

## Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: City of Sunderland College

Provider's UKPRN: 10001475

Legal address: Sunderland College, Bede Campus, Durham Road, Sunderland, SR3 4AH

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Sally Dixon

### Student protection plan for the period 2021-22

#### Assessment of Risk

Sunderland College's Student Protection Plan builds on our experience of delivering higher education and is intended to assure current and prospective students that we have appropriate arrangements in place for the protection and continuation of study. The Student Protection Plan outlines the risks, provide examples of the events that might initiate an action and explains how we plan to minimise the impact of these events if they arise.

The measures contained in the Student Protection Plan are in addition to any protections provide under consumer protection law. We maintain the right to make minor amendments and improvements to our programme and module content year on year. However, if you feel that the programme as delivered varies significantly from your expectations, you can raise this through the College's complaints procedures.

This Plan forms an important part of your Student Contract [Terms and Conditions](#)

This plan will be triggered if:

- We cease to operate
- We decide to close the campus at the location in which the programme is taught and cannot source suitable premises at a nearby location
- We decide to discontinue your specific programme
- We can no longer provide the programme to you for any other reason, e.g.:
  - We lose the right to provide the programme or qualification
  - We lose access to key equipment or facilities
  - We experience loss of key staff

#### **The risk that the College as a provider as a whole is unable to operate is very low**

Overall the College's financial performance is strong. The College's [financial accounts](#) detail the College's financial position, including the independent auditor's report to the Corporation of their audit of the College's financial statements. Given the College's financial position, we assess the risk that we might need to terminate any areas of our provision in an unplanned or urgent way, as unlikely.

#### **The risk that the College will cease to deliver at one of our campuses is low.**

The College's strategic plans are to expand our delivery at our current campuses and grow our higher education student numbers.

#### **The risk that the College will lose the right to provide the programme or qualification is low.**

The College undertakes due diligence with partners that includes protective provisions in contracts (for example, requirements to give early notice of issues affecting ability to deliver or to commit to 'teach-out') as a matter of course.

## **Measure put in place to mitigate risks**

The College will consider and implement any mitigation measures it concludes are reasonable and proportionate in the relevant circumstance to minimise any disruption to our student's studies. The mitigation measure will make reasonable adjustments for all students affected by the circumstances.

In the event that the risk materialises, we may take one or more of the following measures to protect your continuation of study.

### Teach-out

In certain circumstances, Sunderland College may make a strategic decision to close a programme. 'Teach-out' refers to the phased method by which such closure will operate, allowing affected students to complete their studies before the closure occurs.

If such circumstances were to arise at Sunderland College, our priority would be to ensure as many of our students as possible completed their programme of study to the original timescale. This priority applies regardless of the type of event with which we might be faced and should be kept in mind when reading this Plan.

Teach out arrangement will be clearly set out to our students and we will ensure that the arrangements allow the students to achieve their learning outcomes and have a suitable learning experience.

The arrangements will include information for students who may need to redeem failure during the teach-out period, or who may not be able to complete assessments at the time due to extenuating circumstances.

Although the circumstances giving rise to the need to 'teach-out' are rare, when they do occur, 'teach-out' will usually be realistic and achievable. An example of exceptional circumstances where we might not be able to 'teach-out' would be if issues relating to standards or the quality of the academic experience arose. In such a case, we would seek to protect continuation of study by offering a transfer on to a similar or replacement programme or by giving support to transfer to an alternative supplier.

### Campus Closure

We do not foresee circumstance that this is likely to occur, where we would be unable to deliver programmes at any of our sites. However, if any site became unusable for an extended period of time we would relocate teaching as soon as practicable to one of our other campuses. Alternatively, we may transfer some, or all content, to remote delivery to ensure that students are able to continue to engage with their learning. If students are in receipt of travel passes provided by the College these would continue to be valid.

### Staffing Issues

In the event that Sunderland College suffer loss of key delivery staff, we will seek temporary or permanent replacements and provide cover from existing staff to ensure that delivery was not affected. Where there are delays in providing an alternative tutor, we may adjust the style or timetable of delivery including enhanced Virtual Learning Environment content.

### Course Closure

We do not foresee circumstance that this is likely to occur, where we would be unable to deliver programmes and not teach out the provision. However, if this was to occur we would support students in finding another provider and facilitate transfer or direct entry to the other provider. If any students are in receipt of travel passes provided by the College we would continue to support students with the costs of travel between their accommodation and place of study. The College's [Refund and Compensation Policy \(hyper link to be added\)](#) will apply

### Attendance Bursary

If a student is in receipt of a College bursary, the terms of this will continue to be honoured in the event of a change of programme, site or campus or during any teach-out or continuity periods

### **Financial security**

The College has sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation for students for whom we have identified in the event of increased risk of non-continuation of study.

A copy of our Refunds and Compensation Policy is available on our [website \(hyperlink to be added\)](#)

### **Informing Students**

The College is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options. This will include written communication from the College to outline the changes and to detail the options. A programme meeting or a wider consultation with student may be offered. Students should approach their tutor in the first instance if there are any questions.

For current and future students, this Plan is available on our website. It is also referred to in student handbooks and publicised each year via the Virtual Learning Environment. Students will be given the opportunity to be involved in the annual review of the plan through the student representative system.

The College is committed to contacting as soon as the need for any closure scenario arises, and to give as much notice as practicable, which could be months. In the unlikely event that the College has to give notice, a minimum of four weeks' notice will be given prior to the intended dates of programme change or closure. Advice, guidance and support will be offered in the first instances by your programme leader or Curriculum Manager.

Arrangements will be put in place to allow you to have access to independent advice where appropriate. This might include facilitating support from the NUS nationally.

If you are not content with the proposed outcomes, you can raise the issues first via the College's Complaint Procedure and if, you remain dissatisfied you can raise the issue with the Office for the Independent Adjudicator at [www.oihe.org.uk](http://www.oihe.org.uk)

### **Informing Staff**

For staff, this Plan is also available on the Virtual Learning Environment. Annually refreshed plans and any changes, which have become necessary following a mid-cycle risk assessment will be drawn to the attention of all staff via the Staff-Bulletin (email communication with briefing) and made available on the Virtual Learning Environment. We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of the Plan when they are engaging in relevant activities (such as proposing changes to a course) by delivering training at full college events and providing signposts in relevant documentation.

### **Review**

This Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to be relevant, effective and practical. This review will be supported through quarterly risk assessments, which align with important dates in the academic calendar. The risk assessments will be carried out by HE Committee. The risk assessments will inform an annual refresh of the Plan. The annual refresh will be carried out by the HE Committee, which includes a representative from the students.

### **Feedback**

If you would like to give feedback regarding the College's Student Protection Plan please email the Directorate of Higher Education, Participation and Skills at [HE@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk](mailto:HE@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk)