

Student Protection Plan			
Document type:	Plan		
Document number:	REG-132	Version:	04
Department:	Registry		
Approved by:	Board of Trustees	Date approved:	15/12/2025
Effective from:	18/12/2025	Review date:	15/12/2026
Publication:	SOAS website		
Related documents:	Student Complaints Procedure.		
Documents replaced:	REG-132-03 Student Protection Plan		
<i>Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.</i>			

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Office for Students (OfS) requires registered higher education institutions to prepare student protection plans, which set out what students can expect to happen should a programme, campus, or institution close. The purpose the plan is to ensure that students can continue and complete their studies, or can be compensated if this is not possible.
- 1.2. This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures that SOAS will take to deliver the expected student experience in the event that material change occurs, which potentially puts this at risk.
- 1.3. This plan has been mapped against the university risk register and will be reviewed annually or as the risk levels change.

2. Risks

2.1. Low / Very Low Risks

- 2.1.1. The risk of losing the University's Student visa sponsor licence is low, provided we remain registered with the Office for Students. We mitigate this through strict compliance with Home Office requirements, internal monitoring, and external legal reviews. If the licence were revoked, the impact would be very high for international students, and we would support transfers to other visa-sponsoring institutions, providing exit awards and credit certification.
- 2.1.2. The risk of inappropriate conduct by staff or students is low, mitigated through codes of conduct, values, disciplinary procedures and dignity policies, wellbeing services, inclusive curriculum work, and mentoring schemes. Safeguarding and wellbeing are monitored by the Student Support, Wellbeing and Careers teams and the Students' Union, with annual reports reviewing complaints and disciplinary patterns. If inappropriate conduct occurs, we provide

tailored support via policies, wellbeing and casework services, and adjust curriculum where needed.

- 2.1.3. The risk of losing professional, statutory, or regulatory body accreditation for a small number of programmes is very low. We actively work to meet all requirements to maintain accreditation. In the unlikely event of loss, we would support affected students to transfer to other institutions to complete their studies.
- 2.1.4. We are located on a single campus and therefore the risk of having to move to another location is very low. There are no plans to extend the reach of the campus beyond its current single site footprint. We have robust plans in place to respond to any incident, which may be outside of our control, and will work to ensure that we provide continuous education to our students as well as access to the full range of student support services – even if these have to be provided remotely.

2.2. Medium Risks

- 2.2.1. The university has now stabilised its finances; however, the wider higher education sector remains financially unstable, which presents a moderate risk to our operations. Sector volatility could impact student recruitment, research income, and partnership opportunities, creating pressure on long-term planning and investment. We mitigate this through robust financial planning, income diversification, and regular scenario modelling to ensure resilience against sector-wide challenges.

In addition to the general financial sustainability risk, there is a specific risk of losing (or having restrictions placed on) degree-awarding powers or registration with the OfS if financial sustainability were compromised. This risk is assessed as medium because, while our finances are stable, regulatory compliance is closely linked to financial health. We mitigate this through strong governance, quality assurance, and adherence to OfS requirements. If such a scenario occurred, the impact would be very high, and we would provide exit awards, credit certification, and support for transfer to other providers.

- 2.2.2. The risk of suspending a programme, especially Strategically Important or Vulnerable Languages (SILs), is medium. We mitigate this through strict withdrawal deadlines, teach out commitments, and early planning via annual and periodic reviews. If suspension occurs, the impact on current students and offer-holding applicants would be significant. We would consult students, offer transfers within the university or to other providers, and provide certification for completed credits. SILs programmes would normally be taught out for enrolled students.
- 2.2.3. The risk of losing specialist academic staff, which could prevent delivery of certain modules, is medium. We mitigate this through workload and career development policies, secondment opportunities, and proactive planning for staff changes. If this occurs, we aim to replace staff or adapt modules to achieve learning outcomes. Where replacement is not possible, we follow programme suspension procedures: offering transfers, maintaining year-abroad

options, supporting moves to other providers, and compensating students for demonstrable financial loss.

- 2.2.4. The risk of major programme content changes for the following year is medium. We mitigate this through strict deadlines, teach out commitments, and annual/periodic reviews. If changes occur, the impact is low as current students are consulted. We would offer transfers within the university or to other providers and provide certification for completed credits.
- 2.2.5. There is a possibility that we may be unable to deliver a programme for a specific student cohort and therefore might need to withdraw it before applicants register. This could occur if low application numbers make the programme financially unsustainable and compromise the quality of the student experience. We recognise that, depending on the timing of such a decision, this could constitute a breach of contract with applicants and will seek to avoid this outcome wherever possible. In circumstances where this outcome is unavoidable we will communicate with offer holders as soon as possible and provide information about alternative programmes within SOAS that they may wish to consider. If an applicant declines any alternative SOAS programme offers and chooses to withdraw, any deposit will be refunded.
- 2.2.6. The risk of insufficient support or safety during a year abroad due to international institutional issues or health crises is medium. We mitigate this through robust due diligence, ongoing communication, and contextual monitoring. If it occurs, the impact would be very high for affected students.

2.3. High Risks

- 2.3.1. The risk of disruption due to industrial action is high. We mitigate this through consultation and negotiation policies, strong union relationships, and early warning systems. If action occurs, the impact is low as we provide wellbeing support, extend services, and rearrange teaching or use online platforms to minimise disruption.

3. Risk Mitigation Measures

We have a range of mitigation measures that we put in place to ensure that the impact on our students is kept to a minimum and so that we can deliver the programmes and provision as expected:

- 3.1. We maintain strong financial resilience and sound operational discipline across our governance structures to safeguard the continuity of programmes and the overall student experience. This includes realistic forecasting, planning, and budgeting processes that enable us to respond effectively to changing circumstances. We closely monitor student recruitment and associated income, while ensuring flexibility in academic and administrative planning. Where necessary, we offset fluctuations in student income through growth in alternative revenue streams such as investment returns, enterprise activity, research funding, academic

partnerships, and philanthropy. Expenditure is managed carefully across both operating and capital budgets to achieve financial targets.

Our approach is underpinned by a proven track record of robust financial performance over the past five years, a healthy balance sheet, and the ability to adapt commercially when required. Rigorous forecasting and spend control processes ensure resources are allocated efficiently and risks are managed proactively. These measures provide confidence in our capacity to maintain academic quality and student experience, even in a dynamic external environment.

- 3.2. The university mitigates the risk of losing degree-awarding powers or OfS registration by maintaining strong governance structures, robust quality assurance processes, and full compliance with regulatory requirements.
- 3.3. To reduce the risk of losing the Student visa sponsor licence, the university ensures strict compliance with Home Office requirements, conducts internal monitoring, and commissions external legal reviews.
- 3.4. Risks related to inappropriate conduct by staff or students are mitigated through clear codes of conduct, dignity policies, disciplinary procedures, and wellbeing services. Additional measures include inclusive curriculum work and mentoring schemes, with safeguarding monitored by dedicated teams and annual reviews of complaints and disciplinary patterns.
- 3.5. The university actively works to meet all requirements set by professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies to maintain programme accreditation.
- 3.6. To address potential campus disruption, the university has robust incident response and business continuity plans and can deliver teaching and student support services remotely if necessary, ensuring continuity of education.
- 3.7. Programme suspension risks, particularly for Strategically Important or Vulnerable Languages (SILs), are managed through strict withdrawal deadlines, teach out commitments, and early planning via annual and periodic reviews.
- 3.8. The risk of losing specialist academic staff is mitigated through workload management, career development policies, secondment opportunities, and proactive planning for staff changes.
- 3.9. Industrial action risks are managed through consultation and negotiation policies, strong union relationships, and early warning systems. If action occurs, disruption is minimised by providing wellbeing support, extending services, and rearranging teaching or using online platforms.
- 3.10. The university benefits from close relationships with other leading institutions within the University of London and, in the event of unanticipated circumstances and to provide further reassurance to students, would work with these partners as much as possible, where feasible and necessary, to provide support to students on a reciprocal basis.
- 3.11. We take all reasonable steps to avoid closing a programme before applicants have enrolled by conducting thorough market analysis and demand modelling prior to launching new programmes. In the unlikely event that a programme must be withdrawn after applications

have been received but before enrolment, affected applicants will be offered an alternative programme or a deferred year of entry. Decisions regarding programme withdrawal will be made as early as possible within the admissions cycle to allow applicants sufficient time to secure an offer from another institution. If the proposed alternatives are not acceptable to the applicant, they will have the right to claim compensation in accordance with the University's consolidated Refund and Compensation Policy.

