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Student Protection Plan for the Period 2025-2026

College of Medicine and Dentistry (CoMD)

Introduction

This Student Protection Plan (‘**this Plan’**) provides assurance to you (our current and future students) that we have in place appropriate arrangements to protect the quality and continuation of study for you all. This Plan sets out our approach to protect your interests in a transparent and clear way. This Plan ensures that procedures are in place to protect your interests and that you have redress to the Office for Students (OfS) if you feel that this Plan is not addressing risks satisfactorily.

We actively support and encourage widening participation in higher education and are aware that students studying with us may have differing needs, circumstances and are from diverse cultures. We are committed to promoting Equal Opportunities and this Plan considers the possible needs of different students sharing particular protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. This Plan provides the actions we are taking to address these risks.

Key features of the Plan

In summary, the key features of this Plan are as follows:

a) Provision of a Risk Register Assessment underpinning support for your continued study;
b) A statement of our Financial Performance demonstrating a low risk of inability to operate successfully;
c) A Business Continuity Plan which sets out how we would act to support your continued study in the event of unforeseen or surprising circumstances occurring;
d) A Refund and Compensation Policy in the event that CoMD was no longer able to preserve continuation of study;
e) A policy on effective communication of this Plan on our website and via other appropriate means of communication;
f) Ensuring that students with differing needs circumstances or characteristics are appropriately supported.

1. An assessment of the range of risks to your continued study accounting for your differing needs, characteristics and circumstances and an assessment of the likelihood that those risks will crystallise (Low, Moderate or High)

Business risks are closely monitored and addressed at CoMD through its Risk Register to ensure the continuation of the business and your studies. The Risk Register assesses, addresses and mitigates possible uncertainties and is designed to ensure the continuation of the business **[See Risk Register]**. Our Risk Register covers the following areas:

- Student Recruitment
- Student learning experience
- Financial Risks
- Human Resources
- Property and Estates
- Attendance
- Board of Directors
- Senior Leadership Team

- Statutes and Regulations
- External Policy Context
- Curriculum Change
- Information Resources.

It is measured in terms of the likelihood of the risk happening which is expressed as:

- Red (High Risk)
- Amber (Medium Risk) and
- Green (Low Risk).

The Risk Register is reviewed every six months by the Senior Leadership Team (**SLT**). A robust Student Protection Plan now further strengthens the Risk Register and safeguards your interests as a student.

Risk number	**Risk description**	**Rating (low, moderate, high)**
Risk 1	**The risk that CoMD as a whole will be unable to operate**	**Low**
Risk 2	**The risk that we would fail to continuously deliver at the Colmore Circus campus (or an alternative site) in Birmingham**	**Low**
Risk 3	**The risk that we may be unable to deliver material components of our courses**	**Low to Medium**
Risk 4	**Failure of UU to validate COMD programme**	**Low**
Risk 5	**Failure to meet student needs**	**Medium**
Risk 6	**Failure to achieve an adequate level of student engagement and retention that puts programme continuation into jeopardy.**	**Medium**
Risk 7	**Failure to maintain and/or improve teaching, learning and assessment quality.**	**Low**
Risk 8	**CoMD's facilities fail to provide appropriate resources to support the student learning experience.**	**Low**
Risk 9	**Failure to recruit and retain staff to deliver to the requisite standards.**	**Low**
Risk 10	**Failure to have in place measures and mitigations to address unforeseen risk e.g. a major fire, necessitating loss of building.**	**Low**

2 (a). The actions we have put in place to mitigate risks to your study that we consider are reasonably likely to crystallise

Risk 1. The risk that CoMD as a whole will be unable to operate

Mitigation: This is **low** because CoMD has a plan for its shareholders to invest further capital in the business to ensure continued financial viability. Furthermore your teaching is delivered in partnership with our validating partner, Ulster University (**UU**). Your registration status with UU is that of a 'fully registered' student and CoMD's contract with UU includes a commitment from UU to "teach out" students in the event of termination. As such, you have the added protection from UU that you will be able to complete your studies in the highly unlikely event that CoMD ceases to operate its business.

Risk 2. The risk that we would fail to continuously deliver at the Colmore Circus campus (or an alternative site) in Birmingham

Mitigation 1: There is little risk to students as we have a secure lease and hold a dialogue with the landlords to ensure no interruption to service delivery occurs. We have circa 12,500 square feet in the building and we are willing to expand the campus by leasing additional space available within the building, as necessary to meet student demand and the changing needs of the business

Mitigation 2: We have identified alternative premises with simulation laboratory spaces which could be hired by COMD, along with alterative lecture theatres and teaching rooms.

Risk 3. The risk that we may be unable to deliver material components of our courses.

Mitigation 1: This is because our modules are developed in-house by CoMD, with close involvement from staff who are subject specialists and experts in their respective fields. In addition to our regular faculty, we are able to draw on a wider pool of visiting faculty where required. Delivery is further supported by our state-of-the-art simulation facilities, including a fully functional cadaveric laboratory.

