

# Student Protection Plan for academic year 2018/19



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## 1. Introduction

This plan has been designed in consultation with the College's Higher Education Students who were emailed a draft policy to review and comment upon. For current and future students, it is available on our website. It is also referred to in the student handbooks.

As a registered provider of higher education, Southampton City College must publish a Student Protection Plan which sets out how we will safeguard the continuation and quality of study for current and potential students if a risk to their continued study materialises

At the College course and course units are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing nature of the subject. In exceptional circumstances, a course may be closed or cancelled. Major changes or closures of programmes of study are the exception and not the norm.

This Plan is intended to assure current and future students that we have appropriate arrangements in place to protect continuation of study. It outlines the types of risks, gives examples of events that might trigger action and explains what we might do to minimise the impact of these events if they happen. It addresses circumstances which may arise and result in the College making changes which may affect current students.

The measures contained within are in addition to your statutory rights, which remain unaffected.

### University of Portsmouth Foundation Degree in Early Years

Students studying on the Foundation Degree in Early Years are registered at the University of Portsmouth and are protected by their Student Protection Plan. The contractual arrangements under which this programme operates require us to work together to coordinate activities and provide the best protection for the students.

## 2. Categorisation of Risk - How we define "risk", "likelihood" and "impact"

We have assessed the risks to continuation of study and classified the likelihood of them happening using this sliding scale.

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- Very likely - 91% - 100%
- Likely - 66% - 90%
- Possible - 36% - 65%
- Unlikely - 11% - 35%
- Very unlikely - 0 - 10%

We have also classified impact on a sliding scale.

- Insignificant
- Minor
- Moderate
- Major

### 3. Circumstances which may lead to a change

The College may be required to take the actions outlined above in the following circumstances and/or for the following reasons:

#### 3.1 Risk: permanent or temporary loss of key staff

**Likelihood:** likely

**Impact:** minor

**Reason:** unplanned loss of staff is largely out of our control and is a realistic possibility at any given time. However,

#### 3.2 Risk: Failure to recruit viable numbers to a new programme, resulting in the programme being cancelled

**Likelihood:** possible

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** the College may choose cancel a programme where student numbers recruited to the programme are too low to make it financially viable.

#### 3.3 Risk: closure or suspension of an existing programme

**Likelihood:** possible

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** the College may choose to close or suspend a programme where student numbers recruited to the programme are too low to make it financially viable.

#### 3.4 Risk: Material changes to programmes, such as a change of awarding body, a change of units or a timetable change

**Likelihood:** likely

**Impact:** moderate

**Reason:** Reasons for a change in a course structure or content could include;

- To meet the requirements of an awarding body;
- to respond to sector good practice or quality enhancement processes, such as in response to student feedback;
- to keep programmes contemporaneous by updating practises or areas of study;
- to safeguard academic standards for example, in response to external examiner feedback;
- to abide by the revisions made by the Awarding Body.

#### 3.4 Risk: withdrawal or non-renewal of validation

**Likelihood:** very unlikely

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** the way in which we are governed and operated means that appropriate control, systems and checks are in place to prevent or positively react to an event which would lead to loss, variation or suspension of awarding body approval to run a programme.

**3.5 Risk:** we are unable or no longer intend to operate as a whole due to our financial performance

**Likelihood:** very unlikely

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** the risk of being unable to operate due to financial instability or unsustainability is low because the college is working with the FE Commissioners office on implementing a solution to improve its long term financial viability by mid- 2019. In addition the college insolvency process coming into force in 2019 will ensure that learners' needs are put first, either through financial support for the ongoing organisation, or working with other local providers to take over the college and its delivery.

**Risk:** all or part of our campus is permanently closed

**Likelihood:** very unlikely

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** we have no campus closure plans.

**3.7 Risk:** loss of key equipment or facilities

**Likelihood:** very unlikely

**Impact:** minor

**Reason:** there is only a minimal threat to access to key equipment or facilities for our students as the equipment and facilities which we provide are generally not "one offs" and alternatives could be found.

**3.6 Risk:** Professional body accreditations for the BA (Hons) in Person Centred Counselling & Psychotherapy is lost or suspended

**Likelihood:** unlikely

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** we are aware of and up to date with the requirements needed in order to be accredited by such bodies and have processes in place to regularly review and renew such accreditation.

**3.7 Risk:** non-completion of delivery (i) in one or more subject area (ii) on one or more course, unit or material component of a programme or (iii) one or more mode of study

**Likelihood:** unlikely

**Impact:** major

**Reason:** this risk is considered unlikely because we give our students a 'teach-out' commitment. Although our delivery model will inevitably change shape, these improvements are gradual and usually occur over a long cycle and so have little to no impact on the students concerned. Similar to 'business as usual' improvements, we also consider the same risk resulting from unplanned changes to be unlikely because viability and sustainability are planned in advance so are unlikely to occur.

