Provider's name: Nottingham College **Provider's UKPRN:** 10004577
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Nottingham College HE Student Protection Plan

Introduction

This Student Protection Plan outlines the supporting measures we have to protect you as a student at Nottingham College should the circumstance arise that there is a risk to the continuation of your studies with us.

The Plan is a condition of our ongoing registration with the Office for Students and will be available for all students to view once approval is secured when it is published on our website at: https://www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/study/university-centre/welcome-to-the-university-centre-at-nottingham-college/key-information-and-supporting-documents

Since Nottingham College is one of the UK's larger and more established college providers of Higher Education, we have a strong wealth of experience in the preservation of study in circumstances where we cease to offer a specific course or when a campus is closed. This Plan, therefore, is to assure all current and future students that we have significant measures in place to achieve continuation of study as the overriding objective of the College.

Structure of the Plan

The Plan is broken into four main sections. The first identifies risks that the College considers might be relevant to your studies. The second states measures to mitigate against risks that are considered likely. The third confirms where you can find further information about refunds and compensation should continuation of study be unable to be preserved; and the final section asserts the College's efforts to ensure all students are aware of this Plan's existence.

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for students, how those risks may differ based on students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

The following risks to our students are identified at Nottingham College:

Lack of ability to award level 4, 5 and 6 qualifications:

In the main, there is very little procedural risk that we cannot deliver any of our main HE qualifications, most of which are our main validating partner validated courses, since these are validated for three years' delivery and have followed an extensive revalidation exercise that completed in January 2019. With regard to these, and other qualifications accredited by awarding bodies, where concerns about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are raised, it is unlikely that students would ever be unable to achieve certification as our

internal quality assurance processes work closely with partner HEIs and awarding bodies to address quality enhancement, in-year, before students complete courses.

Loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies:

This is unlikely as the College is supported by external partners and bodies to assure the efficacy of our HE provision. Where regulatory body accreditation is required, we are always aware of and up to date with steps for accreditation and have internal processes to review and achieve. In fact, in our HE Review of 2017 QAA reported it had "confidence that the quality of student academic experience meets…regulatory requirements", and "confidence that academic standards are reliable…" when inspecting our whole provision.

Financial viability of courses:

The risk to course closure or non-continuation exists if it is not deemed financially viable to recruit the very smallest cohorts. This is more pertinent to our provision, and in the context of our students, since we offer courses to small numbers in specific areas and there may be insufficient students to run them. This is unlikely, however, since substantial, early planning of courses ensures their continuation whether they be full-time or part-time.

Permanent Campus closure/ site closure:

Where campuses are deemed redundant through rationalisation of provision, stringent planning ahead ensures that relocation of courses is achieved before new students enrol. For continuing students, their courses are extremely unlikely not to run out since resources and rooming is always available at another site. When deemed absolutely necessary, Nottingham College reserves the right to relocate courses and this may be more impactful for the types of students we tend to recruit who are often drawn to the location of a course and are more unlikely to travel further than originally anticipated to study. Where campuses closures occur and courses are relocated we ensure that HE provision is resourced as highly as possible for students. In these cases, students will be notified in writing as early as possible to inform them of the impact on their personal arrangements for study and be referred to Nottingham College's HE Refund and Compensation Policy.

Building closure or unavailability:

This risk is only likely in the event of adverse weather or infrastructural issues that prevent opening of teaching rooms to students. The impact is mitigated by ensuring students are notified in advance of any disruption and, where possible, are secured an alternative venue if deemed imperative to their learning.

Interruption or damage to IT infrastructure:

This risk is likely for brief periods due to the variability of local and national networks in the College, and moreover, with global threats to cybersecurity. Where possible, action will ensure students are not adversely impacted if producing assessed work or they are allowed mitigation to ensure this is taken into account if producing assessed work.

Course resourcing:

There is only a minimal risk that the loss or reduction in key equipment or facilities would lead to protracted course closure since facilities can be found in other areas of our College as alternatives. Due to the large scale of Nottingham College resourcing is always available across sites.

