

Annex D: Student protection plan

Provider's name: Croydon College

Provider's UKPRN: 10001778

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Student protection plan for the period 2019/20

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for our students, how those risks may differ based on our students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

We have developed our practice by following "*Higher education course changes and closures: statement of good practice.*" and guidance from the University of Sussex.

We will be putting forward proposals to our governing body in July 2018 to address any shortfall that we currently have with respect to student protection plans and these proposals will align our policies and practice to the statement of good practice.

Croydon College has an ESFA financial health rating of Satisfactory and the risk of ceasing to be able to operate is very low. The College has undertaken further work during the year to develop and embed the system of internal control, including financial, operational and risk management which is designed to protect the College's assets and reputation.

Based on the strategic plan, the Risk Management Group undertakes a comprehensive review of the risks to which the College is exposed. They identify systems and procedures, including specific preventable actions which should mitigate any potential impact on the College. The internal controls are then implemented and the subsequent year's appraisal will review their effectiveness and progress against risk mitigation actions. In addition to the annual review, the Risk Management Group will also consider any risks which may arise as a result of a new area of work being undertaken by the College.

A risk register is maintained at the College level which is reviewed at least annually by the Audit Committee and on an ongoing basis by the College management team. The risk register identifies the key risks, the likelihood of those risks occurring, their potential impact on the College and the actions being taken to reduce and mitigate the risks. Risks are prioritised using a consistent scoring system. This is supported by a risk management training programme to raise awareness of risk throughout the College.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes in most areas (Business, Law, Criminology, Public Health, Early Childhood Studies) in the next three years is low. We have continued to receive sufficient applications to open cohorts of a healthy size. Most programmes are taught by several staff members, and some staff members teach on more than one of these programmes. This overlap provides opportunities for arranging temporary cover in the event of staff sickness or turnover. Many of the programmes involve a work placement element and we have a dedicated work placement co-ordinator to administer compulsory work placements in Public Health and Early Childhood Studies programmes. We provide a high level of contact hours and individual support to reduce withdrawal rate and ensure continued good class size across all years of a programme.

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

We have several measures in place to mitigate the risks of being unable to deliver programmes in Business, Law, Criminology, Public Health or Early Childhood Studies.

We have streamlined our suite of Business programmes for the 2018/19 intake, with the discontinuation of two out of three pathways (Business with Marketing, Business with Finance). This means that all applicants will study Business and Management pathway, which will prevent the dilution of the cohort into individual pathways in Year 2 and 3 of the programme, and will ensure that our teaching resources are focused on the delivery of one pathway and that the class size remains healthy to provide a stimulating learning environment and support student achievement.

We are continuously developing our portfolio to make our programmes meet the needs of potential applicants, and attract a healthy number of new applications to ensure that we can continue to deliver the programmes.

We have recently introduced an optional work placement sandwich year for our programmes in Criminology, Psychology and Social Justice (validated by University of Sussex) and in LLB Law (awarded by London Metropolitan University), where students can work for prison service between Level 5 and Level 6 of their programme, for a competitive salary and with a guaranteed employment after graduation.

We have developed a new BA (Hons) Business and Law degree programme, which we will be presenting for validation by University of Sussex in 2018/19 to be offered from 2019/20. The modular structure of the programme is modelled on our currently delivered Business and LLB Law programmes, and will enable some level of transfer of students from and to these programmes, which would also enable continuity of study in-house should any of these programmes be discontinued.

We are also currently looking into the development of a new Sports and Event Management programme.

In the event that we are forced to discontinue an existing programme, e.g. due to a severely reduced cohort size, if any existing students are affected we invite them for a discussion and assist them with the search of an alternative provider to transfer to. We also provide students with transcripts of modules achieved at Croydon College. We also inform potential applicants well in advance to find if a decision is taken not to offer a previously advertised programme, and help them either find a suitable alternative programme at Croydon College, or, if none can be identified, at another provider.

Currently, the HE environment in South London is extremely competitive, and, as a result, could at times lead to low cohorts in certain programme areas (both at the application stage and mid-course). This could mean that it would be no longer viable to deliver the programmes affected. The college has processes in place to mitigate disruption to students affected, the key principles of which are:

- Inform students as soon as a decision to discontinue a course or a particular level thereof is taken, and provide a clear explanation of potential scenarios; ensure that students e.g. on intermissions are included if this affects them.
- Consult the situation with our validating partner (the University of Sussex for most courses), keep the updated of progress and liaise with them on arranging support and assistance to students affected to mitigate any disruption – though we do recognise that the onus is on the college as the delivery provider to put in place student protection measures.
- Liaise with other relevant HE institutions who may offer alternative courses, e.g. collate information about offer available and/or make initial contact on the students' behalf.
- Take legal advice as relevant on consumer law matters and financial impact.

Evidence available on request (subject to data protection legislation) includes written communications with individual students affected by a course discontinuation, and communications with University of Sussex and London Metropolitan University on course planning and validations.

3. Information about the policy we have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

Refunds for Higher Education students are covered in Terms and Conditions for Croydon College HE Students, available on the link below:

<https://www.croydon.ac.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/terms-and-conditions-for-croydon-college-he-students-2017-18.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

We will be making further changes to our policy to ensure we align with good practice recommendations. In order to do this we will be seeking approval from our governing body in July 2018 to cover the following:

- 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.

At the end of the last financial year, 2016/2017, we had cash reserves of £6.4mn which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for students that we might identify an increased risk of non-continuation of study. We will put in place insurance arrangements to provide refunds and compensation for students for whom we identify an increased risk of non-continuation of study. We will ensure that this is in place by 1 August 2019.

4. Information about how we will communicate with students about our student protection plan

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by 1 August 2019 on Croydon College website:

<https://www.croydon.ac.uk/about-us/policies-and-procedures>

We will ensure that any course changes are only made with the agreement of the Deputy Chief Executive who has responsibility for the student protection plan.

We will work with our current students in the development of our student protection plan.

We will review our student protection plan annually. Our students will be involved in our review through the student representation formal meeting structure (Programme Boards and the Student Council). We will encourage our students to read the published student protection plan and feed back any queries or concerns to their class student representatives, to be presented at the Programme Boards.

Should our student protection plan need to be implemented, we will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course as soon as these are approved.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will arrange group briefings and individual meetings to support students collectively and individually, for example with regard to arrangements for transfers to other providers or temporary teaching cover arrangements and/or refunds.