

HE Student Protection Plan

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Warrington & Vale Royal
College UKPRN: 10007339
Winwick
Road
Warrington
WA2 8QA
Contact Point: Director of Quality & Curriculum: Adult & Higher Education

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1. Introduction

As a registered provider of Higher Education, Warrington & Vale Royal College is required to publish a Student Protection Plan. The plan sets out how the college will continue provision and maintain the quality of teaching and learning for students should a risk to continued studies crystallise.

The college has been delivering Higher Education programmes for many years and has significant experience in continuing and maintaining the quality of the study when programmes have ceased to run or a campus closed, or onsite delivery is not possible and learning needs to move online. The college does not currently offer programmes to international students.

This plan builds on this experience and its intention is to assure current and prospective students that there are appropriate measures and arrangements in place to respond to risks and enable continuation of study.

This document outlines the potential types of risk and explains how the college will minimise the impact to students if these risks should happen. It should be noted that the college will take into account your individual student need, characteristics and your circumstances in any action it takes to manage any event.

This plan forms an important part of the terms and conditions of your study with us. Please ensure that you have read and understood this document. Should you have any further questions or require clarification/s please speak to the college's Admissions Officer.

2. Commitments

The college makes commitments to current and prospective students. These commitments ensure that students are treated fairly and transparently, as supported by our planning process. The college has in place:

A robust planning process for HE programmes to ensure that programmes are viable and able to be taught online in the event of another UK lockdown or local or national pandemic

A Teach Out commitment to ensure a phased approach to the closure of programmes

A clear process for closing courses and advising applicants

A process to manage changes to courses and the communication of these to applicants and students.

These are detailed below:

Business Planning

The college plans provision well in advance of delivery. This enables the college to approve, or otherwise, all provision that includes establishing the local demand, the resource requirements, module selections, staffing expertise and teaching plans for all programmes. Course planning will take account of this student protection plan. Courses must be approved before student recruitment can commence.

Teach Out

The college may wish to close and remove provision; this may be a programme or could refer to a department or a campus. Teach Out refers to the phased approach by which such closure will occur, allowing affected students to complete their studies before the closure occurs. The college's priority will be to ensure that as many of our students as possible complete their programme, regardless of the type of event with which the college may be faced. The college will utilise a range of methods to assist student in completing, agreed with the student, should the students not complete in the Teach Out timeframe.

The only exception to Teaching Out a programme would be where there were issues identified with the academic standards or the quality of the academic experience. In such circumstance, the college would protect the continuity of study by supporting students to complete or a mutually agreed plan, offering a transfer to a replacement or similar programme or give support to transfer to an alternative provider.

Course Closures

This plan will be included in the curriculum planning process, which takes place on an annual basis. The curriculum planning process establishes the viability of programmes, from which course closures and approvals are recommended. Course closures may also occur as a result of low applications, in which case the last date a course can be closed is 5 days after the A' Level results are published. Closures are communicated to applicants on this day. The college will guide and support applicants to alternative programmes or another suitable provider.

Changes to programmes

Material changes to the programme, such as structure and modules, cannot be made without approval of the Director of Curriculum: Adult & Higher Education. Approved changes will be communicated to applicants by the Admissions Officer as soon as possible. Applicants will be advised of their right to seek entry to another provider and to withdraw their current application.

Where an applicant has accepted an offer, they will be given the information and guidance to help them make an informed decision about their future course of action.

In normal circumstances, material changes should not be made to programmes after registration. Where this is unavoidable, students shall be consulted at the earliest opportunity on the changes and, where practicable, their views taken into account

Covid-19 or similar

In the event that the UK should enter into another lockdown as a result of a local or national pandemic or similar, the college will move all learning online and continue teaching students remotely through the use of digital learning platforms, emails, video conferencing tools and phonecalls. Students will be informed at the earliest opportunity of any subsequent moves to online learning and adaptations to teaching, learning and assessment. The college will work in conjunction with the Office for Students, the Department for Education, relevant funding agencies and awarding bodies in order to ensure appropriate mitigation is in place to allow

students to continue learning, assessment to take place and quality and standards to be maintained. Students without appropriate access to digital equipment will be supported through the loan of equipment as appropriate, and those suffering financial hardship as a result of the situation will have the opportunity to apply to the HE Student Hardship fund for financial support.

In order to ascertain when learning onsite can reconvene, the college will follow government guidance and put appropriate health and safety measures in place to allow students back onto campus at the government approved time. All current students will be kept informed of college updates by letter.

