

LMA Student Protection Plan 2022-23

Provider's name: LMA [Liverpool Media Academy]

Provider's UKPRN: 10031239

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Section 1 - Introduction

LMA is a specialist Higher Education Institution which focuses on the Creative Industries. LMA has campuses in Liverpool and London delivering courses in Performance [Dance, Musical Theatre, Acting], Music and Creative Media [Digital Film and TV Production and Digital Games Art]. From September 2021 onwards, all LMA new intake first year students are studying on programmes validated by the University of Northampton.

This student protection plan sets out LMA's assessment of the type and level of risk that currently exist to the delivery of courses at LMA and the mitigation measures that the organisation has identified to protect students should any event arise which threatens the quality and/or continuation of their studies.

The measures contained in this plan are in addition to the protections that students have under consumer protection law and do not affect their consumer rights.

Section 2 - Assessment of Risks and Mitigation Measures

This section outlines the range of risks that could occur and identifies how likely they are to take place. The judgement of the level of risk is assessed using the following scale; Very Low; Low, Medium, High, Very High.

Each risk is identified, the level of risk is assessed and a rationale provided for the rating. In addition, clear and evidence based mitigation measures are articulated which have been developed to minimise the impact for students of any risk to the delivery of courses and the completion of their degree programme.

Risk 1: LMA ceases to operate

Current Judgement of Risk: Very Low.

Rationale for Judgement: From a strategic and financial perspective, there is very low risk that the institution will cease to operate. LMA has stringent financial planning and control measures in place which are regularly audited internally and externally. In addition, LMA is also part of Galileo Global Education Group, and as such, if required, can draw on the infrastructure, financial resources and expertise of the group.

Over the last ten years LMA has a demonstrable successful track record of planned growth and development which is underpinned by a clear, future facing strategic plan. There is a strong governance and management structure in place within the organisation, which links directly into the structures of the Galileo group, thereby providing comprehensive oversight and external controls. These structures and processes adhere to external standards and expectations around best practice in audit and risk management.

Mitigation measures: In the event of LMA's exceptional failure, the current contractual arrangement with the University of Northampton is designed to ensure that the two institutions, and the wider Galileo Global Education Group, would work together to ensure continuity of delivery for all current students studying at LMA in order to ensure a successful "teach-out" period for the programmes. This "teach-out" would include the delivery of the programme as planned for all students completing within the standard time. For any students unable to complete in a timely manner, individual plans and arrangements would be established in order to support students wherever possible to complete their chosen programme of study, or if they wish to, transfer to cognate programmes at the University of Northampton.

Risk 2: LMA's validating partner University of Northampton loses Degree awarding powers.

Current Judgement of Risk: Low

Rationale for Judgement: LMA's judgement of this risk comes directly from the University of Northampton's own student protection plan where it is stated that the rationale for the 'low' risk categorisation is 'the University received a positive outcome in its 2015 Higher Education Review and has had no issues or points of concern raised about its provision.'

In addition, due to the nature of the contractual franchise arrangement between the two organisations, all measures outlined in the Northampton plan with respect to this risk, are applicable to LMA students as is clearly stated in the introductory summary of the University of Northampton plan.

Mitigation measures: The University of Northampton outlines that its 'Continued focus on compliance with the UK Quality Code and other Office for Students requirements' acts as a clear mitigating measure which supports the avoidance of this risk.

In the unlikely event of the current validating partner losing degree awarding powers, LMA would also be able to gain support from other HEI's who are part of the Galileo Global Education Group in order to establish new validating arrangements for their courses. Whilst the University of Northampton validates the current provision, the contract clearly stipulates that LMA has developed the courses and has intellectual property rights over the content. Therefore, in principle, the validation of the current courses could be transferred to another validating partner.

Risk 3: LMA's validating partner University of Northampton terminates the contractual relationship between the two organisations

Current Judgement of Risk: Low

Rationale for Judgement: The University of Northampton strategic plan 2017 -22 makes an explicit commitment to the development of longer term alliances and strategic partnerships which 'will drive student number growth, transform lives and inspire change on a global scale'. The partnership with LMA contributes to the achievement of this strategic plan. LMA and the University of Northampton have established a clear commitment to work together and there is a clear synergy between the missions and strategic outlook of the two organisations. In May 2021, LMA and the University of Northampton successfully validated the whole of LMA's course provision, and delivery commenced in September 2021. This validation process successfully approved the delivery of all courses in their current approved structure for the next five years, again demonstrating the long term nature of the arrangement.

