

# London School of Management Education: Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: London School of Management Education (LSME)

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## Student Protection Plan for the Period [2018/2019]

**1 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. 2. The Measures you will put in place to mitigate those risks**

This Student Protection Plan (SPP) aims to address how continuation and quality of the educational provision of London School of Management Education (LSME) will be maintained for our current and prospective students should there be a risk to their continued study. Although such risks are rare, the plan is intended to assure our students that we have suitable measures in place to protect continuation of the study. This plan outlines different types of potential risks, including situations that might trigger action and also provides an explanation of what will be done to minimise the impact of these events on students if they happen. The plan also takes account of the different needs, circumstances and characteristics of our students. We have categorised risk as follows:

The risk is what might possibly go wrong and the likelihood is the probability of a risk happening or the changes of risk happening (measured as a percentage or qualitatively) while impact means the effect on students if a risk happens. In this plan we have classified the likelihood of risk happening:

- Very Unlikely: The risk may happen on rare occasions (chance < 10%);
- Unlikely: An event could occur at some time (chance between 10-30%);
- Possible: An event should occur at some time (chance between 30-50%);
- Likely: An event will probably occur (chance between 50-90%);
- Very Likely: An event is expected (chance more than 90%).

The impact has been classified as:

- Insignificant: The problem can be resolved easily through normal routines and will not affect the student's ability to continue with their studies in accordance with their contract with the institution.
- Minor: Resolving the problem requires a coordinated input from different department or services; nonetheless, this will not affect the continuity of studies and student achievement.
- Moderate: Resolving the problem requires input from a dedicated project team and there may be some minor disruption of academic activities and student achievement if mitigating actions are not introduced promptly.
- Major: Resolving the problem would require input from the Leadership Team with major disruptions in academic activities that will delay the achievement of qualifications. Requires prompt introduction of mitigating actions to prevent the negative impact on students.
- Extreme: Resolving the problem would require input from the Board of Directors. Continuation of studies will most certainly be impossible. There should be existing measures in the operational activities of the institute that would certainly prevent such situations from happening in future.

LSME does not have a Degree Awarding Power at the moment but has plans to apply for this power in the very near future. All courses are awarded by the awarding organisation and our main stakeholder is Pearson Education Limited. Hence, we are not able to make major changes to the curriculum we deliver without any prior approval by Pearson. We do not have a Tier 4 Sponsor Licence and are currently not admitting international students. Under our current circumstances, we have identified the following as potential risks:

**1. Risk:** If LSME no longer able to operate as a whole due to our financial performance.

**Likelihood:** Very Unlikely

**Impact on Students:** This will be extreme as the College will not be able to provide its intended services to students without having a strong financial reserve.

**The reason why this risk is unlikely:** The risk of being unable to operate due to financial instability or unsustainability is low because our balance sheet and cash reserves are relatively healthy. We operate in such a way that appropriate control systems and checks are in place to prevent or react to any situation that would lead to full closure. Our financial performance up to 2017 has been respectable considering the significant expenditures incurred during the latter part of 2017 projected growth. Post 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, the company liquidity has been improved a lot.

**Mitigating actions: We will take should this unlikely risk occur:** We plan to generate positive net cash flow from operations for the foreseeable future. We are also well supported by the banks that have provided loans to us on very competitive terms.

**2. Risk:** If there is a loss of key personnel either permanently or temporarily, this could be planned or unplanned. Planned is when there have been redundancies or dismissals. Unplanned losses can include a sudden death or a specialist lecturer leaving to take up another job or further studies. We do not run any postgraduate courses which depend solely on specialist lecturers. However, our Business and Health and Social Care courses occasionally require teachers with the specialist background for some modules.

**Likelihood:** Very Likely

**Impact:** Minor to Major

**Reason:** Loss of academic staff will affect the delivery of our programmes.

**Mitigating Actions:** We have a business continuity plan to deal with the sudden loss of key personnel which is not planned. In the case of the loss of key personnel, we temporarily appoint a cover by the next member of staff who can also take up the responsibility of the staff who has left until the vacancy is advertised and the most suitable candidate is appointed permanently. This is suitable for our HND and other undergraduate modules which are not very specialised and can be delivered by other members of academic staff. This process is usually implemented after undertaking an impact assessment and drawing an action plan. Although this has never happened before and is likely to be very rare, we can also arrange for learners to continue their studies by adjusting the selected modules to include modules that we have the key personnel for delivery and as a last resort, the learners will be transferred to other institutions (Highly Unlikely). Due to the ITT qualification we run, we always have a pool of teachers who step in as and when it is required. Loss of administrative personnel can also follow the same process and have a minor impact on students.

**3. Risk:** If LSME is not able to deliver some of our programmes due to changes made by the awarding organisation.

**Likelihood:** Very Likely

**Impact on students:** This is usually insignificant as students who are registered on an older version of a programme are given the opportunity to complete their studies in good time.

