

Annex D: Student protection plan

Provider's name: **South and City College Birmingham**

Provider's UKPRN: **100005967**

Legal address: South and City College Birmingham, High street Deritend, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 5SU

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Jacqueline Maher

Student protection plan for the period [2018-19]

The college's risk register covers a range of risks appropriate to a General FE College that delivers higher education programmes. The following are risks to the continuation of study for our students.

Partner University terminating validation agreement

The risk of a partner university terminating a validation agreement is low, as we work closely with local universities and have regular collaborative partnership planning and review meetings. In the event of a termination of an agreement the College and university partner will collaborate to ensure current students are not disadvantaged. Course closure will be managed either through a gradual closure based on not recruiting new students and teaching existing students to the end of their programme, or making alternative arrangements for students to complete their course locally.

Course Closure

The risk of course closure is low. The College has robust planning processes in place to mitigate the need for closure of a course once promoted. If there is a need to close a course the College will notify prospective students immediately and provide support services to transfer prospective students to an alternative course, campus or provider. In the event of the closure of a course the College's fee policy will apply as explained in section 3, compensation.

Campus Closure

The risk of campus closure is low. The College will always endeavour to maintain course delivery at the originally intended campus and to only discontinue programmes at a campus at the end of the programme. In the highly unlikely event that it is not possible to preserve continuation of study necessitating a transfer to an alternative course or campus, the arrangements outlined in section 3, compensation will apply.

Students from areas of high deprivation not being able to continue their study due to financial constraints

The risk of students from areas of high deprivation not continuing their studies is high. A large proportion of the HE student population (62%) at South and City College derive from areas of high deprivation. The high risk is a result of students in this group facing challenging financial circumstances, which either forces them to find employment, which then becomes their focus or, not being able to find employment, making it financially difficult for them to remain in their studies. The most likely students to withdraw from their programme are students from the highest 20% of areas with the most deprivation.

Decline in recruitment of European students as a result of Leaving the European Union.

The risk of leaving the European Union affecting the delivery of HE programmes is very low as the college has a very small number of European students and this is not an area for any planned growth.

Loss of specialist staff

The risk of losing specialist staff is a medium risk as there are many local universities and colleges offering HE programmes within a 10 mile radius. The impact could be that there is difficulty in delivering certain elements of courses.

Loss of work placements for courses where placements are compulsory for achievement of the qualification.

The breakdown in relationships with work placement providers is low. The College has significant links with industry sectors where work placements are compulsory for achievement of a qualification. For these qualifications work placed training is embedded within the sector. The College has a number of work placement tutors who support the continuation of placements for students, and academic staff mentor placement providers. In the event of the loss of a placement by a student the College will support the student to gain an alternative placement to continue their studies.

College unable to continue operation due to financial performance

The college is at a low risk of being unable to operate due to financial performance, as the College is closely monitored by governors and the ESFA for signs of financial underperformance. The College has a 3 year financial plan which demonstrates its financial health is good and shows that the College will not need any recourse to additional borrowing for the next three years.

Ineffective or non-compliant governance leading to internal control failures

The risk to the college of governance being non-compliant or ineffective is very low due to both the composition of the governing body; there are members with an industry background in legal, audit and higher education management, and also there are reporting systems in place to ensure ongoing interrogation with regard to HE programmes, such as audit outcomes and compliance, quality and standards.

Negative TEF Outcome

The college has rigorous reporting systems that allows management to monitor outcomes and TEF metrics closely. The College has been awarded a silver medal in TEF year 2 and has resubmitted for TEF year 3. TEF year 3 data has been adversely affected by the merger with Bournville College and although significant actions have been in place to improve performance in 2016-17 this outcome of TEF year 3 could mean a reduction in TEF medal to bronze. Therefore the reduction in medal awarded is a medium risk but low risk to student outcomes.

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

Students from areas of high deprivation not being able to continue their study due to financial constraints

The college has a well-established support system for students in FE, this includes; travel support, photocopying credits, and emergency loans all of these support systems are extended to HE students along with advice and support accessing appropriate external support bodies when required. Where programmes are franchised students have access to bursary and loans from those universities. The College is applying for an access and participation plan to be approved to be able to provide more targeted support to disadvantaged learners.

Loss of specialist staff

The college has partnership arrangements with five large local universities, working as partners discourages poaching of specialist staff in itself, so lessens the threat from those establishments. The College has excellent relationships with local universities who may also have staff to support in this transition period. The college has the benefit of having teaching staff in FE that can be supported and upskilled to teach in specialist areas on higher education programmes. As part of the partnership students in their final year are given placements to support year one students. This gives those considering teaching as a career some real classroom experience and quite often they return on teacher placement, which can lead to employment. The partnership arrangement with the universities also considers this loss of specialised staff and should it be required would allow South and City College students to infill into specialist modules at the university. The college has established links with educational recruitment consultants and would in the first instance seek replacement staff and provide temporary cover whilst permanent appointments are made.

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

Refunds and compensation can be found in the fee policy and withdrawal policies on the College's website and on the VLE for existing students. These can be found here: <https://www.sccb.ac.uk/higher-education/finance>.

The fee policy provides that:

Withdrawals and Refunds Students wishing to temporarily suspend or withdraw from their studies before completion must inform the college in writing (unless they have been withdrawn by an Award Board for reasons of academic failure). Only when this official notification has been received will the withdrawal be processed and college records amended.

The official withdrawal date will be recorded as the last date of attendance (or the date on which the Award Board reached its decision or the date on which the withdrawal is sanctioned/approved by a student advisor or programme leader provided that this date is clearly communicated).

Upon receipt of a written notification to withdraw the fee liability will be as follows:

Student withdraws or transfers during: Fee liability

Term 1 (from the first day of term 1 but before the start of term 2) 25% of full annual fees

Term 2 (from the first day of term 2 but before the start of term 3) 50% of full annual fees

Term 3 (from the first day of term 3) Full annual fee The college will administer the refund of any fees for students who have chosen to take a Student Loans Company tuition fee loan to finance the cost of their fees.

All other refunds will where possible be refunded using the original method of payment. Accreditation of Prior Learning and International Student course fees are not refundable.

The withdrawal policy provides that:

Students requesting to withdraw from their programme of study:

If a student wishes to permanently withdraw from their programme of study in the first instance are encouraged to consider whether it may be more appropriate to take a leave of absence where the change in circumstance may be temporary. Students are advised to speak with their tutor to discuss their options and implications of withdrawing from their programme. Students who wish to withdraw from their programme of study must inform the college in writing of their intention to withdraw.

The college will complete the withdrawal using the student's last day of attendance as the withdrawal date. The college will notify student finance and awarding body of the student's withdrawal.

All other refunds will where possible be refunded using the original method of payment.

The fee policy considers compensation as follows:

The College will always endeavour to maintain course delivery at the originally intended campus and to only discontinue programmes at a campus at the end of the programme. In the highly unlikely event that it is not possible to preserve continuation of study necessitating a transfer to an alternative course or campus, the arrangements outlined below will apply.

Where it is necessary as a result of action by the College for students to transfer to another provider or location following commencement of a programme due to course closure, the College will consider the impact of any changes to a programme and decide on appropriate compensation.

Compensation may include:

- Additional travel costs
- Payment of additional tuition fees occurred which are directly attributable to the non-preservation of continuation of study
- Support for an alternative method of learning
- Repeat study without fee liability
- Payment of additional maintenance costs such as accommodation.

All claims for compensation will be considered on a fair basis but must be directly attributable to actions of the College in relation to the closure of a course.

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

We will communicate our student protection plan to current and future students through a number of channels. The protection plan will be published on the college website, it will be clearly labelled under HE policies. This will ensure that both current and future students have access. The policy will be available on the college VLE to current students and students will have signposts to the plan in their student handbook.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of the student protection plan by including it in end of year HE staff development. All HE staff will receive the protection plan by email, it will be in the shared HE section on the college intranet and part of the approvals process for all courses.

The colleges' student governor will be involved with reviewing the protection plan along with students attending individual course boards of study. This will ensure that all students have the opportunity to be involved in the consultation process allowing them to review and contribute to the plan.

Should the student protection plan ever have to be implemented we would give students a minimum of 18 weeks' (semester) notice for any planned changes, for unplanned changes we would endeavour to give as much notice as possible. The college would then communicate changes by meeting face to face with all affected students, followed up with a formal letter which would be sent to the affected students to their address in hard copy form and electronically by email.

This student protection plan will be reviewed annually.

Jacqui Maher
Assistant Principal
Tel: 0800 111 6311

South and City College Birmingham,
Digbeth Campus,
High Street Deritend, Digbeth,
Birmingham
B5 5SU