

Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: BMet (Birmingham Metropolitan College)

Provider's UKPRN: 10006442

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Student protection plan for the period 2018-19

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

The risk of the College, as a whole, being unable to operate is very low because our financial performance is in line with BMet's expectations, it generates positive cash on an annual basis, the College has adequate reserves and has foreseeable, tracked and guaranteed income/cash receipts. The College via its governance process, prepares, scrutinises, monitors, reports, grades and manages its financial risk on its financial risk register. To this end the College has business continuity plans to deal with these financial risks and other operational risks to ensure the delivery of good quality learning and learning outcomes for its students. There has been some recent testing in relation to these plans to test and fine tune BMet's response.

The risk that the College could no longer deliver a Higher National course to our students where the provision was under consideration of closure due to poor recruitment is low as the College would ensure that all courses were taught out and all students could achieve their intended outcome.

The risk that the College could no longer deliver a Higher National course to our students where the provision was under consideration of closure due to poor quality is low as the College has robust quality assurance processes that regularly monitor courses and would quickly recognise issues of quality and trigger swift interventions to rectify these issues.

The risk that the College could not continue the delivery of validated courses with one of our University partners is moderate. This poses particular risk to students with non-traditional entry criteria from under represented areas as they form the vast majority of this student cohort.

The risk that the College could not continue with delivery due to one or more of our sites being unavailable is low as it is unlikely that more than one of our sites would be unavailable at any one time. The College has capacity at all main sites and smaller sites to ensure delivery could continue.

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

The risk that the College could no longer deliver a Higher National course to our students where the provision was under consideration of closure due to poor recruitment is low. The College length of the business planning cycle ensures that major change to provision is planned and implemented well in advance and in a way that does not negatively impact on the life cycle of current students. Where a course is withdrawn the College would ensure that all courses were taught out and all students would have opportunity to achieve their intended outcome before a course was completely removed. The College is committed to, and has the financial reserves, to support the retention of any necessary physical and human resources.

The College has teach out arrangements that ensure that a comprehensive action plan would be implemented to enable the continuation of study for all students enrolled on Higher National courses.

This plan considers:

1. Agreement of action plan and set up of course closure management group
2. Notification to all internal support functions – Data Management; Student Records; Finance; Student Services and Admissions
3. Closure of recruitment and removal of related publicity materials
4. Notification and communications to applicants
5. Notification and communications to students
6. Student progress, temporary withdrawals, referral and retake students
7. Examination Boards
8. Course(s) approval and review
9. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
10. Communication with other stakeholders

The risk that the College could no longer deliver a Higher National course to our students where the provision was under consideration of closure due to poor quality is low as the College has robust quality assurance processes that regularly monitor courses, would quickly recognise issues of quality and trigger swift interventions to rectify these issues. The College's quality assurance arrangements set out in the Academic Standards Policy have been confirmed by QAA to be robust and effective in ensuring academic standards and ensuring continuing enhancement. The College has the reserves to ensure that concerns regarding physical and human resources could be addressed where the need arose in a timely and effective manner.

The risk that the College could not continue the delivery of validated courses due to the withdrawal of one of our University partners has been mitigated in a number of ways. The College has established a robust relationship with a new out of area University partner which is committed to supporting the College with validations of new courses. Should one of our other partners withdraw validation this University has committed to validating alternative relevant provision. The College has ensured that current partner Universities have robust, supportive, collaborative teach out arrangements that are binding and are detailed in their institutional agreements.

Where students are in agreement and it is practically and academically possible, arrangements will be made for those current students, those on interruption of study or in a retake situation to transfer into the replacement course. Where there is not a replacement course or students are not in agreement or it is not practically or academically possible, the College is committed to providing both physical and human resources to all students.

The College is committed to continue delivery of any new course at the original site to ensure that students from those groups that come from underrepresented/disadvantaged backgrounds do not face further disruption or incur additional costs.

The College has a comprehensive Business Disruption Response Plan to ensure that issues arising are dealt with in a way that allows the College to continue delivery in as short a timeframe as possible. There is spare capacity at all College main sites and the College would take steps to ensure student courses are moved to an appropriate site and transport is arranged for those students. In addition, all of our College sites have good public transport links and are very accessible. All College sites are within Birmingham and the Black Country and commuting between them on a daily basis is possible. All of our sites are digitally connected and relocating a course is relatively straightforward. The College maintains Business Interruption Insurance in order to fund additional costs should a location or locations become unavailable. Further all of our College sites comply with strict health and safety standards, thus minimising an issue that a building will be taken out of use at short notice.

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

BMet Fees Policy (<https://www.bmet.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Fees-Policy-2018-19-Mar-2018.pdf>)

The College Fees Policy includes information on refunds made to students and employers. It covers refunds for students in receipt of a Tuition Fee Loan from Student Finance England; who pay their own tuition fees and whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor/employer.

The current policy does not contain information in regard to the payment of additional travel costs for students affected by change in the location of their course; compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study and compensation for the tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer course provider. However, our terms and conditions for students address these possibilities and we would consider individual cases on their merit.

In the unlikely event that a refund has to be given to students (the level of HE activity and that most courses are under 2 years in length means they are lower risk) the College maintains sufficient cash balances to allow it to operate. Given the College has the ability to mitigate delivery issues the likelihood of making a refund of fees is considered low. Any repayments that needed to be funded are considered to be low. The cash balances held are considered adequate to ensure that any refunds for courses that have been disrupted due to the fault of the College can be repaid. As noted above the College holds Business Interruption Insurance that could be used should a catastrophic event occur.

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 placing it on our website, the student portal and on the virtual learning environment. It will be included in the information provided to applicants when they are made an offer to study on a course. Students will have their attention drawn to the plan at induction and throughout the year.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose course changes by information session at the College Higher Education Thematic Network meeting; placing a briefing on the College SharePoint site; through curriculum management communication; inclusion in the Academic Standards Policy and discussion at Academic Standard Boards.

We will annually review our Student Protection Plan and enable students to be involved in the review through discussion at the student campus meetings.

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course firstly wherever possible in person and additionally by letter. We will give students 30 days' notice when we need to make material changes to their course. We will give student opportunity to have 1:1 advice and guidance session with their personal tutor and an independent advisor. The students will be made aware of the College complaints procedure.