

Annex D: Template for a student protection plan

Provider's name: Myerscough College

Provider's UKPRN: 10004478

Legal address: Myerscough College, Bilsborrow, Preston Lancs PR30RY

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Mick Cottam (Assistant Principal Higher Education, Myerscough College)

Student protection plan for the period 2018-19

1. 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 the College as a whole is unable to operate is extremely low because our ESFA financial health is rated as 'Good' and we have strong risk management procedures and plans in place. Our governance committees and Senior Management Team meet at least termly to ensure strategic risks to the institution are monitored, reviewed and action planned on a regular basis. Strategic risks and control measures to mitigate these are recorded on the overall College Risk Register. Additionally, in our recent DfE Area Review in 2017 confirmed that *'with regard to financial sustainability, the college is a large, financially strong college. It has recently invested in capital development but borrowings remain below the financial benchmark. The college is currently meeting all benchmarks and their financial plans indicate that they will continue to do so for the duration of the forecast to 2019 to 2020'*.

The risk that the College will stop delivering higher education is extremely low because we are a highly experienced provider of higher education with a 30-year track record of specialist provision in land-based and sports subjects. We received formal approval from DfE and Companies House to use the title 'University Centre Myerscough' for our higher education provision in 2017. All our higher education provision is delivered at our main Preston campus and we are currently one of the largest UK providers of higher education courses in land-based and sports subjects.

The risk that our partnership with our awarding body, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) will be dissolved is extremely low because we have developed a trusted and mature working relationship with the University over the 30 years of our partnership. In 2013 we renewed and strengthened the relationship and signed a new institutional agreement to become an Associate School of the University. The agreement recognises the quality of our provision and deepens the collaboration. The Associate School is managed by a Strategic Development Group and Senior Executive Team providing leadership and direction with membership from the senior management teams of both institutions. Together, these groups drive forward the strategic aims of the Associate School to expand and grow provision, build on existing strengths and deliver an enhanced student experience.

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is our only awarding body and we are the largest partner provider for UCLan. The majority of higher education courses are validated provision (delivered only at Myerscough). We have an exclusivity agreement with the University for delivery of land-based subjects in the UK which means that we are the sole provider of land-based subjects for the University. For subjects where we have similar provision as the University, we work with the University to ensure that our provision is complementary and does not compete with that at the University.

The risk that poor quality or student outcomes will result in the termination of higher education at the College is low because we have a long track record of delivering high quality higher education programmes that meet the requirements of the relevant external bodies and robust processes in place to

ensure that the quality of our higher education provision is maintained. Our most recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Higher Education Review (May 2014) was exceptional with 2 commendations for the quality and enhancement of the student learning experience, 10 areas of good practice and no recommendations. Our most recent (2017) Annual Provider Review confirmed the College as low risk with no identified concerns and our TEF outcome in 2017 was Silver.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver part time programmes is low. The majority of our part time provision is now delivered by distance or blended learning. We have been delivering part time programmes through online and distance learning for over 15 years and the learning materials and technologies are already in place to support the delivery. For the small amount of part time delivery that is delivered on-campus, the part time students are timetabled to infill on equivalent full time programmes and the risk of being unable to continue delivery to these part time infill programmes is low. Our teacher training courses are our only on-campus programmes with stand-alone part time delivery. However, the majority of students on our teacher training courses are our own staff who are undertaking teacher training delivery and as such, the risk of being unable to continue these courses is low.

The risk that we will lose our Tier 4 Licence is low as internal and external audits have concluded that the College has robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that our responsibilities for highly trusted status are met.

The risk that we will lose Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation for specific courses is low because of the level of monitoring we undertake to ensure compliance with PRSB requirements. This was confirmed through re-accreditation of our PSRB accredited programmes at our recent Periodic Course Review in December 2017.

The risk that we are no longer able to recruit to particular subjects due to low demand is moderate because of the current climate of reduced demographics and increased competition. There is considerable variation in demand for our programmes and we are no different from any other institution in this respect. The majority of our subjects have a strong track record of sustained high levels of recruitment and the risk of discontinuing these programmes is low. Some of the more traditional land-based programmes have seen a reduction in demand in recent years across the sector. However, our curriculum structure ensures that these programmes share module delivery with other programmes to ensure an efficient delivery model that can sustain relatively small cohorts. In some highly specialised areas of curriculum there may also be less demand. However, these niche programmes tend to be in highly specialised areas where the College is recognised as one of the main UK providers of the subject and there is little competition from other providers.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our courses is low because our modules are taught by integrated teams of academic staff. For cross-curricular modules, we adopt a core lecture with split subject-based seminar model to ensure that delivery is not totally reliant on individual members of staff.

The risk that we will no longer be able to deliver material components of our courses to particular groups of students is low because we have a highly experienced inclusive learning team in place to support students with additional needs or have a learning difficulty or disability. We have achieved the 'Leaders in Diversity' award from the National Centre for Diversity. The award recognises our all-encompassing methodology for improving equality, diversity and inclusion practices in the workplace.

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

In the unlikely event where we lose our Tier 4 licence, we will comply with Home Office requirements, provide information for current and prospective students and work with external bodies to allow students to complete their year of study, or support students to transfer to an appropriate alternative provider.

In the unlikely event that we lose PSRB accreditation for a course, we will take all reasonable steps to allow students to complete their year of study, or support students to transfer to an appropriate alternative provider.

In the rare event of a decision to suspend recruitment to, or close a course, the College fully recognises, and accepts its responsibilities towards any applicants and continuing students. Details of procedures that will be followed in the unfortunate event of suspension or closure of a course are detailed in our [Higher Education Course Changes and Closures Policy and Procedure](#).

