



Provider's name: **Arden University**

Provider's UKPRN: **10005451**

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Student protection plan for the period 2019/20

Section 1: Introduction and Context

Making the decision to invest in your future by studying for a degree is an important one. You should think carefully about which subjects interest you and how studying them will help you achieve your chosen future or employment or career improvement. You should think carefully about the mode of study and location that best suits your circumstances. Once you have made that choice, you will want to be confident that your chosen university will deliver that course to you.

All universities and colleges registered with the Office for Students (OFS) publish a Student Protection Plan providing its assessment of the risk to continuation of study of all of its students, including the risk that the provider as a whole is no longer able to operate, that it's unable to award the qualifications for which student are registered, that one or more of its delivery locations is no longer available or that it is unable to continue to provide programmes in a particular subject area or delivery mode. This Student Protection Plan is intended to provide you with an overview of any such potential risks and the measures that Arden University has put in place to minimise those risks.

At Arden University, once you have chosen to study with us, we aim to support every student to achieve their study and career goals. We seek to ensure that the qualification you attain on successful completion has currency in your chosen profession and is valued by employers. Sometimes we will make changes to programmes to improve their content and its relevance. Often, such changes are made in response to student feedback. Very occasionally, events outside our control may require other changes. The Arden University Student Protection Plan sets out the types of changes we may make and the circumstances in which they will be made, including what we will do to minimise the impact on your studies and to ensure that you are able to complete your chosen course.

The measures contained in this Student Protection Plan are in addition to the protections you have under consumer protection law and do not affect your consumer rights.

Section 2:

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

Arden University has identified the following key areas of potential risk that relate to its provision of higher education programmes to its students. The University mitigates against these risks in the ways identified in Section 3 of this plan.

- *The risk of not delivering an advertised programme to applicants due to failing to recruit a viable cohort size for a specific intake*

If the University fails to recruit sufficient applicants to ensure the viability of a specific programme of study, it may decide not to deliver that programme for that specific intake. For example, an unviable cohort size may be determined by the perceived negative impact to the student learning experience where the cohort size is insufficient to undertake interactive teaching or group learning activities. For its blended learning programmes which includes classroom delivery, the likelihood of this risk crystallising on a small number of courses is high, but its impact is moderate due to the mitigations outlined in Section 3. For distance learning programmes, the risk is low because students do not remain in separate cohorts so group sizes do not depend on specific intakes. Our developing planning processes and continual review of delivery mode, curriculum and location seek to mitigate the overall risk.

- *The risk of changing site for continuing Full Time blended learning students using Study Centres*

The University's blended learning provision located at its study centres is expanding; therefore, the risk of the University requiring additional or new study centre facilities is moderate. It has sufficient accommodation at the majority of its study centres to accommodate forecast student numbers over the next three years. However, the risk of requiring additional space is higher at its centres in Birmingham and Berlin. Any impact to continuing students of such changes is mitigated by the University's commitment to maintain the same locality and level of facilities as set out in Section 3.

- *The risk of not being able to teach out students on a programme it is discontinuing*

The University continuously improves, updates and develops its portfolio of academic programmes and occasionally makes strategic decisions to discontinue recruitment to specific programmes where they are being replaced or substantially changed. In such an eventuality its terms and conditions set out explicitly its commitment to students to 'teach out' any continuing students on their original programme of study. The risk of the University being unable to teach out students on a programme is low, due to it being a well-established and expanding higher education provider with sufficient staffing and financial resources in place. Track record and current practice both demonstrate the University's commitment and capability to teach out discontinued programmes whilst maintaining a quality student learning experience throughout.

For example, programmes that Arden University delivers leading to an award of one of its partner universities are or have been discontinued with detailed exit plans in place to ensure all that students are able to progress through to completion of their programme of study.

- *Risk of making changes to programme content that negatively impact students or the qualification awarded*

The University has an obligation to ensure that the academic content of its programmes is regularly updated and consequently will make minor adjustments that are unlikely to negatively impact on students or changes that are required by necessity. Students are notified of any such changes in good time and before they come into effect. The likelihood of the University making any changes which are

detrimental to students or to the qualification awarded is low, because its published terms and conditions and its academic regulations mitigate against this risk.

- *Risk of institutional failure due to financial instability*

The risk that Arden University will be unable to continue to operate due to financial limitations is reducing as the University matures and its student base increases. It has business continuity plans and risk management processes in place to ensure that services to students and the University's status are regularly monitored, mitigated and safeguarded. The University's financial sustainability is reviewed annually by its regulators. Although the risk is low, additional planned mitigation is outlined in Section 3.

- *Risk of an international partnership failing and not being able to teach out students*

Arden University works with international partner organisations to support its recruitment to, and pastoral support for, students studying at its international study centre(s). The University undertakes due diligence on any such partners to ascertain the level of risk in relying on its support and only proceeds to establish a partnership where it is confident that the support is sustainable over the foreseeable future. For these reasons the risk of an international partnership failing and not being able to teach out students is low. Mitigations are explained in more detail in Section 3.

- *Risk of being unable to deliver programmes in a particular subject area*

The risk that Arden University will be unable to continue to deliver programmes in a particular subject area is low because the University operates a flexible academic staffing structure, supported by comprehensive online learning materials, which facilitates access to additional academic staff expertise as it requires. Therefore no mitigating actions are proposed because of the university's proven academic staff and learning resource model, and the unlikelihood of this risk occurring.

Section 3:

The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

Mitigations planned or in place against the risks identified above are as follows.

- *The risk of not delivering an advertised programme to applicants due to failing to recruit a viable cohort size for a specific intake*

The University's terms and conditions advise applicants that Arden may withdraw a programme at any point up to the Access Date (enrolment) *This is Under Review*. However, the University will very rarely withdraw a programme at short notice, and never without at least 6 weeks' notice of any such withdrawal. Applicants whose programme is withdrawn will be offered alternative start dates, locations, programmes or modes of delivery.

