

# STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

2019/20

## 1. Risks to continuation of study

The overall risk of the College being unable to operate is low as our financial position, as recently assessed by ESFA, is Good (March 2018). The College maintains a centralised risk register (4Risk) which includes detailed risk management and continuity plans across the following areas:

- Strategic
- Academic
- Business and commercial development
- Business facilities
- Business systems and Information Technology
- Disaster planning
- Finance
- Governance
- Human resources
- Marketing and communications
- Quality improvement

The Business Continuity Plan and 4Risk software includes detailed information regarding the mitigating actions for whole-campus disasters / outages along with a range of actions for implementation should an event such as this occur.

The senior leadership team have overall responsibility for the areas of risk management within their lines of reporting, and risk owners are required to review the existing controls and actions on a monthly basis.

The College's Risk Management Committee meets three times a year and reports directly to the Audit Committee which in turn reports at each Corporation Board meeting. Risks are managed through the 4Risk software which includes academic risks. The Audit Committee monitors all risks on a regular basis and produces an annual report for the Corporation on the work carried out during the year. The role of the Audit Committee, stated within their Terms of Reference, includes advising the Corporation on the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's assurance framework.

For Higher Education specifically, the risk that we would cease to deliver courses at our Newark campus is low as our strategic ambitions are to grow our provision at this campus in the future.

The risk that we are no longer able to deliver programmes in highly specialised areas, such as Acupuncture, Herbal Medicine and Sports Therapy, over the next three years is moderate. At present these specific areas are not subject to formal regulation and consequently there are changes made by the current professional bodies on a regular basis. Changes to professional standards impact on staff specialism, expertise and availability. At present the vast majority of staff delivering on these programmes holds full or part time contracts with the College, with a small number of specialist staff accessed through agency provision.

The risk that professional bodies may choose to withdraw course accreditation is low because we work closely with these organisations to align the curriculum to the standards required across the sector as part of a formal accreditation process. Mapping to the PSRB standards is an essential part of the course validation process in the first instance and this is monitored annually by the professional bodies in partnership with the course teams. The

monitoring and evaluation processes for all HE programmes are overseen by academic managers throughout the academic year and any areas for development are addressed as part of a continual cycle of quality assurance.

The risk that our partner institutions may choose to withdraw their validation arrangements is moderate, as these decisions are taken at a strategic level by partner institutions. The College successfully completed a partnership re-approval process with Bishop Grosseteste University in August 2017 which is valid until 2020. The partnership arrangements with the University of Hull are reviewed annually following a PQR (Partner Quality Enhancement Review); the College completed its first PQR successfully in February 2018 with a number of commendations received from the University panel. The partnership arrangements with the University of Lincoln are also renewed annually following a series of partnership liaison meetings held throughout the year. The partnership arrangements with the Open University are nearing completion and the first OU validated programmes are due to start in September 2018.

The risk that an employer may withdraw from supporting a higher or degree apprentice is low to moderate because there are numerous factors that may contribute to this situation, which are likely to be beyond the control of the College or the student. There is a robust and thorough recruitment process in place which must be fully completed prior to an apprentice commencing a programme of study with an employer. As part of this process the learner, the employer and the College all sign a learning agreement that clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of each party. Student Services are engaged where a student declares a disability and any individual arrangements are put into place prior to the commencement of study.

## **2. Measures in place to mitigate risks**

As with all of the Lincoln College campuses, we have business continuity insurance in place, and there are detailed plans set out for business continuity and disaster planning should there be an incident affecting the use of or access to facilities. For short term outages students would be supported to work remotely via the College VLE (Moodle) and for longer term issues an alternative campus would be utilised to enable taught sessions to go ahead. This may pose greater challenges to students who rely on public transport to get to College, but transport would be provided between campuses in order to mitigate this. For programmes validated by a partner institution the current partnership agreements outline a commitment from the validating institution to 'teach out' any students on programmes that could no longer be delivered by the College. Whilst this eventuality is highly unlikely, due to the multiple campuses available across the Lincoln College group, this arrangement is in place as part of the existing contractual agreements with our partner HEI's. Students would also be offered independent advice and guidance via a meeting with a member of the Guidance Team in order to explore a wider range of options, in the event of non-continuation at a Lincoln College campus. This would include provision at an alternative provider or institution.

If the College was unable to deliver courses within the specialised areas identified, as a result of staff shortage or changes to professional regulation, the following plans would be put into place. The College works hard to maintain strong working relationships with all of the professional bodies concerned, as well as a wide range of current employers, in order to maintain access to professional expertise should any changes be required to the current teaching staff teams. The College would seek to recruit suitably qualified individuals to deliver and support students across the programmes identified in order to maintain academic standards and to secure the long term viability of the course(s). In the event of changes to professional industry regulation the College would again work closely with the accrediting bodies, employers and our validating partners to make the necessary modifications to our academic programmes in order to maintain full industry accreditation and professional recognition. In the unlikely event that any specialised provision could not be continued the College would ensure that there are sufficient resources to 'teach out' any existing cohorts – this includes academic and support staff as well as physical resources and pastoral provision. Should any student wish to transfer to an alternative programme the College would support students to seek alternative provision, as would be the case in the event of any programme being discontinued. As outlined above, the College would continue to work closely with the relevant professional bodies and professionals in practice to ensure the availability of subject specialists as appropriate.

