

Student Protection Plan

Student protection plan

Provider's name: North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT)

Provider's UKPRN: 10004686

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Student protection plan for the period 2022/23

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

NESCOT has been providing higher education programmes since 1953 when the College opened. It has strong finances and is assessed by the Education and Skills Funding Agency as having outstanding financial health. The College's net assets are worth £56.83m (July 2022 Management accounts) with substantial reserves. The risk to the future continuation of NESCOT as an education provider in the Surrey area is considered to be very low.

The North East Surrey College of Technology has assessed the following as potential risks to students' continuation of studies:

1.1 Loss of Validation from one or all of the College's university partners (very low risk)

The College has partnerships with the Open University, London South Bank University, Kingston University, University of Greenwich and the University of West London to offer a range of higher education programmes. Regular monitoring meetings, application reporting and communication takes place between the College and senior members of the respective universities who validate NESCOT's programmes. The quality of provision is subject to annual review at programme and institutional level. Periodic reviews occur on a five-year rolling basis. These measures ensure that any issues of potential poor performance are identified early and addressed. No significant issues have been raised in 2021-22 academic year.

1.2 Closure of Campus or Location of Study (Very low risk)

NESCOT is based at a single main campus in Epsom, Surrey. The College has previously had satellite provision at a number of different UK sites, however these arrangements have now all ceased.

1.3 Closure of a programme (moderate risk)

There are a number of very limited circumstances in which the College would need to consider closure of a programme whilst students are currently enrolled or have received offers. These are: -

- a) Where low levels of student recruitment prejudice the financial viability and quality of the student experience; and
- b) Where it is not able to provide suitably qualified and experienced specialist tutors.

The College has no current plans to close any of its offered higher education programmes in the next three years, subject to viable student recruitment and financial viability. As a provider of HE in an FE environment NESCOT makes a commitment to its students to provide small group teaching and an intensity of support that is valued by students.

1.4 Failure to offer or to close a mode of study option for a programme (very low risk)

There are very limited circumstances in which NESCOT would withdraw a mode of study option for students. In most circumstances the College would infill students onto the same programme on another mode if a particularly mode of study was under threat because of low numbers for example. These arrangements are always made in consultation with students taking into account their personal circumstances and needs.

The College keeps its portfolio of programmes under regular review, and may occasionally discontinue a

programme for reasons of academic or financial sustainability or as part of ensuring the currency of our offering.

The closure of all programmes is subject to approval by the College's Senior Management Team. Any closure of programme does include consideration of how the interests of current and prospective students are protected.

The risk to students' continuity of study is considered to be moderate, as the College's normal practice is to 'teach- out' programmes which are closing to ensure that students receive the degree that they registered for.

1.5 Loss of the College's Tier 4 sponsor licence (low risk)

NESCOT has a Tier 4 Visa sponsor licence for students coming to study with us from outside the EU. There is a risk for any provider that UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) could withdraw our licence to sponsor students on a Tier 4 Visa. This would mean that these students would not be able to continue their studies with us and would lose their right to remain in the UK unless another institution were able to provide sponsorship.

The risk of us losing our Tier 4 Sponsor status is considered to be low, because we have a low visa refusal rate for our students; the College has very few Tier 4 students.

1.6 Loss of PSRB accreditation for a programme (moderate risk)

Three of our programmes of study are accredited by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB): General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP); and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). Successful completion of some of these programmes will lead to chartered status with the relevant PSRB. It is possible that a PSRB may withdraw its accreditation for one or more of our programmes of study, meaning that students completing the programme would no longer be awarded chartered status.

The risk of the College losing accreditation for one of these programmes is considered to be moderate. We engage closely with all PSRBs and regularly assess our compliance with requirements for teaching and assessment standards and other key practices.

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

This section covers the measures which we have put in place to mitigate the risks which we have identified as 'moderate' in section 1, on the basis that these are risks with a greater likelihood of being crystallised.

2.1 Closure of a Programme (moderate risk)

In the event that the College is unable to continue offering a programme of study for any reason, wherever possible we will 'teach out' the programme so that students can complete their programme of study providing that students continue to have a high quality academic experience. The College has sufficient reserves to honour this commitment. Our agreements with our university partners include a commitment to provide continuity of study for students.

It is highly unlikely that teach out arrangements cannot be made. In this unlikely circumstance NESCOL would work in partnership with the validating (Higher Education Institution (HEI) to provide a suitable alternative programme or make arrangements with another institution for students to be accepted with advanced standing onto a comparable programme i.e. credits will be transferred to another provider. This relocation may involve inconvenience to some students, for example increased travel time and costs. The College will compensate students for reasonable additional travel costs incurred as a result of the transfer of their programme. Such claims for compensation will be considered on an individual basis.

In the exceptional circumstance that a validated programme is closed and the College is not able to preserve continuation of study, compensation arrangements will be as set out of the College's HE Terms and Conditions Policy for 2021/22.

2.2 Loss of PSRB accreditation for a programme (moderate risk)

NESCOL has close working relationship with its PSRB organisations. Internal quality assurance procedures require course teams to give due consideration to PSRB requirements e.g. PSRB is a standing item at all Board of Study meetings. Annual reports are submitted to each PSRB; sponsored quality reviews are undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency on behalf of PSRBs, for example in the case of Osteopathic Medicine.

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

The Fees and Refund policy is published on the College website as part of the combined Terms and Conditions (HE) policy.

The policy provides for:

- Refunds for students in receipt of tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company
- Refunds for students who pay their own fees
- Refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor
- The payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course or funding to offset additional costs incurred by relocation e.g. where childcare costs increase significantly.
- Commitments to honour student bursaries.
- Compensation in respect of maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study; and tuition fees and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider and these are not otherwise provided for by the usual arrangements.

The College had total net assets of £56.83m as at 31 July 2022. Appropriate budgetary provision has been made in the unlikely event that the College is unable to preserve continuation of study for students.

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

We will communicate our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by publishing it on our website, by signposting the Student Protection Plan when making offers to applicants and, in the case of current students, by including updated details in programme handbooks.

We will communicate the Student Protection Plan to College staff through

- publication of the College Staff Intranet
- updates to the College's HE Quality Handbook
- Relevant training (e.g delivered at all-College CPD days)

The Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually by the HE Board which includes student representation nominated by the HE Student Council.

The Student Protection Plan covers a range of potential risks to students' continuity of study and what the College will do in the event that a risk crystallises. How we will communicate and consult with students will depend on the nature of the situation in which the Student Protection Plan has to be implemented, so it is not possible to be specific in advance. The overarching principle is that, wherever possible, we will consult with students at the earliest opportunity to ensure that students are fully informed and can provide their views. We will normally do so through the Students' Council (which is supported by the College to provide students with independent advice and representation), and through existing mechanisms that we use to involve students in their teaching and learning, such as student representatives on programme committees.