

Middlesex University - Student Protection Plan for the period from February 2024

1. Introduction

The Student Protection Plan (SPP) assesses the risk to the continuation of your studies, sets out the actions we have in place to protect you as our student should that risk arise, and details how we would communicate with you about this. All universities are required to have a SPP which is approved by the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of higher education in England.

This SPP applies to all students registered with Middlesex University across all of its campuses in London, Dubai, and Mauritius, including students on postgraduate research (PGR) programmes, apprentices and students studying one of our awards through an academic partner institution. This SPP does not cover learners undertaking Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training or those undertaking a training programme with another provider which we have accredited.

2. Assessment of risks

Middlesex University is a global institution which is united by a shared purpose: creating knowledge and putting it into action. Our main campus is in Hendon, London, home to c19,000 students. We also have campuses in Mauritius and, Dubai and deliver programmes through our academic partner institutions in the UK and across the world.

We provide transforming learning through innovative, flexible and highly accessible practices-led education, with excellent outcomes for students. Our students learn through activities and through experience, by doing, making and analysing. We foster innovation, encouraging our students to be creative and curious. They apply their advanced knowledge and skills to real-world and work-based projects that benefit society, the professions and business. Learning this way, our students develop the skills, behaviours and attitudes that they will use as change makers and which employers want and need. We take our responsibilities to our students seriously, and involve our students in our decision-making through co-leadership.

Our regulatory framework relating to continuation of study includes:

- robust processes for approval of new programmes, amendment of programme content and discontinuation of programmes that follow expectations set out in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code
- strong budget setting and management processes and regular assessment and mitigation of key institutional risk

- active student representation and requirements for student engagement in key programme matters
- a clear Complaints Procedure that complies with the OIA Good Practice Framework
- a governance structure that meets good practice standards and ensures decision-making is evidence-based and transparent

Our SPP is written within this context, and is based on our assessment of our risk profile in relation to the continuation of study for our students as at 22nd February 2024. As a dynamic institution there will be changes to our programme portfolio or other aspects of our learning and teaching environment and we are committed to ensuring we keep our students (and applicants) informed. How we keep students informed of these changes is set out in our academic policy [Making Changes to Published Programme Related Information](#).

Risk is assessed on basis of how likely an event is to occur and what the impact of that event would be, there are five levels of assessed risk from the lowest level of negligible then to low then medium then high and finally very high.

Risk profile

The risk that the University will no longer be able to deliver programmes at any of its three campuses is low since the financial management of the University is sound and the University has adequate reserves to continue operations for the foreseeable future. The University robustly manages the various material risks to its operation to ensure continued solvency. The University engages in business continuity planning which provides for continuity of delivery and access to resources in the event of a major incident at the University.

The risk that the University loses its degree awarding powers, or they are restricted is negligible as there is a robust governance structure in place which oversees both the University fulfilling the OfS Conditions of Registration and the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code. The risk of our programmes being de-designated for 'Student Support' purposes (so students were unable to access statutory student finance) is also assessed as negligible for the same reasons.

The University complies with UKVI requirements and tracks the engagement of its sponsored students diligently to ensure they continue to meet the requirements of their visa so the risk of suspension or removal of the Student Visa Sponsor Licence is low. However, in the event of suspension or withdrawal of Student Visa sponsor status, the University would proactively work with affected students and applicants to minimise disruption and it would work with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their studies, either with the University or alternative sponsor where regulations permit.

The University has a large number of professionally accredited programmes (e.g. nursing, law, engineering). Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies undertake regular reviews/renewals of accreditation. The University has a very strong track record of maintaining course accreditation. The risk of loss of accreditation is low.

The University keeps its academic portfolio under regular review and makes decisions about the future of departments, subject areas and programmes based on alignment with the University Strategic Plan, programme demand and currency of content. If the University closes a programme

during the recruitment cycle, we inform applicants as early as possible in order to minimise the potential disruption to the application process. Current students will be consulted and provided with the opportunity to complete the programme or transfer to an equivalent alternative, as set out in this plan. We design our programmes to be delivered by integrated teams of academic staff and will secure access to specific subject experts as required to ensure that students can complete their programme.

The risk that only one subject expert/lecturer can deliver a specific core module on a programme, or research supervisor supervise a research programme, is low. We design our programmes to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff and have access to specialist part-time staff. We appoint teams of supervisors to supervise research students.

It is possible unforeseeable events and/or circumstances that are beyond the University's reasonable control, have a disruptive effect on the University's ability to deliver academic or other services could occur. These are also known as "Force Majeure Events"¹. If these occur the University will give students as much advance warning of the changes occurring to any aspects of their course, including content delivery, placements, assessment and where and how the course will be delivered in different circumstances.

We recognise that there may be particular risks associated with apprenticeship programmes, such as the risk that we need to ensure continuity for students should the employer be unable to continue to support them. We continue to develop our approach to assessing and mitigating risks on apprenticeship programmes, and to ensure that our contracts for apprenticeships, and our quality assurance processes as monitored by Ofsted, are appropriate and help protect the interests of students as apprentices.

The risk that we close a programme at our Hendon campus that is delivered at one of our overseas campuses, or the risk of changes to overseas regulatory arrangements that affect one of our overseas campuses is low. We ensure that we maintain strong relationships with local regulators so that we are aware of pending changes in local regulation or culture and can plan accordingly. There are close links between academic staff across all our campuses which support programmes offered at our Hendon campus. Our overseas campuses are fully integrated into our quality assurance processes. Many programmes use modules shared with other programmes, which enables us to keep programmes open for recruitment on another campus; or we may localise or tailor module content using our programme change processes to ensure that students have the opportunity to complete.

