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## Student Protection Plan 2018/19

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City of Bristol College is committed to ensuring that you achieve the best academic outcome for your studies. However, there may be unforeseen circumstances, often outside the College's control, which result in changes having to be made to your modules or programmes. Whilst changes are rare, this Student Protection Plan sets out possible changes which may occur and how we will manage them.

The [Student Charter](#) details the relationship between you and the college. It outlines expectations that the college places upon its students, as well as expectations students should have of the college to deliver high quality student learning and experience. The Student Protection Plan outlines how the college manages risks to provision and what it will do to mitigate these risks. In the event of any conflict between this Plan and the Student Charter then the Student Charter shall take priority.

### What does this plan cover?

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires the College to have a Student Protection Plan, like this Plan, to protect your interests and detail the steps we would take where significant changes had to take place affecting the quality and/or continuation of your study, such as (but not limited to):

- a decision to close the College or site for delivery of College's programmes had been taken;
- disruption of College's programme delivery;
- industrial action;
- the unanticipated departure of key members of college staff;
- the cessation of programme delivery, likely cessation, or change of delivery mode;
- major changes in year to programme content;
- 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 take all reasonable steps to enable you to complete your studies with minimum disruption as intended. If this is not possible we may offer you:

- 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;
- where all reasonable steps have been taken to secure continuity of your studies, as a last resort, a financial refund and/or compensation (for cases where it is not possible to preserve the continuation of study or where study is disrupted) will be agreed in accordance with our [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 [Student Charter](#), and our [Fees Policy](#).

## Working with you

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 the options that you have
- Applying, where relevant, our [Fees Policy](#)

The University Centre at City of Bristol College has many systems in place to ensure Higher Education success. 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 could do in each eventuality to ensure you understand our commitment to the successful completion of your studies. Higher education risks are regularly reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team and the College's governing body and strategies are in place to mitigate these. However, in the event that there is disruption to programme delivery we will, rather than closing the programme, take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption. These may include any one of the following, depending on what is appropriate for the circumstances:

- temporary short-term suspension of programme delivery (e.g. where there is a change in the programme delivery location or staffing, with 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;
- providing reasonable support to you to access a programme run by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of your credits and information about 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](#) covers disruption to business in the event of a major incident. This includes losing all or part of a site for an indefinite period, for example, as a result of fire, contamination or a serious crime. The Student Protection Plan is in place to address circumstances which may arise and result in the College making changes which may affect current students. Minor changes will not trigger this plan, but material changes will. Material changes which may occur are outlined below and the ways we will manage them described.

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

### If the college ceases operating (institutional failure):

Institutional failure is monitored in accordance with all higher education regulatory body requirements and any likelihood of this identified and carefully managed through the college's risk management

procedures. The risk that City of Bristol College as a whole organisation would be unable to continue operating is low. However, the college has put in place measures to ensure you would not be adversely affected by any situation that may arise.

The procedure for closing a college is set out in statute and the priority of the secretary of state is to ensure the continued availability of the provision the college was providing and to safeguard your learning. Where we have no option other than to cease operating, we would 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.

### **The programme you are enrolled on loses its accreditation**

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 by, for example:

- working with relevant funding bodies to allow you to complete your year of study/programme;
- where the above is not possible, supporting you to transfer to an appropriate programme at another provider including making arrangements for the transfer of credits and information about academic progress and, where appropriate, financially
- compensating you where you suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to your studies;
- assisting you by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of continuation of your studies.

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

At times, due to changes in strategic aims or reduction in demand the college could have to close courses, discontinue particular modules of a programme or there may be times, although unlikely, that the college could have to close departments. In the event of any of these circumstances arising the college has specific plans in place. Where possible we will enable you to complete your programme. Where it is not possible to teach out we will support you to either change programmes at the college or move to another provider.

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

Where events result in term-time programme disruption, the college will normally consider whether it is practicable to make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme. However, the College may have to make changes 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;
- strategic 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.

Where a student is required to transfer course, or move to another institution there are likely to be implications for student finance arrangements. The College's Student Services team will be notified of students affected in the event of any the above steps being taken. Student Services will contact affected students and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on their individual circumstances.

### **If we cease delivering a programme (or if this were to become likely) or change its delivery mode:**

We have established and tested procedures in place in the event of the suspension / closure or change of delivery mode of a programme of study. Where there is a material impact on you, we will mitigate the effect by communicating with you to provide assurance that you will not be adversely affected by the decision and that you will be able to complete your studies.

City of Bristol College [Fees Policy](#) includes details on the provision of refunds. This policy states that the College will refund all fees where the College cancels a course.

Wherever possible we will enable you to complete your programme of study (what we call 'teaching out'). In doing this we will carefully manage our approach to staffing and other resources to ensure your studies are affected as little as possible.

Where it is not possible to teach out then we will consider whether there are options for you to change programmes at the College or to transfer to complete your programme at another institution

We will undertake equality impact assessments to assess the effect on students with different needs, characteristics and circumstances. We will consult with stakeholders who may be affected to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken.

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**

This may happen as a result of long term sickness, retirement, death or leaving the College. Where possible 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 as 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 structure of the College contributes to the security of the provision by established links between our Further Education and Higher Education provision. For example, sharing of facilities and resources (especially in terms of staff) provides increased flexibility and security for the continuation of the provision. In the event staff were not able to provide the quality of teaching we require we would contact teaching agencies who we have established relationships with and employ new staff through them. If

these options did not provide the quality of teaching we require for our students success we would work with our partners as outlined above.

### **Loss of use of specialist facilities or employer support**

City of Bristol College has extensive course and facilities for Engineering where specialised programmes are delivered. A recent £4 million investment into the Advanced Engineering Centre has enabled a significant expansion to this state of the art facility, with additional specialist equipment. The College has given consideration and planned contingencies if there was a problem with this site and you were unable to access the specialist equipment required for their course. Strong links with global engineering organisations located in the area give further reassurance of student protection as if we were no longer able to deliver these courses in the centre we would approach these employers for space and facilities on their premises.

If there were to be disruption to our higher education programmes due to our current employers being unable to offer opportunities for work related learning the College would seek to replace these with new employers or work with our partners to ensure you were not disadvantaged.

### **If industrial action affects your studies**

We have established frameworks for consultation and negotiation with the recognised trade unions. We are highly committed to maintaining an effective employee relations culture and working with trade union colleagues to achieve reasonable solutions to matters that may arise from time to time. Where industrial action does occur, we will seek to:

- ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible;
- take all reasonable steps to fulfil its responsibilities to you in ensuring that any disruption is minimised and that you are not, as far as is possible to determine, disadvantaged by the action.

### **If part or all of a site closes:**

In the event of the College having to close or significantly reduce provision on one of our sites we have measures in place to mitigate disruptions for students. As the City of Bristol College is a multi-site College made up of four main centres that are geographically spread around Bristol if one site is adversely affected and unable to be used we would move our delivery to another of our sites.

Where we have to close part or all of a site, or if it becomes unusable for student activity, we will typically consider remedies such as:

- relocating provision to an alternative site;
- revising the timetable to allow all of the scheduled teaching to take part in the available facilities. This may include student contact sessions delivered outside of normal office hours. Where we take this approach, we will consult with you and undertake equality impact assessments to assess the effect on students with different needs, characteristics and circumstances;
- 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 event that under any of the above scenarios, or where you are a student studying directly at the College and for any other reason caused by our omission or default, you are unable reasonably to continue your studies then our [Fees Policy](#) will apply. If any of the circumstances outlined in this plan eventuate the college has the resources to cover the cost of compensation to students.

## How we communicate this plan

We publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by including it as part of the essential information provided to you at enrolment and during your induction period to the College. It is also published on our website and the College via the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle).

## 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. 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 Higher Education Registrar is responsible for ensuring staff are aware of and implement the Plan.

The College review this Plan annually with final approval via the College's Curriculum and Quality Committee.

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 complaints policy.

**Review frequency:** Annually

**Lead Officer:** Assistant Director, Quality & Standards

**Responsible:** Assistant Director, Quality & Standards

**Last revised:** November 2018