

Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: North Hertfordshire College

Provider's UKPRN:10004690

Legal address: Monkswood Way, Stevenage , Herts SG1 1LA

Contact point for enquiries about this Student Protection Plan: Head of Higher Education
HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk

Welcome to North Hertfordshire College

The College is a medium sized general further education College, located in the towns of Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth, and serving a population of around 200,000 people.

The College operates from four main centres and provides programmes at other local venues.

The College is part of the Hart Learning Group, which includes the Hart Schools Trust and Hart Learning and Development (HLD). HLD is a learning and development business, which supports businesses of all sizes to engage with and invest in emerging talent. HLD provides training and the delivery of higher apprenticeships.

North Hertfordshire College delivers programmes in 15 subject sector areas, which range from pre-entry to advanced level. Apprenticeship, professional and employability programmes are delivered through Hart Learning and Development.

Our aim is to meet student and business demand for high-level skills through a rich and varied portfolio of higher education programmes and high-level apprenticeship offers in accordance with our strategic priority sectors.

Higher Education has been delivered effectively at North Hertfordshire College for over 30 years, and currently includes an offer combining mainly Extended and Foundation Degrees as well as Higher National Diplomas across various sector skills areas.

The Higher Education provision at NHC is a significant strength and has specific key aims and priorities.

HE is a key strategic progression route for College FE courses and a vehicle for local employers to develop its workforce.

NHC is also very well respected by external bodies including local HEIs and the QAA, as evidenced by the successful outcomes of :

- The Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in March 2009
- The successful QAA Higher Education Review in February 2014 confirming that all judgements met UK expectations, and identifying several areas of good practice.

The College was awarded TEF Silver Award in June 2017. In addition to excellent outcomes, the reviewers highlighted that "Very high proportions of students' progress to employment or further study, and to highly skilled employment, at levels notably above the provider benchmark". This is particularly important given our NHC goals around work preparation, progression and destinations.

Student Protection Plan for the period 2019-2022

This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures we have in place to protect you as a student in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies should arise.

The measures contained in this plan apply to all students studying for a directly funded qualification (HNC/HND) delivered at North Hertfordshire College. These measures are also in addition to the protections students have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on their consumer rights.

Students studying on our franchised courses will be covered by the University of Hertfordshire Student Protection Plan, our university partner;

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires HE Providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspension of programmes, closures of courses, College premises or business

These events may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to):

- a decision to close the College has been taken
- a strategic decision by the College to close a course or campus
- a decision has been taken not to run a course for the subsequent year
- loss or restriction of HE provider status
- loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies, e.g. OfS, Ofsted
- loss of accreditation from awarding body (validator)
- withdrawal of designation for student support purposes
- changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course
- disruption of College activity
- industrial action by College staff or third parties
- unanticipated departure of key members of College staff.

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

Risk 1- Closure of Business/College/Campus

The College reported total comprehensive income of £5,251K in 2016/17 and had total unrestricted reserves of £20,340K at 31 July 2017. We also reported borrowings of 6,916K

We have mature business continuity arrangements in place including plans to deal with a range of incidents.

The risk that any of our campuses close is low as the College has a long track-record of delivering programmes and running its business successfully. The College also has a written strategy and business plan covering the next 5 years.

This risk is monitored through risk management in accordance HE regulatory bodies and any instance of this will be managed in accordance with the College policies.

Likelihood: **Extremely Low**

Risk 2: Loss or Restriction as a HE provider

The risk that North Hertfordshire College loses its status as a HE provider is to be considered as low for the following reasons:

- North Hertfordshire College has been delivering Higher Education for the past 30 years.
- HE is a key strategic progression route for College FE courses and a vehicle for local employers to develop its workforce.
- The successful outcomes of several Quality Assurance Reviews, the most recent ones being:
 - The Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in March 2009
 - The successful QAA Higher Education Review in February 2014 confirming that all judgements met UK expectations, and identifying several areas of good practice.
 - The 2017 Annual Provider Review (APR) Outcome: Meets requirements
- The College was awarded TEF Silver Award in June 2017.
- North Hertfordshire College is an active member and key player of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium, a partnership between the University of Hertfordshire and the 4 Further Education corporations in the county.
- North Hertfordshire College has been a HEFCE directly funded institution since 2010.

Likelihood: **Low**

Risk 3- Loss of Validator (awarding body)

The risk that North Hertfordshire College loses one of its validators (currently the University of Hertfordshire and Pearson's Education Ltd) as a HE provider is to be considered as low for the following reasons:

- North Hertfordshire College has been delivering Higher Nationals for 30 years.

