

## Student Protection Plan

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 NCIUL is committed to ensure students achieve the best possible academic experience and outcomes. We are also committed to providing the programmes of study as they are set out in our documentation. However, circumstances might arise which require us to make unforeseen changes to modules or programmes. In exceptional circumstances, we might have to suspend or close programmes. NCIUL has the capacity, capability, and financial resources to protect our students and minimise disruption to their studies.
- 1.2 This Student Protection Plan has been developed in accordance with requirements for initial and ongoing registration with the Office for Students (Condition C3); it also takes account of the 2015 HEFCE Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice and the 2015 UK higher education providers – advice on consumer protection law published by the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA).
- 1.3 To make sure that our students have access to the best programmes of study, NCIUL ensures that there are robust reviewing procedures in place to ensure our academic provisions remain up to date in order to meet both our partnership requirements and employers' needs.
- 1.4 In light of unforeseen situations arise that may impact a programme of study , NCIUL will be open and transparent with all the affected students , the likely impact and the changes NCIUL would need to make to protect students and enable them to continue their studies to completion.

### 2.0 Aim

- 2.1 The aim of the Student Protection Plan is designed to protect students should a risk to the continuation of studies arise. These measures are in addition to the protections NCIUL has under consumer protection law: they do not impinge on the consumer rights ensure students

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are able to complete their studies and NCIUL will assure to take full ownership and make all reasonable efforts to enable them to do so.

- 5.1.4 Where changes result in prospective students being unable to study their intended programme NCIUL will make every effort to secure a suitable alternative programme of study or support to transfer to an alternative accredited provider by Open University.

## **6.0 Student Protection Plan Causes**

**6.1** The Student Protection Plan may be triggered for the following potential reasons:

- Deregistration or suspension of registration with the OFS.
- The closure of a course or a programme, or location of delivery.
- The closure of a subject or discipline.
- A higher education provider exiting the market completely (intentionally or otherwise).
- A higher education provider exiting a particular section of the market, such as part time or distance learning.
- Any other changes which might impact upon students' ability to continue their studies.

## **7.0 Closure of subject areas**

In the event NCIUL planned to exit from a programme we would follow our normal consultation processes, which would include one to one consultation. In the event of closure, existing students will be taught out where they are able to complete their studies within the agreed timeframe. Prospective students will be contacted by the Faculty Dean and Registry and will be provided with advice on suitable alternatives elsewhere. NCIUL will take responsibility for appropriate liaison with UCAS and its validated partner (Open University).

## **8.0 Partner Provision**

Through our academic partnership with Open University NCIUL will seek to ensure that OU student protection plans or equivalent policies provide the same level of support, advice and guidance to students pursuing Open University programmes as set out in the NCIUL Student Protection plan. These will be reviewed as part of the NCIUL's ongoing quality assurance and review of its academic agreement with Open University.

## **9.0 Closure and Suspension**

**9.1** NCIUL may wish to close and remove a programme of study from its current three faculties. This may be as a result of:

- 9.1.1 Low recruitment numbers which could negatively impact student experience.
- 9.1.2 Changes in employment opportunities which could negatively impact graduate destinations.
- 9.1.3 Replacement following curriculum review, to further enhance the offer to students.

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- 9.2 The definition of programme closure means that it will no longer be open for future student admission.
- 9.3 Suspension of a programme of study is defined by a fixed timeframe in which the programme will not be delivered and is normally reserved for new programmes of study which have yet to register students. Programmes of study cannot be closed without Open University approval in order that the contractual implications between current and prospective students and the NCIUL can be fully considered.
- 9.4 The closure or suspension of a programme requires the prior authorisation of the Academic Board and the Open University. A programme may not be suspended or closed without this authorisation because of the implications for the contractual relationship between the institution and current or prospective students.
- 2.2 The policy and processes for closing or suspending a programme are set out in Programme Closure and Suspension .The procedures for closing, suspending or changing any programme of study are designed to reflect the Statement of Good Practice adopted by HEFCE, UUK, Guild HE, and the NUS. They are designed to meet the requirements as set out in the CMA guidance.

### **3.0 Programme Changes Prior to Registration**

- 3.1. We might be required to make changes to programmes either before or after registration of students. If changes such as modifications to the structure of the programme, or removal or addition of modules, students to the programme will receive prior notification as soon as possible. They will be informed of their right to seek entry to another programme for which they are qualified, or alternatively to seek entry to another institution.
- 3.2. If a student has already accepted an offer on the affected programme of study, they will be given all relevant information and advice to enable them to make an informed decision about their options, and their future course of action.
- 3.3. Material changes to programmes should not normally be made after registration. On occasion this might be unavoidable, and when this is the case students will be informed and consulted as soon as possible and their views will be considered.
- 3.4. From time to time we might make minor amendments to programmes to improve quality; to meet the latest statutory requirements, or in response to student feedback. We will ensure students are informed of these changes.

### **4.0 Communication about Programme Changes**

We will inform students as soon as possible of any changes, and the reason(s) for them, to the structure of a programme or to any modules within it. No changes will be made within an academic year. Any minor changes to the programme for the following year will be communicated as soon as possible.

## **5.0 Student Protection Procedures**

### **5.1.1 Current students**

If a programme of study is to be closed, NCIUL will ensure wherever possible that current students are able to complete their studies via a 'teaching out' process: by enabling them to complete the same programme at the institution, and within the original timescale. During the 'teach out' process NCIUL will ensure that the standard of academic provision, the course delivery as outlined in the programme specification, and the overall student experience will be maintained.

5.1.2 If it is not possible for a programme to be 'taught out', NCIUL will offer appropriate alternative courses within the institution OR assist the students to transfer to other providers where possible and appropriate. This will include transfer of accumulated credits to ensure their academic progress. Including transfer of credit and academic progress

5.1.3 If a programme is to be closed only to new entrants (and not to those already registered on it), NCIUL will ensure that current students should be informed of their options. We will provide all necessary information and guidance to students in deciding which option to follow.

## **10.0 Applicants to programmes scheduled for closure**

10.1 In the event of a programme closure, suspension or material changes to programme content, all communications with applicants will be undertaken via Admissions.

10.2 We will ensure that applicants to follow a programme scheduled for closure will be fully informed of their options: these will include (subject to their meeting the entry requirements) transfer of their application to another programme within the institution or to another institution.

## **11.0 'Early' Closure of a Programme of Study**

On account of unforeseen circumstances, such as loss of specialist staff to teach a programme, it might be necessary to close or suspend a programme within a short timescale. In these circumstances NCIUL will ensure that full consultation undertaken with all affected students.

## **12.0 Consumer Rights**

12.1 In applying the above processes NCIUL will take all necessary steps to ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations.

12.2 We will give students and prospective students full information, coupled with guidance and advice to enable them to take informed decisions about their options should a programme of study be closed or suspended

## **13.0 Refund and Compensation Policy**

13.1 We will ensure wherever possible that a programme to be closed is subject to the 'teach out' process, or that the transfer to another course or institution is facilitated.

13.2 If this is not possible, or if there are other circumstances which make the refund of fees more appropriate, we will make a refund for the element of the programme of study which has not been completed, and for which the appropriate fee has been paid.

#### **14.0 Complaints**

14.1 If students wish to make a complaint about their experience under this plan they should do so by following the NCIUL complaints policy which can be found on the VLE.

#### **14.2 The Office of the Independent adjudicator**

If students are not content with the solutions or options presented to them, they have the right to raise the matter with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>