

Student Protection Plan

Version 200418

Lancaster University's Student Protection Plan (SPP) is intended to provide assurance to our current and future students and to the Office for Students (OfS) (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>) that we have in place arrangements to protect the quality and continuation of study on your chosen programme of study.

You may be studying for a Lancaster award delivered at our Bailrigg campus in Lancaster or by distance or blended learning, or you may be studying at one of our campuses overseas, or on a programme in the UK or overseas delivered by one of our institutional partners. This SPP describes the protection in place for students studying for a Lancaster award, as set out in this plan, in order to safeguard continuation of study under all delivery arrangements. Whilst the arrangements for this protection will differ depending on each partnership agreement, Lancaster has in place robust contractual agreements with all its partners to look after the interests of students, and operates rigorous and regular monitoring to ensure partners discharge their contractual responsibilities where required.

Where there are unexpected changes to study, those students who are known by the University to have particular needs which require additional support will be contacted and provided with individual support.

Some students will be studying at Lancaster as part of an exchange, visit or articulation agreement to and from another institution; this SPP covers these students whilst they are registered at Lancaster, although not studying for a Lancaster award.

Details of the protections for students studying within a partnership arrangement are provided in Section 4 below.

Section 1

Our assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students and arrangements in place to mitigate those risks and protect you so you can complete your programme of study

Category	Risk	Protection
Financial	<p>The risk that the University is no longer able to operate or has to close completely: Very Low</p> <p>Lancaster University has a long-standing track record of robust financial performance and management. Our financial position is closely monitored both internally, through robust governance structures, and externally by auditors, an independent credit rating agency and the UK higher education regulator.</p>	<p>Whilst we believe the risk of not being able to operate completely has a very low likelihood of happening, measures that are in place to protect students in continuing their studies include robust insurance provision, considerable financial reserves and a strong credit rating which we have had for many years. These would allow the University to refund tuition fees and to reimburse costs incurred to students for non-continuation of studies in line with our Refund and Reimbursement Policy.</p>

Category	Risk	Protection
Infrastructure	<p>The risk that the University as a whole is unable to operate for a sustained period due to unexpected and exceptional circumstances (such as health epidemics, floods, terror/cyber attacks and other <i>force majeure</i>) affecting the Bailrigg campus: Low</p> <p>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. The University is also involved in Pandemic Consequences Management Planning with the local</p>	<p>In the unlikely event that the University was unable to continue to deliver teaching, research supervision and services for a sustained period due to <i>force majeure</i> or other incidents, we would seek to adopt a range of continuity measures which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation to alternative venues for teaching, supervision and service provision, as close as possible to the Bailrigg campus; • Relocation to alternative domestic accommodation for students living in University accommodation; • Critical support services, such as disability support, mental health support and services for international students, relocated as appropriate;

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	Resilience Forum, where key Lancaster staff play an active role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation and partnership working with emergency services and other external authorities; • Academic and wellbeing advice would be made available to students; • Financial support where material additional costs to students are incurred.
Academic	<p>The risk that the University loses its power to award degrees: Very Low</p> <p>Lancaster University has been awarding degrees since 1964 and is regularly audited and monitored on the quality and standards of its teaching provision and awards by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), its last inspection was conducted in 2015.</p> <p>The University also operates a robust internal academic quality assurance framework which regularly reviews its provision, including its engagement with students, and engages with external reviewers and examiners as part of this framework.</p> <p>The University achieved the Gold standard in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment and was awarded University of the Year 2018, largely on account of its league table positioning driven by high levels of student satisfaction and graduate outcomes.</p>	<p>In the very unlikely event that the University would lose its power to award degrees, a range of measures would be put in place, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options for students to transfer any credit achieved by means of an official interim transcript and transfer to a similar course at another institution; • Validation arrangements for another high quality university to validate Lancaster's degree programmes; • Options for students to receive tuition fee refund and/or cost reimbursement in line with the University's Refund and Reimbursement Policy.
Academic	The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver key components of your programme due to unexpected or unavoidable changes, such as long-term absence of a member of staff: Very low	In the unlikely event that key components (i.e. modules) of a programme could not be delivered due to unexpected circumstances, continuation on your chosen programme of study would be safeguarded through:

