

Student protection plan for 2021 onwards

The Student Protection Plan is a document that is approved by the Office for Students (OfS) that every higher education institution is required to have. It sets out what measures we have in place to protect you, as a student at the National Film and Television School, should a risk to the continuation of your studies arise and details how we would communicate with you about this.

If you have any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this Plan, please contact the Registrar (Ewheal@NFTS.co.uk).

Alternatively, if you have a complaint regarding this Plan you can raise the issue through the procedure detailed in the School's Student Complaints Procedure: https://nfts.co.uk/sites/default/files/u102/Documents/Student_Policies/student_complaints_procedure.pdf.

Students dissatisfied with a decision relating to a complaint they have raised may be able to complain to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#).

1. Assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students, how those risks may differ based on students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise.

The School has assessed a number of possibilities and the associated level of risk to the continuation of study for our students. The assessment includes measures to mitigate against the risk.

- **Closure of a course because of insufficient student numbers**

The likelihood of this is considered to be very low as the School's MA courses have a very good reputation both nationally and internationally, and there is strong demand for them. It would only be done if the student numbers are very low in the current recruitment round and are predicted to remain low.

- **Closure of, or material change to, a course because of the departure or loss of a key member of staff**

The likelihood of this is considered to be very low as the School's reputation, specialist focus and location close to London mean that it is able to attract appropriately qualified staff to maintain provision. In the short term, any loss of staff could be covered by the School's existing group of specialised visiting tutors or other industry specialists.

- **The School can no longer provide teaching to overseas students because the right to recruit them is lost**

This may occur if the School has more than 2 (or 10%) Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies ('CAS') refused by the Home Office or it is in breach of its obligations as a Licensed Student sponsor. The risk of this occurring is low as the School has trained, professional staff in key central administrative (including HR and Registry) roles who are responsible for the issue of CAS documents and the School's compliance with its Student Visa responsibilities. They train and advise staff on our obligations to meet the UKVI requirements.

- **Short-term impacts on the School's site and equipment; for example, damage to the School's key teaching buildings on site, or damage to or loss of specialist, technical equipment**

The risk of this is considered to be low because, as part of its Business Continuity Planning, the School has arrangements in place with major film and television studios and other higher education organisations located nearby that can offer facilities and equipment of similar standard at very short notice within reasonable travelling distance of the School's site in Beaconsfield. In addition, the School has Business Continuity Insurance to cover it for 2 years to the value of £5.5 million.

- **Validation arrangements coming to an end**

The School's Master's degrees are validated by the Royal College of Art and the risk of this agreement being terminated early is considered to be low. The arrangement with the RCA has been in place since 2001 and is governed by a Validation Agreement which expires in 2021. The School has robust and effective quality assurance arrangements in place to secure the standards and quality of its courses. The School is currently applying for its own degree awarding powers but in the event that this is unsuccessful, the validation agreement with the Royal College of Art would be extended.

- **The School is unable to operate due to its financial performance**

The likelihood of this is very low.

The School's financial performance and position is monitored regularly by the School's Finance and General Purpose Committee (as delegated by the Board of Governors) that reviews performance to date and forecast to ensure that the School meets its financial targets. The School enjoys a mixed funding model, with funds derived from both government and industry in addition to student tuition fees. Reported financial performance is subject to an annual external audit, which also includes an independent assessment of the School's ability to continue as a going concern.

The School submits five-year forecasts to the OfS which gives visibility to the School's plans and expected future annual performance and position. The current forecast reflects the School's growing surpluses and continued strengthening of its balance sheet and cash reserves to ensure that the School maintains a sustainable financial position.

At July 2020, the School will have cash and short-term investment balances of circa £4.2 million (37% of net assets). The School has a policy of maintaining a minimum cash balance of £1.8 million in all operating scenarios, and tailors its capital programmes to ensure that this level of cash reserve is maintained at all times.

The School therefore has the governance, the external regulation and scrutiny, and the cash reserves to ensure that the risk to the ongoing operation of the School, including with regard to non-continuation of students' study, is minimized.

- **Students are unable to complete their courses due to the impact of Covid-19 on their teaching and learning**

The risks to the continuation of study for our students relating to Covid-19 are low because we are able to put in place contingency measures to enable students to complete their studies, including delivering teaching online, reordering the curriculum to enable students to undertake practical work at a later point, and extending course end dates to enable all aspects of the curriculum to be delivered. For courses heavily reliant on equipment, computers and other resources are proactively delivered to students homes to enable them to work effectively.

2. The measures that we have put in place to mitigate those risks that we consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

In the event that any of the above occurs, we will take one or more of the following measures. The School acknowledges that different students may have differing needs and therefore the impact of any of these above events occurring will be assessed for each student.

Wherever possible, the School will continue to teach students until the end of the course.

If this is not possible, the School will seek to offer an alternative course (where practicable at the School) for which the student is qualified.

If the student does not wish to or is unable to accept the School's offer of an alternative course, or the School is unable to offer an alternative, the School commits to making every effort to support individual students to find an alternative course at another provider where possible, and it will provide students with reasonable assistance to transfer to that provider.

If the student does not wish to or is unable to accept the School's offer of an alternative course, or the School is unable to offer an alternative, or the student does not wish to transfer, the student will be entitled to withdraw.

If the student decides to withdraw, the School will make an appropriate refund to the student, loan company or sponsor of tuition fees and any deposits paid in accordance with the Student Fee Policy, as appropriate.

If the location at which the course is delivered changes, the School will seek to find an alternative location as close as geographically possible to Beaconsfield as is reasonable. Consideration will be given for compensation and refund as outlined in the Student Fee Policy, and in particular where a student has a disability or requires additional assistance or support.

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

The School has a Student Fee Policy (https://nfts.co.uk/sites/default/files/u102/Documents/Student_Policies/student_fee_policy.pdf) which explains its approach to refunds and compensation. Claims would be dealt with on an individual basis.

The School has cash reserves of circa £2.7m as at July 2018 which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for those students who, for any exceptional circumstances, are unable to remain on a course with the School.

4. Information about how we will communicate with students about our student protection plan

The School will publicise its Student Protection Plan to prospective and current students through:

- the School's webpages
- the School's internal communication system, Facebook Workplace
- the Student Handbook
- the School's Student Representatives.

We will make our staff aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan through staff briefings, Facebook Workplace and when any proposals for course changes are made in accordance with the procedures set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

We will review our Student Protection Plan annually with our Student Representatives at our Academic Standards Committee and it will be approved annually by our Governing Body, of which Student Representatives are members.

Should this Student Protection Plan need to be implemented, students will be notified and consulted as soon as reasonably possible, and supported individually, by the Head of Department and the School Registrar. Additionally, students will be invited to discuss specific concerns with the Student Support and Wellbeing team.

Students will be referred to the Student Representatives for advice if the School needs to implement the measures in its Student Protection Plan.