

Student Protection Plan for 2018-19

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: Sue McGregor, Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation.

See Also: [Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy, Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes, Members' Report and Consolidated Financial Statement July 2017](#), Risk Management Policy, Higher Education Student Compensation Policy, College Board Assurance Plan, Higher Education Programme Amendment Policy, [Complaints Policy and Procedure](#).

Purpose of this Student Protection Plan

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires providers of higher education programmes to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change to a course, programme, campus or institution. This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures Solihull College and University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College have in place to protect students should there be any material change, whether planned or unexpected, and is in addition to the protections available to students under other applicable legislation such as consumer protection law.

The Plan is reviewed at least annually in formal consultation with existing students, with suggestions, comments, observations and questions welcomed at all times from prospective, current and past students to help maintain its continued appropriateness and efficacy.

Assessment of Risk to the Continuity of Study

The College has a commitment 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”*, and to achieve this aim, we are committed to:

- 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:

- an established Risk Management Group comprising members of the Executive Management Team which ensures that specific programmes and procedures for establishing and maintaining effective risk management activities are developed;
- the continuous development of risk management strategies throughout the College;
- monitoring the risk management action plan by the Governing Body;
- 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 self-assessment-procedures;
- the assessment of key college risks as part of the College Board Assurance Plan.

The most recently audited annual statement report on the financial health of the college (to the year ending July 31st 2017, approved on November 29th 2017) states that Solihull College and University Centre has a current solvency ratio of 2.5, an operating surplus as a proportion of income (excluding capital grant releases) of £989,000 and an actual cash balance equivalent to 193 days cash-in-hand¹.

It is therefore 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.

The College policy with regards to validated² 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.

It is an integral part of the college ethos that students are thought of, and treated, as individuals, not numbers or commodities, and as such Senior Management consider it unlikely that there will be any conditions or situations where "teaching out" will not occur. However, to mitigate against even the remote possibility, the College's validated provision includes a significant number of course modules which are common to other providers and therefore allows for the possible transfer of students to other institutions part-way through their studies³.

Measures to Minimise Potential Risks

Solihull College and University Centre does not offer any programmes, courses or modules which require niche or highly-specialised staff for their delivery, nor is there a significant risk to provision due to the unavailability of resources and facilities which cannot be replicated elsewhere. We design our curriculum offer to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff⁴, with all modules

¹ Defined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency as "Outstanding"

² For Franchised programmes, the policy, procedures and protection planning of the awarding Higher Education Institutions apply

³ In terms of recorded credit for achievement: other institutions may have additional requirements.

⁴ Any module which may be overly-dependent on one member of staff is not considered.

validated⁵ as having an alternative lecturer/tutor should the unforeseen happen to the proposed leader, and programmes timetabled so that modules can be substituted for others should it be absolutely necessary.

The integration of part-time and contract staff into course teams further minimises any potential risk to provision due to either short or long term absences, as the amount of hours taught by a number of individuals can be extended, increased or changed, and if absolutely necessary, it is possible to substitute certain modules for others, or to re-timetable delivery schedules.

Course Delivery Location

Should it become necessary, for any reason however unlikely, that delivery is not possible at any one of the college's three campuses; 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.

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 Compensation Policy, and should it become necessary, the Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy which cover:

- refunds;
- commitments to honour student bursaries;
- compensation for maintenance costs and lost time;

Although the College does not have formalised reciprocal arrangements with other colleges which allow for the transfer of students from one to another in the event of a serious disruption to provision, due to the teaching of modules common to multiple pathways⁶, it is possible for some students to move from one Higher National course to another if their course was to be closed part-way through their studies, suspended for any reason (e.g. long-term absence of key staff), or had been closed prior to the return from a student's enforced break in continuity due to personal circumstances⁷.

Communication with Staff, Students and the Office for Students

Student engagement is integral to college strategy⁸, policy, management and curriculum delivery, and takes place at all levels and in many different formats within and across Solihull College and University Centre. It is a key component of the college's monitoring activities with student representation on the HE Quality and Standards Board, HE Strategy Group, Governing Council and our Student Voice Steering Group.

Gathering and reacting to student input with regards to course management and monitoring is an integral part of our Higher Education governance procedures, with documentation such as this approved through our clearly defined student representative system whereby student input, feedback and opinion is formally sought and acted upon at all levels.

⁵ "The internal course design, development and approval processes...." was highlighted as a feature of **good practice** in [QAA's 2016 HE Review of Solihull College](#).

⁶ Solihull College and University Centre is also willing to consider students transferring from other institutions who can evidence comparable academic achievement.

⁷ These students are considered as part of the College's Course Closure policy, and mentioned here only to indicate that all risks to provision, however small, have been considered.

⁸ The Student Voice Engagement Strategy is available on the College website.

The College Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is well-used by all staff and students⁹ and is therefore used to publicise procedural changes, and as a way of eliciting responses in addition to the college's other feedback and management mechanisms. This Student Protection Plan will be highlighted on log-in screens as part of our rotating document display, in addition to its publication on the college website, and attention drawn to it for prospective applicants as part of our information provision prior to any offer of a course place.

HE provision is delivered at all three of campuses, and although the College has an increasing number of HE students, it isn't typical, or practical, for students across all programmes to associate with students other than those on their programme of study. However, the College does take great care to ensure that focus groups and other student gatherings are administered in ways which allow and encourage participation from all students regardless of their mode of study, programme area or campus, with the contents of this Protection Plan to be introduced as a standing discussion item from September 2018.

All HE courses, regardless of the awarding body have a named student representative logged with the Student Enrichment Coordinator who is responsible for their training. They either volunteer or are nominated by their cohort, and if there is more than one nominee, the role is either shared or a ballot takes place.

Written guidance on the representative role is provided on the HE Student Hub (part of our internal VLE) and the College makes efforts to ensure that responses are provided to students when they provide feedback, either via the meeting and reporting structures outlined above, taking part in surveys or giving informal feedback in class.

The student representatives, in addition to training for their role at all levels of the college's management structure have dedicated pages on the Student Hub/ intranet to help to ensure that they are aware of duties for the year, events as they come up and for general consultation on cross-college matters such as the content of this Student Protection Plan.

HE Student Council comments are fed back to the Student Voice Steering Group as an iterative mechanism to encourage students' involvement in our feedback systems with all matters raised in meetings attended by Student Representatives responded to through the meeting system and on the Student Hub section of the intranet.

Clear information about fees, policies and other information regarding study at Solihull College and University Centre's Higher Education and the financial support available to students is, and will continue to be, publicised on the College website at www.solihull.ac.uk with individual advice provided by Student Services upon request either by e-mail, telephone or at personal interviews which can be arranged by appointment.

The College's Policy and Procedure for Closing Credit Bearing Programmes and the Higher Education Programme Amendment Policy outlines the steps which are, or will be, taken in the event of a decision to make material changes to, or close a course¹⁰, and if it becomes necessary to implement any part of this Student Protection Plan, the college's Student Services Department will be contactable by telephone and/or in writing for additional guidance and to respond to questions or requests for supplementary information, and concerned students directed to independent guidance if necessary.

⁹ Both teaching and support staff, and Full-Time and Part-Time students

¹⁰ For example notifying stakeholders and appropriate bodies such as the Office for Students: actions for which the Dean of Higher Education and Curriculum Innovation has both oversight and responsibility.

The Office for Students will be informed initially by e-mail, and subsequently in writing within three days, of any decision being taken which may require the implementation of any part of this plan, in addition to publication both internally on the college's VLE, and on the college website.

Should any current or prospective student wish to complain about the content, administration or implementation of this Student Protection Plan, they should consult the College's Complaints Procedure which is available on the website and on the Student VLE (Moodle).