

# Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: University College of Estate Management (UCEM)

Provider's UKPRN: 10008173

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## 1. The aim of this plan

UCEM's Student Protection Plan ("SPP") sets out the measures that UCEM has in place to protect You (the student), should a risk to the continuation of studies arise, and the action UCEM will take to protect Your interests and assure continuity of study in the event of a programme closure, or in the unlikely event that UCEM is no longer able to operate.

UCEM is committed to protecting the interests of all Our students, in all circumstances. If a Material Change (as set out in section 2) occurs UCEM will consult with students at the earliest opportunity and put measures in place to preserve continuation of study.

This SPP assesses the level of risk in relation to continuity of study, the measures that UCEM has in place to mitigate any risks, and how UCEM will communicate any information relating to the SPP with You.

The measures contained in this SPP supplement the protection You have under consumer protection law and do not impinge on Your consumer rights.

This document should be read in conjunction with UCEM's Terms and Conditions of Contract which are published on the [UCEM website \(opens new window\)](#).

For the purposes of this SPP 'a student' is defined as someone who has registered to study with UCEM on either an undergraduate or postgraduate programme, and who, as part of registration, has accepted the Terms and Conditions of Contract.

## 2. Assessment of the risk of a Material Change to delivery

The following section provides an assessment of specific risks, and the likelihood that these risks will occur. In the event that any of these Material Changes occur, the SPP will be implemented, and students will be communicated with as outlined in section 7.2.

### 2.1 Material Change 1: Risk that UCEM is no longer able to operate

Overall, the risk that UCEM will no longer be able to operate, or will cease to operate, is **LOW**.

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UCEM's Institutional Risk Register is regularly reviewed by UCEM's Audit Committee in line with guidance set out in the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Higher Education Code for Governance, and the CUC Handbook for Members of Audit Committees in Higher Education Institutions. The UCEM Audit Committee's responsibilities are subject to the overarching governance of UCEM led by the Principal and the powers and functions of the Board of Trustees.

The Risk Register details specific risks, and includes a defined risk score pre- and post-mitigation, as well as associated actions.

UCEM is, as at the time of this SPP, financially sustainable: UCEM's income annually matches its expenditure, and the reserves held by UCEM exceed its annual income. Full details are available in the UCEM audited Annual Accounts, published by the [Charity Commission \(opens new window\)](#).

UCEM's annual budgets and business plans are approved by the Finance Committee who, with the delegated authority of the Board of Trustees, monitor in-year costs and income to assure appropriate oversight and control. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring delivery of the annual budgets and business plan.

UCEM has in place a Business Continuity Plan to mitigate against risks that may have an impact on the institution's ability to either fully or completely operate due to unforeseen circumstances. These include mitigations such as: UCEM's headquarters at Horizons, Reading, UK being completely damaged; severe illness resulting in a significant number of staff being unavailable; utility failure; and component or systems failure.

## 2.2 Material Change 2: Risk that UCEM loses the power to award degrees or to validate one or more of its courses

UCEM has 'taught degree awarding powers' (TDAP), which means the institution has been granted the authority to award all taught awards on an indefinite basis. UCEM currently offers a range of UCEM degrees. This SPP details the assessment of risk to the continuation of study if UCEM was to lose the power to award degrees.

UCEM has in place governance and quality assurance processes to mitigate against any risk that could impact on UCEM's taught degree awarding powers and to ensure UCEM's compliance with the regulatory framework and the Office for Students' (OfS) ongoing conditions of registration. By proactive monitoring of compliance with the on-going OfS conditions of registration and engagement with sector groups to learn from best practice the risk is considered **LOW**.

If a decision was made by the OfS to de-register or remove TDAP, UCEM would appeal and/or would apply to re-register to enable teach-out. If UCEM was unable to teach out it would assist students to transfer to an equivalent programme at another provider.

## 2.3 Material Change 3: Risk that UCEM is no longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to our students

UCEM's core mode of delivery is online provision. The risk that UCEM would no longer be able to deliver its programmes by online learning is **LOW**. UCEM's Board of Trustees has invested significantly in the development of online resources, technology, and expert staff to support the continued delivery and enhancement of online learning at UCEM.

Workshops provided as part of an apprenticeship programme will continue to run as they form part of UCEM's funding requirements from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

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## 2.4 Material Change 4: The risk that UCEM is unable to deliver at one or more locations

The majority of UCEM teaching is provided online: therefore, there is minimal risk that UCEM would be unable to deliver at one or more locations. UCEM's campus is its virtual learning environment (VLE), which all students 'attend' for their teaching and learning.

