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COLLEGE

Student Protection Plan

2023 - 2024

Approved by: Board of Governors

Date of approval: 20/01/2023

Effective date: 20/01/2023

Next review date: 20/04/2024

- OFS approved this plan on 5th April 2019
- Liaised with the Buckinghamshire New University on 9th July 2018
- Consultation: with Student Union and Student Representative Committee on 19th July 2018
- The document is published on: www.mrcollege.ac.uk
- The document was brought to students' and staff's attention via email
- Reviewed Annually: Next review date is April 2024

1. The Purpose

1.1. The document has been developed to assure current and future students and the Office of Students (OFS) that the college has appropriate arrangements in place to protect the quality and continuation of study for its students in case of non-continuation of courses.

1.2. This plan has been made available to our staff and all our current and potential students.

1.3. The college has taken reasonable steps to ensure approved course programmes are run without variations. However, the college is prepared for unforeseen changes and is ready to protect its learners when required.

2. Our Commitment

2.1. The college is committed to consulting with the student body about planned programme changes before the implementation. Any impact on students will always be considered when deciding to proceed with any changes.

2.2. The college is committed to delivering the news about any change transparently and openly.

2.3. The college is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure that any decision to change programmes or modules (unless insignificant) will not be implemented in the same academic year as the year in which the decision was taken.

2.4. If a decision is taken to change the delivery location, the college will ensure that the change will not occur until the start of the next academic year. In such an instance, the college undertakes to keep the location within 10 miles radius of the current campuses.

2.5. The college aims to avoid changing programmes or modules close to the start of the academic year. If such changes occur, the college commits to informing prospective and continuing students within five working days of the day when the decision was taken.

2.6. In the very unlikely event of the closing of a programme, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure that current students are not affected and are able to complete their studies.

2.7. The college is committed to supporting the students if any programmes are discontinued and will take necessary action to transfer them to other courses or to another provider.

2.8. The college is committed to publishing any significant changes, including those outlined above, via the college website, email/ SMS within five working days of the decision date. All relevant students will be invited to attend a college meeting to discuss the changes. The Welfare Officer will be assigned to contact any students who report having special needs or circumstances that require extra support.

2.9. The college is committed to providing all necessary guidance to the students. The students are also informed that they can seek independent advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Welfare Officer will help the students with special needs or special circumstances make appointments.

3. Assessment of risks to the continuation of students' courses and the likelihood of these risks crystallise

3.1. The college understands the need to have strong internal controls (IC) to ensure that all legal and regulatory requirements and the relevant policies and procedures at the college are met. The college has an Internal Audit Committee (IAC), which is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of internal controls and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The IAC reviews all departments and must implement any recommendations for improvements issued by the Committee and approved by the Board of Governors.

3.2. The college prepares five-year financial forecasts every year for its strategic planning and to assure its stakeholders.

3.3. The college reported total revenue of £8.470 million for the financial year ended 31st August 2022. The financial liquidity at the end of the financial year 2022 was 205 days. The liquidity remains sufficient to ensure smooth business operations. Therefore, the college believes that the risk of institutional financial failure is very low.

3.4. In preparing its annual budget, the college considers the approximate total refund and compensation amount. This has been a regular procedure for years. The college has a safety buffer fund for any unforeseen circumstances every year.

3.5. By effectively managing its resources, the college can demonstrate a robust financial position with a healthy surplus transferred annually to reserves. The college maintains a Risk Register to identify all major risks, their impact and their chance of occurrence.

3.6. The risk that one or more college campuses will close is very low. The college has the experience and a good track record and experience of running its business and managing academic programmes effectively.

3.7. The chance that the college decides to transfer some courses to its other campuses is low. The impact on students would be low if such a decision were taken because all Mont Rose College campuses are within a one-mile radius. Furthermore, before deciding, the college would first consult with the students affected by a change and receive their feedback in writing. If the change is likely to affect any student adversely, they will be advised to refer to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy (<https://mrcollege.ac.uk/mrc-policies/> to check if they qualify for compensation.

