



Student Protection Plan

2022-2023

A Student Protection Plan is a document that explains what students can expect to happen should a course, college or campus close. It looks at areas such as:

- The discontinuation of a course;
- Closure of a campus or college;
- Unanticipated changes to advertised programmes which affect the ability of the college to deliver the course as originally described.

The objective of such a plan is to outline how students would be able to continue their studies in such events and complete their studies or how they would be compensated or refunded if this is not possible.

Provider's name: Southern Regional College

Provider's UKPRN:

Legal address: East/West Buildings, Patrick Street, Newry, Co. Down, BT35 8DN

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Chris Evans – Head of Quality & Pedagogy
- evansc@src.ac.uk

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.

The College runs a risk register to assess the risks posed to the continuation of courses delivered within it.

The risk that SRC is unable to operate is low because they have been reclassified as part of central government resulting in their determination as a Non-Departmental Public Body. SRC has a strong track record of maintaining sound financial management to ensure financial viability and to ensure that the College continues to operate to high standards of corporate governance.

There is a low risk of SRC closing a campus location where the programme can then not be taught or an alternative nearby location not being made available. Estates run a risk register as well as robust risk assessment procedures that take into account a variety of situations that could lead to such closures and put actions and precautions in place to deal with these.

There is a low risk of discontinuing a current course of study with any plans to remove courses going through an annual course planning process. Where discontinuations are agreed, current cohorts finish out their courses before the programme is removed from the course planner.

The risk of not offering a programme due to insufficient enrolments or programme continuation is low/moderate. If the same level of course is delivered on another campus, learners would first be offered the opportunity to transfer locations. Should they not wish to do this or if capacity wouldn't permit it they would be then offered the opportunity to transfer to another course within the college, however if these options were not taken up then students would be provided with a refund subject to the course having not commenced and the student having not attended.

The risk of Professional bodies withdrawing accreditation is Low/Medium based on the circumstances of each individual organisation. However the college strives to maintain to a professional standard the policies and procedures that allow for each professional body to initially award its accreditation, hence removing the risk for any such withdrawal.

The risk of Partner institutions withdrawing accreditation is low as centre approvals are all up to date with any required revalidations always planned well in advance.

The risk of Employers withdrawing support for apprenticeships is low as the College's Business Support Unit maintains good relationships with current apprenticeship employers and runs successful Apprenticeship events annually which are strongly attended by 55 employers (2019/20)

There is a low/moderate risk of over reliance on a staff member/s for sole delivery of courses due to a consistent trawl from Human Resources for qualified staff with expertise in specialised areas.

The risk of a qualification obtained being different from what was enrolled upon is low, and while the college strives for continual development of its curriculum it maintains continuity in its advertised offer. SRC goes to great lengths to ensure accurate information is provided to customers through up-to-date prospectus and website entries that is built upon at information sessions such as Open Days and Pre- Entry Advice Sessions (PEAS). Review and quality enhancement methods allow for enhancements to the offer but do not permit wholesale change within the course of a programme cohort. Such deviations from the advertised offer come through the course planning process. Any adaptations that may be required in emergency situations will always be cleared through the College liaising with the Awarding Organisation or the Partner Institution for approval.

N.B. For details on above points, refer to Appendix 2 - SRC HE Course Closure, suspension and substantial change policy

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

The College is committed to delivering programmes according to schedules agreed at validation events and takes all reasonable steps to ensure continuation of delivery of its HE programmes. Therefore, if the decision is taken to close a programme all students already registered and actively studying on the programme will continue to be taught until the scheduled end date.

Programmes undertake an annual monitoring process of self-evaluation which evaluates a range of issues including teaching and learning, issues of continuation and resource issues. These are considered at HE SER review meetings and information from these and other relevant documents go on to form part of a wider Self Evaluation Document and action plan which is signed off by the College's Board of Governors.

