



## Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College

UKPRN: 10007469

### Higher Education (HE) Student Protection Plan (SPP)

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#### HE Student Protection Plan

Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College is committed to help you achieve the best from your academic studies and to prepare you for your future career.

However, there may be unforeseen circumstances, often outside the College's control which result in changes having to be made to your modules/units or programmes of study. This document is designed to make clear the arrangements for consulting with students when changes occur. These processes should ensure continuity of studies and minimise any potential negative impacts on students affected by changes.

Mechanisms are in place to ensure that in the highly unlikely event of the College and being unable to complete delivery of the course of study as offered then students will be able to transfer to other institutions to complete their studies. Should this not prove possible (for example through a student's inability to move educational venue) then mechanisms are also in place to ensure that they would receive a refund of fees.

The overall goal of this Plan is to protect the student and the student's investment in study and promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive and supportive environment for our learners, staff and others closely associated with us. We support the rights of individuals to be treated fairly and with respect.

Harassment and bullying can cause serious harm to health and well-being and can ruin an individual's chances of success both in College and in their future career.

Any incidents of bullying or harassment will be regarded extremely seriously and can grounds for disciplinary action, which may include expulsion or dismissal.

The Student Protection Plan will be:

- reviewed annually
- made available to all students and prospective students via the website

In particular:

- applicants will be made aware of this plan at point of offer
- current students will be signposted to the plan as part of induction/re-enrolment
- links to the plan will be available within handbooks
- the plan will be available via the staff intranet and student VLE's

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# HE Student Protection Plan

## Purpose

The Office for Students as regulator for register of higher education providers requires us to publish a Student Protection Plan (SPP). This Plan outlines how we propose to protect your interests should events crystallise that pose a risk to you continuing your studies.

The plan sets out the measures which are in place to:

- mitigate the impact on you in the event of the failure of the College,
- deliver continuity of study,
- manage the risks we can foresee

and sets out in advance

- what you can expect from us as a regulated provider in the event we need to activate our SPP to support you.

The plan has four elements:

1. An assessment of the possible risks facing the continuation of studies and the measures in place to mitigate the likely risks identified.
2. The measures in place to protect student continuity of study should the college no longer be able to offer any of its degree level programmes in any capacity.
3. The policy in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that the College is no longer able to preserve continuation of study.
4. How these measures will be communicated to you.

## 1. Risk to Continuity of Study and Mitigation Measures

Here we assess the range, and likelihood of occurrence, of risks to the continuation of study for our students:

### Financial Failure of the Institution (Low Risk)

The College maintains a strong asset base to support its activities. The merger of the two colleges (Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College) on 1 August 2024 had a clear purpose to secure the long term sustainability of FE and HE provision in Dorset.

The College has the following in place to mitigate the likelihood of financial failure:

- 1.1. Robust financial systems with ongoing budget and close to real time income/expenditure profile monitoring.
- 1.2. Close monitoring by the Senior Management Team to manage short term decision making and longer-term planning.
- 1.3. Business continuity plans covering estate and information technology, backed by insurance cover which includes disaster recovery assistance.

## **Specialist Staff Movement & Retirement (Moderate Risk)**

The risk that the College is unable to deliver material components of our programmes is moderate. However, this may happen under the following circumstances:

- long-term sickness,
- retirement,
- death or
- leaving the College

Where possible we will seek to mitigate the impact on the delivery of programmes as follows:

- 1.4. Assign responsibility to other current members of staff with appropriate skills.
- 1.5. Look to recruit externally where the HE provision does involve specialism from staff to deliver these elements and suitable replacements may not be immediately available. This is more likely with some of our Kingston Maurward campus courses due to the specialist nature of their programmes.
- 1.6. Efforts will be made to recruit new staff in identified areas. Particular emphasis is being placed on recruiting early career lecturers and tutors with the intention of them growing into more senior positions over time. A mentoring system is being developed to support early career workers featuring a combination of internal training and external mentoring. Staff recruitment processes can approve enhanced pay and conditions to encourage recruitment of specialists from industry.
- 1.7. Where possible move the module/unit to later in the academic year to allow time for recruitment of a suitable replacement.

## **Temporary Disruption due to unforeseen circumstances (Low Risk)**

- 1.8. Should a temporary disruption occur you will be contacted via your College email and VLE and will be given work that can be carried out during this period at home.
- 1.9. The College's Incident Management Policy covers actions affecting business continuity, such as damage to buildings or equipment or acts of terrorism.
- 1.10. The risk that the College would be unable to operate due to an adverse event affecting property is low. The College has multi-building campuses in Weymouth and Kingston Maurward.

## **Industrial Action Affecting Studies (Low Risk)**

We have established frameworks for consultation and negotiation with the recognised trade unions. We are highly committed to maintaining an effective employee relations culture and working with trade union colleagues to achieve reasonable solutions to matters that may arise from time to time therefore we would assess this as low risk. However, should industrial action occur we will seek to mitigate the disruption to your studies as follows:

- 1.11. Ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible.
- 1.12. Take reasonable steps to ensure that any disruption is minimised and that you are not as far as possible disadvantaged by the action.

## **Loss of accreditation (Low Risk)**

**1.13.** We consider this as low risk. The current risk to not be able to continue to deliver any Higher Education programmes is moderate. The recent merger has given access to a range of HEI partners and staff specialisms. However, if a programme loses its accreditation from a professional, statutory or regulatory body, we will consider measures to protect student experience, such as:

- offering students the chance to move to another programme;
- delivering a modified version of the same programme;
- providing assistance to students to switch to a different provider who has the relevant accreditation.

## **Suspension of Tier 4 Sponsor Licence (Low Risk)**

**1.14.** In the event of suspension of Tier 4 Sponsor status the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resultant disruption to those services affected by:

- working with the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) to allow existing students to complete their year of studies;
- allowing you to enrol and commence your studies, if you are already in receipt of a visa based upon an allocated CAS from the College;
- offering you the opportunity to postpone your application pending the resolution of the suspension (if you have not already commenced your travel to the College).

## **Withdrawal of Designation (Low Risk)**

We would consider this as low risk. However, should the Office for Students (OfS) restrict or revoke the College's ability to deliver Higher Education programmes we will seek to mitigate disruption to you as follows:

**1.15.** We will work with the OfS to ensure:

- all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the resultant disruption to you;
- where possible changes are made in a transitional manner.

**1.16.** In the event of de-designation for 'Student Support' (where students would be unable to access statutory student finance) we will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to you, for example:

- work with the relevant funding bodies to allow you to complete your year of study/programme
- where the above is not possible, support you to transfer to an appropriate programme at another provider
- assist you by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of continuation of your studies

## **Institutional Closure (Low Risk)**

The merger of the two colleges (Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College) on 1 August 2024 had a clear purpose to secure the long term sustainability of FE and HE provision in Dorset. However, where we have no option than to cease operating, we would consider the following measures to mitigate the disruption to your student experience such as:

**1.17.** A range of measures to protect your experience and ensure continuity of study.

These might include:

- where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period that would allow you to complete their studies;
- where the above is not possible, supporting you to transfer to an appropriate programme at another provider;
- merger with another institution to maintain all or part of the College's current provision.

## **2. Risk of Failure to Deliver Qualifications (Moderate Risk)**

These events may be triggered by a situation such as (but not limited to) a strategic decision by the College to close a programme due to insufficient enrolment and programme take-up.

Under these circumstances then the following would be used to mitigate:

- 2.1.** If you have applied for a College programme, but have not yet enrolled, you will be notified (in accordance with UCAS deadlines where appropriate) in time for you to source an alternative suitable programme, where relevant, at the College or another HEI.
- 2.2.** We will provide you with support and advice in these circumstances to help signpost you to similar courses offered at the College or other colleges/HEI's in the region.
- 2.3.** If you are required to transfer programme, or move to another provider, there may be implications for your student finance arrangements. If you are affected you will be provided with advice and guidance based on this Plan, the HE Student Contract, the HE Refund and Compensation Policy taking account your individual circumstances.
- 2.4.** Where a decision has been made to withdraw a programme for new entrants or withdrawal by a partner HEI to validate the programme, the College under its terms of agreement with partner HEI's is obliged to 'teach out' students already enrolled on the programme to enable them to complete their award.
- 2.5.** Should a student choose to transfer course, or move to another institution the College Careers Advisors will provide impartial detailed advice and guidance based on individual circumstances.

### **Reducing Risk of Poor Recruitment on Programmes**

- 2.6.** The College is currently developing a new HE Marketing Strategy in light of the recent merger. We are committed to programming regular events raising awareness of HE across the campus as well as course specific advice and guidance for progression in to HE in order to minimise the likelihood of poor recruitment to our courses.
- 2.7.** Both campuses have a firm commitment to work with the Southern Universities Network as the local National Collaborative Outreach Programme to identify low participation students and use resources to raise awareness across its whole student cohort.
- 2.8.** The College has an ongoing strategy to revalidate programmes and develop new courses with current awarding bodies and HEI partners. The College is currently

partnered with Bournemouth University, University of Plymouth and the Open University as well as Pearson for delivery of HNC/HND courses.

### **3. Significant Material Change to Advertised Programmes (Low/Moderate Risk)**

Changes to programme content to ensure they are up to date and appropriate is a regular and normal activity which is often instigated by an awarding body. Where the College is aware of a likely change at the start of a recruitment cycle we will notify students of potential changes to content to manage expectations.

The College is committed to:

- Let you know as soon as possible;
- Providing you with advice and guidance on the proposed changes and the options available;
- Applying where relevant our HE Refund and Compensation Policy.

#### **Changes in Year to Programme Content (Low/Moderate Risk)**

The College will make every effort to deliver a course in accordance with the description and content originally published. However, from time to time it may be necessary to make changes to unit/module content. Should changes have to take place the College will ensure that changes are restricted to a minimum.

- 3.1.** We will communicate and work with you to ensure that the programme content is still acceptable.
- 3.2.** Should you wish to withdraw you will be offered reasonable support to transfer to another programme or provider.

### **4. Special Provision & Support for Students**

- 4.1.** Where appropriate risk assessments will take into account the diversity of our student population, including but not limited to physical disabilities, mental health conditions, and cultural backgrounds. Staff will collaborate with relevant support services to gather necessary information and expertise to adequately evaluate risks and their potential impact on different student groups.
- 4.2.** In line with the Equality Act 2010 the College will take reasonable steps to make adjustments to remove any barriers to study to students who have identified a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their educational journey. These adjustments are in relation to:
  - Assessments (exams, presentations etc) or fieldtrips
  - Physical barriers such as steps, classroom access
  - Use of auxiliary aids within the classroom setting
- 4.3.** We consider the diverse needs of our students and staff, ensuring that appropriate support and assistance can be provided during emergencies. The College has support services such as counselling and disability services who are readily available to address specific needs of students who may be impacted by a risk crystallising.
- 4.4.** The College is committed to promoting equality and diversity within its student body and staff. However, there is a moderate risk that on occasions based on legitimate justifications, such as the inability to meet specific requirements or safeguarding



concerns where the College cannot provide (or can no longer provide) a place for students. Where this happens the College will ensure that all actions taken align with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

- 4.5. When it is determined that the College is unable to recruit or teach a specific type of student, the decision-making process will be documented and supported by evidence. This may include consultation with relevant College staff, external experts, or professional bodies.
- 4.6. Where possible, the College will explore alternative provisions to accommodate the needs of students who fall within the identified category. This may involve providing online resources, or referring students to external organisations that can offer appropriate support.
- 4.7. The College can provide financial support through the Hardship Fund and advice and guidance to assist students with the support available through Student Finance.

## **5. Refund of Tuition Fees in the Event of Inability to Provide a Qualification**

- 5.1. The risk associated with the College being required to compensate students in the event of not being able to preserve continuation of study is low. The College has sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation.
- 5.2. The refund of fees in the event of the failure of the Centre or College is covered by the provisions of:
  - HE Student Contract
  - Fees Policy
  - Refund & Compensation Policy
- 5.3. These make clear the provisions which are in place to ensure that you will receive a refund of tuition fees and other relevant costs in the event of the College no longer able to preserve continuation of study.
- 5.4. The College Fees Policy is reviewed annually. It includes details of fees to be charged for each type of course together with its approach to refunds and can be found on the College website.
- 5.5. For the avoidance of doubt you are not able to obtain redress under both this Plan and the College HE Refund and Compensation Policy; in some instances, you may be given a choice between accepting redress under either this Plan or the Refund and Compensation Policy in which case they will be able to opt to accept redress under only one of this Plan or the Policy and not both.

## **6. Communication about the Student Protection Plan**

- 6.1. We will communicate with you about the Student Protection Plan (SPP) in the following ways on our website and via the VLE, we will provide copies within induction materials and it will be published on our website.
- 6.2. The SPP (and supporting policies) will be available on our website for prospective students to view and applicants will be directed to view it within our interview/offer paperwork.
- 6.3. The SPP will be reviewed annually by the HE Academic Board, which includes

student representation as well as link tutors from our partner HEIs and senior managers.

## 7. Responsibility

### 7.1. Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality

<b>Definitions:</b>	None.	<b>Who Needs to Know?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All College HE staff</li> <li>• HE Students</li> </ul>
<b>Related Policies and Procedures: Weymouth Campus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">HE Compensation &amp; Refund Policy</a></li> <li>• HE Student Contract</li> <li>• HE Students Complaints Policy</li> <li>• HE Study &amp; Wellbeing Policy</li> <li>• Fees Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding &amp; Child Protection Policy</li> <li>• Single Equality Scheme</li> <li>• Reasonable Adjustments Panel</li> </ul>	<b>Approval Date:</b>	November 2025
<b>Kingston Maurward Campus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE Admissions and Procedure</li> <li>• HE Refund and Compensation Policy</li> <li>• HE Student Contract/ Agreement</li> <li>• Views and Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Fees Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Equality Policy</li> <li>• Reasonable Adjustments Policy</li> </ul>		
<p><b>This policy was approved and adopted by:</b></p>   <p><b>Kate Wills</b> Interim Principal &amp; CEO</p>			