

# Student Protection Plan 2023 - Present

Approved

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**Provider's name:** Blackburn College  
**Provider's UKPRN:** 10000747

**Blackburn College**

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Welcome to the University Centre, Blackburn College (UCBC). We are a large provider of quality higher education provision situated within one of the largest Further Education Colleges in the North-West of England. Our mission is to transform students' lives and our community through outstanding education, training and support. Working collaboratively with us are local employers and three University partners – we are an Associate College of Lancaster University, hold partnership arrangements with the University of Central Lancashire and the University of South Wales along with awarding powers directly from Pearson for our HNC and HND provision. This high-quality, collaborative network ensures we can support you to achieve your ambitions.

This document, called a Student Protection Plan, is part of our mandatory and ongoing quality assurance under the Office for Students regulatory framework for all English providers of Higher Education (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>). Here we detail the processes and procedures we have in place to assure the quality and continuation of your chosen programme. Following the national guidelines, if a risk is evidenced as low, we have not included additional information as this is not necessary. The Student Protection Plan covers all of our students in UCBC regardless of subject, level and mode of study or awarding partner.

**Section 1** details our assessment of risk to the quality and continuation of your programme of study, the evidence for that assessment and the plans we have in place to ensure we reduce that risk and can provide ongoing support, if required.

**Section 2** details information regarding the policy we have in place at the College relating to student financial arrangements in the unlikely event we cannot preserve the quality or continuation of your programme of study.

**Section 3** details how we will communicate with applicants, current students and staff regarding this plan and how we will revise it periodically to ensure it is up-to-date.

**Section 1:**

<b>Quality and Continuation of Study: assessment of risk and plans in place to mitigate that risk, if the risk is assessed as likely to arise</b>			
	Area	Risk Assessment and Evidence	Plans to mitigate the risk, where the risk is reasonably likely to arise
1.	Financial: the risk that the College is no longer able to operate or closes completely	<p>Very Low Risk</p> <p>We have been assessed by the ESFA as having an outstanding Financial Health Score which evidences the College's ability to maintain its provision financially.</p> <p>The Governing body have a clear strategic plan for the ongoing development of the College, including the University Centre. These plans and our performance are scrutinised by a number of external and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, Office for Students and ESFA.</p>	None required.

**Student  
Protection Plan**  
May 2023 - Present



2.	<p><b>Quality Assurance:</b> the risk that the College is no longer able to validate degrees with its existing awarding partners (Lancaster University, University of Central Lancashire, University of South Wales, Pearson)</p>	<p>Low Risk</p> <p>We have strong and long-term arrangements with our Awarding Partners. A significant majority of our programmes are validated by Lancaster University and we have cemented our relationship with them through having Associate College status.</p> <p>We work collaboratively with our existing Awarding Partners and have regular, scheduled contact throughout the year to provide mutual assurance on the quality of each other's provision and the organisation and management of that provision. In this way any quality matters can be addressed immediately without concern for increased risk.</p> <p>With each of our Awarding Partners we have a contractual agreement signed by the Vice Chancellor, of the relevant University, and Principal and Chief Executive, at Blackburn College, which confirms each party's commitment to supporting students should any risk of course closure become apparent. To date, the College has not had to invoke such plans.</p>	None required.
3.	<p><b>Academic:</b> the risk that the College can no longer deliver a particular course or subject area to our students; the College is no longer able to deliver</p>	<p>Low Risk</p> <p>We operate an annual business planning cycle which takes into account good practice from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). This planning process looks ahead to the following five years of provision for our HE provision, assesses the currency of our programmes and makes recommendations as to any required changes. This is a key process which ensures the College maintains its success in Graduate Employment and is providing a quality experience to our students, communities and global economy.</p>	<p>Additional reassurance for students: There is minimal risk that a course would close once delivery had commenced, however the following processes are documented in our partnership agreements with our University partners:</p>

**Student  
Protection Plan**  
May 2023 - Present



	<p>one or more courses to our students (including part-time students).</p>	<p>Proposed changes are agreed through our University Partners (section 3.5 and 3.6 of the University Centre Blackburn College Academic Regulations). The plan takes into account plans for students who are currently on programmes which require changes to bring it up-to-date in terms of content and structure.</p> <p>During our strategic planning processes, it is usual to re-assess programmes which are no longer relevant or popular with applicants with a view to removing them for further recruitment in the coming year. Where this occurs we have formal, contractual agreements with our University partners to continue to teach the students who are already on those programmes and as such it is highly unlikely that a course would close once delivery had commenced.</p> <p><i>However, we recognise that course closure may be of particular concern to applicants and students and we have therefore provided additional reassurance on the processes we already have in place to mitigate this risk.</i></p>	<p>The need to work collaboratively to ensure that students can complete their studies or be supported to transfer to an alternative programme or provider. This means that we would collaborate with our Partner through either our formal Partnership Management Group or our individual Link Partnership Managers to produce an agreed plan for all relevant students to ensure your studies can be completed. This is highly likely to be an agreement that the College can continue to teach the degree until all students had completed the programme. On the rare occasion this is not a possibility the College would negotiate other suitable options with the partner.</p> <p>If no such suitable alternative were available, the College would consider a refund of tuition fees, as per the Tuition Fee Policy for the relevant year of study. This is available on the Blackburn College website: <a href="https://blackburn.ac.uk/important-documents-for-university-students">Important Documents for University Students (blackburn.ac.uk)</a></p>
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**Student  
Protection Plan**  
May 2023 - Present



