

## Student Protection Plan

**Provider's name:** Solihull College and University Centre

**Provider's UKPRN:** 10005946

**Legal address:** Blossomfield Road, Solihull, West Midlands, B91 1SB

**Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan:** Mary Younan, Dean of Higher Education & Research.

**See Also:** Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy, Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes, Members' Report and Consolidated Financial Statement, Complaints Policy and Procedure and Higher Education Student Compensation Policy available on the college website.

### The Aim of this Plan

A student protection plan is required by the Office for Students (OfS). The OfS requires that this sets out what students can expect to happen should a programme of study, campus, or institution close. The purpose of a plan is to ensure that students can continue and complete their studies or can be compensated if this is not possible. Solihull College & University Centre is a Higher Education provider that is registered with the OfS and, consequently, must have a Student Protection Plan in place. The College is expected to collaborate with students to review and refresh the plan on a regular basis.

### 1. Assessment of the Risk of closure or Suspension of a Programme of Study

The College is committed to "adopt recommended best practice in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of business risks to ensure, as far as possible, that they are eliminated or reduced to a level that is acceptable to the College Corporation". To achieve this aim, we are committed to:

- ensure the College's Risk Management and Board Assurance Policy is implemented in practice
- ensure detailed risks are identified within the College Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan
- integrate risk management into the culture of the College
- manage risk in accordance with recommended best practice
- maintain legal compliance as a minimum standard
- continue to respond to changing social, environmental and legislative requirements
- prevent injury, loss and damage wherever possible and so reduce the cost of risk
- continually raise awareness amongst all employees of the need for the management of business risk

These objectives are, and will continue to be, met by:

- clear strategic responsibility for risk management led by the Risk Management Group
- close monitoring of the College Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan
- clear roles, responsibilities and reporting lines within the College for risk management
- the provision of risk management awareness training
- the dissemination of information relating to risk management to all employees to maintain effective communications on this key activity

- the development and maintenance of appropriate procedures and records to assist in the management of risk.
- the preparation of Business Impact Analysis Plans in those areas and activities that are deemed to be potentially high risk
- the inclusion of risk management in the College's Quality Strategy and Processes
- the inclusion of risk management in the College's Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan

The Risk Management and Board Assurance Policy and Strategy is reviewed annually.

The College has assessed the current and potential ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and has put in place a detailed plan to manage its operations, including its ability to deliver teaching, and supporting students as a result of the impact of the pandemic on their study and career. These measures will continue to be updated in accordance with government guidance received. Communication about teaching, learning and assessment are regularly updated on the College website and on the specific course pages through our Virtual Learning Environment. (VLE)

The audited annual statement reports on the financial health of the College are available on the College's website; it is highly unlikely that there is any significant risk to the operations of the College as a whole, with the diverse curriculum offering at many educational levels also helping to ensure that there is finance available to accommodate unforeseen short- or long-term changes to the requirements of the College's Higher Education provision.

## **2. Measures to Minimise Potential Risks**

The main mitigation of the risk of programmes becoming unsustainable in terms of student numbers, is a commitment to ensuring that all existing students on the programme continue to receive tuition of a consistent level and quality until they graduate (i.e. that the programme is only closed to new entrants, not to existing students).

Should the College seek to close a programme prior to all existing students completing that programme, this will only be approved if all affected students have agreed to that measure. In this situation, an offer of a place on a similar programme at the College or another training provider within the same geographical location will be made. Students may also be offered the possibility of continuing their studies through distance learning, where this can be implemented without any significant degradation in their learning experience.

### **2.1 Course Delivery Location**

Should it become necessary, for any reason however unlikely, that delivery is not possible at an agreed College campus at the time offer is made and accepted by learners; travel compensation will be provided. The nature of Solihull's curriculum offer is such that provision can (theoretically) be moved from one to another, with capacity accommodated by prioritising validated Higher Education over other courses. As a result, this is considered to be a low level of risk.

### **2.2 Commitment to Students**

Students affected by a change to their expected delivery location, breaks in continuity of study, and enforced transfers to another provider are protected financially under the Higher Education Higher Education Student Compensation Policy.

### **2.3 Financial Viability of Courses**

The College continually monitors and reviews the number of potential applicants at regular points, and as a result, can monitor the financial viability of its HE courses. This is mitigated through substantial early planning of courses which ensures their continuation for both full and part-time. Any courses that are anticipated to be at risk, are identified early on to mitigate the effects on potential new students within the

application cycle.

