

Student Protection Plan

Dudley College of Technology

UKPRN: 10007924

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Student protection plan for the period 2020-21

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

The risk that Dudley College of Technology is unable to operate is very low because our financial performance is strong with EBITDA in excess of £4.3m annually.

The risk that we are no longer about to deliver programmes in high specialised areas or material components of our courses is low because all courses are taught by teams of academic staff. Should there be a specific staff absence other academic staff are able to deliver content within the programme.

The risk that a course would need to move sites is small, as Dudley College of Technology provision for HE is deliberately a local model of delivery. Arrangements with partner providers are agreed on that basis.

The risk that a partnership agreement ending would compromise student outcomes is negligible as all contracts around partnership have a teach out clause provided.

The risk that high needs students would not be provided for is very low because we have substantive experience in delivering through FE provision for high needs learners. We are in the process of applying for high needs provision.

The risk that delivery times or mode would need to change is low due to the extensive business planning process within Dudley College of Technology.

Delivery of HE at Dudley College of Technology is focussed on widening participation for students in employment, from low income backgrounds, of wide range of ages and from the local community. Our courses are planned to allow students to work, arrange consistent childcare and to travel easily to their place of study. Our priority is in maintaining consistency of delivery.

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

In order to mitigate risk of not being able to deliver a course component other alternate modules would be available to students. Students will be consulted in the event of a material change being necessary. Progression arrangements and recognition of prior learning agreements with HEIs would be reviewed before this change was made.

We produce a transparent review of financial stability within the college. Changes in material circumstances would be evident to the public and to students before enrolment.

We have a continued staff development programme to ensure that we grow expertise in potential shortage areas. We operate a progression planning system to ensure that trained staff are available throughout the taught and management sectors of college. In the event of staff shortages we would look to recruit temporary staff if we were not able to cover this internally. Temporary staff would be extensively supported by our outstanding practitioners to ensure consistent quality of delivery.

We have external funding in place to support the building works and facility development for our HE provision. The risk that we do not have suitable space to house new provision is small – new provision is business planned around estate growth and development.

Dudley College of Technology has grown year on year over the last 5 years and has committed substantial resources to increasing HE provision with robust business continuity plans in place for all college business, including HE. We have no plans to reduce any existing HE provision or facilities, but do have plans to improve HE facilities and to offer provision in new areas.

The risk of a partnership delivered programme ceasing to run is small. Should this be the case our contracts with lead partners have a 'teach out' clause which would prevent any impact on enrolled students. An alternate course would be in place once that arrangement had ended. Information would be published on the college website and any students who had enquired or applied for the programme would be contacted with full details.

The risk of an individual course not running is small. In the event of interested parties or enrolled numbers being non-viable financially an alternate model of delivery would be proposed which may involve different modes of delivery, module choices or students being infilled with other student groups.

Days and modes of delivery are published on the college website. In the event that any details change they will be updated and any students who have applied will be notified. We endeavour not to make changes to the published days of study. For courses with a high proportion of employer funded places delivery days will remain consistent from the point of publication as the highest priority.

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

Our refund policy is available here:

<https://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/portals/0/downloads/College%20Fee%20Refund%20Policy.pdf>

We have appropriate cash reserves, given our high EBITDA 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. We would anticipate both the number and the likelihood to be very low.

We do not feel it necessary to have insurance in place to cover refunds as our cash reserves are greater than the sums in question.

The risk of not being able to preserve continuation of study is very low.

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 via the college website and within induction materials, given to students after enrolment onto the HE course.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose course changes by validating all course changes through the Key Client Group meetings to ensure that changes to courses do not have a detrimental impact on students.

We will review our student protection plan within the HE Key Client Group, which is attended by the lead HE student representative.

Our students will be involved in our review by through learner voice meetings and directly through discussions with the lead HE rep, who runs a student enhancement group.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course both by email and through discussion within their tutorials and with tutors.

We will endeavour to give students 30 days' notice when we need to make material changes to their course, though we would perceive this to be extremely low risk.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will use our extensive learner support process to support students collectively and individually.

Through learner services and with support from partnership HEIs, we will put in place arrangements to ensure that our students have access to independent advice if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.