

## Annex D: Template for a student protection plan

Provider's name: New College Durham

Provider's UKPRN: 10004576

Legal address: New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor Campus, Framwellgate Moor, Durham,  
County Durham, DH1 5ES

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### **Student protection plan for the period 2019/2020**

All information outlined in this Student Protection Plan will be published on the College website and will be available for all students to access.

#### **1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students, how those risks may differ based on students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise**

Risk 1. – Failure to recruit specialist teaching staff.

In some key specialist areas, historically we have found it a challenge to recruit staff of the right calibre. However, at the current time, this is not preventing us from delivering these programmes.

Risk 2. – Loss of specialist placement opportunities with employers within the region.

In the current economic climate, where programmes solely rely on one or two key employers, a potential risk was identified.

Risk 3. – Loss of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers.

We consider this a low risk having recently been awarded FDAP for a further 6 years.

Risk 4. - Loss of Validation Arrangements with Validating Partners

We consider this a low risk as we have recently been validated by the OU for 5 years. The College currently has an outstanding financial status which would give financial flexibility to teach out any programme for 1 to 2 years as opposed to course closure.

Risk 5. - Course Closure

The College currently has an outstanding financial status which would give financial flexibility to teach out any programme for 1 to 2 years as opposed to course closure. We consider this a low risk given all the mitigating factors identified in these 6 risks.

Risk 6. – Course Changes / Modifications to programme modules

The risk that your programme of study will change, from when you enrolled is low, due to our robust programme design and programme validation process. There is occasions however, when minor enhancements are made to modules in response to student module feedback or as part of our quality enhancement review at the end of each academic year. Any such changes require full student consultation, external examiner approval and formal validation agreement.

## **2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise**

### **Risk 1. – Failure to recruit specialist training staff.**

- a. Continue to build on established arrangements with employer partners to share specialist staff between employers and the College. This will reduce the requirement on recruiting specialist staff specifically to deliver the highly skilled elements of the curriculum.
- b. Well established recruitment processes utilise market rate supplements to support recruitment into posts that are challenging to fill. This has proved successful to date.

Risk factor 1 is predominantly an external factor, which is outside our remit of control. Should we be unable to deliver a programme, having exhausted all other options, students would be able to seek a refund under our refund and compensation policy.

### **Risk 2. – Loss of specialist placement opportunities with employers within the region.**

- a. The College is developed to support a number of employers within the region including links to supply chains and sister companies and to encompass a broad and varied curriculum offer so that it is not reliant on one single employer and in one sector area.
- b. Continuous development and delivery of marketing messages and activities designed to engage new employers.
- c. Robust curriculum planning in partnership with employers, ensures that the curriculum equips students with skills and qualifications that are relevant to a wider sector so that they are able to transfer across various sectors as well as create mobility for students to move beyond the region.
- d. We work closely with a large number of employers locally, regionally and nationally to ensure students can participate in wide ranging work experience activities. We work with employers to ensure there are a clear understanding of responsibilities and required levels of commitment for partners to provide to the College.

### **Risk 3. – Losing its Foundation Degree Awarding Powers.**

The College has recently been revalidated to award Foundation Degrees for a further 6 years. At this moment in time, we consider this to be a low risk to the organisation. Should the College lose its Foundation Degree Awarding Powers, we would seek to gain approval from our partnership with the OU or other HEI providers.

### **Risk 4. - Loss of Validation Arrangements with Validating Partners**

- e. We have a strong working relationship with our Validating Partners and have regular dialogue to discuss all matters relating to curriculum design and development and quality assurance.
- f. We have a validation agreement in place with the Open University which has contingencies in place regarding course closure and teach out should it be required.
- g. Having recently been given Centre Approval to validated Degree, Top-Up Degrees and Masters for a further 5 years with the Open University, the College considers this to be a low risk.
- h. We have a long-established track record of working with our validating partner Pearson's (for our HNC/HND programmes) if this was to change, we would commit to "teach out" all existing students.
- i. The College currently has an outstanding financial status which would give financial flexibility to teach out any of our programmes for 1 to 2 years as opposed to course closure.

### **Risk 5. - Course Closure**

- a. Due to the widening participation nature of the New College Durham student body, we would consider every students individual needs. We would discuss all options available to students. This may include offer of alternate courses, transfer to other provider or refund of fees.

- b. The College currently has an outstanding financial status which would give financial flexibility to teach out any programme for 1 to 2 years as opposed to course closure.

**Risk 6. - Course Changes / Modifications to programme modules**

- a. The risk that your programme of study will change from when you enrolled is low due to our robust programme design and formal validation process.
- b. There are occasions, when minor enhancements are made to modules in response to student module feedback or as part of our quality enhancement review at the end of each academic year. Any such changes require full student consultation and external examiners approval.
- c. All staff working with potential HE students receive training on the importance of being transparent in discussing the possibility of minor modifications to programmes of study for reason identified above in point 6b.

**3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study**

*Please see below link to New College Durham's refund and compensation policy which demonstrates how we ensure :*

- refunds for students in receipt of tuitions fee loan from the Student Loans Company;
- refunds for students who pay their own tuition fees;
- refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor;
- the payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course;
- commitments to honour student bursaries;
- compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study;
- compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider.

<https://www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk/higher-education/studying/course-handbooks/he-information>

We have cash reserves which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for those students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

Our refund and compensation policy is updated on an annual basis. This policy will continued to be reviewed annually at the Academic Policy Review Group as mentioned previously.

#### **4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan**

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students through student handbooks, the virtual learning environment (VLE), Student Forums and the College HE Information website.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose course changes by discussion at Curriculum and Quality Team (CQT) meetings, HE Curriculum and Quality Forums, and Quality Reviews.

We will review our student protection plan through HE Student Forums and Curriculum Team meetings, which feed into HESEQE and Corporation meetings. The plan will be fully reviewed 3 times a year at the termly HESEQE Corporation meeting.

Our students will be involved in our review through HE Student Forums and consultation.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course through Curriculum Team meetings, the VLE, emails, letter and Student Representatives

We will give students 14 days' notice when we need to make material changes to their course

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will carry out consultation in HE Student Forums, post information on the VLE and inform students through lines of communication such as emails and letters to support students collectively and individually.

We will put in place an action plan incorporating student access to individual advice and guidance to ensure that our students have access to independent advice if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.

All of the above will be mitigated through an operational action plan that takes account of all risks.