

The London Interdisciplinary School

Student Protection Plan

The welfare of our students is of utmost importance to us. We're a new higher education institution, and any new enterprise carries risks. This document describes the provisions we've put in place to ensure that these risks are kept to a minimum, so that students and prospective students of LIS can be confident that our institution is viable and sustainable; that it will deliver value for money and an exceptional positive student experience; and that our students will leave us with a high-calibre degree, strong work experience, and an excellent employer network. This document also sets out what we would do to protect our students in the unlikely worst-case scenario that the School is forced to close.

Our financial viability and sustainability

Up until we accept students through our doors in Autumn 2020, we'll be reliant on private investment from companies and individuals to establish ourselves. We've planned our investment timelines so that all the funds we'll need to open to students will be agreed by January 2020, which is the closing date for LIS applications and for UCAS. Therefore, prior to prospective students making any decisions about university choices, we'll have secure funding in place to ensure that we'll have all the resources we need to receive our founding cohort and give them an exceptional student experience.

Once we've opened in Autumn 2020, our main income will be from student fees (which will be the same as those charged by other UK universities) and income from our Professional Development arm.

Student numbers

Our planned student intake numbers are modest, at roughly 120 students per year in our first three years of operation. This is a very small fraction of a potential half a million students expected to apply for university places for the year 2020/21. In 2022, we aim to have a Tier 4 licence, so that we can open our doors to international students, which will not only significantly increase our pool of potential applicants, but will also increase our fee income (as we will charge international students £15,000 per year in fees, in line with other UK universities). From 2023/24, we aim to increase our intake to roughly 240 students per year; in the context of other universities, this will still be an exceptionally small student body.

We are targeting bright, high-potential students that are excited to explore new higher education options. Academic high-performers (those who achieve at least AAB or equivalent) make up about 15% of those applying for university—or 80,000 students. In fact, the pool we'll be drawing from will be much larger than this, as we are aiming to enrol a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not achieve high academic grades but have the passion and potential to succeed on our programme. Attracting 120 students from this large potential pool, with a view to growing that number steadily over the coming years is, we believe, achievable.

To achieve this goal, we are conducting an intensive outreach programme to recruit potential students. As at the end of June 2019, we had already visited 50 schools, engaged roughly 2,500 students and 203 teachers, and conducted two Discovery Days (Open Days) for 75 students; and are scheduled to visit a further 76 schools between July and November.

The UK higher education market is crowded and competitive; but we believe that our unique problem-solving focused interdisciplinary degree, together with our programme of guaranteed, paid internships with world-

class organisations such as McKinsey and Virgin, marks us out from the crowd. We know that students want to leave university with the skills, experience and networks to enable them to succeed in a competitive jobs market; and this is the primary focus of our degree.

Professional Development

Our Professional Development programmes will provide LIS's second major stream of income. The Professional Development market is worth \$70bn annually worldwide, and the expectations of this market are rising: nearly half of Millennials—who will represent 75% of the workforce by 2025—say they are likely to leave their jobs because they're not learning quickly enough. The Professional Development market is not only very large and growing; there is strong demand for new, innovative programmes. LIS is uniquely well-placed to deliver these programmes: we have excellent links with employers through our undergraduate partnerships programme, and have the opportunity to be the only accredited, classroom-based provider of interdisciplinary leadership training in the sector. We are therefore confident that our Professional Development provision will thrive and support the sustainability of the School.

Our teaching and learning

Our aim is to deliver a world-class teaching and learning experience to our students. This will be contingent upon us:

- Recruiting the right staff to provide excellent interdisciplinary teaching;
- Ensuring that annual paid, structured internships are in place with world-class organisations for all of our students;
- Ensuring that we keep academic standards and quality of our programme very high;
- Providing a fit-for-purpose site for the School;
- Ensuring that we maintain the validation of our degree.

Recruiting the right staff

Our course will be delivered by:

- Full-time Expert Teachers, responsible for student progress;
- World-class Content Experts, hired for specific teaching sessions;
- Role Models—practitioners from a range of industries, integrated in a variety of ways, whether it's in workshops, extended Q&A sessions, or in the commissioning of industry problems for our students to solve.

We'll open in 2020 with ten full-time Expert Teachers, who will come from a broad range of backgrounds, including doctorate-level academia, teaching, consulting and executive coaching. The available pool for recruitment is large, and there is therefore very low risk that we will be unable to recruit effectively for our small number of positions. We are already hiring these Expert Teachers and will aim to have six confirmed by Autumn 2019, working with us initially on a part-time basis to help us refine our curriculum.

The risk that we'll be unable to recruit the required number of Content Experts is very low. These will be world-class academics, hired from a range of universities for specific teaching sessions as required. We're committed to recruiting world-class academics, but aren't dependent on specific individuals, as the subject matter relates to core subject knowledge and is not highly specialised (for example, the LIS programme will include principles of coding in Technology, and scientific modelling approaches to supply and demand in Energy).

We have strong confidence in our ability to provide Role Models. The pool of potential Role Models is very large and flexible, given the range of sectors we'll cover in the programme (Education, Energy, Food, Safety, Health). The founding team at LIS has exceptionally strong connections into industry and our employer partners have already committed to supplying Role Models to support our teaching and learning.

Putting internships in place

One of the ways in which we're different to other higher education providers is that we will offer guaranteed, meaningful, paid internships at world-class organisations every year. Our ability to do this relies on us developing partnership relationships with leading organisations across a range of sectors. We have a dedicated Partnerships Director overseeing the development of these partners, and have already signed up thirteen partners, including Virgin, McKinsey, Innocent, Funding Circle, Frontline, and the Metropolitan Police, with the aim of securing 50 in total by the time we open our doors to students. LIS's founding team has strong experience in delivering these kinds of internships, including developing an internship programme at School21 for 14-19 year olds with over 60 different organisations, including organisations such as Salesforce and KPMG.

Securing high academic standards

We are in the process of becoming registered as a higher education provider by the Office for Students, and as part of this registration process are being required to undergo an intensive assessment of our academic quality and standards and the processes we have in place to maintain these. We expect to be registered with the Office for Students before the end of 2019—ahead of the January 2020 closing date for applications

Our prospective validation partner—a leading university in the UK—is currently conducting a similarly rigorous appraisal of our processes for securing and maintaining excellent academic quality. We expect to receive a decision on whether or not our institution and degree will be validated by this validating party by January 2020.

We have a strong governance structure and a number of governance and student feedback processes to ensure that we are constantly reviewing and continuously improving the quality of our academic programme and non-academic facilities and services.

Providing a fit-for-purpose site

Our campus will be in London, within Zone 2, so we can be close to our employer partners and well-networked into the City. Our property strategy has two phases:

- For the first three years of operation (2020/21-2022/23), we'll rent a building in London Zone 2 while our student body is smaller;
- From 2023/34, we'll move into our permanent home, also within London Zone 2.

The School has been having active conversations with a dozen site providers, and has now confirmed a shortlist of three sites which meet our needs and are keen to work with us. We plan to sign a rental agreement with one of these in early Autumn 2019; we'll fit out the space from Spring 2020 and move in during Summer 2020. The three sites include:

- A greenfield site in south-east London, alongside other universities;
- An existing site in Zone 2;
- Our current site in Whitechapel (plus an extension)—a fully serviced space in the heart of the East End with capacity for staff, administrators, and teaching and learning. This is our contingency plan should we fail to secure one of the other sites.

Whichever site we select, we will sign a lease to cover the first three years of our operation. In the unlikely event that our lease is broken, we will relocate to one of the many other options within Zone 2.

Maintaining our validation partnership

Our aim is for our degree to be validated by our validating partner—a leading UK university—by October 2020. We will work closely with them to ensure that we maintain a strong, collaborative partnership, and that the validation of our programme is secure, so that our students can rely on exiting the programme with a high calibre degree.

Within the next two years, we plan to apply for, and attain, degree awarding powers from the Office for Students, so that all LIS students receive an LIS-accredited degree, instead of one validated by a validating partner. We do not foresee any meaningful difference in the design and delivery of our degree should it be validated through LIS's own degree awarding powers, or by a validating partner. Therefore, when we do attain our own degree awarding powers, we'll give our students the opportunity to transfer from the third-party validated programme to the LIS validated programme.

Whether our programme is validated by LIS (through our own degree awarding powers), or by a validating partner, we have a range of measures in place to ensure the quality of academic delivery. These include an academic governance structure and a set of processes designed to assure LIS's Board of Directors on the quality of our curriculum, teaching and learning. This structure and processes are in place to ensure that any validating arrangement is secure and is at low risk of being revoked.

How we'll protect students in the unlikely event of School closure

The major risk facing any new higher education provider is that of institutional failure—the inability of the provider to raise sufficient funds to cover its costs. For LIS, as a single-programme provider, institutional failure and programme failure are one and the same. We have sought to minimise this risk by ensuring that we start small and grow steadily; in our business planning, we have been conservative on student numbers.

In the unlikely event of institutional failure, we'll put in place provisions to ensure that our students are able to continue their studies and complete a high-calibre degree, where possible within the original timeframe.

We will have several information points relating to numbers of prospective students throughout the admissions cycle (e.g. number of applications in January, number of offers in March). This means that we'll know well before our course begins in any given October if we are unlikely to recruit the necessary number of students to our programme. We'll use this information, together with our progress on fundraising, to make a Stop/Go decision about the following intake of undergraduate students in March of every year.

At a given March milestone, should we be in a position to 'Go' (i.e. proceed with an intake in the following October) but expect lower than target student numbers, we'll reduce our costs to accommodate a smaller course.

In the worst-case scenario, should LIS be forced to make a 'Stop' decision, we will close the course for the following year. The impact of this on prospective students should be low, since we operate a direct admissions process, which means that students can apply to us without sacrificing any of their UCAS choices.

