

Student protection plan for the period 2023/24

Provider's name: American College of Thessaloniki

Provider's UKPRN:

Legal address: 17, Sevenidi Str., Pylea, Thessaloniki

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: studentservices@act.edu

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students, how those risks may differ based on your students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

The risks to the continuation of study for our students arise from both internal events and external events outside our control.

Internal events:

The American College of Thessaloniki (ACT) maintains established business continuity plans and arrangements that deal with a range of events. We frequently run test exercises to make sure that our plans are fit for purpose. These exercises include post-hoc evaluation and identification of learning.

The risk that the ACT campus closes is a relatively low as it is a high-esteemed college in Thessaloniki, having an extensive track record of delivering successful programmes and running its business effectively. It also recently devised a strategic plan covering the next 5 years.

The risk of financial failure is low since ACT is in a solid financial status with a high level of financial reserves and diverse income sources (tuition, donors etc.).

The risk that ACT decides to discontinue a specific programme on timescales that directly affect its students is low because all plans for course discontinuations allow registered students to complete their studies. In case of a programme discontinuation, recruitment will be closed and current student cohorts will follow a 'teach-out' scheme. In the past, ACT has successfully managed such processes.

The risk that we discontinue or do not offer programmes due to insufficient enrolment is low. Our programme offerings are regularly reviewed and we ensure that they are in-line with student demands. In the unlikely event of low recruitment, ACT would consider closing a programme to future cohorts.

The risk that the qualification you obtain is significantly different from that for which you enrolled is low because of our approach to programme development and approval, and our approach to managing course discontinuation, as described above. We have the right to proceed with minor adjustments/improvements to our programmes and specific module content each year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback. We seek student consultation for our review and quality enhancement processes and we make sure that planned changes are communicated in a timely and helpful manner. Minor amendments of this sort, do not trigger student protection measures.

The risk that ACT stops teaching a discipline is low. All programmes are well established with clear demand. There is good staff coverage in terms of teaching capacity and capability at ACT, which is closely monitored by the Open University.

The abrupt loss of key staff, academic or administrative, may jeopardize the quality and sustainability of programme delivery, so the impact of this loss is moderate. The likelihood of this risk occurring is also moderate. However, the College mitigates this risk by investing significant resources and time to ensure that staff are well supported and motivated. It also tries to ensure that there are backup staff available to cover temporary staff shortages.

External events:

The risk that we lose the right to provide a programme is low. We have a long-established track record of offering high quality provision and established relationships with relevant professional accrediting bodies in both Europe and the United States.

The risk that ACT ceases operating through no choice of its own is very low. In this case, discussions would be held with other degree-awarding organisations in Greece who offer similar programmes to provide opportunities for students to complete their studies. We have business continuity plans in place which are regularly reviewed. We have independent scrutiny of our activities through our Board of Trustees and independent external auditors.

The risk that staff recruitment and/or student enrolment are negatively impacted as a result of UK's exit from the EU is low. The Greek Ministry has made it clear that validation agreements will not be affected by Brexit as the UK is now considered a 'third country' and the legislation covers such cases. This risk is assessed and reviewed as a part of our risk management process.

2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

In case we are unable to deliver programmes in the next years, our immediate response would be to seek those student protection measures that are most easily within our control (see below).

In the event that the risk materializes, we will take one or more of the following measures to protect students' continuity of study.

1. whenever possible, we will make arrangements to 'teach out' our current students in case of a voluntary closing of a programme. In this way, we commit to ensuring that programmes of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students within existing timeframes determined by programme and our regulations, even though the programme is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.
2. where this is not possible, we will offer alternatives, either utilizing a different mode (e.g. distance learning, etc.). In case this option is not possible, we will support students in seeking another provider to enable them to continue their programme, utilizing student transfer arrangements.
3. where students are studying on programmes which are not readily available locally or nationally then we will investigate alternative options which may include internal or external programme transfer.

These measures may be brought into play at any time, if, for example, doing so would reduce the impact or likelihood of any interruption to studies.

3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

In the event that the college is no longer able to preserve continuation of study, policies relating to refunds and compensation will be available on the ACT's website (www.act.edu) as this would be the first place students should make enquiries too.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

We will publicize our student protection plan to current and future students by making the plan available on our website and referencing it appropriately in our communications with students during the recruitment and admissions process.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose programme changes by including a reference to the Student Protection Plan in our programme approval and amendment documentation.

We will review the Plan annually and will regularly seek views on this plan from the Student Government Association (SGA) as part of our student engagement process. Any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, should be referred to the Associate Dean for Administration & Student Affairs.

We will inform students of any material changes which may affect their studies in a timely manner. Should the student protection plan need to be triggered, students will be notified by the Associate Dean for Administration & Student Affairs (or delegate) via email. We commit to giving our students the maximum amount of notice of any changes, at least 12 weeks prior to the intended dates of programme change or closure where this is possible.

If we need to implement the measures in our Student Protection Plan we will use established mechanisms operated through Student Services to support students collectively and individually.

Advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the Associate Dean for Administration & Student Affairs (or delegate). Additional advice and support will be available from Director of Student Services (or delegate).