4. Impact on students if risks materialise

If any of the risks identified in this plan occur, the impact on students will vary depending on the nature and timing of the event. The following outlines the potential consequences:

4.1 Loss of Student Visa Sponsor Licence

International students may be unable to continue their studies in the UK, requiring urgent transfer to another visa-sponsoring institution. There may be some costs involved to students to facilitate this change of visa. Additionally, this could cause disruption to academic progression and personal circumstances.

4.2 Programme suspension or withdrawal

Students may experience uncertainty regarding completion of their chosen programme. This could affect learning continuity, career plans, and financial commitments, particularly where teach out or transfer options are limited.

4.3 Loss of Degree-Awarding Powers or OfS registration

Students may be unable to graduate from SOAS, necessitating transfer to another provider. This would involve administrative complexity, potential delays in achieving qualifications and some financial implications on living costs.

4.4 Loss of professional accreditation

Students enrolled on accredited programmes may face challenges in meeting professional requirements, impacting future employment or progression to accredited professions.

4.5 Insufficient support during year abroad

Students may encounter safety concerns, interrupted study, or financial loss. Alternative placements or programme adjustments might be required, which could affect academic timelines.

4.6 Industrial action or staff loss

Students may experience disruption to teaching and assessment, requiring changes to delivery methods or module content. While mitigations aim to minimise impact, this may still affect learning experience and outcomes.

4.7 Campus disruption

Students could lose access to physical facilities and services, requiring remote learning and alternative support arrangements. This may impact engagement and sense of community.

4.8 Programme changes before registration

Applicants may need to reconsider their study plans, which could result in withdrawal and financial inconvenience if alternative options are unsuitable.

5. Communication with students

- 5.1 We are committed to communicating with students about any information which may potentially put their experience at risk. In the event that any aspect of this Plan needs to be implemented, information will be conveyed promptly and fairly providing students with information on appropriate options for action. We will use email as the preferred method of communication.
- 5.2 If we need to contact students about any of the risks above occurring, the process will include the following steps:
- a) We will write to students with full information on the changes to the programme portfolio which affect them, including programme amendments and withdrawals, and appropriate current or new programmes available to choose from. We will provide a rationale for these changes and inform students of the timeline and process that we will follow.
 - b) We will invite students to discuss with the Head of Department and the Programme Convenor the details of the programme changes, the impact of these changes on them, go through the options available and answer any questions they may have.
 - c) To support students in making their decisions, we will give them an opportunity to discuss the options with the Programme Convenor or their Academic Advisor and/or Supervisor, which may include – teach out on the original programme, internal transfer to a suitable programme within SOAS, external transfer to another programme at another institution, withdrawal and making a claim for compensation.
 - d) Once students have made a decision, we will support them in their decision at every step with appropriate advice and guidance.
 - e) Students will continue to receive additional support, advice and guidance from our Wellbeing services, in particular if vulnerable students have any specific requirements or needs. We will discuss with students confidentially if they would benefit from counselling or financial advice during this period, so they are fully supported throughout the transition.

- 5.3 SOAS Students Union have been consulted in the production of this Protection Plan.
- 5.4 This Protection Plan has been approved by the Office for Students. It will be published on our website.
- 5.5 It will be reviewed annually, in line with the University risk register, and in consultation with students. This may be through the SOAS Students Union, through student membership on University committees, and through other student fora as appropriate. Once reviewed and approved, we will bring the updated plan to students' attention through the online noticeboard, through student newsletter and the website.

6. Impact Mitigation

On occasion, where we have not been able to mitigate the risks as outlined above, the following would apply, as relevant, to mitigate the impact on our students. This includes teach out; internal or external transfer; or an exit award. We have some additional mitigation for students who may be studying abroad.

