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## **Student protection plan for the period 2023-2026**

### **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**

Staffordshire University is a modern, relevant and vocationally inspired institution, working with industry to support regional economic growth and provide opportunities for a diverse student body. We have built on our strong heritage and mission and, as "The Connected University", we continue to deliver innovative and applied learning, develop talented people and connect our communities to opportunities that will support them to improve economically, societally and culturally.

The University is organised into two Schools:

- Digital, Technologies, Innovations and Business (DTIB)
- Health, Education, Policing and Sciences (HEPS)

The School combinations reflect employer needs for graduates with broader skills, knowledge and an agility. Underpinned by a connected curriculum approach, the University is working in partnership with students to be active, digital, global citizens.

The University has a diverse student population with a significant proportion of local and regional students. We have a relatively small number of students from outside of the UK and are therefore not over exposed to the withdrawal from the European Union nor changes in Home Office immigration regulations. We have in place robust procedures to ensure UKVI compliance and have no issues arising from recent audits.

### **The University's strategic plan is underpinned by a clear set of Key Performance Indicators, so that the achievement of the plan can be managed.**

These are then supported by underpinning KPIs, which measure many areas also contained within statutory returns. These KPIs are reflected in the School/Service five-year Business Plans, which are monitored through Strategic Reviews. The achievement of the KPIs is monitored through the Strategy and Performance Committee of the Board of Governors and ultimately overseen by the Board. The financial performance of the University and associated KPIs are also managed through the same process, however these are overseen by the Sustainability and Resources Committee, which ultimately reports to the Board.

### **Risk that the Institution will cease to operate is low:**

From a financial perspective, the risk that the institution will cease to operate is very low. The University prepares a detailed annual budget and five-year plan, with appropriate stress testing and scenario planning to ensure that it can respond to the changing market. In addition, the Governors have agreed some key financial indicators that must be met annually and throughout our strategic plan including surplus delivery and improvement, minimum cash balances and adherence to regulator and bank covenants.

The University has in place a Risk Management Framework which allows each area of the University to monitor and update its changing risk profile and identify mitigating actions to be implemented. Risk management is part of the Business Planning and Strategic Review process. This is led and managed by the University Executive Board, supported by the Business Risk Manager and is overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee and ultimately the Board of Governors. The University also has in place a Critical Incident Management infrastructure and supporting procedures, which is underpinned by the professional development of staff. This is augmented with Business Continuity Plans for each School and Service so that in the event of a critical incident, the University can mitigate the impact as quickly as possible by referring to robust business continuity plans. These plans are updated on an annual basis, or as the need arises.

**Risk that the institution will close a location, building or campus and cannot find a suitable location is low:**

The business continuity and student experience risk of campus closure is low at Staffordshire University. With satellite operations at Lichfield, London and Stafford, and with further education partners located closely to the Stoke campus as part of the University Quarter, relocation of activities will be feasible if individual buildings or zones of buildings are impacted. Staffordshire University London based in Stratford, London delivers the same curriculum as our Stoke campus. The risk to the venue, which is on the same site as used by Loughborough University and UCL, is low. In the unlikely loss of the Here East site we would seek to run the courses at Capital City Colleges Group which operates our foundation year or an alternative venue. If needed students would be supported to transfer to the main University campus or to alternative courses within London. For partners based elsewhere in the UK, agreements on exit strategies are included in the contractual agreements. This will cover other providers of the course, transfer and support for students along with a timeline for regular review of the arrangements. Partnership arrangements include ensuring partners are financially and educationally appropriate to run our courses.

**Risk of discontinuing a specific subject or programme is managed:**

The University's Quality Enhancement Committee and associated programme approval process ensures that we design and develop provision that is cognisant of the external market including the skills and knowledge requirement of a future work force. We monitor subject and programme performance and changes to the portfolio are planned to minimise disruption to the student body. We have "teach out" guidance to ensure that when we do discontinue provision academic standards are met and the overall student experience is protected. This includes both on campus and partnership provision.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our courses is low because we design our modules to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff and have detailed resources plans in place to cover the upgrading and maintenance of specialist equipment.

**Risk for Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Provision is managed:**

The university provides a wide range of higher and degree apprenticeships for employers in England. The university will adhere to the Apprenticeships Funding and Performance Management Rules for Providers.

Our last Ofsted inspection recognised that the apprenticeship provision as Good putting the University in a strong position is delivering its apprenticeships. In line with the rules, where an apprentice is redundant or the employer ceases to be viable (through administration) the university will work with the National Apprenticeship Service to make reasonable efforts to find a new employer.

**Risk we cannot provide the programme through no choice of our own is low:**

The University has a number of programmes recognised by professional bodies and we monitor compliance through robust quality assurance processes. All recent PSRB audits have been positive with only minor recommendations. The risk therefore is low.

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

The Student Protection Plan will be triggered if the University decides to:

- discontinue a specific programme of study and cannot offer a reasonable alternative;
- stop teaching this subject;
- close the location (building or campus) in which the course is taught and cannot find suitable premises at a nearby location;
- cease operating altogether

or

- we can no longer provide the programme for any other reason;
- we cease operating through no choice of our own;
- we lose the right to provide the course or qualification;
- we lose our UKVI licence.

We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to course, programme and module content year on year, and these in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures. However, if a student feels the course as delivered varies significantly from what they expected, they may be able to seek recourse under consumer or contract law.

The University has policies in place that allow us to mitigate the risks that are outlined above these include:

- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Programme Closure](#)
- [Student Transfer](#)
- [Refund and Compensation Policy](#)

These policies have been developed in line with the Quality Code for Higher Education and CMA guidance.

It should be noted that we will make arrangements to 'teach out' current students where we have voluntarily decided to leave the market or close a programme. This means that we commit to ensuring the course of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students, even though the course is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.

Our Student Transfer policy allows advance standing with another university should a suitable alternative programme be unavailable, and we have an arrangement with Keele University to work together where there are synergies in subject areas, should the department or institution become unsustainable.

### **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 Fee, Refund and Compensation policy can be found at <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/legal/policies/refundand-compensation-policy.jsp>

The policy is written in line with University regulations and approved through Quality Committee and Academic Board

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

This Student Protection Plan will be publicised and communicated in the following ways:

- On our website [www.staffs.ac.uk](http://www.staffs.ac.uk) as an externally facing document and on student facing webpages
- Within our terms and conditions, shared with applicants prior to accepting an offer
- As part of the enrolment process
- With the Students' Union and student representatives as part of the training programme

The plan will form part of our quality assurance processes, aligned to our programme and module approval, review and amendment procedure, and monitored through the University Academic Planning Committee and Quality Committee.

Should we need to enact any element of the plan students will be notified within 1 week of the decision being formally approved and made aware of their rights as stipulated in the plan and CMA guidance.

We will work with students to discuss their options to change programmes, select alternative content or transfer out of the University.

We will ensure that students have access to independent advice through the Students' Union and are signposted to external sources of advice should you require this support.

Student engagement is critical to the ongoing development plan and we will continue to work with the Students' Union and Student Representatives in the implementation.

A web page setting out relevant information in this document for students can be found at

<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/student-protection-plan>