			<p>The College has outstanding financial health as assessed by the ESFA and adequate cash reserves which would be sufficient to provide refunds and/or reimbursements in line with our policy for students identified as at risk of being unable to complete their programme of study.</p>
4.	<p><b>Management:</b> the risk that the College can no longer deliver material components of one or more of our courses due to staffing and/resources</p>	<p>Low Risk</p> <p>The College is bound by its agreements with our University partners to ensure we have adequate, appropriate staffing and resources in place in relation to the numbers of students enrolled. This is checked through annual or semester processes to confirm staffing is in place to each party's satisfaction.</p> <p>For students with additional support needs support is provided based on assessed need. In the unusual event that capacity to provide specialist support becomes an issue, the College has access to additional staff and external assessors that are approved to provide appropriate support as and when needed.</p> <p>With regards to physical resources, assurance again is evidenced by our agreements with our University partners. In addition, the College has dedicated IT support to maintain technical equipment and through the annual Business Planning process we ensure IT facilities and equipment are replaced periodically.</p>	<p>Additional reassurance for students: The College has the following processes in place to provide appropriate cover for staff absence should the need arise:</p> <p>The re-scheduling of the session if appropriate due to a short-term absence or appropriate staff cover.</p>

**Student  
Protection Plan**  
May 2023 - Present



		<p>Subject specialist resources such as those within the Art Studios are monitored and maintained by Facilitators. As we are a large College we have duplicated resources in our Further Education provision which could be used in an emergency situation.</p> <p>Finally, the College has a Business Continuity Plan which it revises annually to ensure that in the event of an unplanned change in circumstances / pandemic / natural disaster such as flooding, we can continue to provide our Educational and support services.</p>	
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Approved

## **Student Protection Plan May 2023 - Present**

**Section 2** details information regarding the policy we have in place at the College relating to student financial arrangements in the unlikely event we cannot preserve the quality or continuation of your programme of study.

Our Tuition Fee Policy covers consideration of a tuition fee refund in the unlikely event that we cannot continue to provide your programme of study or we cannot find you a suitable alternative programme or provider. The Tuition Fee Policy is available in full [here](#). The College has cash reserves of which would be sufficient to provide refunds and/or reimbursements in line with our policy for students identified as at risk of being unable to complete their programme of study.

**Section 3** details how we will communicate with applicants, current students and staff regarding this plan and how we will revise it periodically to ensure it is up-to-date.

### **3.1 Communication with Staff:**

The Student Protection Plan will be shared with Staff through publication on the staff intranet. For academics and support staff with a remit for HE provision the plan will be presented and discussed as part of the staff development programme organised through the Human Resources and Occupational Development Department. Where updates are made, this will be included in the annual staff training on Academic Regulations.

The University Centre at Blackburn College Academic Regulations and related policies and procedures are approved by our Academic Board. Through this existing Governance structure, we have amended our Course Closure/Approval processes to ensure the Student Protection Plan forms part of that process.

### **3.2 Communication with Students:**

The approved version of this Plan will be published on the College website and be uploaded onto Moodle.

### **3.3 Reviewing our Student Protection Plan:**

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually through Academic Board on which we have student representation. Mid-term and annual reports on our regulatory frameworks and risks are required by our Governor's through the Learning and Quality Committee, and this plan will form part of those reports and as part of its ongoing review.

### **3.4 Invoking the Student Protection Plan:**

In the event the College needs to take relevant action from this Plan, we will send targeted information to you, if you are affected, via email and/or text (as appropriate given the nature of the event). Full cooperation with the Students' Union will ensure you as an individual student is represented impartially, should you require additional support and representation. Should we need to close a course before you are able to complete it, we will discuss this with you as soon as is feasible and agree a closure date for that course and work through the plans in this document to support you to complete your programme albeit potentially in another institution. You will be given a minimum of two calendar months' notice of closure unless the reason for closure poses such a risk to staff and students that immediate action is required. We make our Complaints [Procedure](#) available to all our students and use the process as an opportunity to learn and improve.