Modes of Study**

The risk we have assessed is whether the University will be unable to continue to deliver one or more modes of study to students.

We have assessed this risk as **LOW**.

This risk is **NOT AT ALL LIKELY** to occur.

The University offers full-time and part-time modes of delivery and has no plans to withdraw or change its mode of delivery.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

#### **4.10 Recruiting or teaching a particular type of student**

The risk we have assessed is whether the University will no longer be able to recruit or teach a particular type of student.

The University has assessed this risk as **LOW**.

This risk is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** to occur.

#### **International Students**

In order to enrol international students from outside the United Kingdom and Ireland, the University must have a licence from the UK government. This is called a Student Sponsor Licence. The University has had a Student Sponsor Licence (or equivalent) since 2009. If the University were to lose this licence it would mean it could no longer recruit, enrol or teach students from outside the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The University has assessed the risk of it losing its Student Sponsor Licence as

## **LOW.**

The reasons for this assessment are:

- the University's incremental approach to the recruitment of international students from low risk locations;
- recruiting international students from a pool of applicants with strong academic profiles and with high standards of English Language;
- having a dedicated Compliance & Immigration Manager with specialist knowledge of UKVI requirements and staff who undertake regular specialist training from the Home Office to ensure their knowledge is up to date;
- the University's active engagement with UKVI Premium Account Services; providing staff resources dedicated to responsibility for UKVI compliance; and our data thresholds being comfortably within UKVI parameters.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

## **Apprenticeships**

There are also specific considerations in relation to apprenticeship provision. The University's apprenticeship portfolio is linked mainly to its core healthcare training provision and is supported by well-developed infrastructure ensuring the quality of its apprenticeships. We therefore have a high level of confidence in our 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, we would ensure that existing apprentices were able to complete their programmes either within the University or at other institutions. Each apprenticeship programme includes an agreement between the 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 apprentices. However, the University is not responsible if an employer does not fulfil their 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 an apprentice unless they secure an alternative sponsoring employer.

The University has assessed the risk of being unable to engage with its apprenticeship provision as **LOW**.

The reasons for this assessment are:

- the University partners with organisations in the health care sector who can demonstrate high levels of quality of provision and financial sustainability;
- the University has been assessed by Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency with both organisations noting high levels of confidence in University provision;
- the University has a dedicated apprenticeship team with specialist knowledge of the requirements of apprentices, employers and the associated regulations;
- the University offers students on its apprenticeships programmes full access to all support services.

#### 4.11 Partnership Arrangements

We have assessed the risk of you being unable to continue your studies because our partnership with another organisation has ended.

We have assessed the risk of you being unable to continue your studies with one of our partners as **LOW**.

This risk is **NOT REASONABLY LIKELY** to occur.

The University has a very small number of collaborative partnerships with other organisations to deliver some modules and courses.

The reasons for our assessment are:

- there are rigorous approval and closure procedures for partnerships with other organisations;
- we require an exit strategy to be in place before a partnership is approved;
- we enter into a contract with our partners which provides legal protection to ensure appropriate teach out arrangements are in place for students
- we have robust quality assurance processes in place to ensure the quality of your studies is preserved throughout your course.

This risk is not sufficiently likely to occur to require specific steps to be taken to reduce the risk, or to have a plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

### 5 Measures to support continuation of studies

#### 5.1 General measures

The University has the following general measures in place to ensure students are fully protected.

##### **Elongated timeline for course approval and modification**

The University has an elongated timeline for course approval and modification in order to ensure compliance with guidance on consumer law advice issued to higher education providers by the Competition and Markets Authority. This means modifications to courses are strictly controlled.

##### **Management of course withdrawals and closures**

The University's policy and practice is that course or module closures will not affect current students who will be supported to complete their studies. The withdrawal of a course, or termination of delivery by a third party, for example, a collaborative partner organisation, are managed to ensure that the interests of current students are fully protected. Courses are closed to new applicants and are then taught-out to all current students.

During the 'teach-out' period courses continue to undergo the full range of quality monitoring and review procedures, including programme modification, to ensure that the course curriculum and standards remain valid and appropriate as part of a defined exit strategy.

##### **Management of changes to courses**

The University's robust processes for making changes to courses and modules

requires evidence of consultation with student representatives, typically via a Programme Board or Staff-Student Consultative Forum.

