

Student Protection Plan

1. What is the Student Protection Plan?

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires all Higher Education providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan in order to protect your interests where a material change could threaten the continuity of your studies. This plan sets out an assessment of the risk of such significant changes occurring, and describes the measures we have taken to mitigate, reduce and manage those risks.

1.1 Who is covered by the Student Protection Plan?

This plan is only applicable to those students on undergraduate programmes, it does **NOT** apply to students undertaking short, public courses or those on internally awarded programmes (please see the relevant Terms & Conditions for those on our Certificate programme, the Foundation programme and the Terms & Conditions for public and short courses, as relevant). Students on undergraduate programmes should also refer to Art Academy London's Student Terms & Conditions (programme specific) and the Student Fees & Refund Policy alongside this plan. All measures contained in this plan are in addition to your statutory rights, which remain unaffected.

Even if you would normally be covered by the Plan, it will not apply to you if you have had your registration terminated for any of the following reasons:

- At your request;
- in the normal completion of your programme;
- as a result of student discipline, non-payment of tuition-related fees, academic misconduct, academic failure or other similar matters.

1.2 Prospective students

As an applicant, if you have accepted an offer to study at Art Academy London on an undergraduate programme but have not yet enrolled, the Academy will notify you if the Plan is triggered and will likely affect you. In such cases, we would inform you of any changes and would try to minimise their impact by offering suitable alternative arrangements. For example, we would help you to find an alternative course or provider, or we would help you to defer your place for a year if this was appropriate.

2. Review and implementation

This Student Protection Plan is maintained as part of the Academy's risk-management and business continuity planning activities. An institutional risk register is compiled, maintained and managed by the Executive Team, by delegation from the Board of Trustees, who receive regular reports on the register. Due to the small scale of the Academy and the 'hands-on' ethos of the Executive Team, ongoing action plans to mitigate risk throughout the institution can be kept under constant review and any new risks or issues readily identified and acted upon in a timely manner.

Assessments are made of the likelihood and potential impact of each individual risk through discussion within the Executive Team, with the Principal's opinion taking precedence in the event of disagreement. Likelihood and severity are each scored from One (minimal likelihood of occurrence/severity of impact) to Five (high probability of occurrence/maximum severity of impact). Overall importance is then calculated by multiplying the likelihood and the severity; these scores are recorded on the Risk Register and are kept under review by the Executive Team. The Board of Trustees may subsequently override any assessment with its own opinion as to the level of risk.

This plan will be reviewed annually, prior to the commencement of the new academic year.. The plan is a working document and may be subject to amendment at any time throughout the academic year in reaction to any newly identified risk.

The student voice is paramount at the Academy and we are committed to being transparent and open with all members of the Academy's community about any risks and the plans and options available.

2.1 Reasonable adjustments

If any of these measures were invoked but you had special circumstances that required reasonable adjustments, such as a disability or reduced mobility or if you had additional responsibilities (such as being a carer), we would consider these on a case by case basis. This would include the exploration of any reasonable costs that might be incurred.

On implementing the Plan we would carry out an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that we were considering the needs of different groups of students. For example, if we need to deliver part of a programme in a temporary location that is not within central London, the assessment might flag that there would be a larger impact on mature students – as these students may be carers – and so this would be taken into account.

2.2 Communication

A current version of this plan will be available to all students and prospective students via Moodle and on our website. All staff will be made aware of the plan and will be able to access a current version made available on the staff area of Moodle. An annual briefing of changes to the plan will be given to key staff and the student council. Everyone else will be informed of any changes via email.

Art Academy London will communicate to students as early as possible any planned changes that may significantly impact upon the student experience and/or threaten the continuation of study. Should Art Academy London need to implement any of the measures outlined within the student protection plan, we inform students (and other stakeholders) as early as possible of our intentions initially by email. This will be closely followed up by a formal meeting with the Executive Team for those affected students, to provide opportunity for consultation and shared ownership of the proposals.

In instances of changes to programme specification and curriculum, such changes will not be made in-year and students and prospective students will be informed of changes prior to enrolment of the academic year.

3. Risks and plans to protect students

Likelihood and severity are out rated on a scale of 5. Overall importance is calculated by multiplying the likelihood and the severity.

3.1 Institutional closure ('market exit')

Likelihood of risk materialising: 2/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 5/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 10

Art Academy London has a 24-year track record as a self-funded, not-for-profit institution. The Academy operates both as an alternative, small independent HE provider and a provider of public, fine art courses (that can be classified as leisure-based activity). The flexibility of our model means that we are able to off-set losses resulting from lower than expected recruitment to undergraduate and 'academic' programmes through increases in other areas of our business. Our new Bankside building will bring opportunities to build new income streams, providing increased financial stability.

Registration with the OfS and subsequent access to Student Loans and sponsorship for international students is a key objective in our strategic plan and will additionally provide stability and mitigate the risk of institutional closure.

Our governance arrangements ensure financial oversight and the monitoring of institutional risk through the Board of Trustees. Our financial strategy goes beyond maintaining the covenant required by our mortgage provider to a commitment to building free reserves to provide adequate working capital to protect the continuity of Art Academy London's activities.

Our business interruption insurance provides protection in case of significant disruption to the Academy's business activity.

During the recent pandemic, Art Academy London, like all businesses and institutions, followed Government guidance and law with regard to temporary physical closure (and any other restrictions) and took advantage of local and national (pandemic-specific) funding. In such circumstances, the Academy is committed to utilising the aforementioned capital to protect the continuity of our activities, where required.

Where Art Academy London has no option but to close permanently, it will:

- Close in a staged way, over a period of time to allow current students to complete studies, where possible.
- Where this is not possible, or desired by the student, support students to transfer to an appropriate programme at another institution.
- Where appropriate, provide compensation to students where they suffer demonstrable financial loss as a result of the disruption to their studies, in line with our Refund & Compensation Policy.

3.2 Withdrawal or non-renewal of validation

Likelihood of risk materialising: 1/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 5/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 5

Art Academy London, though only relatively recently running validated programmes (five years), has a 20 year track record of successfully delivering the internally awarded Diploma programme; predecessor to our BA Fine Art. The original institutional validation was achieved by successfully passing a rigorous due diligence process and AAL continues to work closely with and under the guidance of the Open University; Programme revalidation was successfully achieved in June 2022 and institutional revalidation in April 2023 (for a period of five years).

The validation includes a commitment to teach out all students enrolled on an undergraduate programme of study to its completion. As part of the validation process, all institutional structures were reviewed and revised to ensure a robust quality culture. The maintenance and continual development of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) working practices is central to the Academy. Because of this, Art Academy London is confident that any due diligence required around our processes and performance, should the need arise to source a new validating partner, will result in a positive assessment.

Should validation be withdrawn or not be renewed, the Academy will maintain quality and standard student experience by:

- Teaching out all students enrolled on validated programmes, as per our validation agreement with the Open University (where this is not possible, supporting students to transfer to another provider to complete their studies);
- Suspend recruitment until a new validation partnership has been established;
- Revert to running non-validated programmes in the event that a new validation partner cannot be found, or where there is a delay in finding one.

3.3 Under-recruiting on undergraduate programmes

Likelihood of risk materialising: 4/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 4/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 16

Approximately half our undergraduate students are classified as mature students who already hold a UK first degree. This cohort of students are not eligible for Student Financial support and are, therefore, at potentially higher risk of withdrawing due to external financial and familial pressures and are often less able to commit to a full undergraduate programme due to tuition fee costs. This has become more apparent over the last academic year with a drop in enrolments onto undergraduate programmes due to the wider economic situation. A number of higher-value bursaries (to reduce tuition fees) were offered as part of the 23/24 recruitment cycle to mitigate the risk of under-recruiting.

