

# Student Protection Plan for the Academic Year 2020-21

St Mary's College  
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## 1. Introduction

St Mary's Sixth Form College is committed to supporting students to achieving the best academic outcomes from their studies. This plan lays out the measures that St Mary's College in collaboration with its validating HEIs, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Liverpool Hope University (LHU) will take in order to protect the continuation and quality of study for current and potential students in the unlikely event that a risk to their continued study materialises.

The plan, which is applicable to St Mary's College students who are either registered or applying for a UCLan or LHU validated course, is designed to reflect the Sector advisory guidance within the CMA UK Higher Education Providers-Advice on Consumer Protection Law (March 2015), the requirements of The UK Quality Code for Higher Education-Part C and The Equality Act (2010) and can be found on our website (<https://www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk/university-centre/he-policies-and-procedures/university-central-lancashire/>). It should be read in conjunction with our Higher Education Terms and Conditions which can also be found on our website (<https://www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk/university-centre/he-policies-and-procedures/>)

***To help with the likely occurrence of a scenario we assessed the risks to continuation of study and classified them according to the likelihood/probability that those risks will crystallise:***

High	Definite / highly probably – has happened or is expected to happen
Moderate	Possible / probable – could well happen in the near future
Low	Unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future

## 2. Our commitment to you as a student or prospective student

- Our commitment is to be open and transparent in our communication to prospective and existing students with the assurance that any changes, including clear information and options, will be passed on to students as early as is feasibly possible. Our student protection plan and our higher education terms and conditions, are available for future and current students (and Staff) on our website.
- In addition, prospective students will be provided with a durable copy of the St Mary's College Higher Education Terms and Conditions at the offer stage of the application process. These contain our provisions for and inform prospective students where to find our student protection plan on our website, which is also included, as a hard copy, in the the appendices of the student handbook, provided at the college's induction day.
- Our student protection plan will be regularly reviewed by our student representative committee and annually reviewed by staff and governors (including a HE Student Governor) as part of the College's overall student policies and procedures.
- To minimise the impact to students we will take reasonable steps to avoid implementing change during an academic year or making changes close to the start of an academic year.
- In the event that the location of your programme changes, we undertake to encourage all affected students to participate in discussions about the viable options available with the added assurance that it will remain within Lancashire.
- In the event of programme closure, we will take reasonable steps to ensure that existing students may complete their current programme to original timescale at St Mary's College.

- We have agreements and processes in place, overseen by the validating body, to allow the student body to transfer to specific alternate providers.
- Regular updates of any impending changes will be given to all affected students via the most expedient communication methods and a named College contact will be assigned.
- We undertake to update our website and presence on UCAS and other listing services, within 3 College working days of a decision or notification of significant change, including all scenarios outlined below and closure to new applications upon a decision to close a programme.
- Where changes are such to render it impossible for prospective students to study on their intended programme and/or with the intended financial support, we will endeavour to offer eligible applicants a place on an alternate programme, or assist existing St Mary's College offer holders in securing a place elsewhere. This includes all scenarios outlined below.
- If the need for a student complaint arises guidance on how to make a complaint and/or gain independent advice is clearly stipulated in our complaint procedure available on our website (<https://www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk/university-centre/he-policies-and-procedures>). Additionally guidance on such a procedure can be sought from the College's Higher Education Advisor assigned to all students at enquiry stage.

### 3. Measures we will take in specific situations

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Updating of programme content, regulations and policies</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	Low
	<p>An ongoing commitment to quality assurance and enhancement at St Mary's College and its validating HEIs, UCLan and LHU means that, from time to time, programme content, regulations and policies will be updated. Where updates to content are made, for example substitution of modules, changes to module content or assessment activities, the College has to follow the HEI's processes for course change, which mean that any major changes are unlikely to obtain approval for in year course content. We have appropriate plans in place to communicate and obtain student agreement in the unlikely event of this occurring, which includes formal discussion with student representatives and the student body.</p> <p>To enable an effective local assessment of risk to students and as changes to regulations may be prompted by the validating HEI, the College has a procedure where these changes have to be considered at Senior Management level before implementation. In addition, any revision of regulations will only apply to students first enrolling after approval of those revisions is sought. It is therefore useful to highlight that different regulations may apply to different cohorts on a programme and will be documented in the Programme Handbook and the College website (dated by the first year of enrolment), for that cohort.</p> <p>New or revised policies shall apply to all students from the start of the academic term following approval by College's Senior Management Team, with a proviso that for the remainder of the then current academic year, no student may be treated disadvantageously in comparison with the previous policy.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>Closure of an individual programme</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	Moderate
	The College may make a strategic decision to close a programme because insufficient enrolments render it non-viable from an academic, student experience or resourcing perspective; or because

	<p>it has been superseded in the College portfolio; or no longer aligns with the College's mission. In such cases and where possible, St Mary's College, UCLan and LHM will endeavour to ensure that each current student may have the opportunity to complete the course which they are enrolled on at the date of termination or provide, in discussion with the student, a suitable alternative based at the College.</p> <p>Where it is not possible for students to complete the course at the College, UCLan, as the validating HEI, would work with both the College and the affected students on a suitable transfer, either to another suitable site based at another partner college or onto an alternative course that is offered directly by the University.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>Loss or damage to our university validation partnerships</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	Low
	<p>St Mary's College, UCLan and LHM have successfully worked in partnership for over 15 years, and will use all reasonable endeavours to protect the interests of students enrolled on courses approved. However, if an issue transpires within the partnership, St Mary's College and both HEIs will each use reasonable endeavours to ensure that all current student have the opportunity to complete the course which they are enrolled on at the date of termination, and shall co-operate so far as may be practical with the intention of achieving such completion of courses by the students.</p> <p>Where it is not possible for students to complete the course St Mary's College would again work with the validating HEIs, to transfer the students onto an alternative course that it provides, whether alone or in collaboration with any third party, and the College shall comply with all reasonable requests to facilitate the transfer.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>The College is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more courses, particularly if there are areas of particular vulnerability, such as single person dependencies for teaching</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	Low
	<p>In certain circumstances the College may need to replace staff as a matter of urgency, as such the nature of the teaching team would facilitate the flexibility of allowing students to complete all work that is necessary with the remaining staff based in the College at minimal impact for students.</p> <p>In the event that the College needs to replace staff externally the College's Human Resources Manager keeps a database of temporary staff which is updated on a regular basis and has firm links with a specialist Supply Staff agency</p> <p>Where the pursuance of a replacement member of staff is deemed unrealistic then the College would be prepared to discuss viable options with individual students and endeavour to accommodate the completion of all outstanding work via a route suitable to the students.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	<b>The College is no longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to its students, particularly if it is considering withdrawing a mode of study (Full-time/Part-time).</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	Low
	<p>In the event of a mode of study being withdrawn by either the College or HEIs both parties will comply with the CMA Consumer Protection Law and make these amendments by the 31<sup>st</sup> of May prior to the next application cycle. The college will endeavour to facilitate a 'teach out' for any current registered students.</p>

#### **4. Reimbursement**

In terms of refunds in relation to tuition fees this is included within the Tuition Fee Policy which is part of the student contract and is available to all students at <https://www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk/university-centre/he-policies-and-procedures/university-central-lancashire/>. If we were not able to preserve continuation of study then we would of course refund all relevant Tuition Fees that had been paid. We have never had such a situation as we always seek to preserve continuation of study and our Tuition Fee Policy in the main is written in relation to non-continuation of a course by a student rather than by ourselves. It is however our intention, working with the newly published UUK Good Practice Guidance 'Briefing: Compensation and refund policies – developing good practice' UUK website to further review our Tuition Fee Policy to include more guidance on refunds and compensation in the future. In relation to compensation and/or other course costs decisions are made on a case by case basis because each student's personal circumstances and impact is different however in doing so we follow the principles of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator with regards to remedies and redress, including financial remedies and compensation. <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/121676/remedies-and-redress-april-2018.pdf> In the event that a decision is taken to cancel or suspend recruitment to a course within 6 months prior to enrolment and/or after enrolment and an applicant with an offer consequently decides to withdraw from the course without any other study, the applicant will receive a refund of any tuition fees paid.