

DEGREE STUDIES AT WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE

STUDENT INFORMATION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose To ensure students' experiences are positive and that they have every opportunity to achieve the best academic outcomes from their studies. Events may occur which mean that unforeseen changes have to be made to learning and this policy is in place to support students during such times.

Scope This policy complies with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requiring degree providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests against situations of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure.

Principles:

1. The events considered by this policy may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to):

- a decision to close Degree Studies has been taken
- a strategic decision by Degree Studies to close a course, after applications have been received
- a decision has been taken not to run a course for the subsequent year
- the college is no longer able to deliver programmes in highly specialised areas
- the college is no longer able to deliver material components of our courses
- loss of partnership status with validating HEIs and/or direct funding status
- changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course, including loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies, e.g. Ofsted, PSRB, etc;
- disruption of Degree Studies activity (e.g. temporary disruption within term-time not covered by any of the above)
- industrial action by Degree Studies staff or third parties
- the unanticipated departure of key members of Degree Studies staff

Measures to Inform and Protect Students

2. West Suffolk College is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options.

3. All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the resultant disruption to those services and to affected students by, for example:

- offering affected students the chance to move to another course;
- delivering a modified version of the same course;
- providing assistance to affected students to switch to a different provider.

4. Where a student is required to transfer course or move to another institution there are likely to be implications for student finance arrangements. The College Student Finance Advisor will be notified of students affected in the event of any the above steps being taken. The Finance Advisor will contact affected students and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on their individual circumstances.

Significant Material Change

Closure of Degree Studies at West Suffolk College

Date	Author	Impact Ass.	Issue	Review Date	Quality App	Section	Page
May 18	Lisa Hunt		1	May 21			1

DEGREE STUDIES AT WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE

5. Institutional failure will be monitored through risk management in accordance HE regulatory bodies and any instance of this will be managed in accordance with College policies.

6. Where Degree Studies has no option, other than to close, it may consider measures such as those below to protect student experience:

- where possible, closing in a gradual way, over a period that would allow current enrolled students to complete their studies at the Institution;
- where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at validating partners of the College and (where appropriate financially) by compensating students where because of disruption to their studies they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss.

Institutional Closure of Part of the College

7. Where part or all of the campus is rendered unusable for activities involving students, the College, in consultation with relevant students, will typically consider:

- relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include hiring spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby);
- revising timetabling to allow all of the scheduled teaching to take part in the available facilities. This may include student contact sessions being held outside of normal college hours. Where such an approach is taken, appropriate consultation will normally be conducted with students, employers and other relevant stakeholders who may be affected; appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken;
- delivering programmes via alternative means, such as Distance Learning. Where such an approach is taken, the college will consider whether this is appropriate for enrolled students who would be affected.

Suspension of Course

8. Degree Studies has established and tested procedures in place of the event of suspension/closure of course. Where there is a material impact on the students, the effect will be mitigated by:

- communication with current students to provide assurance that they will not be adversely affected by the decision, and provide assurance that they are able to complete their studies at the Institution, or in the worst instance at the validating HEI;
- where possible, provision will be made to allow for the completion of studies where 'mitigated circumstances' have been presented;
- consultation with stakeholders who may be affected to ensure appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken;
- future applicants will be notified in accordance with UCAS deadlines, allowing time for students to source an alternative suitable programme (where relevant) at the College.

Inability of Degree Studies to deliver material components of the course

9. Degree Studies will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description applied to it in the prospectus for the academic year in which a student began their programme. However, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, to ensure the programme content is made available, to provide opportunity for successful achievement by students, the college will ensure that:

- necessary changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience, and affected students are notified and consulted with as appropriate;

Date	Author	Impact Ass.	Issue	Review Date	Quality App	Section	Page
May 18	Rachel Kirk		1	May 21			1

DEGREE STUDIES AT WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE

- it works with students to ensure the offer is still acceptable;
- where necessary it allows students the opportunity to withdraw from the programme or transfer to a programme with the validating HEI;
- where required students will be offered reasonable support to transfer to another programme at the college, or to another provider.

Loss of Partnership Status with Validating HEI and/or Direct Funding Status

10. In the event of loss of a partnership agreement or direct funding for its HE provision for Student Support purposes (resulting in the withdrawal of statutory student finance for its courses), the College will work with the funding and regulatory bodies to take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:

- ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to minimise the resultant disruption to affected students;
- ensuring that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner;
- working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme;
- where the above is not possible, supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers and, where appropriate, financially compensating students where they suffer demonstrable, material financial loss because of disruption to their studies;
- considering assistance for affected students by providing evidence/letters/statements in support of continuation of their studies;

Changes to Regulatory Framework Affecting Specific Course

Loss of accreditation

11. In the event of Degree Studies losing PSRB accreditation, it will consider measures to protect student experience, such as:

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

Disruption to University Activity

12. Where events result in term-time programme disruption, the University will normally consider whether it is practicable to make changes to programme delivery, rather than closing or suspending an affected programme.

13. Actions to minimise disruption may include:

- changes to the programme delivery location or method, which may include distance learning;
- changes to the staffing of a programme, for instance through a review of internal staff resources, including recruitment of area specialists, where appropriate;
- offering students the opportunity to transfer to an alternative programme;
- provision of reasonable support to students for accessing a programme run by another provider, including making arrangements for the transfer of credits and information about academic progress.

Date	Author	Impact Ass.	Issue	Review Date	Quality App	Section	Page
May 18	Rachel Kirk		1	May 21			1

DEGREE STUDIES AT WEST SUFFOLK COLLEGE

- in extreme cases the College relevant policy and Business Continuity Plan covers other actions affecting business continuity, such as acts of terrorism, damage to buildings or equipment and severe weather conditions.

Industrial Action

14. Degree Studies has established frameworks for consultation and negotiation with the recognised trade unions. It is 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.

15. Where industrial action does occur, the college will seek to:
- ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible;
 - take all reasonable steps to fulfil its responsibilities to students in ensuring that any disruption is minimised and students are not, as far as is possible to determine, disadvantaged by the action.

Unanticipated Departure of Key Members of Degree Studies Staff

16. Where possible the college will:
- seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant post(s) or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption;
 - where the University cannot avoid closing a programme, the policy as outlined in paragraph 7 will apply.

Feedback

17. Students wishing to provide feedback regarding the College's management of the process of change should follow the Degree Studies complaints procedure.

Date	Author	Impact Ass.	Issue	Review Date	Quality App	Section	Page
May 18	Rachel Kirk		1	May 21			1