In the case of a major emergency the College maintains a Management Plan which would be put in place in the case of any major form of disruption to provision. This details the process of moving provision to other campuses and providing temporary classrooms within a specified timeframe of any disastrous event.

For short term outages students would be supported to work remotely via the College VLE (Canvas) with teaching and assessment adjusting to suit the needs of the situation. Students will be communicated with as to arrangements for these events and there would be communication with partner HEIs on any alternative forms of delivery or assessment as a result of these changes.

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

See Appendix 1 – SRC Fees Policy 2022-23

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

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by having the SRC marketing team publish this on the college website and having student services include this in all relevant material prepared for Open Days and Pre-Entry Advice Sessions.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when they propose course changes by inclusion as part of the course planning process and course amendments procedures.

We will review our Student Protection Plan annually through our HE Advisory Board meetings. The views of students can be fed through Student Focus Groups to Coordinators who will in turn attend the HE Course Coordinators meetings as a follow on to the Advisory Board. Concerns raised here can be discussed and then actioned if required.

We will inform our students of material changes to their course through our Student Services teams via the contact details and permissions provided by each student during their college application. The maximum amount of notice will be given based on the changes required to the course

Fees Policy 2022-23

Process Area	Finance
Reference Number	FIN/002
Directorate	Finance and Planning

Issue No	Date	Details	Author	Approved
012	Nov 2017	Minor wording changes, new logo, new paragraph at section 4.4.	JO'H	Governing Body
013	Nov 2018	Minor Word changes, minor updates, Incorporation of Fee Refund Policy, sections 6 & 7, reorganisation of paragraphs	TMG	Governing Body
014	May 2019	Clarification of student responsibilities for paying fees, section 3, referencing Debt Management Policy, section 4, cancellation rights, section 7, and refund arrangements section 8	TMG	Governing Body
015	Aug 2019	No change to policy Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body
016	Aug 2020	No change to policy Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body
017	May 2021	Minor wording changes Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body

If requested, the College will make the policy available in alternative formats to accommodate visual impairments. The policy can also be downloaded from the College website and made available in alternative languages upon request.

POLICY STATEMENT

The College is not fully funded by the Department for the Economy (DFE) for all its education programmes and training activities. The shortfall in income required to fund its recurrent expenditure and capital investment programme is recovered by levying appropriate fees and charges payable by students, customers and users of its services. Fees and charges are therefore an important source of income to the College, without which it would not be able to deliver the range of programmes, attract and retain high quality staff and invest in new equipment and buildings to facilitate learning.

The aim of this policy is to establish guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational facilities and services. The College will therefore be able to recoup a reasonable proportion of expenditure while acting in a fair and equitable manner towards existing and prospective students and other customers.

The College has the power to set its own fees as set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum issued by DFE, dated 1 October 2018 and the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

1. SCOPE

The process of setting fees and charges shall take into account all relevant direct costs and overheads and will take into consideration market forces and competition, the College Development Plan, target market, competitor analysis, skill shortages and other relevant factors such as equality issues and the prevailing economic climate.

Fees and charges will be reviewed annually and the underlying financial objective will be to achieve full economic recovery for services provided to an external organisation or customer.

Where the benefits of charging are outweighed by the costs or where the imposition of such charges would have a detrimental effect on the purposes and aims of the College, such charges may be waived, or reduced but only in carefully considered circumstances. All such exceptions must be approved by the Chief Executive or the Director of Finance and Planning.

This policy is restricted to those facilities and services where the College has discretion in the levying of charges. Therefore the policy does **not** apply to the following:

- any subsidies, bursaries or exemptions as offered by the DFE, any other government agency or private benefactor.
- examination fees as charged by Awarding Bodies.
- financial support packages for students.
- loans as made available from the Student Loans Company or other equivalent authority.
- grants as made available from the Student Loans Company or other equivalent authority.
- those tuition fees established by external bodies, such as a university.
- part-time course fees for accredited and non-accredited programmes are derived from the number of taught hours and may include other costs such as examination/registration /assessment/residential/materials.