If a PSRB was to withdraw from a course accreditation arrangement the College would work closely with employers and industry professionals to maintain the vocational focus of the course in the first instance. Where appropriate and possible an alternative PSRB arrangement would be sought.

In the event of a validation agreement being terminated the College would continue to teach all students currently enrolled on the programme(s) identified for the duration of the validated programme schedule (e.g. 3 years full time). All provision for this delivery would remain unchanged and students would continue to be supported fully by

the College. The College would also consider the development of a new programme, in line with the College HE strategy and following extensive employer engagement and market research, in partnership with an alternative validating partner.

If an employer was unable to continue to support a higher or degree apprentice the following actions would be initiated:

- The College would offer full support, via assessors, lecturers and student services, to support the apprentice to re-locate into an alternative role. This may be within the same company.
- The College would support the apprentice to seek an alternative employer if necessary by engaging with other employers and organisations known to the College.
- The apprentice would be offered independent advice and guidance via a meeting with a member of the Guidance Team in order to explore a wider range of options – including alternative programmes from other funding streams (i.e. Taught degree programmes)

The support offered would be timely, as apprentices can only stay enrolled on a programme of study for up to 12 weeks as an unemployed individual.

### **3. Refunds and compensation**

The Lincoln College Fees Policy (<https://www.lincolnCollege.ac.uk/higher-education/terms/>) provides details of refund eligibility in paragraphs 12 and 23. Paragraphs 17 and 19 outline the information regarding student bursaries for full and part time students. Information regarding claims for compensation can be found in paragraph 24.

This policy is publicly available via the College website and students are also directed to this document within the terms and conditions sent at formal offer stage of the application process. Students are directed to this document again as part of their induction activities on their first day of enrolment.

We have cash reserves of £50,000 which would be sufficient to provide refunds and compensation for all HE students for whom we have identified at risk of non-continuation of study. These cash reserves will be included within the Lincoln College budget for 2019/20 which will be formally accepted by the Board of Governors in July 2019.

We will put in place insurance arrangements by August 1st 2019 to provide refunds and compensation for all HE students for whom we have identified at risk of non-continuation of study in addition to the cash reserves outlined above. All insurance policy documentation is held by the Lincoln College Finance department with certificates and policy documentation publicly available to staff via the internal shared drive (T-share).

### **4. Communication of the student protection plan**

#### **Communication**

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by 1 August 2018 via the following communication channels:

- As a document link on the Lincoln College website
- As a PDF document via email to all students as part of the 'offer' stage of the application process
- As a PDF document via email to all current students
- As a document link on the College VLE (Moodle) within the 'HE Information Centre – College Documents and Policies' area

We will ensure that staff are fully informed about the implications of our student protection plan by providing a full briefing at the HE Forum meetings in June, July, August and September 2018. Details of the student protection plan will also be added to the College HE Staff Handbook and the internal communication portal (Workplace).

#### **Student involvement**

Students were asked to contribute to the development of the student protection plan via social media and at course committee meetings. This document was first reviewed by the HE Academic Affairs Committee on 5 June 2018 and a

final version of the document was formally approved by this committee on 29 June 2018. This has also been signed off by the Quality Standards Committee for the 2018/19 academic year. The protection plan will then be reviewed annually by the HE Student Rep group and HE AAC at the end of each academic year.

## **Implementation**

We will inform our students if there are to be material changes to their course as soon as practically possible in order to provide the maximum amount of time for students to seek alternative arrangements. We will aim to contact students no less than 20 days prior to the material changes being implemented and this communication will be issued via email, posted letter and an announcement on Moodle. Students will also, where possible, be invited to attend a verbal briefing with members of the course team to allow for more detailed discussions to take place.

If we need to implement the measures in our student protection plan we will ensure that the following actions are undertaken in order to support the students:

- Maintain clear and accurate information across a range of appropriate mediums (College website, Moodle, email, text, local radio, Facebook and twitter)
- Implement support services immediately (e.g. Shuttle bus services between campuses) and ensure that the details of such services are communicated clearly to all students
- Support individual students as required following any contact made with members of the Student Services team (including counselling, mental health, financial support and independent careers guidance)
- In the event of staff sickness or absence, cover will be provided by other specialist teaching staff where possible and any logistical changes (e.g. timetables or assignment submission arrangements) will be communicated to the students via email, the VLE and verbal instruction.

Students will be directed to the College Customer Complaints and Grievance Procedure should they wish to complain about the implementation of the student protection plan.