3.8. The college recognises that there is a risk that some students' needs will differ from others due to their personal characteristics or circumstances; therefore, applying the same solution to all affected students is impossible. For this reason, the college has staff who can handle students with special needs or circumstances individually. (Refer to the welfare policy at (<https://mrcollege.ac.uk/mrc-policies/> for details)

3.9. The risk of course discontinuation is low as these types of decisions form part of the Strategic Plan. The aim will always be to allow the affected students to complete their courses.

3.10. The risk of discontinuation because of insufficient enrolments is low as the college prepares marketing and recruitment plans well in advance. This preparation includes the analysis of the demand for courses. If demand for some courses reduces, the college will consider this when making the annual review of strategic plans and financial forecasts.

3.11. The risk that the college exits the market is very low. The college's strategy is to expand its operations. The financial standing indicates that the college will not change its position.

3.12. The college has a strong team and succession plans for key staff members. Staff churn is therefore perceived to be low risk.

3.13. The risk that the college loses the right to deliver programmes is low, either because of losing a specific course designation or sub-contractual arrangements. The college policy is to work openly, reliably and transparently to ensure stable and strong business relationships. Maintaining a strong financial position and excellent working relationships with a partner university and relevant professional accrediting bodies ensure that the college will continue to operate for the foreseeable future.

3.14. If any of the above risks crystallise, the following policies/procedures will apply. Their detailed versions are available at <https://mrcollege.ac.uk/mrc-policies/>

- Student Protection Plan
- Refunds and Compensation Policy
- Transfer Policy
- Internal Control Procedures Ensuring the Effectiveness of the Student Protection Plan (internal Policy)
- Welfare Policy (internal Policy)

4. The measures that the college has put in place to mitigate the risks Measures to address changes to programme content or programme closure

4.1. The Academic/Quality Assurance Committee might occasionally decide to approve changes to the course modules or assessments to improve the quality of provision or, if so, instructed by the accrediting body or Partner University. The college will take all reasonable steps to implement the required changes at least two months before the course. The students will be informed about the change and invited to raise any concerns/comments on it within five working days of the decision's decision.

4.2. Though very unlikely, if the decision is taken to discontinue a course, the college will close the programme to new entrants and apply for a 'teach out' designation for all continuing students. The college will retain the funds required to 'teach out' the current students if needed.

4.3. If, for any reason, some students prefer to transfer either to another course or a provider, the college will offer the options:

- Transfer to another course within the institution
- Transfer to a modified version of the course within the institution
- Transfer to another provider

4.4. The college will try finding an alternative course with another provider if the student prefers that.

4.5. If the student selects the option to transfer to another course or another provider after the first two weeks from the start of the course, following the change or cancellation of the course, the student will be advised to arrange a student loan accordingly, and the college finance team will assist the student in this regard. (Ref. Mont Rose College Student Transfer Policy) .The college's Admissions and Finance departments will provide all required advice to the students based on their individual circumstances. (Ref. Mont Rose College Student Transfer Policy)

4.6. Suppose any students with special needs or circumstances are affected. In that case, the Welfare Officer and the admissions and finance department staff will be engaged to find the right solution for the student.

4.7. If the student is affected adversely because of the above change, they will refer to the college Refund and Compensation Policy to check the eligibility for financial compensation.

Measures to address the risk of campus closure/ relocation

4.8. Following the requirements of HE regulatory bodies, the risk of campus closure will be monitored through the college's Risk Strategy. Suppose the decision to close the campus is taken. In that case, the college will refer to internal control procedures ensuring the effectiveness of the Student Protection Plan and follow it to ensure gradual closure. Hence, the students can complete their courses at the college. If this is not possible, the students will be transferred to other campuses running the same programmes or other institutions. The decisions will be taken after consulting the students.

4.9. To improve the quality of students' experience or mitigate any risks due to health and safety, the college may see it necessary to close the campus or relocate. In such

cases, the course timetables would be revised so that effective teaching can occur at available facilities. All stakeholders will be consulted accordingly before the implementation of the change.

4.10. If a decision is taken to relocate, the college undertakes to move to a location within a 10-mile radius from the current location, transfer all programmes and help the affected students arrange alternative travelling routes/ means.

4.11. Suppose the decision is taken to close the campus without relocation. In that case, the college undertakes to transfer the programmes to its other campuses in Redbridge and help the affected students arrange alternative travelling routes/ means.

4.12. Suppose any students with special needs or special circumstances are affected. In that case, the Welfare Officer will be engaged with the student services and finance department staff to find the right solution for the student.

4.13. If the student is affected adversely because of the above change, they will refer to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy to check the eligibility for financial compensation.

Measures to address the risk of de-designation

4.14. In the improbable event of the college's specific course designation being withdrawn or suspended, the college will refer to its Internal Control Procedures, ensuring the effectiveness of the Student Protection Plan and take the following actions:

- The college will appeal the decision or reapply for designation.
- The college will use the sub-contractual agreement with Buckinghamshire New University and transfer the students to their sub-contracted courses.
- Suppose any programme cannot be transferred to the Partner University. In that case, the college may apply for the designation to 'teach out' the affected students to continue and access the funding until they complete their programmes.
- If the 'teach out' designation is not granted, the college will help students transfer to other providers who offer these studies programmes if that is what the student desires. The college will financially compensate students if they suffer demonstrable financial loss because of the disruption of their studies.

4.15. De-designation is unlikely to affect current students practically. At the same time, new applicants would also be unlikely to be affected as their loans could be transferred

to the Partner University as per the MRC's agreement or to another provider if so agreed with the students.

4.16. If any special needs students are affected, the Welfare Officer will be engaged along with the student services and finance departments' staff to find the right solution for the student.

4.17. If the student is affected adversely because of the above change, they will refer to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy to check the eligibility for financial compensation.

Measures to address the risk of withdrawal from the agreement with the Partner University

4.18. The college has a sub-contractual agreement with Buckinghamshire New University. If the University decides to withdraw its sub-contractual agreement for any reason, then the University's own Student Protection Plan would become effective for students registered in its programmes. The University ensures that it has a contractual commitment from its educational partners to 'teach out' their current students or to offer an alternative programme. An exception to this would be where concern over quality and standards has been identified. In such a case, the University would take appropriate action to monitor through its Partnership Board.

4.19. If the University decides to withdraw the agreement, the college will approach other universities to obtain the sub-contractual agreement for the current and new programmes.

4.20. The students will receive all required advice and support from the college's Student Services team regarding the continuation of their programmes. They would be offered the following options:

- Completing their courses under Buckinghamshire New University
- Transferring to a course provided by another University
- Transferring to another University (if a student prefers it)

4.21. The college will liaise with the students. According to their preferences, it will help them transfer to another provider smoothly, requesting transcripts promptly and liaising with the relevant University on the student's behalf.

4.22. Suppose any special needs or exceptional circumstances students are affected. In that case, the Welfare Officer will be engaged with the staff from the admissions and finance departments to find the right solution for the student.

4.23. If the student is affected adversely because of the above change, they will refer to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy to check the eligibility for financial compensation.

Measures to address the risk of market exit

4.24. In the very unlikely event of a decision being taken to close the college, the college will refer to Internal Control Procedures Ensuring the Effectiveness of Student Protection Plan

The following will apply:

- The college undertakes to teach the students until the end of the academic year.
- The college will work to place the students for the following year of their course (if not completed) with another provider for the new academic year.

4.25. If any special needs students are affected, the Welfare Officer will be engaged with the student services and finance department staff to find the right solution for the student.

4.26. If the student is affected adversely because of the above change, they will refer to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy to check the eligibility for financial compensation.

