

1. Assessment of Risks

This Student Protection Plan (SPP) outlines the measures the University has in place to safeguard students in the event of a risk to the continuation of the provision of their studies. The types of events that might cause such a risk are detailed below.

The SPP has been approved by the Office for Students (OfS) and is accessible to all current and prospective students. The protections in this plan complement those provided under consumer protection law and do not affect students' consumer rights.

The University reserves the right to make minor adjustments to course content each year as part of quality enhancement, which do not trigger student protection measures. If a student believes their course delivery significantly differs from expectations, they may use the University's complaints procedures or seek recourse under consumer or contract law.

This plan addresses the specific context of the University, including its campuses in three cities, collaborative partnerships across the UK and overseas, and courses with professional accreditation or which are in specialized areas where there are not many alternative providers in the UK.

The Plan will be activated if the University:

- Decides to discontinue a specific course (managed through the Programme Termination and Suspension Policy).
- Decides to stop teaching a specific discipline.
- Decides to close a campus location where a course is taught and cannot find suitable alternatives at an appropriate location.
- Ceases operations entirely.
- Cannot provide a course for any reason, such as losing accreditation or a Tier 4 licence for international student recruitment or losing the right to provide a course or qualification.

These triggers only apply where there are enrolled students or live applicants. They will not apply in other circumstances, for example, where a course is closed after students have been taught out, and where there are no applicants.

The risk position in this academic year is outlined below. This position takes into account the context of the national decline in international student applications to study in the UK, reflected in the University's recruitment, home student recruitment, and the University's consequent financial planning and efficiency savings.

Risk	Likelihood	Context
The risk that the University as a provider is unable to operate	VERY LOW	<p>The University complies with the ongoing Office for Students conditions. In addition, the University has clear financial planning which it has submitted to the OfS as part of its ongoing registration. There are also clear continuity plans in place which cover interruptions to the University's business through risks to the estate or to business systems.</p> <p>While the University has instituted cost-saving measures for this academic year, this is to enable financial stability both in-year and then across coming years, leading to mitigation of risk at provider level. Any further steps would be taken as needed.</p>
The risk that the University will cease to deliver in complete subject areas	LOW	<p>The University keeps its curriculum under regular review to ensure it meets current and future expectations and student demand. However, it may, from time to time, make decisions to cease to recruit to an area of the curriculum. The University's Academic Sustainability Project <i>may</i> result in recommendations that lead to the closure of a curriculum area, but no such recommendations have been made at the time of writing. Any such decision would lead to the activation of teach-out measures as outlined in this Plan so that students can be supported through the transition.</p>
The risk that the University will cease to deliver specific programmes	MEDIUM	<p>The University's Academic Sustainability Project may recommend that programmes are discontinued or merged. No such recommendations have been made at the time of writing. Any discontinuation decision would lead to</p>

		the activation of teach-out measures as outlined in this Plan, and any merger decision would lead to consultation with students as to how they can be supported through the transition, and/or how, for example, a new programme created by merger will still lead to their intended learning outcomes.
The risk that there may be significant changes to programmes	MEDIUM	Modules <i>may</i> be changed, or withdrawn from programmes, due to rationalization of the number of available modules or staff resource. The University will plan any changes to ensure students can still complete their studies and achieve their qualifications. Wherever possible, core modules will be maintained, and programme learning outcomes will still be met at completion of the programme. Students will be given timely information about the status of their modules, any potential changes to course delivery and how they will be supported.
The risk that the University will no longer deliver courses at its London campus	LOW	The London Campus is an essential part of the University. The University's strategic and business plans involve consolidating and, where appropriate, expanding our delivery of courses on the London campus, and the University is moving to a new campus location within this academic year as a significant investment.
The risk that the University will no longer deliver courses at its Hong Kong campus	LOW	The University has several years of experience of operating a campus in Hong Kong. While there have been in-country risks which means the operation in Hong Kong is regularly reviewed, there is no imminent risk identified.
The risk that the University will no longer be able to deliver programmes to collaborative partner students	LOW	The University enters partnerships following extensive due diligence, and with binding agreements on the governance and operation of the partnerships. These agreements include provision for teach-out and student protection (see section 2 below)
The risk of strike action impacting upon delivery of programmes	LOW	The University has not had the significant industrial action experienced elsewhere in the sector over the last few years. It has a long-standing

		infrastructure and plans for managing any industrial action if it occurs. Where action has taken place, it has been localized and mitigating steps have been put into place which have meant no delays to student award or progression.
--	--	---

