

Blackburn University Centre (BUC) Student Protection Plan 2021/22

Blackburn College

UKPRN: 10000747

Blackburn College's University Centre is one of the largest College-Based Higher Education providers within the North-West of England. Our mission is to transform students' lives and our community through outstanding education, training and support. We evidence our success in that mission by having 81% of our full-time undergraduate students in *relevant* graduate employment or post-graduate study within 15 months of completion (Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020). This has been achieved through a student-centred approach and by successfully fostering excellent relationships with local and regional partners and employers. This results in a curriculum that meets students' needs, as well as local and regional demands, to provide high quality work experience for students and apprentices. We deliver specialist, bespoke training as well as Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Professional Qualifications, all of which equip the workforce with job relevant skills that match the current employment market.

Our University Centre provides a diverse Higher Education offer, which includes Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees, Higher Level and Degree-Level Apprenticeships, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, a Certificate in Education, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education and Master's Degree. The Higher Education offer operates with three University partnerships. We are an Associate College of Lancaster University, who award approximately 85% of our degrees, and hold partnership arrangements with the University of Central Lancashire and the University of South Wales. This high-quality, collaborative network ensures we can support you to achieve your ambitions.

Furthermore, we are continuing to enhance our qualifications through accreditation with Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). These include the British Psychological Society (BPS), British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and Skills for Care, which are either already in place or in progress. This professional recognition adds significant value to our qualifications, as students are able to achieve their award and accreditation. This enhances their options for meaningful progression into post-graduate study and employment, as well as impacting positively on the reputation of our Higher Education offer.

The Student Protection Plan is part of our mandatory and ongoing quality assurance under the Office for Students regulatory framework for all English providers of Higher Education (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>). Here we detail the processes and procedures we have in place to assure the quality and continuation of your chosen programme. Following the national guidelines, if a risk is evidenced as low, we have not included additional information as this is not necessary.

The Student Protection Plan covers all of our students in Blackburn University Centre regardless of subject, level and mode of study or awarding partner.

Section 1 details our assessment of risk to the quality and continuation of your programme of study, the evidence for that assessment and the plans we have in place to ensure we reduce that risk and can provide ongoing support, if required.

Section 2 details information regarding the policy we have in place at the College relating to student financial arrangements in the unlikely event we cannot preserve the quality or continuation of your programme of study.

Section 3 details how we will communicate with applicants, current students and staff regarding this plan and how we will revise it periodically to ensure it is up-to-date

Section 1:

Quality and Continuation of Study: assessment of risk and plans in place to mitigate that risk, if the risk is assessed as likely to arise			
#	Area	Risk Assessment and Evidence	Plans to mitigate the risk, where the risk is reasonably likely to arise
1	Financial: the risk that the College is no longer able to operate or closes completely	<p>Very low.</p> <p>We have been assessed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as having an outstanding Financial Health Score which means that the College is able to support future investment in its facilities and provision.</p> <p>The Governing body have a clear Strategic Plan for the ongoing development of the College, including the University Centre. These plans and our performance are scrutinised by a number of external and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, the Office for Students and ESFA.</p>	None required.

2	<p>Quality Assurance: the risk that the College is no longer able to validate degrees with its existing awarding partners (Lancaster University, University of Central Lancashire and University of South Wales)</p>	<p>Low.</p> <p>We have strong and long-term arrangements with our awarding partners which was further bolstered through successful completion of a five-year Partnership Review in April 2021 with Lancaster University and the University of Central Lancashire.</p> <p>Across all partnerships, we continually monitor the quality and suitability of our HE provision to ensure that it meets the needs of industry and future-focused in its design. To achieve this, we work collaboratively with our existing awarding partners and have regular, scheduled contact throughout the year to provide mutual assurance on the quality of each other's provision and the organisation and management of that provision. In this way, any quality matters can be addressed immediately without concern for increased risk.</p> <p>With each of our awarding partners we have a contractual agreement signed by the Vice Chancellor of the relevant University and Principal and Chief Executive, which confirms each party's commitment to supporting students should any risk of programme closure become apparent. To date, the College has not had to invoke such plans.</p>	None required.
3	<p>Academic: the risk that the College can no longer deliver a particular programme or subject area to our students; the College is no longer able to</p>	<p>Low.</p> <p>We operate an annual business planning cycle which takes into account good practice from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). This planning process looks ahead to the following 5 years of provision for our full/part-time degree provision, assesses the currency of our programmes and makes recommendations as to any required changes. This is a key process which ensures the College maintains its success in Graduate Employment and is providing a quality experience to</p>	<p>Additional reassurance for students:</p> <p>There is minimal risk that a programme would close once delivery had commenced, however the following processes are documented in our partnership agreements with our University partners:</p>

	<p>deliver one or more programmes to our students (including part-time students).</p>	<p>our students, communities and global economy.</p> <p>Proposed changes are agreed through our Governance structure and formally with our University Partners (section 3.4 and 3.5 of the Blackburn College Academic Regulations). The plan takes into account plans for students who are currently on programmes which require changes to bring it up-to-date in terms of content and structure.</p> <p>During our strategic planning processes, it is usual to re-assess programmes which are no longer relevant or popular with applicants with a view to removing them for further recruitment in the coming year. Where this occurs, we have formal, contractual agreements with our University Partners to continue to teach the students who are already on those programmes and as such it is highly unlikely that a programme would close once delivery had commenced. However, we recognise that programme closure may be of particular concern to applicants and students and we have therefore provided additional reassurance on the processes we already have in place to mitigate this risk.</p>	<p>The need to work collaboratively to ensure that students can complete their studies or be supported to transfer to an alternative pathway, programme or provider.</p> <p>This means that we would collaborate with our partner through either our formal Partnership Management Group or our individual Link Partnership Managers to produce an agreed plan for all relevant students to ensure your studies can be completed. This is highly likely to be an agreement that the College can continue to teach the degree until all students have completed the programme. On the rare occasion that this is not a possibility, the College would negotiate other suitable options with the partner.</p> <p>If no such suitable alternative were available, the College would consider a refund of tuition fees, as per the Tuition Fee Policy for the relevant year of study. The College has cash reserves, which would be sufficient to provide refunds and/or reimbursements in line with our policy for students identified as at risk of being unable to complete their programme of study.</p>
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<p>4</p>	<p>Management: the risk that the College can no longer deliver material components of one or more of our programmes due to staffing and/resources.</p>	<p>Low.</p> <p>The College and its collaborative University partners ensure there are adequate and appropriate staffing and resources in place in relation to the numbers of students enrolled. This is checked through annual or semester processes to confirm staffing is in place to each party's satisfaction.</p> <p>For students with additional support needs, support is provided based on assessed need. In the unusual event that capacity to provide specialist support becomes an issue, the College has access to additional staff and external assessors that are approved to provide appropriate support as and when needed.</p> <p>However, we recognise that sickness/accidents can occur and have therefore provided additional reassurance on the processes we already have in place to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>With regards to physical resources, assurance again is evidenced by our agreements with our University Partners. In addition, the College has dedicated IT support to maintain technical equipment and through the annual Business Planning process, we ensure IT facilities and equipment are replaced periodically. Subject-specialist resources, such as those within the Art Studios, are monitored and maintained by Facilitators. As we are a large College, we have duplicated resources in our Further Education provision, which could be used in an emergency situation.</p> <p>Finally, the College has a Business Continuity Plan which it revises annually to ensure that in the event of an unplanned change in circumstances or a natural disaster such as flooding, we can continue to provide our Educational and support services.</p>	<p>Additional reassurance for students:</p> <p>The College has the following processes in place to provide appropriate cover for staff absence should the need arise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The re-scheduling of the session if appropriate due to a short-term absence; • Recruitment of short-term lecturers with specialist skills knowledge; • Capacity within workloads to allow for short-term cover; • Transfer of staff from other areas of the College as appropriate
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Section 2 details information regarding the policy we have in place at the College relating to student financial arrangements in the unlikely event we cannot preserve the quality or continuation of your programme of study.

Our Tuition Fee Policy covers consideration of a tuition fee refund in the unlikely event that we cannot continue to provide your programme of study or we cannot find you a suitable alternative programme or provider. The Tuition Fee Policy is available in full [here](#).

The College has substantial cash reserves which would be sufficient to provide refunds and/or reimbursements in line with our policy for students identified as at risk of being unable to complete their programme of study.

Section 3 details how we will communicate with applicants, current students and staff regarding this plan and how we will revise it periodically to ensure it is up-to-date.

3.1 Communication with Staff:

The Student Protection Plan will be shared with staff through publication on SharePoint. For academics and support staff with a remit for HE provision, the plan will be presented and discussed as part of the mandatory staff development programme organised through the Organisational Development Team. Where updates are made, this will be included in the annual staff training on Academic Regulations.

The Blackburn University Centre Academic Regulations and related policies and procedures are approved by our Academic Board, and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Team are responsible for any amendments delegated to the College by our University Partners. Furthermore, the College's Development, Review and Approval Panel meets regularly to agree any changes to validated provision. Through this existing Governance structure we will amend our Programme Closure/Approval processes to ensure the Student Protection Plan forms part of that process.

3.2 Communication with Students:

The approved version of this plan will be published on the College website and be uploaded onto Moodle. In addition, reference to the Office for Students, this plan and our Complaints and Compliments Procedure will be standard items at induction sessions and within our standard Programme Handbooks, which are updated annually.

3.3 Reviewing our Student Protection Plan:

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually and approved by Academic Board, following consultation with student representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Mid-term and annual reports on our regulatory frameworks and risks are required by our Governors through the Learning and Quality Committee, and this plan will form part of those reports and as part of its ongoing review.

3.4 Invoking the Student Protection Plan:

In the event the College needs to take relevant action from this plan, we will send targeted information to you, if you are affected, via email and/or text (as appropriate given the nature

of the event). Full cooperation with the Students' Union will ensure you as an individual student are represented impartially, should you require additional support and representation. Should we need to close a programme before you are able to complete it, we will announce this to you as soon as is feasible and agree a closure date for that programme and work through the plans in this document to support you to complete your programme albeit in another institution. You will be given a minimum of 2 calendar months' notice of closure unless the reason for closure poses such a risk to staff and students that immediate action is required.