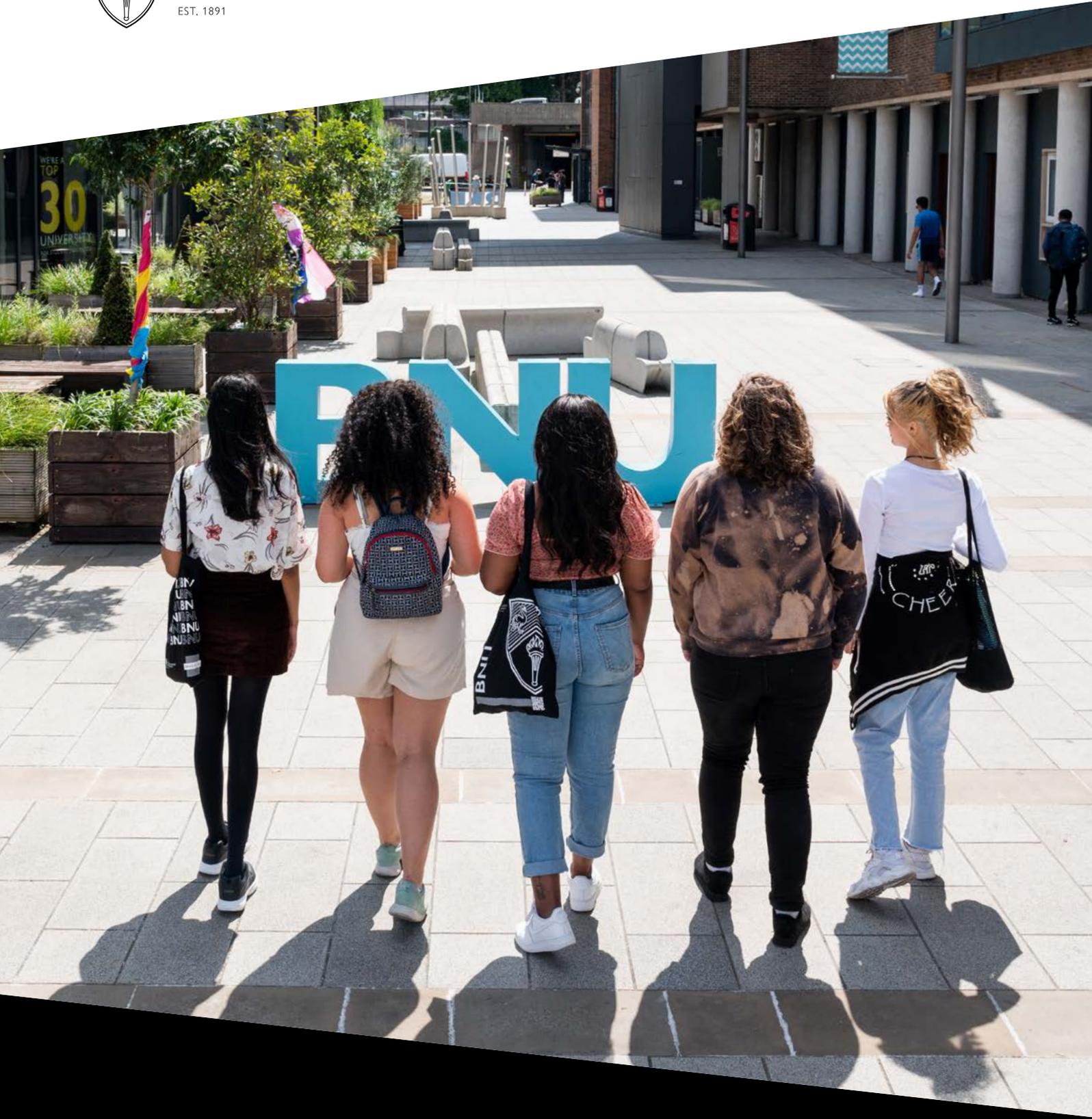




BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY  
EST. 1891



# Student Protection Plan

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**Approved by:** Council/OfS

**Date first published:** Oct-2018

**Owner:** Dean of Students

**Date updated:** Apr-2025

**Review Date:** Apr-2026

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## **Purpose**

- 1 This Student Protection Plan outlines what the University will do should a situation occur that risks the continuation of students' studies, such as if the programme of study, campus or institution were to close.
- 2 The Student Protection Plan is intended to provide an overview of potential risks and measures that Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) has in place to minimise those risks.
- 3 The higher education regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), requires every higher education provider to publish and maintain a Student Protection Plan as an ongoing condition of registration.

