



## HCUC STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

### Introduction

HCUC is committed to helping to ensure students achieve the best academic outcomes from their studies. Events may occasionally occur which mean that unforeseen changes have to be made to modules or programmes.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 required HEIs to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interest in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures or institutional closure.

Material changes may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to):

- a decision to close the College has been taken;
- a strategic decision by the College to close a campus;
- a strategic decision by the College to close a course, or a year of a course;
- withdrawal of designation for student support purposes;
- removal of the Tier 4 Sponsor Licence (the Home Office issued licence which allows a provided to teach international students);
- changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course;
- loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies, e.g. Ofsted;
- insufficiency / unavailability of resources to deliver a specific course;
- major changes in year to course content;
- the unanticipated departure of key members of College staff
- industrial action by College staff or third parties
- disruption of College activity (e.g. temporary disruption within term-time not covered by any of the above);

HCUC has assessed these risks and, where they are considered reasonably likely to occur, put into place the following measures to mitigate them.

HCUC Student Protection Plan Risk Assessment

Area of risk	Risk RAG	Assessment of risk	Mitigation for areas of medium or high risk
<p><b>A decision to close the College as a whole due to poor finances has been taken.</b></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>This is deemed a very low risk due to the strong financial position of the College.</p> <p>Our financial performance is currently outstanding, courses are well planned and resourced in advance through robust development planning and portfolio building processes chaired by the Principal.</p>	
<p><b>A decision by the College to close a campus.</b></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>The College operates across 4 main campuses, and all subjects could transfer to another site, apart from practical aspects of Engineering. In the event that the College was unable to deliver the specialised elements, the College would in the first instance investigate the hire of facilities from local providers, including neighbouring colleges and the University.</p>	
<p><b>Insufficient up to date resources and equipment as required for the courses offered – particularly where requirements change from year to year.</b></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>All departments bid for funds each year to match portfolio requirements through the development planning and budgeting processes. Allocations are granted annually in the region of £300,000. Where requirements or modules have changed significantly e.g. in Engineering, the department include new equipment in their annual bids, and where necessary rearrange modules to ensure delivery and training on equipment takes place in advance of the delivery of the module</p>	
<p><b>The risk of losing validation to run a course</b></p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>The College has policies and procedures in place to ensure awarding organisations quality requirements are met.</p> <p>The academic standards department ensure all are aware of quality requirements, offer advice and guidance to staff at HEASC/HEASB and HEPC/HEOG meetings. The academic standards department also liaise with awarding organisations throughout the external examiner</p>	

		process, ensuring that visits and reports are completed in a timely fashion and any actions completed.	
<b>Insufficient students recruited to make a course viable. – 1<sup>st</sup> year of course or 1 year courses.</b>	<b>Medium</b>	The risk is medium due to current market trends, however HE courses are offered after careful development planning consideration including market information on demand and feeder courses and realistic targets set.	Through the HE programmes, committee applications both internal and external are closely monitored and, rarely, decisions about any courses that are at risk of not recruiting viable numbers are made at the earliest date possible. In the event of a course not being able to run, students are communicated with and supported to find alternative courses.  Future applicants and offer holders will be notified at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than 3 weeks before the start of the course, allowing time for students to be supported to find an alternative suitable programme at the College or an alternative provider.
<b>Insufficient students continuing to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 2 year course.</b>	<b>Medium</b>	HE courses are offered after careful development planning consideration including market information on demand and feeder courses and realistic targets set. Retention to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> year for some courses has been lower than the College target.	The College commits to “teach out” all remaining students so they can complete their qualification in the unlikely event of this happening  Communication with current students to provide assurance that they will not be adversely affected by the decision, and provide assurance that they are able to complete their studies at the Institution;
<b>Withdrawal of Designation</b>	<b>Low</b>	The College has a long standing contract with HE funding bodies.  The College achieved Established Provider Status in 2017 following rigorous QAA Quality Review visit.  Outstanding rating with ESFA	