- *The risk of changing site for continuing Blended Learning students*

The University would ensure that any study centre relocation was within 5 miles of the existing site, and due and proper consideration would be given to accessibility and transport links. Any relocation of a study centre site would be advised to students no later than six weeks prior to the commencement of their programme or the start of their next term or semester, and normally considerably earlier where feasible. The University has minimum criteria for study centre facilities which are approved by its

Academic Board and ensure a threshold standard of facilities and resources that will be provided in all centres.

- *The risk of not being able to teach out students on a programme it is discontinuing*

The University has an excellent record of successfully teaching out discontinued programmes to the satisfaction of its students. Therefore, it would require complete organisational failure to prevent it from teaching out a discontinued programme in future. However, in the unlikely event that Arden University is unable due to unforeseen circumstance to teach out a programme or programmes, it would support students to transfer to a suitable alternative provider. For its franchised or validated programmes, it would look to the awarding body partner in the first instance and draw upon agreements and long-standing relationships with these partners.

- *Risk of making changes to programme content that negatively impact students or the qualification awarded*

The University's Regulatory Framework allows it to make minor adjustments to module content and programmes of study, for example in order to maintain currency or to respond to feedback from students or external examiners, or to align with the changing requirements of an accrediting professional body. Any such adjustments must be approved in accordance with the University's published Procedure for the Approval of Minor Modifications and require consultation with student representatives before the change is approved. Students are notified of minor modifications in good time and before they come into effect. Any changes that might have an adverse effect on students would not be made without formal consultation with affected students and their student representatives.

Occasionally it may be necessary to make major changes to programmes. Normally such changes would not be applied to continuing students and would only take effect for new students. In the unlikely event that the University is required to make major changes to programmes and apply these for continuing students, it would consult formally with all affected students before making a decision. Major changes to a programme must be approved by a panel convened on behalf of the Academic Board, including independent subject experts, in accordance with published procedures for the validation and review of programmes.

- *Risk of institutional failure due to financial instability*

As outlined in Section 2, the risk of institutional failure due to financial instability is reduced to its increasing maturity and growing financial security. Furthermore, now that access to recurrent annual teaching grant of circa. £1.5M is available from 2019/20 onwards, investment for student success is aided in the same way as other longer established Higher education providers. With increased maturity comes stronger student number forecasting and planning to develop greater foresight in financial sustainability. Quarterly financial and student number reporting is currently provided to the Office for Students for review.

- *Risk of an international partnership failing and not being able to teach out students*

In the unlikely event of an international partnership failure resulting in the loss of premises and non-academic services, the University would take immediate steps to provide alternative facilities and support services and to ensure continued delivery of its programmes to students. All staff delivering Arden programmes are already contracted directly to the University to ensure continuity of staffing in country. Changes to sites would be undertaken in accordance with the protocols outlined above under the 'risk of changing site'.

Wherever feasible and beneficial to students, it will seek to launch a new study centre alongside teaching out continuing students at the existing centre. This would not be the case, however, where the relocation was designed to improve facilities or to rectify an issue with the premises, as was the case

with the University's successful relocation of its Ealing centre in 2017. Financial compensation to students for additional travel costs would be considered for any such relocation.

Section 4:

Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

Refund Policy

Arden's Refund Policy is publicly available on its website and sent directly to all successful applicants as part of their offer pack:

https://arden.ac.uk/application/files/9114/6470/2167/Arden_Refund_Policy.pdf

As part of its commitment to providing high quality learning opportunities, Arden University guarantees to all new students starting a programme of study provided by the University for the first time, that they can withdraw at any point within the first 30 days of commencement and receive a full refund.

The University's Refund Policy sets out the circumstances in which students will be entitled to a refund if it does not deliver the programme as detailed.

Arden will not, in general, refund undergraduate students for completed academic years of study. For any change which has been scheduled between academic years, the University does not believe it will be appropriate to refund the previous year's fee because it will formally have recognised the value of learning you have completed. Where you have completed modules you will receive a transcript setting out your marks to date and credits awarded, which is transferable to other UK providers.

In the case of a campus relocation, Arden will consider all reasonable requests for reimbursement of additional travel expenses incurred by students as a result of this relocation.

Distance learning students whose programme is discontinued will normally be supported via a teach out plan. In the unlikely event that this is not possible, students would be refunded for any portion of the programme of study not delivered by the University and supported to transfer to a suitable alternative provider.

Arden University has the financial resources to ensure appropriate teach-out, transfer and refund arrangements, as described above. Please see mitigations planned and in place with regard to the risk of institutional failure.

Section 5:

Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

Arden University will publicise its Student Protection Plan to current and future students on its website and in Offer Packs, which are sent directly to all successful applicants with their formal offer of a place. In addition, we will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose course changes, through handbooks, procedural documents and staff training. Additionally, the University consults with its students regarding the contents of the Student Protection Plan via the student representative system and its online platforms.

Any decision to close a programme or a study centre will be made by the Board of Directors which will consider the financial and legal implications in consultation with the Academic Board. The Academic Board will oversee the appropriateness and ongoing management of any teach out or transfer arrangements, to ensure that academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience is properly managed.

Arden University will inform students in writing if there are to be material changes to their programme or to their study centre. This written notification would include details of the arrangements for students' support and protection, which would include teach out arrangements, offering an alternative course with Arden or transferring to a different provider without having to start their programme again, and measures to compensate affected students financially. The University would normally provide students a minimum of 26 weeks' notice of any material changes.

All Arden University students have access to independent advice provided by StudentLine.

Updated August 12th 2019