

Student protection plan

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Student protection plan for the period 2023-24

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.

Queen Mary University of London is one of the UK's leading global universities with a strong track-record in delivering high-quality programmes on a robust and sustainable footing. Our history dates back to the founding of England's first medical school at the Royal London Hospital in 1785, the founding of Westfield College in 1882 and the establishment of the People's Palace in 1887. We have awarded degrees as a member of the University of London for over a century and were granted powers to award degrees in our own name indefinitely in 2008. Currently we have more than 25,000 students and 4,000 members of staff, and our annual income is £430m. Our governing body oversees systems of control and accountability to ensure that we continue to provide programmes of higher education in the future. For these reasons, the risk of the university as a whole ceasing to operate is very low. We are also not aware of any circumstance which is likely to give rise to a loss of degree awarding powers.

We have five campuses in London which we either own or maintain on long-term leases. The long-term nature of these arrangements allows us to take the needs of students into account in our estate planning and to communicate any changes well in advance. For programmes that we deliver outside the UK, we maintain formal agreements with local partners that are similarly aligned with our obligations to students. The risk of us making a significant change to the location of your studies is therefore very low. We also involve students in planning and monitoring construction projects on our campuses so that important services are maintained and any disruption is minimised.

After you accept an offer of a place on a programme with us, there is a low risk that we may need to suspend or withdraw the programme before you enrol. We will only do this in exceptional circumstances, such as the departure of a key member of academic staff, or unexpected circumstances that render essential teaching facilities unavailable. We may also suspend a programme where the demand from applicants makes it unviable to run. If we have to suspend or withdraw a programme in this way, we will aim to tell you at least six weeks before the published start date and will make every effort to offer a suitable alternative.

After you are enrolled on a programme with us, we will make every effort to continue delivering it until you have completed your studies, or left the programme. In cases where we deliver a programme with another institution, we require them to make the same commitment. As a research-focused university, the choice of modules we offer is refreshed each year to reflect our dialogue with current students, the latest research and developments, and the availability of specialist staff and facilities. This means that you should be prepared for your programme to change and evolve within the published outline so that it remains up-to-date during your studies. Other circumstances which can lead to changes include:

- changes to who teaches on the programme;
- changes made in response to requirements from external professional or statutory bodies;
- changes to the way in which universities are funded, which for example might lead to changes in the availability of some student services.

In common with most universities, we have contingency arrangements that we use in the event of disruption to teaching or assessment for reasons outside of our control.

International students

Queen Mary is an international community with students and staff representing over 160 nationalities. We employ people with specialist training to advise our international students and we audit our sponsorship arrangements on a regular basis to ensure that we comply with the requirements of UK Visas and Immigration. We have held a sponsor licence since the current points-based immigration system was introduced in 2008 and it has never been suspended or revoked. The risk that we would be unable to recruit or teach international students in future is therefore very low. In the unlikely event that an issue with your own immigration status requires you to suspend your studies temporarily, we can normally support you to complete your studies after the issue has been resolved.

MBBS (Malta)

The General Medical Council (GMC), which recognises bodies to award primary medical qualifications, has started its standard process to quality assure our MBBS Malta programme. This takes the form of a major review of plans in advance of recruiting the first cohort of students, a physical review of the sites and facilities for delivering the programme and a year-on-year review, following the first cohort of students to graduation. This process will include an assessment of teaching facilities and arrangements for providing clinical experience as they are put into place. Only during the final year of the first cohort's studies (2021–22) will the GMC be able to confirm that the programme meets its standards. We have therefore put contingency arrangements in place with our MBBS programme in London (which is fully recognised by the GMC) so that, in the unlikely event of us failing to satisfy the GMC's requirements as the programme in Malta unfolds, students who are passing all their assessments can complete their studies and graduate with a medical qualification that is recognised by the GMC.

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

As set out above, we will always aim to deliver your programme so that it matches the published outline and will make every effort to continue delivering it until you have completed your studies, or left the programme.

We will aim to put contingency arrangements in place to address any disruption to teaching or assessment. This might involve using alternative methods of delivering programmes and covering essential material where there have been changes to scheduled contact time. For example, we may provide you with independent learning materials or recordings of lectures, or cover topics as part of other scheduled teaching, or offer additional sessions. We may also modify assessment arrangements to reflect any changes to teaching so that you are not disadvantaged as a result of the disruption. In putting contingency arrangements in place, we will always ensure that academic standards and professional requirements are met, and will aim to deliver your programme so that it closely matches the published outline.

