

STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN 2018-19



GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL

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STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

PURPOSE

This policy sets out Waltham Forest College's commitment to the student experience and to support our students to achieve their academic outcomes.

Provider's Name	Waltham Forest College
Provider's UKPRN:	10007321
Legal Address	Forest Road, London, E17 4JB
Contact Point for Enquiries.	Colin Johnson Head of Higher Education (Colin.Johnson@waltham.ac.uk)

ABOUT US

Waltham Forest College is a medium-sized general further education college in East London, there are approximately 1,260 learners aged 16 to 18 following full-time study programmes. Of these, around two thirds were studying courses up to level 2, and the remainder at level 3. Some 2,450 adult learners were attending the college, most of whom were on part-time courses.

The College delivers a range of programmes across fourteen subject areas, which range from pre-entry to level four. In addition, the College offers apprenticeship, professional and employability programmes.

Our aim is to meet student and business demand for high-level skills through a rich and varied portfolio of higher education programmes and high-level apprenticeship offers in accordance with our strategic priority sectors. The higher education provision at Waltham Forest College is key part of our strategy and is a progression route for our students.

The borough of Waltham Forest is diverse, both ethnically and socially, with 97 languages spoken by students at the College. About half the local residents are from a minority ethnic background. The significant majority of businesses in the area are micro-businesses, employing fewer than 10 people. The average salary in the borough is lower than the London average. The proportion of pupils at local schools who achieve five GCSEs with high grades is below the national rate, and below the average for schools in London. The significant majority of learners who choose to attend Waltham Forest College have not yet achieved high grades in GCSE English and mathematics.

The higher education offer at Waltham Forest College provides students who have had significant barriers to learning the opportunity to obtain higher level qualifications.

STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2018-19

- This Student Protection Plan sets out the measures we have in place to protect you as a student in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies should arise.
- The measures contained in this plan apply to all students studying for a directly funded qualification (HNC/HND) delivered at Waltham Forest College. These measures are also in addition to the protections students have under consumer protection law, and do not impinge on their consumer rights.
- The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires HE Providers to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g. programme changes, suspension of programmes, closures of courses, College premises or business
- These events may be triggered by situations such as (but not limited to):
 - a decision to close the College has been taken
 - a strategic decision by the College to close a course or campus
 - a decision has been taken not to run a course for the subsequent year
 - loss or restriction of HE provider status
 - loss of accreditation from regulatory bodies, e.g. OfS, Ofsted
 - loss of accreditation from awarding body (validator)
 - withdrawal of designation for student support purposes
 - changes to regulatory framework affecting a specific course
 - disruption of College activity
 - industrial action by College staff or third parties
 - unanticipated departure of key members of College staff.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND LIKELIHOOD

Risk 1: Closure of College

- The College reported total comprehensive income of £4,118k in 2017/18 and had total unrestricted reserves of £1,294k at 31 July 2018. We also reported borrowings of £1,195k.
- The College holds an ESFA financial "good" rating for 2017/18.
- We have mature business continuity arrangements in place including plans to deal with a range of incidents.
- The risk that any of our College closes is low as the College has a long track-record of delivering programmes and running its business successfully. The College is also in the process of finalising its new 3-year strategy and business plan.
- This risk is monitored through risk management in accordance HE regulatory bodies and any instance of this will be managed in accordance with the College policies.

Likelihood: Low

Risk 2 Loss or Restriction as a Higher Education Provider

The risk that Waltham Forest College loses its status as a HE provider is to be considered as low for the following reasons:

- Waltham Forest College's governance and operating procedures contain appropriate controls and systems and checks to ensure our continued ability to operate within the regulatory framework.
- Waltham Forest College has been delivering Higher Education for the past ten years.
- HE is a key strategic progression route for College FE courses and a vehicle for local employers to develop its workforce.
- The successful outcomes of several Quality Assurance Reviews, the most recent ones being:
 - The successful QAA Higher Education Review in May 2017.

Likelihood: Low

- In the event of deregistration with Office for Students affecting the ability of students to access student loans, the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise the resulting disruption to students by, for example:
 - Working with relevant funding bodies to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study / programme.
 - Where the programme 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.
 - Assisting any affected by providing evidence / letters / statements in support of continuation of their studies.
 - Working as appropriate with another institution to maintain all or part of the current provision.

Risk 3 Loss of Course Accreditation

The risk that Waltham Forest College loses one of its validators as a HE provider is to be considered as low for the following reasons:

- Waltham Forest Colleges is accredited by Pearson Edexcel and is validated by them on an annual basis, with no issues.
- Each programme delivered at the College is subject to a thorough awarding body validation process that includes a detailed assessment of the College resources, capacity and expertise to deliver the course as well a well-established targeted market.
- The rigorous Quality Assurance mechanisms in place ensure compliance with awarding bodies requirements

Likelihood: Low

Risk 4 Programme Discontinuation or Decision Not To Run A Course the Following Year

- The risk that the College decides to discontinue a specific programme on timescales that directly affect students is low because any course discontinuations in HE are planned at least one year in advance to allow current students to complete their studies.
- The risk that we discontinue or do not offer programmes due to insufficient enrolment and programme take-up or continuation is low. We regularly review the suite of programmes we offer to ensure that we keep pace with student demand and may choose to close a programme to future cohorts where demand is low or as part of a refresh of our wider portfolio.
- There is good staff coverage in terms of teaching capacity and capability at the College.
- Should there be a suspension and/or closure of a course the College seek to “teach out” all of the students currently registered on that programme.
- In all instances where courses are considered for closure, suspension or substantial change, the College will follow procedures aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and take account of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, (HEFCE) statement of good practice on course change and closure (2015), as well as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on consumer law for UK HE providers (2015).
- In addition, our [Student Compensation and Refund Policy](#) sets arrangements for refunding students’ tuition fees and other relevant costs.

Likelihood: Low

Risk 5 Change of Qualification / Course Content

- The risk that the qualification a student obtain ends up significantly different from that for which the student enrolled is low because all our directly funded courses are off the shelf qualifications (Higher Nationals) and are subject to the awarding body rules and regulations. Our quality department and internal monitoring processes ensure that the rules of combination for the off the shelf courses are complied with and checked
- We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to a programme’s content year on year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback.
- Our review and quality enhancement processes are informed by student consultation and we endeavour to communicate planned changes in a timely and helpful manner. These minor amendments in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures.

Likelihood Low

MEASURES IN PLACE TO MITIGATE THOSE RISKS THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE REASONABLY LIKELY TO CRYSTALLISE.

In all cases, we will inform students of any changes, which may affect their studies in a timely manner.

Risk 1 College Closure

Where the College 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 possible, the College will use its existing network partners such as the school, local employers to source the necessary facilities to allow the completion of studies
- where possible, the College will hire spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby) to allow completion of studies.
- the College will provide the necessary transport arrangements to allow students access the new site
- where the above is not possible, in supporting students to transfer to appropriate programmes at other providers
- in case of dispute with registered students as a result of risk 1, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 2 Loss or Restriction as a Higher Education Provider

In the event of loss or restriction as a HE provider, Waltham Forest College will work with the OfS regulatory body to:

- ensure all reasonable steps are taken to minimise disruption to affected students
- ensure 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
- ensure that, as far as possible, changes are made in a transitional manner
- In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 2, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy

Risk 3 Loss of Course Accreditation

- In the event of the College losing its accreditation from its awarding body, Pearson Edexcel) and if we are unable to deliver a programme in the following year, our immediate response would be to seek to use those elements of our student protection measures that were most easily within our control.

We will take one or more of the following measures to protect students' continuity of study. All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the 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
 - 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
 - Whenever possible, arrangements will be made to ensure programmes of study can be completed by all currently enrolled students within existing timeframes determined by the awarding body and College regulations, even though the programme is being discontinued and we will not be taking on new student cohorts.
- In case of dispute with students as a result of risk 4, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 4 Programme Discontinuation or Decision Not To Run A Course the Following Year

- Where a course is dis-continued, we would close the programme to new recruitment and ensure that current student cohorts complete their full qualification
- The College is committed to put the necessary resources to ensure that existing students complete their programme. We have experience of managing this process successfully
- In case of dispute with students because of risk 5, the College will trigger its compensation and refund policy.

Risk 5 Change of Qualification / Course Content

- All of our programmes are subject to validation by the awarding body and therefore this risk will not happen without the full re-validation process taking place.
- Students on the course will not be affected by these changes as transitional arrangements are always made to cater for existing students.
- We retain the right to make minor adjustments and improvements to a programme's content year on year, as part of quality enhancement and in response to student feedback, without changing the qualification title.

- Our review and quality enhancement processes are informed by student consultation and we endeavour to communicate planned changes in a timely and helpful manner. These minor amendments in themselves do not warrant the triggering of student protection measures.

NOTIFICATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Waltham Forest College's Commitment to Students

We commit to:

- communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information
- being open and transparent with all students should any risk to the continuity of their programme of studies arise, and inform them in a timely manner
- taking reasonable steps to protect student normal studies completion should we discontinue a programme, close a department or discipline, close a location (building or campus) where a programme is taught, or should the College close altogether
- consulting with students and considering students' views in a timely manner before deciding to implement any substantial changes to their programme or discontinuing it, or closing a department or closing a location
- taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures
- Informing the OfS of any changes that may necessitate a review of this Student Protection Plan or any of the measures contained within it.
- Should the Student Protection Plan need to be triggered, students will be notified by the Head of Higher Education via meetings, email and telephone calls.
- Free advice and support will be offered in the first instance by the Head of Higher Education and supported by Student Services.
- Additional, non-academic, advice and support is available from Student Support Services (or delegate)
- You will also have access to independent advice from the Students' Union if we need to implement the plan.

COMPLAINT

If students would like to complain please either contact the Head of Higher Education directly (Colin.Johnson@waltham.ac.uk) or access the College's Compliments and Complaints procedure which can be found [here](#)

COMMUNICATION

We will publicise our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by:

- Making the plan available on our website
- Referencing it appropriately in our communications with students during the recruitment and admissions process.
- Ensuring that all students are at induction sent an electronic copy of the plan

Reviewing the plan

The College will:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan (staff development) when they propose programme changes by including a reference to the Student Protection Plan in our programme approval and amendment documentation.
- Review the plan annually with senior management
- Regularly seek views on this plan from our student representatives as part of our student engagement processes.
- The plan will be presented to the HE committee for final approval prior to publication on the website

Capturing Student Views

- The College has a variety of mechanisms in place to capture student voice on all aspects related to student life (learning, teaching validation of courses, continuation, progression, accommodation, transport, student services). The College intends to use the same mechanisms to seek student views on this Student Protection Plan.
- Students have the opportunity to provide feedback by completing surveys and attending programme meetings at College or University. Student Representatives also attend the HE committee and therefore will have the opportunity to discuss and feedback on the Student Protection Plan.
- Students will be able to feedback informally to their tutor or the Higher Education Manager.
- Formal routes of capturing student feedback include the Higher Education Induction survey, completed by all HE students after their 6-week induction and the End of Year Survey. In addition, regular student voice groups are held and HE students are encouraged to be student governors on the College's Governing Body.
- Any immediate views, concerns or feedback in relation to this plan, should also be referred to the Head of Higher Education using Colin.Johnson@waltham.ac.uk