

4.11 Student Protection Plan					
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## STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN 2020/21

**Provider Name:** Docklands Academy London

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### Introduction

Docklands Academy London (DAL) has been operational as a Higher Education Institution in Canary Wharf, since 2011. It is a non-profit organization with the mission of raising the business leaders of the future for purposes of social responsibility. The Academy works in partnership with a chain of restaurants sharing the same founder, who is also a well-known chef. The Academy holds a unique position as an educational provider combining education with the workplace.

DAL will grow further with the launch of a new project of a boutique hotel with gastronomy and culinary arts training centre in Canary Wharf area, to be annexed to the Academy in 2021. This will give DAL further opportunities to offer a direct connection with education and the industry.

DAL is a professional partner of European Association of Hospitality and Tourism Schools (AEHT).

Higher Education (HE) is currently delivered at 11-13 Selsdon Way. Student numbers are modest and the provision is a mixture of one and two-year programmes validated by Pearson Edexcel. At present DAL doesn't deliver any provision overseas.

DAL believes that the risks of institutional financial failure is low based on the assessments made by accrediting bodies including Pearson, British Council and British Accreditation Council. The Academy demonstrated significant financial resilience for the past year during Covid-19 pandemic restrictions to be able to continue to offer courses to its students.

This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures that the DAL has in place to protect the continuation and quality of study for all our HE students should risk to such continuation crystallize. The plan is supported by the following documents:

- **DAL Procedure 9.6 Business Continuity Plan (including Critical Incident plan and Disaster Recovery Plan)**
- **DAL Procedure 4.13 Transfers, Suspensions, Terminations, Withdrawals, Closure and Change of HE Provision**
- **DAL Procedures 4. HE Admissions Policies**
- **DAL Procedures 4.10 Refund of Tuition Fees**
- **HE Learning Agreement (Student Contract)**

The type of events or change that might cause risks, together with an explanation of the steps the Academy would take to protect students' continuation of study are set out below.

These measures are in addition to the protections that students have under Consumer Protection Law and do not affect students' consumer rights.

### **Risk Assessment**

Academy's Business risks (financial, operational, reputational and circumstantial / environmental) are evaluated for materiality and probability and assigned an owner whose responsibility it is to ensure that the agreed mitigation is put in place.

DAL maintains a Risk Register, reviewing the potential major factors that could affect operations. This is reviewed by Senior Management Team and by the Board of Governance on a termly basis. The Risk Register is a RAG rated document and is able to provide a framework about how the Academy will test, review, adjust and update performance and risks.

There is a **DAL Procedure 9.6 Business Continuity Plan** which details the business of the DAL, identifying the assets (including people) and processes that are critical to delivering our teaching and initial response to an incident and the longer-term implementation of measures for a return to business as usual. It also considers continuity preparations and how to make the organisation more resilient to risk.

The Academy's management of circumstantial or environmental risks such as disease, fire, floods and or Force Majeure are the same as for any major Higher Education institution. The

Academy's **Disaster Recovery Plan** (embedded in the Business Continuity plan) ensures the following:

- Implementing immediate action to ensure safety of students, staff, and visitors, including evacuation, and treatment of casualties, liaison with emergency services, notification to families of injured individuals, and the protection of assets.
- Establishing temporary arrangements to ensure that Academy activities are recommenced as soon as possible. This will necessitate; finding safe, secure teaching environments; minimising inconvenience; enabling finance and administrative procedures to be resumed.
- Undertaking the planning and management of actions required to establish the mid to long-term return to normal operations
- Maintenance of appropriate insurance and cash reserves to support business continuity in the event of such unforeseen circumstances.

### **Risks that may trigger the Student Protection Plan (SPP)**

**Closure of the campus:** The Academy has no plans to close its campus where HE is delivered. If any changes were to be made to close or to re-locate the delivery of any course to a different site, the impact on students would be minimal as every effort would be made to cause minimum disruption to students and provision of a full range of support for all students would continue.

**Closure and suspension of programmes** The Academy may wish to close and remove a programme of study from its portfolio. This may be as a result of low recruitment numbers that could negatively affect student experience or following a curriculum review to enhance the student offer. Closure of a programme means that it will no longer be open for future student registration. Suspension of a programme is defined by a fixed timeframe in which the programme will not be delivered and is normally reserved for new programmes of study that have yet to register students.