<p><b>Major Changes in Year to Course Content</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes by Awarding Body</li> <li>• Loss of key staff members.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p>There is periodic review of specifications and changes rarely occur outside of these.</p> <p>The majority of HE courses are delivered alongside much larger FE provision thereby enabling a wide pool of staffing to draw upon. Whilst also applicable to Engineering courses there is a slightly higher risk in this area as staff are highly specialised and difficult to recruit.</p>	<p>The College will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description applied to it in the College's websites for the academic year in which a student began their programme. However, in the event of major in-year changes to course content the College will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience, and affected students are notified and consulted with as appropriate;</li> <li>• it works with students to ensure the offer is still acceptable;</li> <li>• where necessary it allows students the opportunity to withdraw from the programme;</li> <li>• where required students will be offered reasonable support to transfer to another programme at the college, or to another provider.</li> <li>• the College is continually reviewing its recruitment practices to ensure the widest pool of applicants. The College also uses a wide range of agencies to recruit specialist staff in areas of shortage. In addition, staff are being trained on some of the specialist modules to provide a wider base of staffing.</li> <li>• 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;</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Suspension / revocation of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>	<p>The College has a robust interviewing and vetting procedure before CASs are issued. Additionally once the learners are enrolled there is system in place, using live date, to monitor attendance. The system has been inspected by UKVI.</p>	<p>In the event of suspension or revocation of Tier 4 Sponsor status, the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resultant disruption to those services and to affected students by, for example;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with UKVI to allow first and second year enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme;</li> <li>• provide assistance to affected students to switch to an alternative sponsor if completion is not possible.</li> <li>• advise students already in receipt of a VISA based upon an allocated CAS from the College, but who have yet to start, on possible options for them to postpone their studies or to take up studies elsewhere, within the guidelines of UKVI</li> <li>• offer students who hold a CAS, but have not had visa approved, the opportunity to postpone their application pending the resolution of the suspension, or withdraw their application with full refund offered in event of revocation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disruption to College Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial Action</li>   <li>• “Acts of God” (e.g. weather, fire, flood, flu epidemic)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p><b>Low</b></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>We have business continuity plans in place to deal with interruption to service for a number of scenarios</p>	<p>:</p>

### **How we will communicate with students about the student protection plan**

The HCUC Student Protection Plan will be published on both the Uxbridge College and Harrow College internet sites, in the [Higher Education Terms and Conditions section](#). Hyperlinks to this section are included in offer letters to applicants.

The Student Protection Plan will also be brought to students' attention at their induction sessions.

### **Implementation of the plan**

Where the College makes material changes to course delivery or content, they will be made in accordance with our Public Information and Course Changes procedure, which ensures that students are consulted about any proposed changes and their consent obtained before they will be signed off.

If any aspect of the student protection plan is triggered, students will be contacted in the first place by their tutor. The College Information Advice and Guidance Team (including the international officer) will also be informed and asked to support any students who decide to make alternative arrangements.

If students have any concerns about disruption to their course, they should in the first instance contact their tutor directly, or through their class representative.

### **Refunds and Compensation**

Should HCUC be unable to deliver Higher Education courses as advertised, refunds and compensation for additional costs will be considered. Details are included in the [HCUC Fees policy](#), published on the internet.

The College has full insurance in place to cover a wide range of eventualities that may occur. Insurance cover includes Professional Liability and Business Interruption. In addition the College has Outstanding health rating as calculated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and good cash reserves. The HE provision of the College is a small proportion of the overall business of the College, accounting for less than 3.5% of total income, and the College is therefore confident that the measures currently in place are sufficient to ensure full compliance with the refund and compensation policy without risking the financial viability of the College

### **Feedback**

The College welcomes feedback from students on its student protection measures including this plan. This can be provided informally to College staff (tutors) and via well-established student representation processes (e.g. class reps, surveys).

Staff are able to provide feedback on student protection measures through regular HE management meetings

If students wish to complain about the implementation of the student protection plan, or how claims for refunds or compensation have been dealt with they can do so through the College's complaints procedure. Details are published on the internet.

### **Review of Student Protection Plan**

The plan will be reviewed in year in the light of any feedback received from students or staff through the HCUC management structure.

There will be a formal annual review at the HE Consumer Protection Compliance Working Group, which includes student representation.