

1. PURPOSE

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.

The College aims to identify, evaluate and continuously manage threats and maximise opportunities to ensure the best achievement of the College's vision and strategic objectives and to discharge fully all statutory responsibilities. 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.

2. CLOSURE AND SUSPENSION

The College may seek to close and remove a Higher Education programme from its offer. The closure of a programme means that the college will cease to recognise the programme as one for which a student may be registered.

Suspension of a programme of study is defined by a fixed timeframe in which a programme will not be delivered.

Decisions to close or suspend a programme approved by an Awarding Body must be formally approved by the College Leadership Team because of the implications for the contractual relationship between current and prospective students and the college.

Decisions to close or suspend a programme that is franchised or validated by a partner university must be formally approved by the College Leadership Team and the partner university. Once these steps have been taken due process linked to the partner university's relevant Student Protection Plan are to be followed because of the implications for the contractual relationship between current and prospective students and the partner university.

Any request to close or suspend a programme must be made by the Assistant Principal of Standards and Quality. They will make a business case to the College Leadership Team who will make the final decision. Any such request should incorporate the following:

- Market rationale
- Strategic and financial implications
- Impact, if any, on arrangements with partner institutions
- Impact on current and prospective students
- Impact on existing or proposed programmes
- Impact on relationships with employers
- The expected impact on staff and resources

On receipt of a request to close or suspend a programme, the College Leadership Team may agree one of the following:

- Decline the request
- Approve the request without condition(s)
- Approve the request with condition(s)

3. PROGRAMME CHANGES PRIOR TO APPLICATION AND ENROLMENT

The College may be required to make changes to programmes at the following times:

- Between publication of the prospectus and application
- After application

Where material changes (such as a number of changes to the structure of the programme, or the removal or addition of a number of modules) are made between the publication of the prospectus and application, the college will draw these changes to the attention of applicants as soon as possible and advise them of their right to seek entry to another college programme for which they may be qualified or to withdraw their application and seek entry to another institution.

Where the applicant has already accepted an offer, they shall be provided with all necessary information, advice and guidance by the college to help them make an informed decision at their future course of action.

In normal circumstances, material changes to programmes should not be made after application and enrolment, but where this is unavoidable, students and their representatives shall be consulted at the earliest opportunity on the changes and, where practicable, their views shall be taken into account.

If a student reasonably believes that a material change to their programme adversely affects them, they may cancel their Learning Agreement with the college. In such circumstances the college will offer suitable information, advice and guidance to a student and, where possible, facilitate their transfer to another institution which offers an appropriate programme for which they are qualified.

Further to commencement of the programme and during the course of a student's studies, the college may make minor amendments to the programmes in order to improve the quality; to meet the latest requirements of an accrediting body; or in response to student feedback. Where such minor amendments to the delivery of a programme are necessary, the college will consult with or inform students and their representatives of these changes, as appropriate, and in line with college quality assurance processes.

4. STUDENT PROTECTION

Current students should normally be allowed to complete the programme of study for which they are registered unless each gives their explicit written consent to the contrary. Such consent must not be sought until a closure or suspension recommendation has been agreed.

Where a programme is being closed to new entrants only, the college's response to ensure that student continuation is in place in the event that Halesowen College is no longer 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.

5. **APPLICANTS**

In the event of a programme closure, suspension or material changes to programme content, all communications with applicants must be undertaken via Admissions and the quality of these communications will be subject to review by the Assistant Principal Quality and Standards.

Applicants who have accepted offers should not be contacted until the closure or suspension process has been fully completed.

Applicants thus affected should then be informed of their options to transfer their applications to another programme within the college or to another institution.

Applicants who have been made offers, but have not yet accepted them, may however be advised that a closure or suspension request has been made.

Such applicants should be advised that the offer of a place is suspended until a final decision has been made and will be withdrawn if the request is accepted. They should also be advised that they may choose another programme or institution.

Where relevant, UCAS should be notified when the closure or suspension request has been finalised.

6. **TIMING**

Wherever possible, requests to delete, suspend or make material changes to the content of programmes should be made in a timely manner.

As a result of unforeseen and unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. loss of specialist staff) it may be necessary to close or suspend a programme within a foreshortened timescale. In such circumstances, the student interest is paramount and full consultation should be undertaken with all affected students and their nominated representatives.

In order to ensure full compliance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and related regulations, students should be given the fullest information, advice and guidance to enable them to make well informed decisions in the event of programme closure and suspension.

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.

Reviewed / Approved	By	Date
Reviewed by	Rewritten Joanne Williams	October 2024
Consulted with	Craig Tucker	October 2024
Approved	-	
CLT approved	Yes	05.11.2024
Website	-	
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