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	<p>Lancaster University periodically changes its curriculum so programmes remain attractive to applicants and deliver highly employable graduates. Students are involved in curriculum design and development, and current students are consulted if any change is proposed to their programme whilst they are studying on it, in accordance with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines. Prospective applicants are provided with accurate and up to date information on available programmes.</p> <p>The University's programme design and approval process is organised and managed to take place in sufficient time for new information to be published in prospectuses and for any consultation with students to take place.</p> <p>We have established processes in place to consult with and inform students (and where relevant applicants) of any material changes to their courses.</p> <p>Resource requirements are considered during the programme approval process to ensure sustainability, and the majority of modules are delivered by more than one member of staff with the appropriate subject specialism.</p> <p>Each postgraduate research student will have a minimum of one main supervisor who will be part of a supervisory team. Supervisors may leave the University and, under such circumstances, appropriately qualified replacements are approved, typically drawn from the wider supervisory team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary staff recruitment (or transfer) to the required subject discipline; • Re-scheduling of the affected component/module, ensuring all pre-requisite learning is considered; • Use of alternative components/modules as appropriate to ensure programme learning outcomes can still be met; • Where the above options were not available, and programme learning outcomes could not be met, students would be supported to find alternative programmes at the University, or would be provided with support to transfer to another institution with official confirmation of credit already achieved in the form of an interim transcript. Under these circumstances the University would offer options for tuition fee refunds and/or reimbursement of costs in line with the University's Refund and Reimbursement Policy. <p>Further disability needs assessments/adjustments may be undertaken to allow students to take alternative modules where necessary.</p> <p>Academic and wellbeing advice and guidance would be made available to students.</p> <p>The risk of a postgraduate research student not having assigned an appropriately qualified supervisory team is very low; if this did occur, the University would seek to hire in relevant expertise or support the student in transfer to an appropriate alternative institution.</p>

Category	Risk	Protection
Academic	<p>The risk that specialist equipment and materials required for teaching and learning may be unavailable for a prolonged period: Very Low</p> <p>We employ skilled technicians who support the maintenance and use of specialist equipment and materials and there are regular equipment maintenance schedules in place. Business continuity plans are in place to address such eventualities.</p>	<p>In the extremely unlikely event that specialist equipment and materials would be unavailable for teaching for a prolonged period of time, we would ensure you could continue to study on your programme by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loaning relevant specialist equipment and materials as required; • Re-scheduling teaching to a time when the equipment is available; • Using alternative means to deliver the required content, provide equivalent learning experience and assess that you have met the required learning outcomes of the programme. <p>Further disability needs assessments/adjustments may be undertaken to allow students to use alternative equipment or materials where necessary.</p> <p>Academic and wellbeing advice and guidance would be made available to students.</p>
Academic / Compliance	<p>The risk that the University would lose its existing Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation such as for the medical degree or degrees in Law, Accounting and Finance and Psychology: Low</p> <p>The University has robust systems in place to assess and monitor ongoing compliance with the various requirements of the professional bodies, as evidenced by our recent internal audit carried out by PWC and by our recent re-accreditations by the professional bodies themselves, such as The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the General</p>	<p>In the unlikely event that a professional programme loses its PSRB accreditation, students will be able to continue to study on the programme and the University will take the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek re-accreditation at the earliest opportunity; • Where permitted by the professional body, seek to apply professional accreditation retrospectively to any degree awarded during the period where accreditation had been suspended; • Offer students the opportunity to change programme if they so wish should accreditation no longer be possible, with options for tuition fee refund and/or cost

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	<p>Medical Council, the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professions Council.</p>	<p>reimbursement in line with the University's Refund and Reimbursement Policy.</p> <p>Academic and wellbeing advice and guidance would be made available to students.</p>
<p>Compliance</p>	<p>The risk that the University is no longer able to recruit and continue to teach and supervise international students studying under a Tier 4 visa because the University's sponsor licence has been revoked: Low</p> <p>The University has been a Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) under the UK Government's Points-based Immigration system since 2009 and we have demonstrated compliance with our immigration sponsor duties throughout this time. Compliance in relation to the recruitment and admission of international students, record-keeping and monitoring student engagement whilst studying has been audited by the UK's Immigration and Visa Service (UKVI) Higher Education Audit Team (HEAT) in March 2018 and the University has monitored its ongoing compliance undertaken by our internal auditors.</p>	<p>In the unlikely event that the University lost its Tier 4 sponsor licence, we would ensure that our current international students could complete their studies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brokering with another HEI of equivalent standing and reputation to effect a transfer onto an equivalent programme, ensuring that any credit accrued would be confirmed in an official interim transcript; • Under these circumstances the University would offer options for tuition fee refunds and/or cost reimbursement in line with the University's Refund and Reimbursement Policy; • Where there were no suitable places available at another university, the University would consider refund and reimbursement to students in line with the Refund and Reimbursement Policy. <p>Under these circumstances the University would provide academic, wellbeing and immigration advice support to affected students.</p> <p>In the unlikely event that the University lost its Tier 4 sponsor licence, we would consider reimbursement of costs for applicants who had accepted an offer of a place to study at Lancaster.</p>