The risk of a course or programme cancellation is low. In the event of insufficient student recruitment of viable student numbers, the students will be kept informed of the situation and the Academy will ensure that there is a minimal impact on students. In situations where a decision is made to discontinue a course or programme, the Academy is committed to teaching out those courses or programmes and offers to new entrants will cease to be made. The procedure and scenarios for course closure are outlined in **DAL Procedure 4.13 Transfers, Suspensions, Terminations, Withdrawals, Closure and Change of HE Provision.**

There is a risk that some learners on courses with internal progression routes may choose not to continue to study at the Academy. This could result in very few learners remaining on the course, leading to a different experience for the students. In these circumstances, each course would be looked at to see if there were opportunities to bring, for example, HNC and HND students together, covering topics or units where the content can reasonably be linked across teaching years with close compliance to awarding body rules.

## **Closure of subject areas**

The risk of not being able to deliver whole courses or programmes due to staffing or resource issues is low. Each course area has expected staffing resources with a range of skills, experience and expertise that ensure students receive a quality / positive experience. In order to mitigate the negative impact of any loss of specific skill sets that are dependent on limited numbers of staff, each course offered / provided by the Academy are carefully assessed, training opportunities are made available to existing staff to upgrade their skill set and back up resources are put in place for contingency planning, **DAL Procedures 6.4 Personal Development & Performance Review and 6.9 Training needs** promotes sharing and transferring of specialist knowledge, materials and upskilling existing staff should a need arises to cover for each other as well as supporting their CPD and personal development review periods.

The inevitable negative impact caused by Covid-19 pandemic and the Academy's shift to online / blended teaching provision in the recent year has proven that the Academy has exceeded in adapting to different teaching modes with good student outcomes. Additionally the Academy has a good network of part time lecturers and consultants who are willing to provide additional staffing should need arise.

The Academy makes investments for both physical and human resources in a bid to upgrade what is available in line with projected student numbers for the forthcoming intakes.

## **Loss of specialist staff**

The risk that the Academy is no longer able to deliver components of courses is low. A small number of courses have units or modules that rely on the specific skill set of certain staff. The curriculum team have relationships with local employers who are willing to deliver specific aspects of a unit where the high-level skills are covered by specialist teachers; and other members of staff are able to support delivery by industry contacts. The Academy's PDR (Personal Development Review) process is used to ensure existing staff members are accessing courses and events that minimise the impact to students in any changes in staffing. Budgets for staff development have been maintained so that staff have up-to-date and wide-ranging relevant skills. Recruitment of new staff is focused on hiring people who have a wide range of relevant skills. The Academy has arrangements with recruitment agencies to source appropriate teaching staff and has a network of part time teaching staff and consultants should a need arise.

## **Updating programme content, regulations and policies**

The Academy is committed to ongoing enhancement of programmes and student experience and as a result may wish to make changes to programme content, regulations or policies. Where material changes (such as a number of changes to the structure or content of the programme) are made the Academy will draw these changes to the attention of students and prospective students as soon as possible as outlined in **DAL Procedures 4.13 Transfers,**

**Suspensions, Terminations, Withdrawals, Closure and Change of HE Provision.** Changes to policies and regulations that affect students will normally come into effect at the start of an academic year and following the conclusion of approval processes.

Where material changes are made to programmes of study prior to enrolment, the Academy will contact prospective students to provide information and guidance to help them to take an informed decision on their course of action. This will include their right to seek entry to another programme within the Academy for which they may be qualified or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.

In normal circumstances, material changes will not be made to a programme after enrolment, but if this is necessary students will be informed at the earliest opportunity of the changes and wherever possible their views will be taken into account.

The Academy will inform every registered student of any editorial, minor or major changes or variations no later than six weeks of the term preceding the term in which the change or variation shall take place. In the case of changes due to circumstances beyond the Academy's control (e.g. illness, sudden departure or death of a key staff), registered students will be informed as soon as practically possible.

If a student reasonably believes that a **material change** to their programme of study adversely affects them, they may cancel their contract with the Academy as outlined in the terms and conditions.

In such circumstances the Academy will offer advice and information to a student to aid transfer to another institution that offers a suitable alternative programme of study as outlined in the **DAL Procedures 4.13 Transfers, Suspensions, Terminations, Withdrawals, Closure and Change of HE Provision**

The Academy will continue to make changes to programmes during the course of a student's studies in order to improve the quality, enhance the content, and meet the latest requirements of an accrediting body or awarding organisation or in response to student feedback. The Academy will consult with and/or inform students of these changes as appropriate.

Where continuation of study is not negatively impacted upon, it is unlikely that the updating of programme content, regulations and policies will result in the triggering of the Student Protection Plan.

### **Partnership Provision**

The Academy shall continue to undertake thorough due diligence prior to going into a collaborative partnership; the outcomes of the initial due diligence are also monitored annually to assess further risks associated with education delivery. Through its academic partnership agreements, the Academy ensures that there is a contingency plan considering how best to allow students to continue their studies in the event of the collapse of a collaboration agreement. A 'teaching-out' arrangement is the preferred option as it ensures continuation of

study. Transfers and in the worst case scenario - sudden closure- may also be considered. Students will be fully supported in finding arrangements for alternative provision.

### **Refund (and Compensation) Arrangements**

The Academy's Refund of Tuition Fees Policy, **DAL Procedure 4.10 Refund of Tuition Fees**, sets out the provision for refund of fees (and compensation).

The Academy's financial strategy is to ensure there are sufficient cash reserves within the Group of Companies it belongs to (five start restaurant group namely Tas, Ev and Hazev) for directly fee paying students and working capital at any one time to meet its obligations to provide refunds and compensation should the need arises. Students enrolled on programmes under partnership arrangements accessing funding through a partner will be treated under their relevant refund and compensation policy.

The refund policy is applied in a fair and proportionate way ensuring students are not disadvantaged. The Academy complies with OIA and CMA guidance on this matter.

An application for a refund must be made with the Tuition Fee Refund Application form, available from the website here: <https://assets.docklandsacademy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/15130056/DAL-Tuition-Fee-Refund-Application-Form-2021.doc> or in hard copy on request. submitted to the Finance Department. Circumstances in which students can apply for a refund are outlined in **DAL Procedure 4.10 Refund of Tuition Fees**. The tuition fees MAY be refunded in special circumstances. These include, but are not limited to, if;

- a student wishes to cancel a booking and gives two weeks' notice in writing before the start of the course
- a student wishes to cancel an accommodation booking and gives one months' notice before the start of the stay
- a prospective international student has made a deposit of their fees, but then fails to obtain a visa to study at the Academy. In this case the student or his/ her consultant must send scanned copies of their DAL Offer Letter/s, Visa Refusal Letter and passport by e-mail to the Academy for verification
- a prospective international student obtains a visa to study at the Academy, but then, before entry to the UK, decides not to take up the offer of admission
- there are strong compassionate or health grounds, supported by the presentation of suitable evidence

If after enrolment the student decides to withdraw from their course for any other reason, they will not get a refund.

Where the Academy terminates a course which has already started, the student will receive a full refund of all amounts paid.

All other refunds will be subject to deductions for classes already attended and any additional charges already incurred such as examination fees or administration fee.

Refunds will be made to the person or organisation who has made the payment to the Academy, be this the individual learner, a sponsor or the Student Loans Company\*. \*Please

note Refunds for students in receipt of tuitions fee loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC) will be processed directly by our partner college who has direct responsibility to SLC to deal with such matters and NOT the Academy (only applicable to Higher Education students).

For Higher Education courses only:

- The Academy will make payment to learners to cover any additional travel costs incurred by them if they are affected by a change in the delivery location of their course, or will make funding available to offset these additional costs.
- If it is not possible for the Academy to continue to deliver a course, the Academy will make a payment to cover any additional maintenance costs and/or lost time incurred by a learner. The Academy will also make a payment to cover any tuition and/or maintenance costs incurred by a learner where these are of a greater value than they would have incurred had the Academy continued to deliver a course for which they were enrolled.

### **Refund policy for courses purchased directly from the Academy**

This section applies only to students purchasing the course directly from the Academy.

Bookings made remotely (by telephone, email, online except for booking in person at the Academy) may be cancelled within fourteen (14) days of the initial application via the Admissions Team at [info@docklandsacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@docklandsacademy.co.uk) . This 14-day period is called “the cooling off period”.

If you cancel within the cooling off period, you must tell us in writing. Cancellations made by phone will not be accepted. You must keep evidence of your cancellation within the ‘cooling off period’.

For the avoidance of doubt this clause applies only if the student is not physically present at any time throughout the conclusion of the sale. Students will not be entitled to a refund if they cancel their course under this clause after the 14 day period stipulated above.

### **Communicating with Students**

There is a link to the Student Protection Plan on the Academy’s website within the T and Cs.

HE Course handbooks contain information on the Student Protection Plan and where to access it. These are updated and provided to students for each year of their course and explained during induction.

The Academy will continue to ensure that all academic and support staff involved in HE provision are aware of the implications of the consumer protection compliance in general and also the Student Protection Plan (SPP) in particular through the deliberative committee structure (Board of Governance, Academic and Advisory Board and Quality Board), staff meetings, curriculum planning, course modification and closure of programmes and courses processes.

The Academy's Student Protection Plan (SPP) will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with relevant student representative meetings and through the HE committee structure that has student representatives as members. Final approval of the SSP will be by the Academy's Board of Governance that also has student representatives.

The Academy will keep HE students informed through its social media platforms, by formal letters and where possible, through online / face-to-face meetings designed to assist affected students with understanding the nature and implications of such events and the Academy's responses in regard to the Student Protection Plan. The Academy will ensure that affected students are either provided with, or signposted to, independent advice as appropriate to the given situation.