

Higher Education Student Protection Plan 2025-26



Family:	Customer Service and Experience
Reference Code:	CSE03
Manager Responsible:	Deputy Principal
Committee for Approval:	Finance and Corporate Services
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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).
- Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ).
- 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 2025/26 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 are invited to provide their views. A HE Student Forum will be held biannually to facilitate discussion of any suggestions, comments, and concerns with the Strategic Director of Higher Education.

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 continues to operate robust financial budgeting and forecasting processes, ensuring liquidity is maintained and potential issues with cash generation and profitability are identified and addressed proactively.
Issues affecting the physical estate prevent the delivery of courses.	We have a robust Business Continuity Plan to minimise disruption to students if a building becomes unusable. This includes quickly securing alternative accommodation, either by reallocating space within our existing buildings or by bringing in temporary structures. Both our Chesterfield and Derby sites are centrally located, providing easy access to local, accessible alternative venues should they ever be needed. Our estate is currently undergoing significant changes, including the addition of an Advanced Manufacturing Centre and the revamp of North Block 1. These developments have enabled us to create more curriculum area zones, enhancing the learner experience.
Disruptions to the availability and security of technology resources affects course delivery.	The college has implemented extensive information security measures, supported by a skilled and experienced team of IT professionals responsible for the maintenance and development of its IT infrastructure. All software licenses and certificates are current. A comprehensive IT disaster recovery procedure is in place, providing detailed guidance in the event of a service outage or disruption to the IT network. Where possible, for instance in the provision of internet services, systems are designed with resilience in mind, ensuring individual service elements are supported by a backup option.
Lack of staff availability affects course delivery.	Higher Education (HE) provision constitutes a small fraction (around 3%) of our college's total provision, meaning the likelihood of staff shortages in this

	area is relatively low. To improve curriculum knowledge, resource sharing, and best practice, HE provision is managed directly within our school curriculum structure. This approach ensures strong curriculum foundations and consistent delivery. Staffing risks are effectively managed by curriculum management teams, with support from Directors of School and the College's Higher Education Strategic Lead. A positive student experience is central to all staffing decisions, especially regarding the continuity of teaching for units, awards, and subjects. The college actively promotes connections between Further Education and Higher Education teaching staff to encourage shared teaching, experience, and knowledge. Our partnership with SHU is particularly strong in this regard. We support workforce development through a central fund, which enables staff to undertake master's level study and build capacity where needed. Staff are also actively encouraged to participate in professional development and scholarly activities. Our flexible, hourly-paid workforce provides cover for short-term absences, ensuring teaching continuity. This is further supported by a network of agencies that can supply additional staff if required.
Awarding Body sanctions affecting the operations or awards process for a course.	We consider this risk low due to the organisation-wide measures in place to assure all aspects of the teaching, learning, and assessment process. Independent reviews by external verifiers and examiners of our internal quality assurance processes confirm that all lecturers meet the required standards, and that assessment decisions are robust, fair, and timely. The validation and validity of our provision is reviewed through our internal HE Progress Boards and our external partner final assessment boards. The college has a specialist team dedicated to quality assurance and Awarding Body relationships, providing support for any identified issues. The college will also work closely with Awarding Bodies to ensure their requirements are fully met should any concerns or sanctions arise from an external assurance review.

Poor university partner relationships affect the offer, organisation, or assessment arrangements for one or more courses.	The risk is minimal thanks to the strong contractual and relational links with each of the institutions we partner with. The college's strategic plan for Higher Education aims to protect student services by continually cultivating multiple university partnerships and nurturing long-term relationships with a focus on development. In every instance, contracts include provisions for all existing students should a partnership conclude. Furthermore, as our university partners are local, students can easily transfer to a course delivered directly by the university if necessary.
The college will be unable to offer Higher Apprenticeships due to a poor outcome from Ofsted inspection.	Following a November 2022 inspection, the college was judged as 'Good' overall, with strong skills provision. This, coupled with the recently approved Access and Participation Plan, demonstrates the college's capacity to provide high-quality education and to improve, thereby preventing future poor outcomes that could restrict access to funding or approvals. The college operates a robust annual cycle of quality review and improvement planning across all areas of provision. Significant attention has recently been directed towards Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, ensuring Higher Education students receive the same high-quality experience as the wider college population. All departments will continue to plan and implement improvements, working towards achieving outstanding provision for all students.
One or more courses do not recruit sufficient students for a course to commence.	The college admissions policy is committed to providing students with clear, early advice during the application cycle. This ensures that if a course might not run in a future year, students are informed of the risk and helped to find alternative or "insurance" choices. Where possible, the college offers internal alternatives, and students receive clear guidance for alternative or clearing applications to suitable courses elsewhere. Furthermore, the college is proactively preparing for the introduction of Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) pathways from January 2027, anticipating any curriculum changes this may entail, in line with curriculum specialisms and Labour Market Information (LMI) data. Future provision is also being aligned with the key

	objectives of the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) strategic plan.
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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/>