

Student Protection Plan – Academic Year 18/19

1. An Assessment of Risk

The College operates a process of Risk Registers which is overseen by the governing body. This is based by individual areas, and on the estate. Higher Education has a specific register. Issues relating to continuation rates, high grades, DLHE data, TEF data, partnership agreements and any outcome from Internal Audit, as well as anything else that the deliberative structures around HE discuss. While the Risk Registers also ask 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 Risk Register has led to the following assessments:

The risk that Derby College is able to operate as a whole is low because of its financial performance. The ESFA have graded the College's financial performance as 'good' and in the 16/17 Academic Year its EBIDTA surplus was £3958K. Each year the Curriculum Business Planning Process clearly spells out the process to ensuring course viability and all courses offered are planned to ensure they are financially robust and thus well-resourced. All courses have minimum numbers to run and these are published in a range of formats.

Currently HE is delivered on 3 of the College's campus with the most significant provision being at the Main Roundhouse Campus and at the Broomfield Hall Campus. Both of these campuses have bespoke HE spaces and growing provision. There has been planned and sustained investment into these spaces. A small amount of provision is delivered at the JWC Campus and some capital funding is being invested in there to develop resources for 18/19 where it is envisaged that provision will grow. Detailed planning and programme approval happens through Academic Board to ensure that development and alterations to provision is well managed. Thus the College, operating within the Technical Education Act is carefully planning resource investment and ensuring parity of programme. All programmes go through a validation process (in most cases with a HEI) so senior leaders across all Institutions involved are assured of the College's capacity to deliver and sustain programmes.

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 recruitment techniques, recruiting industry specialists and the risk of not being able to deliver modules and work with HE partners who would support in any such instance. While new arrangements are put in place every endeavour would be made to cover classes owing to the small class sizes that the College operates. Again, this provision is supported and overseen by HEI partners so in any case where there is a risk to students there are wider bodies that can be called on to make sure that students continuation is not affected.

2. Mitigation

As detailed above, the College takes great care to ensure that programmes can be successful. All new curriculum developments are approved by HE Academic Board and form part of a Curriculum Business Planning Process. All new courses go through a validation process to ensure that staff and resources are in place to ensure students succeed. Our continuation metrics are in line with provider averages and above provider averages for those in POLAR Quintile 1 and Quintile 2. If we were not able to deliver a programme because there were issues with specialist provision (such as a problem with the equine facility) we would work with our networks (in this instance LANDEX and partner HEIs) to ensure that courses could continue. These considerations form part of the validation process.

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Furthermore, each year programmes undertake an annual monitoring process which encourages an evaluation of a range of issues including teaching and learning, issues of continuation and resource issues. These are considered at the Academic Standards and Quality Committee and form part of a wider Self Evaluation Document and action plan which is signed off by HE Academic Board, link governors and with external representatives.

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 and providing temporary classrooms within two weeks of any diastorous event. Students will be communicated with rapidly as to arrangements for them and there would be detailed discussions with partner HEIs on any support they could offer at this time.

If a course is closed for any reason there are set processes to follow to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. These are drawn up with partner HEIs based on the good practice developed by the Association of Collaborative Providers.

3. Information Regarding Tuition Fees

The College has a published tuition fee policy which states:

9.1 Derby College will not raise further charges from the month following a learner leaving a course.

9.2 Where a learner leaves a course and seeks a refund of charges, the College will offer a rebate of any charges levied in the month following the last attendance.

For students who are sponsored the College follows the same principle of refunding any fees paid over this amount. As soon as a student leaves a course the College notifies the Student Loan Company. Every return for attendance to the SLC is checked through the College's register EBS system and course leaders are emailed to ask to confirm continued attendance.

Moreover, bursaries are paid on a termly basis to ensure they go to those in most need and any underspend gets diverted to students in need.

If students were asked to move campus for provision, or if provision needed additional unpublished expenditure then this would be covered by the College. Each year the College sets a contingency budget for any such cost. If there are any changes to loan circumstances for students that put them into hardship this fund can be used to support students at risk on non-continuation.

Higher Education at the College was part of the Corporation Audit Committee's assurance strategy. The internal auditors carried out a review of HE in March 2017 and provision was found to have sound levels of assurance for its HE planning and fee policies.

4. How We Will Communicate to Students

Currently we publish all details relating to finance in offer letters to students. We will add details of our consumer protection plan to this. Moreover, we will ensure statements are inserted into course handbooks and onto the VLE.

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A training programme for staff relating to the Student Protection Plan has been scheduled, and this will be rolled out from June 2018. Furthermore, as part of a HE Induction to staff new to HE details of the Plan will be built into discussions.

Any changes to students' circumstances will be communicated to students within 10 working days and leaders will make every effort to work with students to resolve issues.

Each year we will work with the student body to review the Protection Plan through the student rep system. Additionally, at Programme Committees we will ask students to reflect on the Plan. Furthermore, through induction surveys we will ask students to reflect on how they have found accessing the Plan.