| **Student Protection Plan for the Academic Year 2018/19** |
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| **1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students,** **how those risks may differ based on our students’ needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise** |
| * **There is an extremely low risk that the University as a whole will be unable to operate. We do not consider this to be reasonably likely to eventuate.**

A well-managed, financially stable, organisation, the University of Lincoln has well-established oversight and decision making structures, supported by excellent, reliable, and timely, management information, which together enable it to respond quickly and effectively to changes in the environment. In recent years, the University has bucked the national trend demonstrating high demand and consistent growth. The University has reported a financial surplus for each of the last 12 years and, as evidenced in the 16/17 financial statements, has total reserves of over £156m and cash reserves of over £30m.* **There is an extremely low risk that the University will no longer able to award the qualifications for which its students are registered, because the OfS has varied or revoked its degree awarding powers. We do not consider this to be reasonably likely to eventuate.**

As a well-managed academic institution, the University of Lincoln has strong, well-established quality assurance and other governance structures, which ensure oversight over all compliance matters, by the Senior Leadership Team and/or the Academic Board and/or the Board of Governors, as appropriate. This strength in quality assurance is demonstrated by the latest QAA institutional review (published February 2013), in which the University was "commended" for student learning opportunities, one of the four key elements of the review and classified as "meets UK expectations" in the other three areas. In the more recent Teaching Excellence Framework exercise, the University was awarded “Gold”, in 2017.* **There is a low risk that the University will be unable to award qualifications for which its students are registered because a validating partner has withdrawn validation.**

There is only one such arrangement in which the University is involved (a transitional Medical School partnership with the University of Nottingham).The risk is mitigated as follows:* The agreement runs to 31 August 2031 and is anticipated to remain in place until full General Medical Council approval has been secured for the University to award undergraduate medical degrees.
* The two universities have agreed joint Medical School governance arrangements, to supplement their individual, well-established, oversight and assurance frameworks.
* The University has committed significant ring-fenced resources, based upon a business model informed by the University of Nottingham, to ensure the financial success of the partnership.
* In the highly unlikely event of a failure of the partnership, the agreement is clear that the University of Nottingham will step in to ensure that students are not disadvantaged.
* **There is a low risk that a validation arrangement under which University of Lincoln programmes are delivered by a partner organisation comes to an end.**

The University has the following agreements in place:* North Lindsey College, Scunthorpe (validation: 100% delivery by partner).
* Lincoln College, Lincoln (validation: 100% delivery by partner).
* KDU University College, Penang (dual degree award: 100% delivered by partner).
* HKDI, Hong Kong (collaboration: delivered by partner, with 40% of teaching provided by University staff in Hong Kong).

The risk is mitigated as follows:* Under the University's standard agreements, partners are required to "teach out" all students to whom a commitment has been made, should an agreement not be extended (or be terminated early).
* In the event that a partner does not, or cannot, meet teach out responsibilities, the University will step in and ensure that the students are taught out.
* **There is a low risk that the University is no longer able to deliver courses to students in one or more subject areas and/or departments.**

The University has a very broad academic base, with a (four) College structure. Under the Colleges sit the 25 Academic Schools/Departments, covering in excess of 80 subject areas. The risk is mitigated as follows:* The College structure (in the context of an annual University turnover in excess of £150m) ensures that individual Schools and subjects are not vulnerable to short-term demand or other factors.
* Modules are designed to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff, significantly reducing the risk that the University can no longer deliver material components of its programmes.
* The University has very well established management information systems, factoring in both external information (such as national subject demand trends and forecasts) and internal time series demand analysis. This informs an annual planning exercise, which reviews, on a “balanced scorecard” basis, the overall health of individual subject areas and agrees action plans; accordingly, on the rare occasions that the University determines to discontinue a programme or exit a subject area, the implications will normally be considered some years in advance.
* The University has an established practice, supported by our "Programme Closure, Suspension and Changes Policy" (last updated February 2016), which ensures, amongst other things, that all students are taught out in the event of a subject or programme closure.
* When entering into new subject areas, the University ensures that a minimum staffing complement is appointed, to avoid excessive reliance on a single individual.
* **There is a low risk that the University is no longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to students.**

The University, when determining to make an offer for a work-based, distance learning or part-time mode for a course does so in the full knowledge that such a decision commits it to offering that mode until all of the students have completed. The same mitigation applies as to course closure.* **There is a low/medium risk that the University’s Tier 4 sponsor licence is revoked, resulting in our being unable to meet commitments to potential international students or to teach out international existing international students.**

