Buckinghamshire College Group

Student Protection Plan 2018-19

Responsible Officer:	Vice Principal Corporate Services
Date of issue:	November 2018
Next review date:	September 2019
Procedure available:	Intranet and Website
Policy Authorised by:	Executive

1. Purpose

The Student Protection Plan (the Plan) has been designed to provide assurance to current and future students that the College has appropriate arrangements in place to protect the quality and continuation of study for their students. It supports and complements other polices in place within the College that define and protect the experience that students have when studying at the College.

2. Scope

The Plan applies to all students currently studying on a programme led by the College, where directly through the College or via one of its partners as well as those applying for a future course.

3. Policy Statement

The following principles form the basis of the Plan.

- The College will seek to ensure that its study programmes as offered to students are completed as per the offer.

- The College aims to minimise any disruption to students as a result of changes to its provision which may be required.

- The College will consider how any planned changes will impact on its student populations, particularly with any perceived differences in the impact on different groups of students.

- The College will ensure it keeps students informed of changes that may be necessary as soon as possible and will continue to communicate with them to resolve any resulting issues.

- The College will inform any awarding or other regulatory body of circumstances that require the invocation of this plan (with the exception of changes to individual programmes).

4. Risk Assessment and Register

Risk assessment has been carried out with reference to the College's risk assessment process that produces a register of risks. This assesses identifiable risks, the inherent risk and how this risk is mitigated in order to give a residual risk assessment. The risk register reviews all risks across the College, however the ones most relevant to this Plan are:

- Partner arrangements – in relation to the partners that the College delivers tuition with and on behalf of;
- Retention and achievement rates as reviewed in the College's quality cycle;
- The recruitment, retention and development of the College's workforce;
- The continued financial viability of the College, including continued investment into infrastructure and facilities;
- The continued maintenance and availability of teaching facilities e.g. business continuity.

5. Principles that Minimise and Mitigate Risk

The mitigation which minimises the risks as referred to above is managed with reference to a number of key principles and ways of working within the College. These are as set out below.

a. Effective leadership and management

The College has a published overall strategic plan in place (the current version is for the 5 year period 2018-2023) and monitors the delivery of that plan through an annual operating plan and annual financial plan.

b. Governance and monitoring

The Risk Register is monitored and updated by the College's Executive and is also reviewed by the Audit Committee of the College's Governing Body on a termly basis. The College uses a suite of key performance indicators to assess progress through the year in meeting the annual targets. Targets may be adjusted and appropriate action taken as a result.

c. The Quality Cycle

High quality teaching is at the heart of student satisfaction and enhances student retention, attendance and ultimately achievement. The College has a comprehensive monitoring and improvement strategy for this Quality Cycle that includes:

- Monitoring of teaching quality via planned and unplanned "Teaching Walks";
- Development of teaching standards through overall and individual staff training;
- The appointment and use of Advanced Practitioners – who are "expert" teaching staff who are remitted time to work with other staff to improve the quality of teaching;
- Rigorous and regular monitoring of all quality data via the termly success panels (structured meetings by curriculum area);
- External, annual monitoring and verification reviews by all awarding bodies.

d. People Strategies

The College does not currently have an overarching People Strategy, however there are a series of policies and procedures that cover:

- A recruitment process to cover a wide range of channels and be innovative to find the right people and place them in the right job;
- A comprehensive induction and probation process;
- A comprehensive staff development plan for both individuals and teams.

e. Feedback from Students

The College listens to and takes seriously the feedback of students. This primarily happens through the student union. The Student Union is represented by an executive which is led by the Student Union President (a role which the College invests a salary in). The Student President sits on the College's governing body ensuring that that the views of students are represented at the highest governance level within the College.

Members of the College Executive and other management regularly meet with the Student Union to receive detailed feedback on issues and suggestions for improvements. In addition, student surveys are carried out at least twice a year to gauge feedback on the widest level possible.

f. The Annual Planning Process

The College has a comprehensive annual planning process. In particular, this cycle sets out the course offering from the College and will respond to any required changes that may needed (as a result of recruitment levels or any other factor). On a day to day basis this feeds into the Quality Cycle as described earlier.

Any course closure or amendments are subject to a review process that is approved by the Vice Principal Learning & Quality (a senior post holder position within the College). Should a course closure be proposed, the affected students (and any future applicants) will immediately be contacted to assess the impact upon them and look to minimise such. This may include transferring to the same College course at another of the College's campuses (see below), transferring to another College course or making arrangements with another provider to continue on the same or similar course. The decision taken will include reference to any perceived or unintended consequence for a particular student group or population. The College aims to ensure that students are given a minimum of 30 days' notice of any intended change to a course.

g. Business Continuity

The College has 3 campuses of its own based at Aylesbury, Amersham and Wycombe. It also has a second campus at Aylesbury that its operates in conjunction with Buckinghamshire New University. The availability of these 4 campuses minimise the risk of not having appropriate facilities to carry out student learning. Should it be required, the College would arrange transport between campuses for any affected students (building upon the College's existing transport arrangements). The College also maintains a substantial business continuity policy to provide fund for potential events.

6. Commitment to the Continuity of Study

Wherever possible the College will seek to preserve continuation of study for all students who may be affected by changes as described above. In particular:

- The College will make every reasonable effort to ensure that lack of resources (through staff or facilities) do not impact students' continuation of study. The College has access to a wide labour market via temporary providers that will enable the teaching of courses to be completed, and;

- The College will make every reasonable effort to make available potential options for the continuation of study via learning resources, at an alternative campus or at alternative providers if it cannot complete the course of study itself at the campus of student enrolment.

7. Refund and Compensation Policy

Where it is not possible to arrange a suitable alternative provision for the circumstances described above, the College will refund fees as described in the College's Fee Policy. Furthermore, in such instances the College will compensate students for reasonable and evidenced other costs incurred by these students while studying on its own courses.

Based on historical trends the amount of refunds within the College are extremely low (between 0.1-0.2% of income). Nevertheless, should this change the College has the financial resources (cash reserves in excess of £1.5m) to make such compensation. The College will continue to monitor the levels of refund to ensure the low historical levels of historical refund and compensation remain that way or which may require funds to be set aside to specifically fund the Plan.

8. Complaints

Complaints about the impact of any change resulting from this Plan will be addressed through the College's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and procedure which is accessible on the College website.

Policy Checklist:

Impact on Students/Staff:
Policy applies to all students

Impact on Diversity:
Medium – with reference to potential course changes.

Impact on Health & Safety:
None.

Impact on Data Protection/Freedom of Information:

Buckinghamshire College Group complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and would only allow disclosure of relevant information as required (for example to a Police Authority).

Link with Strategic Plan:
Maintenance of *Excellence* within teaching standards and reputation.

Communication/Consultation Plan:
Intranet and College website.

Process of review:
The policy is reviewed annually or when legislative or procedural changes occur.

Process of review of effectiveness:
The Governing Body is accountable for ensuring the Group has effective policies and procedures in place and monitoring the Group's compliance with them.

Legal authority:
As required by law and adherence to funding body regulations.

Responsibility for maintaining this policy rests with:
Vice Principal Corporate Services.

Links to other policies:
Admissions Policy and Procedures
Quality Improvement Strategy
Quality and Data Cycle
Professional Development Policy and Procedure
Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
Fees Policy
Disaster Recovery Procedures
Equality & Diversity Policy
Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy