

Riverside College: Higher Education Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: Riverside College

Provider's UKPRN: 10002863

Legal address: Kingsway, WIDNES, Cheshire, WA8 7QQ

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Head of Higher Education and Teacher Development

Student protection plan

The Office for Students requires providers of Higher Education within universities and colleges to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change eg programme changes, suspension or course closures.

An assessment of the risks to the continuation of study for Riverside College Higher Education students

The risk that Riverside College is unable to continue in operation is very low because our financial performance is rated Outstanding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA). The College has appropriate insurance arrangements and business continuity plans in place to deal with unlikely events and disasters (such as large scale fire) that would impact on business operations.

A full annual review of the Higher Education Curriculum occurs annually what takes into account predicted numbers based on current enrolments and applications. This process also examines and responds to quality issues and changes from funding bodies. Therefore:

- the risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes (including those taught in highly specialist areas) is low, and
- the risk of course closure is low.

The risk that the College will lose accreditation with an awarding body or partner university is low. The risk that the College will lose approval to run a course is low. We know this because:

- at Riverside College's most recent QAA institutional Review, it was confirmed that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **met UK expectations**. The quality of student learning opportunities at the College **met UK expectations**. The quality of the College's information about learning opportunities **met UK expectations**. The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the college **met UK expectations**.
- the College has a TEF Gold Award which provides a clear indicator of the quality of our Higher Education provision.
- since the launch of the Annual Provider Review model for quality assessment of Higher Education programmes in March 2016, Riverside College has consistently met quality and standards requirements.
- the College has received consistently very good NSS Survey results over recent years.
- we have an established partnership and a very good reputation with the University that validates and approves our Foundation Degree and Top-Up degree provision.
- we have considerable experience of successfully running Level 4, 5, 6 and 7 provision.

Therefore, the risk of de-designation of courses for 'Student Support' purposes (resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance for courses) is low.

At Riverside College our programmes are delivered by integrated teams of experienced and appropriately qualified staff, whose curriculum vitae have been approved by the awarding organisation and validating university (at validation and course approval stage and during external verification/monitoring of provision, which is carried out annually). Therefore:

- the risk where events result in term-time programme disruption is low.
- the risk that we are no longer able to deliver material components of our courses is low.

Measures to mitigate risk

If there was loss of key staff due through occupational mobility, Riverside College would seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant position(s) or recruit externally to avoid disruption.

In the event of a decision to suspend recruitment or close a course, the College fully recognises and accepts its responsibilities towards remaining continuing students. It is expected that where courses are proposed to be withdrawn or closed, existing students will be able to continue on the course on which they have enrolled until the completion of their studies.

In the highly unlikely event of loss of accreditation or loss of approval to run a course through an awarding body, the College will work to protect the student experience by considering measures which may include:

- offering affected students the chance to move to another course,
- providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider who holds the relevant accreditation, including transfer of credit and academic progress,
- providing letters/statements/reports in support of continuation of their studies at another provider.

In the highly unlikely event of notification from the validating university of loss of approval to run a course or intended course closure, the College will work to protect the student experience by considering measures which may include:

- working with the validating HEI to allow arrangements for enrolled students to complete their year or programme of study (through the teaching-out of the course at the College).

If the teaching-out of the course at the College is not possible, the College will work with the student 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,
- providing letters/statements/reports in support of continuation of their studies at another provider.

In the highly unlikely event of de-designation of courses for 'Student Support', Riverside College will take all reasonable steps to minimise resulting disruption to students by:

- working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year or programme of study, either at Riverside College or with another provider who holds the relevant accreditation.

In the highly unlikely event of term-time programme disruption, the College will, where it is practicable, make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme. Actions to minimise disruption may include:

- temporary short-term suspension of programme delivery (eg where there is a change in the programme delivery location or staffing),
- changes to the staffing of a programme for instance through a review of internal staffing resources, including recruitment of subject specialists, where appropriate.

3. Refund of tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to their sponsors (eg employer)

Riverside College's Higher Education Tuition Fees Policy can be accessed through the College website.

It provides details on:

- 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.

Riverside College recognises that there is range of potential scenarios that may require specific compensation 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):

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

Riverside College has a Higher Education Compensation Policy which is accessible by students through Riverside College's website (within the Higher Education section).

Riverside College will follow guidance from the Consumer and Markets Authority and, where appropriate, the Office for the Independent adjudicator in relation to compensation arrangements.

Riverside College's financial performance is rated Outstanding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) and would be in a position to provide for refunds and compensation in the unlikely event of non-continuation of study.

4. Measures to inform and protect students

We will review our student protection plan by consulting Higher Education student representatives through the Higher Education Learner Voice Forum.

Riverside College students will be involved in our review by providing feedback comments on the scope and suitability of the student protection plan.

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students. The student protection plan will be accessible by students through Riverside College's website (Information and Policies page).

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan through its Higher Education Learning Community.

Riverside College is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible with clear information and options.

Where changes to Higher Education courses affect students and are considered to be material changes, the process will involve consultation with the affected students.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course face to face during group tutorial, by email and by letter.

Where material changes can be foreseen, we will give students at least 10 days' notice when we need to action material changes to their course.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will offer whole group and 1:1 tutorials/advice and guidance to support students collectively and individually.

The College will put in place impartial 1:1 advice and guidance either from College staff teaching on another course or with alternative HEIs to ensure that our students have access to independent advice if we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan.