

Student Protection Plan

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

Provider's UKPRN: **100005967**

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Student protection plan for the period 2020-2021

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 Office for Students requires all providers of higher education to develop a student protection plan. This plan sets out the main risks to the continuation of study for our higher education students and the measures the College has in place to mitigate those risks.

The College is confident that it has appropriate processes in place to ensure the continuity of higher education provision. A high quality student learning experience is central to the College's ethos and in order to protect students' interests the college will aim to introduce any changes in such a way as to enable students to complete their courses and teach out any course that may close. The College does not anticipate closing a course before the planned completion date except when it is in students' interest following for example the loss of specialist staff. The risks that students may be prevented from completing their course for reasons of course closure or the inability to deliver courses is considered by the College to be low.

The College has considered the following risks:

Risk of South and City College being unable to operate

The risk of the College being unable to operate is very low.

The College has a strong record of financial performance and management. The College's three year financial plan demonstrates that financial health is good and shows that the College will not have any recourse to additional borrowing for the next three years. The financial health of the College is closely monitored and reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Risk of campus closure

The risk of campus closure is low.

The College has effective contingency plans in place to address any major incidents such as terrorism, flood or a fire. The College has five main campuses in Birmingham and in the event of a major incident will have the ability to transfer provision to an alternative campus. There are good transport links in Birmingham so the impact on students continuing with their chosen course in this event is considered low. The College does not currently have any plans to move courses between campuses.

Risk to the delivery of programmes – 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.

Risk to the delivery of programmes – loss of specialised staff

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes in highly specialised areas in the next three years is moderate

In some specialist areas it can be challenging to recruit to posts where specialist staff are required. The College has identified that the areas of specialist Health and Social Care modules and some aspects of Engineering are of moderate risk. As a large institution we are confident that we have access to a broad range of staff and skills to be able to meet our obligations to students and through restructuring staff we are able to teach programmes and ensure continuity. The college also 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. This relationship also fosters collaboration and so university partners may also have staff to support in this transition period.

Risk of an awarding body or partner terminating and agreement

The risk of an awarding body or university partner terminating and agreement is low.

The quality of higher education programmes is closely monitored in line with awarding body and partnership procedures. Quality monitoring procedures are robust and are able to identify issues associated with students learning experience throughout the academic year. In addition the College works closely with local university partners with regular collaborative partnership planning and review meetings. It is envisaged that if a course is closed by a partner then the university partner's course closure procedures will be adhered to and the option to teach out the course will be the preferable option.

Risk of being unable to provide compulsory work placements for achievement of the qualification

The risk of not being able to provide or support students' learning experience due to a loss of work placement providers is low.

The College has significant links with industry sectors where work placements are compulsory for achievement of a qualification such as in the Early Years Sector. 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, alongside academic staff mentoring placement providers. Due to the embedded nature of placements within the sector and the resources provided by the College for placement activity the risk is considered as low.

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

Following the consideration of risks to the continuation of studies for students the College has established the following measures are in place to mitigate the risks identified.

Risk to the delivery of programmes

In the event that the College is unable to deliver an intended programme due to course closure or the loss of specialised staff the College will consider the following option in consultation with students:

- Appointing temporary or agency staff to teach the specialised modules
- Consider changes to the modules or course structure which would utilise current staff expertise, such as altering the delivery pattern of modules within an academic year
- Consider major modifications to a course to enable new module delivery within existing staff expertise
- Provide training and upskilling for existing further education staff to allow for delivery of specialist modules
- In conjunction with university partners allow students to infill into specialist modules at the university.
- Consider partnership delivery or transfer to other institutions for continuation of studies and facilitate the process for transferring academic credit

Risk of an awarding body or partner terminating and agreement

The College will always aim to teach out any courses that are planned for closure and so mitigate any risks to students' experience. This will ensure that students are not disadvantaged in their studies and will continue to study until the planned end of their programme.

If the option to teach out the programme was not viable then the College would establish a plan with the awarding body or university partner to ensure the continuation of study either at the university partner's campus or at another local institution where practicable, following the established procedures of the awarding body or partner.

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

Fees and refunds are set out in the Higher Education Fee Policy and Withdrawal Policy which is available on the College's website.

These can be found here: <https://www.sccb.ac.uk/higher-education/finance>.

The Policy explains:

- Fees that will be charged at different stages of the academic year (fee liability)
- Notification requirements for withdrawals or temporary suspension of studies
- Refunds for students and the method of refund

This information applies to students funded via the Student Loans Company, a company sponsorship or paying their own tuition fees.

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 and students are required to transfer to an alternative course or campus, the policy explains that the College will consider the impact of any changes to a programme and decide on compensation if appropriate.

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 or costs such as accommodation or childcare costs.

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.

In the event of a need to apply refunds or compensation procedures the College has sufficient cash reserves to meet requirements

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

The College will communicate the 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 be signposted 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 available be in the shared HE section on the college intranet.

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. The student protection plan will be reviewed annually.

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

In the event that students wish to comment on the student protection plan, comments can be submitted through the College's comments forum available on the VLE or in Boards of Studies, any specific complaints can also be made using the College's complaints procedure which can be found on the website and VLE.

If the College implements the student protection plan students will be guided to undertake independent advice through the National Union of Students and be supported in the process by the College's Student Services Team.

Contact

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