Mitigation measure: Risk is mitigated by the fact that the nature of the contractual relationship between the two organisations means that all students who are recruited and enrolled on programme will continue on the same programme even if the relationship is terminated. This is because a clear teach out arrangement would be actioned, which would support all students to complete their validated programme of study within a standard timeframe. For any students unable to complete in a timely manner, individual plans and arrangements would be established in order to support students wherever possible to complete their chosen programme of study, or if they wish to, transfer to cognate programmes at the University of Northampton.

Risk 4: LMA ceases delivery at one of the campuses

Current Judgement of Risk: Low

Rationale for Judgement: LMA's long term strategic plan explicitly outlines the development and growth of the two current campus structures. Both campuses are subject

to long-term lease arrangements which reflect LMA's commitment to delivery on the sites, and work is ongoing to continue to enhance the facilities on both sites. The campuses are geographically distanced from each other, which supports recruitment in two separate areas of the UK. There is a strategic recruitment strategy in place which specifically supports individualised marketing and outreach activities which are tailored to the target markets for each campus.

Mitigation Measure: Differentiated campus recruitment, estate development and student experience enhancement plans are in place for each campus in order to support the viability and vibrancy of both sites. This approach acts to minimise the risk that LMA ceases delivery at one of the campuses.

If, in the exceptional circumstance that LMA ceases delivery at one of the campuses, students would be supported to complete their course. A range of options could be made available to support this commitment including students transferring fully to the other LMA campus, undertaking a blended mode of study with some elements of provision delivered remotely and some on site, or transferring to a cognate University of Northampton course.

Risk 5: LMA closes or suspends a particular individual course

Current Judgement of Risk: Low

Rationale for Judgement: LMA has made a deliberate strategic decision to offer a targeted and limited suite of courses which share a common ethos and structure. Development of the courses has been underpinned by careful market research and analysis of current and future student and sector demand. This planned approach to product development is underpinned by a clear recruitment strategy and monitoring of the student recruitment pipeline to ensure all courses recruit and maintain viable student numbers. LMA's staff planning and resource allocation process supports flexible delivery models, which supports upscaling and downscaling of resource requirements dependent on student numbers. Clear quality assurance and enhancement measures are in place to support the delivery of successful, high performing courses which report good levels of student outcome and satisfaction, thereby making provision attractive to prospective students. All these factors combine to support the assessment that closure of a particular course is low risk as the current portfolio of courses is judged to be attractive and viable.

In the unlikely event that an individual programme is closed or suspended within the course of a recruitment cycle, LMA would work within UCAS guidelines to ensure that applicants are provided with an alternative course choice, either within LMA or with the University of Northampton.

If an individual programme is closed or suspended whilst students are on programme, a clear teach out arrangement would be actioned, which would support all students to complete their validated programme of study within a standard timeframe. For any students unable to complete in a timely manner, individual plans and arrangements would be

established in order to support students wherever possible to complete their chosen programme of study, or if they wish to, transfer to cognate programmes at the University of Northampton.

Mitigation measures: Clear strategic planning processes are in place to minimise the impact of any closure of a course for applicants including protocols around timely decision making around suspension or closure for new intakes. In the unlikely event that an individual programme is closed or suspended within the course of a recruitment cycle, LMA would work within UCAS guidelines to ensure that applicants are provided with an alternative course choice, either within LMA or with the University of Northampton.

Risk 6: LMA campuses and facilities close due to unexpected external events

Current Judgement of Risk: Medium

Rationale for Judgement: This risk has been identified as medium, due to the ongoing uncertainty around the continuing COVID pandemic. The LMA campus has been closed to students and staff twice in the last two years, albeit for shorter periods than some other institutions within the UK HE sector. Rigorous plans have been implemented to allow the campus to reopen as soon as possible once governmental lockdown measures have been lifted to ensure face to face delivery can be resumed. This mode of delivery is particularly important for the type of practical course delivered by LMA.

Mitigation Measures: Clear business continuity plans are in place which have been adapted over the last two years to include a range of measures to support the continuity of delivery during the pandemic. Physical Covid protocols have been developed [eg. student contact bubbles etc.] which can be implemented dependent on the nationally identified level of risk.

