

## CCG student protection plan

Provider's name: Chichester College Group

Provider's UKPRN: 10007817

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### Student protection plan for the period AY2023/24

#### 1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students, how those risks may differ based on your students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

Chichester College Group (CCG) takes seriously its responsibility to protect the interests of current and future students and provide outstanding support at application and on programme. The CCG Student Protection Plan provides information regarding the likelihood of certain events that would disrupt studies, together with measures that CCG would take to mitigate each circumstance. The range of events this Plan addresses are as follows:

1. The permanent or temporary closure of the Chichester College Group.
2. CCG permanently or temporarily closing one of its campuses.
3. CCG's ability to operate normally being significantly impaired.
4. CCG closing or suspending one of its programmes.
5. An academic partner, in consultation with the CCG, deciding to close or suspend a programme.

#### Institutional closure

The risk that CCG will close permanently is **very low**.

CCG is compliant with the Code of Governance for English Colleges (2015) and the ten principal responsibilities for good governance. Under responsibility 6, the Group fosters adopting a financial strategy and funding plan which are compatible with the duty to ensure the sustainability and solvency of the colleges. Under responsibility 7, the Group fosters effective controls and due diligence in relation to all matters including acquisition, subcontracting and partnership activity.

Governors and senior managers attend the Finance and General Purposes Committee three times per year to review the Group's financial performance. Performance includes the Group's ability to deliver funding body allocations and its ability to achieve challenging commercial income targets. CCG operates a chain of nurseries, an international exam board and a commercial sports centre to reduce reliance on government funding streams and ensure continuous investment in its learning resources and facilities.

The Area Review programme for further education colleges in England in 2015-17, opened opportunities to re structure post-16 education to better meet local skills needs, remove small provision in colleges and offer specialism and greater choice for employers. Area Reviews offered smaller colleges long term financial security and the ability to expand into new markets. Chichester College merged with Central Sussex College in August 2018 as part of the Area Review programme to create Chichester College Group with a £60 million annual turnover. The merger offers new opportunities for CCG as it begins to work with new employers on new course development in the Gatwick Diamond. The merger places CCG as the largest general further education college in Sussex.

Chichester College demonstrated sound financial performance over many years which spearheaded the merger with Central Sussex College now known as Crawley College. CCG performance is evidenced in annual financial statements, which are completed in line with Paragraph 21 of the Instrument of Government and can be viewed at [Link CCG Financial statements](#) . Financial capability is verified by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The College is assessed by the ESFA as having a "Good" financial health grading. The current rating of Good is considered an acceptable outcome. Financial statements are also reviewed by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the predecessor to the Office for Students (OfS), through its annual performance review to ensure CCG's ability to deliver high quality HE programmes.

CCG monitors business continuity through a group-wide register. The risk is reviewed and updated termly using a RAG rating and numerical scoring system to mitigate risk. The register is also reviewed by external auditors and ratified through the Finance and General Purpose Committee.

CCG holds a contingency plan to deal with a range of scenarios that could impact on the institution's ability to meet its obligations, whether as a result of permanent or temporary closure. Regular review and planning ensures CCG is positioned to deal with given scenarios in an effective and efficient manner such as:

1. CCG takes the decision to close the CCG permanently or temporarily;
2. Other disruption of CCG's activities (including but not restricted to acts of terrorism, construction or repair work, damage to buildings or equipment, extreme weather, health and safety issues, industrial action, legal restrictions, upgrades to equipment).

### **Closure of a CCG campus**

The risk that any of the Colleges or campuses within the group will close is **very low**.

The merger of Chichester and Central Sussex College (now Crawley College) in August 2018 provides long term financial stability to both colleges with greater opportunities to develop new provision. The Group is currently investing in new STEM buildings and resources for both Colleges to increase teaching and learning capacity and offer greater course specialisms to meet emerging LEP priorities. The Group is also working closely with a greater number of levy payers within the Gatwick Diamond to address their short and longer term training needs, building progression routes to levels 4,5 and 6

The Brinsbury and Horsham Training Centre provide additional teaching and learning resource and students could be moved to other campuses within the group on a temporary or permanent basis is necessary

CCG monitors course applications weekly throughout the academic year for starts in the next academic year. Monitoring applications is an integral part of the risk register, which is reviewed and updated termly by the Group Leadership team. The risk register identifies early warning signs for college closure with mitigating actions.

### **Significant disruption to CCG operations**

The risk that CCG operation will be disrupted to the extent that its operations are significantly impaired is **very low**.

CCG has implemented robust policies and procedures with regard to the quality and standards of its programmes, admission of students and the support available through Additional Learning Support and Student Experience Teams.

CCG has in its previous Colleges a solid track record with the relevant regulatory authorities which include: HEFCE/Office for Students, Quality Assurance Agency, British Council, UK Visas and Immigration, OFSTED, ESFA, Care Standards and LANDEX). This track record provides confidence in CCG's ability to manage unforeseen disruption to operations.

The business contingency plan is designed to enable the institution to mitigate the impact on students should the following events occur:

1. Withdrawal of CCG designation for student support purposes (that gives students of the CCG the ability to apply for and receive student loans).
2. Withdrawal of CCG designation as an FE Provider
3. Suspension or revocation of the CCG Tier 4 Sponsor Licence (the licence issued by the Home Office which allows a provider to admit and teach international students).
4. Other disruption of CCG activities (including but not restricted to acts of terrorism, construction or repair work, damage to buildings or equipment, extreme weather, health and safety issues, industrial action, legal restrictions, upgrades to equipment).

### **Closure or suspension of a programme**

From time to time, CCG will decide that either a programme should be closed to new students or that it cannot offer a programme during a particular academic year. These circumstances can arise for a number of reasons:

1. Academic staff becoming unavailable owing to health reasons/maternity or paternity leave/departure from the College
2. The programme can no longer be offered as the associated costs have become unsustainable.
3. CCG taking the decision to offer new programmes, resulting in the need to close existing provision in order to create the necessary capacity.
4. More rarely, a specific programme may be impacted by changes to the regulatory framework or by changes in the accreditation secured from University partners or from a professional, regulatory or statutory body (PSRB).

CCG has an established protocol to deal with the proposed closure or suspension of one of its programmes as outlined in the Colleges admissions policy. CCG will take measures to safeguard the interests of those present and future. CCG will always consider its options before closing or suspending a programme. Decisions to close programmes due to low recruitment are made four months before the start of the course and applicants are signposted to alternative courses and alternative HEIs.

Programme closure whilst students are on programme would be an act of last resort, but CCG would identify opportunities to transfer all learners in advance. The risk of students not being able to complete their programme of study in such circumstances is therefore **very low**.

CCG reviews its Higher Education provision annually, ensuring that all awards are appropriately resourced in terms of staffing and resources. Given the competitive nature of the UL higher education market, there is a likelihood the College may amend or stop delivery of at least one of its programmes. The risk of a programme being withdrawn or suspended within the next three years, and applicants being affected in some manner is therefore **moderate**.

CCG takes seriously its responsibility for all programmes to meet the requirements of accreditations secured from PSRB's. Adherence to quality and standards are paramount, ensuring alignment to all regulatory and awarding body requirements and participating in reviews on a regular basis. For this reason, the risk of a programme closing owing to the loss of accreditation is considered **very low**.

### **Significant changes to a programme made following admission**

The risk that CCG will permit a significant change to a programme following admission, to the extent that the student's ability to continue on the programme is impaired, is **moderate**.

CCG has established policy that significant changes to programmes made following the admission of students may only be made with the consent of the *entire* cohort potentially affected by the proposed change and only after it has been agreed by the Higher Education Board post publication of course details unless CCG is compelled to in order to respond to changes in PSRB requirements, amendments to relevant legislation, or in the event that one or more members of staff become unavailable to deliver an element of the programme at short notice.

### **Significant changes to a programme made following an offer of admission**

The risk that the CCG will permit a significant change to a programme following an offer of admission having been made is considered to be **moderate**.

CCG adheres to the Competitions and Markets Authority through its admissions policy and is therefore mindful of its obligations to applicants at all stages of the admissions process. CCG will therefore have a policy for changes to be made to programmes post advertisement and application and prior to launch to ensure that such changes are only made where there is a compelling rationale and via agreement from the Higher Education Board. Applicants holding offers or who have accepted an offer, will be informed of these changes at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise**

CCG is committed to ensuring that all students will be treated fairly if any of the above events occur and all actions will be based on the individual needs and circumstance of the student. Therefore, it is impossible to outline all approaches to be taken due to the diversity of the learner population and the impact of potential incidents. For each attempt to mitigate the risks identified in this plan, CCG will pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, noting that students with protected characteristics should have these taken into account in any decision-making process relating to student protection.

CCG has put in place the following measures to mitigate those risks considered reasonably likely to occur:

### **Closure or suspension of a programme**

When considering the closure or suspension of a programme and its impact on current students, CCG will not take a decision to approve the proposed change without taking the views of the affected students into account. If CCG takes a decision to close or suspend a programme, it will follow procedures by:

1. Communicating this decision at the earliest possible opportunity to any affected students and applicants.
2. Where possible, allow students to complete their study meeting the defined outcomes of the programme, with programmes closing for new applicants.
3. Where the above action is not possible CCG will take appropriate actions with each student to transfer to another programme or institution.
4. All affected stakeholders will be consulted to ensure that issues of equality and diversity are considered and acted upon where appropriate.

