
Student protection plan for the academic year 2021/22

Provider name: University of Cambridge

Provider UKPRN: 10007788

Legal Address:

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Context:

This Student Protection Plan aims to set out clearly for applicants and current students the processes that the University of Cambridge has in place to protect students should the continuation of their studies be affected. It highlights the University's identified potential risks, mitigations and procedures for managing risks, and the University's commitments to its students.

Students are protected against unfair practices under consumer law. This plan takes into account student rights as consumers and it does not replace or impinge on those rights. More information about student consumer rights is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-guide-to-consumer-rights-for-students>

Given the length of courses, some changes in the options available in any year of a course are likely to occur as a result of, for example, staff changes, illness, sabbatical leave or developments in the subject. Students will normally be notified of these changes by their College Director of Studies, or by the Faculty or Department of the University providing the course. The compulsory elements of a course are unlikely to change, other than for reasons aimed at improving the course for the benefit of students, or where the course carries an external accreditation the maintenance of which requires a change. Any change to a course requires justification to and approval by the University's Education Committee, in line with policies and procedures approved in advance by that Committee. That Committee is always concerned to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by any course change. The Education Committee includes student representatives.

Similarly, for students conducting research, it is possible that changes will occur in relation to supervisor(s), advisors or other support staff (such as laboratory technicians) as a result of the staff changes including sickness and sabbatical leave. Similarly, whilst the University endeavours to ensure continuity of access to research facilities this cannot be guaranteed. Any changes to research provision will be managed by the relevant Degree Committee.

Explanation of Scoring Matrix

Risk likelihood scale:

The risks identified below, should they be realised, may have an impact on students' continuation of study. The 'risk likelihood' highlights the possibility of this risk occurring in the future. A range of

risks were considered including those suggested by the Office for Students and it is only those with a likelihood of low or above that are considered within this document.

1	Very low	No indication that the risk will occur and the risk has not occurred previously.
2	Low	Risk is highly unlikely and has not previously occurred.
3	Medium	Risk is possible but not likely to be frequent.
4	High	Risk likely to occur frequently.
5	Very High	Risk is highly likely.

Risk impact scale:

The 'risk impact' highlights the foreseeable consequences should a risk come to fruition.

1	Insignificant	The event would have little to no impact on continuation of students' studies.
2	Minor	The event may be felt briefly but there would be few repercussions for students.
3	Moderate	The event would adversely impact studies, resulting in mitigation by the University.
4	Serious	The risk would hinder studies, causing temporary substitutions and cancellations.
5	Very Serious	The risk would impact studies so severely that continuation of studies would be prohibited indefinitely.

Total residual risk score:

The overall risk assessment is calculated by multiplying the risk likelihood and risk impact together. It is important to note that this does not take into account the mitigating actions and processes that the University has in place to reduce and mitigate risks.

- 1 – 6: Low
- 7 – 12: Medium
- 13 – 20: High
- Over 20: Very high

Risks faced by the University of Cambridge

RISK NUMBER	1
RISK NAME	A location is no longer available for teaching
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	3 - Medium
IMPACT OF RISK	2 - Minor
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	6 - Low
DESCRIPTION OF RISK	This risk is marked as having a medium likelihood. This is because the University has over 340 operational buildings, 51 of which are listed.

	<p>These buildings all require maintenance and refurbishment to operate successfully for teaching and learning.</p> <p>However, the impact of this risk on students is low because, if a location is made unavailable, the University is confident that it can provide a suitable, accessible alternative. The University has a significant amount of space and strategies in place to ensure the estate is being used as efficiently as possible. The University also has a proactive scheme of building maintenance to reduce the risk of unplanned closures.</p> <p>The University has a Programme Board for Education Space that aims to encourage the efficient and creative use of the spaces which the University has, to share good practice around education space, and to develop the information infrastructure that will help the University to deliver a world-class, education-centred estate. Further information on its work can be found here: https://www.educationspace.cam.ac.uk/about</p> <p>Further information about the University of Cambridge estates strategy can be found here: https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/strategic-framework</p>
KEY AFFECTED STUDENT GROUPS	Students with accessibility needs may be adversely affected by late notice of alterations. The University will aim to notify these students as soon as possible and offer support on travelling to and from a new location.