**Reasons:** It is very likely that the institution will no longer be able to deliver the generic Health and Social Care HND course because Pearson has made changes to the qualification by dividing it into two specialised qualifications (HND in Healthcare and HND in Social and Community Work). These new qualifications replace the existing one which will be phased out in September 2018. We have been approved by Pearson to deliver these two qualifications which mean that new learners will have to consider either the Healthcare programme or the Social and Community Work programme. This could potentially lower the number of learners we can enrol on each programme as we need to comply with the current number control requirement. It will not be financially viable to have fewer than 15 students for each of these programmes for the Academic Year.

**Mitigating Actions:** All prospective learners will be informed of our decision to run the programme each Academic Year by considering the numbers we have admitted by mid-way through the recruitment process. If insufficient numbers are likely, we will have to make the decision to transfer these learners to other providers who will run the programme and provide a full refund to affected students **will be one option.** This will be made clear to prospective learners at the initial stages of their admission process. Neighbouring FE colleges with a good reputation, such as the Barking and Dagenham College offer similar qualifications and are not restricted by the number of students they can recruit. Although we have not yet established an agreement to this effect, we have started the process of future collaboration with the Barking and Dagenham College in view of its location and the fact that they offer the same range of programmes delivered by LSME. The Coventry University (Barking and Dagenham Campus) will be another option for our learners as they also offer our range of courses, are not restricted by the number of students they can take and serve the same local community of our learners. At present over 40% of our students come from the Barking and Dagenham Borough.

Another option will be to enrol learners on our three-year BSc Programmes in Health and Social Care Management validated by the University of Chichester. This programme started in September 2018 and will be offered to those who wish to progress for a degree in Health and Social Care after their HND qualification.

**4. Risk:** If all or part of our campus is permanently closed

**Likelihood:** Unlikely

**Impact on students** will be 'major' for those whose programmes are organised on the affected premises.

**The reason for the low likelihood:** We have no campus closure plans for refurbishment as Cambrian House is our only campus at the moment. It is brand new and was opened in April 2017. We plan to operate from Cambrian House except where a significant and unexpected incident or accident (e.g. flood, fire, earthquake etc) renders the premises officially unsafe.

**Mitigating Actions:** In the event of permanent closure of part or all of our campus, LSME would secure alternative premises in the local area via commercial agencies and operate from these until such time as the campus was restored to operation.'

- We can also decide a delivery by alternative means or methods (e.g. virtually through our VLE);
- Revising the timetable to avoid or minimise student exposure to building works or reschedule the building work to minimise the effect on teaching, students and study;
- Transfer to or seek temporary support from alternative providers who have the relevant space and equipment.

Certain losses may be covered by insurance which would underpin our ability to respond and recover quickly. Where students incur additional costs in relation to change in location, the Refunds and Compensation Policy would apply.

For the unlikely event of a planned renovation (might happen in the next 5 years) we will ensure that the work is scheduled in a way that will not disrupt continuation of studies.

**5. Risk:** if there is a loss or suspension of regulatory approval and accreditation from regulatory bodies (e.g. QAA, Pearson, DfE Course Designation).

**Likelihood:** Very Unlikely

**Impact on students:** There will be a major disruption of academic activities.

**The reason why this risk is unlikely:** We are aware of and up to date with the requirements needed in order to be accredited by such bodies and have processes in place to regularly review and improve on our practices.

**Mitigating Actions:** In the very unlikely event where there is the withdrawal of student finance for our courses by the DfE, existing students will be informed of the situation, the amount of time left on their course and support to complete their studies as soon as possible will be our primary objective for the majority of learners. This 'teach-out' strategy will be in different phases allowing affected students to complete their studies to the original timescale before the actual closure occurs. Although the circumstance giving rise to the need to 'teach-out' are rare when they do occur, 'teach-out' will usually be realistic and achievable.

Exceptional circumstances where we might not be able to 'teach-out' may include issues relating to standards or the quality of the academic experience and the decision to close down is from the QAA or due to a sudden loss of accreditation by Pearson. In such a case, we would seek to protect continuation of study by offering a transfer on to a similar or replacement programme or by giving support to transfer to an alternative supplier (for example, providing certification of credit or a record of academic achievement). Students who may be supported to get a transfer to other institutions that run similar programmes may have the option to go to Barking and Dagenham College or the Coventry University as highlighted above. Students who have paid all their fees in full and will require to be transferred to other institutions will be refunded in full and compensated for their loss of time as our last resort.

If any of the risks we identify happen we will act swiftly and, as part of our response, offer those students suitable and appropriate advice and support. The nature of the advice and support will normally be determined in consultation with our students and their representatives. In doing so, we will give as much notice as is possible in the circumstances to inform students of what will happen and when. Affected students, both individually and collectively, will be encouraged to actively engage with discussions about implementation plans. Regular updates will be given via the most appropriate communication method, depending on the nature of the event and a named contact will be assigned.

**6. Risk:** If there are issues with partner organisations (e.g. validation, research partners and including issues with partner premises, employer engagement partnerships). LSME has currently secured a Validation Agreement with the University of Chichester for BSc programmes in Business and Health and Social Care Management for full and top-up qualifications. We have also formed research partnerships with an international University in India (Panjab University, Chandigarh) and are in the process of signing MoUs with Mumbai University and MCM DAV College for Women). In future, our students will benefit from exchange programmes and may engage in research activities within these institutions. We are also strengthening our employer engagement strategies.

**Likelihood:** Unlikely

**Impact on students will be moderate.** This is because our agreement with the University of Chichester includes a priority to protect continuation of students who are already enrolled on the programmes they are currently validating. Activities of all other partners including employers may lead to a minor disruption to student rate of progression particularly if a mandatory academic activity such as work placement is undertaken with the partner. Besides, the majority of our students are already employed and have used their employment setting for work placement.

**The reason why this risk is unlikely:** We carry out due diligence on partners and chose highly credible institutions with an established reputation for academic achievement and graduate outcomes.

**Mitigating Actions:** We have included protective provisions in contracts with the University of Chichester. The College is also currently focussing on a second validating partner as a back-up plan. Employers and other partners are required to give us ample notice of their inability to commit to our agreement should they experience unexpected difficulties. Students affected by an employer's inability to deliver their work-based learning experience will be allocated to a suitable employer as quickly and swiftly as possible. We have recently established a database of employers who offer work-based learning. These employers are actively engaged with the institution by participating in our career fairs, employer forums, career development training for students and offer their services as guest lecturers. Suitable employers will be identified from our database to support learners with work-based learning activities should the need arise. LSME also offers teaching placement opportunities for its trainee teachers within the College.

**7. Risk:** If there is a loss of key equipment or facility (e.g. Learning Resource Centre)

**Likelihood:** Unlikely

**Impact on students is moderate.** Students rely on the College Computers in the Learning Resource Centre for academic purpose although a majority of students use their personal laptops. There may be some minor disruption in their progress should there be a loss of key equipment.

**Reason:** There is only a minimal threat to access to key equipment or facilities for our students (e.g. failure of or damage to equipment, facility or premises access restrictions by third parties or plan improvement in IT facilities). Students whose courses or programmes rely heavily on IT or those who rely on IT for other reasons (students who do not have a laptop) will need to be given special consideration.

**Mitigating Actions:** The equipment and facilities which we provide can always be replaced as a matter of urgency to ensure the continuation of learning for students:

- We ensure that the timing of the scheduled work will minimise disruption to teaching and students and the impact. We will work with engineers to minimise downtime and conduct their checks only when learners are not on the premises;
- We will rely only on our face-to-face delivery where the VLE is not available or only on the paper submission where Turnitin is not available or give additional time for learners to submit their work when the system is up and running.

**3. 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 the continuation of the study**

See attached a copy of the LSME Refund and Compensation Policy. The policy highlights:

Refunds for students in receipt of tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company, self-funded students and students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor. It also highlights plans to pay for the additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course as well as our commitment to honour student bursaries, compensation for maintenance and lost time and tuition and maintenance cost where students have to transfer courses or provider.

Plans to deliver financial implications of the refund and compensation policy.

We are confident that we can deliver the financial implications of our refund and compensation policy. There are sufficient reserves in working capital to provide refunds and compensation for those students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

We will put in place insurance arrangements to provide refunds and compensation for those students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study. We will ensure that this is in place by 1 August 2019.

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

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students via our website and it will also be addressed during the admission process. It will be used in conjunction with the terms and conditions statements used for student contracts for prospective learners.

We will ensure that our current students have been signposted to the plan on our website as a means of general communication so that they are aware of how these risks will impact on their studies and what we plan to do to mitigate the impacts.

If any of the risks we identify in this Plan happen and their impact on the students concerned is more than insignificant, we will act swiftly and, as part of our response, offer those students suitable and appropriate advice and support. The nature of the advice and support and the exact timing of our communication with students will vary from risk to risk and depend upon the impact and will normally be determined in consultation with our Students representatives. In doing so, we will give as much notice as is possible in the circumstances to inform students of what will happen and when.

We will always take reasonable steps to avoid implementing change during an Academic Year or making changes close to the start of an academic year but recognise that this will not always be possible. Affected students, both individually and collectively, will be encouraged to actively engage with discussions about implementation plans.

Regular updates will be given via the most appropriate communication method, depending on the nature of the event and a named contact will be assigned. Students will be given the opportunity to make complaints about the changes and will be signposted to the Complaints Policies and Procedures in which they will also have the opportunity for Independent Advice and Guidance.

The plan will also be referred to in Student Handbooks and publicised each year via the Moodle Platform VLE.

For staff, this plan will be available on the VLE.

Annually reviewed plans and any changes which have become necessary following a mid-cycle risk assessment will be drawn to the attention of all staff via email communication with a briefing and made available on the VLE. We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of the plan when they are engaging in relevant activities that involve proposing changes to a course. We will ensure that we deliver training at the inter-departmental level and provide signposts in relevant documentation.

This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, effective and useful. We will have risk assessments every six months and this will inform the annual review of the plan. The risk assessments will be carried out by a group comprising representation from each department and relevant service area. The Board of Directors and Academic Board will be responsible for the annual reviews but students will be involved in the review by conducting an annual student consultation and inviting representatives in Committee meetings for the review process.