

Student Protection Plan (HE)

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| Policy number: | CQ006 | Policy Owner: | Head of Faculty Higher and Adult Education |
| EIA Status: | Compliant | EIA meeting date: | 17/07/2025 |
| Approved by: | SLT | Date approved: | June 2025 |
| | Committee | | June 2025 |
| | Board | | |
| Review frequency: | Annually | Next review due: | 01/06/2026 |
| External website: | Yes | Status: | Active |
| Linked policies/ documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees, Refund and Compensation Policy • Complaints Policy and Procedure • Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement • Business Continuity Plans | | |

Policy Summary

University Centre Newbury (UCN) is committed to protecting higher education students' interests by managing risks that could disrupt their studies. The Student Protection Plan outlines how UCN assesses potential risks to course delivery and the measures in place to ensure continuity and quality of education.

Student Protection Plan (HE)

1. Policy Statement and Purpose

Newbury College, trading as University Centre Newbury (UCN), the designated higher education (HE) facility for the College, is committed to safeguarding student interests in the event of substantial changes affecting the delivery of HE programmes. This commitment is risk assessed through a Student Protection Plan, a requirement of the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory framework as required by the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA, 2017).

Purpose

This Student Protection Plan preserves the continuation and quality of study for HE students when a risk to students' continuation of study occurs. The plan outlines an assessment of risks, the likelihood that those risks will occur and the severity of the impact on students should the risks occur.

Scope

This plan applies to all HE students enrolled at UCN and covers risks to programme delivery due to a range of factors. This plan is in addition to the protection provided by consumer protection law.

The plan does not cover personal circumstances that might stop or limit a student's ability to continue their studies. It is not applicable if students voluntarily withdraw or are withdrawn for non-compliance with their Student Agreement, including failing to meet required academic standards or non-payment of fees.

2. Definitions

- **Higher Education (HE):** Education provided at academic levels 4 and above.
- **Higher Education and Research Act (HERA, 2017):** An act to make provision about higher education and research; and to make provision about alternative payments to students in higher or further education.
- **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA):** Collects, assures and disseminates data about HE in the UK on behalf statutory customers (e.g., OfS).
- **Office for Students (OfS):** Regulatory body for all English higher education.
- **Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA):** Independent body that reviews student complaints about HE providers in England and Wales.

3. Responsibilities

- **Head of Faculty Higher and Adult Education:** Oversees policy implementation and compliance.
- **Senior Leadership Team (SLT):** Ensures policy alignment with College and UCN goals.

4. Procedures

See Appendix A: Student Protection Plan for the period 2025-26.

5. Review, Compliance and Enforcement

Head of Faculty HE and Adults will review this policy annually for effectiveness and compliance, considering feedback from students and stakeholders, as recommended by the Office for Students (OfS). Any revisions made to the plan should be communicated to the OfS.

6. References

- Consumer Rights Act 2015 · Equality Act 2010 · Higher Education and Research Act 2017
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- OfS Regulatory Framework
- Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

7. Supporting Documents

- Appendix A: Student Protection Plan for the period 2025-26

8. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant legislation.

Reviewed: May 2024, June 2025

Next review date due: June 2026

Appendix A: Student protection plan for the period 2025-26

1. Provider's Details

Provider's name: Newbury College, trading as University Centre Newbury (UCN)

Legal address: Newbury College, Monks Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 7TD

Provider's UKPRN: 10004596

Contact point for enquiries about this plan: Head of Faculty HE and Adults, 01635 845000

2. Procedures

To ensure that all key stakeholders have access to and are familiar with the Student Protection Plan, it will be published on the College's website.

Responsibility of the plan sits with the Head of Faculty HE and Adults, who will:

1. Engage students in the discussion of the plan to ensure awareness and obtain feedback to inform any revision requirements.
2. Inform the OfS of revisions made to the plan.
3. Assess and manage risks related to programme delivery, including operational cessation; one or more locations for course delivery no longer available; course-specific delivery challenges; inability to deliver a particular mode of study; and recruitment or teaching limitations for certain student types.
4. Take action to protect student interests if a decision is made to change or close part or all the delivery of a programme or cease operation as a provider.
5. Inform students in a timely manner of any risk to the continuity of their studies, providing a minimum of 90 working days of the closure of a course.
6. Ensure students are provided with advice, guidance and support if significant changes occur that affect the provision of their studies.
7. Ensure students, partners and supporting employers have the opportunity to discuss any proposed changes, the likely impacts on provision and the measures in place to protect the provision.
8. Refer to the Student Protection Plan when programme changes are proposed and discussed.

3. Risk Assessment

| Risk | Impact | Probability | Mitigation |
|--|--------|-------------|---|
| Provider as a whole is no longer able to operate | High | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reserves are carefully monitored. • Business continuity plans in place. • Quality measures and monitoring in place. • Strategies, policies and key performance indicators (KPIs) monitored by SLT and where appropriate Corporation. |
| One or more of the locations at which course delivery takes place is no longer available | Medium | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active blended learning model in place. • Curriculum planning considers location of course delivery. • Alternative arrangements in place for off-site provision if needed. |
| Inability to deliver a specific course / course | High | Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual monitoring processes in place with awarding bodies/partners. • Validated provision is monitored by partner universities and termly meetings ensure compliance is maintained. • Student voice is recorded, monitored and actioned. • HE policies and procedures reviewed and updated where required. • Curriculum planning and implementation of 4Cast software. • 'Teach out' enrolled students until planned completion if a |

| Risk | Impact | Probability | Mitigation |
|---|--------|-------------|---|
| | | | decision is made to close a programme. |
| Inability to deliver material components of a course/courses | High | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist staff recruited. • Existing staff trained. • Effective curriculum planning process • Seek support from employers and university partners. |
| Inability to deliver in a particular mode of study | Medium | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust curriculum planning and implementation of 4Cast software. • Programme fees are reviewed each year by SLT. • Contract review meetings with university partners. • Robust quality assurance to identify any issues in delivery modes. |
| Risk of not being able to recruit or teach a particular type of student | Medium | Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from HE Skills for Success team. • Support from external agencies, including university partners, where required. |