## **Scope**

- 4 This Student Protection Plan ("the SPP") covers all students currently enrolled on or applying to a Programme of Study leading to an award of Buckinghamshire New University whether they are studying directly with the University or indirectly through one of the University's partners in the UK or overseas.

## **Measures to mitigate risk**

- 5 The following measures are in place to mitigate risks from occurring:
- 6 Each Dean of College and Director of Professional Service maintain a risk register which involves identifying, assessing, monitoring and controlling the risks within their areas of responsibility.
- 7 The College and Directorate regularly review and discuss risks with University Strategy Group (USG), line managers, Dean of College, Director, Finance and People Business Partners.
- 8 The USG review and report on strategic risks through monthly and termly reporting cycles and provide an assessment of strategic risks to each meeting of the Audit Committee. The Strategic Risk Register is informed by the risk registers of Colleges and Directorates. Subsidiary companies report through their Boards of Directors.
- 9 The Audit Committee monitors and reviews the effectiveness of risk management and review the Strategic Risk Register at each meeting to understand changes to risk ratings, monitor net risk and ensure risks are controlled within tolerance levels. The Audit Committee reports on the effectiveness of risk management and make recommendations to the University Council on any changes to policy and processes.
- 10 Council reviews the Strategic Risk Register at least annually, reviews the annual report of the Audit Committee and approves changes to the risk policy proposed by the Audit Committee.
- 11 The University Collaborations Committee (UCC) maintains a risk register for all partnership activity and undertakes due diligence and other quality assurance activities.
- 12 The University will ensure that Educational Partners that offer programmes which they themselves have developed and delivered have Student Protection Plans where appropriate and as required for partners registered with the OfS.

## Assessment of Risk

- 13 BNU has a formal mechanism for reviewing and monitoring the range of potential risks that could impact its ability to deliver its programmes of study. The Student Protection Risk Register and the Strategic Risk Register are the formal institutional documents that record all risks, the likelihood of them occurring and the actions taken to minimise the risk. The following risks and mitigations are outlined below.

### **Closure of the University/Market Exit or the University has its degree awarding powers revoked.**

- 14 This is not a situation that is foreseen, particularly from an unplanned event. The assessment of risk where the University ceases to operate either as a deliberate decision, through market pressures, or loses its status to award its own degree or that of its Educational Partners is low.
- 15 In the unlikely event that that University must close, or has its degree awarding powers revoked, the University will enact its [Teach Out Policy](#) enabling current students to be taught to the completion of their studies where eligible. Where 'teach out' is not possible, BNU will seek to offer similar, alternative programmes of study, either as a merger with another higher education provider, or transfer students to another provider, or where possible, seek an Educational Partner to accredit the University's existing programmes.
- 16 Applicants will receive appropriate support from the University to transfer their application to another higher education provider.

### **Merger of the University with another higher education provider (HEP)**

- 17 The risk arising from such an unplanned event is not foreseen. The assessment of risk where the University ceases to operate as an independent body and a merger occurs with a HEP is low.
- 18 In the unlikely event that the University must merge with another provider, all reasonable steps would be taken, as set out in in Paragraph 15 of this Student Protection Plan.
- 19 Applicants would receive appropriate support from the University to transfer their application to another HE provider if they did not wish to continue their application with the merged body.

### **Closure of a specific location or campus**

- 20 The assessment of risk where restrictions on in-person delivery of programmes at a specific location or campus are imposed on the University is low.
- 21 There are no current plans to close campuses. If a natural disaster, a major event outside of the University's control or if a Government emergency restriction occurs that results in having to temporarily close a specific location or campus, alternative arrangements to minimise disruption to students and their studies will be made such as alternative delivery methods, relocation of provision to an alternative location or revised timetabling.
- 22 If there is a strategic decision to permanently change, or substantially alter the location of delivery of a programme of study, the University will consult with students to assess the impact on them. An Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted to ensure the needs of different groups of students are considered and that students are not directly or indirectly discriminated against.

