



College

Higher Education Student Protection Plan

Policy Details	
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1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 This Policy responds to the requirement to maintain a Student Protection Plan under the Higher Education and Research Act to protect student experience in the event of programme changes or closure.

2. Introduction and Purpose

- 2.1 USP College (the college) is committed to helping to ensure students achieve the best academic outcomes from their studies. Events may occasionally occur which mean that unforeseen changes must be made to modules or programmes (provision for such events is detailed within the college Admission and Enrolment Policy).
- 2.2 The student protection plan intends to assess the range of risks to non-continuation of study and provide the student with an overview of the measures the college has in place mitigate those risks.
- 2.3 COVID 19 Statement: A measure approached in light of Department for Education and Office for Students guidelines will be adopted by the college. This may mean some disruption to the educational programmes during the academic year as a result of the COVID 19 outbreak.

At all times the college will uphold the consumer rights of its students aiming to inform them of their options at the earliest possible opportunity if there are extraordinary modifications or changes to the advertised course offer.

- 2.4 This plan protects the college's registered students including students registered to the college as part of formal sub contractual arrangements.
- 2.5 For more information regarding this policy please contact the Head of Higher Education, emailing info@uspcollege.ac.uk.

3. Legislation and Guidance

- 3.1 [The Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#) requires Higher Education Institution's (HEI) & Further Education colleges to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure.
- 3.2 This plan was written in accordance with [Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20 guidance](#) published by Office for Students February 2018.

4. Risk to Non-Continuation

- 4.1 The college assessment of risk to non-continuation have been as considered for a period of two years, equivalent to the normal pattern of study of its funded provision.
- 4.2 The college has identified the following risks to non-continuation of courses (but not limited to):
- Institutional closure
 - Institution closure of part of a campus
 - Cancellation of a higher education course

- d. Loss of eligibility as a registered provider of higher education
- e. Loss or restriction of validation arrangement with Pearson Education limited
- f. Working with sub contractual partners
- g. Major changes to in year course content or delivery mode
- h. Industrial action by college staff or third parties
- i. The unanticipated departure of key members of college staff

4.3 The college will use its system of risk management to calculate the risk to non-continuation. The systematic process of risk management and mitigation is summarised visually using a 4-point Likert Scale as shown in Table 1 to measure the probability of the risk to non-continuation. Risks and their likelihood of crystallisation, will be reviewed on an annual basis. A summary of the risk to non-continuation and their likelihood can be found in Appendix 1. The full risk assessment process is available upon [request](#).

Table 1 4-point likelihood rating scale

Low	Medium	Significant	High
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4.4 For every risk assessed in this student protection plan, the college will justify its reason to ensure transparency for its students and prospective students.

5. Measures to Inform and Protect Students

5.1 Students are referred to the college Admissions and Enrolment Policy. The college is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options.

5.2 All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the resultant disruption to those services and affected students by, for example:

- a. offering affected students, the chance to move to another course;
- b. delivering a modified version of the same course;
- c. aiding affected students to switch to a different provider.

5.3 The college's Admissions team will be notified of students affected in the event of any of the above steps being taken. The Admissions team will contact affected students and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on their individual circumstances in line with guidance provided in the Student Protection Plan.

5.4 In the event that the college had to implement its Student Protection plan, the Student Services team would be on hand to provide bespoke support for each student that is affected by this. This would include assisting in identifying alternative relevant provision, assisting with contacting the new provider and ensuring that relevant references were forwarded to the new provider in a timely fashion so as to facilitate a smooth transition.

6. Significant Material Change

6.1 Institutional Closure

Rating:

Low Risk

Justification: The risk to institutional closure is rated low, the college's financial health is currently rated as Good, by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and is forecasted as good for the next financial year. The college currently meets all its statutory requirements to provide higher quality Higher Education.

- a. Institutional failure will be monitored through risk management in accordance with HE regulatory bodies and any instance of this will be managed in accordance with college policies.
- b. Where the college has no option, other than to close, it may consider measures such as those below to protect student experience:
 - i. where possible, closing gradually, over a period that would allow currently enrolled students to complete their studies at the Institution;
 - ii. where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and (where appropriate financially) by compensating students where because of disruption to their studies they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss;
 - iii. merging with another institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.

6.2 Institution Closure of Part of a Campus

Rating:

Low Risk

Justification: The risk to institutional closure is rated low, the college's financial health is currently rated as Good, by the ESFA and is forecasted as good for the next financial year. The college current meets all its statutory requirements to provide higher quality Higher Education.

- a. Where part or all of the campus is rendered unusable for activities involving students, the college will typically consider remedies such as:
 - i. relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include hiring spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby) and / or installing temporary buildings on the college's land (where available);
 - ii. revising timetabling to allow all of the scheduled teaching to take part in the available facilities. This may include student contact sessions being held outside of normal office hours. Where such an approach is taken, appropriate consultation will normally be conducted with stakeholders who may be affected; appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken;
 - iii. delivering programmes via alternative means, such as Distance Learning. Where such an approach is taken, the college will consider whether this it is appropriate for enrolled students who would be affected.

6.3 Cancellation of a Higher Education Course

Rating:

Medium
Risk

Justification: The college operates on small cohort sizes, where student numbers determine viability. The college has mitigating processes in place to measure risk to course closure.

- a. Where the college decides for strategic reasons that a course is not viable to run; the college will consider the following:
 - i. communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options;
 - ii. offer suitable information advice and guidance (IAG).

6.4 Loss of Eligibility as a Registered Provider of Higher Education

Rating:

Low Risk

Justification: The college is regulated by the Office for Students (OfS) and complies to the ongoing conditions of registration. The college has a well governed and managed Higher Education provision with processes to mitigate these risks.

- a. In the event of loss or restriction of college's status as a registered provider of Higher Education, the college will work with the regulatory body to:
 - i. ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the resultant disruption to affected students;
 - ii. ensure that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner.
- b. In the event of loss or restriction of the college's status as a registered provider of Higher Education for 'Student Support' purposes (resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance for its courses) the college, will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:
 - i. working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme;
 - ii. where the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to their studies;
 - iii. considering assistance for affected students by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of the continuation of their studies;
 - iv. partner with another institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.

6.5 Loss or restriction of validation arrangement with Pearson Education limited

Rating

Low Risk

- a. In the event of loss or restriction to the relationship with Pearson education limited the college would look to implement the following measures for students:
 - i. Where possible, we will 'teach out' current students expected to complete based on original expected end date, ensuring the course can be completed by all students that are currently enrolled.
 - ii. We will offer individualised support to assist in finding an alternative provider with whom the course can be completed.
 - iii. We will accurately record the amount of credit/academic progress achieved and support you in using this as credit transfer to another provider
 - iv. In the event that none of the proposed options are acceptable, the college will give full consideration to refunding all or part of paid tuition fees.

6.6 Working with Sub Contractual Partners

Rating:

Medium
Risk

Justification: The college operates with four sub contractual partners, Writtle University College, University of Hertfordshire, Simply Alliance Limited, trading as Docklands Academy London (DAL), and Oxford Business College (OBC). The college rates the risk to non-continuation as low, due well established partnerships and effect quality assurance mechanisms that exists as part of ongoing sub contractual arrangements.

Students registered with Writtle University College and University of Hertfordshire are covered by the respective awarding body student protection plan, these can be found on the corresponding websites.

- a. Dockland Academy and OBC students

Engaging in this sub contractual activity as the lead partner brings some risk of partner, programme and module closure. The unplanned closure of a partner is low risk. From time to time across the portfolio it is possible for the risk of a programme or module closure to materialise.

- b. However, these risks are mitigated by our internal governance arrangements:
 - i. At the inception of a relationship, all partners undergo a due diligence process which requires formal sign-off by the college academic board;
 - ii. The due diligence process is repeated every year as part of formal Partner re-approval processes.

- d. The college's Memorandum of Agreement with DAL and OBC includes a requirement for the partner institution to teach out a sub-contracted programme should either party initiate a termination of the partnership. If DAL were, for reasons outside its or the colleges control, unable to continue to deliver a programme (or if the college had significant concerns over the partner's ability to deliver the programme), then the college would initiate one of the following:
- I. Initially, the college would consider offering support to allow the partner institution to teach the programme until all current students have completed the course (depending upon the circumstances, this could include financial support, the provision of college staff to contribute to teaching, and/or additional student support). Where there are concerns about quality, standards and student's academic experience on the course, it may not be possible to 'teach out'.
 - II. Student recruitment will be discontinued, in accordance with the legal agreement
 - III. Failing that, the college, in consultation with the partner institution, would investigate the possibility of an alternative HE provider continuing to teach the programme, with students ideally continuing on the same programme, or with their consent transferring to a similar programme.

6.7 Major changes to in Year Course Content or Delivery Mode

Rating:

Medium
Risk

Justification: The college has a process to ensure that the delivery of programmes are provided as advertised. The programmes are reviewed annually and are agreed in advance of teaching. With the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, the college may be forced to change face to face delivery modes to distance or blended models to meet the most current guidance from the UK government.

a. The college will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description applied to it in the college's website course guide for the academic year in which a student began their programme. However, in the event of major in-year changes to course content or delivery mode, the college will ensure that:

- i. changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience, and affected students are notified and consulted with as appropriate;
- ii. it works with students to ensure the offer is still acceptable;
- iii. where necessary it allows students the opportunity to enact programme suspension or withdraw from the programme;
- iv. where required students will be offered reasonable support to transfer to another programme at the college, or to another provider.

6.8 Disruption of College Activity

Rating:

Medium
Risk

Justification: The COVID 19 pandemic has meant widespread disruption to Higher Education course in 2020-21. It is anticipated that there will not be the same level of disruption in 2021-22, though government guidelines may impact the colleges decision making. Good management and governance processes will aim to mitigate any in year risk of disruption.

- a. 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.
- b. Actions to minimise disruption may include:
 - i. 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 students);
 - ii. changes to the programme delivery location or method, which may include distance learning;
 - iii. changes to the staffing of a programme, for instance through a review of internal staff resources, including recruitment of area specialists, where appropriate;
 - iv. offering students, the opportunity to transfer to an alternative programme;

- v. provision of reasonable support to students for accessing a programme run by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of credits and information about academic progress.

6.9 Industrial Action by College Staff or Third Parties

Rating: Low Risk

Justification: The college has a settled higher education teaching staff with low turnover, and no recent history of trade union disputes.

- a. The college has established frameworks for consultation and negotiation with the recognised trade unions. It is 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.
- b. Where industrial action does occur, the college will seek to:
 - i. ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible;
 - ii. take all reasonable steps to fulfil its responsibilities to students in ensuring that any disruption is minimised, and students are not, as far as is possible to determine, disadvantaged by the action.

6.10 The Unanticipated Departure of Key Members of College Staff

Rating: Low Risk

Justification: The college does not have a high turnover of HE staff. All staff have a three-month notice period, to terminate employment.

- a. Where possible the college will:
 - i. seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant post(s) or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption.

7. Refunds and Compensation

- 7.1 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 Fees & Refunds Policy outlines information on the refund of tuition fees if the college is no longer able to preserve the continuation of study.
- 7.2 The college will incorporate provisions within its annual budget for the potential payment of tuition fees and other refunds and compensation payments to students. A combination of cash reserves and (where appropriate) insurance policies will be designated for those students where an increased risk of non-continuation of study has been identified.
- 7.3 If a student feels they have been disadvantaged because of any significant material change listed in the student protection plan, they can apply for

compensation through the college Compliments and Complaints Process. Each application will be an individual evidence-based assessment.

- 7.4** The college will consider compensation claims for:
- a. additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course;
 - b. commitments to honour student bursaries;
 - c. maintenance costs and lost time in the unlikely event that it is not possible to preserve continuation of study; and
 - d. tuition and maintenance costs where students have to change course or provider.
- 7.5** All compensation claims are considered in context, and take into account:
- a. What mitigation the college has already put in place to satisfy the complaint;
 - b. The contract with the student; and
 - c. How much of the contract is unfulfilled.
- 7.6** Decisions about how much compensation is appropriate are taken on a case-by-case basis. The college always aim to satisfy a complaint and refund claims at the earliest stage possible. This early resolution culture extends to compensation claims.

8. Communication Feedback and Review

- 8.1** This [Student Protection Plan](#) is available to current and future students and staff on our external website, as is our current practice with the [Fees and Refunds Policy](#).
- 8.2** The college will operate a minimum notice period of 20 working days to inform students in the event of course, campus or planned provider closure.
- 8.3** Should the Student Protection Plan need to be implemented, affected students will be contacted in a variety of methods. This will include, but not limited to; direct telephone communication, personal written correspondence, and email. Indirect communication will be presented through the college website.
- 8.4** Students wishing to provide feedback regarding the college's student protection plan should follow the college's [Compliments and Complaints Process](#). Students will also be given the opportunity to shape the way the college mitigates risks to non-continuation, through the input at course level programme committee meetings.
- 8.5** This policy will be reviewed annually. The risks will be re-rated using the student protection plan risk register tool. The updated risk to non-continuation will be validated by the academic planning committee, with the Policy being signed off by Policies and Procedures committee. The Final Student Protection Plan will be agreed for publication at Higher Education Academic Board.

**Appendix 1 Student Protection Plan Risk Register Summary
2021-22**

No.	Area	Ref:	Risk associated with:	Current score	Current Risk for Academic Year	Risk for Previous Academic Year	Responsible	Mitigated Risk
1	Senior Management	6.1	USP College Closure	4	Low risk	Low risk	Principal & CEO	Low risk
2	Senior Management	6.2	College Campus Closure	2	Low risk	Low risk	Principal & CEO	Low risk
3	Senior Management	6.3	HE Education Course Cancellation	6	Medium risk	High Risk	Vice Principal Funding	Medium risk
4	Senior Management	6.4	Loss of eligibility as a registered provider of Higher Education	5	Medium risk	Medium risk	Vice Principal Funding	Low risk
5	Senior Management	6.5	Loss or restriction of validation arrangement with Pearson education limited	5	Low Risk	Medium risk	Head of Higher Education	Low risk
6	Senior Management	6.6	Working With Sub Contracted partners	12	Medium Risk	High Risk	Head of Higher Education	Medium Risk
7	Senior Management	6.7	Major changes to in Year Course Content or Delivery Mode	16	Medium Risk	High risk	Head of Learning	Medium Risk
8	Senior Management	6.8	Disruption of College Activity	16	Medium	High risk	Head of Higher Education	Medium Risk
9	Senior Management	6.9	Industrial action by College staff or third parties	6	Low risk	Medium Risk	Head of Higher Education	Low risk
10	Senior Management	6.10	The unanticipated departure of key members of College staff	2	Low risk	Low risk	Principal & CEO	Low risk

Equality and Diversity Statement & Impact Assessment

USP College is committed to equality of opportunity. The aim is to create an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect, regardless of: age, disability, family responsibility, marital status, race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender identity, transgender, sexual orientation, trade union activity or unrelated criminal convictions.

This form should be used by managers and policy owners within their area of responsibility to carry out Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EDIAs) in relation to protected characteristics including, but not limited to: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. The word 'policy' is taken to include strategies, policies, procedures and guidance notes; both formal and informal, internal and external.

1. Name of Policy

HE Student Protection Plan 21-22

2. Which of the following groups could be affected by this policy?

(Tick all that apply)

Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wider Community	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Complaints

Have complaints been received from anyone with one or more protected characteristic about the service provided? If yes then please give details.

N/A

4. The Impact

Four possible impacts should be considered as part of the assessment:

- Positive Impact** - Where the policy might have a positive impact on a particular protected characteristic.
- None or Little Impact** – Where you think a policy does not disadvantage any of the protected characteristics
- Some Impact** – Where a policy might disadvantage any of the protected characteristics groups to some extent. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals with protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.
- Substantial Impact** – Where you think that the policy could have a negative impact on any or all of the protected characteristics. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that the negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Thought-provoking questions, which might help come to a decision about the impact of a policy on individuals with protected characteristics:

- Does policy outcomes and service take up differ between people with different protected characteristics?
- What key information do we have? Does data or engagement with people with protected characteristics give insights into areas of disadvantage, which relate to the policy area?
- If the policy is likely to have a negative impact on individuals, sharing particular characteristics what steps can be taken to mitigate these effects?
- Will the policy deliver practical benefits for certain groups?
- Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good understanding/relationships between groups?
- Do other policies need to change to make this policy more effective?
- Is there any elements of the policy that could be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

Use the guidance provided above and complete the following table: **(Please Tick ✓)**

Gender/Age	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Gender		✓		
Age		✓		
Disability	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Visually Impaired		✓		
Hearing impaired		✓		
Physical Disability		✓		
Specific Learning Difficulties		✓		
Global Learning Difficulties		✓		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		✓		
Any other disability – Various		✓		
Other Factors	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Race		✓		
Culture		✓		
Religious Belief		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Gender Reassignment		✓		
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy /Maternity /Paternity		✓		

Please comment on any areas where some or substantial impact is indicated. Any resulting actions must be added to the below action plan.

5. Is there anything that cannot be changed?

What cannot be changed?	Can this be justified?	If so, how?
Not applicable		
E.g., Disabled people can be treated more favorably under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. If a policy appears to treat disabled people more favorably than other equality groups, the disadvantage may be justifiable		

Please list the main actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment in your area of responsibility. (Continue on separate sheets as necessary)

<p>Action Plan:</p>
