AOU
الجامعة العربية المفتوحة
Arab Open University

Student Protection Plan

Academic Year 2026- 2027

AOU Student Protection Plan

Student Protection Plan for the year 2026/2027

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AOU is committed to providing the best possible learning experience to its students throughout their study period and until graduation. It is keen to maintain a sustainable provision with the minimum possible disruption. As part of its normal functioning, AOU conducts risk assessments on regular basis to update its contingency plans and to ensure the continuity of its services to all stakeholders.

1. **An Assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students**

In the following we provide an account on the range of risks that may disrupt the university business and the continuation of studies.

a. **Risk of Institutional Failure:**

AOU has operated across its established branches/campuses since 2002 with minimal disruption to studies. Strong governance and sustained financial resources keep the risk of institutional failure or inability to operate low. The University's financial performance is reasonably satisfactory, supported by sound financial policies. Regular audits through the Board of Trustees' Audit Committee ensure that appropriate action plans and contingency measures are in place to address financial issues. External audits provide additional assurance of the University's financial position. Its multi-campus structure enables larger branches/campuses or the University's common pool to support branches with lower revenue. Insurance policies cover all University premises, assets, students and staff.

The University's governance structure ensures efficient management of its overall provision and effective risk control to support institutional sustainability.

b. Risk of not being able to offer validated programmes/tracks:

Programme viability

The risk of being unable to deliver validated programmes is low, supported by sustained academic quality, strong demand at most campuses and adequate student enrolment.

Programme oversight and planning

The University closely oversees programme delivery and regularly monitors compliance with higher education requirements in each branch/campus country and with OUVP requirements. Before introducing any undergraduate or postgraduate programme, it conducts a detailed feasibility study to assess the programme's viability, sustainability and prospects for success.

Pathway or track disruption

The risk of being unable to offer a particular programme pathway or track is also low. If this occurs, the impact will be limited to the affected AOU branch/campus, and remedial action will follow the local Ministry of Higher Education's requirements and conditions.

c. The risk of closure of study centres:

The risk of closure of study centres is generally low, should a decision be taken to stop operations in a specific study centre, the university will assist students in relocating to another study centre or to the main campus. However, the Arab Open University blended learning system provides a high degree of flexibility where students do not have to attend regularly to campus and 75% of their studies are managed through distant learning. The students can access the online learning management system, student information system and online support services from anywhere at their convenience.

d. The risk of closing an AOU Branch/Campus:

Closure risk and policy

The risk of closing a local branch/campus is low. The University conducts regular performance reviews, scenario analyses and internal audits for each AOU branch/campus. Any closure will be managed in accordance with the University's approved policy.

Risk monitoring and prevention

The University's governing bodies closely monitor AOU branches/campuses as part of routine oversight. Each branch conducts an annual SWOT analysis and works with senior management at headquarters (HQ) and other stakeholders to address potential threats and take appropriate precautionary measures.

Reporting and governance oversight

The AOU biannual report supports effective oversight of branches and HQ offices and is also submitted to the Board of Trustees' Performance Monitoring Unit (PMU). The Board's audit and executive committees meet twice a year. Together, these processes help identify and address challenges and risks at an early stage.

Each Branch/Campus is locally licensed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Therefore, they are also subject to scrutiny through the cyclic quality review visits for licensing and accreditation purposes every few years as per the local regulations.

e. Changes in Academic programmes /modules:

Minor changes may take place to certain modules or courses during the year as per stakeholders' feedback. However, major modifications or changes in study plans of any academic programme of study typically take place at the point of revalidation. The University has arrangements to ensure that continuing students are not disadvantaged in any way and that transitional study plans are in place.

f. Risk of not securing accreditation or renewing local licensing:

The risk of not securing accreditation or renewing local licensing or approval is low. AOU has successfully secured both international and local accreditation throughout its operation.

Quality assurance framework

The University operates within a robust quality assurance framework shaped by QAA-UK benchmarks and Open University UK standards guided by the Office for the Students (OfS) framework. Sound policies and procedures govern its operations.