In the unlikely scenario that we will have to close while students are already undertaking their degree course at LIS, we will phase closure to protect successive cohorts and ensure that the majority of enrolled students are "taught out" at LIS. The exhibit below summarises our approach

Exhibit: What happens in the event of LIS closure?

Academic year of students	Policy in event of mid-degree closure
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach out Year 1 - Support student in transferring to alternative provider to continue studies from Year 2 - In event that student can only transfer into Year 1 at an alternative provider (either because they cannot find a place in Year 2 or because we are unable to “teach out” Year 1), student may make a claim for a refund of tuition fees and compensation under LIS’s Refund and Compensation Policy - Students may also make a claim for compensation under LIS’s Refund and Compensation Policy if they incur any other additional costs as a result of transfer
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach out Years 2 and 3 and award degree. Students will be given the opportunity to transfer to another programme for Year 3 if preferred, but LIS is committed to teaching out Year 3 if there is student demand for this. - In the event that “teach out” is not possible, support student in transferring to alternative provider at Year 2; student may make a claim for a refund of tuition fees and/or compensation under LIS’s Refund and Compensation Policy
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teach out Year 3 and award degree - In the event that “teach out” is not possible, support student in transferring to alternative provider and Year 2; student may make a claim for a refund of tuition fees and/or compensation under LIS’s Refund and Compensation Policy

Years 2 and 3

In the event of a decision to close, we will operate a “teach-out” policy for Year 2 and Year 3 students, which means we’ll deliver all modules of our degree through to graduation as planned, as well as all promised paid internships. Students will continue to have access to student finance as they complete their studies, and will be awarded their degree at the end of the course, within the original timeframe. We’ll fund the costs of teaching out through student fees, capital freed up by disbanding our marketing and student recruitment functions, and a reduction in staff numbers in line with the reduction in the student body. During the teach-out period, we would operate a phased closure of our ongoing operations; this might include a relocation to a smaller site, which we would endeavour to find close to its existing site.

An exceptional circumstance in which teach-out may not be feasible is if any major issues arose in relation to the standards or quality of LIS’s academic offering, and therefore its ability to offer a validated degree qualification to its students. In the unlikely event that this arises, we would seek to protect continuation of study by supporting students in transferring to other institutions. In practice this might mean students in Years 2 and 3 having go back to the beginning of Year 2 on their transfer course (in line with most course transfer rules). Should this be the case, students may make a claim under LIS’s Refund and Compensation policy for refunds of tuition fees and compensation for additional costs incurred as a result of transfer (e.g., additional years of tuition fees, additional years of maintenance and accommodation costs).

Year 1

For Year 1 students, we will teach-out the remainder of the year (again drawing on capital freed up by the disbanding of marketing and student recruitment activities and the cutting of staffing and rent costs), and will

ensure that each student is given an appropriate set of transferrable credits as well as a clear, transferrable grade that has been moderated by independent, external examiners. These credits will be developed in line with the framework set by the designated body for quality assurance of UK Higher Education—the QAA—and will be transferrable to other UK university degrees. Students will be able to transfer to alternative institutions through UCAS and retain access to their student finance.

Because LIS’s offering is unique and offers a mix of humanities and science training, we anticipate that the transfer degree courses will include liberal arts, humanities and sciences programmes. We will support the transfer of these students by offering rigorous, timely, individual support through the UCAS application process. Given the range of destinations likely for our students, we would ensure our support is tailored to each individual student. Our London location increases the likelihood of students finding local options.

Specifically, we would support students through the transfer process by:

- Funding student UCAS fees.
- Providing dedicated support to the students affected, including advising individuals on course transfer (including suitable universities and courses), providing guidance on application, providing support in demonstrating the compatibility of LIS’s courses with the desired transfer course(s), and offering rapid feedback on personal statements.
- Providing a timely and detailed academic reference for each student by a senior member of faculty that has been involved in the student’s learning, as well as a reference from visiting academic faculty where possible.
- Ensuring that partner organisations provide employer references based on students’ performance on their internships (this will be a condition of our partnership agreements with these organisations).

In the event that Year 1 students cannot find a place at an alternative provider to continue their studies from Year 2; or in the unlikely event that we are unable to “teach out” the year and they are forced to start new degrees from Year 1, students may make a claim for a refund of tuition fees and compensation for additional costs incurred under our Refund and Compensation Policy.

As an additional safety-net, discussions are being progressed with other higher education institutions to identify potential for transferring students in the event of institutional failure, where it is reasonable and feasible to do so.

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1	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Experience)	09/2018	Original draft
2	Ed Fidoe (Chief Executive)	09/2018	Adjustments to wording
3	Jasper Joyce (Director of Strategy & Operations)	09/2018	Adjustments to wording
4	Chris Persson (Co-founder)	09/2018	Adjustments to wording
5	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Experience)	03/06/2019	Adapted into a Student-facing document; more detail on what students can expect in the event of course closure, LIS closure, site closure.
6	Ed Fidoe (Chief Executive)	25/06/2019	Adjustments to wording, update of outreach numbers
7	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Experience)	10/08/2019	Minor adjustments to wording