

## LTE Group Student protection plan

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UCEN Manchester is a trading name of LTE Group for the delivery of the higher education provision which is regulated by the Office for Students.

### Student protection plan for the period 2019-20

#### **1. Assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students, how these risks may differ based upon the needs, characteristics and circumstances of our students, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise**

The risk that LTE Group as a whole is unable to operate is very low because our financial performance is stable and rated 'Good' using the ESFA Financial Health calculations, both for the past three years and in future year plans. The HE fee income is circa. 5% of the overall LTE Group turnover and each business unit has business continuity plans in place to deal with reductions in learner recruitment and lower levels of income in-year without impacting on the learner experience. UCEN Manchester is a trading name of LTE Group and delivers the higher education provision which is regulated by the Office for Students.

The delivery of our programmes is dependent upon the continued contractual relationships with our validating partners, Manchester Metropolitan University, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Huddersfield. These contracts allow for termination, by either party of the partnership, and for the withdrawal of the approval for particular programmes. Provision is included in the contracts for the teach-out of all existing students. The risk of any of these contacts being terminated or specific approvals being withdrawn is low.

The risk that the locations where we deliver our higher education courses to students will no longer be available is low. Whilst LTE Group operates over multiple campuses around Manchester, UCEN Manchester delivers the majority its courses at campuses predominantly dedicated to higher education and there are no plans in the next two years to close or move from these locations. However, there is a likelihood that there will be some campus re-locations beyond two years as our strategic plan encompasses the consolidation of all our higher education provision across fewer locations.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver courses to our students in our current subject areas or departments is low because we have established teams of staff who are qualified to deliver subject specialisms across our group businesses. We also have designed our validated curriculum to encompass a generic skills based module across each level which can be delivered by integrated teams of staff. We will continuously review our curriculum offer in order for it to meet both regional and national skills requirements, student and employer demand. During scheduled annual reviews, it may become necessary to close a course due to lack of consumer demand or the changing requirements of the sector, which is an integral part of curriculum review.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes in highly specialised areas such as Film and TV Production (Manchester Film School) is low because we have an established practice of co-delivery with industry experts and an established mentoring scheme in place with alumni and industry experts.

The risk that we are no longer able deliver courses which are currently offered full or part time is low. The majority of the provision is offered full time (with the exception of HNC Construction and the Built

Environment which is part time only) and where a part time mode is offered, this is on infill basis to the full time course.

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

In the event that any risk crystallises, we will take one or more of the following measures to protect continuity of study:

Where there is a termination of a contract or the withdrawal of approval for specific programmes by a validating partner, the formal agreement provides for the teach-out of existing students. This would result in a cessation to the recruitment of new students rather than impact on existing students. The period of notice for any such termination of a contract or withdrawal of a programme, is long enough to allow any new applicants to be notified in good time to find alternative places. Similar programmes, offered at UCEN Manchester, which are validated by one of our other partners can be offered to applicants, in addition to those programmes offered at one of our validating partner institutions.

We will undertake reasonable endeavours to 'teach out' current students where we have voluntarily decided to leave the market or close a course. This means that we commit to ensuring the course of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students, even though the course is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.

Where the above is not possible, we have a commitment from our validating partners to teach out our students currently registered on a course where there is comparable provision.

We commit to our students that we will offer other, alternative courses from our portfolio to affected students where there has been a course closure. We acknowledge that this may not be an appropriate approach for students who wish to study the particular course or subject that is being discontinued and these students will be supported in finding an appropriate course at either one of our validating partners or another provider. Our compensation policy will offer students the differential in the course fee, if the course fee at the new provider is higher than the fee on the course currently enrolled upon at UCEN Manchester.

We commit that where it is deemed reasonable that students cannot travel to validating partner locations or those of another provider, we will compensate students in line with our compensation policy contained within the Tuition Fee Policy which can be found <https://ucenmcr.tmc.ac.uk/about/policies/he>

We commit to supporting our students in seeking another provider in order for the continuation of studies with them, utilising student transfer arrangements.

Where we have plans to re-locate the curriculum, the details of this strategy and the curriculum locations will have a managed communication plan which is timely, open and transparent to both current and prospective students. The student will be put at the heart of the re-location strategy and the communications and our approach will be in line with the Competition and Markets Authority guidance and compliant with consumer protection legislation. The student experience will be enhanced with any potential re-locations.

We will take into consideration the needs of all our students, including those with mobility considerations or special educational requirements.

Measures contained in the plan may be brought into play at any time, if, for example, doing so would reduce the impact or likelihood of any interruption to students' studies.

### 3. Information about the policy which is in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

This policy applies to all students, irrespective of whether they are students in receipt of tuition fee loan, students paying their own fees or students paying fees via a sponsor.

Course Closure Scenario	Refund / Compensation for fully completed and current year of study only			
	tuition fees	travel	maintenance costs	Other / Bursary
Teach out available by LTE Group at an existing LTE Group location	N	N	N	N
Teach out unavailable: Offered at validating partner or other local provider on same or comparable course, within 20 miles of existing delivery location.	N*	N	N	N
Teach out unavailable: Offered at validating partner or other provider on same or comparable course, over 20 miles away from existing delivery location. Offer accepted by student.	N*	Y	N	N
Teach out unavailable: Offered at validating partner or other provider on same or comparable course, over 20 miles away from existing delivery location. Offer rejected by student.	Y	N	Y	Y

\*Where the course fee of the new course at the validating partner or other provider is higher than that currently charged by LTE Group trading as UCEN Manchester, a differential amount will be awarded (i.e. the difference between the two course fees).

Where travel compensation is available the travel expenses will be reimbursed to the learner if claimed within 3 months of travel. The allowable claim will be based on a mileage rate of 25 pence per mile where travelling by car or the cost of public transport, evidenced by receipts, standard class fares only.

In exceptional personal circumstances, subject to written application, if it is deemed that the time to travel to the validating partner is excessive when compared to the commute time to the existing delivery location the learner will be entitled to a refund of all tuition fees and maintenance costs paid in respect of completed and current years of study. This will be determined on a case by case basis.

No refunds will be processed until there is confirmation that the original tuition fee payment has been cleared in LTE Group's bank account. Refunds and / or compensation may take up to three weeks to process.

LTE Group had cash reserves of £22m for year ending July 2017 which is sufficient to provide refunds and compensation in respect of any course closures that we cannot teach out or provide a suitable alternative at a local partner. As the intention will always be to teach out the number of learners impacted will be minimal.

The above information will be included within the Tuition Fee Policy available at <https://ucenmcr.tmc.ac.uk/about/policies/he>

#### **4. Information about how we will communicate with our students about the student protection plan**

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by publishing it on the UCEN Manchester website ([www.ucenmcr.tmc.ac.uk](http://www.ucenmcr.tmc.ac.uk)); including the plan with the material which is sent out to all applicants who have been made an offer to study at UCEN Manchester; providing all students with a copy at the point of enrolment; and publishing it on the course virtual learning environment for current students.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan by publication of it on the staff intranet, and it will be included as part of the staff continuous professional development days on an annual basis. Any course changes will be monitored by the Curriculum Management Panel where due regard will be given to the student protection plan before any course changes or course closures are agreed.

We will review our student protection plan on an annual basis. In order to acquire student views, it will be scheduled as an agenda item at each Programme Committee. It will be presented annually to the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee, which has delegated authority from Academic Board, for approval with the UCEN Manchester Divisional Board having oversight of the activity.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course by written communication via the UCEN Manchester student e-mail address. A UCEN Manchester manager will also visit groups of affected student in timetabled sessions in order to notify students of any material changes. Where we have externally validated provision from our University partners, this will also be executed in conjunction with them following their procedures.

We will give students 90 days' notice when we need to make material changes to their course

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will ensure that students are counselled by a UCEN Manchester manager in order to support students both collectively and individually. Personal tutors will also provide ongoing support to the students. Students will be provided with the contact details of the relevant manager who will be able to provide assistance to students in relation to any ongoing queries they may have.

Students will be provided with the contact details of the Careers, Employability and Welfare team and the Student Union, who will be able to provide independent advice if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.

If students are not content with the proposed outcomes, they can make a complaint under LTE Group complaints procedure which is available at <https://ucenmcr.tmc.ac.uk/about/policies/general> and ultimately raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>.