



STUDENT PROTECTION (HIGHER EDUCATION) PLAN

SLG Owner	Susanne Davies
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SCOPE

Dudley College of Technology (UKPRN: 10007924)
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Dudley College of Technology's Student Protection Plan to the prosperity of the town, the Black Country and its surrounding areas. As a key provider of high-quality education, training and skills development, Dudley College has many features in place to ensure its Higher Education provision is successful.

Dudley College of Technology is committed to ensuring learners achieve the best academic outcome for their studies. However, there may be unforeseen circumstances, often outside the College's control, which may result in changes having to be made to learners' studies. Whilst risks are rare, this plan discusses them and how they might be mitigated.

Dudley College of Technology has many systems in place to ensure Higher Education success. The likelihood of the risks outlined of occurring are considered to be low. However, the College has considered a wide range of potential scenarios and set out what we could do in each eventuality to ensure you understand our commitment to the successful completion of your studies.

What does the plan cover?

The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 and Condition C3 and C4 of the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England requires the College to have a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests and detail the steps it would take if significant changes have to take place affecting the quality and/or continuation of a learner's study, such as (but not limited to):

- The College not being able to operate as normal
- Partial or full closure of a site
- Change to programmes
- Loss of accreditation
- Ceasing to deliver programmes or changes to delivery mode
- Staffing issues
- Industrial action

Which students does this plan apply to?

This plan covers Dudley College of Technology students on Higher Education courses. If learning is taking place through a partner institution, the relevant partner's Student

Protection Plan will apply. The College will work with partners to ensure disruption to students is limited as far as possible.

How the College will communicate this plan

The College publicises its Student Protection Plan to current and future students by including it as part of the essential information at enrolment and during the induction period to the College. This plan is also published on the college website and in induction materials.

Student Protection Plan

I. An assessment of the range of risks

The risk that Dudley College of Technology is unable to operate is very low. The risk that the College is no longer able to deliver programmes in highly specialised areas or material components of our courses is low because all courses are taught by teams of experienced academic staff. Should there be a specific staff absence other academic staff are able to deliver content within the programme.

The risk that a course would need to move sites is small, as Dudley College of Technology's HE provision is deliberately a local model of delivery. Arrangements with partner providers are agreed on that basis.

The risk that a partnership agreement ending would compromise student outcomes is negligible as all contracts around partnership have a teach-out clause provided.

The risk that high needs students would not be provided for is very low because we have substantive experience in delivering provision for high needs learners.

The risk that delivery times or modes would need to change is low due to the extensive business planning process within Dudley College of Technology.

Where any changes are anticipated which will affect an HE programme, the College is committed to:

- Informing those affected as soon as possible.
- Working with student representatives to discuss the changes.
- Providing those affected with advice and guidance on the proposed changes and the options they have in applying to, where relevant, our Fees Policy.

Delivery of HE at Dudley College of Technology is focused on widening participation for students in employment, from low-income backgrounds, of wide range of ages and from the local community. Courses are planned to allow students to work, arrange consistent childcare and to travel easily to their place of study.

In the unlikely event of the College losing its accreditation for a programme, full consideration will be given to the nature of our student population. The College would consider measures to protect the student experience, such as those below:

- Working with relevant bodies to allow students to complete their year of study/programme.
- Where the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to an appropriate programme at another provider and, where appropriate, financially compensating them where they suffer demonstrable, material/ financial loss because of disruption to their studies.
- Assisting students by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of the continuation of their studies.

2. Risk mitigation

In order to mitigate the risk of not being able to deliver a course component, other alternative modules may be made available to students. Students will be consulted in the event of a material change being necessary. Progression arrangements and recognition of prior learning agreements with HEIs will be reviewed before any change is made.

The Colleges produces a transparent review of its financial stability. Changes in material circumstances would be evident to the public and to students before enrolment.

The College has a staff development programme to ensure that it grows expertise in potential shortage areas. The College operates a progression planning system to ensure that trained staff are available throughout the taught and management sectors of College. In the event of staff shortages, the College would look to recruit temporary staff if unable to cover this internally.

