

TITLE	REF	VERSION
HE Student Protection Plan	HESPP	1

DEPARTMENT	Higher Education		
DATE	30 August 2022	REVIEW DATE	30 August 2025

## HE Student Protection Plan

<b>Main points of plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To respond to the requirement to maintain a Student Protection Plan under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.</li> <li>Activate Learning is committed to protecting the interests of students in the event of any disruption to their studies.</li> </ul>
<b>List of procedures for implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtaining approval to withdraw a programme.</li> <li>Notification of decision to outside organisations</li> <li>Notification of decision and arrangements for current students</li> <li>Notification of decision and arrangements for prospective students</li> </ul>
<b>Related policies, documents and strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–</li> <li>Risk Management Policy</li> <li>Fees Policy</li> <li>Business Continuity Policy</li> <li>Closure of a Programme Policy and Procedure</li> <li>Collaborative Agreements with University partners</li> <li>UK Quality Code for Higher Education: chapter B8: <i>Programme Monitoring and Review</i> and chapter B10: <i>Managing Higher Education with others</i>.</li> </ul>

### **Equality and diversity statement**

*It is the policy of Activate Learning to recognise and encourage the valuable and enriching contribution from all who work and learn here and the rights of all individuals who come into contact with the organisation such as prospective students and job applicants.*

*We believe that people from a range of backgrounds and experiences can enhance the life and development of the institution and that all individuals should be treated on the basis of individual merit and without prejudice. Activate Learning will, therefore aim to provide an education service which actively promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, economic status, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, marriage/civil partnership or sexual orientation in both education and employment. We will strive vigorously to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage and will actively combat bigotry and discrimination. Activate Learning expects all employees, students, and associated partner organisations to adopt this policy.*

*Activate Learning is committed to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on its policies and procedures in order that some measurement is made of the contribution that the policy/procedure makes towards equality and diversity objectives.*

## Background to the plan

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires higher education providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the event of material change, e.g., programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure.

These events may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Institutional closure
- A strategic decision by Activate Learning to close a course or campus.
- Withdrawal of designation for student support purposes.
- Removal or suspension of the Tier 4 Sponsorship Licence.
- Notice given by awarding body to close a course.
- Loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies e.g., PSRB.
- Industrial action by staff or third parties.
- The unanticipated departure of key members of staff
- Changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course.

### 1. Scope of the Plan

This plan covers all Higher Education qualifications awarded by Pearson including those delivered as part of a higher or degree apprenticeship. In addition, this plan covers those programmes awarded by Kingston University, the FdSc and BSc in Counselling awarded by Middlesex University and the FdSc in Counselling awarded by the University of Greenwich delivered by Activate Learning.

Students studying on an HE qualification which is delivered by Activate Learning under a sub-contracted (franchised) arrangement with a university partner will be covered by the respective University's Student Protection Plan:

[Oxford Brookes University Student protection Plan](#)  
[University of Reading Student Protection Plan](#)

Applicants for HE programmes at Activate Learning who have accepted an offer to study, but who have not yet enrolled, will be informed if the Student Protection Plan is triggered. Activate Learning will explain the changes that will affect them, and if necessary, offer suitable alternative arrangements (for example, deferral for a year, or signposting towards alternative courses or providers).

Activate Learning students who have had their enrolment terminated (voluntarily, by programme completion, and as a result of disciplinary action, non-payment of tuition fees, academic misconduct, academic failure, or similar) are not covered by the Student Protection Plan.

### 2. Student Protection Plan Statement

Activate Learning is committed to protecting the interests of students and applicants in the event of any disruption which may adversely affect their studies, including the closure of a higher education programme. These procedures have been established to provide a clear statement of the arrangements to secure both the quality of provision and the student experience. In addition, Activate Learning has set aside adequate financial reserves to underwrite the likely costs that may result from any disruption which adversely affects the continuity of study for students. Activate Learning's Fee Policy provides examples of the refunds and compensation students may be entitled to and is available on the Groups' website.

