

# Student Protection Plan



**Provider's name:** Guildhall School of Music and Drama

**Provider's UKPRN:** 10007825

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## **Student protection plan for the September 2023 onwards (to be reviewed annually)**

Students invest significant amounts of time, commitment, and financial resources in their education, and expect to receive value for money in return. The School is committed to helping students achieve the best possible outcomes from their studies both in terms of professional training and academic achievement. The protection plan sets out the School's responsibilities to its students in the event of programme changes.

### **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**

#### **1.1 Institutional closure**

The School is a department of the City of London Corporation. Given the resources of the City of London Corporation, it is highly unlikely that the School would close without sufficient notice being given to registered students that would enable them to complete their degree programmes, other than as a consequence of a London or nation-wide major disaster. The School has a business continuity plan in respect of a major disaster (see Section 2).

#### **1.2 Programme closure**

Reasons to close a programme of study might include:

- a. Non-alignment with current or future strategic priorities
- b. Current or future market demand limit and there are insufficient interested and suitable applicants
- c. No longer relevant to the needs of industry
- d. No longer financially viable due to costs of the training
- e. No longer financially viable due to significant changes in government funding for small and specialist institutions and/or high-cost programmes
- f. Lack of appropriate staff to teach on the programme\*
- g. Changes in Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements affecting any of the above.

The risk of programme closure for our well-established programmes in research, acting, music and music therapy, and production arts, is extremely low. The programmes are reviewed regularly to ensure they stay up to date with the needs of the profession, there is a consistent strong demand for these programmes from applicants, and there are teams of academic staff in each area to deliver the

core teaching, with the option to expand the teams in specific instrumental/discipline areas to meet individual student needs.

For programmes that have been validated for the first time in the last 10 years, the risk is moderate. All programmes have been tested through a rigorous validation process including financial modelling. However, some programmes, (e.g. Video Design in Live Performance), have been developed to meet a very specific industry need that given the nature of technological developments could change very quickly.

Brand new programmes carry a greater risk of closure as there is a higher risk that anticipated student numbers may not be met. However, the School will not advertise a programme until it has been validated and sound market research and financial modelling have been undertaken as part of the validation process.

\* The School guarantees that its degree programme will be delivered by appropriately qualified individuals. It does not guarantee that its teaching will be delivered by named individuals. In some instances, (e.g. Principal Study in Music), a student may be able to express a preference for a teacher, but even where this preference is accommodated that does not constitute a guarantee for the entirety of the student's study at the School. This is articulated in the Offer Handbook given to all applicants to whom an offer is made.

### **1.3 Student Visa Sponsorship**

The School is very mindful of its Student Visa sponsorship duties, has processes in place to support students applying for a visa, and monitoring arrangements once students are enrolled. To date it has an excellent record in respect of visa refusal and completion rates. Loss of Student Visa sponsorship is unlikely but not impossible.

### **1.4 Risk to change of validator for the doctoral programme**

The School has its own taught degree awarding powers and has just one validation arrangement in respect of its doctoral programme. The School's relationship with its validator is of long-standing and it is highly unlikely that there will be a change of validator before the School makes a submission for its own research degree awarding powers.

### **1.5 Programme and module amendment**

A programme and its modules are reviewed regularly as part of the Annual Programme Evaluation and at least every five years under periodic review (known as revalidation). Through these processes amendments to programmes are made to enhance the offer and the student experience in general. There is a strong possibility that a significant amendment to a programme of study will occur at revalidation which would affect all new students enrolling for the next academic year. It is possible for a significant amendment to occur during the revalidation period but the School has mechanisms in place to protect the student interest (see 2.5 below). Any transition arrangements must be discussed with the affected cohort and outlined in the revalidation document.

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

### **2.1 Major disaster**

In the event of major disaster, the School has a business continuity plan in place but in any such event a specific plan for replacing or postponing teaching would be devised depending on the extent of the disruption. This may include, but is not limited to:

- moving all classes online
- moving to a blended learning model
- moving suitable classes to alternative buildings within the School,

- keeping the School open longer hours thus extending the teaching hours available,
- utilising other sites within the Greater London area with similar equipment to the School
- any combination of the above.

The School also has a specific agreement with the other music conservatories in London (dated June 2013) to co-operate and provide support to a fellow conservatoire in the event that it was unable to deliver its teaching, performance and rehearsal activities due to a disaster. This was superseded by a framework for co-operation across all CUK conservatoires approved by the CUK Board in November 2016.

## 2.2 Programme closure

Prior to a formal decision regarding programme closure, there will be local discussions at programme and departmental level with approval in principle required by the School Executive to start discussions with relevant parties, including students. The department will then develop a programme closure strategy, and at a suitable point share this plan with all current students who may be affected and the Students' Union.

It is envisaged that there will be a two-stage approval process:

**Stage 1:** Approval in principle by School Executive with proposed closure date, indicative timeline, and a decision on the acceptance of new applications.

