



ACM STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

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ACM Student Protection Plan

1. PURPOSE

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires higher education providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure. This policy statement outlines the plan in place.

2. POLICY DETAILS

Provider's name: The Academy of Contemporary Music

Provider's UKPRN:10067853

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Student Protection Plan for the period 2020-21

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) is committed to helping ensure students achieve the best academic outcomes from their studies. Events may occasionally occur which mean that unforeseen changes have to be made to modules or programmes. Provision for such events is detailed within the ACM Contract of Enrolment and contained terms and conditions.
- 1.2. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires higher education providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure.

These events may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to):

- significant material change;
- a decision to close the institution has been taken;
- a strategic decision by the institution to close a course or campus;
- withdrawal of designation for student support services;
- a decision is taken to not run a course for the subsequent year;
- major changes in year to course content;
- changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course;
- loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies;

- disruption of institutional activity (e.g. temporary disruption within term-time not covered by any of the above);
- industrial action by institution staff or third parties;
- the unanticipated departure of key members of institution staff.

This plan lays out the measures that ACM, and where applicable its validating university partner, will take in order to protect the student interests and assure continuity of study in the event of course campus or Institution change or closure.

2. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation for students, how those risks may differ based on students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks would materialise:

2.1. Major changes in year to course content

2.1.1. ACM deliver a relatively small portfolio of programmes within the area of music and the wider creative industries; an area that is generally considered to be rapidly evolving and changing. In order to ensure that programme content and learning outcomes remain fit for purpose and relevant it may be necessary for us to make changes to course content. The design of the programmes is such that flexibility is accommodated within the module learning outcomes so that major changes to course content are not normally necessary and can easily be accommodated with no negative impact to the student experience. However, it is possible that a major change may be necessary to ensure that a programme remains fit for purpose. In such cases appropriate measures will put in place, as outlined below.

2.2. Closure of an individual programme

2.2.1. ACM's programme strategy is such that the majority of students at the institution are on one of a small number of awards rather than small numbers on many different programmes. Consequently, programme closure is considered an unlikely event and historically this has proven to be the case.

2.2.2. It is possible that where there might be insufficient numbers on an individual discipline within a course it may be necessary to close a particular pathway prior to commencement. However, whilst there is no precedence for this happening and it is also considered low risk, should such a situation occur appropriate measures are outlined below.

2.2.3. Currently there are no plans or proposed strategies to close individual programmes for other reasons.

2.3. Closure of a specific site or campus

2.3.1. Institutional failure will be monitored through risk management in accordance with HE regulatory bodies. This monitoring assesses the financial sustainability management and governance of the institution. ACM has met the annual monitoring requirements, and where necessary

has provided ongoing assurance of financial backing and support to ensure continued provision, and as such is considered a low risk.

2.3.2. Whilst considered low risk, should such a situation occur that requires closure of a specific site or campus, e.g. for health and safety reasons, or other unanticipated event, appropriate measures are outlined below.

2.3.3. Currently there are no plans or proposed strategy to close sites or campuses for other reasons

2.3.4. Following the impact of the Coronavirus in early 2020, plans were put in place to continue delivery through provision of remote learning, and to keep ACM campuses open for staff and other services. Whilst it is difficult to predict events of this nature the aim will always be to continue programme delivery wherever possible.

2.4. Withdrawal of designation for student support services (which allows UK/EU students to apply for tuition fee and maintenance loans)

2.4.1. ACM has been recognised as an institution approved for designation since 2000, and has successfully received designation each year through the annual specific course designation approval process. As such withdrawal of designation is considered low risk.

2.4.2. Due to the current requirements for an annual designation approval process delays to confirmation from the government are possible and have been experienced in the past leading to late availability of loans to students.

2.4.3. Changes to the higher education policy framework, through introduction of the Office for Students (OfS), will provide a more 'level playing field' for alternative providers aligned with a more robust mechanism for designation.

2.5. Withdrawal or non-renewal of validation

2.5.1. ACM current validation agreement with Middlesex University has been in place for nearly 20 years and such withdrawal or non-renewal of validation is considered a relatively low risk.

2.5.2. ACM has, in the past, worked with more than one university validating partner and has experienced non-renewal of validation following change in strategic direction of the university. In such a case appropriate measures were put in place to ensure students were not disadvantaged. Whilst withdrawal or non-renewal is not currently considered a high-risk should such an event occur appropriate measures have been considered below.

2.6. Institutional closure

2.6.1. Institutional failure will be monitored through risk management in accordance with HE regulatory bodies. This monitoring assesses the financial sustainability management and governance of the institution. ACM has met previous annual monitoring requirements, and where necessary has provided on-going assurance of financial backing and

support to ensure continued provision, and as such is considered a low risk.

2.7. Loss of key staff

2.7.1. ACM employs a large number of specialist teaching staff, both as contracted employees and sessional staff. Many of these have high profile careers with national and international reputations. Staff profiles are provided on the ACM websites and in other promotional material although tutors are not promoted as being linked to a specific module or class and no implication that students will be taught by a specific member of staff is given.

2.7.2. Recruitment strategy ensures that the tutor faculty typically has multiple staff covering specific subject areas thereby reducing any potential risk to the student experience through loss of key teaching staff.

2.7.3. Management and governance strategy is primarily based on senior and executive staff teams contributing to the management and oversight of activities rather than through the apex of a single member of staff or principal. This ensures broad engagement of stakeholders and the effective use of expertise, whilst minimising risks that might be attached to the loss of key staff.

3. The measures put in place to mitigate those risks considered feasible.

N.B. These are not necessarily risks considered likely to happen (as outlined above). However, measures have been considered regardless.

3.1. Major changes in year to course content

3.1.1. ACM will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description provided in the ACM prospectus or other material provided, for the academic year in which a student began their programme.

3.1.2. In the event of major in-year changes to course content ACM will ensure that changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience, and affected students are notified and consulted as appropriate and provided with a rationale as to why a change might be needed.

3.1.3. Where necessary it will allow students the opportunity to withdraw from the programme and where required offer reasonable support to transfer to another programme at ACM, or to another provider.

3.2. Closure of an individual programme

3.2.1. In the event that it is necessary to suspend or close a course and where there is a material impact on students, the effect will be mitigated by:

- communication with current students to provide assurance that they will not be adversely affected by the decision and provide assurance that they are able to complete their studies at the institution;

- where possible, provision will be made to allow for the completion of studies where 'mitigating circumstances' have been provided;
- consultation with stakeholders who may be affected to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken;
- future applicants will be notified in accordance with UCAS deadlines, allowing time for students to source alternative suitable programme (where relevant) at ACM.

3.3. Closure of a specific site or campus

3.3.1. Where ACM has no option, other than to close a specific site or campus, the following measures will be considered:

- where possible, continue operating in a transitional manner over a period that would enable current students to complete their studies at the institution;
- where it is not possible to continue operating in a transitional manner, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes within the ACM group, or at other suitable providers, and (where appropriate financially) by compensating students where because of disruption to their studies they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss.

3.3.2. Where part of a campus is rendered unusable for activities involving students ACM will typically consider the following measures:

- relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include hiring spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby) and /or installing temporary buildings;
- revising timetabling to allow all of the scheduled teaching to take part in the available facilities. This may include timetabling sessions being held outside of normal teaching hours. Where such an approach is taken, appropriate consultation will normally be conducted with stakeholders who may be affected;
- undertaking appropriate equality impact assessment.

3.4. Withdrawal of designation for student support services (which allows UK/EU students to apply for tuition fee and maintenance loans)

3.4.1. In the event of de-designation of its courses for 'Student Support' purposes (resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance for its courses) ACM will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:

- working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme;
- where the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other ACM sites not affected by the de-designation, or to programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to their studies.

3.4.2. In event that availability of student loans is unavoidably delayed more than usual the following measures will be considered:

- providing students with a 'grace period' before payment of tuition fees is expected
- providing students with temporary financial hardship support where they are likely to suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption delays to maintenance payments.

3.5. Withdrawal or non-renewal of validation

3.5.1. In the event of withdrawal or non-renewal of validation ACM will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:

- working with relevant validating partner to allow enrolled students to complete their programme through a 'teach-out' arrangement;
- working with a potential new university partner, or existing partner within ACM group, to provide validation of the programme, or comparable programme;
- where either of the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes to other ACM sites not affected by the withdrawal or non-renewal of validation, or to programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to their studies.

3.6. Institutional closure

3.6.1. Where ACM has no option, other than institutional closure, the following measures will be considered:

- where possible, continue operating in a transitional manner over a period that would enable current students to complete their studies at the institution;
- where it is not possible to continue operating in a transitional manner, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other ACM sites, or at other suitable providers, and (where appropriate financially) by compensating students where because of disruption to their studies they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss.

3.7. Loss of key staff

3.7.1. Where possible ACM will:

- Seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant post(s) or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption;
- Where ACM cannot avoid closing a programme, due to loss of key staff, the policy as outlined in section 3.2 will apply.

4. Information about the policy 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 continuity.

4.1. Information regarding Refunds and Compensation Policy is made available to prospective students and applicants via ACM's website (www.acm.ac.uk) as well as included within ACM's internal assets, such as the student facing virtual learning environment. The policy is subject to a cyclical period of review, to align with the review and update of all ACM's policies and procedures, ensuring consistency and alignment with current practice.

5. Information about how ACM will communicate with students about the student protection plan

5.1. Students will be provided access to the Student Protection Plan via the public website and the student portal.

5.2. Students have representation within the committee structure in which we would normally expect activity likely to impact on student experience and their programme of study to be discussed.

5.3. Should the protection plan need to be implemented students will be contacted by a member of the student services team, or via communication from the executive or senior management team at the earliest opportunity following a decision that an applicable change was decided upon or notified to the institution.

5.4. ACM will take reasonable steps to avoid implementing change during an academic year or making changes close to the start of an academic year.

5.5. ACM will undertake to update the website and presence on UCAS and other institutional listing services at the earliest opportunity on notification of a significant change.

6. Student involvement in the review of the plan

6.1. Students will have the opportunity to contribute to a review of the plan (including the Refunds and Compensation policy) to ensure that their views, interests and needs are taken into account.

6.2. The plan will be reviewed, with student involvement, before it's publication for students enrolled on the 2020/21 academic year.

6.3. Student engagement in the review will be undertaken through the formal Student Council meetings on an annual basis. The meetings have student representatives from across all programmes and sites.

6.4. Student contribution to the plan review will be recorded within a formal report provided to the Student Experience and Engagement Committee, which reports into the Academic Board. Both committees have student representation.

4. POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to ACM Guildford Ltd campuses (Guildford, Birmingham and London) registered with the OfS on Middlesex university validated higher education

programmes and students, staff, applicants, associate members, visitors and contractors connected to those campuses and those programmes.

5. RELATED POLICIES

ACM Refunds and Compensation policy <https://www.acm.ac.uk/policies/>

6. POLICY OWNER

6.1 This Policy is under the responsibility of the Academic Board. The responsible committee will ensure the cyclical review of this Policy is carried out under ACM's Quality Assurance Framework.

6.2 Decisions and appropriate actions in support of the implementation of the Policy will be authorised by the Executive Chairman.

7. DOCUMENT HISTORY AND NEXT REVIEW

Version: 1.2
Approved on: 01 September 2020
Approved by: Education Executive