2. DEFINITIONS

Directorate	This comprises the Chief Executive and Directors
Accredited Course	Are those courses as defined on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Prescribed List of Accredited Qualifications (PLAQ) as defined by the Department for the Economy (DFE), or other courses approved by DFE including university validated courses.
International Students	International students are those students from countries outside the EEA who do not meet residency requirements as laid down by DFE. The fees for such students are based on 'full cost recovery' irrespective of whether they relate to Higher Education or Further Education programmes.
Tuition Fee	This refers to the amount due from a student (or his or her sponsor) as stipulated in the Annual Fees and Charges Schedule.
Examination Fee	The money collected by the College which is then forwarded to the awarding body.
Validation Fee	A sum of money required by the third party organisation responsible for ratifying the issue of qualifications (usually at third level).
Course Fee	Tuition Fees plus any examination, validation, material fees
Fee waiver	This refers to a reduction of the tuition fee due as stipulated in the Annual Fee and Charges Schedule.
Refund	This refers to the paid fee to be reimbursed to a student (or his or her sponsor).

A Glossary of Terms is included at **Appendix 1**.

3 PAYMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES

3.1 STUDENTS

The payment of fees is the responsibility of each student and they may be paid by cash, cheque, credit/debit card or other method approved by the College. Students will be required to pay all course fees at enrolment unless otherwise determined by the College. They are normally collected during enrolment at the beginning of the academic year, but where appropriate, additional fees may be collected at enrolment throughout the year.

- All Higher Education (HE) students will be required to commit themselves to the payment of the full fee due. All HE students must provide evidence that they have sufficient finance to pay course fees or **have made a genuine commitment to access financial assistance**.
- Fees payable by Student Loans Company are paid directly into the College Bank Account. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that all relevant paperwork has been completed and confirmation received before informing the College that they are supported by the Student Loans Company.
- A full time HE student may not be permitted to enrol unless they pay tuition fees or provide evidence of their application to the Student Loan Company. Full time HE students not applying to the Student Loan Company for a loan must pay full fees at enrolment unless instalment arrangements have been approved by the Finance Department.
- A part time HE student who is eligible for Student Finance NI support must pay a minimum of £100 or 25% of the full fee, whichever is higher, at enrolment, and set up an instalment plan if they are making an application for support to Student Finance NI. If the student is not eligible for support or applying for a loan they must pay the full fee at enrolment.
- Any amounts paid by HE students which are subsequently funded by the Student Loans Company will be refunded to the student.
- If the Student Loans Company withdraws support for the student as a result of the student's withdrawal or other change in circumstances the student will be liable for any recalled amount in addition to any outstanding fees.

The College will facilitate the administration of part-time higher education student grants through the Education Authority and student loans through the Student Loans Company insofar as the College will distribute the application forms.

It is the individual student's responsibility to complete and submit all appropriate forms and paperwork in support of any application for financial assistance.

3.2 SPONSORS

Where a student is sponsored by an organisation, a letter of confirmation, or the appropriate employer liability form, is required to enable enrolment and registration to take place.

Organisations and employers who sponsor students are liable for the full cost of the course fee. There shall be no concessions. Late payers may be charged interest and non-payers will have legal proceedings taken against them to recover outstanding fees together with any administrative costs incurred.

If the student leaves the sponsor's employment after the start date of the course the fee liability remains with the sponsor.

If the student leaves the sponsor's employment before the course starts the sponsor should notify the College in writing, before the course starts, to withdraw their support, in these cases the course fee liability will transfer, as appropriate, to the student. If the College is not notified in writing in advance of the start date the fee liability will remain with the sponsor.

Where a student is sponsored by an organisation and is also eligible for funding through the Education Authority then payment from Student Finance NI and the Student Loans Company will be acceptable.

