

Student Protection Plan (Academic Year 2025/26)

Legal address: The Sheffield College, Granville Road, Sheffield, S2 2RL
Contact point: Mr Andrew Birch

1. Introduction

The Student Protection Plan (SPP) sets out what students can expect to happen should Sheffield College ("the College"), provision, campus or institution close. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that students can continue or complete their studies or can be compensated if this is not possible.

Should an event occur that results in closure of a significant part of the College provision, we would anticipate working closely with our university partners, staff and students to ensure students' interests and outcomes are protected. The SPP outlines the key risk for the College, for each risk we have described the actions we are already taking or will take to mitigate or eliminate the risk and ensure continuation of study.

The provisions of this plan cover significant risks and do not include changes that may be required owing to operational matters during the general delivery of a course.

These include (but are not limited to)

- Individual changes to a module or course and its teaching, delivery and or assessment
- Timetable changes, including location or whether in person or online
- Changes required to a course or module to ensure continued compliance with regulatory or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body or other external requirements

Where appropriate in such circumstances, the College may consult and communicate these changes to students and staff to ensure that delivery and outcomes remain of a consistent high quality.

2. Notification

Where it is necessary to implement this Student Protection Plan, the College will communicate with students in a timely, open and honest manner, and will provide each of them with a copy of the plan. In the initial communication with affected students, the College will provide details of the issue, the proposed response and the timescale for implementation. It will provide a statement concerning the discussion with the Sheffield College Student Union and the College's response to Student Union feedback. As further information becomes available, affected students will be contacted in a timely way, and will be signposted to College services, including those services that deal with financial hardship payments, as well introducing them to external services, such as counselling services and student support services.

In all cases, the College will seek to arrange a meeting with affected students at a location, time and date that is suitable for those students to attend. Wherever possible, the College will schedule all student meetings to take place at a time, location and date where those students would normally be expecting to attend their course.

3. Identified risks

a. Risk to the continued operation of The Sheffield College

The risk that the College will be unable to operate in the medium term is **very low**, as it receives income from a variety of sources (mainly Further Education) and is not reliant on a single funding model.

The College maintains public indemnity insurance to cover against a range of risks typical for a Further Education institution. In addition, the College also has business continuity insurance, the purpose of which is to ensure continuity of educational services to Higher Education students within the College, including the provision of administrative services associated with the recording of student attainment and awards. The College undertakes reviews of its *Disaster Response and Recovery Plans*, including reviewing the level of financial resource required to operate them, on a regular basis. Furthermore, the College has disaster recovery protocols, typical for the Further Education sector, which are tested and reviewed on a scheduled basis.

b. Risk of courses moving to a different College campus

The risk that the College will elect to move the location of the delivery of any of its Higher Education courses during the medium term is low.

The College currently delivers Higher Education courses at the following locations:

- City (Granville Road, Sheffield, S2 2RL)
- Hillsborough (Livesey Street, Sheffield, S6 2ET)

c. Risk of course closure on any Higher Education provision delivered at the College

The risk that there will be instances of course closure which would not allow the students to complete their course is low.

Once provision has started, the College will ensure that the course continues to run where possible. The College will not close a course on grounds of reduced numbers at any point following its commencement.

Should a course be at threat of closure due to other circumstances such as, but not limited to, lack of appropriate teaching staff or loss of suitable accommodation, the College would look to our validating partners for assistance in mitigating this risk. Should this not prove possible, the College would look to transfer its learners to other providers, or to implement teach out so as to ensure continuity of study.

d. Risk of termination of validation contracts

The risk of the termination of validation contracts by our validating partners is low.

The College has a robust Quality cycle, and within this has regular review processes with all of its validating partners.

All formal Awards Boards and formal Periodic Reviews have been completed successfully.

In the highly unlikely event that a validation contract is terminated by a validating partner, the College would look to transfer its learners to other providers, or to implement teach out so as to ensure continuity of study.

e. Critical Incident Management

Serious incidents are rare but regrettably cannot be ruled out. These could include the temporary suspension of access to College buildings, due to IT failure/ cyber-attacks, severe weather, or impacts of significant world or local events, such as the global pandemic.

The purpose of business continuity planning is to ensure that the College has robust measures in place to cope with a major disruption and ensure a coordinated, planned approach is in place to help the College sustain time-critical activities at an acceptable level, and get back to normal as quickly as possible.

The College will seek to minimise disruption to students and prioritise continuation of study as part of its incident management protocols. These protocols support an effective and immediate response to disruption, prioritising the health and safety of our community.

Most incidents and disruption are temporary and will be successfully resolved with clear communication provided to students and staff on alternate access to College resources and support. Where unplanned disruption looks to be longer term, the provisions of this plan and associated communications and reporting will apply.

4. Refunds and compensation

If the College is unable to preserve continuation of study owing to one or more of the events identified within this Plan, the College will in accordance with its conditions of study, provide as much notice as possible and work closely with the students concerned to minimise the disruption and impact on them.

The College may identify circumstances in which financial compensation is appropriate. In most cases this will entail the offer of a full or partial refund of tuition fees in recognition of the loss of service and the impact on the student.

Students can submit a complaint under the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure if they are dissatisfied with the actions taken to minimise the disruption and action on them.

Students are entitled to a refund of any over-payment of tuition fees and other specific circumstances in accordance with conditions of study. Refunds are conditional on the receipt of the specified college documentation.

5. Communicating the provisions of the plan to students

The College is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options, including referring students to independent advice support and services.

Information about this plan will be communicated in the following ways:

The plan will be published on the college's website and links made to appropriate student-facing pages

References to and a link is included in the Student/ Course Handbook and cross-references made to other student procedures as appropriate

Should it become necessary to invoke any provisions of the plan, the College will maintain due regard to student continuation and welfare and provide support and guidance in respect of financial, academic and pastoral implications.

6. Implementing the Student Protection Plan

When the College first identifies that one or more risks is likely to affect students, they will be notified in writing, and will be provided with a copy of the Student Protection Plan. The correspondence will identify a time and place where a meeting with affected students will be held; this will normally be a working day within the academic year, using dates in the published College academic calendar as the reference point. The College will also provide the Sheffield College Students' Union with a copy of any correspondence, to facilitate communication with individual students and representation of students.

Where a course is recognised or accredited by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (or equivalent body) named in a validation document or course specification, the College will provide that body with details of how students are affected, together with details of the issues and the College proposals for responding to those issues in a timely way.

In cases where employers are providing sponsorship, work-based learning or work-based assessment of the affected students, the College will provide details of the students that they sponsor who are affected, together with details of the issues and the College proposals for responding to those issues, within the meaning of the Student Protection Plan.

We recognise that change and significant unexpected events can be unsettling and the wellbeing of our students is important to us. Should an identified risk materialise, we will communicate clearly, usually through a range of channels, with our staff and students and advise them of actions they need to take and specific support mechanisms in place to support their study.

7. Reviewing the Student Protection Plan

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually as part of the College's document review schedule.