University of Essex

Online

Student Protection Plan for the Period 2026/27

Provider's name: Kaplan Higher Education UK Limited

Provider's UKPRN: 10021682

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1. Introduction

1.1 As a registered provider of higher education in the UK we are required to publish a Student Protection Plan which explains how continuation and quality of study will be preserved for current and potential students should a risk to their continued study crystallise.

1.2 We have worked collaboratively with the University of Essex Online since 2007 and we are experienced in preserving continuation and quality of study for students. This plan is intended to assure current and future students that we have processes and procedures in place to protect continuation of study.

1.3 In the event that any of the risks should crystallise we are committed to working closely with our students, our university partner(s) and the Office for Students to ensure our students are protected through the change process.

2. Structure of the Plan

2.1 The table on pages 2 and 3 of this document identifies the risks that could apply to our provision

along with an assessment of the impact and likelihood of the risk crystallising.

2.2 The table also contains a rationale of why we have assessed the identified risks are very unlikely, unlikely or very low.

2.3 The remainder of the document provides information regarding established and overarching processes that we have in place to ensure continuation and quality of study for our students, and information about the practical aspects of how the Student Protection Plan will operate

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Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
The risk of being unable to operate or to decide to cease trading.	Severe	Very Low	The risk that Kaplan Higher Education UK Limited/University of Essex Online would be unable to operate is very unlikely because: ▪ We are part of Kaplan International Holdings, which in turn is part of Kaplan, Inc. Kaplan, Inc and its group are a large multi-national organisation. As such the wider group has substantial financial resources to support the continued operation of Kaplan Higher Education UK Limited. • Kaplan has an annual external financial audit which includes a review of going concern which provides assurance of Kaplan's financial status. • Kaplan also submits an annual report on financial sustainability to the Office for Students which provides assurance to the regulator of Kaplan's financial status. ▪ We have a Business Continuity Plan in place which outlines the measures that would be taken if we were affected by extreme external factors such as terrorist activity, pandemic and severe adverse weather conditions. It is very unlikely that we would decide to cease operating because: ▪ We have continued to invest in the design and delivery of high quality online higher education which has been recognised by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and in the excellent results of the independent National Student Survey (NSS). Furthermore, in 2023 we were awarded Silver in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for the University of Essex Online provision. We also received a Gold in the Times Higher Education (THE) Online Learning Rankings 2024.

			▪ We have consistent enrolment numbers onto our programmes, and we perform significantly above benchmark for part-time distance learning providers in the B3 Registration Conditions of Retention, Progress and Completion.

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Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
The risk that we may lose the right to offer the qualification for which you are studying	Severe	Low	The risk that we may lose the right to offer qualifications that our students are studying, for example due to, failure to comply with the standards set by the Office for Students (OfS) or loss of validation by one of our university partners is unlikely because: We were rated Silver in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in 2023. We follow robust procedures for design, approval, monitoring and review of our courses which are overseen by our university partners. Some of our courses have professional accreditation by a Professional Statutory or Regulatory body (PSRB). This accreditation is maintained by periodic reviews of the quality and standards by the relevant professional body. ▪ We have a co-operation agreement to continue to work collaboratively with the University of Essex to support our existing students in their studies, develop new programmes and grow our student numbers. In March 2023 we successfully completed an Institutional Review with the University of Essex. Institutional Reviews take place every five years to allow the University to assure itself that we remain suitable for the conduct of Higher Education (HE) programmes leading to an award of the University of Essex

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Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
The risk that we may lose the ability to deliver our awards via our virtual learning environment.	Severe	Very Low	All our awards are delivered through a customised virtual learning environment (VLE) bespoke to each partner. The risk that we may lose the ability to deliver our awards via our VLE(s) is unlikely because: ▪ They are hosted by, backed up and supported by a specialist hosting company. The specialist company provides the following services: ▪ VLE course backups enabled and set to run on a daily basis. ▪ Offsite disaster recovery backup on a daily basis. This is a full server backup (including the operating system) which can be restored in the event of a complete failure. ▪ A database synchronisation is run twice per hour to a second machine. This copies all data to a second server. ▪ We review the performance of the learning platform and specialist hosting company on a regular basis.

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Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
The risk that we may close any of our courses.	Moderate	Very Low	The risk that we may close any of our courses is very low because: ▪ Our recruitment levels have been consistent, and our teaching resource has sufficient depth and expertise to support the continued delivery of our awards. However, we recognise that a higher education provider may at any time take a strategic decision to close a course or programme, and we believe that this risk is also mitigated by our 'teach-out' commitment to our students.
The risk that we may not have enough staff to teach a course	Moderate	Low	We will make every effort to provide the required teaching and supervisory staff, however we cannot guarantee that teaching or supervision will be provided by a specific named individual. We are successful in recruiting a pool of talented Associate Tutors who have extensive academic and industry experience to deliver our range of vocationally focused programmes. We conduct multiple recruitment cycles throughout the year to ensure that the depth and breadth of our tutor pool is maintained, and our robust annual review processes allow us to identify and take action where we need to.

3. Teach-Out

3.1 As part of our commitment to providing a high quality online educational experience for our students it is possible that from time to time we may take the decision to close a particular programme.

3.2 'Teach-out' refers to the phased process that allows affected students to complete their studies before the closure occurs. Our modular delivery and individually allocated Student Support Teams enable us to tailor the 'teach-out' process to each individual student.

3.3 In the rare event that a student may not wish to remain enrolled and proceed through 'teach-out' we are also committed to offering students a transfer to an alternative programme with the Kaplan International group or with the University of Essex, or to assist the student in identifying an alternative institution which best meets their needs.

4. Refund and Compensation Policy

4.1 We have a Refund and Compensation Policy which is available on our website and learning platform. It outlines the circumstances in which we will refund tuition fees and provide compensation.

4.2 We consider refunds and compensation to be a remedy of last resort and we are committed to using our best endeavours to ensure all students are able to continue and complete their studies with us. However, we recognise the importance of informing students about how we will refund or provide compensation should we be unable to preserve continuity of study

4.3 We believe that the likelihood or any of the identified risks occurring in 2025-26 is very unlikely, unlikely or very low. However, if any of the stated risks did crystallise the wider Kaplan group has substantial financial resources to support refund and compensation of affected students.

5. General Communication

We will communicate the provisions of our Student Protection Plan to relevant stakeholders in the following ways:

5.1 New Students:

- Publication on the University of Essex Online website.

5.2 Current Students:

- Available to all current students via the virtual learning environment, and on the University of Essex Online website.

5.3 Staff and Associate Tutors:

- The plan will be available to associate tutors via the virtual learning environment and on the website.
- Permanent staff will be able to access the plan as needed though the staff intranet pages.
- Inclusion in relevant staff training activities
- Inclusion in guidance documents related to the procedure for course discontinuation.

6. Review of the Student Protection Plan

6.1 The plan will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team on an annual basis.

6.2 An updated version of the Student Protection Plan will be made available to current students and prospective students via the respective VLE and website.

7. Implementation

7.1 If any of the risks that we have identified within the plan do crystallise we will endeavour to act quickly and provide as much notice as is practicably possible to affected students. As part of that response we will provide advice and guidance through our Student Support Team in the first instance.

7.2 The nature of the advice and guidance that is provided will vary according to the nature and severity of the risk that has crystallised.