
Student Protection Plan

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Introduction

City of Bristol College is dedicated to ensuring every student's academic success. However, unforeseen circumstances, often beyond the college's control, can necessitate adjustments to modules or programmes. This Student Protection Plan outlines potential changes that may arise and the college's strategy for their management.

The [College Code of Conduct](#), outlines expectations for both students and the college, ensuring a high-quality learning experience. The Student Protection Plan details the college's risk management approach and mitigation strategies in education provision. In the event of conflicts between this plan and the Student Charter, the Student Charter will take precedence. City of Bristol College does not possess degree awarding powers, instead, our programmes are conferred by partner institutions;

- University of the West of England
- University of Plymouth
- Bath Spa University
- Pearson Education

Students enrolled on Franchised programmes fall under the respective partner university's student protection plan. Please refer to the attached Appendix for a list of Franchised programmes.

What does this plan cover?

The 2017 Higher Education and Research Act requires the College to have a Student Protection Plan, detailing measures in response to significant changes affecting the quality or progression of students' studies. Such changes may include, (but are not limited to):

- a) a decision to close the College or site for delivery of College's programmes had been taken;
- b) disruption of College's programme delivery;
- c) insufficient student numbers are recruited to make a course viable;
- d) industrial action;
- e) the unanticipated departure of key members of college staff;
- f) the cessation of programme delivery, likely cessation, or change of delivery mode;
- g) major changes in year to programme content;
- h) changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific programme and/or loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies.

Which students does this plan apply to?

This plan covers City of Bristol College Higher Education Students. If you are studying with us through a partner institution because of the nature of our agreement with the university this plan will apply.

What happens if the College needs to make a change to or close your programme or the college?

We are committed to letting you know about any proposed changes as early as possible, setting out clear information about what we plan to do and what your options are. We will make reasonable efforts to minimise disruption to your studies, and if necessary.

We may offer you alternative options:

- the opportunity to move to another programme;
- a modified version of the same programme;
- assistance to switch to a different provider;
- a move to a different campus;
- if continuity of studies cannot be maintained despite all reasonable efforts, as a last resort, a financial refund and/or compensation will be agreed in accordance with our policy [Fees Policy](#).

Where you are required to transfer programme, or move to another site, there may be implications for your student finance arrangements and/ or you may need support from the College to access the new arrangement. If you are affected, the college's Student Services team will contact you and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on this Plan, the [College Code of Conduct](#), and our [Fees Policy](#).

Disruption of College's Programme delivery.

Where we anticipate changes, which will affect your studies we are committed to:

- Letting you know as soon as possible.
- Where appropriate working with student representatives to discuss the changes.
- Providing you with advice and guidance on the proposed changes and options that you have.
- Applying, where relevant, our [Fees Policy](#).

The likelihood of the risks outlined below of occurring are considered to be low. However, we have considered a wide range of potential scenarios and set out what we will do in each eventuality to demonstrate our commitment to the successful completion of your studies.

The Higher Education Board, and Higher Education Operational Committee regularly review higher education risks, implementing strategies for mitigation. In the event of program delivery disruption, we'll take necessary steps to minimise impact on you, employing appropriate measures depending on the circumstances:

- temporary short-term suspension of programme delivery (e.g. where there is a change in the programme delivery location or staffing, appropriate actions to mitigate the impact on you);
- changes to the delivery location or method, which may include distance learning;
- delivering a modified version of the same course;
- changes to the staffing of a programme, including the recruitment of alternative staff;
- offering you the opportunity to transfer to an alternative programme;
- offering support for you to access another provider's programme, including credit transfer arrangements and sharing information on your academic progress.
- provision to 'teach out' a course for existing students;
- in line with our [Fees Policy](#) full or partial refunds will be considered in special cases where the College is unable to support you with continuation of your studies.

The college's Business Continuity Policy addresses major disruptions, such as the loss of a site due to incidents like fire, contamination, or serious crimes. The Student Protection Plan handles changes affecting current students, activated only for material changes. The outlined material changes and corresponding management strategies are detailed below.

Possible risks to your study and how we would manage these:

Risk of notice from our partner institutions; the risk of academic partnership termination is low. Regular meetings with university partners ensure ongoing program evaluation and relationship maintenance. Issues affecting student experience are collaboratively resolved through regular reviews. In case of termination, we commit to a timely process, allowing courses to conclude. Our Academic Agreements prioritise ensuring registered students complete their course, either at our institution or by transferring with our support.

