

Student protection plan for the period 2018-20 – Shrewsbury Colleges Group

Risks & Mitigation

HE provision is recorded in the College's Risk Register and is assessed to be very low. The College has a robust business continuity procedure that ensures the safety and welfare of all, minimise educational and administrative disruption within the College and would enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time.

Risk	Mitigation
The College as a whole is financially unable to operate.	Assessed as low, our current ESFA financial health rating is good. The college generates and has budgeted to generate EBITDA above the 5% target stipulated by the FE Commissioner.
Campus Closure.	Assessed as low but if required, students would be taught at one of our town centre campuses, within three miles of London Road campus where higher education is predominately delivered. From 18/19 higher education will be delivered out of the new HE Centre on the London Road Campus which is a standalone building able to function independently of the main building on campus. Unless taken on the grounds of emergency relocation due to unanticipated events, or on the grounds of planned material improvement of facilities, the College undertakes not to close a site or relocate a course while teaching is underway for the academic year except in the event of exceptional circumstances where consultation with students would be undertaken.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>The College is no longer able to offer a course to students for example due to low numbers or franchise partner withdrawing.</p>	<p>In all instances, where courses are being considered for closure, suspension or a substantial change, the College follows the Course Closure Policy which is aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and takes account of the HEFCE (now OfS) statement of good practice on course change and closure (2015), as well as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on consumer law for UK Higher Education providers.</p> <p>Students on programmes likely to be affected by substantial changes or course closure will be invited to a meeting with the Higher Education Lead, Curriculum Leader and Lead Tutor where they will be given the opportunity to provide input and discuss any concerns.</p> <p>The College reserves the right to withdraw an offer or close a course if circumstances change or there are insufficient applications. The final date this decision will be made is pre- determined and advertised annually on the Course Specification.</p> <p>Students who are under offer are notified immediately of closure or any changes which may impact on their decision to study with us through the Admissions team.</p> <p>If our franchise partner were to withdraw we would follow the Course Closure Policy in relation to teaching out the affected programmes and immediately commence a scoping activity to research and determine who we could work with going forward. An example of when this was effective was when we were served notice by Edge Hill University in 2016 for our FET provision and we opted to work with Staffordshire University going forward, this resulted in no break in provision.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>The College is no longer able to deliver material components of one or more courses, for example due to single person dependencies for teaching.</p>	<p>Assessed as low. The College currently offers a small number of higher education courses, none of which are programmes in highly specialised areas. Under normal circumstances if a teacher leaves we are able to replace them within the required three month notice period however in certain circumstances there may be a need to replace staff teaching on programmes as a matter of urgency. In this instance we would redirect experienced course tutors from within the College or the services of a specialist Supply Staff agency would be utilised to locate new or temporary staff. Where the pursuance of temporary staff is unrealistic then the College would be prepared to extend the students' semester if possible to complete all work that is necessary with the remaining staff.</p>
<p>The College loses its designated status (which allows UK/EU students to apply for tuition fee and maintenance loans).</p>	<p>If the College's designation is withdrawn, suspended or is not successfully renewed, depending on the circumstances of de-designation, the College will appeal the decision/make a new application for designation with a view to the restoration of this for the coming academic year.</p> <p>Where appropriate the College will also apply for "teach out designation", allowing eligible existing students to continue to access student tuition and maintenance loans, including those making new loan applications, for the remainder of their studies while on their current programme at Shrewsbury Colleges Group, which was designated up to that point. The College may also explore the alternate option of operating as a franchisee of another provider, in order to restore student support.</p> <p>In the event of teach out designation not being granted, the College will endeavour to transfer existing eligible students, in receipt of/or seeking loans, to an approved and designated alternative provider, should they so wish.</p>

Refunds & Compensation

In the event of a course being cancelled in the interest of efficiency the College will refund in full all course fees within thirty days of course cancellation. In such cases, the College liability shall be restricted to a refund of any course fees paid to the College by the student, their representative or their employer.

In the event of a course being relocated to another campus the College will, on request, pay additional travel costs incurred by students as a result of the relocation.

In the event the College is unable to preserve continuation of study and as a result students have to transfer to another course or provider, the College will provide compensation for reasonable additional maintenance costs or additional course fees incurred as a result of this event, and shall honour bursary commitments already made.

In the event of a student intermitting or withdrawing from a course the student will be liable for fees as outlined in the Fee Policy which is reviewed and published annually.

Requests for compensation in respect of successful complaints are considered by the Finance Director on a case-by-case basis.

The College maintains sufficient insurances and cash reserves to ensure business continuity in the case of exceptional events and to cover the costs of refunds and compensation as described above.

Communication with Students

Shrewsbury Colleges Group will publish the Student Protection Plan on our website. A summary of the Student Protection Plan and a link to the document will be included in all Course Specifications and Course Handbooks, which are updated each year.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group will continue to ensure that all academic and support staff involved in HE provision are aware of the implications of the Consumer Protection Compliance in general and also the Student Protection Plan through Academic Leadership Team, HE Forum and the HE Enhancement Group.

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors on an annual basis, which has student representatives as members.