In order to retain this demographic and maintain projected student numbers in the long term, continued provision of bursaries and scholarships to fully privately funded students remains central to our financial strategy and to our access and participation plan.

Increased marketing spending and new initiatives for 24/25 recruitment have been actioned in response to the increased risk of under-recruiting.

We are confident that the opening of the new Bankside building in late 23/24 will increase AALs 'brand awareness' and enable us to further promote the unique aspects of Art Academy London's undergraduate programmes (very high contact hours, small class sizes and a focus on highly specialist skills teaching) and improve enrolments.

In the long term, increased brand awareness and removal of the financial barrier to study for the more traditional HE demographic (through successful registration with the OfS and access to Student Loans).

In the event an undergraduate programme under recruits, the Academy will take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of student experience by:

- Ensuring sufficient budget is in place to deliver the programme as advertised and detailed in the programme specification;
- Co-teaching smaller cohorts across programmes and pathways, where appropriate;
- Informing prospective students of the cohort size (where programmes under-recruit to the point of having significant impact on the student experience) and offer the opportunity for withdrawal before enrolment (without financial penalty).

In the event an undergraduate programme is cancelled due to under recruitment, the Academy will:

- Provide compensation to prospective students* where they suffer demonstrable loss of opportunity as a result of the disruption to their intended studies (i.e. if this decision has not been communicated in time for the student to apply to another institution for entry in the same academic year).

*where the prospective student has already entered into a contract with the Academy.

3.4 Major changes to programme(s)

Likelihood of risk materialising: 1/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 4/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 4

Art Academy London is committed to running all validated programmes as they are described in the programme specification and handbook for the academic year in which the student began their studies. Any significant changes to programme specifications will only take place after extensive consultation with students affected (and any other stakeholders) and where possible, will not be introduced in-year (unless required for very specific reasons). Additionally, all minor and major changes are required to be agreed with the OU prior to their introduction, under the terms of the validation agreement.

In the event of significant changes to a programme, the Academy will:

- Only implement changes in order to maintain quality of experience;
- Consult with students to ensure that the offer remains acceptable and valid;
- Offer students unwilling to accept the changes the opportunity to withdraw from the programme and transfer to another institution.

3.5 Disruption of programme(s) due to (temporary) loss of key specialist tutors

Likelihood of risk materialising: 2/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 4/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 8

Although as a small institution Art Academy London has a very small team who teach on and deliver undergraduate programmes, contingency plans are in place (approved by the OU as part of the validation process) to ensure that all key Programme/ Pathway and Department leaders have a deputy who can take over duties or a colleague who will be able to effectively deputise for them. Additionally, contracts for key tutors require them to provide at least one full term's notice to allow a suitable replacement to be found.

Due to the number of tutors AAL works with on other, non-validated and public courses, we have a large pool of specialist practitioners already working at the Academy, who are able, and qualified, to teach on our undergraduate programmes. Within this cohort, there are individuals with sufficient specialist knowledge to ensure that we will be able to continue to run our undergraduate programmes in the case of a temporary or permanent loss of key tutors.

There is a similar contingency plan for academic support staff, due to our small scale. Again, this was reviewed and approved by the OU.

In the case of an unexpected, sudden loss of tutors where the deputy is unable to take over duties and a permanent replacement cannot be identified immediately, the Academy will:

- Seek a temporary replacement from within our pool of tutors or alumni or from within our industry and academic partners;
- Make reasonable adjustments to the delivery of the programme(s) to ensure that the full curriculum is delivered, if necessary by altering the schedule in consultation with students;
- Where a replacement cannot be found in time, identify alternative external sources of teaching and arrange suitable access to these, at no additional cost to students affected;
- Allow students to withdraw or transfer to another institution without financial penalty, where the loss of key tutors has demonstratively affected their quality of experience.

