

Student Protection Plan – Academic Year 2020/2021

1. Assessment of Risk

DCG; (referred to interchangeably as 'the college') maintains a series of risk registers, one of which is dedicated to higher education which is overseen by the governing body. Issues relating to continuation rates, course performance, student outcomes, LEO data, TEF, partnership agreements and any outcome from internal audit, as well as anything else that the deliberative structures around higher education may highlight. While the Risk Registers asks for the mitigation details to be added, anything flagged as high risk is also reviewed by the Colleges Audit Committee.

In relation to student protection, the following areas that would put the provision of programmes at risk include:

a. Financial Risk

- i. The risk that DCG is unable to operate is low due to its financial performance. The ESFA have graded our performance as good for 2018/19, and the EBITDA surplus was £3031k
- ii. Each year the Curriculum Business Planning Process clearly outlines the process to ensuring course viability and all courses offered are planned to ensure they are financially robust and well-resourced. All courses delivered as part of a franchise and/or subcontracting agreement are subject to approval and regular monitoring (either annual or periodic) by the HEI. All courses have a set minimum number to run and these are published in a range of formats. Future viability is discussed with the HEI at appropriate intervals.

b. Insufficient enrolment and course take up resulting in course closure

- i. The college operates with traditionally smaller numbers enrolled on to HE programmes than compared to that of a standard Higher Education Institution and so therefore has lower tolerances for minimum enrolment numbers for a course to run. As standard, DCG advertises on its website that a course requires a minimum of six (6) students in order to run the programme, but this will be reviewed on a course by course basis and some variations may occur. Every step will be taken to review, where possible, innovative arrangements that can be made to support the course taking place. This might result in the course being combined with another course where the modules and the teaching allows, and this would be approved by the awarding organisation.
- ii. Recruitment to each course is monitored annual as part of course performance monitoring. Where a pattern of insufficient enrolment is highlighted, this course will be reviewed for future continuation.
- iii. Where recruitment within a given year is predicted to be lower than six, applicants will be informed as soon as is reasonably possibly about the final decision to run the course. This information is included on all course webpages and prospectuses.
- iv. Where courses have been affected by attrition and there are fewer than six students progressing to the next level within the course the course will continue to be supported. The performance will be discussed at HE Academic Board and with the curriculum area(s) affected. Actions may be put in place to combine teaching with other groups if appropriate to the subject and learning outcomes which would be discussed with the HEI.

Student Protection Plan – Academic Year 2020/2021

c. Loss of Key staff

- i. Specialised provision designed to meet the needs of the local economy, is often developed based on the expertise of staff. However, this is mitigated against through ongoing continuing professional development, appropriate recruitment techniques, recruiting industry specialists working with HE partners who would support in any such instance where module delivery might be at risk.
- ii. Engagement of employers is highly valued and integrated where possible into programmes to assist with specialist subjects. However, programmes are not designed to be reliant on employers, and all experiences and access to resources required to meet the programme learning outcomes can be sourced from within the college.
- iii. Whilst new and innovative arrangements are encouraged in order to augment the student experience, every endeavour is made to cover all classes where small class sizes might be in operation.
- iv. Most of the provision is supported and overseen by HEI partners so in any case where there is a risk to students, there is a wider network that can be called on to make sure that student continuation is not affected.

d. Planned course closure

- i. Proposals to close or suspend a programme are considered by the HE Academic Board and agreed with the relevant awarding HEI as part of the annual monitoring process and Collaborative Partnership Agreements.
- ii. Where the course closure is due to the withdrawal or end of partnership approval, the college will work closely with the awarding organisation to follow the appropriate procedure as set down in the initial partnership agreement.
- iii. This information will be shared at the next available Programme Committee Meeting (PCM) which has student membership and announcements will be made to the course members via a range of mediums including in class announcements, the VLE and formal letters where deemed appropriate. In these circumstances, it will be organised that the course will 'teach out' until the final year of students studying the course (if over multiple years) has been completed.
- iv. No further recruitment activity will be undertaken for this course.
- v. Students that require repeat study due to failed assessments or due to authorised study breaks will be reviewed on a case by case basis. If the college are unable to support individual students, arrangements will be made with an alternative provider and financial compensation will be considered for the student(s) affected.
- vi. If the college are unable to 'teach out' the same protocols stated in the 'unplanned course closure' will be followed.