5. The annual monitoring processes will ensure no diminution of standards throughout the closure process, protecting the learning experience for students and the standards of the programme that is closing.
6. Decisions to close will be taken as early as possible, taking into account relevant UCAS deadlines so as not to adversely impact applicants ability to choose a suitable alternative programme.
7. Where provision is provided through a franchise or partnership provision explorations will be made with the provider for alternative solutions such as cover staffing or transfer.
8. If steps 1-7 do not derive satisfactory onward progression for students, CCG may explore whether it is appropriate to provide students with fee waivers or refunds, CCG will consider what financial recompense may be due to the students owing to demonstrable, material financial loss caused by the disruption to their studies.

**Significant changes to a programme made following registration or following an offer of admission**

In the event that the CCG approves significant changes to a programme following offer or enrolment onto a substantive programme, the following actions will be taken to mitigate the risks to students and applicants.

1. All students potentially affected by the change will be consulted and the consent of each individual obtained prior to approving the change.
2. Changes will be restricted to the absolute minimum necessary.
3. Where appropriate, CCG will support students and applicants who feel that changes to a programme create a circumstance where they wish to withdraw from the programme and either transfer to alternative programme or seek alternative provision at another provider.
5. Where provision is provided through a franchise or partnership provision explorations will be made with the provider for alternative solutions such as cover staffing or transfer.
6. If steps 1-4 do not derive satisfactory onward progression for students, CCG may explore whether it is appropriate to provide students with fee waivers or refunds, CCG will consider what financial recompense may be due to the students owing to demonstrable, material financial loss caused by the disruption to their studies.

**3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study**

CCG will ensure that all students are treated equitably when agreeing a way forward to achieve their qualification. However, if CCG is unable to preserve the continuation of study for any of incidents outlined above, the Group may explore if it is appropriate to provide students with fee waivers or refunds. CCG will consider what financial recompense may be due to the students owing to demonstrable, material financial loss caused by the disruption to their studies.

1. Refunds of course fees will be made according to the duration of learning undertaken and impact of alteration or course closure to overall learning outcomes of the programme of study.
2. Fee waivers will be considered if a student has to undertake substantive rework in order to obtain the learning outcomes of an alternative course due to the closure or substantial alteration of existing provision
3. CCG will support students that are transferred to an alternative site or institution for the academic year impacted for out of pocket expenses and any other reasonable adjustments agreed prior to the transfer.
4. If steps 1-3 do not derive a satisfactory outcomes then a case may be taken for financial recompense review by the Higher Education Board and Chief Financial Officer.

#### **4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan**

CCG will ensure that the student protection plan is made easily accessible by:

1. Including a prominent reference and link to the plan in the CCG prospectus.
2. Providing a link to a copy of the plan when making an offer of admission.
3. Providing a clear link to the plan from CCG Higher Education communication webpage.
4. Providing a link to the plan from programme pages on Chi-online.
5. Informing all students when the plan is updated to ensure all students have access to the most recent version.

Following the publication of each version of the plan, CCG will ensure that all HE staff are informed through the deliberative structures to inform them of its relevance to their roles.

The plan will become an integral element of the Colleges Higher Education Quality policies which will refer specifically to the closure suspension or amendment of programmes

CCG Students Union (ChiSU) will be consulted on the content, format and regular review of the plan as part of the deliberative structures annual review of all policies and procedures.

Students or applicants who wish to comment on or make a complaint regarding this plan should contact the Director of Higher Education, [sue.banger@chichester.ac.uk](mailto:sue.banger@chichester.ac.uk)

On initiation of the student protection plan CCG will undertake to communicate with all involved and outline the assistance students can expect. Communication will be made through College email contacts as per all other formal contact, giving detail of the nature of the event that has occurred, the likely implications and required actions. Links will also be added to the HE and CCG Facebook pages to optimise coverage.

In the event that the CCG has to permanently or temporarily close any of its campuses, students and applicants will be given notice unless there are reasons outside of the CCG's control that prohibit such notice being given.

Any closures, suspensions, or substantial changes to programmes that are approved by CCG will be communicated to all current students and applicants where appropriate, at the earliest possible opportunity.

1. Students and applicants who are affected by the closure or suspension of a programme will be informed of such a change within seven days of the decision having been taken.
2. CCG will provide to students or applicants notice of a decision to close or suspend a programme, unless there are reasons outside of the University's control that prohibit such notice being given.
3. Students who are affected by significant changes to their programme will be consulted at least 30 days before the change is planned to take effect, unless there are reasons outside of the CCG's control that prohibit such notice being given.

The CCG will do its utmost to provide all the information needed should one of the above events occur. However, independent advice may be given on options through the CCG careers advice centres who will either be able to advise directly or recommend another suitable organisation who can assist.