

Student Protection Plan

What is a Student Protection Plan?

A Student Protection Plan is a document that sets out what you can expect if your course, college, or campus were to close or change unexpectedly. It covers situations such as:

- When a course is discontinued.
- When a campus or college closes.
- Unexpected changes to advertised programmes that affect the college's ability to deliver your course as originally described.
- Changes or adjustments to modules or the course structure.

The main purpose of the plan is to explain how you would be supported to continue your studies and complete your course if any of these situations arise. It also outlines what would happen in terms of compensation or refunds if continuing your studies is not possible.

Provider's name: Southern Regional College

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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.

SRC regularly conducts a thorough risk assessment, including a risk register, to evaluate potential threats to the continuation of study for students enrolled in The Open University (OU) programmes. This process ensures that we can respond promptly to emerging risks while safeguarding students' educational experience.

The following identifies the key risks to the continuation of study and evaluates their likelihood, considering the diverse needs of our student body:

1. Institutional Closure or Inability to Operate (Low Likelihood)

- **Risk**: The College being unable to operate due to financial instability or changes in governance structure.
- **Mitigation**: As part of central government, the College has been reclassified as a **Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB)**, which provides a stable financial and governance framework. The College has a proven track record in sound financial management and corporate governance, ensuring operational continuity.
- **Differential Impact**: Students would face significant disruption in their studies if the College were to close. However, as part of the governance model, closure is considered a **low likelihood** due to strong financial and operational procedures.
- **Likelihood**: Low, based on the College's financial stability and strong governance processes.

2. Campus or Programme Closure (Low Likelihood)

- **Risk**: Closure of a campus location where students are studying, potentially affecting their ability to continue their course.
- **Mitigation**: The College operates a robust Estates Risk Register, including comprehensive risk assessment procedures that evaluate possible scenarios leading to campus closures. Action plans and contingency measures are in place to ensure alternative arrangements can be made, such as transferring students to a nearby location or alternative provision.
- **Differential Impact**: For students who rely on a specific campus location (e.g., those with limited mobility or specific personal circumstances), this risk could cause greater disruption. The College would offer support to affected students, including online learning options.
- **Likelihood**: Low, given the risk management procedures in place and the availability of alternative options.

3. Discontinuation of a Course or Significant Programme Modifications (Low/Medium Likelihood)

- **Risk**: A course may be discontinued or modified, potentially altering students' academic paths.
- **Mitigation**: Discontinuation of courses undergoes an annual course planning process, with plans to remove courses agreed only after a thorough review. In such cases, students currently enrolled on the course are allowed to complete their studies. If modifications to modules or courses are necessary, students are consulted, and their feedback is gathered to assess the impact.

- **Differential Impact**: Students enrolled in niche or highly specialised courses might face greater disruption in the event of discontinuation or major course modifications. However, clear communication and consultation will minimise the negative impact and students would be offered alternative pathways.
- **Likelihood**: Low to medium, based on the College's well-established course planning processes.

4. Insufficient Enrolments or Programme Continuation (Low/Moderate Likelihood)

- **Risk**: A programme may not attract sufficient enrolment, affecting its continuation.
- **Mitigation**: If a programme is at risk due to low enrolment, students will first be offered the opportunity to transfer to another campus offering the same programme. If this is not possible, students may be given the chance to transfer to a different course within the College. If neither option is acceptable or feasible, students will be eligible for a refund, provided the course has not commenced and they have not attended.
- **Differential Impact**: Part-time students, those with familial or employment responsibilities, or those reliant on specific course timings might face more disruption in such situations.
- **Likelihood**: Low to moderate, as enrolment forecasts and promotional strategies are closely monitored.

5. Withdrawal of Professional Accreditation (Low/Medium Likelihood)

- **Risk**: Professional bodies may withdraw accreditation from specific programmes, impacting students' qualifications.
- **Mitigation**: The College works closely with professional bodies to maintain accreditation standards. Accreditation renewal is closely managed, and policies are regularly updated to meet professional standards.
- **Differential Impact**: Students in accredited programmes would face a risk to their professional qualification if accreditation were withdrawn, which could delay their career progression.
- **Likelihood**: Low to medium, as the College proactively maintains accreditation status.

6. Withdrawal of Partner Institution Accreditation (Low Likelihood)

- **Risk**: The partner institution may withdraw accreditation, preventing the College from offering a particular programme.
- **Mitigation**: The College has up-to-date centre approvals, with revalidations planned well in advance. This ensures ongoing delivery of accredited programmes.
- **Differential Impact**: Students enrolled in these accredited programmes would experience significant disruption if accreditation were withdrawn, particularly if they are near to completing their studies.
- **Likelihood**: Low, given the proactive management of accreditations.

7. Withdrawal of Employer Support for Apprenticeships (Low Likelihood)

- **Risk**: Employers may withdraw support for apprenticeship programmes, affecting students' ability to continue in work-based learning.
- **Mitigation**: The College's Business Support Unit maintains strong relationships with apprenticeship employers and runs regular successful apprenticeship events. The College also supports employers through dedicated advisory services to minimise the risk of withdrawal.
- **Differential Impact**: Students enrolled in apprenticeships who rely on employer support may face disruption if this support is withdrawn, particularly if they cannot find alternative placements.

- **Likelihood**: Low, as employer relationships are actively maintained.

8. Over-reliance on Key Staff (Low/Moderate Likelihood)

- **Risk**: The College could face disruption if a key member of staff, responsible for delivering specialised courses, is unavailable.
- **Mitigation**: The College actively recruits qualified staff and maintains a pool of experts in specialised areas, ensuring continuity of teaching provision in the event of staff absence.
- **Differential Impact**: Students relying on lecturers for specialist knowledge or mentorship may face some disruption, though contingency plans are in place to provide cover.
- **Likelihood**: Low to moderate, due to proactive recruitment and succession planning.

9. Deviation from Advertised Qualifications or Course Structure (Low Likelihood)

- **Risk**: The qualification received by students could differ from what was originally advertised due to changes in the course or teaching structure.
- **Mitigation**: The College ensures that the advertised programme is consistent with the qualification awarded. Any changes to the course content, structure, or qualification are subject to rigorous approval processes and communicated transparently to students. The College's prospectus and website are kept up-to-date, and students receive clear information through Open Days and Pre-Entry Advice Sessions (PEAS).
- **Differential Impact**: Any significant deviations could impact students' expectations, particularly for those enrolled in specific career-focused programmes. However, the College ensures compliance with consumer protection regulations by informing, consulting and seeking agreement with enrolled students in advance of any such change to that which is advertised.
- **Likelihood**: Low, as the College prioritises maintaining the integrity of its advertised offer.

N.B. For details on above points, refer to the college website policy section here:

CUR-013-HE-Course-Closure-Suspension-and-Substantial-Change-Policy-ISSUE-003.pdf

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

1. Commitment to Continuity

The College is committed to delivering Higher Education (HE) programmes in line with the schedules and conditions agreed during validation events. We take all reasonable steps to ensure students' studies are not disrupted and that courses continue as planned.

- In the event of a programme closure, all registered and actively studying students will be supported to complete their course to the scheduled end date, maintaining the advertised offer.

2. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

To safeguard quality and continuity:

- All programmes undergo annual monitoring and self-evaluation.
- This process reviews teaching effectiveness, resource allocation, and continuation strategies.
- Findings are considered at Higher Education Self-Evaluation Review (HE SER) meetings and compiled into the HE Profiles and Projections document, which is approved by the College's Board of Governors. This proactive approach ensures transparency and early identification of risks.

3. Business Continuity Planning

For major disruptions (e.g., campus closures or emergencies):

- The College's Business Continuity Plan sets out procedures for relocating provision, arranging temporary classrooms, and ensuring teaching continues within a specified timeframe.
- These measures minimise disruption and maintain learning quality.

4. Flexible Learning for Short-Term Disruptions

- Remote learning options are available via the College Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- Adjustments to teaching and assessment will be made to ensure fairness and maintain standards.
- Students will receive prompt communication with clear instructions on accessing alternative arrangements.

5. Collaboration with Partner Institutions

- Where relevant, the College will liaise with partner Higher Education Institutions to ensure changes to delivery or assessment align with their expectations and regulatory requirements.
- This collaborative approach guarantees a seamless learning experience for students.

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:

FIN-002-Annual-Schedule-of-Fees-and-Charges-2025-27-ISSUE-021_2025-12-150550_gzdo.pdf

FIN-002-SRC-Fees-Policy-and-Procedure-for-2026-27-ISSUE-021_2025-12-05-150557_fegp.pdf

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

1. Publication and Accessibility

- The Student Protection Plan will be published on the College website by the SRC Marketing Team.
- Student Services will include the plan in all relevant materials for Open Days and Pre-Entry Advice Sessions to ensure prospective students are informed.

2. Staff Awareness

- The implications of the Student Protection Plan will be embedded in the course planning and amendment processes.
- Staff proposing course changes will be required to consider the plan as part of these procedures.

3. Review and Student Engagement

- The plan will be reviewed annually at Higher Education Advisory Board meetings.
- Student feedback will be gathered through Student Focus Groups and communicated to HE Course Coordinators.
- Issues raised will be discussed at HE Course Coordinator meetings following Advisory Board sessions, with actions taken as required.

4. Notification of Material Changes

- Students will be informed of any material changes to their course through Student Services using the contact details and permissions provided during application.
- Maximum possible notice will be given, considering the nature and timing of the changes.