

Student Protection Plan (Updated for 2023-24)

The Student Protection Plan is a document that is approved by the Office for Students (OfS) that every University is required to have. It sets out what measures we have in place to protect you, as a student at the University, should a risk to the continuation of your studies arise and details how we would communicate with you about this.

This plan has been prepared to comply with condition C3 of the regulatory framework for higher education in England as set out by the Office for Students (OfS).

The University has established processes designed to monitor risk and, if required, to preserve the continuation of study for students.

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

The risk that the University, as a whole, will no longer operate is LOW. It is NOT AT ALL LIKELY that our University will no longer operate.

1. Financial Risk

The University considers the risk of being unable to operate as very low given its mechanisms to budget appropriately. The University controls expenditure carefully and has a prudent approach to financial management.

The University regularly undertakes detailed financial modelling and sensitivity analysis on a range of scenarios. As a result, it can respond quickly to changes in government policy or unexpected threats or opportunities. The University budget process ensures that the financial sustainability of the University is protected while ensuring student facing services (academic and support) are always prioritised.

The appointment of all staff is subject to a rigorous process and all appointments require the approval of the Vice Chancellor or nominee. There is no automatic replacement of vacancies and all appointments are challenged, with resources directed to those areas of greatest need. Allocation of financial resources is directly linked to student requirements to ensure value for money and a top-quality student experience.

The University has relatively small numbers of international students and therefore is not subject to market volatility or government/visa issues affecting cohorts significantly. The University supports the cross subsidisation of subjects whenever possible, and recognises that while some subjects will see declining numbers, others will grow as a result of market forces. The University is committed to offering as full a range of subjects as possible. This reasserts the position that the financial risk of being unable to operate is a very low risk.

2. Teaching Quality and Standards

The University does not rely upon any partners to validate its undergraduate or postgraduate provision.

In 2016 the University was given the award of TEF gold. The teaching excellence framework (TEF) is a system that assesses the quality of teaching in universities in England. The framework provides a resource for students to judge teaching quality in universities. Universities are classified gold, silver or bronze. These ratings are determined by six core metrics based on teaching, academic support and progression to employment.

The conclusion is that the quality of teaching at the University is of a high standard and this is demonstrated in the determinations by the external bodies mentioned in this section who have inspected or reviewed the provision at Liverpool Hope University. This reasserts the position that losing degree awarding powers is a very low risk.

3. University Campuses

The University has two teaching campuses which are 4 miles away from each other in Liverpool. Should either be subject to a major incident rendering the campus unable to operate, courses could be taught at the other campus or alternative space within Liverpool. In the event of a major incident at one of the University campuses, such as a fire, the University has a business continuity plan in place which would be funded by our business interruption insurance. This would enable the University to quickly find alternative facilities to ensure continuation of student studies.

The University has no plans to close either of its campuses and will continue to use its cash reserves to fund a major capital investment programme across both campuses, ensuring top quality learning and teaching facilities for students and staff. The Estate is well maintained and there are no concerns about the quality of any of the facilities or a need to close any of its buildings due to a poor state of repair. The current building project to establish a state-of-the-art Learning and Teaching facility at Hope Park is due to complete in 2023/24 and is being managed to ensure that disruption to students and campus life is minimal.

4. Availability of Courses and Measures to Support Continuation of Study

a. Major Changes to the content of a Course (including as the result of the unanticipated unavailability of key members of staff)

Changes to the content of a Course will occur within the established quality processes at the University or as a result of planned cyclical validation. In the unlikely event that major in-year changes to the content of a Course are required, the University will ensure that these are undertaken according to the agreed process for Course modifications.

The risk of the need for major in-year changes to the content of a Course is LOW.

b. Suspension of recruitment to a Course

The decision to suspend a Course is usually taken ahead of the annual recruitment cycle but there may be some decisions that are made no later than mid-July. Any decision will consider the impact of the proposed suspension of recruitment on applicants and current students and the process for notifying students and applicants. Where the suspension of the Course is approved, the University will use all reasonable endeavours to safeguard the delivery of the Course for continuing students (known as “teach out”). Where a decision to suspend recruitment to a Course is taken and offers have already been made, the University will notify all applicants promptly and offer support to transfer to another Course at the University or release applicants to another higher education provider.

The risk of the need for suspension of recruitment to a Course outside the agreed arrangements is LOW.

c. Termination of a Course

Any decision to terminate a course is subject to satisfactory arrangements being made for students to complete their Course and be assessed for the award for which they are registered (“teach out”). Any teach out provision following a termination decision will be

monitored through the University's established academic governance structures.

The risk of the need for termination of a Course outside the agreed arrangements is LOW.

d. Loss of accreditation from a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB)

The University takes all reasonable steps to ensure continued compliance with the accreditation requirements set out by our PSRBs. This is monitored through the University's established procedures for the management of quality and standards. In the event that a PSRB withdraws an accreditation from a Course, the University will work with the PSRB to ensure satisfactory arrangements are made for current students to complete their course and to be assessed for the accredited awards for which students are registered ("teach out"). In the exceptional circumstances that the University is unable to protect continuation of study on the accredited course, we will ensure that students are offered the opportunity to complete their course without accreditation or are offered reasonable support to transfer to another suitable accredited programme at the University or another provider holding the relevant accreditation.

The risk of loss of accreditation from a professional, statutory or regulatory body for an individual course is LOW.

5. Key Components in a Course

The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver material components of its programmes is low because of the way the programmes are designed. The University does not have small modules in its undergraduate (UG) programmes and each year is based either on two 60 credit blocks or one 120 credit block. Thus, each programme can be delivered by a range of academic staff rather than being reliant on specific individuals and the order of delivery of essential material can be easily changed if necessary. This reduces the risk for the student and provides stability for the teaching of the undergraduate courses.

A significant proportion of the UG students at Hope are registered on Combined Honours courses. These programmes are structured and timetabled in such a way as to ensure that the delivery of one subject does not affect the other. This means that a wide range of combinations of subjects are available without risk of a negative student experience.

As Hope offers professional courses in teacher training, social work and sports rehabilitation, the provision of professional placements by the University is significant. In the case of teacher training the University has a network of 400+ local schools and other providers so the availability of placements is generally not problematic as there are usually alternative sources to approach if one placement is not available. The social work placements are allocated through well-developed networks and again the existence of a wider number of opportunities means that all students can be placed with alternatives if their first choice is not available. There is a network of Sports Rehabilitation placements maintained by the Academic Team and there is an in-house Clinic facility where students can complete part of their placement requirement.

6. Modes of Study

The University does not generally deliver many alternative modes of study. The majority of the study (particularly at undergraduate level) is done on campus face to face and is full time. The University has a small number of online PG Certificates. If a mode of study was to be changed, the University would seek to consult with students in the same way that it would with any material change to a programme.

7. International Students

The University currently holds a licence to sponsor students from overseas who require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK. If there was an issue with the University's licence, students would be given help and advice in relation to finding an alternative provider in the UK. At the present time there are no risks to the University's highly trusted sponsor status.

8. Students taught in collaboration with other partners

Any students studying on a School Direct programme where Liverpool Hope is the awarding body will have the opportunity to complete their PGCE at Liverpool Hope should there be any viability issues within the collaborative partner school.

All PGR students studying at either Maryvale, Newman or St Mary's will be able to transfer to Liverpool Hope should their respective colleges no longer be able to operate.

All students in the Network of Hope will initially be dealt with by the registering college and will have the opportunity to transfer to courses at Hope if it proves the most suitable option.

9. Compensation arrangements

The University has in place a Refund policy which deals with circumstances when a student withdraws from a programme or when a programme is discontinued.

The University recognises that every case is different and that it is not possible to produce a pre-defined answer that would cover every possible situation where compensation may be sought. Therefore, every case will be considered on its own merits.

The University will establish a Compensation Panel in order to consider all requests and situations potentially meriting a compensation payment. This will be chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost. The factors to be considered in arriving at a suitable level of compensation will include the length of disruption to the course, reimbursement of course costs incurred directly by the student, impact on learning, opportunity costs, travel costs etc.

The University's latest financial statement for the year ending 31st July 2022 demonstrates we have sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation in the event that we are unable to preserve continuity of study.

10. Communication

The SPP is published on the University website in the section containing all student information. The SPP forms part of the Student Guide. This is sent to all applicants when they receive an offer from the University.

If any element of the SPP has to be implemented students will be informed as soon as is reasonably possible. The University will use all reasonable endeavours to provide students with at least 30 days' notice of any activation of the SPP but there will be some very rare occasions when this may not be possible.

All students affected (whatever their characteristics) will be taken into consideration when the University decides how best to communicate with students over any implementation of the SPP. The relevant Head of School/Department will be responsible for putting together a communication mechanism to ensure that all students, regardless of their circumstances are able to actively engage with discussions. In most cases, the University will seek to use a

taught session (wherever possible) to speak to students on a group basis but to offer on- to-one meetings for individual concerns to be raised. The University will also use the online learning portal and student email to convey messages but this will be in conjunction with other more personal methods of communication.

Students who wish to complain about the way that the SPP has been implemented should use the University Complaints Procedure and direct their complaint to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.

11. Force Majeure

The University has in place emergency response and business continuity plans to deal with a range of unexpected and exceptional circumstances. These plans are well-developed and have evolved in maturity through exercise training and previous responses to incidents.

12. Review

This Plan will be presented to and require final approval from University Council on an annual basis.