Section 2

Policy on Refunding of Tuition Fees and Reimbursement of Costs

The University has a financial strategy which ensures long-term sustainability whilst supporting short-term liquidity. This means that the University will continue to seek to maintain cash balances to meet its expected obligations in the normal course of operations, including any that should arise from its Refund and Reimbursement Policy. We also have a long-term banking arrangement which allows us to access further working capital if required. This places the University in a strong financial position should the need arise to provide refunds to tuition fees and other costs.

The University has a policy on refund of tuition fees and cost reimbursements which can be accessed here:

<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/study/undergraduate/RefundandReimbursementPolicy.pdf>

Section 3

How we will communicate with students on the Student Protection Plan

We will publish our SPP to all current and prospective students once our registration with the OfS has been approved, which is likely to be in late summer 2018. The SPP will be accessible on the University's terms and conditions section of our website to which all applicants are directed on accepting a place to study at Lancaster, and to which students are directed at initial and re-registration.

All staff will be made aware of the SPP and will pay due regard to the assurances to students provided in the SPP.

The SPP will be reviewed on an annual basis and, as part of the review process, the SPP will be formally considered at the Student Engagement and Academic Representation Group, the membership of which includes the Students' Union President and Vice-President Education, who will be asked to consult with student representatives on proposed changes to the SPP.

Should we need to invoke any aspect of the SPP, working within our existing emergency and contingency frameworks, we will proceed as follows:

- i. deploy multimedia communications (individual and group, digital and/or face-to-face as appropriate) to ensure students are updated on events as they unfold and are directed to relevant support services;

- ii. work with the Students' Union to facilitate the provision of independent advice to students on their options;
- iii. provide information, advice and guidance through our existing student support services (financial, welfare and academic).

Should students be dissatisfied with the outcomes that may result in the implementation of any aspect of the SPP, they will be able to make a complaint through our [Complaints Procedure](#).

Section 4

Our assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students who study for a Lancaster award in partnership with one of the University's partners and arrangements in place to mitigate those risks and protect you so you can complete your programme of study:

The University forms partnerships with other institutions and third party commercial partners in the UK and overseas to deliver programmes of study leading to Lancaster University awards. When forming partnerships, the University undertakes a range of rigorous and comprehensive due diligence exercises which explore aspects of the prospective partner's reputation, governance, financial stability, quality and standard of provision, as well as evaluating the economic, political and environmental context of the potential location.

In forming partnerships to deliver programmes leading to a Lancaster award, the University undertakes robust financial planning and modelling and market research, and commissions professional expert advice as required. We reference the QAA's Quality Code as it relates to partnerships and collaborations and we have adopted sector best practice in drawing up partnership agreements. Lancaster University, as the awarding institution, will always have responsibility for assuring the academic quality and standards of teaching delivery, postgraduate research supervision and the award. We have robust review and monitoring systems in place to discharge this responsibility for each partnership.

Whilst our partnership agreements contain different business terms and comprise different responsibilities for each partner, each agreement describes the circumstances under which the partnership might be dissolved and provides details of the obligations of each party, including how the interests of students would be protected under such circumstances. Normally this means that every effort will be made to 'teach out' the remainder of a programme for all registered students.