Relationships with partner HEIs and other partner organisations:
We commit to 'teach out' policy agreements with our partners and have utilised our internal Programme Closure Process for our main validating HEIs and bodies when required. We also adhere to collaborative arrangements for course changes and closures to do so. This has been evident as our other validating partners change. For example, for both Middlesex University and Derby University validated courses, although current planning does not yet include courses validated by either, students, whilst on these course when in existence, were fully supported by these partnerships to ensure they completed. QAA's HER of Nottingham College in October 2017 confirmed the effectiveness of all such partner arrangements.

Non-completion of delivery:
At module level and for HE subject areas the likelihood of this is very small. The risk is mitigated by flexibility in staffing and our ability to deliver from wider teams to ensure student completion. We are able to draw upon a very wide pool of staff in the College and create further e-learning resources to ensure that delivery is always completed.

Permanent or temporary loss of teaching staff:
The likelihood of this is high as unplanned loss of staff is out of the College's control and could, realistically, occur at any given time subject to our rigorous HR policies. Turnover of staff can affect students from lower attainment backgrounds more profusely since, unlike most able peers, they feel the impact of structural changes and instability most.

Suspension or loss of tier four Sponsor Licence:
The likelihood of this is low as inspections for education oversight would expect to confirm OFSTED ratings to satisfy this; and HE oversight has previously confirmed confidence in academic standards and the quality of the student experience (last by by QAA's HER in October 2017). Risk that oversight inspections, preventing us from offering International students HE courses, have effect on continuation of courses is, however, negligible since no students currently studying HE are International.

2. The measures that Nottingham College has put in place to mitigate those risks that are considered to be reasonably likely to crystallise

In the following areas it is judged necessary to put in place specific measures to mitigate:

Financial viability of courses:
The College continually monitors and reviews the numbers of potential recruits and financial viability to its HE courses. Those that are anticipated to be at risk are identified to support and offer alternative courses to students that have already applied.

Should a course be closed, we operate in accordance with our internal Programme Closure Process that identifies steps taken to determine the need to do so and the actions that will be planned to secure least disruption to our students who have already applied and give them advice as early on as possible. Where students are mid-way through a course that is

then closed, this policy also ensures they complete, despite no new entrants being recruited.

Permanent campus closure/site closure:
Where the only option is to relocate a course, as deemed necessary, and with the College's stated reserve of right to do this, we inform applicants at the earliest opportunity of this change, before enrolment. Where relocations of HE provision are planned due to campus closure, all students will be informed in writing as soon as specific relocations are confirmed. Furthermore, for students continuing into their next year financial support for their travel to their new location will be granted to ensure smooth transition.

Interruption or damage to IT infrastructure:
With regard to the occurrence of interruption to our IT infrastructure, or its day-to-day accessibility, alternative means of delivery during an event would mean more face-to-face delivery and paper submissions of assessments where Turnitin, or other electronic applications, are not available.

Permanent or temporary loss of teaching staff:
In the event that a key member(s) of teaching staff leaves the College, other suitably qualified and experienced staff will be utilised to provide temporary cover, until a new individual is appointed. We also have long standing relationships with educational recruitment agencies who can help us secure teaching staff very quickly to provide cover for teaching. In the most severe circumstances, innovation to our delivery model - by transferring content online to our VLE - can help ensure a course continues and students' learning is not adversely affected. Our Achievement Coaches are able to support and advise all students, particularly those from with more modest academic entry points to ensure that changes to staff and undue unfamiliarity with deliverers of learning does not inhibit opportunities to succeed. Again, the rigour of our selection processes for recruiting new staff ensures they have the requisite skills to support students with lower academic abilities.

Suspension or loss of tier four Sponsor Licence:
Should educational oversight determine we become a legacy Tier Four sponsor, students currently studying would be supported to complete, as with others, and Nottingham College's International Office would ensure that prospective students are notified of this change through communication with Agents abroad who recruit for us.

3. Information about the policy Nottingham College has in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that Nottingham College is no longer able to preserve continuation of study

In the event that Nottingham College is unable to preserve continuation of study, then refunds and compensation will be made available after opportunities to explore all other options have been exhausted to the satisfaction of individual students.

Nottingham College's Fees Policy for HE Students can be found on the following link: https://www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/study/university-centre/welcome-to-the-university-centre-at-nottingham-college/key-information-and-supporting-documents

This sets out the conditions to refund tuition fees in Section 6.

Our cash reserves to cover compensation and fee refunds are sufficient since most courses operate with small numbers of students - only a few courses exceed more than twenty students. As such, contingency funding is always available to refund fees where necessary; there is no chance the College will be unable to refund should continuation of study be impossible.

Reasonable compensation for students is also available in circumstances where the student experience is severely affected after the College is unable to preserve continuation of study such as additional travel, maintenance and other relevant costs associated with beginning an HE course. This also applies in the unfortunate circumstance that students have to transfer to another provider.

Our HE Refunds and Compensation Policy can be found here:
https://www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/study/university-centre/welcome-to-the-university-centre-at-nottingham-college/key-information-and-supporting-documents.
It is also provided at the end of this Plan in Appendix 1 for your ease of access.

4. Information about how Nottingham College will communicate with students about this Student Protection Plan

We will publish our Student Protection Plan, which informs of our measures to current and future students by adding this to the Student Information handbook and publishing details of this protection plan on the College website at:
https://www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/study/university-centre/welcome-to-the-university-centre-at-nottingham-college/key-information-and-supporting-documents.

For staff, awareness of the implications of our Student Protection Plan will be detailed in the HE Staff Quality Handbook and published on the relevant staff intranet webpages. Their conversancy will ensure they all complete the course closure process when required and adhere to the measures spelt out for risks that are more likely. Our Terms and Conditions signed by students at enrolment will also provide details of this.

Our Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by Student Ambassadors to continue development with their input and review. Feedback will be used to make improvements and to ensure clarity of purpose and meaning for them. Should anyone have comments or notice immediate concerns about this Plan then they can be made to:
he.team@nottinghamcollege.ac.uk

Should any of the circumstances outlined as a risk in this Student Protection Plan arise, to determine a genuine reason not to continue a course of study, then we will consult students collectively, and individually to ensure they can be placed on a suitably alternative, 'replacement' course as soon as possible after the commencement of their course, as per their Terms and Conditions of enrolment. They will be informed in writing of all options available to them to ensure the satisfaction of each student in a timely manner. Refunds will

be made to those not satisfied by alternative arrangements, who choose not to continue study with Nottingham College.

Independent advice for students can be found at our Students' Union and in curriculum support teams with Careers Advice members. Students will be informed of these matters when they enrol as part of their induction, as expressed in their Terms and Conditions.

Appendix – Nottingham College HE Refund and Compensation Policy (Non-Continuation of Study)

Introduction

1.1 This policy provides details of the terms for refunds and compensation that Nottingham College will consider paying to HE students should a Higher Education course of study be cancelled by the College.

1.2 It covers all HE students of the College. Namely: students in receipt of a tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company; students who pay their own tuition fees; and students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor.

Rationale

1.3 Nottingham College has published a Student Protection Plan that sets out how continuation of study will be preserved for current and potential students if a risk to their continued study crystallises. Nottingham College's Student Protection Plan is intended to assure current and future students that it has appropriate arrangements in place to protect continuation of study. The Plan states the risks that might apply and explains mitigating actions should those risks happen.