### 3. Communication of the plan to key stakeholders.

Activate Learning will ensure that all key stakeholders have access to and are familiar with the Student Protection Plan by undertaking the following:

- Publishing the plan on the Group's website
- Publishing the plan on the students' virtual learning environment (ALO)

- Including the plan alongside other material provided to applicants.
- Sharing the plan with Higher Education Partners
- Publishing the plan on the staff intranet
- Including coverage of the plan in the induction of new staff and other relevant staff training activities
- Including coverage of the plan in the induction of new student representatives
- Informing employers of the plan, where relevant.
- Ensuring that all key stakeholders are aware of Activate Learning's Customer Comments, Suggestions and Complaints policy in the event of any concerns related to the implementation of the student protection plan.

Activate Learning will also ensure that the Student Protection Plan is formally reviewed annually by the Group Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB), in collaboration, and – importantly – with student representatives with which we have an excellent and valued relationship.

#### **4. How will the Student Protection Plan be triggered?**

If any manageable risk to continuation of study begins to appear likely, the Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) office will advise the Group Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB). Consideration and discussion of the risk, its impact and likelihood, may or may not generate a decision that the Student Protection Plan should be triggered. Depending on the size and urgency of the circumstances, consultation could be swift or awaiting the next scheduled HEAB meeting. The Chair of the HEAB will take the final decision. If the Student Protection Plan was triggered, consultation and discussion would continue with student representatives, ensuring communication with students was clear, prompt and transparent, and that intended actions, impacts and resolutions were clearly understood from early in the process.

#### **5. Measures to Inform and Protect Students**

Consultation and discussion characterise Activate Learning's relationship with the student body and its representatives, with clear, prompt and transparent communication being a key part of student protection. Activate Learning is therefore committed to communicating any material changes to students as soon as possible, with clear information and options.

Any triggering of the Student Protection Plan will be supported by a communication plan. The respective Group Faculty Director will be responsible for developing and delivering the plan.

All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise disruption to affected students by, for example:

- Offering affected students, the opportunity to move to another course.
- Delivering a modified version of the same course.
- Ensuring that students with protected characteristics continue to receive appropriate support.
- Providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider.

Where a student transfers courses or moves to another provider there are likely to be implications for student finance arrangements. The respective Group Faculty Director will be responsible for the provision of detailed information, advice and guidance with support from the Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) office to students based upon their individual circumstances which will include the provision of funds to cover additional costs, as necessary.

#### **6. Student Support**

- Activate Learning recognises that individual students have complex characteristics and diverse needs, in particular related to age and maturity, disability and accessibility, and necessary part-time study. The protection measures taken by Activate Learning might not be appropriate for all students and therefore reasonable adjustments would be considered where appropriate to individuals, and in full legal compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Activate Learning currently invests significantly in student academic and pastoral support, welfare and wellbeing, student experience, financial and practical advice on the status of student loans, mental, emotional, and physical health including counsellors, disability, dyslexia and sensory impairment. Higher

Education Study Support and Student Services provide a permanent and flexible staff base which in itself mitigates risk.

## **7. Significant Material Change**

### **7.1. Institutional closure**

Institutional failure will be monitored and reported through risk management in accordance with Further and Higher Education regulatory bodies and any instance of this will be managed in accordance with Activate Learning's policies<sup>12</sup> and procedures.

Where Activate Learning has no option, other than to close, it will consider measures such as those below to protect the student experience:

- Where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period of time that would allow current enrolled students to complete their studies.
- Where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and by compensating students where because of disruption to their studies they suffer demonstrable, material loss.
- Merging with another institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.

### **7.2. Institutional Closure of a Campus or Part of a Campus**

Where a campus or part of a campus is rendered unusable for activities involving students, Activate Learning will notify students within 10 working days and typically consider remedies such as:

- Where possible, managing the timeframe for closure of a campus to allow students to complete their studies.
- Relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include hiring spaces for programme delivery and/or installing temporary buildings.
- Revising the timetable to allow all of the teaching to take part in the available facilities.
- Delivering programmes via alternative means, such as distance or blended learning.
- Supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss due to disruption of their studies.
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

### **7.3. Withdrawal of Designation**

In the event of de-designation of its courses by the Office for Students for 'Student Support' purposes, resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance, Activate Learning 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 due to disruption of their studies.
- Considering assistance for affected students by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of continuation of their studies
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

### **7.4. Suspension or Closure of a Course**

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<sup>1</sup> Activate Learning Risk Management Policy

<sup>2</sup> Activate Learning Business Continuity Policy

Activate Learning has established procedures in place in the event of suspension/closure of a course. For sub-contracted provision the procedure is detailed within the awarding body's institutional agreement, and for validated provision Activate Learning has its own 'Closure of a Programme' policy<sup>3</sup> and procedure which is overseen by the Group Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB). Where there is material impact on students, the effect will be mitigated by:

- Oversight from the HEAB who will receive a clear statement of the rationale for closure and the arrangements to secure both the quality of provision and the student experience following the decision to withdraw the programme (*see appendix 1 for details*)
- Communication with current students within 10 working days of the decision to close or suspend a programme of study to provide assurance that they will not be adversely affected by the decision and provide assurance that they are able to complete their studies.
- Where possible, provision will be made to allow for the completion of studies where 'mitigating circumstances' have been presented and approved.
- Consultation with stakeholders (including employers where relevant) who may be affected to ensure appropriate quality impact assessments will also be undertaken.
- Future applicants will be notified within 10 working days of a decision to close or suspend a programme of study, allowing time for students to source an alternative suitable programme.
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

### **7.5. Suspension of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence**

In the event of suspension of Tier 4 Sponsor status, Activate Learning will take all reasonable steps to minimise the disruption to those services and to affected students by, for example;

- Working with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study or programme.
- Allow students already in receipt of a VISA based upon an allocated CAS from Activate Learning to enrol and commence their studies.
- Offer students who have not completed their application, the opportunity to postpone their application pending the resolution of the suspension.
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

### **7.6. Revocation of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence**

In the event of revocation of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence, Activate Learning will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to affected students by, for example.

- Providing assistance in the form of information, advice and guidance to affected students to apply to an alternative provider.
- Provision of funds to cover the difference in tuition fees charged by an alternative provider if students are unable to complete their qualification.
- Providing funds to support other additional costs that may be incurred, such as a new VISA application, health surcharges, and the refund of tuition fees if students are unable to complete their year of study. Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

## **8. Changes to Regulatory Framework Affecting a Specific Course**

In the event of Activate Learning losing PSRB accreditation for a specific course, Activate Learning will consider the following measures to protect the student experience;

- Offering affected students, the opportunity to move to another accredited course.
- Delivering a modified version of the same course.

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<sup>3</sup> Activate Learning Closure of a Programme policy.



- Providing assistance to affected students (and employers where relevant) to switch to a different provider who holds the relevant accreditation.
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

## 9. Disruption to College Activity

Where events result in term-time programme disruption for example a pandemic, Activate Learning will consider in conjunction with its awarding bodies, whether it is practicable to make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme.

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 including assessment, which may include elements of, or moving entirely to distance/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 delivered by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of credit and information about academic progress.
- Providing students with access to independent advice services such as the Student Union, Careers, Counselling and Welfare.

### 9.1. Industrial Action

Activate Learning is 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.

Where industrial action does occur, Activate Learning will seek to:

- Ensure that normal operations and services 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.

### 9.2. Loss of key staff

Where possible, Activate Learning 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.
- Explore options to alter the schedule of delivery of modules/units to enable students to achieve their qualification.
- Explore options for students to undertake alternative modules/units which will still enable them to complete and achieve the required credits and/or combination of modules/units to achieve their qualification.
- Where Activate Learning cannot avoid closing a programme due to the loss of key staff, then the procedures outlined in section 5 will apply.

Version and date:	Summary of updates
2 July 2022	Section 1; Included start date of FdSc Counselling with Middlesex University Section 5: Included provision of funds to cover additional costs. Section 7.6: Included provision of funds to cover additional specified costs
August 2023	Section 9.2 included revising schedule of delivery