3.6 Discontinuation of a programme

Likelihood of risk materialising: 4/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 3/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 12

At present the Academy's undergraduate offering is small (two programmes) and it is highly unlikely that a programme will be discontinued (unless it was due to be superseded; i.e. a decision was made to replace the FD pathway in contemporary portraiture with a BA). There may be an instance where a programme stops recruiting due to low demand; As detailed in 3.3 under-recruitment and, therefore, discontinuation of a programme is currently an increased risk. With regards to institutional stability and market exit as detailed in 3.1, loss of income due to the discontinuation of a validated degree programme can to an extent be mitigated through replacement with a non-validated programme (indeed, we have more recently increased our portfolio of non-validated programmes to help mitigate the impact of lower enrolments on validated programmes).

In case of the discontinuation of a programme, Art Academy London will:

- Teach out all students enrolled on the programme, as per our validation agreement with the Open University;
- Inform prospective students that they will be the last intake onto the programme;
- Support those students who choose to transfer to another Academy programme or another, appropriate, institution.

3.7 Temporary closure of buildings due to unexpected damage or events

Likelihood of risk materialising: 1/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 4/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 4

Art Academy London has in place a comprehensive Emergency Procedures, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Policy which has been approved by the OU as part of the validation process as appropriate to mitigating such risk and ensuring a workable plan is in place to enable AAL to provide continuity to students, where possible. Since 2018, initially as part of the validation process, the Academy has been undertaking a programme of facilities improvements, thus reducing the possibility of unforeseen building closure. Art Academy London operates a strict site management regime with comprehensive health & safety and fire safety arrangements that includes safe working practice security measures in which all students and staff. A strategy is in place for the control and storage of volatile materials used on site. Art Academy London also has in place a comprehensive insurance cover to safeguard business continuity.

In case of unexpected damage to (e.g. due to fire, flooding or other) requiring temporary closure of part of the campus, the Academy will:

- Activate the Emergency Procedures, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery policy and plan, with any resulting costs supported through our business continuity insurance;
- Relocate core activities to other buildings within the Academy campus, in so far as possible;
- Work with Southwark Council to secure additional temporary space, where required. Where possible this will be close to our main site. Where relocation to a site further away is necessary, we will offer compensation for increased cost of travel, in line with our refund and compensation policy;
- Where disruption is prolonged, we will assist students to transfer to another institution and provide a refund of fees in line with our refund and compensation policy.

3.8 Disruption due to expansion and relocation programme

Likelihood of risk materialising: 1/5

Severity of impact if risk were to materialise: 4/5

Overall importance (likelihood x severity): 4

Art Academy London is due to move into a new main campus (Bankside) towards the end of the 23/24 academic year. The relocation will involve consolidation of our buildings from the current three to two and be phased as required to minimise disruption to students and teaching.

To minimise disruption caused by the expansion and relocation plan, the Academy will make sure that:

- A comprehensive relocation plan is drawn up from the earliest project planning stages;
- Enrolled students, and prospective students, are informed about relocation plans (and any possible temporary closure) at the earliest opportunity;
- Adequate resources are built into the project budget to ensure a smooth relocation and, if necessary, the provision of suitable alternative facilities during the building works and that any temporary facilities have been secured sufficiently in advance to ensure any alterations needed to comply with the standards set out by our validating partner, the Open University, can be made in good time;
- The Facilities, Health & Safety Committee liaise with students and tutors throughout the entire process to ensure that disruption is minimised and refurbishment and expansion plans are suitable for the whole community.
- The new buildings and facilities are of a sufficient level of completion before relocating to ensure a seamless continuance of all teaching and learning activities.

Policies and documents that supplement and reference this document:

Student Terms & Conditions

Student Fees & Refunds Policy

Document name	Student Protection Plan	Document owner	Darren Nairn
Date originally created	December 2020		
Version	4	Review date	January 2024
Author of amendments	Darren Nairn	Next review date	August 2024
Changes (list sections)	1.1, 2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8		
Approved by	Board of Trustees	Date of approval	Pending