

Writtle University College FE Student Protection Plan

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1. Introduction

1.1 Writtle University College (“the University College”, “WUC”, “we”) is committed to supporting all students to achieve the best possible outcomes from their studies. When you accept an offer of a place at WUC, and when you enrol on a WUC course of study, we make a series of commitments to you about the services we will provide. These are contained in our FE Academic regulations policy. The policy can be accessed here:

<https://writtle.ac.uk/FE-Regulations-&-Policies>

1.2 We will do everything possible to avoid implementing any changes which significantly affect the content or delivery of your course at WUC. However, sometimes events occur which mean that we do have to make changes to your course; or, in extreme cases, which mean that you are unable to complete your studies at WUC. This Student Protection Plan explains what these risks are, and what action we will take should they arise.

2. Risks affecting applicants to WUC FE courses

2.1 Course suspension or withdrawal

a) When we offer you a place to study at Writtle University College, we will invite you to accept that offer as part of which you will be required to review and accept our Terms and Conditions. This confirms that you have accepted the place on your chosen course.

b) Sometimes we will need to suspend or withdraw a course in between an applicant accepting an offer and the course commencing. **There is a reasonable chance of this occurring where we have received lower than anticipated application numbers to a particular course.** In this scenario, it may be financially non-viable for WUC to run the course and we may not be able to guarantee the quality of the student experience.

c) We appreciate the disappointment and disruption this can cause for applicants and we will make reasonable endeavours to avoid such action. Where it **is** necessary to suspend or withdraw a course, we will take that decision as early as possible.

d) Following a decision by the University College to suspend or withdraw a course of study, we commit to notifying all offer holders by email within 48 hours and all applicants within 5 working days.

e) Wherever possible we will offer a place on an alternative WUC course of study, subject to admissions requirements.

3. Risks affecting current students enrolled on WUC FE courses

3.1 Major changes to course content or delivery

a) We recognise that you have chosen a WUC course of study based on the information we provided to you at the point of application. We will make reasonable endeavours to avoid major changes to the content and delivery of your course.

b) A 'major' change to a course might include the substitution of core modules, a change to the accreditation attached to the course, a change to the length of study or material changes in how the course is assessed. Minor changes to a course, for example updates to module content or minor changes to academic regulations, are normal in any FE College and are not considered a risk to continuation of study.

c) Where major changes are planned to a course, these will normally apply to future student intakes and will be reflected in the course information available to applicants. The need for us to make major changes to your course is only likely to occur in the event of sudden staffing changes or an unforeseen business continuity risk. **Consequently, there is a low risk of WUC needing to make major changes to your course.**

d) In the event that we deem it necessary to make major changes mid-way through a course, and where existing students are therefore affected, we will ensure that all changes are discussed with student programme representatives and considered by the Academic Board (where WUC students are represented).

e) Where you remain dissatisfied with the above approach and no longer wish to remain enrolled on your course, we will make reasonable endeavours to facilitate transfer to another education provider.

f) The University College operates on one campus in Writtle, Chelmsford. As we are a single-campus Further Education provider, we do not envisage a change in the location of your course.

3.2 Course withdrawal

a) Writtle University College frequently reviews and refreshes its portfolio of academic courses. We may take a strategic decision to close an individual course due to falling student demand, resourcing constraints, because it is non-viable academically or because it no longer aligns with our mission. However, in almost all cases a decision to close a course will apply to future intakes and WUC will commit to "teach out" current students enrolled on the course.

b) It is possible that WUC may take a decision to withdraw a course mid-way through delivery, such that currently enrolled students are unable to complete their courses. This is only likely to occur in the event of sudden and significant staffing changes or an unforeseen business continuity risk. The University College has never in the past taken a decision to close a course to current students. **Consequently, there is a low risk of WUC withdrawing a course before currently enrolled students have had the opportunity to complete their studies.**

c) In a “teach out scenario” we commit to consulting with all students on the programme and putting in place an action plan to address any risks affecting student learning opportunities or the quality of the student experience. We judge there to be a low risk that currently enrolled students will be detrimentally affected. However, there is a risk that part-time, repeating or intermitting students may face difficulties completing the programme in line with the majority of the cohort, which might mean that the quality of their student experience cannot be guaranteed, or that they are unable to complete the course before it is withdrawn.

d) In the unlikely event that a course is immediately withdrawn and currently enrolled students are unable to complete their studies, we will consider the implications for each student and hold individual meetings to discuss future study options. We commit to either:

- transfer students to another suitable WUC course of study; or
- facilitate transfer to a course at another education provider (though WUC cannot guarantee acceptance onto a course at other providers).

