

## **Student protection plan for the period 2018/19**

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

The University of Nottingham is a large, well-established organisation with an income of £638 million in 2017, a surplus in the same year of £40 million available for reinvestment, and well over 3,000 teaching and research staff. For these reasons, it is extremely unlikely that the University would be in a position where it could not continue to deliver existing programmes should it choose to do so.

Any closure of programmes leading to a University qualification will only occur, therefore, if the University chooses to take this action because the number of students being recruited falls short of expectations to a point where the programme, or some component of it, is not sustainable in the long term. This plan deals with this situation and how students on such programmes are protected. There are, at the time of the production of this plan, no programmes identified as being in this position that have not already been closed to new entrants.

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

The main mitigation of the risk of programmes leading to a University qualification becoming unsustainable in terms of student numbers is a commitment to ensuring that all existing students on the programme continue to receive tuition of the same level and quality until they graduate i.e. that the programme is only closed to new entrants, not to existing students. Approval of a programme closure will only be granted by the University if it is satisfied that the level and quality of tuition will not be significantly affected.

Should the University seek to close a programme prior to all existing students completing that programme, this will only be approved if all affected students have agreed to that measure. In this situation, an offer of a place on a similar programme at the University will be made, if such a programme exists and will continue to exist. Students may also be offered the possibility of continuing their studies through distance learning, where this can be implemented without any significant degradation in their learning experience.

Where suitable internal opportunities cannot be provided, students may be offered transfers to comparable programmes at other universities, should the individuals so wish. Russell Group universities are broadly similar institutions with similar entry tariffs for programmes. Our members have a willingness to try and undertake support for one another to transition students out from a programme at one institution to a comparable programme at another subject to normal entry requirements and the capacity of the receiving programme to accept more students. In this regard, the University will also make full use of its strong strategic relationship with the University of Birmingham, which is a similar institution with similar entry tariffs for programmes. Our two institutions have a willingness to assist one another in transferring students from a programme at Nottingham to a comparable programme at Birmingham subject to normal entry requirements and the capacity of the receiving programme to accept more students.

Any students not able or wanting to take up these opportunities, and wishing instead to complete their programme, will be allowed to do so.

Details of the procedures underpinning this approach are set out **here**.

The financial and staff resources available to the University enables it to adopt this approach with regard to programmes that are not sustainable in the long-term.

### **3. Information about the policy we have 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**

Refund and compensation payments will only be made in the highly unlikely event that the University is forced to close a programme, or a major component of it, prior to all existing students completing the programme and receiving their University qualification; and that this is due to circumstances the University is unable to remediate and is therefore done without giving students the option of completing their programme of study.

In cases where the University has not been able to make suitable transfer arrangements for students (as described in Section 2 above), refund and compensation payments will be considered. The necessity for and extent of the refund and compensation being offered will be determined with reference to any demonstrable loss experienced by the affected student and attributable to the closure. Such payments may comprise some or all elements of the following:

- refunds of the tuition fees (whether to the Student Loans Company, the student's sponsor, or the students themselves) previously paid to the University for tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification
- payment of reasonable travel costs to students where a change of location in study is requiring additional travel on the part of students
- continued payment of any bursaries to which the University is committed
- payment of any maintenance costs associated with past attendance at the University that are over and above what the student could in any case have been expected to incur had they not been in attendance
- individually calculated payments (taking into account the opportunity costs involved) in recognition of time previously spent on tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification.

Where programme closure has been forced on the University, but suitable transfer arrangements have been made for students, compensation payments will consist of any tuition and maintenance costs at a new provider that are over and above what would have been paid by the student to continue their studies at Nottingham plus any reasonable costs arising from transferring place of residence.

Any student or group of students dissatisfied with the level of refund or compensation payments being provided to them can make use of the University's complaints procedure as set out **here**.

The large income and favourable financial position of the University described in Section 1 above provide assurance that any compensation becoming due will be paid.

In the situation that the University is wishing to close a programme before all students have graduated, but is still able to give students the option of completing the programme, the University may decide to provide incentive payments to students to agree to early closure, and these payments may reflect some of the above elements to some extent. In this case, though, students would still be entitled to complete their programme rather than accepting the payment.

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

The Student Protection Plan will be made available electronically to all applicants accepting an offer of a place at the University as well as to current students when they re-register annually with the University. Committees and staff responsible for approving and processing changes to programmes and programme closures will make full use of the Student Protection Plan in their work.

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by Quality & Standards Committee, including the student representatives on that committee, and the Students' Union will be encouraged to bring forward to that committee any proposals they might have for revision of the plan.

If there is a need for the Student Protection Plan to be implemented, affected students will be notified individually and through the relevant Learning Community Forum, via the procedures set out **here**. The Students' Union and its Student Advice Centre will be fully involved in these procedures so that it is in a position to provide advice and support to affected students independently from the University