

Provider's name: Futureworks Training Ltd.

Provider's UKPRN: 10022087

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Student Protection Plan

1. Introduction

This plan sets out the actions Futureworks will take, in co-ordination with its validating partner, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), to ensure that students are protected in the event of a material change to Futureworks' operations.

A material change may include the decision to close one or more courses, or a decision to cease operations altogether. A material change may, however, be triggered by decisions taken outside of Futureworks control, such as loss of designation/registered status with the Office for Students, or the decision by a validating partner to not renew the delivery one or more courses.

In any such circumstance, protecting the student interest is key to this plan, and Futureworks will attempt to ensure continuity of study wherever possible.

2. Consumer Rights

Students are recognised as consumers and, through this plan, Futureworks seeks to maintain its firm commitment to communicating with its students in an open and timely manner, providing clear information, advice and guidance at all stages of the student journey, particularly in the event of planned (or unplanned) changes to programme delivery.

3. Measures

Wherever possible, Futureworks will take reasonable steps to avoid implementing material changes during the academic year and, in any event, will always seek to inform students of any changes as early as possible. Where change is unavoidable, Futureworks will take the following actions, wherever possible, to minimise any disruption caused:

- adjusting and/or extending the academic calendar, to allow students the necessary time to complete their year of study and receive academic credit for their work to date (or, in the case of students in their final year, to receive their intended exit qualification)
- modifying the programme in such a way as to mitigate the material change (for example, by allowing students to complete a similar module, or modules, from a different Futureworks programme, or by allowing students to complete one or more modules at UCLan)
- facilitating the transfer¹ of students to another Futureworks degree programme
- facilitating the transfer¹ of students to a UCLan degree programme

¹ Futureworks Student Transfer Policy is available on the Futureworks website <http://futureworks.ac.uk/ofs/studenttransferpolicy.pdf>

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- aiding students that wish to transfer¹ to another provider

4. Risk analysis and specific measures

- a. Institutional Closure/Market Exit [Assessed risk: VERY LOW]

Futureworks maintains a Strategic Plan, available on the Futureworks website, which sets out a range of ambitious goals and priorities for the coming years. Futureworks is committed to an enhancement led approach to its higher education delivery for many years to come; however, as with all businesses, it is always possible, however unlikely, that a series of events might occur which may cause the Board to take the decision to exit the market, for example, through a major change in the creative industries, or through some catastrophic event which would render the business unviable.

Wherever possible, Futureworks would enter a “teach-out” period, lasting until the end of the academic year, enabling students to complete their year of study. As the validating partner, UCLan would ensure that students receive academic credit (or awards, as appropriate) for their study at the end of the teach-out period. In the event that it is not possible to offer a full teach-out period, Futureworks would liaise with UCLan to coordinate continuity of service by, for example, arranging for the University to accommodate learning activities, and temporarily hiring Futureworks’ academic staff for on-campus delivery (e.g. in Preston, or at another partner of the University in the region).

During the teach-out period, and if appropriate and relevant to the circumstances, Futureworks may work with UCLan to identify a suitable buyer for the organisation.

In any event, Futureworks would work with the University to ensure that students were able to continue their studies at UCLan during the following academic year(s) if no other suitable options were available and, where financially appropriate, would seek to compensate students where demonstrable material financial loss has occurred as a result of the disruption to their studies. Students should refer to the Futureworks Refund & Compensation Policy² for more information.

- b. Closure of a specific facility [Assessed risk: LOW]

Futureworks operates a single campus, comprised of a range of learning spaces spread over two buildings. Where closure of a specific facility or building is deemed necessary because of, for example, remedial works, or through a programme of refurbishment/renovation, Futureworks would aim to perform such works during periods of non-teaching, e.g. throughout the summer period, or through the Christmas or Easter breaks.

Where a specific aspect of Futureworks provision is rendered unusable for activities involving students because of, for example, health and safety concerns resulting from a natural disaster (such as flooding), Futureworks would seek to relocate its provision

² Futureworks Refund and compensation policy is available on the Futureworks website <http://futureworks.ac.uk/ofs/refundandcompensationpolicy.pdf>

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to an alternative location – either by shifting provision from one Futureworks building to another, or through hiring appropriate teaching and/or studio space nearby.

Futureworks maintains a Business Interruption Insurance Policy to mitigate the costs associated with such action and employs a Disaster Recovery Plan³ to facilitate an expedient and measured response to any such scenario.

- c. Expiry of property lease/invocation of break clause [Assessed risk: VERY LOW]

Both Futureworks buildings are rented from landlords which whom Futureworks has lease agreements which do not expire for many years (10yrs/7yrs). Break clauses are included in both contracts which permit ONLY Futureworks to terminate the contracted periods early.

- d. Course closure [Assessed risk: MEDIUM]

Futureworks has in place procedures to manage course closure and to mitigate the impact of this on students. Futureworks is contractually obliged to teach out students on a given course through its agreements with the University of Central Lancashire, and so any decision to close a programme of study would not affect students enrolled on the course. However, where there is a perceived material impact on the students, Futureworks would aim to mitigate this by communicating with the student body to assure them that the decision to close the course would not adversely affect their learning experience, academic life or career potential.

Futureworks would notify UCAS and any existing applicants for the course about this decision, and would seek to ensure that any ongoing applications for the course would be processed in accordance with UCAS deadlines. Where appropriate, applicants would be offered an alternative course of study at Futureworks.

- e. Withdrawal of registered status with the Office for Students [Assessed risk: LOW]

If Futureworks is unable to access student support (from, for example, Student Finance England) because of the withdrawal of registered status by the Office for Students (formerly Specific Course Designation, granted by HEFCE), Futureworks would, depending on the specific circumstances, seek to appeal the decision at the earliest opportunity.

Recognising that such a process may occur at some time, and to ensure the uninterrupted provision of student finance to both students and applicants, Futureworks would work with UCLan to register every student – new and old – as a student of the partner university (known as operating under an indirectly-funded/franchise arrangement), but who would continue to study at Futureworks, in the usual way.

Following a successful appeal (or reapplication) and on the basis that access to student support has been reinstated, Futureworks would enrol any new students on a

³ Futureworks Disaster Recovery Plan is available on the Futureworks website
<http://futureworks.ac.uk/ofs/disasterrecoveryplan.pdf>

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directly-funded/validated arrangement, in the usual fashion. Should an appeal and/or reapplication be unsuccessful, Futureworks would continue to operate on an indirectly-funded basis until such time that it would be appropriate to reapply for registered status.

- f. Non-renewal of validation / termination of partnership [Assessed risk: LOW]

Futureworks has been in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire for 10 years in 2018, and in this time both parties have worked together to develop a close and productive working relationship in which the provision of support, assurance and development have been mutually beneficial. At the Periodic Course Review event held at the end of November 2017, the University revalidated Futureworks entire portfolio of degree programmes for another five to six-year period, demonstrating its confidence in the partnership, and its intention to continue working together in the future.

Nevertheless, should the University decide to terminate the partnership, the contract between both parties incorporates terms which provide for the teach-out of students on Futureworks courses, subject to the usual rules and regulations. In the event that the University decides it cannot (or will not) support a teach-out period, Futureworks would seek to locate a suitable alternative validating partner at the earliest opportunity. In such circumstances, since all Futureworks students are registered first-and-foremost as UCLan students, the onus would be on the University to compensate any students who might have been adversely affected by the decision to withdraw support for the programme(s).

5. Contribution, approval and publication

This plan has been created in partnership with Futureworks student partners, the Board of Directors, the Board of Governors and the Futureworks management team. It has been approved by both Boards and is available to stakeholders via the Futureworks website.