



Student Protection Plan

Ada, National College for Digital Skills

Document Control

Version	Purpose/Changes	Author	Date
2025-26 v1	Updated to incorporate BCP updates and campus developments	John Simpson	20.03.26

Date Approved:	02.04.26
Approved By:	Academic Board
Document Owner:	HE Quality and Standards Lead
Date of Next Review:	June 2026

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1. Introduction

This Student Protection Plan (SPP) sets out how Ada, The National College for Digital Skills (“Ada”), will protect the interests of students should any risks arise that could affect the continuation or quality of their studies. As a specialist Further Education College dedicated to developing digital talent and widening participation in the digital and tech sector, Ada is committed to creating a stable, supportive, and inclusive learning environment in which students can thrive. The SPP forms part of that commitment.

The purpose of this plan is to provide clear reassurance to current and prospective students that Ada has carefully considered the types of disruption that could occur, whether relating to course, staffing, facilities, or wider organisational change and has established practical measures to prevent, mitigate, or manage those risks. In doing so, the plan aims to ensure that students can continue their education with minimal interruption and with continued access to the high-quality teaching and support expected from the College.

The SPP outlines the specific risks relevant to Ada’s provision, evaluates their likelihood and potential impact, and explains the actions the College would take should these risks materialise. These actions may include safeguarding continuity of teaching and learning, ensuring access to essential resources, providing alternative study options where appropriate, and communicating promptly and transparently with students.

2. Our Commitment to You

- **Being open, transparent, and timely** in communicating with students where any risk to their studies arises, providing clear information about what is happening and what it means to you.
- **Taking all reasonable steps** to protect students’ ability to continue and complete their studies in the event of programme discontinuation, significant programme change, closure of a teaching location, or, in extreme circumstances, closure of the College.

- **Consulting students, employers and relevant stakeholders** before implementing substantial changes, and ensuring students' views are considered as part of formal decision-making processes.
- **Putting in tailored support** and protective measures that take account of individual student needs, including reasonable adjustments and well-being support where required.
- **Reviewing this Plan regularly** and communicating it, and material revisions, to students and employer bodies on an annual basis.

3. Terminology

For the purposes of this Student Protection Plan, Ada uses terminology that is aligned with guidance and expectations set out by the Office for Students (OfS). This ensures clarity, consistency, and transparency for students, staff, and external stakeholders.

- **Material change:** Refers to any change that could reasonably be expected to have a significant impact on students. This may include, but is not limited to, the discontinuation or suspension of a programme, substantial changes to programme content or delivery methods, changes to mode or location of study, loss of validation, or changes arising from financial, staffing or regulatory pressures.
- **Market Exit:** Refers to circumstances in which the College is required, or decides, to cease delivery of higher education provision. This could occur because of insolvency, withdrawal of OfS registration, loss of validation, or other extreme events.
- **Teach out:** Describes arrangements put in place to allow existing students to complete their programme of study, or an equivalent award, despite a programme being discontinued or the College preparing to exit the market. Teach-out arrangements will be designed to minimise disruption and maintain academic standards, with oversight from the validating partner where applicable.
- **Risk to continuation of study:** Refers to any event or decision that may affect a student's ability to progress, complete their studies, or receive the intended learning experience. Ada undertakes regular risk assessments and scenario planning to identify such risks early and to implement proportionate mitigation.

4. Assessment of the Range of Risks to the Continuation of Study

4.1. Risk Related Financial Stability

Ada has been providing high-quality digital career-focused education and training for almost 10 years; the risk that Ada is unable to fulfill its obligations and duties to you is low because our financial performance is good. Ada recognises that entering higher education is a significant investment in

terms of time and commitment.

4.2. Risk to Continuation of Study Due to Campus Closure

The risk to continuation of study due to campus closure is very low because our established hybrid teaching model allows for a seamless transition to full online provision should physical campus access be restricted. This ensures that students can continue their learning without interruption regardless of physical facility availability.

As our provision is solely focused on the digital sector, our portfolio of programmes is small and strategically aligned to market demand. Furthermore, our degree programmes are used as part of our integrated degree apprenticeship programmes, meaning the risk that we close a course is extremely low.

4.3. Premises Security and Emergency Planning

Ada operates from two campuses: London Victoria and Ancoats Manchester. Ada occupies both buildings under a 25-year lease, which was secured from the Department for Education on terms that ensure long-term stability. The risk that students will be unable to complete their programme due to unplanned closure of buildings for emergency measures is also highly unlikely.

The College has extensive Health and Safety policies and procedures, active fire risk management and Estates utility resilience to ensure that risks to buildings are minimised. Should a rare incident occur, the College's business continuity plan is brought into effect. The College has Business Interruption insurance cover to help fund the costs of such a scenario.

4.4. Pandemic and Major Public Health Risks

In the event of a major public health event, such as a pandemic, the College would follow all national and local guidance issued by relevant governmental bodies. As a digital-focused college, Ada possesses the core capacity and resources to rapidly pivot to and sustain online delivery to ensure the continuity of study while the Major Incident Plan or business continuity arrangements are in operation.

4.5. Key Risks to Course Continuation and Qualifications

- **Minor Changes:** The College may make minor changes to course material, content, or mode of study (timetable adjustments/module sequence) to enhance the learning experience, provided these changes do not detrimentally affect the overall educational outcome.
- **Major Changes:** The College reserves the right to make substantial variations to a course, mode of study, or subjects offered only when reasonably considered necessary due to unavoidable circumstances outside the College's control. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, changes in legislation or governmental funding/policy, the departure of key academic personnel,

or low student demand that makes the continuation of the course financially unviable. In all cases of substantial variation, the College will consult affected students in advance and provide appropriate options, advice, and support to ensure continuation of study.

- **Suspension or closure of a course (Internal Factors):** The College reserves the right to cancel courses due to internal circumstances such as insufficient enrolment.
- **Loss of key staff:** Academic staff have a three-month notice period, allowing time for replacement hiring.
- **Withdrawal of OU validation (Qualification Risk):** Ada does not hold its own degree awarding powers; therefore, our programmes are validated by The Open University, which acts as the awarding body under a formal Approval and Validation Agreement. This Agreement sets out clear provisions for termination. The agreement stipulates that the parties will take all reasonable steps to ensure students are able to complete their programmes or transfer to a suitable alternative programme elsewhere.
- **Market Exit (Winding up of the College):** Triggered by extreme events like insolvency. The College would immediately enter a teach-out phase where possible.

5. Mitigation Measures for Identified Risks

Risk	Mitigation Measure
Closure of part or all the College’s premises temporarily	The College will invoke its GSB (Gold-Silver-Bronze) command structure to manage the incident. We will immediately pivot to remote delivery via Google Classroom/Teams. For prolonged disruptions (>28 days), the strategy involves relocating to alternative local sites or partner employer spaces. Comprehensive Business Interruption insurance is maintained to fund these transitions.
Material alteration to a programme during the academic year	Substantial variations are avoided mid-cohort. Any significant changes—such as curriculum structure or core delivery modes—are typically reserved for periodic revalidation cycles with The Open University (OU). We commit to a transparent consultation process

	with students and employer bodies. All material alterations must be formally scrutinised by the Academic Board and the OU to ensure academic standards are protected.
Suspension or closure of a programme	In the unlikely event of course discontinuation, our primary strategy is "teach-out," ensuring all enrolled students can complete their studies at Ada. For prospective students, we issue immediate notifications and provide personalized guidance to identify suitable alternative programmes, either within Ada or with another provider.
Loss of key staff	Academic staff contracts include a three-month notice period, providing a buffer for recruitment. The Silver Team (Tactical) will coordinate immediate external hiring while utilising a pre-approved bank of visiting lecturers and internal staff to maintain delivery and assessment schedules without detriment to the student experience.
IT System Failure or Cyber Incident	Ada has a 3-hour Recovery Time Objective (RTO) for critical applications (REMS, Google, Finance). We maintain a reciprocal stock of laptops at each campus (London stocks for Manchester and vice-versa) to be deployed immediately to students in need. If primary communication (email) fails, the College utilizes the PageOne SMS service as a resilient secondary notification tool.
Disruption to Examinations	During any disruptive incident, the College gives absolute priority to securing an alternative Approved Exam Centre for learners sitting external assessments to ensure no delay in qualification achievement.

<p>Withdrawal of OU validation</p>	<p>Our partnership with the OU is governed by a formal agreement requiring both parties to take all reasonable steps to protect students. If terminated, we will cooperate to either enable a teach-out phase at Ada or support a smooth search for another validated provider, ensuring students graduate with their intended qualification.</p>
<p>Market Exit (Winding up of the College)</p>	<p>Recruitment is suspended immediately. The Gold Team (Strategic) will work under OU guidance to facilitate a teach-out or assist in transfers to another UK institution. Ada commits to providing all necessary academic transcripts and administrative support to ensure a smooth transition for every student.</p>

6. Refund and Compensation Policy

Ada’s current higher education programmes are primarily delivered as degree apprenticeships, which are funded via the Apprenticeship Levy and direct employer contributions. Consequently, specific financial protections, refund mechanisms, and liabilities are captured within the formal Training Services Agreements held with each individual employer. All such arrangements are managed in strict accordance with Skills England rules and relevant funding regulations to ensure the continued protection of both the learner and the sponsoring organisation.

7. Communication with Staff and Students about the Student Protection Plan

7.1. To students and applicants

- The full Student Protection Plan is available on the College website (ada.ac.uk/policies).
- The plan is included in all student handbooks and is accessible to students via the College’s Apprentice Information Portal.

7.2. To staff

- The plan is communicated to staff through Higher Education (HE) fora, staff development sessions, and curriculum planning meetings.
- The requirements of the plan are considered during the initial validation and revalidation of all

higher education programmes.

7.3. Review and Consultation

The Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the HE Quality Committee and submitted to the Open University (OU). The College ensures student voice and representation in its decision-making, which will be through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The College commits to communicating this plan and any revisions to it annually to the student and employer bodies.

The table below summarises the College’s core commitment regarding communication and the support to students who may be directly affected should the Student Protection Plan need to be implemented.

Aspect	Statement/Arrangement
<p>Communicating with affected students should the SPP be implemented</p>	<p>The College is committed to communicating material changes as early as possible, with clear information and options. Where material changes are made to a course, the College will provide initial communication that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An explanation of the proposed changes. 2. Details of the implementation date. 3. How the changes will affect you. 4. How to access further information, advice, and guidance. 5. How to tell us your preferred option (where applicable).
<p>Support and Guidance</p>	<p>The information, advice, and guidance offered will cover wellbeing, mental health, counselling, and disability support. Information will be tailored to students' needs and circumstances. Students will be made aware of external information, guidance, and advice such as from the validating partner, the OU. In the case of a significant change like the risk of closure (Market Exit), the College would involve the OU in the development of information, advice, and guidance, as well as all related action planning.</p>