3.3 Disruption to teaching or assessment

a) Where it is necessary to cancel a scheduled teaching event, for example due to staff sickness, we will seek to reschedule the event or to substitute it with an equivalent activity or suitable set of learning materials. We will use reasonable endeavours to avoid significant changes to your timetable.

b) It is possible that you may experience a period of sustained interruption to your course, for example due to multiple staff shortages or local or national industrial disputes. In the unlikely event that this occurs, we will seek to make changes to course delivery so that teaching and assessment can continue, rather than closing or suspending your course. We will ensure that normal services are resumed as soon as possible and we will make reasonable endeavours to prevent you being disadvantaged by the action.

c) It is possible that you may experience disruption to your studies as a result of events beyond the reasonable control of the University College. This might include, but is not limited to:

- extreme weather;
- war, riots or civil commotion;
- an actual, suspected or threatened act of terrorism;
- national emergencies;
- pandemic, quarantine or widespread illness; and
- default of suppliers of sub-contractors.

d) In such circumstances the University College will resume normal services as soon as possible and will use reasonable endeavours to prevent you being disadvantaged by the situation.

e) Where an operational, financial, regulatory or “force majeure” event requires WUC to make a major change to your teaching or assessment, we will ensure that you are not financially penalised, either with respect to tuition fees or reasonable costs, should additional periods of teaching and assessment be required beyond your original course schedule.

f) WUC accepts no liability for failure to perform any of its obligations under its Terms and Conditions where that failure is caused by an event beyond the reasonable control of the University College which could not have been foreseen or prevented even if the University College had taken reasonable care.

3.4 Loss of university status or withdrawal of designation for student support purposes

a) In the event that the regulator removes university college status or withdraws designation for student support purposes, we expect the change to be applied in a transitional manner such that currently enrolled students are not directly affected. We will make reasonable endeavours to minimise disruption to currently enrolled students and we commit to informing all offer holders as soon as possible.

b) The University College has no reason to believe that loss of university college status or withdrawal of designation is likely to occur during the course of your studies.

3.5 Institutional closure

a) Where the University College has no option other than to close, it will take the following steps to protect continuation of study for all students:

- i. Wherever possible closure will take place on a phased basis, so that currently enrolled students are able to complete their studies.
- ii. Where the above is not possible, we will facilitate transfer to a course at another further education provider (though WUC cannot guarantee acceptance onto a course at other providers).
- iii. We will explore the possibility of merger with another institution to maintain all or part of our current provision.

b) The University College is asset rich. Our estate is 220 hectares, which includes numerous assets with varying degrees of liquidity. They are not considered to be dependent on each other and, if disposed of independently, would not adversely affect the University College's education provision. Furthermore, the University College's income is derived from a diverse range of sources, including, but not limited to, further education income and funding, rent from halls of residence, commercial lets, rent from houses, short courses and conferencing and events.

4. Further information and feedback

4.1 This Student Protection Plan was developed in consultation with the HE Quality team who consulted with WUC HE students during spring-summer 2018 and had the support and involvement of the Writtle University College Students' Union.

4.2 This document will be reviewed and republished on an annual basis. Student Protection Plans applicable to each cohort of students (from 23-24 onwards) are available on the Writtle University College Website.

4.3 If you have a concern that this Student Protection Plan has not been applied correctly, or that the terms of this plan have been insufficient to address disruption to, or discontinuation of, your studies, please contact the Director of Further Education in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied with the actions taken to address your concerns, you may submit a complaint by following the WUC complaints procedure (http://writtle.ac.uk/PDFS/complaints_procedure.pdf)

Version Control

Version Number	Purpose/Amendment	Date
1.0	Introduction of policy in line with HE policy of the same	23/09/21
1.1	Review for academic year 2022-23	24.08.22
1.2	Review for academic year 2023-24	30.10.23