The risk that UCEM will be unable to deliver its teaching through the VLE is **LOW**. To mitigate the risk of failure of the VLE, the VLE is hosted externally in a high availability cloud-based environment, so an outage is unlikely. In the highly unlikely event of an outage, the supplier contract includes 24/7 support, and UCEM would contact the supplier immediately. This risk is continuously monitored and is detailed in the UCEM Business Continuity Plan.

The majority of apprenticeship workshops are delivered online however UCEM occasionally runs some physical workshops to support delivery of its apprenticeship programmes. UCEM does not host the workshops at a specific location or campus, but instead hires venues in locations around England. There is a moderate risk that a specific location could become unavailable. In this event UCEM will offer a suitable alternative location. If physical workshops cannot be held UCEM will offer online workshops as an alternative.

## 2.5 Material Change 5: Risk that UCEM is no longer able to deliver programmes to students in one or more subject areas

All UCEM programmes are focussed on subjects relating to the built environment – i.e., property, land, and construction. This fulfils UCEM's Royal Charter (RC000125), which defines its objectives as to deliver education and training within these specialist areas. UCEM has one school (the School of the Built Environment).

Within the school there are full- and part-time members of staff with expertise in the relevant specialisms, and these academic staff are supported by associate tutors who are also specialists within the built environment.

The risk to students of non-continuation of study arising because UCEM could no longer deliver programmes in one or more subject areas is **LOW**, because the school has well-integrated teams, and is supported by a strong network of associate tutors.

## 2.6 Material Change 6: Risk that UCEM is no longer able to deliver one or more programmes due to closure

Clause 6 of the UCEM Terms and Conditions of Contract sets out the circumstances in which UCEM may close a programme.

Section 3 of this SPP provides information on the measures that UCEM has in place to preserve continuation of study for its students.

There may be instances where UCEM will choose to discontinue a programme; however, on these occasions UCEM will cease recruitment and then teach out the programme or offer students a suitable alternative programme. UCEM ensures that remaining students on the programme are fully supported to complete their studies by putting in place a Programme Closure Student Support Plan. The risk that UCEM would not teach-out the programme is very **LOW**.

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UCEM's apprenticeship programmes are funded by the ESFA. There is a **MODERATE** institutional risk that the ESFA would revoke UCEM's funding contract if UCEM fails to meet the compliance requirements of the ESFA. In this event UCEM would be required to transfer all apprentices to an alternative delivery partner for the remainder of their apprenticeship programme. If an individual apprentice was found to be ineligible for funding after commencing a programme with UCEM, the circumstances of the case would be considered. Depending on the circumstances of the case the apprentice would either be allowed to continue on their programme without ESFA funding or would be withdrawn.

## 2.7 Material Change 7: Risk that UCEM will make changes to programmes or is no longer able to deliver material components (i.e., tuition as defined in the programme specification) of one or more programmes

Where there is a change to a programme, this will be made in accordance with Clause 6 of the Terms and Conditions of Contract.

Changes will usually be made from the start of a new academic year, i.e., from 1 September, following a period of consultation with students and prospective students outlining the options available to them.

The risk that UCEM would no longer be able to deliver material components is **LOW** because of the way the teams have been integrated within the school structure and the associate tutor network which supports delivery of its programmes. All UCEM programmes are mapped to meet the competency frameworks of the relevant professional bodies, and modules will continue to be delivered to ensure the programmes meet professional body requirements.

## 2.8 Material Change 8: Risk that UCEM is no longer able to recruit or teach students with particular needs

UCEM attracts students from around the world, and currently has part-time and full-time students studying in approximately 100 countries. The risk that the institution would no longer be able to attract or deliver its programmes in full- and/or part-time modes is **LOW**, due to the continued investment and support from the Board of Trustees.

Due to its online learning model meaning that students do not visit the UK to study their programme, UCEM is not subject to Tier 4 visa requirements. For this reason, the risk to non-continuation of study for international students is **LOW**.

The risk that UCEM would no longer be able to recruit or teach students with disabilities is also **LOW**. UCEM reviews all its online materials for accessibility to ensure that a student with disabilities can apply to UCEM and can access the online learning materials. UCEM may provide materials in different formats, as detailed in the [Code of Practice chapter on Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing \(opens new window\)](#). UCEM has a dedicated Disability and Welfare Team to support applicants and students with additional educational needs, and to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place.

The risk that UCEM would no longer be able to recruit or teach students with any other protected characteristics is also **LOW** because its online delivery provides an accessible platform and mode of learning. In addition, the programmes are designed to be flexible to support students in different circumstances, such as pregnancy, paternity, and maternity.