**Stage 2:** Proposal for closure to the relevant Programme Board and Academic Board with the indicative timeline, a summary of the implications, and the closure strategy. The Academic Board will then make its recommendation to the Board of Governors. Academic Board approval is not a requirement for Board approval, but the Board of Governors must actively seek the Academic Board's opinion.

The detailed closure strategy will be devised by the department (in consultation with Registry, and Marketing and other departments) This would need to be approved by both the School Executive and the Academic Board before being presented the Board of Governors. If time is pressing and the next scheduled Board of Governors meeting is some time off, the Board's Academic Assurance Working Group (AAWG) will consider the plan on behalf of the Board and report to the next full Board meeting.

A closure strategy would need to include the following elements:

- the final date for new entrants (where appropriate),
- a communication plan for enquirers/applicants if a recruitment cycle is already underway
- formal notification to any partner involved in the programme
- the plan for phasing out the teaching and any implications affecting student choice (e.g. electives) noted and worked through
- as assessment of the impact of the closure on other programmes and the student experience and proposed mitigation where significant
- the plan for phasing out assessment including provision for deferred and referred assessment
- a clear plan for intermitters and other students exceeding the standard length of study on the programme and how any missed teaching and assessment will be replicated/replaced to allow them to complete their programme of study. This would require negotiation with individual students and might require Special Schemes of Study or compensation (see Section 3) where agreement cannot be reached
- a communication plan for staff, students, alumni, and any partners.

Responsibility for the creation of the closure strategy, and its implementation, rests with the Programme Leader and the relevant Head of Department. Student consultation will include as a minimum:

- provision of written information to students
- invitation to a meeting to discuss implications

- separate management meetings with SU President/SU Vice-Presidents
- student representation via Programme Board, Academic Board and Board of Governors.

Where a decision has been made not to revalidate a programme of study, a request will be made to Academic Board for an extension to the validation period to cover teaching out of the programme for existing students.

Where offers made to prospective students of the programme have been accepted, the School will honour these offers unless the number of offers accepted is too few to make the programme a viable learning experience. In the latter instance, alternative arrangements will be made (e.g. the offer for a different programme), and or appropriate compensation. Applicants who have been made offers, but have not yet accepted them, will be advised that a closure or suspension request has been made. Such applicants will be advised that the offer of a place is suspended until a final decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the request is accepted.

### **2.3 Loss of Student visa sponsorship**

In the unfortunate event that the School loses the ability to sponsor students under the Student visa regime the School will:

- Notify Student visa students and potential Student visa students holding an offer of the change in circumstance
- Do all in its power to find an alternative programme at another London-based institution for its Student visa students and facilitate transfer, including the provision of a transcript of study completed to date
- Provide counselling and support
- Honour a student's Hall of Residence licence to occupy for the remainder of the academic year even where no longer a student of the School
- Reimbursement of tuition fees for the current academic year of study not completed
- Reimbursement of Student visa fees.
- Payment of the difference in fees where new provider's fees are higher than the School's in the transfer year of study.
- Other reimbursement of tuition fees where a suitable transfer cannot be found or agreed upon.
- For applicants - reimbursement of visa fees where already paid

Further detail about financial arrangements is given in section 3.

### **2.4 Change in validator for the doctoral programme**

Under the School's Validation Agreement with City, University of London both parties have agreed that any termination of the validation agreement should be without detriment to any students studying on the doctoral programme at that time. A notice period of 12 months also applies. Both parties would enter into a Termination Agreement which would set out the respective responsibilities of the parties to the students concerned including continuing to deliver the programme to those students currently registered.

A change in validator, including a change to self-validator under research degree awarding powers, will be considered a significant programme amendment and the point of change (from one awarding body to another) will be explored thoroughly with staff and students given that a part-time research degree can take up to 8 years. Any research degree awarding powers submission will set out the agreed approach to the change of awarding body for current students completing after research degree awarding powers granted (see below for how a consensus will need to be achieved).

### **2.5 Programme and module amendments**

Amendments to a programme or module specification or assessment criteria will be considered by the relevant departmental committee and all major amendments presented to the Academic Board for approval; representatives of the student body must be involved in the decision making. Where a significant amendment at the programme level is proposed or a significant amendment to a module

worth more than 20 credits is proposed the affected cohort of registered students must be consulted in advance of the proposal being presented to the departmental committee and a consensus achieved and recorded. If a consensus cannot be achieved, the proposal may only be approved for new students and transitional arrangements will need to be put in place for current students. Amendments approved during the academic year will come into effect on the first day of the next academic year except where a special resolution for an in-year amendment has been made by the Academic Board.

**A significant amendment will be:**

- to the award to which a programme leads – including variation to an exit award;
- to the award classification boundaries or award classification algorithm;
- the overall programme aims and/or intended learning outcomes;
- the approved length and/or mode(s) of study of the programme;
- the deletion or replacement of a module worth more than 20 credits where the effect of this would lead to an alteration in the overall aims and/or intended learning outcomes of the programme;
- a significant change to the resources required to deliver the programme or module.
- a significant reduction, 10% or more, in the contact hours required to deliver a module
- a significant alteration in the learning or teaching methods or to the methods of assessment (e.g. shift from placement to lecture)

a combination of minor changes that, when aggregated, is deemed to constitute a major change.