External review and risk management

AOU is subject to scrutiny by the Open University Validation and Partnership (OUVP) and periodic reviews by local accreditation authorities. These audits and reviews help the University identify and address issues that could lead to loss of accreditation or suspension of an academic programme.

g. The risk of disruption of student studies:

The risk of disruption of student studies is low to moderate depending on the socio-political setting in each AOU campus. Political turmoil, civil unrest, environmental and Health conditions in addition to other force majeure circumstances may locally affect a specific university campus. In such cases the university will implement its risk management policy and business continuity plan.

2. Mitigating Measures:

Risk and response

Risks to the continuation of studies, including campus closure, suspension of an academic programme, or loss of approval or licensing, are generally

low. Nevertheless, the University recognises their potential adverse impact and has a well-developed approach to managing it.

Coordination with the Open University

AOU will consult closely with the Open University on all matters affecting OU-validated programmes and their registered students. Mitigation measures and detailed action plans will be developed jointly.

Flexible learning and continuity

Flexible provision and established distance and online learning platforms provide additional ways to maintain continuity of individual courses and programmes during exceptional circumstances and crises.

Implementation timing

Changes and their scheduled implementation dates will be specified. Changes will usually take effect at the beginning of the following semester.

Implementation of the Plan:

- In the unlikely event where the university needs to close one of its campuses or discontinue offering one of its academic programmes, AOU policy for Closing a Branch or Freezing / Suspending an Academic Programme will be fully implemented. (Appendix 1-b).
- The admission of new students to the relevant programme in all branches offering it at the beginning of the semester following the issuance of the freezing/discontinuation decree shall be suspended until further notice.
- Where possible and as a rule, closing will be gradual to allow continuing students to complete studies at the University.
- If the above is not possible, the students will be supported to transfer to another programme of study or another AOU campus.
- Students registered in the OU validated Programmes will be dealt with in consultation with the Open University Validation and Partnership (OUVP).
- In the unlikely event the partnership with the Open University was to end, students registered on OU-validated programmes would be entitled to complete their studies and based on the teach-out plan agreed between the AOU and OU-UK.

Compensation & Refunds:

In the unlikely event that an AOU Branch is no longer able to preserve continuation of study The students in that specific branch will be compensated as per the Local Ministry of Higher Education relevant policies and directives. Generally, various AOU campuses will be subject to the local Ministries of Higher Education policies for refunds and compensation.

AOU maintains sufficient financial reserves for emergencies, including students' special circumstances. Each campus has insurance covering University buildings, assets, staff and students. AOU is expected to notify the local Ministries of Higher Education and the Open University of any potential campus closure or programme suspension at least one year before implementation.

Activation of the Plan:

As soon as the closure/suspension decision is taken, the University management shall officially undertake the task of officially announcing this closure and informing students of this decision through official information channels. The concerned authorities prepare leaflets and awareness workshops for enrolled students to explain and clarify what they are entitled to and what they should do in accordance with the approved closure plan to facilitate and accelerate the process of their graduation. The AOU would consult with the OU if a closure impacts on students registered on OU-validated awards.

Communication of the plan:

- The Student Protection Plan will be published to our current and future students on the University main website, Learning Management System (LMS) and in the updated student prospectus. The staff will also be made aware of the SPP.
- The staff will also be informed of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose course changes. This will take place during staff meetings as soon as it is approved with the programme's deanship.
- Material changes to any academic programme will be approved during programme revalidation. The students will be informed about the changes and the scheduled date for implementation. Usually, changes will take place at the beginning of the following semester from revalidation and approval.