If circumstances outside our control prevent us from delivering a core component of your programme ourselves, we will make every effort to offer a suitable alternative. This could include making arrangements for you to follow an equivalent module elsewhere in the University of London. If you enrol with us as a postgraduate research student and your supervisor subsequently leaves the university, we will either arrange for you to continue receiving supervision from them, or appoint another supervisor with appropriate expertise from Queen Mary or elsewhere.

In the unlikely event that we are unable to continue your programme after you are enrolled, we will make every effort to find a suitable alternative. This may be at Queen Mary, or at another university in the Russell Group or the University of London. All transfers are dependent on your circumstances, as well as availability and entry requirements on the alternative course.

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.

Our approach to providing remedies in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study is set out in our Refund and Compensation Policy for Students. The aim is to return a student as closely as possible to the position they would be in if we had been able to continue their programme. In doing so we expect the student to take reasonable steps to minimise the impact and any losses, and take advantage of the alternatives we offer them.

If we ask you to complete core components of your programme at another university, because we are unable to deliver those components ourselves, we will pay (from the fees you pay to us) the tuition fees charged by the other university and reimburse you for any reasonable, additional travel expenses.

If we ask you to transfer entirely to another university, because we are unable to continue your programme, we will offer you a financial remedy that takes into account:

- any differences between tuition fee levels at Queen Mary and the other university;
- any additional tuition fees arising from the transfer (for example, if it is agreed that you need to take additional modules at the other university to those you would have taken at Queen Mary);
- the source of your funding (for example, payment by the Student Loans Company, or sponsorship by a third party);
- any reasonable, additional travel expenses arising from the transfer;
- any commitments we have made to pay a bursary or scholarship for the duration of your studies;
- if you are an international student, any additional costs arising from changes to your visa necessitated by the transfer.

We do not normally offer compensation for general living expenses that would have been incurred anyway, such as food and accommodation. Note that any fees paid through the Student Loans Company, or by a sponsor, are refunded to them unless they tell us to refund a student directly.

In the event that a transfer to another university is not available or appropriate, our approach to refund and compensation will depend upon an assessment of the individual student, including any other form of mitigation available, how the student is funded and the value of any credits they have obtained.

Queen Mary maintains insurance arrangements which may be used if we need to implement the provisions of our Refund and Compensation Policy for Students.

In assessing the risks to the continuation of study of our students, identifying appropriate measures to mitigate those risks, and applying the Refund and Compensation Policy for Students, we will continue to take into account the diverse needs of our student body and in particular the implications of any protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The profile of our undergraduate students in London is distinctive for a Russell Group university, for example, with 91% from state schools, 60% from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and 27% from households where the annual taxable income is less than £10k. Nearly 45% of our entire study body is from outside the UK. The services we provide for students reflect and support this diversity.

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

This Student Protection Plan forms part of our terms and conditions with applicants and students. It is published on our website and we draw it to your attention when you first apply to study at Queen Mary. The terms and conditions, including this Student Protection Plan, become formally binding if you accept an offer of a place. We then remind you about them when you first enrol and re-enrol in each subsequent year. The commitments contained in this Student Protection Plan are also embedded in our policies and procedures for programme approval and review, which define how we make decisions about our programmes. In this way we can ensure that members of staff across the university are aware of the Student Protection Plan and do all they reasonably can to support you to complete your studies with us.

This Student Protection Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner in the event of a significant change in the risks set out in Section 1 above to ensure it remains current. We consulted with the Queen Mary Students' Union in developing this Student Protection Plan and will involve them in reviewing and monitoring it annually through our formal governance structures. We also involve student representatives in reviewing our programmes and provide formal and informal mechanisms through which any student can raise concerns about their experience.

In the unlikely event that we need to make alternative arrangements for you under the provisions of this Student Protection Plan, we will:

- explain the situation to you in writing and offer you the opportunity to discuss it with us in person;
- aim to provide at least 6 weeks' notice of changes coming into effect before you first enrol on your programme, or at least 12 weeks' notice of any changes coming into effect after you first enrol, bearing in mind that this may not be possible in the case of an emergency or other event outside our control;

- involve you in identifying suitable alternatives and provide you with choices where possible;
- put you in touch with the Students' Union, so that they can advise you and advocate on your behalf;
- follow, and draw your attention to, the commitments in our Student Protection Plan;
- direct you to our Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy (if you are an applicant) or our Student Complaints Policy (if you are an enrolled student), if you wish to make a complaint.