



Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: Matrix College of Counselling and Psychotherapy

Provider's UKPRN:10023453

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Student Protection Plan for the period June 2021 – August 2022

This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures we have in place to protect students in the event of a risk to the continuation of studies. The measures contained in this plan apply to all Matrix students. They are in addition to the protection you have under consumer protection law and do not impinge on your consumer rights.

We commit to:

- *Being open and transparent with you in the event of a risk to the continuation of your studies, informing you as soon as possible if such a risk occurs*
- *Taking reasonable steps to protect your studies and minimise any disruption*
- *Consult with students in a timely manner before deciding to make any substantial change to the course or its delivery*
- *Consult with students and consider their views on this plan*

Matrix College is committed to communicating any changes to you as early as possible, setting out clear information and options. We will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption and to enable you to complete your studies as intended.

We are required by the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) to have a Student Protection Plan, like this, to protect your interests and details the steps we would take where significant material changes had to take place which would alter the quality and/or continuation of study.

We carry out an annual risk assessment to decide how likely material changes (which may affect the continuation of the business or our ability to deliver the course) are to occur.

Risk levels are assessed as high (likely to occur during the academic year), Medium (unlikely to occur during the academic year) or Low (very unlikely to occur during the academic year).

1. Assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students at Matrix

1.1 College Closure (for financial or other reasons)

Risk level: Low

As with other providers there may be an extreme set of events which cause the College to close. These may be triggered by the College becoming insolvent through, for example, falling student demand, becoming no longer financially viable due to loss of government funding, lack of available teaching staff, retirement of the Director with no successor in place.

We consider the possibility of the College closing due to insolvency to be very low. The College has been running for 20 years and have always been able to meet our financial obligations, we pay creditors swiftly. We have a good track record of audited financial statements. Our financial performance is strengthening due to a marked increase in student numbers over the past four years. We have cash reserves to ensure financial security and have no borrowings.

If government funding for student loans is withdrawn, we will work with the relevant authorities to enable us to 'teach out' the current courses.

The risk to the course closing due to low student numbers is also low. We have the highest numbers enrolled for 2020/21 for ten years. We are now the only provider of a counselling degree programme in Norfolk. We are diversifying and are running a new course (Introduction to Counselling Skills) which is very popular.

The risk of closure due to lack of teaching staff is low. We have an excellent reputation and receive a large number of applications when advertising for tutors.

We have a contingency plan in place to manage the sudden departure (through illness or retirement) of the Director

1.2 Venues being no longer available

Risk level: Low

Matrix currently operates from two venues:

Wymondham

We have a 5-year lease on our building in Wymondham, Norfolk. We would have a minimum of six months' notice if the lease was being discontinued. This would give us time to find alternative local premises.

Ipswich

We sublet a venue in Ipswich, Suffolk. We have an agreed contract with our landlord to continue to use the venue until July 2021 from which time we will cease running a programme in Ipswich and all provision will be in Wymondham. We consider the risk that the venue would be unavailable small.

1.3 Loss of validation

Risk level: Low

Matrix has a longstanding relationship with our validator, and it is highly unlikely that there will be a change of validating partner.

If we did lose validation, we would offer, where possible, the chance to move to another training provider with the relevant accreditation to protect your student experience

1.4 Key Programme Lead are unavailable

Risk level: Medium

This may happen as a result of long-term sickness, death or leaving Matrix College.

We may replace the Programme Lead with another experience tutor at Matrix to ensure minimal disruption to your studies and support. Alternatively, we may recruit a suitably qualified, external tutor to take on the role.

1.5 Programme changes and amendments

Risk level: Medium

The programme and modules are reviewed regularly. Our latest validation review was in early 2018 we received five commendations for the programme. It is possible that the curriculum may alter slightly over the duration of the six-year validation agreement in line with current thinking in counselling. The possibility of the programme altering significantly at the next revalidation event in six years is medium, we may make changes to teaching material or assessment methods to reflect current thinking in counselling and psychotherapy. If any significant changes were to occur, we would consult with the students prior to any change taking place and would only implement changes if a majority of the student population were in favour.

2. Measures we have put in place to mitigate the risks that we consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

2.1 College Closure

Cancellation prior to the start of an academic year

Should Matrix take the decision to close it will endeavour to give prospective students at least 8 weeks' notice.

We will then investigate alternative courses available and offer to transfer students to an alternative, appropriate programme with an equivalent qualification. We would discuss the proposed transfer with each individual student.

Please see the Matrix College Refund and Compensation Policy <https://matrix.ac.uk/compliance/> for further details

Cancelling the course during the course of study

It is Matrix policy that should the College decide to close we will teach out the course a student is enrolled on. The business plan is structured in such a way that there is sufficient income to cover the costs of teaching during the duration of a student's studies. We have sufficient, flexible staff to cover all teaching.

If it was not possible for Matrix to teach out the courses, the contingency plan with Middlesex University (detailed in the Memorandum of Cooperation) would come into effect.

If, for any reason, this was not possible we would support students to transfer to an alternative, appropriate, local programme with an equivalent qualification.

Any arrangements associated with course closure would be managed in close association with Middlesex University our validating partner.

2.2 Loss of venue

We have a good relationship with both our Landlords and in both cases would be given ample warning if the venues were to become unavailable.

In the unlikely event one becomes unavailable we would acquire alternative accommodation of the same, or higher, standard as the current premises within 10 miles of the current locations. We have insurance to cover the cost of this.

The process would be carefully managed by the Operational Team, would be carefully planned and would involve consultation with students.

We would maintain a sufficient cash balance to be able to provide a travel contribution if it is necessary in accordance with the Matrix College Refund and Compensation policy.

2.3 Loss of validation

The current validation agreement with Middlesex University is for six years (revalidation is due 2024).

Matrix and Middlesex University maintain strong ties to ensure the continued smooth running of our successful relationship. In the unlikely event of validation being withdrawn Middlesex University is bound by contract to give us 12 months' notice. We would ensure a period of transition and ensure that the obligations set out in the Memorandum of Cooperation and the Partnership Agreement are fulfilled.

If validation was lost we would endeavour to obtain validation from an appropriate, alternative University. If this was not possible we would help students transfer onto to an alternative, appropriate, local programme with an equivalent qualification.

2.3 Loss of registration with the Office for Students

If registration with the Office for Students is withdrawn we would apply for 'teach out' designation allowing students in receipt of student loans access to funding for the duration of the course. Our business plan allows for loss of designation and we would be able to teach out all current courses.

If teach out designation was not possible students would be helped to transfer onto an alternative course with a designated provider.

If loss of designation occurs Matrix does not anticipate the closure of the College and has a business plan for that eventuality.

2.4 Programme Changes

Amendments to the programme will be considered by the Academic Board and passed to the Operational committee for approval. The Academic Board has student members who are involved in the decision making of the Board.

Where a significant change to a module is proposed approval is sought from the students (via the student reps). If a consensus is achieved any proposal will be forwarded to Middlesex University for approval.

We will inform students of any material changes to the curriculum at least two months prior to the start of the new academic year.

Communication with students about this Student Protection Plan

This Student Protection Plan is available to current students on Moodle and will be available to prospective students on the Matrix website.

Staff are made aware of the Student Protection Plan in their induction and it is available to them on Moodle.

The Student Protection Plan is reviewed yearly. Students will be encouraged to take part in this review via their student reps. Informal discussions with students and the Operational team may also occur and these will form part of the review process.

If we need to implement measures in our Student Protection Plan we will use the Programme Lead team to communicate with and support students.

Advice and support will be offered by the management team who will also arrange to have independent advice available (with support from Middlesex University).