

Deree-The American College of Greece

Student Protection Plan

(as required by the Open University)

I. Range of Risks to the Continuation of Study

- ACG has a sizeable amount in reserve/endowment funds invested in the United States, which can easily serve as a bridge to any short or mid-term financial difficulties. Furthermore, ACG has business continuity plans to deal with various related risks. Thus, the risk that Deree-The American College of Greece is unable to continue to operate is very low because of the College's financial standing.

The risk that Deree-ACG will no longer be able to offer the Open University awards is low, given the latest Greek government law that allows for the approval of validation agreements with institutions from non-EU member nations. Furthermore, if for some reason this partnership is severed, Deree-ACG, as a dual-degree institution, will continue to offer its four-year, US-accredited degrees, as it has since 1981. The College has been re-accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) for 10 years from 2016 to 2025, and has continuously been accredited since 1981.

- All OU validated modules also serve the requirements for the completion of the respective US degree program. During Fall 2019, 74.4% of our undergraduate students were following the dual award system. Once per year, the Registrar's Office sends all OU registered students' transcripts (ratified grades only) to the Open University. If needed, the College could help students to transfer to our validation partner to complete their degree programs.
- The College meets and even exceeds all Greek government criteria for operating as a College and therefore, the risk that Deree-ACG loses its license to operate as a College in Greece is extremely low. Nevertheless, all the College's communication with students and staff includes the condition that the College will continue to operate as long as the Greek government allows its operation.
- The risk that natural disasters will force the temporary closure of the campus is low. The College has experienced floods and earthquakes, and no such events have ever forced it to close for more than a day. Over the past two years the College has done extensive work to reinforce its buildings and enhance its earthquake protection, as per Greek government regulations.
- Since 2009 enrolment has increased by 40%. The increasing diversity of the student population allows the College to continue its operations even if one student group or market segment has a significant decrease. The College now has 3500 students. In addition to its Greek degree-seeking students, it enrolls about 800 US study abroad students annually, and approximately 1000 Greek parallel study students, most of whom take six modules from Deree-ACG during their studies at Greek public universities. Therefore, the risk that Deree-ACG will not be able to continue operating or continue offering certain programs due to significant decrease in enrolment is low.

- The College has never faced nor expects to face the lack of available Teaching Staff. Many Greek academics pursue Ph.D.'s in almost every discipline at English-speaking universities, but also in Greece, which results in an overabundance of available instructors for hire. Also, the College has the financial resources to hire part-time and full-time Teaching Staff when the need arises. Each School at the College maintains a list of CVs of available instructors who could step in to teach on a part-time basis, if needed.

II. Measures in Place to Mitigate Risks

- If for some reason the College's main campus is not accessible to students, the College has another building in downtown Athens, presently used in the evenings by its other unit, Alba Graduate School of Business. As this building is available most of the day, classes could be moved there. In addition, our Learning Management System (Blackboard) is used extensively by Teaching Staff. Teaching could continue for a period of time via this distance learning system.
- In case of a lockdown, as during the COVID-19 health crisis, the College immediately switched all its modules to our LMS (Blackboard). Over the past few years 84 members of the teaching staff had been trained on teaching in such a mode of delivery. Additional tools were used including Blackboard Collaborate, Adobe Connect, and MS Teams for synchronous instruction. For modules needing specialized software, such as in Graphic Design, we secured the use of the required software for students directly from Adobe. During this crisis, the College continued to offer counselling services through our Counselling Center via Skype and telephone. In addition, our student learning facilitators working for our Student Academic Support Services office continued to offer help to students on academic matters through an online platform (MS Teams). Finally, During the Coronavirus health crisis, all academic administration offices, such as the Registrar's, the Academic Advising and the Validation Offices operated with no disruption and continued to support and offer their services to students. With the permission of the Open University, during fall 2020 we will offer again certain modules in synchronous online mode.
- If a decision is made to discontinue an academic program, the College will create a teach-out plan individualized per program, to ensure that all students finish their degree programs on time. In the past, we discontinued two academic programs (Healthcare Management, and Contemporary Dance Practice). This was done over a four-year period. We are obligated by the Open University and the New England Commission of Higher Education to allow students to finish their studies in discontinued degree programs. The chances of discontinuing other programs are very low, as we continue to monitor enrolment; moreover, as a comprehensive institution, we have decided that certain programs must be offered despite low enrolment.
- The College's teach out plan requires that we offer all modules to remaining students so they can complete the program on time. This is what took place with the two programs mentioned

above. Regarding the possibility of losing teaching staff in a program, this is not going to be a significant issue. About 50% of our sections are taught by less than full time teaching staff. As we have done with the programs in a teach-out process, we will simply elevate the status of part-time to three-quarter time staff to full-time. The College has a significant number of CVs in our files of very qualified instructors available in the Athens area who could jump in and assume teaching duties. Furthermore, the College has over 40 exchange agreements, primarily with US institutions, and if needed students could transfer there to finish their degree programs. Of course, these students could also transfer to the Open University or other institutions in the UK to complete their degree.

III. Tuition and Fees Refunds in the event the College is no longer able to preserve continuation of study

- Link to tuition and refund information:

<https://www.acg.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/admission-process/greek-students/tuition-fees/>

- Deree-ACG is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education. The accreditor monitors the College's financial condition each year and it has never raised any concerns about the College's ability to meet its obligation since it was first accredited in 1981. Furthermore, the institution's financial statements are audited each year by an independent firm, which further ensures that the College is financially able to meet all its obligations.
- Given the College's strong financial status, the College is very unlikely to shut down in the middle of a term. However, during the Coronavirus health crisis when we were faced with over 100 American study abroad students needing to depart for their home country and exit our residence halls, we arranged for them to receive partial refunds for the unused portion of their stay in the residencies. This has been the most severe crisis, which tested our readiness, but we succeeded. For example, no compensation for graduation delays was necessary, because we experienced no delays. In a few cases where we determined that students in certain laboratory modules did not get adequate instruction with laboratory equipment during the COVID-19 crisis, we refunded the lab fee to these students. These two cases (refunding housing fees and refunding lab fees) have become part of our accepted policy.
- The College's accepted practice and policy regarding teach-out programs and any delays in student completion regarding such programs is that we guarantee students in such programs that they can complete their awards on time, even if we need to hire additional instructors to teach modules on a "directed study" (one-on-one) basis.
- Change of Location Costs:

This does not apply to ACG, because it only operates in the Athens area.

In the unlikely case that the ACG undergraduate program is forced to stop its operation, the ACG Board of Trustees will decide on the most appropriate course of action for the compensation of students, faculty and staff and anyone else affected by the specific

circumstances. ACG has sufficient cash reserves of at least five times its annual operating budget, which could be used for compensation purposes, in the case of an emergency.

- The College also has an insurance policy to cover cases of business interruption.

IV. Communication about the Student Protection Plan

- Deree-ACG will publicise our student protection plan by placing it on the College website.
- The College will ensure that staff are made aware of the implications of our student protection plan via our ongoing orientation sessions.
- This plan will be made available to the Deree Student Association.
- As we have done in the past, if we decide to discontinue any academic programs, we will gather students in that program, explain the reasons for discontinuing, seek their feedback and then work one-on-one to work out the teach-out program. As we have done in the past the teach-out process for a discontinued program takes about 2-4 years.
- Communication to students, as it happened with the Coronavirus crisis takes place through the students' ACG email account and in some cases through an SMS message sent directly to student-registered mobile phones. In addition, the Student Government Association communicated to students via email and via a dedicated Q&A video about the response to the crisis. During this crisis, the students received weekly messages from the Provost and a message from the President. Teaching staff received regular messages from their respective deans.
- Generally, students receive information in the ACG student email accounts for any matter that concerns them. This account is created upon admission to the College. The College operates an automated warning system that is triggered to provide information to student mobile phones and emails in case of a sudden event, such as a coming physical disaster, temporary suspension of College operation due to widespread medical crises (e.g. viruses) and other emergencies. Apart from the above automated alert system, designated College Officials are assigned College physical areas where they will rush during emergencies to help students complete a possible evacuation or assist them in general on College grounds/building. The personnel in the Registrar's Office, the Academic Advising Office, The Deree-OU Validation Office, the Student Affairs, the Career Office will assist student in case they need to complete their studies elsewhere in the unforeseen event that the College seizes operations.
- Before any future review of the SPP plan the College will discuss it with the elected College Student Government. Students may receive any additional information for the SPP plan from the Business Office, the Student Affairs Office, or the Registrar's Office depending on the nature of their inquiry.