

Higher Education Student Protection Plan Condition

Author: Deputy Principal

Equality Assessment: Deputy Principal

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Version and Date		Actions/Notes
1.0	August 2025	Included collaboration with students in the policy review process to align with the Office for Students (OfS) guidance. Added a statement clarifying that the risks outlined in the SPP are assessed proportionately to the College's size. Outlined the minimum measures to ensure students can complete their studies, access student finance or transfer to other providers

Approved by SMT: September 2025

Approved by Corporation: n/a

Date of Next Review: August 2026

Related policies or procedures or parent policy if applicable:

- Higher Education Student Contract Terms and Conditions
- Higher Education Fee Payment Policy
- Higher Education Refund and Compensation Policy and Process
- Compliments & Complaints Policy
- Admissions Policy

Groups/bodies consulted in the development of the policy:

- HE Student Representatives
- Finance Department

To be published on College Website: Yes

To be published on Student Hub: Yes

Provider's name: Macclesfield College

Provider's UKPRN: 10004144

Legal address: Park Lane, Macclesfield, SK11 8LF

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Dr Lucy Reed

Student Protection Plan for the period 2024-25

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.

Introduction:

As a registered provider of Higher Education, Macclesfield College is required to publish a Student Protection Plan (SPP) which sets out how continuation of study will be preserved for current and potential higher education students if a risk to their continued study manifests. The risks to the continuation of study has been assessed proportionately to the College's size, student characteristics and needs. This ensures that the mitigation measures outlined in the Student Protection Plan are appropriate and effective for the level of risk posed to students. This requirement applies to all registered providers of higher education.

The SPP outlines the types of risks, gives examples of events that might trigger action and explains what we might do to minimise the impact of these events if they happen.

This document forms an important part of your **Student Contract Terms and Conditions** and should be read in conjunction with these prior to accepting an offer of study and enrolling on the course. You will find the relevant policies and procedures, Terms and Conditions and the Student Protection Plan (SPP) on the college website (<https://macclesfield.ac.uk/awards-policies-and-values/student-and-college-policies/>). Also, a copy of these terms and conditions and the Student Protection Plan will be given to you to read before enrolling on the Higher Education course.

The risks to non-continuation of study are categorised into two main categories: risk at Institutional level and risk at programme/course level.

Risks at an Institutional Level:

Financial Risks: The risk of the College being unable to operate is very low. The Board of Governors is committed to ensure that there are sufficient financial reserves to allow the College to continue with its main operations for the targeted 90 days according to the college financial plan should the college have to wind up its operation. This allows the college to meet its obligations to staff and students. The College's Financial Statements are available on the College website. It is a main concern of the Board of Governors that the college has sufficient reserves to meet its liabilities and therefore the Reserves Policy is under regular review. Additionally, the principal regulator the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provides assurance for further education colleges to preserve continuation of study for students in the event of whole provider closure. Based upon our student numbers and size these reserves are sufficient to cover all reasonably foreseeable risks to the College's operations.

Partnership Risks: The risk of losing partnership is very low. The College's higher education provision is dependent on the continued awarding powers of any validating partners, City and

Guilds and Pearson Education Limited group. These institutions are established UK awarding bodies that have held their powers for a considerable period of time. The risk of any one of them losing the awarding powers is very low.

Risks at Programme / Course Level:

Resource Risks: There is a risk that the College might be unable to continue to deliver programmes in specialist subject areas should a combination of staff unavailability be such that it became impossible or impractical to deliver to the quality that the College expects. A similar risk exists should, for any reason, specialist accommodation or equipment be unavailable for significant periods of time. The risk relating to staffing is low because our programmes are modular and are delivered by teams of staff, and also because our programmes are designed in such a way that few modules are dependent on the availability of a single staff member. The risk relating to accommodation is also low. The College has a physical estate much larger than is necessary to support its Higher Education provision. If any part of the College's physical estate become unusable as a result of, for example, fire or flood it would normally be possible to move delivery to a different location to preserve continuation of study. A small proportion of the College's Higher Education provision is partially dependent on the availability of specialist equipment and would be compromised should this equipment be unavailable for prolonged periods.

Recruitment Risks: The College's higher education provision is expanding and there is a moderate risk, particularly in the case of newly introduced programmes / courses, that recruitment levels may result in uneconomic group sizes. The potential students are informed during offer stage if there is any potential risk to course cancellation due to low enrolment. Any course cancellation within 14 days of the course date in consultation with the impacted students.

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

The four risks identified are mitigated as follows:

The College's Student Protection Plan includes minimum measures to ensure that students can complete their course of study, continue accessing student finance, or transfer to other providers in the event of material changes or closures. These measures include:

- Teach-Out arrangements: Ensuring that students enrolled on a course are able to complete their studies at the College.
- Support for transfers to other providers: Facilitating the transfer of affected students to comparable programmes at other institutions, including coOrdinating with other providers to ensure a smooth transition.
- Financial compensation: Providing refunds or compensation for tuition fees and other relevant costs where continuation of study cannot be preserved. Termination of contracts or approvals for specific programmes:
- The formal agreements with the College's higher education partners provide for teach-out of existing students in all but the most extreme circumstances. The normal response to such a scenario would be to halt new recruitment rather than impact on current students.
- The normal expectation is that teach-out would include any candidates holding firm offers of places unless suitable alternative provision could be arranged.
- In all but the most extreme circumstances period of notice for any such change is long enough to allow for any new applicants to be notified in good time for them to find alternative places.