4 COLLECTION OF STUDENT DEBT

Action will be taken by the College to recover any outstanding fees in accordance with the College Debt Management Policy.

5 COURSE TRANSFER

A student may transfer from one programme to another provided that permission is obtained from the lecturer in charge of the programme he/she wishes to join.

Lecturers granting such approval must bear in mind the educational needs of the applicant, the timing of the proposed transfer and whether or not such a transfer will meet the student's needs.

Examination/Registration fees may be transferred prior to registration with the external body. It should be noted that applicants may be requested to pay an additional tuition fee or alternatively they may be entitled to a partial refund where the fee differs.

6 FEE WAIVER

The College policy is that fees are not waived except in the circumstances outlined below.

Applications for fee waiver or refunds of fees paid shall be made in writing by an individual or organisation or by College staff on behalf of the applicant.

All applications shall be passed to the appropriate manager for processing.

Requests for the refund of tuition fees may be recommended for payment by the Campus Coordinator and authorised by the Chief Executive or his/her delegated authority, when:

- 6.1** A course/class is cancelled by the College; where cancellation of a course takes place, students will be offered either a place on a suitable alternative course or a full refund;
- 6.2** A student does not attend the course of study. Any student who fails to notify the College at least 5 working days before the course commences, shall be liable for a £30 administration fee.
- 6.3** Where an applicant has enrolled on a full cost recovery programme a minimum period of one months' notice is required for cancelling the enrolment. (Failure to provide such notice will mean that no refund will be offered);
- 6.4** If the time and day or evening meeting of the class has been changed and the student is unable to continue attending because of these changes; and

- 6.5** Other fee waiver or refund applications shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances by the Chief Executive, (or in his absence by the Director of Finance and Planning). Any case for exceptional circumstances to be considered must be supported by a statement from the appropriate Head of Faculty/Assistant Director.
- 6.6** If an applicant has made more than one attendance no reduction in fee or refund may be given, except in circumstances as in (6.4) or (6.5) above. However, where a refund has been refused it may be possible to transfer the tuition fee paid to another programme.

Registration, examination and validation fees will only be reduced or refunded if the amount is requested before the fee has been forwarded to the external body.

7 STUDENTS' RIGHT TO CANCEL

A student enrolled on a substantial course, i.e. a credit bearing course of 120 hours or more will have a right to cancel their course with no fee chargeable within 14 calendar days of the start of the course.

8 REFUNDS

Refunds of amounts paid can only be processed when;

- any student
 - a fee waiver results in a credit balance on the students' account;
 - Hardship fund support is confirmed;
 - any sponsor pays the course fee.
- FTHE student
 - provides evidence that a Student Loans Company loan has been approved, or the first loan instalment is paid to the College by the Student Loans Company;
- PTHE student
 - provides evidence that a means tested grant has been approved or the Student Loans Company pays the College the appropriate means tested grant;
 - provides evidence that a Student Loans Company loan has been approved or the first loan instalment is paid to the College by the Student Loans Company;
 - any student in receipt of both a loan and a means tested grant will be refunded any amounts they have paid when the student provides evidence that the loan and means tested grant amounts cover the cost of the fees;
- PTFE student
 - provides evidence that an FE Award has been approved.

Any student who receives a refund and who subsequently withdraws from the College before the full fee is paid to the College, or the Student Loans Company recalls any amounts paid will be referred to the College Debt Collection agent within 28 days of withdrawal if the account is not settled in full within that time.

Where a refund has been authorised, the refund will normally be made by cheque. In all instances the College will refund to the student any amounts they have paid that result in an overpayment to their account.

9 DISTRIBUTION

Sharepoint Policy Centre
Website

10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Management Statement / Financial Memorandum
- Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges
- Annual Schedule of Charges for the Hire of College Facilities
- Financial advice documents available on each campus
- Hardship Fund Policy
- Additional Support Fund Policy

11 FLOWCHART

None

12 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This policy has been subject to equality screening.