If the college ceases operating (institutional failure):

Institutional failure is monitored per higher education regulatory requirements, with identified risks managed through our risk procedures. The overall risk of City of Bristol College ceasing operations is low. Measures are in place to safeguard against adverse effects on students. The statutory procedure for closing a college prioritizes the continuation of provision and safeguarding learning. In the unlikely event of closure, we will consider measures to protect your student experience, such as:

- where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period that would allow you to complete your studies at the college;
- merging with another institution to maintain all or part of the college's current provision;
- where the above is not possible, by supporting you to transfer to an appropriate programme at another provider;
- where appropriate, by compensating you for disruption to your studies where you have suffered demonstrable material financial loss;

Insufficient student numbers are recruited to make a course viable.

In the unlikely event if the College cannot meet its student recruitment targets and must cancel the course, the College will:

- timely refund of full tuition fees to those students who have paid in advance and are yet to start their studies.
- discuss options with individual students who have been accepted with suitable alternative courses or entry to the next intake.
- provide students with opportunities to enrol at another local provider.
- ensure existing cohorts will continue the course through to completion at all sites.

The programme you are enrolled on loses its accreditation

The risk of partner universities or awarding organisations withdrawing from our programs is low, given regular quality assurance reviews. Systems are in place to address quality issues and ensure your academic experience is safeguarded. Additionally, the risk of our partners being unable to award degrees is low, as UWE Bristol, University of Plymouth, and Bath Spa University are experienced institutions known for delivering high-quality programmes.

If our programmes are de-designated for 'Student Support' purposes (so you were unable to access statutory student finance), we will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to you.

For example, by;

- working with relevant funding bodies to allow you to complete your year of study/programme;
- if the above is not feasible, assisting your transfer to a suitable program and compensating for demonstrable, material financial loss due to study disruption.
- assisting you by providing evidence such as letters in support of continuation of your studies.
- if the above is not feasible, assisting your transfer to a suitable programme at another provider, including planning for credit transfer, academic progress information, and, if necessary, financial arrangements.

Changes to our minimum Apprenticeship standards;

The college offers Higher-level Apprenticeships, and changes to minimum standards could impact our ability to deliver apprenticeships if we lose direct claims. The likelihood of this is low due to safeguards in place, including weekly reviews of apprenticeship engagement, close collaboration with assessors and department heads to track attendance and progression, and regular communication with employers for updates on apprentices.

Our contingency plan is to help you find a suitable provider, collaborate for a smooth transition of funding and module accreditation, with a possible break in learning to avoid any disadvantage to you or your employer.

Changes in our strategic aims, reduction in demand or course closure

Occasionally, due to strategic shifts or reduced recruitment, the college may close courses, discontinue program modules, or, though unlikely, close departments. Decisions are made based on the impact on student experience and financial viability with low student numbers. In such cases, plans are in place.

We aim to facilitate your completion of the current award. If continuing isn't feasible or you prefer to transfer, we'll support program changes at the college or a move to another provider. There's a low risk of course structure or timetable adjustments, and any changes would be made in consultation with you and your student cohort to ensure teaching and assessment through award completion.

If we need to make major in-year changes in the content of your programme

If events cause term-time program disruption, the college will typically explore adjustments to program delivery instead of outright closure or suspension. However, changes may be necessary due to:

- updates to the course content to keep it current;
- loss of key staff;
- insufficient enrolment, significant reduction in attendance or circumstances beyond our control resulting in course or department closure;
- decision to close a centre, discontinue a course or to move the course to better facilities;
- restrictions or changes put in place by an external body.

For students required to transfer courses or move to another institution, Student Services will be informed, and the affected students will receive detailed information, advice, and guidance tailored to their individual circumstances.

If we cease delivering a programme (or to become likely) or change its delivery mode

We have established procedures for program suspension, closure, or delivery mode changes, aiming to mitigate any material impact on you. Our Fees Policy guarantees refunds if the college cancels a course. We strive to enable program completion through teaching out, managing resources carefully. If not feasible, we'll explore program changes or transfers. Equality impact assessments will be conducted, consulting stakeholders when necessary. If you have applied for a College programme, but have not yet enrolled, you will be notified (in accordance with UCAS deadlines where appropriate) in time for you to source an alternative suitable programme, where relevant, at the College or one of our partners. We will provide you with support and advice in these circumstances.

Key academic staff involved in delivering a programme becoming unavailable

Teaching contracts require a 3-month notice period to prevent staffing gaps from resignations. However, in cases of long-term sickness, retirement, death, or departure, we will:

- seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by assigning responsibility to other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption;
- where the College cannot avoid closing a module or programme, the plan outlined will apply;
- in the extreme circumstance that the College cannot avoid closing a programme we would ensure students were not disadvantaged through working with our partners to provide alternative provision.

The College's structure ensures the security of provision by linking Further Education and Higher Education. Shared facilities and resources enhance flexibility and continuity. If staff quality is compromised, we have established relationships with teaching agencies for potential replacements. If needed, collaboration with partners is considered for maintaining teaching standards.

