

Student Protection Plan



Provider's name: The Royal Agricultural University

Provider's UKPRN: 10005545

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Student protection plan for the period [2018-2019]

The following is an assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU).

The risk of a decision needing to be taken to close the University is low due to sound financial management and robust governance and leadership.

The risk of a strategic decision to close a programme at the University is low. Annual curriculum portfolio review at the University ensures any decisions to withdraw programmes occur with sufficient time to inform potential applicants. The Royal Agricultural University's policy is to teach out all withdrawn programmes so students 'on programme' are not affected by strategic portfolio review decisions

The risk of the University losing University status or withdrawal of student support funding is low. The University is putting significant senior resource in to ensuring the Institution meets the requirements for maintaining University status and student support funding, with the requirements being reviewed regularly at Council and the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group.

The risk of removal of Tier 4 status is low. The Royal Agricultural University ensures the organisation remains compliant for Tier 4 sponsorship through robust training for registry, admissions and human resource staff.

Loss of accreditation from Professional Statutory Bodies carries low risk. The Royal Agricultural University 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.

There is low risk of industrial action by University staff or third parties. The Royal Agricultural 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.

There is a moderate risk of the unanticipated departure of key members of University staff affecting the delivery of individual modules within a programme of study. A small, specialist institution is more at risk to impact from staff departure. The Royal Agricultural University ensures programmes are designed, and staff recruited, in such a way as to not become reliant on any individual staff member for delivery.

The measures that the Royal Agricultural University have in place to mitigate risks to delivery of provision for students

1. Overarching Measures for Protecting Students

1.1 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

1.2 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.

The following outlines the different circumstances that may affect a student's study, from the significant changes such as institutional closure through to changes at a modular level, outlining the ways in which the RAU will help to ensure students receive the best outcome from their studies.

2. Significant Material Change

Institutional Closure

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

2.2 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 the Institution
- 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

Loss or Restriction of University Status

2.3 In the event of loss or restriction of University status 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

Withdrawal of Designation

2.4 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

Suspension of Programme

2.5 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

Major Changes to Programme Content

2.6 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 ensure 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

Suspension of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence

2.7 In the event of suspension of Tier 4 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

Revocation of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence

2.8 The University, in the event of revocation of Tier 4 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

Loss of accreditation

3.1 In the event of the University losing PSRB accreditation, the University will consider measures to protect student experience, such as those listed below:

- 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

4.1 Where events result in term-time programme disruption, the University will normally consider whether it is practicable to make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme.

4.2 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 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

Industrial Action

4.3 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.

4.4 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

Loss of Key Staff

4.5 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, the policy as outlined in section 2.5 will apply

4.6 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

5.1 The RAU has collaborative partnership arrangements with a number of UK FE Colleges and International Institutions. Students studying at these institutions are either on validated or franchise provision.

5.2 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.

- 5.3 Franchise Provision. All students studying RAU franchise provision at a UK Partner Institution will fall within the RAU's Student Protection Plan.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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;
- 5.6 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.

Information about the policy the University has in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that the University are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

- The RAU terms and conditions for the payment of fees and fee refund policy can be found online;

<https://www.rau.ac.uk/sites/files/rau/RAU%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Fee%20Payments%202018-19.pdf>

<https://www.rau.ac.uk/sites/files/rau/RAU%20Refund%20Policy%202018-19.pdf>
and

- These will be updated to include provision for refunds and costs associated with the plans laid out in this document.
- 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.

Information about how the University will communicate with students about this student protection plan

- 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.
- The RAU will publish this, and future, student protection plans to students via the student portal, Gateway.
- Students, via the RAU Student Union and student voice mechanisms, will be involved in the annual review of this student protection plan