RISK NUMBER	2
RISK NAME	Alteration to or withdrawal of a component of a course
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	2 - Low
IMPACT OF RISK	1 - Insignificant
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	2 - Low
DESCRIPTION OF RISK	<p>The risk of alterations to taught courses which would have a negative impact on students is scored as low. Minor and major alterations are sometimes required in order to ensure that the University retains a world-class learning experience, and are made in consultation with students, and usually in response to student feedback. The Faculty or Department must present an evidenced rationale for any changes which may include the evolution of course objectives, regulations created by a Professional, Statutory, Regulatory of Accrediting Body, evidence of demonstrable need, alterations to align courses to strategic plans and recognition of existing duplication of provision with other courses or papers.</p> <p>Minor alterations score a medium on the likelihood of risk scale as they are often undertaken, but the impact of the risk should be negligible for students. They include changes to regulations such as paper titles or the length of an assessed essay and are made to improve the student experience or to clarify aspects of the course. These changes are subject to a light touch approval process because they are not material and will not adversely impact student learning.</p>

	<p>Major alterations would have a greater impact, but the risk is far less likely to crystallise. Any major alterations are subject to committee approvals with a minimum timeframe of two years. The University also expects that any alterations should not disadvantage any current students or result in teaching becoming inadequately resourced.</p> <p>Unless immediate alterations are deemed necessary, the University will seek to ensure changes are only introduced for new student cohorts, and that students are aware of these alterations prior to enrolment. If any alterations are made that are contradictory to information in the prospectus or online, students will be informed in line with current processes. Prospective students would have the opportunity to raise any questions about the modifications with the relevant Faculty or Department. They can then make informed decisions on whether the alterations made would change their intention to study at the University.</p> <p>The risk that the University is no longer able to deliver material components of the courses is low because the modules are designed to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff. The 'creation of new module' form enquires whether teaching is restricted to a single academic staff member and if so, requests the Faculty or Department's explanation on how they seek to mitigate this dependency.</p> <p>In addition, there are many embedded procedures to ensure academic quality and standards – the Faculty Boards, the General Board's Education Committee, publication in the University's official newspaper, The <i>University Reporter</i> and the Educational and Student Policy team all fulfil quality assurance roles.</p> <p>Further information can be found here: https://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/curricula-and-assessment/changes-existing-courses/changes-regulations-and-supplementary-regulations</p>
KEY AFFECTED STUDENT GROUPS	Prospective students and offer holders

RISK NUMBER	3
RISK NAME	Suspension or withdrawal of a course
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	2 - Low
IMPACT OF RISK	1 - Insignificant
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	2 - Low
DESCRIPTION OF RISK	<p>The likelihood of this risk is low. The University would not withdraw an undergraduate course (Tripos) while students are on the course. The University has, very occasionally, rescinded a taught master's course (an MPhil, MRes or MSt). This is because the content of these courses is more responsive to the interests of prospective students and new developments in the relevant disciplines.</p>

	<p>The University has a number of processes in place to manage the suspension or withdrawal of a course should such a need arise. These procedures use a variety of measures to minimise impact on students, meaning that current students and offer holders should not be affected by any changes that take place. The studies of any current students and offer holders should continue as expected, the course just being withdrawn to future cohorts.</p> <p>In addition, the action of withdrawing or suspending a course has to be approved by a number of committees and a case must be presented. This minimises the likelihood of a course being suspended or withdrawn at short notice. To this end, an unplanned closure of a course has been excluded from this risk register as the risk likelihood was considered negligible.</p>
KEY AFFECTED STUDENT GROUPS	All students

The measures undertaken to mitigate impacts should risks crystallise (low-high risks)

RISK NUMBER	1
RISK NAME	A location is no longer available for teaching
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	3 - Medium
IMPACT OF RISK	2 - Minor
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	6 - Low

Typically, if a building is in need of refurbishment or maintenance, it will be included in proactive planning. As a result, no students will be displaced because, through its estates maintenance plan, the University will manage timetabling decisions or, where possible, maintenance will take place in the vacation period.

If the University is unable to deliver teaching at the site initially indicated to students, the following actions will be undertaken:

- Inform students that the location of scheduled teaching has been relocated. Where appropriate, the University will inform students as to why the space initially scheduled has been deemed unsuitable. The information will be circulated via an email generated by Moodle, the University's Virtual Learning Environment.
- The University will provide an alternative location and inform students of this. The University will aim for the new space to be close to the original site while also ensuring that it will not compromise the quality of teaching.
- In the case of a location being unavailable for an extended period of time, the University will aim to hold the teaching at a consistent location.

RISK NUMBER	2
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RISK NAME	Alteration to or withdrawal of a component of a course
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	2 - Low
IMPACT OF RISK	1 - Insignificant
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	2 - Low

In most cases, if there is an alteration to the course, all current students and offer holders will continue their courses as planned. The change will then be phased in for future cohorts. The University will regularly update the prospectus, hard copy and on-line, to ensure the information is correct at the time of publication and for the foreseeable future.

If the University is unable to deliver a component of the course that was initially indicated to the students, it will undertake the following action:

- Ensure that any alterations made to the course has been approved by all the relevant and necessary committees.
- Encourage the Faculty or Department to consult effectively with their student representatives in order to ensure minimisation of impact on students.
- Inform students at the earliest opportunity of alterations to the course.
- If changes impact offer holders, the University will follow this process:
 - o If the information in the prospectus, on the website, or via other media, becomes incorrect, the University will communicate changes to Undergraduate courses with students via colleges, or via the Graduate Admissions Office or Faculty or Department if the change affects postgraduate students. Websites will be updated accordingly.
 - o This information will be circulated to students via a durable medium, such as email or letter.
 - o After a student has received the communication, the student can form a judgment on whether he or she still wish to undertake the course. If the changes mean that a student no longer wants to attend the University, they can withdraw from the contract.
 - o The student does not have to state why they have chosen to withdraw from the contract.

It is important to note that changes are rarely made to courses and they are normally undertaken as a result of student feedback and with student consultation in order to ensure the course is improved for future cohorts. The University will collaborate with the relevant Faculty or Department to ensure that no student is adversely impacted by this alteration. The University will also ensure that the replacement for the withdrawn element is robust and suitable. The University will publish changes affecting the regulations in the *University Reporter*.

RISK NUMBER	3
RISK NAME	Suspension or withdrawal of a course
LIKELIHOOD OF RISK	2 - Low
IMPACT OF RISK	1 - Insignificant
OVERALL RISK ASSESSMENT	2 - Low

The standard process is to make arrangements to 'teach out' student cohorts. This means all current students and offer holders will continue with their studies as normal and graduate with the same qualifications. There will therefore be no impact on their experience as a student.

In the unlikely event that the University is forced to suspend or withdraw a course, it will undertake the following processes:

- Ensure that any suspension or withdrawal proposals regarding the course have been approved by all the relevant and necessary committees.
- Encourage the Faculty or Department to consult effectively with their student representatives in order to ensure minimisation of impact on students.
- Course recruitment will be suspended. This means that no prospective students will be offered the opportunity to apply for the course.
- Once all students who had registered or started the course prior to the decision to suspend or withdraw the course have graduated and there are no more cohorts, the course can be suspended or withdrawn.
- Students who intermit their studies (take leave from the University) will be supported to continue and complete their studies on the 'teach-out' basis. These students will be supported on a case by case basis.

Refund and compensation policy

In the event that the University were to be unable to preserve continuation of study, alternative provision for affected students would be considered as part of a review and the University would observe the guidance set out in HEFCE's "Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures" including clear arrangements for informing and consulting with students.

The University recognises the financial investment students make when selecting and attending higher education institutions and is committed to ensuring that students affected by any non-continuation of study receive refunds and compensation for loss to which they are legally entitled.

The University is financially secure. In addition, the University holds Professional Indemnity insurance up to £10m in the aggregate for all claims made against the University in any one period of insurance. In the circumstances, the University is confident that it has the financial resources to meet all reasonably foreseeable claims for refund or compensation.

Communication with students

The University's commitments to students at Cambridge

The following information focuses on how the University will communicate with students about the student protection plan.

The University will publicise the student protection plan to both staff and students via the University website as this is the most accessible of its communications channels. The University will also inform key stakeholders about the student protection plan in order to raise awareness amongst prospective students and offer holders. Staff will be made aware of the implications of the plan when considering changes to course provision.

The University will review the student protection plan annually. It will consult with key University stakeholders, including representatives of the Cambridge University Students' Union and Graduate Union and colleagues across the sector and will assess the University Key Risk Register to ensure the plan is fully comprehensive. The reviewed document will be subject to final approval by the University Council as the trustee body.

The University will inform students of alterations to their courses by maintaining an open and transparent dialogue. It will always aim to notify students in a timely manner. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the University aims to inform students of any material changes to courses at least six months prior to the alterations being implemented.

Crucially, the University will continue to recognise that the Cambridge provides education to students from diverse backgrounds with a variety of responsibilities and accessibility needs. As such, the University will seek to support the full range of student needs and will keep communication lines with students open to ensure they are able to seek support where necessary.

Advice and support

Should students require advice and support throughout the process, we have a number of support mechanisms available. There is further information available on our student wellbeing website <https://www.studentwellbeing.admin.cam.ac.uk>.

If a student requires advice or support or wishes to make a complaint, they should contact a responsible officer (information available in handbooks) in the first instance or access the website for the Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals which contains information on the Student Complaint Process at <https://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/student-complaints>. Students may also seek independent advocacy, advice and support from the Students' Unions' Advice Service <http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/support/university/sas/>.

If a student has exhausted the internal complaints processes and feels that the issue has not been resolved or the outcome is unfair, they can also contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to make a formal complaint: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.