If LMA campuses and facilities have to close completely due to either the pandemic situation or other force majeure, clear plans are in place to deliver the programmes via remote learning using LMA's VLE system. As the VLE is cloud based, delivery is not physically dependent on the premises. Adapted teaching and learning delivery plans are in place which enable students to engage with their studies remotely. Modified approaches to assessment can be implemented which are supported by the validating partner. These modifications are all designed to enable students to achieve the specified programme learning outcomes.

LMA has a high percentage of students from groups who are underrepresented within Higher Education and who may experience disadvantage due to their background. In the event of a campus closure and moving to remote learning, these students could be at more risk of not being able to engage with learning and failure to complete their course. To mitigate this risk, planned student support activities are in place and will be actioned to support identified groups. Activities include 'keep in touch' phone calls to check on welfare; provision of laptops to students who do not have access to IT at home; signposting to additional remote learning study support materials.

Risk 7: LMA is unable to deliver some components of courses as advertised at the start of the programme due to unexpected external events.

Current Judgement of Risk: Medium

Rationale for Judgement: Due to the practical nature of LMA's portfolio of courses, this risk is judged as medium. External events such as the pandemic may require modifications to the delivery of the course and impact on access to particular specialist resources and facilities - e.g. numbers may need to be limited in some specialist facilities such as music studios; closure of public venues such as theatres may mean that some performances will need to take place in non-specialist facilities etc.

Mitigation Measures: Institution wide and course level plans identify alternative approaches and resources that can be used to enable the learning outcomes of the programmes to be met. Alternative delivery methods will be employed to enable, wherever possible, all students to engage in replacement activities which are judged to be similar and complementary to those that have been advertised.

Students will be informed of any changes that are required in a timely manner and will be given the opportunity to provide feedback about amended plans.

A flexible approach to staffing and resource management and allocation will be adopted in order to support the alternative delivery.

Risk 8: Changes to government policy around access to student loan finance for students who do not meet mandatory entry requirements impacts on LMA's student recruitment and widening participation ethos.

Current Judgement of Risk: Low

Rationale for Judgement: LMA's analysis of the entry tariff profile for both Level Three and Level Two qualifications demonstrates that a high percentage of LMA's intake who progress directly from school or college obtain grades which are above the current required entry tariff. For example in 20-21 the average Level Three UCAS tariff points score achieved by new intake students in this category was 128 points.

Mitigation measures: LMA monitors the entry tariff profile of its new students via the institution's Quality Assurance and Enhancement processes which are reported to both the Academic Committee and also the Executive Board. This monitoring includes course level analysis of the entry trends, providing the opportunity for early identification of areas that carry risk which may impact on the institution's financial position and recruitment strategy.

Resulting from this analysis, LMA undertakes a strategic review of required entry criteria for the next admissions cycle. This review takes into account external policy changes and reviews which may impact on student recruitment, alongside the tariff profile achieved by

previous intakes. Where required, LMA will adjust its recruitment strategy and entry criteria for the next recruitment cycle in order to respond to this risk.

LMA is committed to supporting students from widening participation backgrounds to achieve their full potential and engages in a range of outreach activities with local and regional communities. These activities are built around a 'growth-mindset' approach to learning development and aim to build confidence, raise aspirations and encourage students to exceed their predicted grades. In addition, LMA provides clear information, advice and guidance to applicants around a range of topics including student finance. If and when changes to policy around access to finance arise, LMA will ensure that outreach activity clearly includes clear information for students around the minimum entry requirements that are required to gain financial support. Also additional activities to support students from widening participation backgrounds who may be at more risk of not achieving the required minimum entry requirements will be instigated.

Section 4 - Refunds and Compensation

LMA's Fee, Refund and Compensation policy can be found on the LMA website.

Section 5 - Communication to Students about the Student Protection Plan

LMA's Student Protection plan is publicly available on the LMA website.

All applicants are provided with information about the Student Protection Plan as part of the material that is sent out to them when offers are made.

Once students enrol with LMA, the Student Protection Plan is made available to students via the student course information hub within the LMA VLE.

The Student Protection Plan is reviewed annually by the LMA Executive Board - audit and risk committee and is received and formally adopted by the LMA Academic Committee. The students /staff are made aware of the Student Protection Plan via annual Staff Development Mandatory Policies update training. A copy of the Student Protection Plan is also made available on the staff intranet.