

Student Protection Plan



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Approving Body:	VCAG
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Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation	Rating
Closure (cessation of trading) of the University	RAU has developed sound financial management and robust governance and leadership.	low
Strategic decision to close a programme, resulting in students being required to stop studies	Annual curriculum portfolio review at the University ensures any decisions to withdraw programmes occur with sufficient time to inform potential applicants. RAU aims to teach out withdrawn programmes wherever possible, so students are not affected by strategic portfolio review decisions.	low
Loss of University status, Degree Awarding Powers (DAP) and/or eligibility for Student Finance England (SFE) loan entitlement	DAP criteria and OfS regulatory requirements are reviewed regularly by the Vice Chancellor's Executive and Governing Council. Consultations with OfS and QAA regarding RAU's bid for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) will provide additional external assurance on Teaching Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). The quality of, and support for, RAU's programmes has been recognised through receiving a Silver rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).	low
Loss or suspension of 'highly trusted sponsor' status for Student Visas via UKVI	As a small institution with relatively low international student intake, there is a greater risk of passing the threshold of visa refusals. However, RAU ensures robust training for relevant staff and adopts a cautious and thorough approach to assessing applicants requesting a student visa.	moderate

Loss of accreditation from Professional Statutory Bodies	RAU works closely with several regulatory bodies, most notably the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). This is a long-standing relationship with excellent communication processes in place.	low
Industrial action by RAU staff or third parties delivering key services	RAU is highly committed to maintaining effective employee relations and working with trade union colleagues to pre-empt/resolve matters that may arise from time to time, helping avoid disputes that have disrupted other universities.	low
Unanticipated departure of key members of RAU staff, affecting the delivery of individual modules	A small, specialist institution is more at risk to a disproportionate impact from staff departure. However, quality assurance processes ensure programmes are designed in such a way as to avoid reliance on any individual staff member for delivery. HR have made improvements to both staff recruitment and retention.	moderate
Collaborative partners based in UK	Quality Assurance scrutiny on partnership arrangements, plus programme validation and revalidation ensures the above risks are mitigated for all RAU validated study in the UK. Partners are required to have their own Student Protection Plan.	low
Collaborative partners based overseas	Quality Assurance scrutiny on trans-national partnership arrangements, plus programme validation and revalidation, includes separate risk assessments pertinent to the region, including political, economic, social and technological variances. Although no partnership would be entered into without ensuring safeguards are in place, there is additional potential of unanticipated changes, such as overseas legislation or conflict. Partners are required to have their own Student Protection Plan.	moderate

Mitigation measures

1. Overarching Measures for Protecting Students

- i. The RAU will ensure it takes all reasonable measures to protect students from being adversely affected by any disruption to programme delivery or the wider student experience. A variety of measures will be put in place including, but not limited to:
 - providing students with the opportunity to transfer to another programme
 - modifying the delivery/content of an existing programme
 - providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider.

- ii. Where a student is required to transfer programme, or move to another institution, there are likely to be implications for student finance arrangements. The University's Registry team will be notified of students affected in the event of any the above steps being taken and will contact affected students and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on their individual circumstances.

2. Significant Material Change

- i. Institutional failure will be monitored through risk management in accordance with HE regulatory bodies.

- ii. Where the University has no option, other than to close, it may consider measures such as those below to protect student experience:
 - where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period that would allow current enrolled students to complete their studies at RAU
 - where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and (where appropriate

financially) by compensating students where, because of disruption to their studies, they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss

- merging with another institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.
- iii. In the event of loss or restriction of degree awarding powers (DAP), the University will work with the Office for Students to:
- ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the resultant disruption to affected students
 - ensure that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner.
- iv. In the event of de-designation of its programmes for ‘Student Support’ purposes (resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance for its programmes), the University will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:
- working with the Office for Students to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme
 - where the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to their studies
 - providing assistance for affected students by producing evidence in support of continuation of their studies
 - merging with another Institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.
- v. The University has procedures in place in the event of suspension/closure of a programme. Where there is material impact on the students, the effect will be mitigated by:

- communication with current students to provide assurance that they will not be adversely affected by the decision, and provide assurance that they are able to complete their studies at the Institution where possible, provision will be made to allow for the completion of studies where ‘mitigating circumstances’ have been presented
 - consultation with stakeholders who may be affected to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken
 - where possible, future applicants will be notified in accordance with UCAS deadlines, allowing time for students to source an alternative suitable programme (where relevant) at the University or elsewhere.
- vi. The University will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description applied to it in the University’s prospectus for the academic year in which a student began their programme. However, in the event of major in-programme changes to programme content the University will ensure that:
- changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience, and affected students are notified and consulted with as appropriate
 - it works with students to mutually agree the offer is still acceptable
 - where necessary, it allows students the opportunity to withdraw from the programme
 - where required, students will be offered reasonable support to transfer to another programme at the University, or to another provider.
- vii. In the event of suspension of UKVI Student Sponsor status, the University will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resultant disruption to those services and to affected students by, for example:

- working with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme
 - allow students already in receipt of a visa based upon an allocated CAS from the University to enrol and commence their studies
 - offer students who have not commenced their travel to the University, the opportunity to postpone their application pending the resolution of the suspension.
- viii. The University, in the event of revocation of UKVI Student Sponsor Licence will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resultant disruption to affected students by, for example, providing assistance to affected students to switch to an alternative sponsor.

3. Changes to Regulatory Framework Affecting Specific Programme

- i. In the event of the University losing PSRB accreditation, the University will consider measures to protect student experience, such as:
- offering affected students the chance to move to another programme
 - delivering a modified version of the same programme
 - providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider who holds the relevant accreditation.

4. Disruption to University activity

- i. Where events result in term-time programme disruption, the University will normally consider whether it is practical to make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme.
- ii. Actions to minimise disruption may include:

- temporary short-term suspension of programme delivery (e.g. where there is a change in the programme delivery location or staffing, with appropriate actions to mitigate impact on students)
 - changes to the programme delivery location or method, which may include distance or blended learning
 - changes to the staffing of a programme, for instance through a review of internal staff resources, including recruitment of area specialists, where appropriate
 - offering students the opportunity to transfer to an alternative programme
 - provision of reasonable support to students for accessing a programme run by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of credits and information about academic progress.
- iii. The University is highly committed to maintaining an effective employee relations culture and working with trade union colleagues to achieve reasonable solutions to matters that may arise from time to time.
- iv. Where industrial action does occur, the University will seek to:
- ensure that normal operations are maintained as far as possible
 - take all reasonable steps to fulfil its responsibilities to students in ensuring that any disruption is minimised and students are not, as far as is possible to determine, disadvantaged by the action.
- v. Where possible the University will:
- seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant post(s) or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption
 - where the University cannot avoid closing a programme, apply the policy as outlined in section 2.v.

- vi. The University's Critical Incident Plan covers other actions affecting business continuity, such as acts of terrorism, damage to buildings or equipment.

5. Students studying at Partner Institutions

- i. The RAU has collaborative arrangements with partners delivering education in the UK and overseas. Students studying at these institutions are either on validated or franchise provision:
 - Validated Provision. All students studying validated provision at a UK Partner Institution, and therefore directly funded to that Institution, will fall under the Student Protection Plan for that Institution. The RAU will work with all their partners to ensure these students are adequately protected and incorporate approval of the Institution's protection plan within the quality assurance process at Institutional approval and review.
 - Franchise Provision. All students studying RAU franchise provision at a UK Partner Institution will fall within the RAU's Student Protection Plan.
- ii. The University is committed to ensure that students are protected in the event of the termination of a partnership agreement. The RAU mitigates against the failure of any form of collaborative partnership provision through close operational links via a dedicated academic and registry staffing resource, and a robust institutional approval and review process.
- iii. An integral part of the Memorandum of Agreement for all partners is a business planning process that ensures both the RAU and the partner institution are confident early on in the recruitment cycle that sufficient numbers will be recruited for any programme to run, and be sustainable;

- iv. In the event that a validating partner decides that it is suspending or withdrawing a programme they are required to notify the University immediately and ensure the processes are followed as per their Institutional Student Protection Plan. In the case of franchise provision, the University would immediately enact the relevant section of this plan.

Financial refunds and compensation

1. The RAU terms and conditions for the payment of fees and fee refund policy can be found in the online student handbook:
www.rau.ac.uk/student-life/new-students-guide/student-handbook-and-policies/handbook
2. These will be updated to include provision for refunds and costs associated with the plans laid out in this document.
3. The RAU has sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds to students on individual or suites of programmes and assets to cover refunds to all students in the event of Institutional closure.

Communication

1. The University will communicate any changes that may affect students in a timely fashion and in an accessible format, taking due regard for equality and diversity of the student body.
2. The RAU will publish this, and future, student protection plans to students via the student portal, Gateway.

3. Students, via the RAU Student Union and student voice mechanisms, will be involved in the annual review of this Student Protection Plan.

Review

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

Version control

Version number	Change	Name and job title	Date
1.0		Julie Walkling, Director of Operations	2018
2.0	Restructuring and updating of risk assessment in light of improved finance, staffing and IT provision, and new collaborative partnerships.	Dan Shaffer, Director of Academic Services	February 2024