Measures to address the risk of disruption due to the loss of a key staff member

4.27. The college comprehends the risk of relying on one resource person; therefore, a succession plan is developed for senior staff members. The plan aims to ensure that every key staff member is covered by another staff member with the appropriate skills and experience to cover the risk.

4.28. Continuous training is provided to staff to ensure that there will be no disruptions to the quality of services provided.

4.29. The employment contract with the college requires employees to provide at least four weeks' notice. If a teaching staff member leaves between academic sessions, the

college has the provision for continuous coverage. Data Bank was developed to provide all lecture notes and handouts to new staff members. The college also uses 'jobs.ac.uk' and 'indeed' to recruit new staff members.

Measures to address the risk of disruption due to an industrial action

4.30. Though this event is improbable, the college will continuously work if the risk crystallises, ensuring that all normal operations are in place.

4.31. The college will take appropriate actions to minimise disruption by ensuring the teaching schedule is unaffected.

Measures to address the risk of Tier 4 licence suspension

4.32. The college has no international students enrolled at the moment. In these circumstances, suspending the Tier 4 licence will not affect our current students.

4.33. If the college initiates admitting international students and somehow revokes the Tier4 sponsor license, the college will help the affected students switch to another institution.

Measures to address the risk of Pearson's centre removal

4.34. Though very unlikely, if Pearson decides to close our centre for any reason, the normal procedure will be to inform the students about the change within five working days.

4.35. The students' achievement records would be uploaded on the Pearson portal within five working days, allowing the institution where the student transferred to access the data and arrange their continuation from the point they stopped at the college.

Measures to protect the student in case of other internal and external risks

4.36. The college has a Disaster Recovery Plan, which covers internal and external risks (e.g. acts of terrorism, damage to buildings and equipment etc.). These risks are unlikely to crystallise, though the college has relevant procedures in place.

5. Monetary compensation schemes

5.1. If any decision is taken by the college that results in disruption of studies and the affected students are not able to transfer to another course within the institution or to another institution due to special needs, or if the transfer results in a financial loss to the students, they may be eligible for financial compensation. The students will be referred to the college's Refund and Compensation Policy to check their eligibility for financial compensation.

Procedure

5.2. The affected students will be contacted via post within five working days, providing the details of the change and giving instructions and information about the claim process and eligibility criteria.

5.3. The students must be able to demonstrate that the change resulted in a financial loss.

5.4. All claims will be assessed based on the student's individual circumstances, considering the student's eligibility for compensation and the amount of compensation.

5.5. The Welfare Officers will be informed if any of the affected students have special needs or disabilities. They will offer their assistance in making claims within five working days. This information will also be on the college website guiding the affected students with special needs to contact the Welfare department if required.

5.6. After the assessment, eligible students will be paid financial compensation within five working days as per the college's Refund and Compensation policy.

6. The Partner University's reassurance for students studying at Mont Rose College:

Buckinghamshire New University provides the following reassurance for its students studying through a sub-contractual arrangement with a partner:

'In the event that a Partner college becomes unable for whatever reason to continue to provide the programme to each student in the manner and to the standard which the student and we might reasonably expect, the University is committed to ensuring that each student is able to continue with their programme to the natural conclusion of their studies with the minimum of disruption. The options open to the University in such a scenario depend largely upon the individual circumstances of the Partner but would include: providing direct teaching and support services to students at the Partner's

teaching premises, securing appropriate teaching accommodation in the appropriate location for such teaching; arranging the transfer of students to study at a University campus on the same or very close programme, or transferring students to such a programme at another HEI.'

7. Policy Review and Monitoring

7.1. The Academic/Quality Assurance Committee reviews the Student Protection Plan annually. The college engages the student body every year to participate in the review process.

7.2. The college's Audit Committee monitors that the Student's Protection Plan is clearly understood and ready to be actioned if a material change is triggered.

8. Complaints

If the students are not satisfied with how the Student Protection Plan is implemented, they can refer to the college's Complaints Policy and Procedures, available on our website:

<https://mrcollege.ac.uk/mrc-policies/>