**Student consultation will comprise as a minimum:**

**In year amendment** - all students in a cohort affected will be invited to a meeting (with at least five term time days' notice) and a consensus\* will be required for the amendment (and a quorum of 75% required to be considered a valid meeting). A formal record of the meeting will need to be taken and preserved. If insufficient students are present at the meeting the individual written approval of the students will be required. This will be followed by the normal programme/module amendment procedures through Programme Board and Academic Board

\*A consensus shall mean 90% of students attending a meeting. If a meeting does not take place individual written approval is required, 67.5% of student cohort affected will need to agree to the proposal.

**Significant change** - as above

**Other amendments** - Student consultation through the Programme Board and the Academic Board with the normal notice period, via the distribution of paperwork, a week in advance.

**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**

The School is committed to giving every student registered on a programme of study the opportunity to complete that programme of study (this does not include students removed under a formal regulatory procedure such as Student Disciplinary Committee or Academic Progress Review Committee). This may include making alternative arrangements with another provider in the event of a major disaster or loss of Student visa sponsorship.

In any instance where the School cannot honour its commitment to the student to complete their programme of study within a reasonable timeframe (standard length of programme plus 6 months) or where no suitable alternative provision can be found, the following reimbursement and compensation policy will apply:

- a. Reimbursement of tuition fees for the current academic year of study not completed (to original payee)
- b. Reimbursement of Student visa fees (where applicable)
- c. Reimbursement of flight costs for Student visa students who need to make an additional flight due to action under this plan.

Where the School has found suitable alternative provision for the student to complete their programme but the student does not wish to accept the arrangement, a, b and c will apply. Where the School is unable to find suitable alternative provision d, will also apply:

- d. Compensation equivalent to the tuition fees paid for the previous academic year (where applicable).

Additionally, where a student has additional costs due to the extension of the programme or arrangements with another provider they will receive:

- Reimbursement of additional accommodation and term-time travel costs for the time by which the programme is extended under this plan
- The difference in term-time travel costs between term-time address and the School and the time-term address and the new provider, or the costs of alternative accommodation, whichever is the cheaper.

The School will honour any scholarship or bursary awarded for the current academic year. However, as no scholarship or bursary is recurrent and students must apply each year, continuing students will need to reapply in the usual way and it will not be transferable

All registered students of the School may apply for hardship. Where actions under this plan have resulted in additional costs not covered above the student is encouraged to make a case to the hardship committee.

The School will fund these reimbursement and compensation arrangements through its normal budget and through the City of London.

Any complaints about reimbursement, compensation received under this plan will be considered under the Student Complaints Procedure as a Stage 2 complaint.

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

##### **4.1 Promotion of the Student Protection Plan**

The Student Protection Plan is available on our website for prospective students and all stakeholders to view. Additionally, it will be referenced in the Offer Handbook (given to all applicants who are made an offer) and in the annual Student Handbook indicating where the full copy may be located.

As part of the School's quality assurance processes, explicit guidance will be given to Programme Leaders when devising and reviewing their programmes to be mindful of the requirements of the Student Protection Plan. Programme Leaders will be required to state within validation and revalidation submissions (from September 2018 onwards) the level of risk associated with programme closure and significant programme amendment and the measures in place, or to be undertaken, to minimise that risk. Programme Leaders will also need to indicate in their programme/module amendment documentation how amendments will be communicated to students and prospective students.

#### **4.2 Timeframes and methods of consultation when implementing the Plan**

Details about specific timeframes (where relevant) are given in section 2 of this document as are the mechanisms for consulting students under the Protection Plan. The School's aim is to work collaboratively and co-operatively with the student body to find pragmatic yet sensitive solutions.

The School has an extensive health and welfare service and will provide support and counselling to any student affected by actions taken under this plan.

#### **4.3 Access to independent advice**

It is expected that the SU President, on behalf of the student body, will raise any concerns about actions under this plan in the first instance with the Principal, a Vice-Principal, or the Dean of Students (or equivalent). If the SU President continues to have reservations about the appropriateness of any management actions under this plan they may approach the member of the Board of Governors recognised as the students' supporter on the board. If the Board member is unable to assist the student body directly, they will inform the School Executive of the need to fund independent advice for the student body.

#### **4.4 Review of the Student Protection Plan**

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by Academic Board alongside the review of all other policies. Where amendments are suggested, these will first be discussed with SU Officers and then presented to the Students Executive Forum (to which all student representatives are invited) for further discussion. Final approval will be sought from the Academic Board (where student representation is required for quoracy). Any approved amendments will come into effect for the next academic year and therefore any review and approval of amendments will need to have been completed by the end of the Spring term.

**Last updated: 13 November 2023**