

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

Student Protection Plan

What is the Student Protection Plan?

The publication of a protection plan is a requirement for any organisation registering with the Office for Students (OfS), the Higher Education Regulator for England, and this document has been approved by them. This plan will be updated annually.

The Trust is committed supporting students throughout their studies with us and to enabling them to reach their target academic awards. Through its established governance and review processes, the Trust assures the ongoing sustainability and quality of its programmes. It actively manages risks around education delivery including availability of resources (staffing, rooms, finances, IT and technical) to ensure, wherever possible, courses run as planned and as advertised.

The Trust does not have degree awarding powers, so it has partnerships with universities who validate and award its degree programmes. In the Trust's partnership arrangements, the interests of students are paramount and both sides will always seek to enact solutions to issues which allow students to satisfactorily complete their studies.

This plan sets out how the Trust manages risk around delivery of its education programmes and sets out actions which would be taken if there was a threat to the commencement or continuation of your studies. It describes how we would communicate with you and how you would be supported if any of the events described were to come about.

Where changes to the delivery of your programme need to be enacted through the implementation of aspects of this Plan, the Trust will consult with students via course representatives and by holding open meetings before any decisions are made. All changes will be appropriate to the programmes affected and will take into account the different types of activities involved. For programmes extending beyond the delivery of taught modules, including professional doctorates, arrangements will be made for supervision to be available until students have completed.

All continuity plans will be mindful of diversity within student groups and issues of difference will be considered to ensure no students are disadvantaged by changes.

Whilst the situations described in this Plan are mostly unlikely to occur, the Trust's response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated its ability to quickly move provision online in response to events. Student opinion was gathered through a series of online meetings and surveys. Levels of satisfaction remained good.

All measures within this document are in addition to those protections offered to you in consumer law and do not impinge on these rights.

What is covered by the plan?

All Higher Education provision leading to a degree awarded by one of the Trust's university partners is covered by this plan. The Trust has the majority of students on programmes validated by the University of Essex. There are some students on doctoral programmes validated by the University of East London. These latter courses are not available to new entrants and will be fully closed once all of the current students have completed.

The Trust is continually monitoring risk around current and future education delivery. All programmes have a Course Lead who can raise concerns. Courses are grouped into four Portfolios, and the Portfolio Managers meet regularly with the Associate Deans. All emerging risks and issues will be collected and monitored by the Training Executive (TE) which is chaired by the Director of Education and Training / Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The TE maintains a risk register to ensure that mitigating action plans are put in place and followed through.

The risks described below have been identified as those which might prevent the Trust from delivering the best educational experience. They are generally unlikely to happen, however we have aimed to make this list as comprehensive as possible to demonstrate that we are monitoring these risks and we do have plans should any of these events come about.

1. The Trust closes

This would be most likely to happen for financial reasons and is of very low likelihood. As an NHS Foundation Trust, we have in place adequate governance and monitoring structures to ensure our sustainability. We are monitored regularly for financial performance by NHS Improvement, the organisation which oversees Foundation Trusts. In addition, the Trust finances are monitored by the Directors and the Governors and there is an internal Audit Committee.

In the unlikely event of ongoing financial issues preventing the Trust from operating, there is a possibility that it could merge with another Trust. In this case there would be a consultation prior to the merger which would include student input. If the merged organisation was not able to continue to offer existing education provision, the Trust would seek to ensure that there is a teach-out prior to courses closing. A teach-out means that courses will not recruit any new students but they will remain open until all existing students have completed and received their awards. The Trust has experience of managing teach-outs when it has previously closed programmes and when it changed university partners.

In the event of closure of the Trust with no opportunity to teach out then every effort would be made to transfer programmes to another provider including to validating university partners.

2. One of our National Centres of delivery closes

The Trust offers its courses at sites under two different arrangements:

Associate Centres where a local organisation delivers a course under contract. The local organisation will supply staff and premises to deliver the course. These are located in:

Birmingham

Bristol

Florence

Genoa

Leeds (with the exception of MA Foundations of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy)

Milan

Alternative Centres where the Trust resources the course and pays for staff and premises. There may or may not be a local organisation which assists with course delivery.

These are located in:

Belfast

Kent

Leeds (MA Foundations of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy only)

Stroud

Sussex

In the event of the closure of an Associate Centre, the Trust would make every effort to continue with delivery in the same area. The first preference would be for a teach-out to be agreed with the closing organisation. If this is not possible, the Trust would either take over delivery to create an Alternative Centre or it would contract another partner to take over the delivery. Students would be consulted as part of this transition. The Trust would investigate long term viability to decide whether there will be a teach-out then course closure or if the delivery will continue under new arrangements.

In the circumstances where the Trust or a different partner takes over delivery, students will be given the option to withdraw from their programme and to receive an award based on completed academic credits. Student will be entitled to a refund of fees limited to those paid in a current and incomplete academic year.

As Alternative Centres are sites where courses are delivered by the Trust, there is less risk from any local partner closing. If premises become unavailable due to a closure, the Trust will, as far as possible, provide an alternative venue. Any interim period would be covered by using virtual technologies to maintain delivery. Students would be consulted about any changes and would be allowed to intermit (take a break from study) if they wished. Students who do not wish to continue studying under any revised arrangements would be able to withdraw from their programme and to receive an award based on completed academic credits. Students will be entitled to a refund of fees limited to those paid in a current and incomplete academic year.