Loss of use of specialist facilities or employer support

City of Bristol College offers specialized programs at the Advanced Engineering Centre. Contingencies are in place for potential facility issues, including collaboration with global engineering organisations for alternative space. If work-related learning is disrupted, efforts will be made to secure new opportunities or collaborate with partners to minimise any disadvantage to students.

If industrial action affects your studies

We have frameworks for consultation and negotiation with recognized trade unions, committed to maintaining effective employee relations. In case of industrial action. Where industrial action does occur, we will seek to:

- Maintain normal operations and services as much as possible.
- Take reasonable steps to minimize disruption to ensure you are not unduly disadvantaged.

If part or all of a site closes

If a College site needs to close or reduce provision, measures are in place to mitigate disruptions for students. With multiple sites across Bristol, if one is affected, delivery can be shifted to another site.

If a site needs to close or becomes unusable, we'll explore remedies such as:

- Relocating provision to an alternative site;
- Adjusting the timetable to accommodate all scheduled teaching in available facilities, possibly involving sessions outside normal office hours. We'll consult with you and conduct equality impact assessments if this approach is taken.
- Delivering programmes or parts of programmes via different delivery modes, such as Distance Learning. Where such an approach is taken, we will consider carefully whether this is appropriate for the enrolled students who would be affected.

In the outlined scenarios or if, due to our omission, you cannot reasonably continue your studies, our [Fees Policy](#) applies.

How we communicate this plan

We share our Student Protection Plan with students during enrolment and induction, providing essential information. It's also accessible through the college Student Council, on our website and the Virtual Learning Environment. We publicise our [Compliments, Complaints & Feedback Policy & Procedure](#) and [Fees Policy](#) on our college website.

How we implement this plan

In the event our Student Protection plan needs to be implemented, we will:

- Communicate to students in writing giving 30 days' notice of where we need to make material change to your programme.
- Notify our university partner in writing.
- Conduct course team meetings with Student Representatives and affected students, with circulated minutes. Arrange additional meetings if needed.
- Provide advice and guidance to students in relation to financial matters and careers advice either collectively or individually.
- Communicate with employers where material changes may impact on a student's job role.
- Consult with other institutions to provide advice on alternative course and how you might be able to transfer with credit.

Recognising diverse student schedules, it's crucial to promptly communicate material changes, especially for part-time and full-time students, as well as those sponsored by employers.

How we review this plan

We review our Student Protection Plan during the academic year by ensuring it is included within the existing annual reviews of documents related to students. This process involves the College's Student Union representatives and course representatives. There is also an extensive programme of focus groups carried out with a range of groups throughout the year.

We ensure the wider student population can become involved with the review process by publicising and promoting these throughout the year. The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed by the HE Academic Board.

Staff are made aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose course changes by a policy impact assessment as part of the process of curriculum planning and programme validation. The Head of Higher Education is responsible for ensuring staff are aware of and implement the Plan.

We reserve the right to amend this Plan from time to time based on legal or regulatory change affecting you or us or best practice in the higher education sector.

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint about your experience under this plan you should do so by following the College's [Compliments, Complaints & Feedback Policy & Procedure](#).

Version	
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Lead Officer:	Head of Higher Education
Senior Manager responsible:	Director of Further and Higher Education

Appendix 1

Higher Education Institution	Programme	CoBC Student Protection Plan	Partner Institution Student Protection Plan (Franchised Programme)
University of Plymouth	FdA Creative Arts Therapy Studies	✓	
University of Plymouth	FdA Counselling	✓	
Bath Spa University	FdA Early Years	✓	
Bath Spa University	BA (Hons) Counselling Top Up		✓
Bath Spa University	FdA Creative Therapeutic Practice		✓
Bath Spa University	FdA Counselling		✓
University West of England	FdA Educational Support	✓	
University West of England	Health Professions Foundation Year		✓
University West of England	FdSc Health and Social Care Practice		✓
Pearson Education	HNC in Construction and The Built Environment (Civil Engineering)	✓	
Pearson Education	HNC in Construction and The Built Environment (Construction)	✓	
Pearson Education	HND in Construction and The Built Environment (Construction)	✓	
Pearson Education	HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering	✓	
Pearson Education	HNC Mechanical Engineering	✓	
Pearson Education	HNC Computing	✓	
Pearson Education	HND Computing	✓	
Pearson Education	Creative Media Production HNC (Moving Image) L4	✓	
Pearson Education	Creative Media Production HNC (Game Design, Animation and Vfx) L4	✓	
Pearson Education	Photography (Art & Design) HNC L4	✓	
Pearson Education	Graphic Design (Art & Design) HNC L4	✓	
Pearson Education	Graphic Design (Art & Design) HND L5	✓	
Pearson Education	Creative Media Production (Game Design Animation and Vfx) HND L5	✓	
Pearson Education	Photography (Art & Design) HND L5	✓	