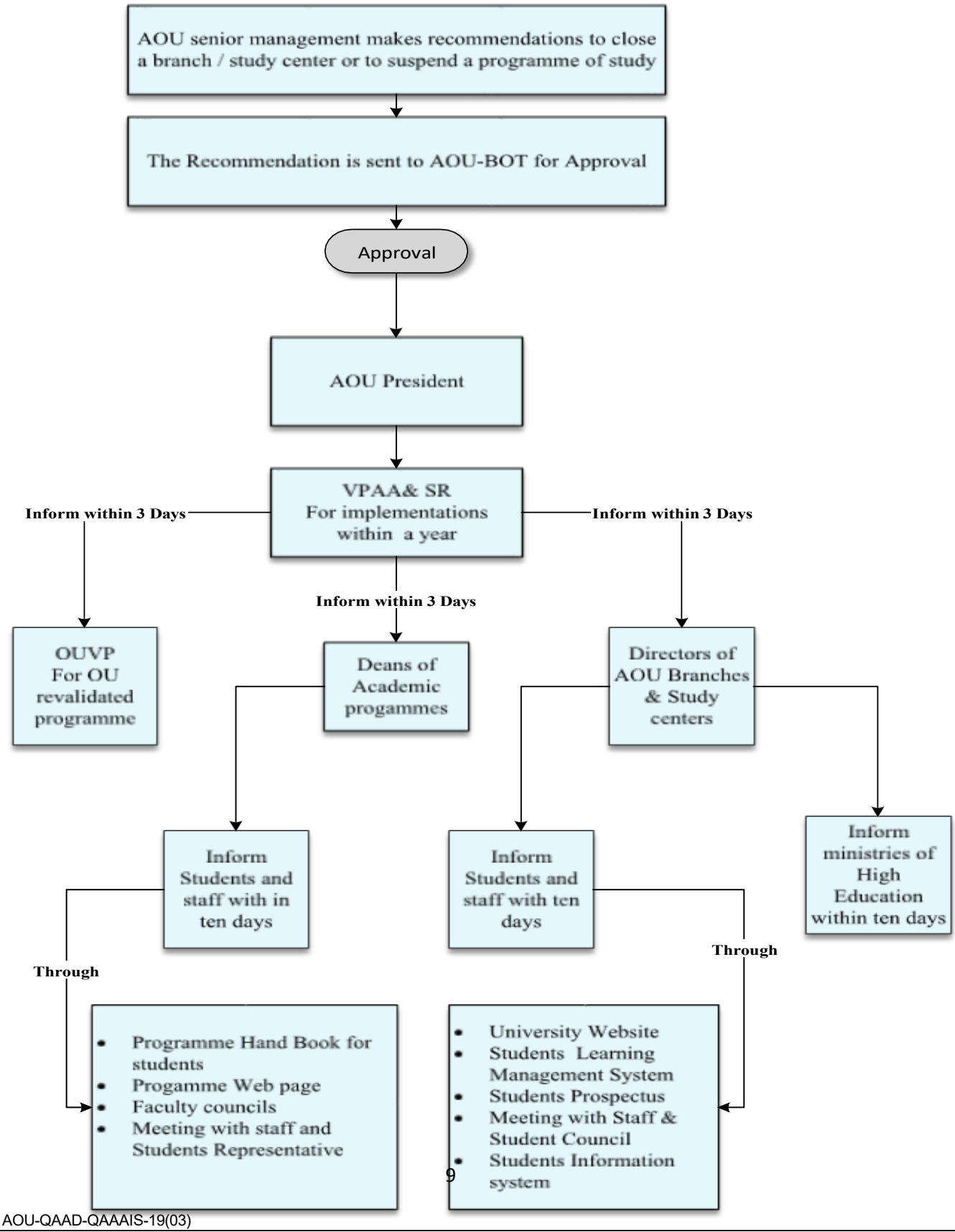
- The students will be informed through the University formal channels e.g.

university website, LMS and programme handbook.

Review of the Plan:

AOU will be reviewing the plan annually at the beginning of every academic year.

Communication Flowchart



Appendices

Appendix I.A

AOU Risk Assessment Matrix (AOURAM)

Type	Risks Likelihood		Impact/Severity of consequences				
			1 Very low	2 low	3 Moderate	4 High	5 Very high
	Likelihood	Certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
		Likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
		Possible (3)	3	6	9	12	18
		Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8	10
		Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

AOU Control Risks Matrix

Type	Inherent Risks Likelihood		Impact/Severity of consequences				
			1 Very low	2 low	3 Moderate	4 High	5 Very high
	Likelihood	Certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
		Likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
		Possible (3)	3	6	9	12	18
		Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8	10
		Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

Inherent Risk:

Refers to the possibility of adverse effects coming out of a situation or at work within a particular environment before any action has taken place to change or control the environment.

Control Risk:

Refers to the possibility of adverse effects coming from flaws in the hierarchy of controls.

Hierarchy of Controls:

- Directive
- Preventive
- Detective
- Corrective

Risks are evaluated according to the likelihood of occurrence and severity of consequences.