If a course cannot run due to low numbers, applicants are offered alternative courses or support to research alternative providers within the United Kingdom. Where students are mid-way through a course that is then closed or has low continuers, this process also ensures they complete as part of our commitment to 'teach out'. Non-completion of delivery at module level is unlikely. The risk is mitigated by flexibility in staffing and in our ability to deliver from wider teams to ensure student completion. We can draw upon a pool of staff in the College and create further e-learning resources to ensure that delivery is always completed. As a result, this is considered to be a low level of risk. The College policy with regards to validated course closures is to always "teach out" to the expected completion date of all students enrolled at the time - any decision to terminate provision is made and is fully articulated in the Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes.

## **2.4 Teaching Staff**

If a key member(s) of teaching staff leaves the College, other suitably qualified and experienced staff will be utilised to provide temporary cover, until a new individual is appointed, or we can utilise the bank of flexible part time staff. Teaching cover and recruitment agencies can also provide teaching staff cover where it is not possible to source internally specifically in specialist subject areas.

In the most severe circumstances, course content can be accessed through the Student Intranet to ensure a course continues and students' learning is not adversely affected. Staff changes are inevitable and accepted as staff progress in their profession. This can particularly affect students from lower attainment backgrounds more profusely as they feel the impact of structural changes and instability more than their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds; this is considered to be a low level of risk.

## **2.5 Building Closure or Unavailability**

Adverse weather or unexpected infrastructural issues could prevent opening of teaching rooms to students. The impact is mitigated by ensuring students are notified in advance of any disruption (text and on the website) and having access to e-learning resources where possible, or secure an alternative venue if deemed imperative to their learning. The risk rating of this occurring is extremely low.

## **2.6 Interruption to IT Infrastructure**

This is a medium level of risk for brief periods due to the variability of local and national networks in the College. Where possible, action will be taken to ensure students are not adversely impacted if producing assessed work, or they will be allowed mitigation to ensure this is considered if producing or submitting assessment.

### **3. Information about the policies we have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that we are unable to preserve continuation of study**

Refund and compensation payments will only be made in the highly unlikely event that the College is forced to close a programme, or a major component of it, prior to all existing students completing the programme and receiving their college qualification; and that this is due to circumstances the College is unable to remediate and is therefore done without giving students the option of completing their programme of study. Please refer to the Higher Education Student Compensation Policy' to determine student eligibility.

In cases where the College has not been able to make suitable transfer arrangements for students (as described in Section 2 above), refund and compensation payments will be considered. The necessity for, and extent of, the refund and compensation being offered will be determined with reference to any demonstrable loss experienced by the affected student and attributable to the closure. Such payments may comprise some or all elements of the following:

- refunds of the tuition fees (whether to the Student Loans Company, the student's sponsor, or the students themselves) previously paid to the College for tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification
- payment of reasonable travel costs to students where a change of location in study is requiring additional travel on the part of students
- continued payment of any bursaries to which the College is committed
- payment of any maintenance costs associated with past attendance at the College that are over and above what the student could in any case have been expected to incur had they not been in attendance
- individually calculated payments (taking into account the opportunity costs involved) in recognition of time previously spent on tuition that will no longer lead to the award of a qualification.
- Where programme closure has been forced on the College, but suitable transfer arrangements have been made for students, compensation payments will consist of any tuition and maintenance costs at a new provider that are over and above what would have been paid by the student to continue their studies at SCUC plus any reasonable costs arising from transferring place of residence.
- Any student or group of students dissatisfied with the level of refund or compensation payments being provided to them can make use of the College's Concerns and Complaints Policy.

In the situation that the College is wishing to close a programme before all students have graduated but is still able to give students the option of completing the programme, the College may decide to provide incentive payments to students to agree to early closure, and these payments may reflect some of the above elements to some extent. In this case, though, students would still be entitled to complete their programme rather than accepting the payment.

#### **4. Communication with Staff, Students and the Office for Students. How do students and the College make sure the Student Protection Plan is followed and kept up to date?**

The College will publish the Student Protection Plan to current and future students incorporating this into induction material and publishing the plan on the College website. This will take place following approval by the OfS.

For staff, awareness of the implications of the Student Protection Plan will be discussed at team briefings. All Course Leaders will ensure their teaching staff are aware of this and that new staff are inducted in this process. Additionally, all staff who are involved in the application and admissions process will be made aware of this through their line managers briefings. The Terms and Conditions signed by students at enrolment will also provide details of this. The Student Protection Plan will be made available electronically to all applicants accepting an offer of a place at the College as well as to current students when they re-register annually with the College. Committees and staff responsible for approving and processing changes to programmes and programme closures will make full use of the Student Protection Plan in their work.

- The Student Protection Plan is reviewed annually by the Quality and Standards Committee (which includes student representation)

- The Students' Council is invited to take any recommendations for changes to the Student Protection Plan
- If we need to use the Student Protection Plan because of a decision to close or suspend a programme of study, we will notify students who are affected individually. Additionally, consultation may take place through the relevant Programme Quality Board forum.