



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

## Student Protection Plan

### Introduction: What this Student Protection Plan is for

This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures we have in place to protect you as our student in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies should arise. The type of events or changes, which might cause such a risk, are detailed below.

This plan will be submitted to our regulator, the Office for Students, for approval in April 2018 and will be available to all current and potential students.

The measures contained in this plan apply to all students studying for a qualification with the University of Sheffield. They are in addition to the protections you have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on your consumer rights.

### Our commitments to you

We commit to:

1. being open and transparent with you should any risk to the continuity of your programme of studies arise, and inform you in a timely manner
2. taking reasonable steps to protect your studies should we discontinue a programme, close a department or discipline, close a location (building or campus) where a programme is taught or should the University close altogether
3. consulting with students and considering students' views in a timely manner before deciding to implement any substantial changes to their programme or discontinuing it, or closing a department or closing a location
4. taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures
5. informing the OfS of any changes that may necessitate a review of this Student Protection Plan or any of the measures contained within it.

If you have any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, please contact the Director of Academic Services via [SPP@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:SPP@sheffield.ac.uk)

### Notification, advice and support

Should the student protection plan need to be triggered, you will be notified by the Director of Academic Programmes and Student Experience (or delegate) via email.

Advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the Director of Academic Programmes and Student Experience (or delegate). Additional, non-academic, advice and support is available from Director of Student Support Services (or delegate).

We have agreed with our Students' Union that students will have access to independent advice from the Students' Union through the Student Advice Centre if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.

### What can I do if I have a complaint?

If you are not content with the proposed outcomes, you can raise the issue under our Complaints Procedure which can be found at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/complaints-and-appeals>

**Provider's name:** The University of Sheffield

**Provider's UKPRN:** 10007157

**Legal address:** Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN

**Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan:** Director of Academic Services via [SPP@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:SPP@sheffield.ac.uk)

## **Student protection plan for the period 2018/19**

### **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 risks to the continuation of study for our students arise from both internal events and/or external events outside our control.

#### **Internal events:**

The risk that the provider as a whole is unable to operate is very low because our financial performance is, over time, strong. The University reported total comprehensive income of £17.2m in 2016/17 and had total unrestricted reserves of £308m at 31 July 2017. We also reported low borrowings (£74m against a maximum of £260m) and high liquidity days (52 against a target of 15). We have mature business continuity arrangements in place including plans to deal with a range of incidents. We regularly run test exercises to ensure our arrangements are fit for purpose which include post-hoc evaluation and identification of learning.

The risk that we decide to close the location (building or campus) in which the programme is taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location is low. Our estate is in of a suitable size and quality, we have an Estates Strategy in place to guide future plans and good governance of our decisions including suitable senior leadership and strong links to monitoring of the University's financial position.

The risk that we decide to discontinue your specific programme on timescales that directly affect you is low because we plan any course discontinuations to allow current students to complete their studies. Where a course is discontinued we would close the programme to new recruitment and 'teach-out' current student cohorts. We have experience of managing this process successfully.

The risk that we discontinue or do not offer programmes due to insufficient enrolment and programme take-up or continuation is low. We regularly review the suite of programmes we offer to ensure that keep pace with student demand and may choose to close a programme to future cohorts where demand is low or as part of a refresh of our wider portfolio

The risk that the qualification you obtain is significantly different from that for which you enrolled is low because of our approach to programme development and our approach to managing course discontinuation, outlined above. We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to programmes and module content year on year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback. Our review and quality enhancement processes are informed by student consultation and we endeavour to communicate planned changes in a timely and helpful manner. These minor amendments in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures. Further guidance on what may be deemed a minor adjustment and/or improvement can be found at: [https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.753207!/file/CMA\\_Guidance - Inform Consult Consent Dec 17.pdf](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.753207!/file/CMA_Guidance_-_Inform_Consult_Consent_Dec_17.pdf)

The risk that we stop teaching a discipline is low for the majority of the University's provision. The University is in the process of completing a full review of its undergraduate provision in order to ensure that the programme portfolio is appropriate and that we are actively recruiting to programmes. Where we offer specialist programmes, teaching is delivered by a combination of

permanent and contract staff which can be adjusted as required in response to changing circumstances.

The risk that we are unable to provide suitable supervision for students studying for doctorates is low. We have experience of managing changes to supervisory arrangements due to staff retirements or where staff have left the University. In the past this has included transferring supervision to new supervisors where alternative staff are available in the right subject area or, where this is not possible, establishing arrangements whereby pastoral support is offered by an internal supervisor and disciplinary support is offered by an external supervisor.

#### **External events:**

The risk that we lose the right to provide the programme or qualification for which you are registered is low. We have a long-established track record of offering high quality provision and established relationships with relevant professional accrediting bodies across our provision. For our apprenticeship provision we have contracts in place which include clauses regarding discontinuation.

The risk that we lose our tier 4 licence is low, evidenced by the University's inclusion in the recent extension of the Tier 4 pilot process, based on our having a consistently low visa refusal rate. We have specialist teams in place to understand and respond to UKVI requirements. There is clear senior accountability and ownership in place and reporting lines are well established in the organisational governance structure.

The risk that we cease operating through no choice of our own is very low. The University is a large organisation with strong management and governance arrangements in place for managing our business. We have business continuity plans in place which are regularly reviewed and tested through practice exercises. We have independent scrutiny of our activities through our Council and our independent external auditors.

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

If we are unable to deliver specialist programmes in the next three years our immediate response would be to seek to use those elements of our student protection measures that were most easily within our control (see below).

In the event that the risk materialises, we will take one or more of the following measures to protect students' continuity of study.

1. whenever possible, we will make arrangements to 'teach out' our current students where we have voluntarily decided to close a programme. This means that we commit to ensuring programmes of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students within existing timeframes determined by programme and University regulations, even though the programme is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.
2. where this is not possible then we will offer an alternative programme at the University of Sheffield or support in seeking another provider to enable students to continue their programme, utilising student transfer arrangements.
3. where students are studying on specialist programmes which are not readily available locally or nationally then we will investigate alternative options which may include internal or external programme transfer.

These measures may be brought into play at any time, if, for example, doing so would reduce the impact or likelihood of any interruption to your studies. Further information on relevant policies and procedures can be found at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/policies-procedures>

### **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**

The University Tuition Fee Refund Policy is available at:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/fees/refunds>

The Student Financial Compensation Policy is available at:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/fees/compensation>

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

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by making the plan available on our website and referencing it appropriately in our communications with students during the recruitment and admissions process.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose programme changes by including a reference to the Student Protection Plan in our programme approval and amendment documentation.

We will review the Plan annually and will regularly seek views on this plan from Students' Union officers and the Student Advice Centre as part of our student engagement processes. Any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, should be referred to the Director of Academic Services via [SPP@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:SPP@sheffield.ac.uk)

We will inform students of any material changes which may affect their studies in a timely manner. Should the student protection plan need to be triggered, you will be notified by the Director of Academic Programmes and Student Experience (or delegate) via email. We commit to giving you the maximum amount of notice of any changes, but at least 12 weeks prior to the intended dates of programme change or closure where this is possible.

If we need to implement the measures in our Student Protection Plan we will use established mechanisms operated through Student Support Services to support students collectively and individually.

Advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the Director of Academic Programmes and Student Experience (or delegate). Additional, non-academic, advice and support is available from Director of Student Support Services (or delegate).

We have agreed with our Students' Union that students will have access to independent advice from the Students' Union through the Student Advice Centre if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.