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation:	Description:
DFE FE HE NDAQ PLAQ QCF	Department for the Economy Further Education Higher Education National Database of Accredited Qualifications Prescribed List of Accredited Qualifications Qualifications and Credit Framework



**HE COURSE CLOSURE, SUSPENSION AND SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE:
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Process Area	Curriculum
Reference Number	CUR 013
Directorate	Curriculum

Issue No	Date	Details	Author	Approved
001	Feb 2018	First issue	CD/KK	Governing Body
002	Jan 2021	Policy reviewed – no changes to procedure	CD/KK	Governing Body

If requested, the College will make the policy available in alternative formats to accommodate visual impairments. The policy can also be downloaded from the College website and made available in alternative languages upon request.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this document is to set out the criteria for course closure, suspension and substantial change(s) to higher education courses offered by Southern Regional College.

This policy is linked to College Policy on Admissions, which is available on the College web site (www.src.ac.uk) and the College's Course Approval policy available on VLE.

2. SCOPE

All courses at Level 4 and above.

3. DEFINITIONS

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency, the independent body responsible for overseeing academic standards and quality in Higher Education
PSRB	Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies
Course Closure	No further intakes to the course and it will no longer be offered by the College
Course Suspension	No intake to the course for a specified period
Substantial Change	Alterations to a course that could potentially affect the decision of an applicant to take up their place and/or significantly vary the information provided to applicants or to students regarding the nature of the course
Awarding Organisations	Higher Education Institutions, Awarding Bodies and PSRBs
QPUI	The unit responsible for overseeing Quality and Pedagogy within the College

4. INTRODUCTION

The policy aligns with Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education and is informed by the Competitions and Markets Authority guidance on consumer law for UK HE providers (2015).

There are a number of reasons why a course may need to be closed or changed. These may include:

- Strategic realignment of College policy.
- Realignment of the curriculum policy and development of course offer.
- Development in vocational skills or external body (including awarding organisation and PSRB) requirement.
- Decrease in demand.
- Outcome of a periodic review or re-approval process.
- Staff skills required are temporarily/permanently unavailable and it is impossible to substitute them.
- Change in funding.
- Unforeseen changes imposed to entry criteria by an Awarding Organisation.

5. CONTEXT

Southern Regional College regularly reviews and updates its courses to ensure that its curriculum is relevant and to reflect best practice, taking account of the views of students and external stakeholders including employers. In exceptional circumstances, a course may be closed by the College or its awarding body/University partners or the College may no longer be able to teach a course or an aspect of a course to a specific group of students, or the College or awarding body/University partner may introduce a substantial change which will impact on applicants and/or current students.

When courses are closed or changed the following precepts will underpin the process.

- Students currently on courses will be supported to complete the course of study on which they are enrolled. This includes provision made for those with extenuating circumstances and leave of absence which may require completion beyond the normal period.
- Course closures and changes will normally be planned in the previous academic year for closure and before the recruitment process begins.
- Where it is impossible to make alterations or closures prior to recruitment as far as is possible, those who are prospective students (in receipt of course information or have entered the admission process) the College will engage with affected students to ensure a mutually acceptable outcome.
- External partners including awarding bodies and professional statutory and regulatory bodies will be fully informed of plans.

6. DEFINITIONS

Course Closure

The College may, when deemed necessary, close a course meaning that there will be no further intakes to the course, and it will no longer be offered by the College. Those students already enrolled on the course will continue to progress and complete the course. Where students have broken study due to extenuating circumstances or leave of absence the College will provide support for completion and this may include with an alternative course or transfer to another provider.

Course Suspension

The College may, where deemed necessary, suspend a course meaning that there will be no intake to the course for a specified period (normally the following academic year). Students currently registered on the course will continue to progress and complete the course.

Substantial Change

Substantial changes constitute alternations to a course that could potentially affect the decision of an applicant to take up their place and/or significantly vary the information provided to applicants or to students regarding the nature of the course and its component parts.