6.1. Teach out

- 6.1.1 Teaching out a programme means that we will continue to provide the advertised programme for the duration of students' enrolment but that we will not enrol any new students onto the programme. If we need to teach out a programme, it will be because one of the risks outlined above has occurred and no other option is available. Wherever possible, we will seek to transfer students to another programme or provider if preferred. If teach out is required, we will maintain the same quality of teaching and student experience as if the programme were continuing.
- 6.1.2 We recognise that teach out may be the best option for some students, even where transfer is possible, for reasons such as caring responsibilities or travel constraints. We will consult with affected students before deciding whether teach out or transfer is most appropriate.
- 6.1.3 We will keep students informed through programme representatives, online Q&A sessions with Programme Convenors, and one-to-one meetings with academic advisors, ensuring understanding of the process and providing an opportunity to raise questions or concerns. We will continue this engagement throughout the remainder of the programme.
- 6.1.4 All internal processes in relation to monitoring quality of the provision will continue for the duration of the teach out. Students may raise any concerns about teaching or learning quality either informally or formally in the usual way, under the Student Complaints Procedure.

6.2. Internal Transfer

- 6.2.1 An internal transfer is when students choose to transfer to another programme offered within SOAS. Enrolled students will be provided with information about the changes to their current programme, the rationale for change and any available options that might be available.
- 6.2.2 Where continuation on the current programme is not possible, we will support an internal transfer to a similar programme. Academic and professional services staff will provide guidance tailored to individual circumstances, such as caring responsibilities or travel constraints.
- 6.2.3 Most changes involve programme mergers designed to improve student experience and ensure continuity of study. We will explain similarities and differences between programmes, including learning outcomes, assessments, and career prospects.
- 6.2.4 Once an internal transfer has been confirmed, we will update registration records, provide programme details, and facilitate integration with the new cohort. The student experience will be monitored through feedback mechanisms.
- 6.2.5 For students that do not wish to transfer internally, they may choose an external transfer, a teach out (if available), or to exit early with an award. In such cases, we will provide information on refunds and compensation.
- 6.2.6 Students who are dissatisfied with how the transfer is handled will be advised on the complaints process.

6.3. External Transfer

- 6.3.1 An external transfer is when a programme cannot continue and SOAS cannot provide a suitable alternative – we will help students transfer to a similar programme at an alternative provider, where available.
- 6.3.2 Where this is required, we will help compare the chosen provider with SOAS to identify differences in academic and support services that may be relevant. This would include campus access, accommodation, visas, library resources, disability adjustments, financial support, careers advice, complaints and appeals processes and the student union activities. If a student then chooses to transfer externally, we will work with the new provider(s) to facilitate the process. We will provide any required exit award/confirmation to confirm progress to date.

6.4. Exit Awards

- 6.4.1 If none of the other options are of interest or appropriate and a student decides to withdraw, then we will provide them with any exit award that may be due. An exit award will depend on the number of credits that have been achieved. We will also be able to provide an academic reference and transcript.

6.5. Year abroad students

- 6.5.1 Some SOAS programmes include a year abroad at partner universities, forming part of a four-year degree. This typically occurs in the second or third year, with students returning to SOAS for their final year. Credits and marks earned abroad count toward the overall award. Students may transfer internally to a three-year programme without the year abroad if needed.
- 6.5.2 If a student was to experience insufficient support or safety concerns during a year abroad, we will arrange an alternative placement at a nearby or similar institution, wherever possible. If the chosen country becomes unavailable, we will identify another suitable location or offer a transfer to a three-year programme, making necessary adjustments to support the transition.
- 6.5.3 Where teaching cannot be completed and no alternatives exist, we will support a return to SOAS and ensure academic progression is recorded.
- 6.5.4 Where disruption causes demonstrable financial loss, SOAS will compensate students in line with the compensation procedure outlined in this plan.
- 6.5.5 Students from other institutions that are studying for a period of time in SOAS receive the same protection as outlined here for their time that they are studying with us.

7. Refund and compensation

- 7.1 Any requests for the payment of compensation for distress and inconvenience will be considered according to the Student Complaints Procedure.
- 7.2 All other refunds and compensation are paid as set out in the Student Experience and Protection: criteria for payment of compensation.
- 7.3 Both of these documents can be found on our policies and procedures page:
<https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/governance/policies-and-procedures/degree-regulationspolicies-and-procedures>