3. Changes to your course or its discontinuation

The Trust reviews its academic provision through its Annual Review processes, in order to maintain academic standards and to ensure courses keep up-to-date. From time to time, the Trust has closed courses, usually due to changing student demand and its impact on recruitment. The Trust will always teach-out courses which are to be closed. Current students will be informed when this is the case and will be given a timescale for the teach-out. This will include information about when modules will run for the final time.

The risk that we decide to discontinue your course before you are due to complete is low as we would plan such a change to allow current students to complete their studies. In the exceptional event that there is no opportunity for teach-out, the Trust would assist students in transferring to another provider which would be best placed to enable them to meet their academic and professional goals.

4. Staff are unavailable to teach your course

Many Trust courses require specialised staff to deliver them. The risk around having sufficient staff to teach is low. As the Trust is an organisation which stands out nationally and internationally in psychoanalytic and systemic thinking and training, it is successful in being able to recruit the required staff. It also provides development opportunities to clinical staff who wish to develop and deliver education.

The Trust plans module and course delivery in advance so that programmes are staffed prior to the start of each academic year.

For doctoral students who have commenced their thesis work when their supervisor leaves, the Trust will find another member of staff who will be able to take over. The Trust will also explore, with the student, whether it will be possible for the original supervisor to be retained in an associate capacity to give continuity.

5. Failure of IT or other Trust infrastructure

In the event of a catastrophic failure of the Trust IT infrastructure or a disaster (fire, flood or similar) on Trust premises, the Trust will prioritise communication in the first instance. We will then enact a recovery plan. As is required by the NHS, the Trust maintains disaster recovery plans at institutional and at departmental level. These are continually reviewed and updated. Additionally, the Trust runs simulation exercises to ensure that plans are fit for purpose and that staff are aware of their responsibilities in event that they are enacted.

6. Closure or breakdown of the relationship with validating university

The Trust is not able to award degrees in its own right so it works with partner, validating universities who are able to do this. There is a low risk that the relationship between the Trust and the validating university may break down or cease. It is set out in our Partnership Contracts that, if this were to happen, the Trust and the university are committed to a teach-out of existing courses. If for any reason this is not possible, the Trust would find an alternative validating partner who would be willing to pick up affected students and award their degrees.

7. Loss of professional body accreditation

A number of Trust courses are recognised by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). Consequently, these programmes confer partial or complete fulfilment of the requirements for clinical registration. There is a low risk that PSRB recognition would be completely withdrawn from a course. The Trust works closely with its RSPBs and actively engages in meeting revised requirements and with periodic review processes. In the event that a PSRB were to have concerns such that accreditation was withdrawn, it is unlikely that this would be applied to students mid-way through a programme and a period of teach-out would ensue. If accreditation were to be immediately withdrawn, the Trust would work with the PSRB to find another provider who would be able to allow students to complete their awards and receive professional recognition.

8. Loss of student visa licence

The Trust has a licence to sponsor overseas students on student visas on Trust courses. The Trust is reviewed occasionally on its processes and procedure by the Home Office. The most recent review in 2019 approved the continuation of the Trust's licence. In light of feedback from this audit, the Trust has updated some of its procedures.

If the licence were to be withdrawn, normally the Home Office would permit a period of teach-out to allow existing students to finish their programmes.

Refunds and compensation

The Trust follows the guidance published by the Competition and Markets Authority to providers of Higher Education. In the circumstances of any of the events described above, or any other circumstance where the Trust is unable to deliver programmes in a manner which will allow students to meet the learning outcomes, the Trust will refund fees to students who have not completed the current academic year.

The Trust publishes Terms and Conditions of registration each year which are provided to students before they accept an offer on a course. These are supplemented by a Student Fees and Refund Policy (<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/training/prospective-students/fees-and-funding/fee-regulations/>)

Publication of this Plan

The most up to date version of this Plan is available publicly on the Trust's website.

The link will be shared with all students and staff involved with Trust education. There will be the opportunity for students to ask questions about the Plan during induction, at course committee meetings and at the Dean's Forum

Implementation of the Plan

Where changes are made which will impact on a programme structure or delivery, the Trust will consult with existing students and applicants and inform them of what is happening and when. The students will be given options should they be in disagreement with any changes.

Changes which are made before students apply will be clearly included in promotional material so potential applicants are aware of all of the correct and relevant course details.

If any of the risks identified in this Plan happen, the Trust will act quickly to inform students of the situation. The Trust will inform any partners involved and, where required, the OfS. Support and advice will be offered, the nature of which will depend on what has actually happened.

Emergencies will trigger established Trust recovery action plans which include guidance on communications, including to students.

Complaints

The Trust has a published student complaints procedure with an online form which allows concerns to be raised. If you have concerns about this Protection Plan which you would like to register as a complaint, please go to:

<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/training/current-students/student-support/support-and-complaints/>

If, having been through the Trust's complaints process and having received a letter confirming its completion, you are still not satisfied, you may take your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator to whom the Trust subscribes.

Any questions regarding this Student Protection Plan should be sent to academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk