

Provider's name: Bexhill College

Provider's UKPRN: 10000670

Legal address:
Bexhill College
Penland Road
Bexhill on Sea
East Sussex
TN40 2JG

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: louisedavison@bexhillcollege.ac.uk

Student protection plan for the period 2021-2022

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 that Bexhill College is unable to operate and continue teaching existing students is very low. Our latest financial statements (2019-2020) show a strong financial performance. The total turnover in 2019-2020 was £10,899,000. Its total assets are £18,042,000 with Total Net Assets of £12,248,000. With these figures in mind, Bexhill College believes that the risks of institutional financial failure is very low and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has rated our financial position as 'Outstanding'. Therefore, the College believes we have financial resilience to be able to continue to offer courses to students.

The risk of a course or programme cancellation at the start of an academic year is moderate as the courses are new and we need to build viable numbers. This may occur if the minimum number of students to enhance the student experience are not recruited or in situations where a strategic decision is made to discontinue a course or programme.

The risk of not being able to deliver whole courses or programmes due to staffing or resource issues is low. Each curriculum area has staff with a range of skills, experience and expertise that ensures students receive a positive experience. Each curriculum area has contingency plans in place to mitigate the impact of any loss of specific skill sets that are dependent on only one member of staff. Each area is also well resourced with specialist equipment and investment in these areas is on-going, with opportunities to upgrade these available each year through the College's budget planning process.

There may be specific circumstances where programmes or modules are materially changed, withdrawn, suspended or partially delivered. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Changes as a result of a review of the HE programmes as part of strategic planning processes and governance
- Disruption due to events beyond our control such as fire, flood, pandemic or other disaster
- Unexpected changes in staff members impacting on specialist delivery

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

In the event of insufficient student recruitment of viable student numbers, the students will be kept informed of the situation and the College will ensure that there is a minimal impact on students, ensuring appropriate procedures for course closure are followed. Potential students will be supported to find alternative provision locally.

If programmes of modules are to be materially changed, withdrawn or suspended as a result of a review, this will be completed in line with relevant procedures which include notifying and consulting with affected students. To mitigate the risks, specific actions will be taken including:

- Seeking to recruit new staff where programmes or modules are at risk of withdrawal due to appropriate staff expertise
- In situations where a decision is made to discontinue a course or programme, the College is committed to teaching out those courses or programmes and offers to new entrants will cease to be made.

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

Bexhill College's Refund and Compensation Policy (HE 3) includes the refund of tuition fees and other relevant costs to our students including compensation when necessary in the event that we are no longer able to preserve continuation of study. The policy covers ;

- refunds for students in receipt of tuitions fee loan from the Student Loans Company.
- refunds for students who pay their own tuition fees.
- refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor.
- the payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course.
- commitments to honour student bursaries.
- compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study.
- compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider.

The College generates detailed cash flow forecasts on a monthly basis. The budget process allows for variation in the cash flow cycle due to unforeseen circumstances. This, along with appropriate insurance, is sufficient to provide refunds and compensation if necessary. Our HE provision is a small cohort so that we could provide the compensation for our HND students should we be in a position to no longer preserve continuation of study on one or more of our HE courses.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

The College's Student Protection Plan will be made available to current and prospective students on the College's website and internally on the student portal. In addition, it is drawn to students attention in the College's Higher Education Student Learners Agreement which is provided at the offer stage and signed by the student to accept their place. It is also referred to as part of the induction programme.

Bexhill College will continue to ensure that all academic and support staff involved in HE provision are aware of the implications of consumer protection compliance in general and the content of the student protection plan through; the HE Board, curriculum planning meetings, HE staff training / mentoring and through procedures for course modification, and provision of new courses or the closure of programmes. This will include:

- publication on staff portal
- inclusion in policy and process documents for course changes and closure
- inclusion in relevant staff training activities.
- Explanation of how staff will work with their current students in the development of plans to ensure that they are living documents that are reviewed and updated appropriately as any risk assessment changes.

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis via the College's management and Governance structures. This includes review through the HE Board to which the lead student representative is invited as appropriate for Policy reviews. The lead student representative represents the interests of all students as they meet with student representatives for each course and year group. The lead student representative attends the HE Curriculum Board regularly to formally provide the voice student contribution.

Every registered student will be informed through college consultation of any major changes or variations to courses such as mode of delivery, no later than six weeks of the term preceding the term in which the change or variation shall take place. In the case of changes due to circumstances beyond the College's control (e.g. illness, sudden departure or unexpected death of key staff), registered students will be informed as soon as practically possible. In the unlikely event that our Student Protection Plan needs to be implemented, Bexhill College has the following arrangements in place to ensure that as far as possible students that are affected by the changes are notified and supported to meet their individual needs and preferences. Bexhill College will:

- Inform students if there is to be any material changes to their course by letter and email. Ensure that key personnel are informed and available to support the different needs and preferences of students affected by any material change.
- Give students that are affected by a course closure a minimum of 28 days' notice with clear guidance about our support, information and guidance plans in place.
- Invite affected students to a meeting with key senior management responsible for HE at a convenient place and time for open discussion relating to any material change to their courses.
- Publicise the proposed meeting details on the student portal and email the students effected to maximise opportunities for students to attend.
- Complete and publish minutes taken at the meeting after they have been checked by the lead student representative to confirm they are fair and accurate before publishing these on the college's student portal.
- Work closely with other local providers of HE to identify and secure possible alternative courses for which our students can transfer if required ensuring students affected by the material changes to their courses are supported so transfer can be as seamless as possible
- Consider possible different needs of different groups of students sharing particular protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) For example, if a course that had a large cohort of mature students changed location considering, there might be a larger impact for example on travel implications or caring responsibilities and so this would be taken into account.
- In the event that students wish to complain about the way in which we implement our plan they will be sign posted to Bexhill College's complaints policy.