

Student Protection Plan



**Harper Adams
University**

16 May 2018

Provider's name: **Harper Adams University**

Provider's UKPRN:10040812

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Student protection plan – May 2018

- 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.SUMMARY OF CONTEXT

Harper Adams University is focussed on land-based studies. Set on a 635 hectare farm, we are the leading specialist university tackling the future development of food production, processing, animal sciences, engineering, land management and sustainable rural business.

Harper Adams University has a long history of education and a strong academic reputation. Our location and longevity, along with our traditional asset base place us in a good position to manage the risks outlined below.

We have indicated the risk of any of the circumstances below occurring on a **low risk/medium risk/high risk** and **very high risk** basis.

1.1 COURSE CLOSURES & PLACEMENT – LOW RISK

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver courses in our specialised areas in the next three years is low. Application rates to the university are at good levels and the admissions system is managed efficiently. Therefore, the risk that the University might suffer from poor recruitment for its Undergraduate or Postgraduate programmes is relatively low. There is a comprehensive range of promotional activities undertaken in the UK and overseas to assist recruitment and, due to our status and high reputation, industry and government continue to support our work in the form of industry scholarships, placement offers and specialist grant funding.

Undergraduate courses at the university include a placement year in industry and there is a moderate risk that this provision might be affected by changes in Government policy/regulation, loss of placement offers from industry or legal action by students or employers. These risks are addressed by having effective management procedures for student placements, including vetting/approval processes and monitoring of national policies, employers and student placement experiences. We carry out individual visits to all students on placements and have special procedures for overseas placements, including use of agents in various countries. There is a careful matching of individuals to placement opportunities and our placement procedures are reviewed annually.

1.2 MAINTENANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY – LOW RISK

There is a low risk that teaching quality might not be maintained at its current high standard and/or academic governance is inadequate, leading to poor student satisfaction and reputational risk. The University is currently Gold rated in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) and has close engagement with TEF and other aspects of the HE Quality Assurance (QA) system. We operate in-house development courses for new teaching staff, including a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning accredited by AdvanceHE. Our comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual provides guidance on our systems, which are regularly reviewed. The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy incorporates the refinement of effective quality management systems and includes a number of Performance Indicators that support teaching quality.

There is a low risk that the University will not maintain adequate student satisfaction because we have sustained excellent ratings. For example, we currently (2017) have an overall satisfaction score in the NSS of 93% and in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey 2018 were placed second overall in the UK. We hold TEF Gold status and have been WhatUni 'University of the Year' for two consecutive years. We maintain close liaison with the Students' Union and student representatives through, for example, the Student Academic Group and our course committees. The Estates and Student Services teams work together to identify priorities for maintaining wider aspects of student satisfaction and student feedback and NSS scores are reviewed independently by our Head of Education Development and Quality Enhancement.

1.3 DELIVERY OF MATERIAL COMPONENTS OF COURSES – LOW RISK

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our courses due to staffing issues is low. Most members of academic staff teach across undergraduate and postgraduate courses as well as contribute to short courses and knowledge exchange activities. This integrated approach to staff resources means the risk of not being able to teach courses due to changes in staffing is minimal.

1.4 COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES – LOW RISK

There is a low risk that problems with our current or future UK and overseas focused collaborative teaching or research arrangements could lead to reputational damage, quality, financial or contractual difficulties. Collaborative agreements are in place and are actively monitored. The University's Quality Assurance Manual sets out expected performance standards. Regular review visits are held with collaborative partners, both in the UK and overseas. Partner institutions/organisations have undergone due diligence checks, all are in good standing and all provision is subject to annual monitoring. Management arrangements are monitored by the Collaborative Programmes Management Committee and related financial arrangements are managed by the Director of Finance. Contracts with collaborative partners include provision for protecting students' studies, with a focus on teaching students to completion of their courses.

1.5 TIER 4 SPONSOR STATUS – MEDIUM RISK

The risk that UK Visa and Immigration/Tier 4 sponsorship requirements and baseline thresholds are not met, leading to loss of licence, is moderate because some factors are beyond the immediate control of the University. The University's senior staff keep abreast of official guidance and attend relevant training. Internal audit conducted a review (May 2015) using most recent Home Office (HEAT) guidance and no major issues were identified. There is regular dialogue with admissions staff for all courses and management of visa processes by our representative staff in China. The University keeps abreast of UK Visa and Immigration (UKV&I) requirements through participation in sector training and network events and prepares for their potential audits. The University's Human Resources team engages with information / guidance networks and training events in relation to their responsibilities for current and potential staff affected by UKV&I requirements. Our performance has led to us being selected for the extension of the pilot Tier 4 visa programme.

1.6 INSURANCES AND ESTATES & INFRASTRUCTURE RISKS – LOW RISK

There is a low risk of a failure to procure adequate insurance leading to a significant impact on students. A detailed review of insured property valuation was recently undertaken by a FIVS Valuer in discussion with the Head of Estates and Facilities, increasing the value insured by 30%. There is a regular review of the portfolio of insurances benchmarked with brokers and a buying group. We have clear procedures for making claims and, due to the working estate/farm being part of the University, environmental insurance is also in place.

