



# Higher Education Student Protection Plan

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## **1 Introduction**

This plan meets the College's requirements under the *Higher Education and Research Act 2017*. It outlines the measures in place to protect students where events may impact on the planned delivery of a course. It sets out how the College will mitigate risks to the quality and continuation of its future programmes by protecting the interests of students. Building on our previous success with higher education programmes, this plan assures current and future students of the quality and continuation of their programme.

## **2 Potential Risks**

To minimise potential risks to continuity, the College operates a robust Curriculum Planning Process. This ensures that appropriate resources, including staffing, are in place to deliver the programmes, potential risks are identified and actions taken to mitigate them through the risk register.

In addition to this, the College has assessed the potential risks and put measures in place to mitigate their impact. This is outlined in Appendix 1.

The plan acknowledges that there is not one single measure that will be suitable for all students and will consider the individual needs of all students.

## **3 Closing programmes**

In the unlikely event that a course is closed, the College will ensure that all students have the opportunity to complete their studies.

If material changes occur, the College will protect students' interest with steps including:

- running 'teach out' programmes for existing students
- offering students an alternative programme, facility or venue
- arranging for affected students to change to an alternative provider at the same point in their studies
- giving full or partial refunds only when the College cannot provide any other alternative.

### **3.1 Offering 'teach out' programmes**

To minimise the impact on students, the College can run 'teach out'. This is when the programme closes gradually, allowing current students to complete their studies. If a programme enters into 'teach out', the College will publish a formal agreement with its validating partner setting out its commitment to ensuring the quality of the student academic experience.

### **3.2 Offering alternative programmes**

In some exceptional cases, when 'teach out' is not possible, the College will offer students transfers to other programmes within the College or with other providers. This will be used as a last resort.

### **3.3 Offering refunds and compensation**

The College's Higher Education Refund and Compensation Policy details when it gives refunds or compensation for ending programmes. These are a last resort and the College will do everything possible to ensure that these are not necessary.

To meet any financial implications of this plan, the College will adopt a Student Refund and Compensation Fund. This fund will be established from tuition fee income.

## **4 Communication**

This plan is available to all students and staff on the College website.

Programme handbooks and offer letters will refer future students to the plan. Staff can also access it on shared drives.

If any risks occur, the College will communicate with affected students as soon as possible, but no later than 5 working days after reaching a decision. This will take place verbally and in writing.

The College will explain its mitigation measures to affected student groups. Students can discuss this further in a group or individually with a named contact.

All students can receive independent advice and support.

## **5 Review**

The College will review this plan annually consulting staff and students to maintain currency and appropriateness.

Any changes to the plan will be posted on the Telford College website and student HE general area of the Virtual Learning Environment, and all staff will be updated.

## **6 Complaints**

Students who wish to make a complaint about how Telford College is implementing this plan can do so using the HE Complaints Policy and Procedure.

## 7 Appendix 1 Indicative Risk Register

Appendix 1 lists a number of risks that may affect the continuation of programmes. It is not exhaustive but details the more probable risks and the measures the College may take to mitigate their impact.

Risk description	Risk Score (5x5) Likelihood x Consequences Likelihood	Key mitigation factors
<p><b>Course Suspension/Closure</b></p> <p>Enrolment to a programme is suspended, most likely due to insufficient applications</p>	<p>4 x 4 = 16 High Risk</p>	<p>Curriculum Planning that considers application and predicted enrolments, drawing on previous student numbers and conversion rates. Continual monitoring of applications. Communication with potential applicants and current students from the initial point of concern. Identification of possible alternative courses for applicants Implementation of 'teach out'. Application of Course Closure, Suspension and Major Change Policy and procedures. Referral to Refund and Compensation Policy.</p> <p>The College would work collaboratively with other higher education institutes, further education colleges and the Association of Colleges (AoC) to find a suitable alternative that allows existing students to complete their chosen programme.</p>
<p><b>Loss of key staff (temporary or permanent)</b></p> <p>Loss of staff may impact on specialist delivery. Planned losses include workforce reduction or restructuring activities. Unplanned loss includes staff sickness and resignations</p>	<p>4 x 4 = 16 High Risk</p>	<p>A Curriculum Planning process that considers the sufficiency and of staffing. Timely recruitment and selection processes to seek temporary or permanent staffing replacements internally or externally. Review of timetables to provide cover from existing staffing. Implement temporary adjustments to delivery or content (such as blended learning).</p> <p>Where the course is franchised through University of Wolverhampton, supported delivery from their academic staff will be sought.</p> <p>The College would be responsive to seek temporary or permanent replacements internally or externally. In all circumstances the quality of higher education provision would be achieved via internal processes (e.g. College Staff Induction) and external approval of new staff from the validating body (where appropriate).</p>

Risk description	Risk Score (5x5) Likelihood x Consequences Likelihood	Key mitigation factors
<b>Withdrawal of awarding arrangements from validating organisation</b> (Pearson)	3 x 5 = 15 Medium Risk	<p>The College has an established track record in delivering Pearson Higher Nationals. New partnerships with local HEIs would be established to replace the programme(s). Liaise with the validating organisation on exit arrangements to ensure that students are not affected and are able to complete their programme.</p> <p>The College would work collaboratively with other higher education institutes, further education colleges and the Association of Colleges (AoC) to find a suitable alternative that allows existing students to complete their chosen programme.</p>
<b>Withdrawal of awarding arrangements from validating organisation</b> (university partner)	3 x 4 = 12 Medium Risk	<p>The College has established track record in delivering Foundation Degrees franchised through University of Wolverhampton with assessment of quality and standards of these courses consistently high. Liaise with the validating organisation on exit arrangements to ensure that students are not affected and are able to complete their programme. Students will have the option to transfer to the same course at another organisation within the partnership, or the university themselves. Implement the Refunds and Compensation Policy. New partnerships with local HEIs would be established to replace the programme(s).</p> <p>The College would work collaboratively with other higher education institutes, further education colleges and the Association of Colleges (AoC) to find a suitable alternative that allows existing students to complete their chosen programme.</p>
<b>Major Material Changes to Programmes</b>  Combining delivery routes / pathways within programmes	4 x 3 = 12 Medium Risk	<p>Robust internal and external approval processes to ensure currency of programme. Application of Course Closure, Suspension and Major Change Policy and procedures. Implement changes for future cohorts <b>not</b> current students. In extreme circumstances if to affect current students – would only take effect following consultation and approval by student body. Consultation with students. Early communication of planned changes to both prospective and current students (if applicable). Commit to the 'teach-out' of a course. Allow students to withdraw from the programme and access alternative provision. Implementation of the Refunds and Compensations Policy.</p>

Risk description	Risk Score (5x5) Likelihood x Consequences Likelihood	Key mitigation factors
<b>Unexpected Campus Closure</b>  Full or part loss of specialist teaching facilities	2 x 4 = 8 Low Risk	Seek alternate premises (within College or externally), including the use of University Centre Telford, where we are a partner. Make temporary adjustments to delivery or content (such as blended learning) Specific consideration of impact for the different needs, characteristics and circumstances of students.

5 x 5 Risk Matrix

L	5	5	10	15	20	25	<b>Risk Rating</b> High Medium Low
I	4	4	8	12	16	20	
K	3	3	6	9	12	15	
E	2	2	4	6	8	10	
L	1	1	2	3	4	5	
I		1	2	3	4	5	
H							
O							
O							
D							

CONSEQUENCES