Should a move to online learning as a result of a local or national pandemic or similar impact upon new students starting on programme, all applicants will be informed in writing of the plans in place, impact on learning and expectations for study so that they can make informed decisions about their enrolment.

Risks associated with Covid-19 (**or similar**) and the disruption on learners are outlined below:

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Covid-19 health & safety measures are applied to onsite face-to-face learning, including social distancing measures, resulting in a need to reduce class sizes	Likely	Low	In the event that the college is required to reduce footfall on campus to maintain social distancing, the college takes a risk-based approach to moving courses online. Higher Education courses are prioritised for onsite delivery, where possible. Where the college is required to reduce class sizes in order to maintain social distancing, programmes may be moved to a week on/week off blended delivery model that includes one week in college face-to-face and one week learning remotely. Remote learning is delivered and supported by the virtual learning environment.
All face-to-face learning is suspended and learning moves to online for a temporary period (in line with government guidance)	Likely	Low	The college operates a Digital Strategy which enables all programmes of study to be supported through an appropriate virtual learning environment, all teachers to be suitably trained to deliver remote and digital lessons, and for students to be appropriately supported to access relevant digital equipment for completing teaching, learning and assessment remotely.
Practical elements of a programme are unable to be delivered during remote learning periods	Unlikely	Low	The college adheres to awarding body mitigations where Covid-19 or similar has disrupted learning and particular practical elements of a course are unable to be completed remotely. This has included the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted assessment - to allow units, modules or assessments to take place. • Centre/Teacher Assessed

			<p>Grades – where a unit or module has been unable to be completed due to face-to-face learning being suspended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay – on some programmes that include a 'license to practice' or similar, the delivery and assessment of some units, modules or assessments that cannot be delivered remotely have been delayed until such a time when teaching could return to face-to-face. <p>The above approaches to assessment during periods of remote learning is guided by the awarding body stipulations and regulations.</p> <p>On programmes that include substantial practical skill development, the college is also committed to ensuring that students are able to access appropriate practical skills workshops when learning returns to face-to-face, regardless of awarding body mitigations applied. This includes the prioritising of practical-based programmes for return to campus and may also involve the delivery of additional timetabled sessions at no extra cost to the student.</p>
A student's personal circumstances change as a result of Covid-19 and impacts on their ability to achieve their programme	Likely	Moderate	<p>All students receive ongoing academic and welfare support whilst on programme from their HE Programme Leader, a Safeguarding & Inclusion Manager and a Progress Coach. Students are able to access a wide variety of welfare support resources to support changes in circumstances and help them to stay on programme, such as financial, health, wellbeing and personal relationships. The college operates a HE Hardship Fund that HE students can apply to for financial support. HE students are also able to apply for a Break in Learning if they are facing significant circumstances that will impact on their ability to engage with the programme on a temporary basis (up to 12 months in duration). If an application for a Break in Learning is approved, all tuition fees are suspended until the student returns to learning.</p>
Students are not made aware of changes to the delivery of	Very unlikely	Low	<p>The college ensures that all changes to programmes of study at all levels are communicated to students through a variety of methods including emails, letters,</p>

their programme, approach to assessment or support available during and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic			text messages, phonecalls, messages via the college app and website announcements. All changes to the planned and advertised delivery of HE programmes have to be approved by the Director of Quality & Curriculum: Adult & Higher Education. Where possible, proposed changes are discussed with HE students to ensure that no student is negatively impacted and any issues raised are dealt with on an individualised basis. All changes to HE programmes are communicated in writing to students by either the HE Programme Leader or the Director of Quality & Curriculum: Adult & Higher Education. Ahead of enrolment, HE applicants are made aware of the college's approach to learning during the Covid-19 pandemic or similar via the published HE Policies and Procedures. These are available on the college's website year-round and are referred to in the college's pre-entry marketing and advice & guidance materials. In addition, during induction, all HE students are provided the link to the college's HE Policies and Procedures, which includes the college's HE Outbreak & Lockdown Plan, as well as information on how to access welfare support whilst on programme. This information is also contained in the HE Handbooks which are given to students during induction.
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3. Refund and Compensation Policy

The college has a HE Fees and Refunds policy, available on our website. It outlines the circumstances in which we will refund tuition fees and other relevant costs where we are no longer able to provide continuation of study. Refunds are a last resort after the college has exhausted all other avenues and so are committed to doing all that we can to ensure that refunds and compensation are not necessary. The college will have sufficient finance in place to refund/compensate students, where appropriate.

4. Advice, support and communication

Should any of the risks identified in this plan occur and the resulting impact on the students is more than insignificant, the college will act swiftly and offer those students affected guidance and support. The nature of this will vary from student to student and is dependent on circumstances.

The college will take reasonable steps to avoid implementing changes during an

academic year. Students will be consulted and engaged in discussion about course, campus or college closure within 14 days (unless in relation to Covid-19 or similar where the college is required to follow immediate government guidance). In the case of permanent closures, students will receive an individual letter or email and will be invited to discuss the implementation by a college manager.

Updates will be provided dependant on the nature of the event.

For current and prospective students, this plan is available on our website and will be supplied to applicants when their study offer is made. The plan will also be referred to in student handbooks for ongoing reference. College staff will have access to the student protection plan on the college's intranet site Info Point.

Students can seek independent advice about any aspect of this plan and can also seek clarification and guidance from the college Admission's Officer. Students are able to complain about the implementation of this plan using the college's complaints policy.

5. Review

This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to be relevant and practical. The review will be carried out by the Director of Quality & Curriculum: Adult & Higher Education and presented to SLT and the Governing Body for approval, before submission to the Office for Students for final approval.

6. General Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
The approval of HNC/HND/HTQ provision is revoked by the awarding organisation/partner university	Unlikely	Extreme	The way in which the college quality assures programmes are fully embedded and monitored by the governing body. In the very unlikely event that approval is withdrawn, the college will work closely with the awarding organisation, other providers and the students to agree a plan of action to enable each student to complete.
The college is no longer able to deliver HE programmes	Unlikely	Extreme	The college would cease recruitment for HE programmes in advance. Students currently on programme would be guided to complete their studies in the given timescale. All students are enrolled on HNC, HND or HTQ routes, which in the main are 1 year FT programmes or 2 year HTQ. On completion of the HNC students would be guided to alternative provision to complete their HND or transfer to a University to commence their degree level studies.
The college is no longer able to operate as it intends or closes due to financial challenges	Unlikely	Extreme	The risk of being unable to operate is low because of the way in which managers monitor financial performance and report to the governing body through the Finance and Resources Committee. Should the college close, the closure would be managed over a timescale, which enables students to complete or be transferred to an alternative suitable provider depending on individual needs. The college has a positive cash balance and credit agreements in place with the bank, which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for those students that have been identified as at an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

The risk that the college cannot operate as it intends due to a critical incident	Unlikely	Moderate	The college has a Business Continuity Plan to deal with incidents such as fire, flood, storms, terrorist or cyber-attack. As a multi-site college we are able to transfer provision to an alternative site in the short-term. If we are unable to deliver courses at one of our campuses, timetables would be revised to permit teaching to transfer to an alternate campus, which may include some aspects of blended learning to further meet student needs.
The risk that the college cannot operate as it intends due to a local or national pandemic (<i>see above Covid-19 risk assessment for more details on how the college plans to manage the risks associated with the disruption to learning</i>)	Likely	Low	All programmes are designed to incorporate a combination of face to face and online teaching, and students will be inducted onto the digital platforms during their first week of study. Schemes of learning are designed to ensure that practical elements of the course are delivered as early on as possible should a UK lockdown occur mid-year and teaching and learning needs to move to remote online methods. Impact to students should be low and manageable, and where further support is required for students the college is able to provide equipment and financial support as appropriate.
The college closes provision or a campus	Likely	Moderate	The college reviews utilisation at all campuses and where necessary will take steps to relocate provision to alternative sites to improve viability. Decisions to relocate provision are taken by the governing body as part of the estates strategy. As a multi-site college, we are able to transfer provision to alternate campuses to enable continuity of study.
Non-completion of the delivery in a subject area, course or material component of a programme.	Unlikely	Moderate	This is deemed unlikely due to the college's "Teach Out" commitment. From a staff expertise perspective, the college employs teams of academic staff who have responsibility across a range of course modules.
Cease delivery on one or more courses to students.	Unlikely	Moderate	Should delivery cease, the college's Teach Out commitment would apply in this case. The college would cease recruitment for HE programmes in advance. The college considers programme viability and sustainability well in advance of the commencement of programmes, to enable applicants on unviable programmes to receive timely guidance and support to source alternative provision.
No longer able to deliver one or more modes of study to our students, particularly if withdrawing a mode of study	Unlikely	Low	The college does not withdraw modes of study. Part-time students infill into full-time classes over a two-year time frame. The Teach Out commitment would apply if the course was withdrawn, which may include a blended learning approach depending on the needs of the student.