Risk 4. The risk of Failure of UU to validate our courses.

a) **If UU changed its strategy on validation and accreditation CoMD.**

Mitigation 1: While our courses are approved by UU, we are reliant on our relationship with UU (or another degree awarding body partner) to deliver our courses. As such, in the longer term, CoMD intends to apply for its own Degree Awarding Powers (**DAPs**) to allow it to deliver its courses independently from a degree awarding body partner, which will make this risk redundant.

b) **UU deciding that we no longer met the requirements for validation/accreditation**

Mitigation 2: We run regular internal Quality Assurance processes to assure Academic Quality continues to meet the standards required by UU and we regularly review performance against the requirements. We hold regular operational meetings with UU to ensure that any problems are identified early and actively addressed.

Risk 5. Failure to meet student needs

Mitigation 1: CoMD regularly review the content and the modes of delivery of our courses, in relation to both individual and workforce requirements. This gives our programmes unique selling points which make them attractive to students and ensure that they assist them in their careers.

Mitigation 2: The programmes undergo a five-year revalidation cycle with UU, ensuring that they remain current, responsive to student needs, and aligned with relevant regulatory and sector requirements. This process enables appropriate amendments to be made in response to student feedback, market demand, professional expectations and regulatory changes.

Risk 6. Failure to achieve an adequate level of student engagement and retention that puts programme continuation into jeopardy.

Mitigation 1: Students identified as being at risk of disengagement through poor attendance or engagement are proactively contacted and invited to meet with the relevant Studies Advisor and Student Services team to identify any barriers to learning and implement appropriate interventions. Student engagement, attendance and academic progress are also regularly reviewed during meetings with their Studies Advisor, enabling concerns to be identified at an early stage and ensuring appropriate academic and pastoral support is provided where required.

Mitigation 2: Student engagement, retention and progression data are regularly monitored by the College through its quality assurance and governance processes to identify trends, inform interventions and support course sustainability.

Risk 7. Failure to maintain and/or improve teaching, learning and assessment quality.

Mitigation: This is mitigated through robust quality assurance and enhancement systems, procedures, policies and practices, quality and standards monitoring by external bodies (such as the OfS and QAA) and an on-going oversight by the Teaching, Enhancement and Quality Committee (TEQC) and the Academic Council (AC). CoMD annually reviews its Learning and Teaching Strategy and is continuously reviewing and enhancing its quality assurance procedures, to ensure programmes remain high quality and support positive student engagement and retention.

Risk 8. CoMD's facilities fail to provide appropriate resources to support the student learning experience.

Mitigation 1: This risk is mitigated through ongoing oversight by CoMD's governance committees, including the TEQC and AC, which monitor the adequacy of learning resources and oversee continuous improvements to IT provision, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and library resources. Student resources are also a standing agenda item at all relevant committees, including the Staff–Student Liaison Committee, enabling resource-related issues to be identified, monitored and addressed in a timely manner.

Mitigation 2: In addition, all proposals for new programmes include a resource assessment to ensure that appropriate facilities, staffing and teaching resources are in place to support the student learning experience prior to programme approval.

Risk 9. Failure to recruit and retain staff to deliver to the requisite standards.

Mitigation 1: CoMD operates a robust recruitment and selection process, including clearly defined job descriptions and person specifications, together with interviews conducted by appropriately experienced staff, to ensure suitably qualified and experienced employees are appointed.

Mitigation 2: CoMD seeks to recruit and retain high-quality staff through competitive terms and conditions of employment, professional development opportunities and a supportive working environment that encourages collaboration, engagement and open communication with senior leadership.

Risk 10. Failure to have in place measures and mitigations to address unforeseen risk e.g. a major fire, necessitating loss of building.

Mitigation 1: CoMD maintains appropriate insurance cover and a Business Continuity Plan, which sets out the arrangements for maintaining critical operations and minimising disruption in the event of a major incident, including the loss of College premises. Business continuity arrangements are regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Directors to ensure they remain effective and appropriate.

Mitigation 2: Critical IT systems are protected through secure backup and recovery arrangements, enabling essential teaching and business operations to be restored promptly following a major disruption.

2 (b) Measures we have put in place to mitigate a major risk to your study

Whilst CoMD has a Risk Register it has also produced a Business Continuity Plan **[See Business Continuity Plan]**. The Business Continuity Plan addresses business continuity in the event of a major disruption to your studies. A typical example of such a disruption would be if the CoMD campus became suddenly, without warning, unavailable, or where there were any unforeseen long-term situations that affected CoMD's ability to teach you.

College of Medicine & Dentistry

Business Continuity Plan

Introduction

This Plan is to be used to assist in the recovery of CoMD in general and your studies in particular, in the event of a major disruption to the business. A major disruption is defined by CoMD as a significant incident threatening personnel, buildings or the operation of the business and requires special measures to be taken to restore activity to normal, as quickly as possible. For example, where a fire destroyed most of the building or the foundations and rendered the building suddenly unsafe. **CoMD acknowledges its responsibility to maintain the quality of all students' studies in the event of an unexpected major incident.**

CoMD operates a Risk Register to cover all other academic and personal risks to student learning, staffing, learning resources etc. However, CoMD also has measures in place that guard against an event that would bring a potentially catastrophic disruption to your studies. CoMD believes that a disruption of up to five days to your learning is manageable by normal measures through implementing a model encouraging a short period of self-study. However, in the event of a major disruption, CoMD has a contingency plan to deal with this issue, minimising the overall disruption to staff and students.