2. Measures to Mitigate Risks

In the event that a risk materializes, the University will take one or more of the following measures to protect students' continuity of study:

- applicants will always be contacted to discuss available options, which might include transferring their application for another course at the University, deferring application (if a closure is for a limited period), or being advise on finding a suitable alternative elsewhere.
- If a course can no longer be offered, the default position is to implement teach-out arrangements for students already enrolled to ensure that they have opportunities to achieve their award with a satisfactory learning experience. These arrangements will be clearly communicated to students. Teach-out ensures that the course is taught to completion for existing students, but no new intakes will be accepted. The arrangements will detail what happens for students needing to redeem failures or who are unable to complete assessments due to extenuating circumstances or leave of absence. The course will be closed once the last enrolled student completes their studies in the timeframe set out by the teach-out arrangements.
- The University's Collaborative Provision Agreement mandates that if a partnership agreement is terminated, both parties will ensure that enrolled students will have the opportunity to complete their courses within the normal timeframe through teach-out. The partner is required to cooperate with the University to facilitate this. If teach-out is not possible, the University will offer suitable alternative courses or facilitate transfers to other providers, including advice and transfer of credits. Alternative locations or modes of study may also be provided to enable students to complete their education.
- In the event of a closure in London students would be offered transfers to courses in Sunderland where possible or assisted in transferring to other providers in London. Teach-out will remain the primary option for students at the Hong Kong Campus and TNE partners but transfers to local providers may be facilitated if necessary.

All these measures have been tested through consideration of how the processes would work, and/or from experience of operating teach-out or other measures. The University will take into consideration the needs of all its students, including those protected characteristics. Measures

contained in the plan may be brought into play at any time; if, for example, doing so would reduce the impact or likelihood of any interruption to students' studies.

3. Information about Refunds and Compensation

The University has developed a Course Closure Compensation Policy (CCCP) that will be activated as necessary under this plan. The University possesses the financial capacity to meet obligations arising from this policy through contingency budgets and its financial reserves.

If the University is unable to preserve continuity of study in any circumstances it will draw up a refund and compensation offer. This policy will outline tuition fee refunds and other costs, ensuring transparency for affected students.

4. Information about Communicating with Students

The University's Student Protection Plan is published as part of the Student Handbook. Attention is drawn to the plan during the online enrolment process and the terms and conditions provided to all applicants.

The University will conduct an annual review of the SPP each year, consulting with the Students' Union.

Students will be promptly informed of any changes affecting their studies. Should the SPP need to be activated, students will receive written notification from their Dean of Faculty.

The University commits to giving as much notice as possible regarding course closures, potentially several months in advance. In the unlikely event that this is not feasible, a minimum of four weeks' notice will be provided, along with support from the relevant Faculty and additional independent advice from the Students' Union.

If students are dissatisfied with proposed outcomes, they can escalate their concerns through the University's internal complaints procedure and, if necessary, to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>. The University commits to:

- Being open and transparent when students' continuity of study may be at risk.
- Clearly outlining how key elements of the student experience will be managed in such situations.
- Taking reasonable steps to protect students if a course or discipline is discontinued, or if a campus location closes.

- Considering student feedback after decisions are made regarding course discontinuation or campus closures.
- Ensuring that all student groups and individuals are treated equitably and are not unfairly disadvantaged.
- Informing the Office for Students of any changes that might necessitate a review of the plan or its measures.
- Ensuring all students have access to evidence of academic achievements, such as certifications and transcripts, especially for those wishing to transfer.

Students can provide immediate feedback or concerns regarding this plan by contacting the Academic Registrar: ian.rowan@sunderland.ac.uk.

5. Governance

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by the University's Executive and Regulatory Framework Group, in consultation with the Students' Union. Any revisions will be approved by the University's Academic Board.

Author: Iain Rowan, Academic Registrar

Next review date: 1 May 2026, for approval by Academic Board in June 2026.