### **Temporary suspension of in-person delivery at a specific location, campus, partner or nationally**

- 23 The assessment of risk where restrictions on in-person delivery are imposed on the University or on its Educational Partner in response to a national or local pandemic, or another outbreak is moderate.
- 24 In such an event, the University has arrangements which provide for a safe continuation of study and support for students. The implementation of the [No Detriment Policy – Emergency Measures](#) will come into effect when extreme circumstances beyond the University’s reasonable control require exceptions and additions to be made to the University’s standard Regulations.

### **Closure of area of academic provision**

- 25 The assessment of risk where the University closes an academic area following a review of strategy and/or consideration of market forces is moderate.
- 26 Where possible, the University will consolidate provision within other academic areas. Where this is not possible, individual programmes may be closed as per the suspension/closure of an individual programme as set out in Paragraph 27-30 of this Student Protection Plan.

### **Suspension /closure of an individual programme**

- 27 The assessment of risk should the University suspend entry to or permanently close one of its programmes is currently judged as moderate.
- 28 The University reviews and updates its portfolio to ensure that it remains relevant, current and aligned with the University’s strategic direction. Continuous review of programmes should reduce the need for programme closure or programme suspension. The University may decide to suspend or close a programme of study if the demand is insufficient to cover the cost of delivery.
- 29 If the University decides to suspend entry to and/or permanently close one of its programmes, it will consult with current students and would normally seek to ‘teach out’ and apply the process and the timescale set out in the [Programme Suspension and/or Closure Policy](#).
- 30 Recruitment activities will cease, and affected applicants will be offered an alternative programme of study at the University, or where necessary, reasonably assisted to secure an alternative programme of study with another HE provider.

### **Module closure/other changes to programme content such as changes to the regulatory framework for accredited programmes**

- 31 The assessment of this risk is low.
- 32 The University monitors and considers the performance of its programmes through annual monitoring and periodically reviews the currency and validity of programmes in light of developments in research, professional practice and pedagogy, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements.
- 33 If a module is discontinued and/or a programme is amended for instance, following a review of the curriculum, changes to subject benchmarking or changes to accrediting body requirements, student representatives will be consulted through the Programme Approval and Amendment Procedure. Notification of changes will be given to applicants and current students with the opportunity to transfer to other modules/programmes where possible or required.

### **Industrial action by staff or third parties, or unanticipated departure of key members of University staff related to programme/subject areas**

- 34 The assessment of this risk is low.
- 35 The University has contingency plans in place to prioritise the delivery of education to current students. If industrial action or the unanticipated departure of staff were to occur, the University will reasonably communicate with students impacted by the action or departure of staff and provide support where the situation requires.
- 36 If staff are unavailable due to illness, industrial action or other reasons, the University will make every effort to minimise the disruption to students and take reasonable steps to ensure learning opportunities are not missed.
- 37 If a member of staff were to leave the University or to take long term sickness absence, the University will make every effort to find suitable replacement staff to minimise the disruption to impacted students.
- 38 Where contingency plans cannot be implemented, other options will be discussed with affected students such as repeated delivery or additional learning.
- 39 For research students, the Regulations for Research Degrees sets out the arrangements where there is a need for a change in supervisory arrangements or if the main supervisor is likely to be absent for a period of more than two months.

### **Loss of accreditation from a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB)**

- 40 The temporary or permanent removal of accreditation of a programme or subject area that impacts the University's ability to deliver that programme or lead to a loss of status of that external body is low.
- 41 BNU has a sustained record of delivering programmes that are regulated by PSRBs. If a programme loses its PSRB accreditation, the University will discuss options with the affected students. These options may include supporting students to find an alternative accredited programme with another HE provider or facilitating the transfer to another programme at the University. The University will work with the PSRB to minimise the disruption to students.

### **Closure of an Educational Partner of the University**

- 42 The assessment of risk where an Educational Partner ceases to operate either as a deliberate decision or through market pressures or through Government removal of course designation is currently assessed as medium. BNU monitors the performance of all its partners to pre-empt any activity and manage associated risks. In the event of closure, the University will, where appropriate, 'step-in' and teach the course directly. Should this not be possible, the University will seek alternative providers for students in locations with relatively close proximity to their existing campus. Where appropriate, this will include an opportunity to study at BNU, or at another educational partner. The University will provide timely information, advice and guidance to students and manage the communications directly. The University will work with alternative providers to facilitate student transfers, and support students with transcripts confirming their achievement of award or credits.

### **Termination of an Educational Partner of the University**

- 43 The assessment of risk where the University chooses to terminate its relationship with an Educational Partner is currently medium. In such an event, BNU will take all reasonable steps to ensure that students continue to receive a high-quality academic experience in accordance with

the OfS B Conditions of Registration. In the event of termination of a partner, there is a requirement to teach out programmes as covered in the contract between the University and the Educational Partner. In addition, the University will work with the partner to assess whether BNU leadership or teaching staff should be deployed to ensure a successful teach-out process. The University will work with the Educational Partner to coordinate information, guidance, and advice. Any commitments covered in the Educational Partner's or University's Access and Participation Plan will be honoured.

### **Withdrawal or non-renewal of a validation of an Educational Partner programme**

- 44 The assessment of risk that the University does not approve or re-approve a programme delivered by an Educational Partner is currently judged as medium.
- 45 The University will enact its Teach Out Policy if an Educational Partner ceases to operate due to a closure, termination or ceases to deliver BNU Programmes.

### **Removal or suspension of Student Route licence at BNU or an Educational Partner**

- 46 The assessment of risk of removal or suspension of the University or an Educational Partner Student Route (formerly Tier 4) Sponsorship Licence is low. The University has mechanisms in place to monitor activities relating to its Student Visa licence and can address any potential issues or concerns.
- 47 If the University were to have its Student Route licence removed or suspended, it will work with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and affected international students on their options. This would include the option to 'teach out' current students or to transfer students to other HE providers where 'teach out' is not possible.
- 48 Recruitment of international students and affected applicants will be passed to another sponsor where appropriate and/or students will be given the option to postpone their application with the University pending reinstatement of the licence if it were suspended.
- 49 If an Educational Partner were to have its Student Route licence removed or suspended, BNU will work with the partner where applicable to transfer those affected to other HE providers.
- 50 Recruitment will cease and affected applicants will be offered alternative provision with the University where appropriate.

## **Refunds and Compensation**

- 51 The University's [Refund and Compensation Policy](#) supports the Student Protection Plan and sets out the circumstances in which the University will refund tuition fees, other relevant costs to students and provide compensation where necessary if the University is no longer able to preserve the continuation of study for one or more students.
- 52 Students studying on programmes offered by an Educational Partner of the University where it is not possible to offer alternative provision should refer to that Partner's Refund and Compensation Policy or equivalent.

## **Complaints**

- 53 The University will make all reasonable efforts to resolve any issues arising from a need to formally activate this Student Protection Plan. However, students can submit a complaint

through the University's [Student Complaint Procedure](#) should they remain dissatisfied with the resolution, outcome or service they receive from the University.

- 54 Specifically, students will be able to raise complaints about the way any disruption or closure is handled. Where appropriate, a consultation forum will be put in place and the Students' Union will provide additional support and guidance.
- 55 Where students are dissatisfied with the complaint process or the outcome of any complaint, they will be able to take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

## **Communication**

- 56 The Student Protection Plan is published on the [Policies and Strategies](#) section of the BNU website where it can be accessed by applicants and current students.
- 57 The Student Protection Plan is also referenced in the [Terms and Conditions of Admission](#) and the Refunds and Compensation Policy published on the Policies and Strategies section of the BNU website.
- 58 In the event of a planned closure of a programme, campus or Educational Partnership arrangement as stated in this plan, the University would, wherever possible, provide current students with a notice period of 90 days. This notice period would be dependent on the specific circumstances of the closure.
- 59 As outlined in the plan, the University would take reasonable steps to enable students to complete their studies or transfer to an alternative programme at BNU or at an alternative institution.

## **Reviewing this plan**

- 60 This plan was reviewed by the University Strategy Group, Council and the Students' Union. The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually and updated where necessary.



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