- Should validation/approval for any programme be withdrawn or the contract with a partner terminated it would normally be possible to transfer students to a similar programme with another provider.

Transfer of programme delivery

- The normal process for any transfer of delivery will be for all existing students to complete their studies as planned at their normal study location.
- Under these circumstances, the change of location will be included in all admissions information and materials. New students will be admitted to start their programmes at the new location and would expect to complete their studies at that location.
- Where such a phased transition is impossible or impractical, the College will either provide affected students with free transport between sites or will compensate students for any additional travel costs they incur.
- For student internal or external transfer as detailed in the Higher Education Student Transfer Arrangements Statement available at the college website.

Resource unavailability

Staffing

- Programmes are modular and designed to allow for delivery by teams of staff. Few modules rely on the knowledge and skills of only one member of staff. As such, programmes are sufficiently robust to continue in the long or short-term absence of any one staff member.
- Many programmes have optional modules that can be changed should it become difficult to staff any particular specialism.
- The College maintains a bank of part-time staff that can be called on at relatively short notice to assist in programme delivery.

Accommodation

- The College has a large enough estate for minor losses of availability to be accommodated by re-rooming within the campus or rented accommodation.
- The College is insured against the costs incurred should any of these actions be necessary.

Specialist Equipment

- Most of the College's programmes have no requirements for specialist equipment.
- Where the use of specialist equipment is desirable, programmes are nevertheless designed, as far as possible, not to be critically dependent on particular specialised resources. Most programme designs allow for the possibility of resources being unavailable and have contingency plans to allow delivery to continue should specialist equipment be unavailable.
- The College is insured against the costs incurred should any of these actions be necessary.

Non-viable group sizes

- The College's programme validation / approval processes include consideration of likely demand. Programmes cannot proceed to validation / approval until / unless there is a well-founded expectation of financially viable recruitment.
- The College reviews the level of enquiries / applications for programmes regularly during the recruitment cycle. Any decisions to close non-viable programmes / courses to new applicants are taken as early as possible in order to allow applicants the greatest possible opportunity to find appropriate alternatives. Applicants are informed promptly of any decisions affecting their applications.

- In cases where programmes / courses are closed to new applicants, the College offers places on appropriate alternative programmes / courses, where these are available, and offers assistance to students wishing to find alternative provision at other institutions.
- The College seeks to avoid disadvantaging enrolled students by closing programmes /courses during their delivery, and will normally teach programmes to completion even if they become uneconomic during the delivery. If, in exceptional cases, it was necessary to close a programme/ course before its normal completion the College would consult with affected students and use its best efforts to find satisfactory alternative progression routes within the College or with other providers.

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

The College's Higher Education Refund and Compensation Policy and Process is available on the college website.

The policy outlines the circumstances in which we will:

- Refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students
- Provide compensation to students.

As stated above, the College has cash reserves that would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for any students affected should any of the low risks listed above result in non-continuation of study.

The College considers refunds and compensation to be a remedy of last resort and we are committed to doing all we can so that refunds and compensation do not become necessary. The Policy may be implemented as a result of particular risks in the SPP occurring.

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

Current and future students will be informed of the College's Student Protection Plan:

- On the College website
- In offer letters / emails
- At the time of enrolment

The Student Protection Plan will be published prominently on the College website, ensuring it is easily accessible to prospective students. Additionally, a copy of the terms and conditions and the Student Protection Plan will be given to students at the offer stage and again before enrolment on the Higher Education course.

Current students will have access to all of this information via the College website. Details of where this information can be found will be signposted in course handbooks and in tutorials.

The College will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of its student protection plan when they propose course changes through internal staff development and as part of validation and amendment processes.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course by email to their college email addresses, by publication of details on the College's Virtual Learning Environment and/or by post.

We will normally give students 90 days' notice when we need to make material changes to their course. Where it is impractical to give 90 days' notice we will provide as much notice as is reasonably practical.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will:

- consult with students through tutorials
- provide additional advice sessions for affected groups
- provide opportunities for one-to-one discussions and advice
- provide practical assistance through the College's Student Services

If the College needs to implement the measures in our student protection plan it will provide independent advice to students through the College's Student Services team. The Student Services team will offer advice themselves and will signpost students to sources of independent advice outside the College.

5. Review

The College will hold an annual consultation with student representatives about the provisions of the Student Protection Plan. Additionally, the College will collaborate with students to review and refresh the plan on a regular basis, ensuring it remains fit for purpose and addresses their needs. The SPP will be reviewed annually and approved by the College's Senior Management Team, with student feedback informing the review process.