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## 3. Measures that UCEM has put in place to mitigate these risks and to preserve continuation of study for students

UCEM is committed to ensuring the continuation of study for students in the event of a Material Change and will be transparent where changes have occurred, or are going to occur, and will support students through any changes.

Detailed information regarding the processes that are in place to mitigate risk in the event of programme closure or programme change can be found in the following documents:

- [Terms and Conditions of Contract \(opens new window\)](#)
- [UCEM Academic and Programme Regulations \(opens new window\)](#)
- [UCEM Code of Practice Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation \(opens new window\)](#)
- [UCEM Refund and Compensation Policy \(opens new window\)](#)

All documents are published on the UCEM website. You are advised to read the relevant section of these documents alongside this SPP.

In the event of any programme closing UCEM will put in place a student support plan which details how student interests will be protected in line with the SPP, what risks are associated with closing the programme and how the risks will be mitigated, the student and stakeholder communication strategy and any changes to programme management and delivery arrangements during the runout. Oversight of the implementation of the SPP rests with UCEM's Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee.

### 3.1 Programme closure

In the event that a UCEM programme is closed, UCEM is committed to 'teaching out' all students currently registered on the programme; however, UCEM will also support students to transfer to another programme if they wish to do this instead.

Students will be given the opportunity to complete their programme of study (in accordance with the Academic and Programme Regulations for Students). However, in exceptional circumstances, where students have not exceeded the maximum registration period for their programme but have fallen behind their cohort, the Academic Board may approve an accelerated programme closure, for example by providing additional resit opportunities, taking into account the needs of students with protected characteristics and particular needs.

UCEM will also provide students with the opportunity to transfer on to an alternative programme offered by UCEM or, where appropriate, to another provider, with appropriate credit transfer where applicable.

For students that have applied to the programme but not yet enrolled, UCEM will notify the students concerned allowing them sufficient time to source an alternative programme. Where needed UCEM will provide support to applicants to find a suitable alternative programme.

### 3.2 Apprenticeship programme closure due to withdrawal of ESFA funding

To mitigate the risk of failing to meet the compliance requirements of the ESFA in relation to UCEM's apprenticeship programmes the Board of Trustees has provided significant investment to UCEM to deliver these programmes, which has included additional recruitment of staff with relevant expertise, as well as additional systems. Academic governance structures have also been reviewed to ensure appropriate oversight of quality and standards.

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In the unlikely event that the ESFA has cause to, and decides to, terminate one or more of the apprenticeship funding contracts (levy and non-levy) that UCEM holds, the normal route to enable the apprenticeship students to continue with their programme is for the ESFA to identify and approach another suitable training provider with a view to the transfer the responsibility for provision of the apprenticeships to that provider. UCEM will promptly provide such assistance and comply with such timetable as the ESFA may reasonably require for the purpose of ensuring an orderly transfer of responsibility for provision of the apprenticeship programmes, to ensure continuation of study for the students affected.

In the event that relevant employer(s) indicate that the transfer of the responsibility for provision of the apprenticeship programmes is undesirable to the relevant employer(s), UCEM would offer such assistance as is necessary to enable the student to complete as much of their programme with UCEM as possible. UCEM would work with the employer to support students to find other means of funding.

## 3.3 Changes to programme or material components

UCEM will endeavour to deliver programmes in line with the information provided to students in the programme specification; however, there may be circumstances where it is necessary to make a change in order to comply with external professional, accrediting or regulatory body requirements, to ensure that curriculum, mode or delivery remains current, to implement external examiner feedback or annual monitoring improvements. The level of change will be restricted to those changes that are absolutely necessary to ensure the quality of the programme and consultation will take place with students impacted. All changes will be made in accordance with the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

For UCEM's apprenticeship programmes UCEM will endeavour to deliver all material components as planned, however, there may be occasions where this is not possible for the following reasons:

- a venue is unable to hold a workshop, either an alternative venue will be found in the same area, or students will have the option to transfer to a different location in the UK where a workshop is being delivered. Where workshops cannot be held face-to-face due to external factors (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) UCEM will provide the workshop in an alternative format.
- Where an examination centre is unable to hold an End Point Assessment (EPA) exam, an alternative venue will be found in the same area, or students will have the option to transfer to a different exam centre.

If attending an alternative apprenticeship workshop venue or EPA examination venue was not an option due to special circumstances, UCEM would explore this on a case by case basis and would consider facilitating a transfer to another provider or applying its Refund and Compensation Policy.

