

Higher Education Student Protection Plan 2024-25



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Manager Responsible:	Deputy Principal
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Impact Assessment status	In preparing the Policy, any potential disproportionate impact it might have upon individuals with protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, have been carefully considered. It is the conclusion of the College Group that the Policy does not adversely impact on individuals with any of the protected characteristics.
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Aim

This document aims to provide students studying a Higher Education course or Higher Apprenticeship with Chesterfield College with clear, accessible information about how the college assesses and manages the risks to providing an excellent student experience, and the policies in place to safeguard students should something unexpected have an impact on their course.

In this document you will find our assessment of risks, links to information about fees, refunds and compensation, and an overview of the ways we communicate with students whose courses are provided for by this plan.

Scope

The Student Protection Plan applies to all students who start a programme of study towards a Higher Education Award or Higher Apprenticeship from 1st August 2024. This includes the following types of course/award:

- Higher National Certificate (HNC).
- Higher National Diploma (HND).
- Foundation Degree.
- Honours Degree (or top-up).
- Higher Apprenticeships including any of the qualification types listed above.

The plan provides protection for students regardless of how their fees have been paid or course funded, including those who take out a loan, pay their fees in full, or benefit from apprenticeship funding.

Communication

We will make this Student Protection Plan available to current and future students by publishing it on the college website prior to the start of the applications cycle for 2024/25 course entry. We will publicise the plan to future and current students by ensuring that there is a clear reference to all key Higher Education documents within our Prospectus, on the course information published online, on our website, and in the information provided to students at induction.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the existence of our Student Protection Plan, the importance of sharing this information with students, and its application when they propose course changes, through the college structure of meetings, briefings, and training.

Each year, the college will undertake a programme of consultation with current students to review key Higher Education policy documents, including this plan, as part of the process of preparing the plan for the following year. All Higher Education students will be asked for their views, and a focus group meeting planned to allow for discussion of the suggestions, comments, and concerns raised.

In the event the plan is implemented for one or more course, students will be given 14 days' notice of any change, unless a change is required in response to a business continuity issue outside the control of the college.

Management of Risks

Chesterfield College understands its responsibility to safeguard and protect provision for students, minimising or removing risks to the continued successful delivery of the Higher Education courses we offer. The overview below provides a summary of the risks that might affect our HE courses, how we manage these risks, and what plans are in place should there be an issue we have to respond to.

Possible risks to continued provision for students	Ways in which the college will mitigate these risks, if required
The college is unable to continue operating due to poor financial health.	The college has robust financial budgeting and forecasting processes in place to ensure that liquidity is maintained and that any issues relating to cash generation and profitability are identified and addressed ahead of time.
Issues affecting the physical estate prevent the delivery of courses.	A robust Business Continuity Plan is in place to ensure that, where a building may become unusable, the impact on students is minimal and that alternative accommodation is quickly sought (either by moving provision around the remaining buildings or by bringing in temporary buildings). Both the Chesterfield and Derby sites are close to the centres of Chesterfield/Derby which offers access to local, accessible alternative venues should these ever be required.
Disruptions to the availability and security of technology resources affects course delivery.	The college has in place a wide range of measures to protect information security, and a skilled and experienced team of IT professionals who provide support for the maintenance and development of the IT infrastructure. The college has an IT disaster recovery procedure that provides comprehensive instruction in the event of a loss of service or disruption to the IT network. Where possible, for example, in the provision of internet services to the college, systems are designed to be resilient, so that individual elements of the service are supported by a 'backup' option.
Lack of staff availability affects course delivery.	Higher Education provision, as a proportion of total college provision, is relatively small (c.5%) which means that the risk of lacking staff in this area is relatively low. The risk is managed effectively by the strategic and operational management team for Higher Education, and student experience is the priority in all decisions affecting staffing and the

	<p>continuity of teaching for units, awards, and subjects. Where possible, the college fosters links between Further and Higher Education teaching staff to share teaching, experience, and knowledge. Support is provided through a central fund for workforce development for study at master's level, enabling growth in capacity where needed. Staff are actively encouraged to participate in development and scholarly activity. Our hourly paid, flexible workforce provides cover to support continued delivery in the event of short-term absence, supported by a network of agencies providing additional staff as required.</p>
<p>Awarding Body sanctions affecting the operations or awards process for a course.</p>	<p>We consider this risk to be low due to the organisation-wide measures in place to assure all aspects of the teaching, learning, and assessment process. Independent reviews carried out by external verifiers/examiners of internal quality assurance processes verify that all lecturers are working to required standards, and that assessment decisions are robust, fair, and timely. The college has a specialist team responsible for quality assurance and Awarding Body relationships to provide support for any issues that are identified. The college will seek to work closely with Awarding Bodies to ensure that their requirements are fully met in the event of any concern or sanction resulting from an external assurance review.</p>
<p>Poor university partner relationships affect the offer, organisation, or assessment arrangements for one or more courses.</p>	<p>The risk is minimal due to the strong contractual and relational links with each of the institutions with which we partner. The college strategic plan for Higher Education seeks to protect services to students through the continued development of multiple university partnerships, developing long-term relationships with strategic plans for development. In all cases, contracts make provision for all existing students if a partnership comes to an end. University partners are local, meaning that students can transfer if required to a course delivered directly by the university.</p>
<p>The college will be unable to offer Higher Apprenticeships due to a poor outcome from Ofsted inspection.</p>	<p>Following an inspection in November 2022 the college was judged overall as 'Good', with strong skills provision. The college can therefore be seen as a provider of high-quality provision and to have the capacity and ability to improve, preventing future poor outcomes that may restrict access to</p>

	<p>funding or approvals. The college has a robust annual cycle of quality review and improvement planning which covers all aspects of provision. Significant focus has recently been given to those areas judged externally as requiring improvement. All areas will continue to plan and implement improvements to progress the college towards outstanding provision for all students.</p>
<p>One or more courses do not recruit sufficient students for a course to commence.</p>	<p>The college admissions policy and its commitment to providing students with clear advice early in the applications cycle ensures that where a course may not run in a future year, students are informed of the risk and supported to find insurance or alternative choices. Alternatives within the college are offered where possible, and students are given clear advice to support them through alternative or clearing applications to a suitable alternative.</p>

Fees and Refunds

The college policy for fees, including arrangements for student loans and refunds, are clearly documented within the Fees and Refunds Policy (FIN09), which is updated annually and applies to the academic year in which a course or award is started by a student.

Financial support is provided to Higher Education students according to the Higher Education Bursary Policy (FIN08) for each academic year of study. Applications are considered and awards made each year according to the policy for that year. Policies clearly explain to students that an award of financial support in one year does not automatically apply to future years.

In addition to the provisions made within the Fees and Refunds Policy, this plan provides a commitment from the college to provide support with costs associated with changes to provision which are implemented by the college after the start date of the course:

- If the college makes a change to the delivery location of a course, students will be eligible to apply for financial support to cover any additional costs of travel.
- If the college closes a course and students have to transfer to an alternative provider to complete their award, the college will provide financial support to meet the cost of tuition fees for the period already paid by the student and meet the cost of any difference in fees directly with the new provider until the planned end date of the award. Note, this does not apply to any transfers for the completion of new or 'top-up' awards following a period of study with the college.
- When implementing plans to mitigate any unforeseen circumstances affecting students during their course of study, the college will always consider the additional costs that may be incurred by students in completing their studies and make provision to compensate for reasonable expenses incurred. The specific arrangements relating to each case will be clearly communicated to students.

The Chesterfield College Group website displays our corporate policies, procedures, and statistics:

<https://www.chesterfield.ac.uk/article-categories/policies-procedures-and-statistics/>