e. Unplanned course closure within the same academic year or course disruption

- i. In the case of a major emergency the College's Health and Safety Executive oversees the Disaster Management Plan which would be put in place in the case of any major form of disruption to provision. This document details the process of moving provision to other campuses, provision of temporary classrooms, or movement to online learning within two weeks of any disastrous event. Students will be communicated with as

Student Protection Plan – Academic Year 2020/2021

quickly as possible to inform them of arrangements. There would be detailed discussions with partner HEIs to investigate any support they could offer at the time.

- ii. Any unplanned course closures will be reviewed on a case by case basis and circulated via HE Academic Board, along with collaboration with the awarding HEI. Should it be the case that the course is due to close within an academic year, and ‘teach out’ arrangements are not possible or viable (e.g. from sudden loss of facilities) and suitable support from partner HEI’s is not a viable option, the college will seek to support enrolled students to transition to a comparable programme at another institution with broadly similar entry tariffs. Alternatively, there may be an opportunity to transfer to a programme at the awarding HEI that meets the needs of the students. In these cases, it is subject to normal entry requirements and the receiving programmes ability to accept additional students.
- iii. Should it prove impossible to make alternative provision students affected by an unplanned closure and the student is required to undertake repeat study in a different location or transfer to a different provider, financial compensation will be considered.

f. National or global disruption

- i. In the case of national or global disruption to the provision of higher education, the college will react in accordance with any necessary guidance or policy that may be distributed from central government.
- ii. If unable to attend campus, where possible students will be supported in their homes via distance learning mechanisms. This will include email, online learning platforms, internet video calls, telephone, 1 to 1 and group sessions.
 - a. Every effort will be made to support student with the provision or access to specialist equipment should their course require it. Where this is not practicable, the college will review the courses learning outcomes and make adaptations necessary to assessments to meet the learning outcomes without disadvantaging the students’ performance potential.
- iii. All courses will be evaluated from an assessment perspective, and if necessary, in accordance and with approval from the HEI/AO, changes to assessment will be made in order to facilitate completion of the qualification.
- iv. Communication to students in event of this scenario will be via the college website, through their course virtual learning environments and via email.

g. Campus Support

- i. Currently HE is delivered on three of the College’s campus with the most significant provision being at the main Roundhouse Campus and at the Broomfield Hall Campus. Campuses have bespoke HE spaces dedicated to HE students. There is planned and sustained investment into these spaces. A small amount of provision is delivered at the Joseph Wright Campus and it is envisaged that provision will grow in this location.
- ii. Detailed planning and programme approval happens which is communicated via the HE committees to ensure that development and alterations to provision is well managed with clear oversight. Thus, the College, operating within the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 is carefully planning resource investment and ensuring parity of programme.
- iii. All programmes go through a rigorous initial validation process (in most cases with a HEI) along with regular periodic reviews, providing senior leaders across all institutions

Student Protection Plan – Academic Year 2020/2021

involved are assured of the College's capacity to deliver and sustain programmes, which is reviewed on a regular basis.

- iv. There is planned growth and integration in the use online and virtual platforms to support teaching and learning from a remote perspective.

h. Planned changes to programmes

- i. The procedure for considering and proposing major modifications to programmes is set down by the awarding organisation/HEI. As a general principle, modifications should be implemented for the next entering cohort, and not for current students. DCG will ensure compliance with minor modifications to a programme as designed by the awarding institution.
- ii. Currently registered or enrolled students are consulted on proposed modifications to programmes. The financial impact of different models for providing for a student who is returning to a modified programme following a break in study will be considered. For example, if the programme modification is such that it is necessary for a student to repeat study in order to resume their programme, the potential cost (including, but not limited to, any fee waiver approved by the college) will be borne by the college.
- iii. Where changes to programmes require to be made within a very short timeframe, this will always be in consultation with the validating organisation, with as much notice being provided to students as is reasonably practicable.