Substantial changes could include:

- Change of course location (to another Campus)
- Change to the title of a course
- Change to the accreditation of a course
- Change to the mode of delivery (e.g. from full to part time)
- Substantial changes to the curriculum, assessment or modules

Substantial changes must be notified (and approved) in a timely fashion and should normally be agreed one year in advance of the next intake. Where substantial changes are intended to impact on current students and/or represent changes to the information already provided for applicants, these will be exceptional, must involve consultation and agreement with students, and/or applicants. The College will endeavour to engage with all students at the earliest opportunity.

7. PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

PLANNING FOR COURSE CLOSURE, SUSPENSION OR SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE

STAGE ONE

The Curriculum Directorate through the curriculum planning process will propose courses for closure, suspension or substantial change.

Securing Approval to Close, Suspend or Substantially Change a Course

The academic faculty must in the first instance make an assessment of the rationale for, and impact of, a proposed course closure, suspension or substantial change, and ensure discussion with relevant parties as indicated in this document. This includes other College curriculum and support departments including Quality and Pedagogy Unit, Admissions, Marketing, MIS, Examinations and awarding organisations.

The Head of Faculty must complete the course closure form in the form centre to notify course closure, suspension or substantial change of a HE course and submit to the College's Curriculum Directorate.

Once agreement has been reached by College Executive that the course may close, the Head of Faculty will formally notify the appropriate functional sections to ensure that the course is removed from the College's course information promotional materials by Marketing and the awarding organisation to ensure removal from UCAS if appropriate. The status of the course should be reflected in College records as "course closed".

STAGE 2

The Head of Faculty will carry out the following:

- Notify internal departments including MIS, Examinations, Admissions, Student Finance and Quality.
- Liaise with Quality and Pedagogy Unit to notify awarding organisation and current External Examiner/Verifier.
- Notify and communicate with current students in writing (durable medium).
- Notify and communicate with prospective students in writing (durable medium).

COMMUNICATION IN THE EVENT OF COURSE CLOSURE, SUSPENSION OR SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE

Area	Action	Responsibility
Communication with current students	Arrangements for students to: Complete the course. Extenuating circumstances. Leave of Absence. Limit to registration. Written communication.	Head of Faculty
Communication with prospective students	Arrangements for students who have been interviewed or requested information to provide options including signposting and details of change/closure including timescale. Written communication.	Head of Faculty/Head of Campus Services
Notification of awarding organisation	Liaise with QIU to discuss plan to change or close course with AO and EE where applicable. Complete and process awarding organisation administration procedures.	Head of Faculty/Head of Examinations
Management of recruitment and publicity materials	Course descriptor removed from college intranet and awarding organisation if applicable. Reference in College marketing materials to be removed.	Head of Faculty/Head of Marketing
Head of Faculty/Head of Marketing/MIS/ Finance/Quality	Admissions: request to remove course from the admission process. MIS: Removal/suspension of course from QL. Examinations: Cleansing of data and student registrations issues. Finance: student financial issues/awarding organisation financial implications. Quality: Examination Board and quality assurance processes.	Head of Faculty

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Written communication (durable medium) is required to update current and where possible, prospective students. The College intranet and other usual forms of communication will be used to support the process.

MONITORING AND REVIEW AND STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

Course changes and closures will be monitored through the yearly curriculum planning process.

Strategic oversight will be provided through the Executive Team and outcomes forwarded to the Senior Curriculum Management Team and the Education Committee of the Governing Body.

8. DISTRIBUTION

VLE

All Clients

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Admissions Policy

Course Approval Policy

Course Planner

Awarding Organisation Schedule of Approvals

Awarding Organisation Regulations

CC01 Course Closure, Suspension, Substantial Change Form (Form Centre)

10. FLOW CHART FOR COURSE CLOSURE, SUSPENSION AND SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE

