



Higher Education Policy: Student Information and Consumer Protection

Version:	1
Originator:	Vice Principal, Higher Education
Equality Impact Assessed:	27/09/17
Approved by:	SMT
Date Approved:	14/09/17
Review Interval:	3 Years
Review Date	14/09/20
Audience:	Students, Applicants, Staff & Governors

Contents

1.0	Purpose and Scope	3
2.0	Information for Students	3
3.0	The Course Offer – Withdrawal of Modules/Units.....	5
4.0	Withdrawal of Advertised Programmes	5
5.0	End of Validated Programme.....	6

1.0 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This document describes
- a) How the College will ensure that prospective students (applicants) and current students are able to access timely and accurate information in order to make informed decisions.
 - b) The obligations of the College to applicants and current students in relation to the modules/units that are offered on its higher education programmes and the arrangements that will be made if changes to the course offer are required.
 - c) The exceptional circumstances that will give rise to a decision by the College to withdraw an unconditional or conditional offer of a place on a higher education programme and the arrangements that will be put in place in such an eventuality.
 - d) The arrangements to be put in place in the event of changes to the validation arrangements for a course i.e. 'teach out'.¹
- 1.2 This policy and the associated procedures seek to ensure that students' reasonable expectations for fairness and transparency of information and process are met as described in the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) guidance to students and higher education institutions.²
- 1.3 The policy is to be read in conjunction with the College's Student Complaints procedure for higher education and NESCOL HE Terms and Conditions (HE Students) - see the College website at <http://www.nescot.ac.uk/policies>.
- 1.4 The College has sought to follow, wherever possible, the good practice guide published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on behalf of HEFCE.³

2.0 Information for Students

- 2.1 Students should expect to receive up front, clear, timely, accurate and comprehensive information at all points during the student journey. The student journey is defined as covering the student experience as a prospective student or applicant to enrolled student and finally to Graduated at the end of their studies.

¹ 'Teach out' means where a university who accredits a NESCOL course will cease to do so beyond a specified date and where arrangements will need to be put in place to transfer a student to a cognate course under separate accreditation arrangements.

² Competition and Markets Authority 'Higher education: guide to consumer rights for students' (March 2015); Competition and Markets Authority 'Higher education: consumer law advice for providers' (March 2015)

³ HEFCE 'Information For Students: A guide to providing information to prospective undergraduate students' (2017)

2.2 NESCOL will seek to ensure that it provides clear, timely, accurate and comprehensive information to prospective students. It is important to recognise that the overwhelming majority of its higher education students progress internally from further education courses at the College and do not apply through the UCAS system.

2.3 The information provided to prospective students comprises -

- a) Course title and final award (certificate)
- b) Name of the awarding body i.e. the validating university
- c) Length of the course
- d) Start and end dates of the course
- e) Details of work and study placements
- f) Location of study i.e. campus
- g) Details of any accreditation by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSBR) e.g. General Osteopathic Council, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- h) Timetable information – if not available details of when information will be provided to students
- i) Entry requirements including arrangements for the recognition of prior learning or experience where applicable, additional requirements such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) report etc.
- j) Overview of the course
- k) Course/academic year structure
- l) Details of modules/units including those that are mandatory and those that are options. Information will also be given about how and when decisions are made about which modules are to be offered in any year and how students will be advised of these matters.
- m) An overview of teaching and learning activities
- n) Indicative class sizes
- o) Details of taught hours and independent study required (workload)
- p) Support available for students i.e. learning and disability support that can be accessed by students
- q) Details of the teaching team wherever possible.
- r) Information about assessment and feedback arrangements on the course including informal (formative) and formal (summative) assessments.
- s) Details of the assessment components of each module/unit including how they contribute towards the final award if applicable.
- t) Tuition fees, other course-related costs if applicable.
- u) Accommodation arrangements and costs
- v) Financial support that is available to students.

2.4 Prospective students will be supplied with this information via

- a) The College website
- b) Offer letter(s) and related communications
- c) The Student Handbook – provided to students at induction

- d) On-programme course communications – typically provided to students by the Programme Leader
- e) 'Weblearn' (online Virtual Learning Environment – VLE)

2.5 The College will seek at all times to ensure that information on the College website is up-to-date. Appropriate website information maintenance arrangements are in place. The College will ensure that information is up-to-date in time for the internal HE progression events that take place at the College in the Spring term.

3.0 The Course Offer – Withdrawal of Modules/Units

3.1 Wherever possible the College will make available the advertised modules/units to students. In the case of Pearson (Higher National) programmes where there are a very large number of potential optional units advertised in the programme specification, the most likely units to be offered will be described as set-out in 2.4 above.

3.2 It may not always be possible to make available the full diet of optional modules/units on a course because of changes in teaching staff availability, class size/group viability factors or timetabling constraints. Students will be advised of these changes at the earliest opportunity and when the modules/units might be offered at a future point.

4.0 Withdrawal of Advertised Programmes

4.1 When a programme of study is advertised on the College website, UCAS and other published channels including the higher education prospectus, the College will always seek to honour unconditional or conditional offers to applicants. In exceptional circumstances the College may be obliged to withdraw an advertised programme. The specific circumstances that will give rise to the withdrawal of a programme of study will be limited to a) course viability b) staff availability c) serious concerns regarding course quality or d) the absence of approval by the external validating partner.

4.2 The College is mindful of the serious consequences of the late withdrawal of an advertised course for applicants and it is not a decision that will be taken without extremely careful consideration and as a matter of the last resort. Such a decision will require the approval of the College Senior Management Team after all other options have been considered. In order to be fair to applicants and their future study options, the College will seek to make decisions about whether to close entry to a course at the earliest possible opportunity. Such a decision will be taken at the no later than the end of the summer term and earlier whenever possible.

- 4.3 When a higher education programme of study is to be withdrawn from offer all course applicants will be contacted in writing. The reasons for the withdrawal of the course offer will be clearly described. If possible, applicants will be given an alternative course offer at the College. If there isn't a suitable alternative or the student does not wish to take up the offered alternative, the College will endeavour to arrange a transfer to another suitable course at a neighbouring college or higher education institution. If the student has applied through UCAS, the student will be released to make an application elsewhere

5.0 End of Validated Programme

- 5.1 On rare occasions a higher education course with enrolled students may become no longer available. This could occur because: -
- a) the validating HEI partner has decided to cease to provide the validation for that course
 - b) the College has decided to cease offering the course
 - c) The College has decided to change the validation arrangements for the course
- 5.2 When a course is to be closed to new applicants arrangements will be put in place to continue to deliver the course to continuing students until they have exited their programmes i.e. 'Teach out'. So that this process can be managed efficiently teaching will continue to be offered until the last cohort of students would normally have completed their course i.e. at the end of the third year for a three year degree programme. So that students who may have interrupted their studies because of properly authorised illness or deferral or who are retaking parts of a course are not unreasonably disadvantaged, 'teach out' will normally be extended by one further year i.e. 'teach out'+1 year.
- 5.3 When the validation arrangement for a course are to change and enrolled students have failed to complete their programme before the end of the 'teach out' or 'teach out + 1' arrangements, the College will endeavour to ensure that that any remaining continuing students can transfer to the new course. This will require the development of suitable 'articulation'⁴ arrangements to be agreed between the validating partners of the old and new course.

⁴ Where students are admitted to a course with advanced standing recognising prior achievement from another course.