



Overview / Purpose

The Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) has responded to the need for consumer protection of the UK Higher Education sector.

The OFS has been instructed as part of Higher Education Research Bill (2017) recommendations to ensure that all Higher Education providers produce a Student Protection Plan as part of their registration with the OFS from 2018.

The intention of this plan is to provide protection and assurances to all HE students at application and throughout their study stage to safeguard and provide fair and transparent information if changes to courses and institutions are likely to take place. This could be due to areas such as potential financial instability, market changes, loss of Partnership provision and relocation of local industry.

This plan outlines the intentions of The East Sussex College Group and the commitment it makes to both its applicants and current students to address any potential disruptions that are likely to impact their complete student experience and on-going study. It provides guidance and plans that the institution has in place to protect them.

Reference and responses have been made to the good practice standards in *the DFE Higher Education & Research Bill - section 9 measures to protect students*:

- **Transparency, fair and accessible plans. Any key changes shall be communicated in a timely manner**
- **Any changes to courses or closures shall be provided to students at application and enrolment cycles.**

There shall be:

- **Clarity of options**
- **Accurate information/notification**
- **Consultation with students**
- **A clear process to ensure continuity for student studies and indications of any potential negative influences which may impact on this.**
- **An arrangement set out for continuity of provision in the event of closure(s)**
- **Provision to support and facilitate where possible, students wanting to transfer to the East Sussex College Group from other institutions.**

This information will be covered in the college Student Protection Plan statement (below) that will be published on the college website, provided to applicants at application stage and in Course level Handbooks.

The intention is to provide a statement that communicates clearly to students and can be used across multiple platforms and updated when appropriate. (Reviewed annually)

HE Student Protection Statement 2021

Informing students of change:

Minor course changes

The college is committed to making on-going changes to courses such as the updating of the curriculum and/ or staffing but these will not trigger the Student Protection Plan. However, students will be notified of these changes if relevant prior to the commencement of their studies.

Applicants / New students

- The college will communicate any possibility of changes of circumstances to an individual, group or employer of students, if the course they have applied for fails to recruit against college targets resulting in a decision by the college not to deliver that course for the new academic year. This decision and communication will take place at the latest two weeks after the final UCAS deadline by the 20th May (ESCG Admissions / Policy and Procedures 2021). This applies to students who have accepted confirmed firm places on any of the college's level 4, 5 & 6 courses funded by OFS.
- All students will be informed by letter outlining and explaining changes and possible options that could be taken up with the support of the college HE team. This might include options to study at other local HEI's or partner colleges dependent on travel, places, financial and work commitments.
- HE Student fees per annum will not change (i.e. remaining as advertised on the college website)
- Bursary information will remain as provided to all students at application and enrolment stage.

For students who wish to transfer from another HE provider they need to ensure that they have the relevant cats points to apply to the college dependent of level of study and will be accepted and are eligible to attend one of the colleges courses after a successful interview has taken place, and confirmation of the relevant student funding.

Existing students

- The college will guarantee delivery and the timely completion of its HE courses for all existing cohorts of students. If for any reason it has been decided to close a particular course in the future, or make changes to mode of delivery, campus site or staffing, the college will honour the commitments made at the commencement of their course.
- Course meetings or wider communications with students will be made available with HE College Management, to ensure any potential changes to the delivery of the

course (s) are clearly communicated by the college and a period of consultation is undertaken with the students to ensure decisions are transparent, fair and manageable for the students.

- The college is committed to continuing the support processes featured in its student agreement for its existing students.
- The college will support intermitting and repeating students, enabling them to complete their studies within the timeframe commensurate with its respective awarding body, this would include the provision of bespoke tutorial support for non-available elements of provision.
- Students may also be offered the opportunity:
 - to transfer to another provider (where provision is within a consortium of colleges)
 - to transfer their award to a new validating authority (where there is continuity of teaching but a change in validating institution)
 - to transfer to equivalent courses within the University subject to a mapping exercise of course learning outcomes, content delivered to date and student achievement profile, and appropriate operational considerations in terms of the impact on resources and cohort size.
- Full or partial refunds will only be considered in special cases where the college is unable to support students with continued study, if students decide to leave the college.
- No changes to Course fees will be made mid-course.

Material Changes

Material changes can trigger the Student Protection Plan; this would include the cost of the course, type of qualification, change of awarding body, location or other key factors on which student's enrolment was based. If this is the case students will be provided with the same communication options available to all existing HE students.

The college may need to make changes due to:

- Significant reduction in attendance beyond our control resulting in course or department closure
- Strategic decision to close a centre, discontinue a course or to move the course to a better facility
- Restructure or change put in place by an external body