Aim

The aim of the Business Continuity Plan is to set out the responsibilities and actions to be taken by CoMD to quickly and efficiently re-instate the business operation in the light of a major disruption. The primary goal would be to ensure little or no disruption to studies.

Objectives

The objectives of the Business and Continuity Plan are to:

- Provide for continuity of the activities essential to the business.
- Reduce to a minimum the disruption to students, staff, and services restoring them to an acceptable level.

Scope of the Document

The Business and Continuity Plan sets out details of the recovery measures to be taken in the event of a major disruption to the key activities of the business.

Activation of the Plan

The SLT will be responsible for the activation of the Business Continuity Plan. At the point the plan is activated, all staff and students are to be immediately informed. All staff members will be contacted and advised of the current situation and what their role will be in the recovery phase. You will be contacted through your student representatives, or individually, where possible and you will be kept up to date with actions taken, as they are delivered.

Action to be taken

CoMD has an insurance policy that would cover us financially enabling us to rent another premises in the event of a major disruption. We have identified alternative premises with simulation laboratory spaces which could be hired by COMD, along with alterative lecture theatres and teaching rooms.

Further, CoMD shareholders have committed to a further share capital investment, to provide extra funds for compensation to those students we have identified as an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

Students with differing characteristics or circumstances in the event of major disruption

CoMD will ensure that the temporary premises are equipped with resources that will enable access for students with disabilities as well as providing learning resources appropriate for the whole range of student disabilities.

3. We provide information for you about the policy we have in place to refund tuition fees and any other relevant costs. This also covers compensation, where necessary, in the event that we were no longer able to preserve your continued study

The Refund and Compensation Policy provides clear and transparent information about a refund and/or compensation in the event of our inability to maintain continuation of study. The policy has been approved by the Office for Students and is available on the CoMD website/via the following hyperlink **[See Refunds and Compensation Policy]**. The Academic Council has also evaluated the policy prior to approval by the Board of Directors and Governing Body. Its aim is to give you full protection under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 for refunds and/or compensation, where reasonable. The policy covers the following areas:

- Refunds for students who pay their own tuition fees;
- Refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor;
- The payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course;
- Compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study; and
- Compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider.

Delivering financial implications of the Refund and Compensation Policy

We have cash reserves which would be sufficient to provide either a refund or compensation to the students to whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

4. This section provides information on our policy on how we communicate to our students about the Student Protection Plan

We publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students in the following ways:

- On the CoMD website and student VLE;
- Copies made available at the time of admission and induction

We will ensure staff are aware of the implications of this Plan through initial staff development. It will be the responsibility of each Head of Department to make staff aware of the implications when changes are being proposed. This is monitored by the Academic Council, which signs off changes to the Plan.

The Plan is tabled at Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings for comment and student representatives are also present when the Academic Council receives the Plan. It is part of the terms of reference for a student representative to inform their constituents of any important issues and it is always checked at Academic Council that this has occurred.

If this Plan needs to be actioned, we will inform you if there are to be material changes, with an immediate meeting of all students with the SLT. At the meeting we will explain how changes are to be implemented and there will be an opportunity for consultation with you covering the effect of the material changes. Dates of change will be agreed and then confirmed in writing to all students. In the event of termination of an accredited course, there will be clear instructions as to the 'teach out' arrangements for the course. We will endeavour to give students a minimum of 30 days' notice prior to a material change being enacted. At the same time, the Dean will inform all members of the Academic Council and Governing Body.

If material changes need to be made and/or this Plan implemented, we will ensure the following:

a) Each student is individually supported by a studies advisor and student services team member who will give clear and continuous advice on the effect of the changes and/or implementation of this Plan;
b) The tutor will help the student make effective choices to mitigate the effect of the changes and/or implementation of this Plan;
c) Compensation will be agreed, where appropriate, as swiftly as possible;
d) Students will have access to the respective departmental heads and Senior Leadership Team;
e) Full advice will be provided about choice of new options where appropriate; and
f) Substantial advice and support will be given by studies advisors and senior academics if the student needs to find an alternative programme with another provider.

5. Protecting students with differing circumstances, characteristics and needs

The Student Protection Plan ensures that students with disabilities, whatever the nature of these, will be protected through continuous review so that learning resources and physical resources will be appropriate to support you. CoMD will also ensure that continuous access to CoMD and your studies is of paramount importance and will respect differing needs and circumstances. In this way, CoMD will continue to encourage students with disabilities that CoMD is a welcoming and supportive place to study.

6. Access to all documents cited in this Student Protection Plan is available through the hyperlinks in this Plan, CoMD's website and the Academic Quality office (upon request).

Document owner: Academic Council