In 2017/18, there were in excess of 1000 international students enrolled at the University, whom the University had sponsored for a Tier 4 student visa. Previous experience in the sector suggests that, were the licence to be revoked, the University would not be permitted to deliver on its commitments and to teach out the students concerned.The risk is mitigated as follows:* The University continues to dedicated resource in this area, with an established Tier 4 compliance team in place, who oversee compliance centrally and in Colleges.
* The University has a well-established, University-wide Student Attendance Monitoring & Management (SAMM) system in place, which supports the operation of the “Student Engagement & Participation Policy” (last updated January 2018).
* The University is signed up to the UKVI “Premium Service” and works closely with its UKVI contact.
* The University maintains a keen focus on UKVI metrics; for example, the visa refusal rate has, for a number of years, been maintained at below 5% (less than half the maximum permitted by UKVI rules).
* The University was subject to a Home Office compliance audit in 2014, and was considered to be compliant. A small number of minor recommendations were implemented immediately.
* **There is a low/medium risk that a professional body could withdraw their accreditation from a course, impacting deleteriously on current students.**

The University offers in excess of 90 programmes with professional body accreditation. This accreditation is attractive to students, some of whom may not have chosen Lincoln were the accreditation not in place. Accreditation is at the discretion of the relevant professional body; accordingly, it could be revoked were the requirements to change.This risk is mitigated as follows:* Each professional body accreditation is managed directly through the relevant School/Department and College, who are in close contact with the requirements of the relevant organisation and can “future proof” programmes.
* Reaccreditation exercises are undertaken as required by the relevant professional body.
* Professional bodies will normally require action plans to address concerns or recommendations as they arise, as opposed to immediate revocation.
* The outcomes of accreditation and reaccreditation exercises are reported to the Academic Affairs Committee, which has University oversight in this area and will ensure that any recommendations are addressed and action plans developed and delivered upon.
* No professional body has, hitherto, revoked accreditation of a University of Lincoln programme of study; rather, additional accreditations have been secured in recent years.
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| **2. The measures that we have put in place to mitigate those risks that we consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise** |
| We have articulated the mitigating measures that are in place to ensure that we can be confident of being able to meet our commitment to teach out any students impacted by programme closure. However, as an additional measure to provide further assurance, it should be noted that the University is a member of Midlands Enterprise Universities (MEU). The East Midlands members of this group (University of Derby, University of Lincoln and Nottingham Trent University) have agreed to provide support to each other’s students where necessary and feasible in the event that an individual university found itself unable to meet its commitments to students. This is an additional ‘safety net’ measure. |

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| **3. Information about the policy we have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study** |
| **Link to Policy:**The policy can be accessed from the following page:**https://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/academic-policies/*** We have (2016/17 financial accounts) cash reserves in excess of £30m which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for the very small number of students who might be deleteriously affected by the withdrawal of, or significant change to, a programme of study.
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| **4. Information about how we will communicate with students about our student protection plan** |
| **How we will communicate the provisions in our student protection plan to current and future students:*** We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students on our website, as soon as it is approved by OfS.
* We will collaborate with out Students’ Union in the development and implementation of a communications plan.
* We will ensure that cross-references to our Student Protection Plan are included in the "Programme Closure, Suspension and Changes Policy" and any other relevant policies.
* We will ensure that consideration of the Student Protection Plan is built into the Terms of Reference of relevant committees.

**How we will work with our current students in the development of our student protection plan:*** Our Students’ Union has been consulted and supports this Student Protection Plan (and the associated “Refund & Compensation Policy”).
* We will review our Student Protection Plan with our Students’ Union every five year years, to ensure that it remains in line with best practice and factors in any changes to the identified risks, with the next review due to be completed by the end of May 2023.

**Arrangements that have been put in place to communicate with affected students should the student protection plan need to be implemented:** * In the event that measures detailed in the Student Protection Plan need to be invoked, the student interest will be paramount.
* The University will work closely with the Students Union in agreeing appropriate specific arrangements and will communicate with affected students directly via a range of channels (direct email, social media, face-to-face etc).
* Students will be signposted to their School/College office and the Student Support Centre for University advice.
* The Students’ Union independent Advice Service will be available, on a more personal and individual basis, for students who consider that they need independent advice and/or an advocate.
* Students will be signposted to the University Complaints Procedure.
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