- North Hertfordshire College is a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium since 2002
- The successful outcomes of all validation and revalidation events that took place on all programmes delivered at the College since the creation of the Consortium
- The College has never been subject to any special measures imposed by one of its awarding bodies, such as loss of accreditation or loss of direct claim status, due to poor quality, management or malpractice
- The successful outcomes of all Quality Assurance Reviews (see previous)

Likelihood: **Low**

Risk 4- Loss of Accreditation

The risk that North Hertfordshire College loses the accreditation from one of its validators (currently the University of Hertfordshire and Pearson's Education Ltd) to deliver a particular programme is to be considered as low for the following reasons:

- The College has never lost the entitlement to provide any of its HE programmes.
- Each programme delivered at the College is subject to a thorough awarding body validation process that includes a detailed assessment of the College resources, capacity and expertise to deliver the course as well a well-established targeted market.
- The rigorous Quality Assurance mechanisms in place ensure compliance with awarding bodies requirements.

Likelihood: **Low**

Risk 5- Programme Discontinuation or decision not to run a course the following year

The risk that the College decides to discontinue a specific programme on timescales that directly affect students is low because any course discontinuations in HE are planned at least one year in advance to allow current students to complete their studies.

The risk that we discontinue or do not offer programmes due to insufficient enrolment and programme take-up or continuation is low. We regularly review the suite of programmes we offer to ensure that we keep pace with student demand and may choose to close a programme to future cohorts where demand is low or as part of a refresh of our wider portfolio.

There is good staff coverage in terms of teaching capacity and capability at the College.

Likelihood: **Low**

Risk 6- Change of Qualification/Course content

The risk that the qualification a student obtain ends up significantly different from that for which the student enrolled is low because all our directly funded courses are off the shelf qualifications (Higher Nationals) and are subject to the awarding body rules and regulations. Our quality department and internal monitoring processes ensure that the rules of combination for the off the shelf courses are complied with and checked

For our franchised courses, these are subject to the University of Hertfordshire policies and regulations. The university's approach to programme development and approval, and approach to managing course discontinuation, are well established.

We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to a programme's content year on year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback.

Our review and quality enhancement processes are informed by student consultation and we endeavour to communicate planned changes in a timely and helpful manner. These minor amendments in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures.

Likelihood: **Low**

Notification, advice and support

North Hertfordshire College Commitment to Students

We commit to:

- communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information
- being open and transparent with all students should any risk to the continuity of their programme of studies arise, and inform them in a timely manner
- taking reasonable steps to protect student normal studies completion should we discontinue a programme, close a department or discipline, close a location (building or campus) where a programme is taught, or should the College close altogether
- consulting with students and considering students' views in a timely manner before deciding to implement any substantial changes to their programme or discontinuing it, or closing a department or closing a location
- taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures
- Informing the OfS of any changes that may necessitate a review of this Student Protection Plan or any of the measures contained within it.
- Should the Student Protection Plan need to be triggered, students will be notified by the Director of Curriculum via email and telephone calls.
- Free advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the Head of Curriculum and supported by the Head of Higher Education.
- Additional, non-academic, advice and support is available from Student Support Services (or delegate) and University partner
- You will also have access to independent advice from the Students' Union if we need to implement the plan.

What can students do if they have a complaint?

There are several channels

- If you have any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, please contact the Head of Higher Education via HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk
- If your complaint is about your course then you should follow the complaints procedure available online. This can be found on <https://www.nhc.ac.uk/media/4309/compliments-feedback-and-complaints-2017-18.pdf>

Provider's name: North Hertfordshire College

Provider's UKPRN: 10004690

Legal address: Monkswood Way, Stevenage, SG1 1LA

Contact point for enquiries about this Student Protection Plan:

Head of Higher Education – HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk

For any other types of complaints or query, students can contact us directly on <https://www.nhc.ac.uk/contact/enquiries/>

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

In all cases, we will inform students of any changes, which may affect their studies in a timely manner.

Risk 1A- College closure

Where the College has no option, other than to close, it may consider measures such as those below to protect student experience:

- where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period that would allow current enrolled students to complete their studies at the Institution
- where possible, the College will use its existing network partners such as the school , local employers to source the necessary facilities to allow the completion of studies
- where possible, the College will hire spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby) to allow completion of studies.
- the College will provide the necessary transport arrangements to allow students access the new site
- where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers
- In case of dispute with registered students as a result of risk 1A, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 1B: Closure of one of the College's Campuses

Where one of the College's campuses is unusable for activities involving students, the College will typically consider actions such as:

- Relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include using another of the College 's campuses or hiring spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby)
- Revising timetabling to allow all of the scheduled teaching to take place in the available facilities. This may include student contact sessions being held outside of normal office hours. Where such an approach is taken, appropriate consultation will normally be conducted with stakeholders who may be affected; appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken
- In case of dispute with registered students as a result of risk 1B, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 2: Loss or Restriction as a HE provider

In the event of loss or restriction as a HE provider, North Hertfordshire College will work with the OfS regulatory body to:

- ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise disruption to affected students
- ensure that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner
- working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme
- ensure that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner
- In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 2, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 3- Loss of validator

In the event of the College losing one of its validators, the following steps will be taken:

Franchised Courses: University of Hertfordshire

- The College will work with the University directly to regain approval. This would require agreed specified actions carried out by the centre within agreed timescales
- If the relationship with the University breaks down, the College will support student transfer to one of the Consortium Colleges of their choice delivering the same programme
- In case of student non-agreement, the College will try to source an alternative institution that delivers a programme with similar specification This approach will require full agreement from all students registered initially.

In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 3, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy

Directly Funded Courses – Pearson's Education Ltd (Edexcel)

- The College will work with Awarding Body directly to regain approval. This would require specified actions agreed with the Awarding Body and carried out by the centre within agreed timescales.
- If the relationship with the specialist Awarding Body breaks down, the College will support student transfer to an alternative institution with specialist Awarding Body approval.
- In case of student non-agreement, the College will try to source an alternative Awarding Body with similar specification and work with students to achieve alternative assessment measures. This approach will require full agreement from all students registered initially

In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 3, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy

Risk 4: Loss of accreditation

In the event of the College losing its accreditation from one of the awarding bodies (UH, Pearson's Edexcel) and if we are unable to deliver a programme in the following year, our immediate response would be to seek to use those elements of our student protection measures that were most easily within our control.

We will take one or more of the following measures to protect students' continuity of study.

- All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the disruption to those services and to affected students by, for example:
 - offering affected students, the chance to move to another course
 - delivering a modified version of the same course
 - providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider
 - consultation with stakeholders who may be affected to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken
 - future applicants will be notified in accordance with UCAS deadlines, allowing time for students to source an alternative suitable programme
 - Whenever possible, arrangements will be made to ensure programmes of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students within existing timeframes determined by the awarding body and College regulations, even though the programme is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.
- In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 4, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 5- Programme Discontinuation or decision not to run a course the following year

- Where a course is dis-continued, we would close the programme to new recruitment and ensure that current student cohorts complete their full qualification
- The College is committed to put the necessary resources to ensure that existing students complete their programme. We have experience of managing this process successfully
- In case of dispute with students because of risk 5, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 6- Change of Qualification/Course content

- All of our programmes are subject to validation by the awarding body and therefore this risk will not happen without the full re-validation process taking place.
- Students on the course will not be affected by these changes as transitional arrangements are always made to cater for existing students.
- We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to a programme's content year on year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback, without changing the qualification title.
- Our review and quality enhancement processes are informed by student consultation and we endeavour to communicate planned changes in a timely and helpful manner. These minor amendments in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures.

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

Policies relating to refund and compensation are available on the College website.

The compensation and refund policy can be found **here**.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your Student Protection Plan

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by :

- Making the plan available on our website
- Referencing it appropriately in our communications with students during the recruitment and admissions process.
- Ensuring that all students are at induction sent an electronic copy of the plan

Reviewing the plan

The College will

- Ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan (staff development) when they propose programme changes by including a reference to the Student Protection Plan in our programme approval and amendment documentation.
- Review the plan annually with senior management
- Regularly seek views on this plan from our student representatives as part of our student engagement processes.
- The plan will be presented to the HE committee for final approval prior to publication on the website

Capturing Student Views

The College has a variety of mechanisms in place to capture student voice on all aspects related to student life (learning, teaching validation of courses, continuation, progression, accommodation, transport, student services). The College intends to use the same mechanisms to seek student views on this Student Protection Plan.

Students have the opportunity to provide feedback by completing surveys and attending programme meetings at College or University. Student Representatives also attend the HE committee and therefore will have the opportunity to discuss and feedback on the Student Protection Plan.

Students will be able to feedback informally to their tutor or the Higher Education Manager.

Formal routes of capturing student feedback include the First Impressions survey, completed by all HE students after their 6 week induction and the End of Year Survey.

Any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, should also be referred to the Head of Higher Education using HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk.

What can students do if they have a complaint?

- If your complaint is about your course then you should follow the complaints procedure available online. This can be found at here
- <https://www.nhc.ac.uk/media/4309/compliments-feedback-and-complaints-2017-18.pdf>
- If you have any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, please contact the Head of Higher Education via HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk

Provider's name: North Hertfordshire College

Provider's UKPRN: 10004690

Legal address: Monkswood Way, Stevenage, SG1 1LA

Contact point for enquiries about this Student Protection Plan:

Head of Higher Education – HEAdmin@nhc.ac.uk

- For any other types of complaints or query, students can contact us directly on <https://www.nhc.ac.uk/contact/enquiries/>