Note: this risk is also addressed in our Refund and Compensation Policy

#### **4. Measures to protect students**

The College will consider and implement any mitigation measures it concludes are reasonable and proportionate in the relevant circumstances, to minimise any disruption to students' studies.

##### **4.1 Teach-Out**

'Teach-out' refers to the phased method by which the closure of a programme will operate, allowing affected students to complete their studies before the closure occurs.

If such circumstances were to arise at Southampton City College, our priority would be to ensure as many of our students as possible completed their programme of study to the original timescale. This priority applies regardless of the type of event with which we might be faced and should be kept in mind when reading this Plan.

In the unlikely event that we were not able to teach-out, for example if issues relating to standards or the quality of the academic experience arose, we would seek to protect continuation of study by offering a transfer on to a similar or replacement programme or by giving support to transfer to an alternative supplier (for example, providing certification of credit or a record of academic achievement).

#### **4.2 Mitigating actions to deal with staff issues**

We will seek temporary or permanent replacements internally or externally, providing cover from existing staffing to ensure lessons are not cancelled. Where there are difficulties in covering classes immediately, we may need to adjust delivery or content (for example enhanced VLE content) or to make changes to the course structure or timetable.

We have established relationships with educational recruitment consultants. Depending on the scale and nature of the event, we may consult with the affected students in formulating our response and will always try to minimise the impact on our students for example, by carefully timing the event and giving notice where this is possible.

#### **4.3 Senior Management Team approval**

Proposals for programmes to be discontinued or for significant changes to be made, whether for reasons of strategic fit or operational viability, need to be approved in accordance with the Closure of Programmes procedure. The College's Closure of Programmes procedure makes clear the requirement for the College to ensure students affected by the closure of a programme are consulted and their interests protected.

#### **4.4 Advice, Support and Communication with students in the event of implementation**

If any of the risks we identify in this Plan happen and their impact on the students concerned is more than insignificant, we will act swiftly and, as part of our response, offer those students suitable and appropriate advice and support.

The nature of the advice and support will vary from risk to risk and depend upon the impact and will normally be determined in consultation with our students. In doing so, we will give as much notice as is possible in the circumstances to inform them what will happen and when.

If a programme is changed or suspended at application stage, applicants will be informed by letter or email as soon as it is reasonably practicable in order for the applicant to decide whether or not they still wish to continue with their application to study.

#### **4.5 Provision of a replacement programme of study**

The College will seek to offer the individual a suitable replacement programme at College for which the individual is qualified (and subject to the individual student meeting

relevant conditions for the programme. If the individual does not wish to accept the College's offer of a replacement programme or the College is unable to offer a replacement programme, an individual will be entitled to withdraw: (i) his or her application; or (ii) from the programme (as appropriate) by notifying the College in writing.

#### **4.6 Refund and compensation**

In the unlikely event that the College is unable to secure a suitable alternative for students when a programme closes, we will make an appropriate refund of tuition fees and deposits paid. We consider refunds and compensation to be a remedy of last resort and we are committed to doing all we can so that refunds and compensation aren't necessary.

Where as a result of an investigation through the Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures it is concluded that students have not received the education experience outlined in college course information and their learning agreement appropriate financial or other compensation may be offered.

If, as a consequence of a substantial change to a programme, an applicant decides not to study with the College, the College will refund any tuition fees and/or deposit that they have paid in advance. Full details regarding refunds and compensation can be found in our HE Fee, Refund and Compensation Policy at <I:\Office for Students\HE Fee, Refund and Compensation Policy.docx>.

### **5. Communication of the Plan**

#### **5.1 Communication with staff**

We will continue to ensure that staff are aware of the implications of consumer protection compliance in general and this Student Protection Plan in particular through its HE meetings and through its procedures for the approval, modification and closure of programmes and units; these activities will be supported by dedicated training and ongoing routine written and verbal advice and guidance from the Quality Team.

#### **5.2 Communication with students**

The College will publish this Student Protection Plan on its website at <https://www.southampton-city.ac.uk/higher-education>

#### **5.3 Updating the Plan**

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with the students and staff.

#### **5.4 Feedback**

If the student would like to give feedback regarding the College's management of the process of change, they may follow the College's complaints procedure, which can be

found at: <https://www.southampton-city.ac.uk/perch/resources/complaints-policy-2017.pdf>.