Changes to material components of the course require:

- evidence of student consent before changes are approved; and
- in limited circumstances, individual written consent must be demonstrated.

Minor changes require evidence of consultation with student representatives.

The University also provides a course changes section on its website and informs readers that courses may be subject to change.

## 5.2 Additional Measures

The University's assessment is that none of the risks are reasonably likely to occur.

In the unlikely event that a risk did become reasonably likely to occur, we would amend this Plan to include the additional measures we would take to reduce that risk. We would also include an action plan of the steps we would take to preserve the continuity of study for affected students.

The University would take a personalised approach to action planning and consider the individual needs of affected students, providing support tailored to the individual. We would consider our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the characteristics, needs and personal circumstances of affected students.

## 6 Refund and Compensation Policy

For all the reasons we have given, we consider it is **not likely** that we will be unable to preserve continuity of your studies. In the **rare** event that we cannot, the University's Refunds and Compensation Policy would apply.

Our Refunds and Compensation Policy can be found here:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/refund-and-compensation-policy.pdf>.

Our latest financial statement for the year ending 31 July 2021 demonstrates we have sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation in the event we are unable to preserve continuity of study.

## **7. Informing staff and students about the Student Protection Plan**

### **7.1 Current and future students**

We will share, and explain, our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by:

- publishing it on the University website;
- including it with the materials we provide to applicants when we make an offer to study on a course; and
- by drawing it to the attention of our current students at enrolment in each year of study.

### **7.2 Staff**

We will share and explain our Student Protection Plan with staff by:

- publishing it on our staff intranet pages;
- ensuring that staff are aware of the implications of the Student Protection Plan when proposing course changes and closure (by including consideration of it in our approval and monitoring processes);
- including it in staff learning and development activities, including the University induction for new staff;
- sharing it with the Edge Hill Students' Union.

## **8 Implementing the Student Protection Plan**

### **8.1 Communication with affected students**

The University's risk assessment demonstrates that none of the risks are sufficiently likely to occur to require specific measures to be taken to reduce those risks or to have a specific plan in place to protect continuity of your studies.

If any of the risks increase and become reasonably likely to occur, the Plan will be amended to include any specific, additional measures to reduce the risk to continuation of studies.

The removal or replacement of a module, or closure of a course, are subject to formal University procedures which require consultation with current students. Module and course modifications are similarly consulted upon, with the additional requirement for consent where major changes are being proposed.

Our timeline for making material course changes has been developed as far as possible to minimise their impact on prospective students. However, where short notice changes are deemed important and necessary, arrangements are made for the timely updating of publicity materials, and where appropriate, direct communication with current applicants and offer-holders.

### **8.2 Support for affected students**

The University will provide tailored, individual support for students affected through its personal tutor system, Programme Leaders and a range of professional support services.

### **8.3 Independent Advice for affected students**

You can obtain independent advice from the Edge Hill Students' Union at [www.edgehillsu.org.uk](http://www.edgehillsu.org.uk).

### **8.4 Making a complaint**

If you want to make a complaint about the way in which we implement the Student Protection Plan, you can make a complaint using the University's Student Complaints Procedure, which you can find on our website. If you have any queries about how to make a complaint you can contact [complaints@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@edgehill.ac.uk). The Edge Hill Students' Union can provide independent advice and support on making a complaint.

## **9 Development and Review of the Student Protection Plan**

The University's existing risk management procedures involve an institutional assessment of risk three times per year. The Student Protection Plan will be included as a standing agenda item at Risk Management Group meetings and the risks to continuity of study will be included in the University's Risk Register which will be updated to reflect any change in levels of risk identified.

Our Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually and revised, if necessary, to ensure that our assessment of risk remains current and that mitigating measures remain practicable, relevant and effective.

In order to ensure that our students' views, interests and needs are taken into account, our students will be involved in the review of the Student Protection Plan by:

- consultation with the Edge Hill University Students' Union; and
- consideration of the Student Protection Plan through the University's Academic Board Committee structure, at which students are represented by Edge Hill University Students' Union sabbatical officers.

Edge Hill University

\*This document was reviewed in January 2022 to ensure that it remains relevant. Its next scheduled review will take place in January 2023. Should any significant changes arise impacting our risk position, we will move to an earlier review.