The risk that students at a collaborative partner organisation are no longer able to study a Middlesex University programme because of closure or financial failure of the collaborative partner organisation is low. We manage a programme of ongoing financial and quality due diligence for all our collaborative partners that includes registration status should they be registered with the Office for Students. We are therefore constantly monitoring the financial and quality standing of collaborative partners and their continuing ability to deliver Middlesex University collaborative provision. The Collaborations sub-Committee of Assurance Committee has oversight of this process.

3. Measures put in place to mitigate the risks

Our Business Continuity planning process helps to manage any risks to the delivery of University services and to minimise disruption to those services in the event of an incident. The plan is kept up to date and makes provision for continuity of delivery and access to specialist resources in the event of a major incident.

If a programme closure is proposed, we implement our programme closure process which requires approval from the Portfolio Development Committee, which scrutinises teach-out plans to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for students to complete their qualification.

Our programme closure form [Appendix 2d Programme closure form](#) requires a statement of how the programme will be phased out and students enabled to complete their studies, confirmation that this has been discussed with all affected students (by the Programme Team) and a communication plan for all enquirers or prospective students holding offers for the course.

If the University closes a programme during the recruitment cycle, or makes changes to the programme, we inform applicants as early as possible in order to minimise the potential disruption to the application process. Where possible, we will offer an alternative programme in a similar subject area or offer the intended programme of study at another entry year. If an alternative programme is unavailable or unsuitable then for undergraduate applicants we will support their substitution of choice to another institution via UCAS. For current students, we communicate with all students, and ensure teaching and other resources continue to be provided. Where this is not possible for individual modules or years of study we work with students to confirm their options in relation to transfer to other programmes or modules. We also ensure dedicated academic and professional services support continues to be available, via Unihelp, our first port of call for general student enquiries, where students can seek general and specialist advice, and via the Progression and Support team, who provide specialist advice and guidance on study options.

¹Such events may include but are not limited to health related epidemics/or pandemics (for example COVID-19), war, changes to the law, or any actions taken by the government or other public authority, that unavoidably impacts on our ability to deliver business as usual. If an event occurs which is disruptive but it can be reasonably managed with little or no disruption to services, then the University would not treat such an event as a force majeure event

The Apprenticeship Sub-Committee of Assurance Committee has been established to oversee the arrangements for the establishment and management of degree apprenticeships, and that body will continue to review and manage risks relating to apprenticeships.

All our agreements with collaborative partner organisations include a requirement (irrespective of whether the partner has OfS registration) to have their own risk assessment and SPP in place. This includes an option for students to transfer to an alternative provider (which may be Middlesex University itself) where the risk of whole institution failure is assessed as high or medium. Students at a partner organisation should refer to their SPP in the first instance. We will work with any partner whose relationship with us is being brought to an end with the aim of ensuring students are able to complete their qualification or a suitable alternative.

4. Refund and Compensation Policy

We are committed to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to complete their studies, or a suitable alternative where feasible. This commitment extends to students taught directly in the UK and, to students at overseas campuses. For students studying for Middlesex degrees through partner organisations we will work with those partners to ensure this commitment is also extended to them. Nevertheless, specific financial arrangements for students affected by a possible discontinuation of study opportunities, or significant change to them, can be found in our Refund and Compensation Policy.

You can view our refund and compensation policy at https://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/494333/Refund-and-compensation-policy.pdf

We anticipate that the University will continue to have substantial cash reserves which will be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for any claims and requests covered by the Refund and Compensation Policy.

5. Communication about student protection plan

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by:

- publishing the plan on our public website, and providing a link to the plan from the courses page on our website <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses> in order to make prospective students aware of it;
- providing an information page, including a link to our |Student Protection Plan, on the Unihub site <http://unihub.mdx.ac.uk/>, which provides all Middlesex students with information about the study support, events and facilities available to them and the regulations which govern their study.
- including a website link in all student programme handbooks.

We will ensure that Middlesex and collaborative partner staff are aware of the implication of the Student Protection Plan by:

- referencing the plan in our validation and review procedures <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/policies/academic-quality/handbook/lqe-handbook-section-3> in order to ensure that academic staff are aware of the plan when proposing programme changes or programme closure;
- incorporating review of student protection arrangements in our institutional approval and reapproval processes for collaborative partners

We will review our Student Protection Plan annually at Assurance Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Board, to ensure that it remains current and up-to-date.

Assurance Committee includes student representation.

Communication

If the University closes a programme during the recruitment cycle, or makes changes to the programme, we inform applicants as early as possible in order to minimise the potential disruption to the application process. Where possible, we will offer an alternative programme in a similar subject area or offer the intended programme of study at another entry year. If an alternative programme is unavailable or unsuitable then for undergraduate applicants we will support their substitution of choice to another institution via UCAS.

Where we make major changes to programmes, or make a decision to close a programme, students are notified by the programme leader, and provided with the information required to enable them to continue to study and to complete the programme. Students have access to advice via Unihelp, our first port of call for general student enquiries, where students can seek general and specialist advice, and the Progression and Support team, who provide specialist advice and guidance on study options. Students can also seek independent advice from the Students' Union Advice service.

If you have concerns or complaints about how the Student Protection Plan is being implemented, please follow our [concern and complaints procedure](#).

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