The College has external funding in place to support the building works and facility development for our HE provision. The risk that the College does not have suitable space to house new provision is small – new provision is business planned around estate growth and development.

The College has committed substantial resources to increasing HE provision with robust business continuity plans in place for all College provision, including HE. There are no plans to reduce any existing HE provision or facilities but will aim to improve HE facilities and to offer provision in transformational sectors to align with the College's strategic plan. The risk that the College does not have suitable space to house new provision is small – new provision is business-planned around estate growth and development.

The risk of a partnership delivered programme ceasing to run is small. However, should this be the case, the College's contracts with lead partners have a 'teach out' clause which would prevent any impact on enrolled students. An alternate course would be in place once that arrangement ends. Information would be published on the College website and any students who had enquired or applied for the programme would be contacted with full details.

The risk of an individual course not running is small. In the event of interested parties or enrolled numbers being financially non-viable, an alternate model of delivery would be proposed which may involve different modes of delivery, module choices or students being infilled with other student groups.

Days and modes of delivery are published on the College website. In the event that any details change they will be updated and any students who have applied will be notified. The College endeavours not to make changes to the published days of study. For courses with a high proportion of employer funded places, delivery days will remain consistent from the point of publication as the highest priority.

In the event that there is disruption to programme delivery, the College will, rather than closing the programme, take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption. These may include any one of the following, depending on what is appropriate for the circumstances:

- Temporary short-term suspension of programme delivery.
- Changes to the delivery location or method, which may include distance learning.
- Delivering a modified version of the same course.
- Offering the opportunity to transfer to an alternative programme.
- Providing reasonable support to access a programme run by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of credits and information about academic progress. The College also has progression agreements with local university partners that allow students to transfer to continue their programme of study.
- Provision to 'teach out' a course for existing students.

The College is committed to informing students about any proposed closures as early as possible, setting out clear information and what students' options are. The College has a formalised procedure for closing or withdrawing programmes/courses, taking account of the need to safeguard the interests of any students and interests of applicants. A decision will normally be made giving students approximately two-weeks' notice.

Where students are required to transfer their course, or move to another campus, there may be implications for student finance arrangements and students may need support from the College to access new arrangements such as through transport, support with childcare or caring responsibilities etc.

If students are affected, the College's Learner Services team will contact them and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on this plan and the Fees Policy. Should industrial action affect your studies, the College has established frameworks for consultation and negotiation with recognised Trade Unions. The College is committed to maintaining employee relations culture and working with Trade Union colleagues to achieve solutions to matters that may arise. Should industrial action occur, the College will endeavour to ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible and take any reasonable steps to ensure learners are not disadvantaged by the action.

3. Fees and refunds

The refund policy is part of the Fees Policy and is available on the website:

<https://dudleycol.ac.uk/our-college/about-us/policies-procedures/>

4. Communication

The Student Protection Plan will be available through the College website and be made available within induction.

Staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose course changes by validating all course changes through the Key Client Group meetings to ensure that changes to courses do not have a detrimental impact on students.

Students will be informed if there are to be material changes to their course, both by email and through discussion with tutors during tutorials.

The College will endeavour to give students 30 days' notice in the event it needs to make material changes to a course, though we would perceive this to be extremely low risk. If the College needs to implement the measures in the Student Protection Plan, it will use its extensive learner support process to support students, both collectively and individually.

Through Learner Services and with support from partnership HEIs, the College will put in place arrangements to ensure that students have access to independent advice if needed.

Review of the Student Protection Plan

The Student Protection Plan is approved by the HE Board of Study Committee, the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) and the Corporation (via Standards Committee). Higher education risks form part of the College's Risk Register which is regularly reviewed by the SLG and our Corporation. The Student Protection Plan is in place to address circumstances which may arise and result in the College making changes which may affect current students.

The College reserves the right to amend the Student Protection Plan from time to time based on legal or regulatory change. The College does not accept any liability for any consequential or other economic loss (including loss of profits, loss of goodwill or loss of opportunity) resulting from any of the matters covered by this Plan. Only foreseeable losses will be covered by the College.