In the event of a decision to suspend recruitment to a course we fully recognize our responsibilities to any applicants who have been made offers for admission to the course and will support the applicants to transfer to another course, either at the College or another provider. In these circumstances, we will contact the applicants to discuss appropriate alternative courses or transfer arrangements.

It is expected that, in the rare event where courses are proposed to be suspended or withdrawn, the existing cohorts will be taught-out and continuing students will be able to continue on the course on which they have enrolled until the completion of their studies.

Exceptionally, changes may be required to ensure a smooth closure and in this case must be proposed and approved using the University Course/Module amendment process, which will involve consultation with students and will seek to minimise the impact on students affected by changes and closures.

If, in extremely exceptional circumstances, teaching-out of the course at the College is not possible, the College will work with the students and the University to explore the following options:

- Opportunities to offer alternative courses within the College or University
- Providing support for students to transfer to other providers, including transfer of credit and academic progress
- Where teaching cannot be completed or where none of the proposed options are acceptable to the student, the student may request a refund of all or part of paid fees depending on the amount of credit/academic progress achieved.

If we are unable to continue to recruit to any of our more traditional land-based programmes and teaching-out of the courses is not possible, we will work with our nearest land-based providers in Cumbria and Cheshire to provide support for transfer to alternative programmes. We are members of LANDEX, the national representative body for land-based providers and this will provide a forum for discussing alternative arrangements for the students with other land-based providers.

If we are unable to continue to recruit to some of our highly specialised areas and teaching-out of the courses is not possible, we will offer alternative modes of delivery for the continuing students. We already offer courses in those highly specialised subjects through blended learning or online delivery and this will provide a natural option for students on those programmes.

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

The following statement in our [Higher Education Course Changes and Closures Policy and Procedure](#) outlines arrangements that will be made to refund fees and other relevant costs in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study for a course.

'Where teaching cannot be completed or where none of the proposed options for maintaining continued study are acceptable to the student, the student may request a refund of all or part of paid fees depending on the amount of credit/academic progress achieved'.

Details of how tuition fees are calculated in the event of discontinuation of studies are outlined in our [Tuition Fees Policy](#).

Where students are in receipt of tuition fee loans from the Student Loans Company or a sponsor, any such refund will be transferred via the Student Loans Company or sponsor.

We recognise that there are a wide range of scenarios that may require specific arrangements for individuals or cohorts depending on the circumstances of the discontinued study and these will be dealt with on a case by case basis. Such arrangements may include (but are not limited to):

- 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.
- Commitments to honour student bursaries where students have to transfer courses or provider.
- Payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course.

Our assessment of risk identifies only moderate risk that we are no longer able to continue to recruit to particular subjects due to low demand. As such, any instances where we are unable to preserve continuation of study are likely to be only those courses with very small cohorts and the overall financial implications of our refund and compensation policy to the College are likely to be low. Additionally, our ESFA financial health is rated as 'Good' and we have sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation for those the students on courses that we have identified as moderate risk.

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

We recognise the importance of providing assurance to current and future students regarding their studies and our student protection plan will be published to current and future students on the College website.

As detailed in our [Higher Education Course Changes and Closures Policy and Procedure](#), it is expected that over time, course teams will need to make amendments to courses and modules, for example to implement enhancements identified by the course team, develop the curriculum based on latest subject based and pedagogic research, respond to feedback from students and external examiners, develop the curriculum on to reflect employer input, reflect changes in the external environment, developments in the subject area and incorporate changes required by accrediting bodies. For all changes to courses or modules, the University Course/Module amendment process is followed. The University form for proposed changes to a module or course requires course teams to consider the implications for current students when they are proposing course changes.

We have consulted with the Students' Union Liaison Officer in the development of this student protection plan and the measures to mitigate risks contained within it. We will review our student protection plan by close monitoring of recruitment patterns, feedback on the student experience (such as NSS outcomes) and student success and progression outcomes to identify any factors that might indicate a change to the assessment of risk or measures to mitigate risks and inform the development of our student protection plan.

At course level, Staff:Student Liaison Meetings are held each semester with course representatives where any issues that might present a risk to their studies will be discussed and action plans will be put in place to mitigate against those risks.

At institutional level, the development of the student protection plan and monitoring of performance and outcomes that may inform the student protection plan will be discussed at our Associate School Senior Executive Team meetings. In addition to senior managers from both the College and the University, our Students' Union Liaison Officer sits on this committee and will play an active part in representing the students in the development of our student protection plan.

Additionally, our Students' Union President sits on the Corporation and Quality and Standards committees of the College governing body who will be ultimately responsible for monitoring of performance of our recruitment and any other issues that may lead to a course closure.

As detailed in our [Higher Education Course Changes and Closures Policy and Procedure](#), for all changes to courses or modules, the University Course/Module amendment process is followed. Where the course changes are required which affect current students and are considered material changes, the process will involve consultation with the affected students through tutorials and course communications. Once any course changes have been approved by the University, we will inform students of the approved changes via tutorials and course communications. Normally amendments are approved by the University for the next entering cohort and not for current students, except where the proposed amendments will deliver a better quality of educational experience to students enrolled on the course and the changes are clearly beneficial to students. The University deadlines for course changes are set to ensure that students are given sufficient notice if we need to make material changes to their course.

In the unfortunate event that we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will support students collectively and individually and ensure that they have access to independent advice through our student support services centre in the CORE, the 'i' (the University one-stop-shop for information, advice and guidance) and through the University Students' Union Advice Centre.