There is low risk of major IT disaster involving loss of information or use of central hardware or associated inability to operate IT services, leading to disruption to teaching and other core activities. IT security arrangements and IT fire risk management systems are in place. The University's Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Plan for IT systems is regularly reviewed along with insurance arrangements. The Business Continuity Plan has been tested and is reviewed annually.

The risk of an outbreak of communicable disease and consequent harm to students and/or staff is low to moderate because we keep abreast of any emerging diseases/viruses. The University's medical service monitors student health risks and Student Wardens monitor student health in conjunction with the Head of Student Services. There is a Meningitis procedure in place, with training provided to accommodation Wardens and staff. Appropriate catering services policies and procedures are in place. Biosecurity precautions are in place on the University farm and a H1N1 Flu risk procedure is available.

There is a low risk of failure to comply with statutory requirements with regard to buildings and estate management with subsequent impact on students. This risk is managed by regular reviews of legislation requirements and regular inspection of relevant facilities and systems. The University's Health & Safety Committee reviews key facilities and systems.

1.7 UNIVERSITY CLOSURE DUE TO FINANCIAL REASONS – LOW RISK

There is very low risk that the University as a whole will be unable to operate and need to close because our financial performance is relatively strong. In our financial results for 2016/17 the University generated an underlying surplus before taxation, of £1,539k with operating cash generated of £5,527k or 12% of income and we have business continuity plans to deal with loss of income or a significant reduction in student numbers.

The risk of a significant reduction in income with subsequent impact on students is also low and the risk is managed by regular monitoring of financial performance with active management of expenditure and budgetary control. We maintain regular dialogue with government officers on funding proposals and monitor government strategy and funding policy developments.

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

Please provide an evidenced statement of the measures you have put in place to preserve continuation of study for your students in those areas where you consider the risk to be increased. For example:

2.1 COURSE CHANGES OR CLOSURES

The University subscribes to the University sector's Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures. The University reserves the right to withdraw optional modules for which the number of students electing to study that module is fewer than five. Where this revision occurs, students will be guided on appropriate alternatives, in keeping with their career aspirations.

Where students proceed with part-time studies, which includes any 12 month period in which they study fewer than 60 credits, including for reasons of postponement on approved grounds, the University reserves the right to make programme changes to the later stages of their studies, in order to maintain sufficient student enrolments to support a vibrant learning experience and financial viability. Such changes would not affect the approved title or intended learning outcomes of the intended award but might affect the availability of specific modules or detailed changes to assessment or tuition arrangements.

Minor changes to courses The University may make minor changes to courses to reflect changes in relevant laws and regulatory requirements, which might result in modest changes to the indicative content of individual modules or to the detailed assessment arrangements for specific subjects. It might also be necessary to make minor technical adjustments and improvements along similar lines. These changes will not affect the degree title awarded, accreditation privileges, placement requirements or the intended learning outcomes of the award.

More significant changes to courses. Any significant changes will be made in consultation with existing student representatives and will be informed by advancements in understanding a discipline, student and employer feedback or professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements. This is in

accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 3.8 of the University's Academic Quality Assurance Manual.

In accordance with the University's Admissions Policy, applicants will be advised by the Admissions team of any significant changes to a course since an offer was made. Such changes may include a change in a professional body's recognition of a programme, a change in the award title or major changes to the curriculum (considered to be a replacement of at least three compulsory modules over the duration of the programme) or significant revisions to placement requirements.

If these changes are due to be made before a course commences, prospective students may contact the University to end the contract, with no financial liability. If significant changes to a course are to be made after starting the course and, exceptionally, students wish to withdraw, they will be permitted to do so and will be supported in finding an alternative course to which to transfer.

Very rarely a course is suspended or withdrawn before it enrolls students. In making a decision to suspend or withdraw a course for new enrolments, the University takes into account the financial viability of programmes and the vibrancy of the likely learning experience if there are very small numbers of applicants. Where a course is not certain to run, the University will advise applicants of the criteria for a course to run at the time an offer is made, and the timing of the decision to confirm that the programme has met the criteria.

If students proceed with an application for a course which may be subject to suspension or withdrawal, the University will inform the student at the earliest opportunity of any decision to suspend or withdraw the course. In this event, the relevant Admissions team for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes will make every effort to provide assistance to help applicants find an alternative course, based either at Harper Adams University or elsewhere and, for undergraduate students, will advise on the UCAS procedure to follow.

If the University were to lose a Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) approval for a course, such as that from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), students will be able to move to another course or choose to receive an amended version of the course. Alternatively, the University will give advice and guidance to the student about changing to another provider

In the event of sudden or unexpected loss of staff, which affects courses, the University will seek to replace staff as soon as is reasonably possible. This may mean re-allocating appropriate staff from other duties to ensure that courses can continue to operate. Where this is not possible and courses need to be postponed or closed the measures cited above will apply.

In the event that students need to change their course or move to another provider, student finance concerns may need to be resolved. The University's academic services teams will be informed of students affected and will provide advice, information and guidance related to individual circumstances.

2.2 COLLABORATIVE COURSES IN THE UK AND OVERSEAS

In the event that students enrolled on collaborative courses with partner organisations (UK or overseas) are affected by changes, closures or other material reasons, the same measures as described above will apply where the changes are evidently the responsibility of Harper Adams University. If the changes or closures etc. are evidently the responsibility of the partner institution/organisation that institution/organisation will be responsible for making new arrangements and/or refunding course fees, should this prove to be necessary.

2.3 TIER 4 SPONSOR STATUS

In the event of the University losing its Tier 4 Sponsor status, or having this temporarily suspended, it will take all reasonable steps to reduce the impacts on services and students. We will work with UKV&I to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme and seek to allow students

already in receipt of a visa based upon an allocated CAS from the University to enrol for their studies. Students planning to travel to the university will be able to postpone their application pending the resolution of the Tier 4 Sponsor Status issue. If the University is unable to resolve the Tier 4 Sponsor difficulty, and loses its status permanently, we will give all reasonable assistance to students in changing to another provider.

2.4 INSURANCES AND ESTATES RISKS

In the event that the University's operations are interrupted by unforeseen insurance or estates circumstances and students are affected, the University will apply its Emergency Response Plan and consider whether it is feasible to make changes to course delivery, rather than closing or suspending a course. These changes may include altering the staffing of a programme as appropriate to requirements, amending the location or mode of delivery, postponing some course delivery, potentially giving students the opportunity to transfer to another cognate course or, if necessary, offering students guidance and advice on transferring to another appropriate provider.

2.5 UNIVERSITY CLOSURE

In the very unlikely event that the University needs to close completely, it will consider merging with another institution in order to preserve teaching and protect courses of study. If a merger is not possible, the University will strive to close gradually in order to protect enrolled students and enable them to complete courses of study. If gradual closure is not possible, students will be supported in changing to courses at other providers. If affected students suffer evident, financial loss they may be compensated under the terms of the University's Refund and Compensation Policy.

In the event that some facilities or part of the campus closes, which affects students' studies, the University will consider:

- Changing the timetable in order that teaching can continue in the spaces that remain available.
- Changing provision to a different location, either by providing new accommodation or by accessing off-site facilities as a temporary solution.
- Changing course delivery to, for example, online only or mixed modes of attendance in order that studies can continue.

In the event that the University's courses were no longer approved by Government for student support, through the Student Loans Company, resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance, the University will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to students via the following types of measures:

- Allowing enrolled students to complete their courses of study via negotiation with the funding bodies.
- If this is not possible, students will be supported in transferring to programmes at other providers wherever appropriate.
- Students may be financially compensated to the extent of the course fees paid if it is evident that they have incurred financial losses due to termination of their course of study.

2.6 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AFFECTING THE UNIVERSITY

These may include, without limitation, strikes, lock-outs or other industrial disputes (whether involving the workforce of the University or of any other party), civil commotion, malicious damage, compliance with any law or governmental order, rule, regulation or direction, accident, breakdown of plant or machinery, fire, flood, storm or default of suppliers or sub-contractors.

If such events affect students and their courses of study the University will assist students as far as reasonably possible to reduce the impact. Measures that might be taken will include those cited in the above paragraphs in relation to making alternative arrangements and amending provision to minimise

disruption. Students may be financially compensated to the extent of the course fees paid if it is evident that they have incurred financial losses due to such significant events.

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

Please link to or provide a copy of your refund and compensation policy:

<https://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/documents/Refund-and-Compensation-Policy.pdf>

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

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by informing them of it as part of their contract with the University and placing the policy on the University website and in our Student Handbook.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose new courses and course changes by noting the plan in the Quality Assurance Manual guidance relating to proposed course changes, developments and reviews.

We will periodically review our Student Protection Plan by sharing it with the Student Academic Group, which is formed of student representatives from all course areas. The plan will be discussed and adapted in the light of student comments and feedback.

Any significant changes to course delivery and aspects of the expected student experience will be subject to consultation with students, the Students' Union and staff representation groups.

In the event of campus closure, partial campus closure or closure of courses, the University will consult with students, staff and other stakeholders affected to ensure appropriate impact assessments are carried out. In accord with UCAS deadlines/guidance, prospective and future applicants will be notified, providing sufficient time for applicants to identify other suitable courses.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course by emailing/writing to students directly, publicising changes on our Virtual Learning Environment and via notifications on student notice boards/display screens around campus. We will give students as much notice as possible when we need to make changes and, wherever possible, students will be consulted in advance of any changes which may affect them.

We will also inform students of all available sources of advice and guidance to assist them in the event of changes and will offer as much support as possible from relevant University services and staff.