1.4 In addition to the Student Protection Plan, the College is required to adopt an HE Refund and Compensation Policy (aside from the College's Fees Policy for HE Students). This is to set out the circumstances in which it will refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and provide compensation where necessary, if the College is no longer able to preserve continuation of study for student(s). This Policy, therefore, should be read alongside the Student Protection Plan, and the HE Terms and Conditions that forms a contract between Nottingham College and an HE student. All are available for current and prospective students on the College website at:
http://www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/university-level/guidance-documents

1.5 Nottingham College confirms that refunds and compensation are to be a remedy of last resort and is committed to using its best endeavours to ensure all students are able to continue and complete their studies at the College. It is, however, important to explain how the College will refund or compensate students if it is unable to preserve that continuity of study.

1.6 The Student Protection Plan states that this is unlikely but agrees that if it were to occur, affected students should receive a refund of fees and appropriate compensation in accordance with this policy and our Fees Policy for HE Students (see Section 6). This is also in accordance with the College's statutory responsibilities under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. It also forms part of our duty to register as an HE provider with the Office for Students following their guidance and guidance by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator.

Inability to preserve continuation of study

1.7 In this Policy a reference to the College no longer being able to preserve continuation of study means that the College has cancelled or intends to cancel either:

- an HE course on which an individual has been offered or accepted a place before that individual can enrol as a student; or

- an HE course on which a student is enrolled before that student has completed that course.

1.8 It does not include changes to or cancelling of courses where all enrolled students who would normally have been expected to complete at the date of cancelling have done so.

Refunds

1.9 As stated in our current Fees Policy for HE Students (Section 6) course refunds are normally only made in the following circumstances:

- the College cancelling a course;
- fees have been wrongly assessed;
- where there are exceptional circumstances for withdrawing from a course.

1.10 The College recognises that in severe circumstances it reserves the right to withdraw a course from provision.

1.11 If such circumstances arise, the College will communicate and consult the students registered on the programme as a priority and, as a minimum, will:

- ensure all students on the programme receive the HE award (for example, certificate or diploma) that recognises the stage they have reached at cancellation;
- offer those students advice and support to help them decide whether or not to transfer to a different course at the College or seek transfer to a suitable alternative provider to complete the course which is to be terminated;
- offer to pay reasonable travel costs to cover at least one visit per student to an alternative provider;
- put in place a compensation plan relevant to the circumstances of the particular cancellation that includes provision for compensation in respect of additional costs reasonably incurred by students as a result of any relocation; and
- ensure that any student who has been in receipt of a bursary or similar funding and who would have continued to receive that bursary or funding had the course not been cancelled, receives the remainder of that bursary or funding should they transfer to a different HE course at Nottingham College.

Compensation

1.12 The College will also ensure that its plan for dealing with the cancellation includes appropriate provision for communicating with and compensating individuals who have been offered or who have accepted a place. This includes, as a minimum, an offer of advice and support to help them decide whether to apply for a different programme at the College or seek a suitable alternative.

1.13 In the circumstance that is not possible to preserve continuation of study by effecting a transfer to an alternative course, eligibility for compensation will be made on a case by case basis, including appropriate provision for:

- maintenance costs;
- lost time;
- additional tuition costs;
- travel costs as a result of relocation of their course.

1.14 Eligibility for refunds and/ or compensation and the specific amounts for each will be considered by Nottingham College's Senior Leadership Team. Relevant guidance published by the Office for Students and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education will be taken into account in making such considerations.
1.15 Should a student be dissatisfied by the action taken by this College relating to matters of refund and compensation they may use the College's Complaints procedure to raise further concerns.

Payments
1.16 Refunds will normally only be made to the bank and account holder that originally paid the tuition fee and will not be paid in cash. This applies whether the students are in receipt of a tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company, pays their own tuition fees or whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor.

Financial assurance
1.17 As stated in Nottingham College's Student Protection Plan, the College has sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation for students who have been identified at a heightened risk of non-continuation of study. Since numbers of most courses are low, therefore, the numbers that anticipated to be affected is low.
1.18 This Refund and Compensation Policy is linked to the College's Student Protection Plan and forms an important part of the College's HE Terms and Conditions. It will be reviewed annually along with associated documents.
1.19 Any queries of feedback about this policy can be made to:
he.team@nottinghamcollege.ac.uk