4. Risk Mitigations

4.1 Risk of the Provider as a whole unable to operate

The risk of Newbury College as a whole provider being unable to operate is low because the College closely monitors financial reserves. Clear budget income and expenditure targets are set, actioned and monitored for all income streams. Reserves are managed prudently and undergo regular reviews by internal and external auditors. There is a robust process for the management of debts, with regular monitoring by the Finance Director and Corporation. Robust expenditure authorisation procedures are in place.

The College has a business continuity plan to deal with any incident that causes access to premises to be affected.

The College has not identified any major risks to HE quality or provision through its governance and management or through reviews by regulatory bodies (Education and Skills Funding Agency Funding Audit 2020 and Ofsted 2023).

The College seeks to maintain high standards by participating in quality standards.

To maintain the quality of HE provision the UCN follows internal/external quality assurance processes and feedback is actioned to ensure the quality of provision is sustained and improved where required.

Strategies, policies and KPIs are reviewed by Head of Faculty HE and Adults, SLT and Corporation (where appropriate) to ensure they support the sustained operation of the College. KPIs are monitored to manage any risks which may impact upon the financial viability of the College and its provision.

4.2 One or more of the locations at which course delivery takes place is no longer available

The risk that one more of locations of delivery is no longer available is low. The College has a business continuity plan to deal with any incident that causes access to premises to be affected.

UCN programmes are delivered using an active blended learning model which offers flexibility of delivery location.

Curriculum planning considers location of delivery prior to commencement of the course.

If a location is no longer available, an alternative location will be arranged and/or adjustment to the active blended learning model will be made. If off-site provision (i.e., Sport) is unable to access their normal premises, delivery can be moved to UCN, or adjustment made to the active blended learning model.

4.3 Inability to be able to deliver a specific course/courses

The risk of UCN losing approval to provide HE programmes is medium due to low recruitment numbers in some areas.

A programme may be withdrawn based on recruitment being too low to be financially sustainable or staff being unavailable to deliver the provision. If a programme is withdrawn, UCN will teach out enrolled students and new applicants to the programme will be notified of its withdrawal.

HE quality assurance processes are in place to identify, action and monitor risks. Internal HE quality processes support external processes to ensure that expected standards are met and mitigates the risk of losing approval.

Level 4 and 5 qualifications have centre approval agreements in place with awarding bodies. Annual monitoring processes and periodic centre reviews with awarding bodies scrutinise the validity and sustainability of provision.

Programmes awarded by university partners are contracted for a period of years. All university partner provision is regularly monitored by university partners to ensure academic standards; quality assurance and compliance is maintained.

Curriculum planning starts early in the academic year and includes resources and staffing plans to mitigate the risk of courses being cancelled. Labour market intelligence is used to inform the planning to ensure programmes are relevant to industry needs and potential student recruitment.

4.4 Inability to deliver material components of a course/courses

There is a low risk of a material component of a course being undeliverable due to its specialist nature. A unit or module may have been selected for delivery because of the expertise of an individual teacher or requested by a local employer. The risk occurs if the teacher becomes unavailable for an unforeseen reason.

UCN plans and manages its programmes to reduce the risk associated with specialist provision. Where specialist delivery is identified in the curriculum plan, existing staff will be trained, or specialist staff recruited. Where there is demand for specialist provision from the employers who inform the development of programmes, UCN would seek their support in training existing staff or draw upon their expertise to manage the gap in recruiting a replacement member of staff.

4.5 Inability to be able to deliver in a particular mode of study

The risk of inability to deliver a particular mode of study is low. Robust quality assurance identifies and actions any issues in delivery that may impact mode of study.

Each year, UCN undertakes curriculum planning and considers each programme's mode of study. Any change to mode of study would be considered by SLT as it would likely require a change to programme fees.

Contract review meetings with university partners take place annually to review provision and partner universities would advise on change in mode of study.

4.6 Risk of not being able to recruit or teach a particular type of student

The risk of not being able to teach a particular type of student is low. UCN aims to attract and retain a diverse student body within an inclusive learning environment, with appropriate safeguards in place. Our aim is to be an inclusive environment where individual differences are respected and where all staff and students have a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential (Newbury College's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement).

For students who disclose a disability, or who have been identified as having learning difficulties, reasonable adjustments are made, as appropriate to teaching and assessment practices as well as the wider student experience, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

5. Compensation and Refunds

If a satisfactory arrangement for the continuation of a planned programme of study cannot be found, the Fees, Refund and Compensation Policy will be applied. If compensation is deemed necessary, Newbury College holds professional indemnity and public liability insurances to support claims.

6. Dissatisfaction and Complaints

If the proposed changes fail to meet student satisfaction, students can make a complaint following the Complaints Policy and Procedure. Students may also raise a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).