Partnership	Protection
Lancaster University provides validation to programmes of study designed, delivered and assessed at a number of colleges in the UK. Students studying at Blackburn College, Blackpool and The Fylde	Whilst full responsibility for protecting students' continuation of study rests with each of these partners, Lancaster University would provide logistical support where necessary through established mechanisms

Partnership	Protection
<p>College and Furness College do not have a contractual relationship with Lancaster University, but the University is responsible for oversight of the academic quality and standards of the degrees awarded.</p> <p>The risk that teaching delivered and awards bestowed by these Colleges are of an unsatisfactory quality: Very Low</p> <p>We have long-standing relationships with these partners and rigorous processes in place to monitor the quality and standards of teaching and assessment processes.</p>	<p>to ensure that academic standards are maintained in relation to teaching and assessment. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching support; • Assessment support including running examination boards to determine final degree classification. <p>Should any of our UK partners cease to operate due to financial or other reasons, we would work with that partner to offer affected students the opportunity to complete their studies at the University or an appropriate alternative institution.</p>
<p>Lancaster University has a campus in Ghana - LU Ghana – run in partnership with Transnational Academic Group (TAG) who is responsible for infrastructure provision including buildings and teaching staff.</p> <p>Lancaster University retains responsibility for assurance of academic quality and standards, using established systems and processes.</p> <p>The risk that LU Ghana is unable to operate for a sustained period due to unexpected and exceptional circumstances, or that the teaching delivered and awards bestowed are of an unsatisfactory quality: Very Low.</p>	<p>TAG has significant experience providing infrastructure support for higher education in a range of countries, and has its own emergency plans to manage potential issues relating to infrastructure.</p> <p>Should <i>force majeure</i> or other incidents lead to a sustained period of closure of the LU Ghana campus, we will work with TAG through established mechanisms, including the Partnership Management Group and the Joint Management Council, to offer students a range of options which take into account their personal circumstances. These options may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of teaching from alternative premises in Ghana; • Offering students the opportunity to transfer to an appropriate programme at Lancaster University; • Suspension of studies until such time as the campus can be re-opened; • Withdrawal and refund of tuition fees and/or reimbursement of costs.
<p>Lancaster University, in partnership with Beijing Jiaotong University (BJTU), has a campus in Weihai, China - LUC@BJTU - at which students study for dual awards (i.e. two degrees); one from Lancaster University and one from Beijing Jiaotong University.</p>	<p>BJTU is one of the oldest universities in mainland China, ranked in the top 40 institutions nationally, and with extensive experience of providing government-funded higher education in China. They have their own emergency plans to manage potential issues relating to the provision of resources.</p>

Partnership	Protection
<p>BJTU is responsible for infrastructure provision including teaching buildings and student accommodation, and Lancaster University and BJTU are jointly responsible for providing teaching staff.</p> <p>Some teaching is only for the Chinese degree. Lancaster University retains responsibility for the assurance of academic quality and standards for all teaching which contributes to the Lancaster University degree, using established systems and processes.</p> <p>The risk that LUC@BJTU is unable to operate for a sustained period due to unexpected and exceptional circumstances, or that the teaching delivered and awards bestowed are of an unsatisfactory quality: Very Low</p>	<p>Should <i>force majeure</i> or other incidents lead to a sustained period of closure of the LUC@BJTU campus, we will work with BJTU through established mechanisms including the Joint Management Council to offer students a range of options which take into account their personal circumstances. These options may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of teaching from alternative premises in China; • Offering students the opportunity to transfer to an appropriate programme at Lancaster University; • Suspension of studies until such time as the campus can be re-opened; • Withdrawal and refund of tuition fees and/or reimbursement of costs.
<p>Lancaster University has been working in partnership with Sunway University in Malaysia since 2006 to offer students the opportunity to study for dual awards (i.e. two degrees); one from Lancaster University and one from Sunway University.</p> <p>Sunway University are responsible for the provision of all resources and staff. Students at Sunway University do not have a contractual relationship with Lancaster, but Lancaster University is responsible for oversight of the academic quality and standards of all Lancaster University awards, using established processes and systems.</p> <p>The risk that the teaching delivered and awards bestowed by Sunway University are of an unsatisfactory quality: Very Low</p>	<p>Whilst responsibility for protecting students' continuation of study ultimately rests with Sunway University, in the event of <i>force majeure</i> leading to a sustained period of closure of the Sunway University campus, Lancaster would work with colleagues at Sunway through established mechanisms including the Partnership Management Group to provide logistical support as necessary to ensure that academic quality and standards are maintained in relation to teaching and assessment.</p>

There are two partnerships which are coming to an end where Lancaster University is responsible for the academic standards of the Lancaster degrees awarded. The partnerships are each governed by a Teaching Out Agreement which details the responsibilities of each party in supporting students to complete their studies, whilst continuing to secure academic standards, until the final cohort has graduated. This is in accordance with our processes and contracts governing the operation of awards leading to Lancaster degrees with overseas partners.