

Annex D: Template for a student protection plan

Provider's name: **HALESOWEN COLLEGE**

Provider's UKPRN: **10002852**

Legal address: **Whittingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3NA**

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Student protection plan for the period [2018/19]

Purpose of this Student Protection Plan

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 places a requirement upon providers of higher education to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change to a course, programme, campus or institution. This plan outlines actions Halesowen College would take in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies arose, as well as how we would communicate with you about this.

This plan will be reviewed at least annually to maintain its continued appropriateness and efficacy.

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 College aims to identify, evaluate and continuously manage threats and maximise opportunities to ensure the best achievement of the college's mission and strategic objectives and to discharge fully all statutory responsibilities. A Risk Management Policy forms part of the College's internal control and corporate governance arrangements. Good risk management and early ongoing identification of risks are essential to success, ie:

- Planned objectives are more likely to be achieved.
- Adverse risks are less likely to happen.
- The impact of adverse risks which are realised are reduced.

Halesowen College will adopt, wherever possible, recommended best practice in the identification, evaluation and cost effective control of risks to ensure, as far as possible, that they are managed and understood to a level that is acceptable to the Corporation.

In relation to risks currently identified the position for Halesowen College is as follows:

A) The risk that Halesowen College is unable to operate is **low**.

Halesowen College is an established, financially stable provider. In the 2015 HE Review all judgements met UK expectations with two features of good practice. We also hold a Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The most recently audited annual statement report on financial health of the College (to the year ending July 31 2017, approved on November 28 2018 states that Halesowen College has a current solvency ratio of 6.02 an operating surplus as a proportion of income (excluding capital grant releases) of 10.18% and an actual cash balance equivalent to 181 days cash in hand – defined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency as Outstanding.

B) The risk that Halesowen College's partnerships with its awarding bodies are ineffective and / or discontinued is **low**.

The College has regular meetings with the University of Worcester at both strategic and operational levels. This ensures that the relationship between the institutions remains healthy and productive, and any potential issues are resolved before they can impact on the student experience.

Pearson is the national awarding body used for our Higher National qualifications. The risk of loss of validation to these courses is low because the College has a proven track record of quality following Pearson standards moderation and annual Quality Management Review (QMR).

C) The risk that one of Halesowen's awarding body partners is no longer in a position to award foundation degrees or Higher National is **low**.

Halesowen College considers it unlikely that the University of Worcester or Pearson will lose their awarding powers in the near future. The University and Pearson have considerable experience and a proven track record in delivering and awarding higher education qualifications.

D) The risk of campus closure is **low**.

There are no plans to close any of the college's sites and all campuses are used for the delivery of a range of courses including full and part-time FE courses for 16-18 year olds as well as adults and apprentices. There are currently plans in place to modernise the Whittingham Road site which will further enhance facilities for Higher Education students at the College.

- E) The risk that Halesowen College can no longer deliver the material components of a specific programme of study is **low**.

Halesowen College regularly monitors the performance of all courses at programme level and where necessary senior managers will oversee a programme of intervention. Teaching is undertaken by teams, which consist of a mixture of full-time and part-time staff and the University of Worcester can provide specialist expertise should the need arise.

- F) The risk that Halesowen College takes the decision to close a programme of study is **low**.

Decisions to close or suspend a College Higher Education programme are not taken lightly and wherever possible and practicable, courses would be “taught out” to the expected completion date of all students enrolled at the time. However, all provision offered at the College, whether validated or approved by the Awarding Body includes a significant number of course modules which are common to other providers and therefore allows for the possible transfer of students to other institutions part-way through their studies.

- G) Other risks considered:

- Halesowen College does not recruit international students and as such loss of a tier 4 license is not considered a risk.
- Awarding partners are considered secure in their capacity to validate qualifications and loss of their awarding capacity is low risk.
- Halesowen College is committed to offering both full-time and part-time study and as such the risk of discontinuation is very low, given the established nature of these programmes and modes of study.
- It is highly unlikely, therefore, that there is any significant risk to the operations of the College as a whole, with the diverse curriculum offer at educational levels one to five also helping to ensure that there is finance available to mitigate unforeseen short or long term changes to the requirements of the College's Higher Education provision.

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

Halesowen College considers that the overall likelihood of any of the above risks to crystallise to be low. The risks identified within Halesowen College's risk management processes are all considered to be low.

However, in the case of programme closure or any of the risks identified above crystallising, Halesowen College will undertake all reasonable measures to ensure that students will be able to complete their course.

The table below details the College's response to ensure that student continuation is in place in the event that Halesowen College is no longer able to deliver a programme:

'Teaching out'	In the event that Halesowen College closes or suspends a programme, it will under most circumstances continue to teach the students until completion.
Continuation at a partner institution.	Most programmes at Halesowen College have equivalent provision at the University of Worcester or another local provider. If Halesowen College is unable to teach out a programme, it will work with the partner university or local college to find an alternative programme for affected students to complete their studies.
Continuation at another institution	If it is not appropriate or possible for the student to continue studying at another local college, student services will (in consultation with the student) look for other opportunities for continuation with other HE providers.
Exceptional refund and / or compensation	Where there is no other option Halesowen College will provide a refund and or compensation in line with the Refund Policy.

- Halesowen College does not currently offer any programmes, courses or modules which require niche or highly specialised staff for their delivery, nor is there a significant risk to provision due to the unavailability of resources and facilities which cannot be replicated elsewhere. The curriculum offer at the College is taught by integrated teams of academic staff and thus should a teacher leave or be absent, modules or staff can be substituted if it is absolutely necessary.
- The integration of sessional and contracted staff in course teams increases flexibility and minimises any potential risk to provision due to either short or long term absences, as the amount of hours taught by a number of individuals can be extended, increased or changed, if absolutely necessary it is possible to substitute some modules or to re-timetable delivery.
- If for any reason delivery is not possible at any one of the college's three sites, the nature of the curriculum offer is such that provision can be moved from one to the other.

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

Students affected by change to their expected delivery location, breaks in continuity of study and enforced transfers to another provider are protected financially under the Refund Policy.

Although the College does not have formalised reciprocal arrangements with other colleges which allow for the transfer of students from one to another, it is possible for some students to move from one Higher National course to another if the course was to be closed part way through their studies. We would also be willing to consider students transferring from other institutions who can evidence comparable academic achievement. We have cash reserves of £12.3m which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation if students were identified as having an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

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

Student involvement is integral to all elements of College life and takes place at all levels within and across Halesowen College. Students are represented at all course team meetings and in Faculty Review Focus Groups.

Student input is documented by course teams and feeds through to course and college level self-assessment.

The College and HEI Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) is well used by staff and students and publicises a range of necessary information. The student Protection Plan will be highlighted on log-in screens, in addition to its publication on the College website and attention drawn to it for prospective applicants as part of the key information provided prior to a course offer.

HE is currently delivered at two of our three campuses and focus groups are administered in ways to encourage participation from all students regardless of their mode of study, programme or campus. The Protection Plan will be a standing discussion item with students in 2018/19.

All HE courses nominate a named student representative and the College also appoint HE ambassadors annually. Guidance is given to the representatives by the Student Services team and under the new structure will link with the Students' Union and be supported by the Head of Student Experience. Where students provide feedback, the College makes every effort to provide a response either via a meeting or by visiting a class.

We will ensure staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose course changes by a bespoke training/briefing session to introduce it and then annual updates sent to staff.

Students will be consulted on the plan during induction and will be invited to an annual review meeting with key staff.

If the Student Protection Plan was triggered students would be written to, to notify them of this, within ten full working days of the plan being triggered. Once they have been notified they will receive details on who to contact to discuss their circumstances, especially if there were specialist needs and where they can access advice and support.

Information will also be circulated to the Students' Union, Student Ambassadors and Student Services. The information would make clear who to direct any concerns to and would provide information on where students can seek advice and assistance.

Clear information about fees, policies and other information regarding study at Halesowen College and the financial support available to students is publicised on the College website at www.halesowen.ac.uk with individual advice provided by Student Services on request either by e-mail, telephone or in person which can be arranged by appointment.

The office for students will be informed initially by e-mail and subsequently in writing within three working days of any decision being taken which may require the implementation of any part of this plan, in addition to publication internally on the College's/HEI's VLE and on the College website.

Any current or prospective student wishing to complain about the content, administration or implementation of this Student Protection Plan should consult the College's Complaints Procedure, available on the College Website.

Students who are dissatisfied with a decision relating to a complaint they have raised may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), an independent body which reviews student complaints.