## 4. UCEM Refund and Compensation Policy

This section of the SPP sets out UCEM's policies and procedures for refunds and compensation. If UCEM is no longer able to preserve continuation of study, students should refer to the UCEM Refund and Compensation Policy. The Policy provides information on the refunds that students would be eligible for, including:

- students in receipt of tuition fee loans from the Student Loans Company
- students who pay their own tuition fees
- students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor.
- the payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their programme.

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The Policy also details UCEM's commitments to honour student bursaries and provide compensation where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study.

In the unlikely event of UCEM being unable to deliver a programme or programmes of study it has in place a designated Balance Sheet compensation reserve to offer refunds and compensation in accordance with the Refund and Compensation Policy. This reserve will be maintained at a minimum of £1 million or 10% of the most recent audited financial year's tuition fees and education contracts revenue (reported in accordance with the latest version of the Further and Higher Education Statement of Recommended Practice (FEHE SORP)), whichever is the greater.

## 5. Communication with Students and Staff about the Student Protection Plan

This SPP is published on the [UCEM website \(opens new window\)](#) and is annexed to the Terms and Conditions of Contract.

### 5.1 Communication with students

- Applicants are informed of the existence of the SPP in their offer letter to study on a programme with UCEM.
- Current students are notified of the SPP through announcements on the VLE and in their offers to register for their next semester. Students are invited to register for new modules either on a bi-annual or annual basis, and at each of these points students are referred to the SPP.

### 5.2 Communication with Staff

UCEM recognises how important it is that all staff are aware of this SPP when changes to a programme are proposed, in particular to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to provide accurate programme information to both applicants and students.

UCEM has in place academic governance structures to ensure the appropriate process is followed when changes are made. These are detailed in the [Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation \(opens new window\)](#). The [Code of Practice chapter on Information about higher education provision \(opens new window\)](#) details the requirements for compliance with the CMA.

The SPP is also linked with UCEM's quality review processes to ensure all staff are aware of the SPP when proposing any changes to programmes or when making decisions on programme discontinuation. In particular, it is reviewed at the UCEM Deliberative Committee – Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee as part of the review cycle in accordance with UCEM's Code of Practice.

## 6. Development of the Student Protection Plan

UCEM will review the SPP on an annual basis.

Following review, if changes are made, the SPP will be approved at the Academic Board, which includes student representation on the Committee, which ensures that students are part of the final approval process. However, Academic Board will review the SPP a minimum of once every three years.

Any changes to the SPP will take place before the start of the academic year.



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## 7. Communication with Students if the Student Protection Plan needs to be implemented.

### 7.1 Notice period regarding changes

**UCEM closure:** If UCEM is no longer able to operate, UCEM will provide all students with as much notice as practicable, which is expected to be a minimum notice period of one academic year. UCEM would seek to ensure the continuation of study for all students on our programmes by supporting them in finding an alternative programme at another institution. Support for this transfer of study would include the provision of an academic record of a student's achievement, to facilitate the admission to another institution.

**Programme closure:** In the event of programme closure, the procedure detailed in the Terms and Conditions of Contract will be followed. All existing students would be provided with the opportunity to complete their programme, or transfer to an alternative programme. There is no minimum notice period.

**Changes to a programme of study:** In the event of changes to material components to a programme of study the process for change is detailed in the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Changes to a programme or modules must be approved during the Programme Change window to effect change normally from the following September. This means that seven months' notice is usually given to students or applicants affected.

### 7.2 Communication with students on implementation

UCEM will write to all students affected by any of the changes outlined in the SPP and consult on the changes that are occurring. UCEM will explain the reasons for the change and what options are available. UCEM will seek to support students through this process both collectively and individually to help them to understand the options available.

As part of the consultation, students will be provided with the opportunity to discuss the changes with members of staff, who are likely to include the programme leaders, module leaders or Student Engagement Team. As part of these discussions UCEM will work closely with the Lead Student Representative.

### 7.3 Availability of advice for students

UCEM will provide all students affected by any of the changes outlined in this SPP with direct access to the Lead Student Representative, who can raise issues with the Board of Trustees.

### 7.4 Student complaints regarding the implementation of the Student Protection Plan

UCEM has an open, fair, and accessible Student Complaints Procedure which operates in accordance with the principles of the OIA Good Practice Framework to encourage the prompt resolution of problems at the earliest possible stage. UCEM's Student Complaints Procedure is available on the [UCEM website \(opens new window\)](#).

All students are encouraged to resolve issues informally in the first instance with the relevant member of staff. To raise a complaint or seek advice on the possible submission of a complaint, students should first contact the Complaints Officer at UCEM at [complaints@ucem.ac.uk](mailto:complaints@ucem.ac.uk).