Likelihood of occurrence:

- Almost certain: expected to occur
- Likely: could happen sometime
- Moderate: could happen but not likely
- Unlikely: could happen but rare
- Rare: could happen, but probably never will

Severity of Occurrence:

1.very low (Insignificant)

2.low (Minor)

3. Moderate (Tolerable)

4. High (Major)

4.Very high (catastrophic)

Risk Range and Expected Impact

Impact	Overall Inherent Risk Rating Range
Very High	20-25
High	15-18
Moderate	10-12
Low	6-9
Very Low	1-5

Appendix I.B

The Policy of Closing a Branch or Freezing / Suspending an Academic Programme at the Arab Open University.

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Introduction

The Arab Open University (AOU) is committed to delivering academic programmes of the highest quality and securing the human and financial resources needed to support teaching and learning from admission through completion of the graduation requirements set out in its regulations and bylaws. It also seeks to strengthen community confidence in countries hosting its branches and secure the resources needed to sustain its operations.

Policy activation

This policy applies when circumstances beyond the University's control prevent a branch/campus or academic programme from operating at the minimum acceptable level needed to fulfil its mission and objectives without adversely affecting the University as a whole.

Policy scope

The policy sets out the terms and conditions for freezing or suspending an academic programme or closing a branch or study centre.

This document is divided into two parts:

- The first part includes the steps and procedures for freezing / suspending an academic programme offered by the university.

- The second part contains steps and procedures for closing a branch of the Arab Open University.

Article (1): Nomenclature

This document is called “The Policy of Closing a Branch or Freezing / Suspending an Academic Programme at the Arab Open University.”

Article (2): Definitions

The following words and terms wherever mentioned in this Bylaw shall have the following meanings:

University	Arab Open University
President	University's president
Board	University Board of Trustees
Headquarters	The headquarters of the university
Branch	University in the country of the branch
Rector	Rector of the branch country
Deanship	Deanship of specific academic programmes
programme	Accredited academic specialization for a degree
suspend a programme	Suspending the admission of new students for a specified period of time in that program

University	Arab Open University
Stopping a programme	Admission of new students to that programme is closed permanently
Closing a branch	Permanent closure of admission of new students to this branch

Part I: The policy of freezing / suspending an academic programme offered by the university

Article (3): Freezing an Academic Programme

A. When an order to freeze an academic programme is issued, the following measures shall be taken:

1. The concerned Deanship shall be responsible for preparing the plan for freezing the academic programme based on the reports documented by the University's higher administration accompanied by the approval of the Board of Trustees, which clarifies the existence of a real problem facing the continuity of the said programme at the current time.

2. It is the responsibility of Headquarters to inform the branches offering the Programme of the decision to freeze it formally and explain the reasons which led to this action. HQ must also circulate the plan prepared with its explanation, stressing the necessity of adhering to it as soon as it is endorsed by the concerned parties.

3. The admission of new students to the relevant programme in all branches offering it at the beginning of the semester following the issuance of the freezing decree shall be suspended until further notice.

4. The branch management must inform all students enrolled in the frozen programme formally, and in full transparency. They ought to be informed of the

University's plan to freeze it, as well as the freezing period, if possible, through all available means of communication.

5. Awareness bulletins and information workshops for students enrolled in the relevant programme shall be issued/held to explain and clarify what they are entitled to and how the suspension plan shall facilitate and accelerate the process of their graduation from that programme.

6. The University shall be keen to provide possible alternatives, on the academic level, for students enrolled in the concerned programme by facilitating their transfer to another programme if they so desire in accordance with the admission requirements of the new programme.

7. The AOU shall be committed to abide by the conditions of the Ministry of Higher Education in each hosting country where the relevant programme is offered, especially in matters related to how such cases are dealt with in accordance with active rules and regulations which organize similar processes.

8. The University and the concerned Deanship shall ensure the continuity of offering the courses of the frozen programme, and take all necessary measures to complete the educational process until the completion of the academic plan and the graduation of students in accordance with the regulations in force. These must not be inconsistent with the time limits indicated in the approved freezing plan.

B. If the program in question is derived from the Open University in the United Kingdom, and in addition to what is mentioned in item A above, the University is committed to dealing with students enrolled in that programme according to the agreement concluded with the OU in this connection.

C. Students enrolled in a suspended programme may not sue the University at the moral or material level as long as the University is committed to offer the courses

of the approved plan and ensure that students graduate accordingly

D. In the event that it is decided to suspend a program in a specific branch, the above provisions of item (A) of this Article shall apply in coordination with the concerned branch's management.

Article (4): Suspending an Academic Programme

A. When a decision to suspend an academic programme is issued, the following measures shall be taken:

1. The Deanship shall be responsible for preparing the plan for the suspension of the academic programme concerned based on reports issued by the AOU higher management coupled by the approval of the Board of Trustees, which clarifies the existence of a real problem facing the continuity of the programme.

2. It is the responsibility of AOU Headquarters to inform the branches offering the programme of the decision to suspend it formally and explain the reasons.

This should be accompanied by the circulation of the suspension plan prepared together with its explanation and the necessity of adhering to it as soon as it is approved by the concerned parties.

3. The admission of new students to the relevant programme in all branches offering it shall be suspended at the beginning of the semester immediately following the suspension decision.

4. The branch management must inform all students enrolled in the discontinued program formally, transparently of its intention to suspend the programme via all available means of communication.

5. The concerned branches must issue bulletins and hold workshops for students enrolled in the programme to explain and clarify what they are entitled to in line with the approved suspension plan which seeks to facilitate and expedite their graduation from that programme.

6. The University must show keenness to provide possible alternatives at the academic level for students enrolled in the programme who are willing to

transfer to another one in accordance with the admission requirements of the new programme.

7. The AOU shall abide by the regulations and bylaws adopted by the Ministries of Higher Education in each country where the programme is offered concerning programme suspension rules.

B. If the programme in question is derived from the Open University UK, and in addition to everything mentioned in article "A" above, the University shall be committed to dealing with students enrolled in the concerned programme in accordance with its agreement with the Open University in this connection.

C. Students enrolled in a discontinued programme may not sue the University at the moral or material level so long as the University is committed to offering the courses and ensuring that students graduate accordingly (needs legal review)

D. The above provisions of item (a) of this Article shall also apply to study centres if the closed branch includes such centres.

Part II: The policy of closing a branch of the university

Article (5): The closure of an AOU branch

A. Upon issuance of a decision to close an AOU branch, the following measures shall be taken:

1. The Headquarters and the management of the branch concerned shall prepare the closure plan for the branch based on reports, documented by the Higher Management and approved by the Board of Trustees, which show the existence of a real problem facing the continuity of the branch.

2. Upon issuance of the closure decision, the admission of new students to the relevant branch shall be suspended at the beginning of the following semester. The tasks of the concerned branch shall be restricted to completing

the learning and teaching of students enrolled in the relevant branch in accordance with the approved plan.

3. As soon as the closure decision is taken, the branch management shall officially undertake the task of officially announcing this closure and informing all students of this decision with transparency on all information channels. It also adopts measures aiming at facilitating students' graduation.

4. The concerned branch prepares leaflets and awareness workshops for students enrolled in it to explain and clarify what they are entitled to and what they should do in accordance with the approved closure plan in order to facilitate and accelerate the process of their graduation.

5. The University shall be keen to provide possible alternatives at the academic level for students enrolled in the branch who wish to transfer to other branches, if they so desire.

6. The University shall be committed to the regulations and policies of the Ministries of Higher Education in the state hosting the branch concerned, especially in dealing with similar cases.

B. If the branch concerned is accredited by the Open University in the UK and the programmes offered are derived from it, and in addition to everything mentioned in item (A) of this article, the University shall be committed to dealing with the students enrolled in these programmes.

C. Students enrolled in a branch under closure may not sue the University at the moral or material level as long as the University is committed to offering its courses in line with the approved plan and to ensuing that students graduate accordingly.

D. If the branch has educational centers and decides to close any of them, the paragraphs of this article shall apply, and the center is treated as a branch.

Article (6): General Provisions

A. The University President, Vice-Presidents, Branch Rectors, Deans of Academic Programmes and Admission and Registration Departments shall be responsible for the enforcement of provisions under these regulations.

B. The University Council shall decide on cases not stipulated in these regulations.