



Student Protection Plan

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Audience:	Students

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1. Purpose

This Policy responds to the requirement to maintain a Student Protection Plan under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 to protect student experience in the event of programme changes or closure.

2. Scope

Oxford Business College (the College) is committed to ensuring excellent academic and professional outcomes for its students, and to that extent has planned to assess a range of risks to non-continuation of study. The College will provide students with an assessment of these risks and the strategies it plans to implement to prevent those risks from crystallising. This plan has been designed in consultation with the OBC Student Council, which is made up of elected representatives of students across all the College's locations and programmes, to ensure the College has considered the diversity of its students' needs.

At all times, the College will uphold the consumer rights of its students aiming to inform them of their options at the earliest possible opportunity if there are extraordinary modifications or changes to the advertised course offer.

For more information regarding this policy please contact the Head of Compliance, by emailing enquiries@obc.ac.uk.

Should you require this policy in an accessible format please contact enquiries@obc.ac.uk, with your preferred format.

3. Legislation and Guidance

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 requires Higher Education Institutions (HEI) & Further Education colleges to maintain a Student Protection Plan to protect students' interests in the case of material change, e.g., programme changes, suspensions, closures, or institutional closure.

This plan was written in accordance with Regulatory advice 3: Registration of English higher education providers with the OfS published by Office for Students October 2022.

4. Risks to Non-Continuation

The College assessment of risk to non-continuation has been considered for a period of four years, equivalent to the normal pattern of study of its taught provision.

The College will use its system of risk management to calculate the risk to non-continuation. The systematic process of risk management and mitigation is summarised visually using a 5-point Likert Scale as shown in Table 1 to measure the probability of the risk to non-continuation. Each risk identified is given a score 1-5 for likelihood and 1-5 for impact, with 1 being very low and 5 being very high. These two factors of likelihood and impact are multiplied together to provide the overall degree of risk. Risks and their likelihood of crystallisation will be reviewed on an annual basis. A summary of the risk to non-continuation and their likelihood can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 1 Risk Management Scoring

Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
1-50-9	10-14	11-15-19	16-20-24	21-25

For every risk assessed in this Student Protection Plan, the College will justify its reason to ensure transparency for its students and prospective students.

The College has identified the following risks to non-continuation of courses (but not limited to):

4.1 Institutional closure or Campus closure

The risk exposure is deemed very low due to the College's robust financial viability track record, spanning over three decades since its establishment in 1985. Independent audit evaluations consistently categorise the College's financial standing as 'good' or 'outstanding'. This favourable assessment has persisted over the past five years, signifying a sustained level of financial health. The College has undergone regular external audits, with audits conducted by reputable firms such as KPMG. These audits have attested to the College's fiscal soundness and compliance with regulatory standards. Notably, recent due diligence exercises conducted by university partners such as Ravensbourne University London (RUL) have underscored the College's financial stability and adherence to rigorous quality assurance benchmarks. Moreover, amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, the College demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability by swiftly transitioning to online course delivery, experiencing growth in both student and staff numbers, and forging new collaborative ventures with universities and colleges.

4.2 Loss of eligibility as a registered provider of higher education

Whether regulated directly by the Office for Students (OfS) or through partnership with regulated awarding organisations, the College complies with the ongoing conditions of OfS registration. The College has a well-defined corporate governance framework and academic management framework, that ensure the College is meeting its regulatory requirements and promoting academic excellence through a personalised approach to learning.

4.3 Loss or restriction of validation arrangement with a collaborative partner

The College operates four collaborative partnership arrangements, serving as the primary provider of Higher Education. Assessing the risk of non-continuation, the College considers it to be of medium significance, primarily due to the prevailing uncertainties in the Higher Education landscape concerning the future of franchised partnership provision. Despite the presence of well-established partnerships and robust quality assurance mechanisms inherent in ongoing collaborative agreements, the evolving nature of educational frameworks introduces a degree of ambiguity regarding the longevity and stability of such arrangements. It's imperative to note that in all instances, students benefit from the safeguarding provided by their respective awarding organisations' Student Protection Plans, accessible through the corresponding websites for comprehensive information and assurance.

4.3.1 [Buckinghamshire New University](#)

4.3.2 [New College Durham](#)

4.3.3 [Ravensbourne University London](#)

4.3.4 [University of West London](#)

4.4 Major changes to in-year course content or delivery mode

The College Academic Board has the remit to ensure that the delivery of programmes is provided and delivered as advertised. All programmes are reviewed annually and are agreed in advance of teaching. The College will use all reasonable endeavours to deliver the programme in accordance with the description provided in the College's website course guide for the academic year in which a student enrolled on the programme.

However, in the event of major in-year changes to course content or delivery mode,

the College will ensure that changes are restricted to the minimum necessary to achieve the required quality of experience and that affected students are notified and consulted as appropriate. Where necessary, the College will allow students the opportunity to enact programme suspension or withdraw from the programme. The College will also provide additional support and guidance for students to transfer to another programme at the College or to another provider.

4.5 Industrial action by College staff or third parties

The College has a settled higher education (HE) teaching staff with low turnover, and no recent history of trade union disputes. The College is highly committed to maintaining an effective employee relations culture and working with trade-union colleagues if required to achieve reasonable solutions to matters that may arise from time to time. If industrial action should occur, the College will seek to ensure that normal operations and services are maintained as far as possible and take all reasonable steps to fulfil its responsibilities to students in ensuring that any disruption is minimised and students are not, as far as is possible to determine, disadvantaged by the action.

4.6 The unanticipated departure of key members of College staff

The College has a committed team of core academic and professional support staff that have worked for the College for a several years. The College has many connections through its networks and is able to recruit suitably qualified and academic staff very quickly when required. Where possible the College will seek to fill gaps as quickly as possible, by moving other current members of staff with appropriate skills and experience, into the vacant post(s) or recruiting externally, to avoid disruption.

5 Measures to Mitigate Risks to Non-Continuation.

The risk that the College would be unable to operate is very low because of its financial performance. The College typically has a significant surplus each year and it has significant financial reserves that would allow the College to continue as usual for 22 months without income.

Where the College is required to teach out a programme, a Teach Out Plan will be created in consultation with all stakeholders including relevant partners, awarding organisations, staff and students. The Teach Out Plan will prioritise the protection

of students so that they may complete their programme of studies, progress into further studies or gainful employment, or transfer to alternative provider if they wish.

Where circumstances require a programme to be withdrawn before completion by the final cohort of students or that material changes are to be made to a programme, the College will consider the following:

Communicating any changes to students as early as possible, with clear information and options.

Providing suitable Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on the availability of alternative courses at another provider.

Where part or all the campus is rendered unusable for activities involving students, the College will typically consider remedies such as:

- 5.1 Relocating provision to an alternative location, this may include hiring spaces for programme delivery (where possible nearby).
- 5.2 Revising timetabling to allow all the scheduled teaching to take place in the available facilities. This may include student contact sessions being held outside of normal office hours. Where such an approach is taken, appropriate consultation will normally be conducted with stakeholders who may be affected; appropriate equality impact assessments will also be undertaken.

If the College were unable to prevent disruption to continuity of learning teaching and assessment, students would be compensated appropriately for the lack of service in accordance with the College's Tuition Fee, Refund and Compensation Policy.

5. Measures to Inform and Protect Students

In the event of having to enact the Student Protection Plan, the College is committed to communicating any changes to students as early as possible with clear information and options.

All reasonable steps will be taken to minimise the resultant disruption to those services and affected students by, for example:

- 1.1 Offering affected students, the chance to move to another course.**
- 1.2 Delivering a modified version of the same course.**
- 1.3 Aiding affected students to switch to a different provider.**

The College's Student Support team will be notified of students affected in the

event of any of the above steps being taken. The Student Support team will contact affected students and provide detailed information, advice and guidance based on their individual circumstances in line with guidance provided in the Student Protection Plan.

If the College must implement its Student Protection Plan, the Student Services team would provide bespoke support for each student. This may include assisting in identifying alternative provision or contacting a new provider and ensuring that relevant references are forwarded to the new provider in a timely fashion to facilitate a smooth transition.

6. Refunds and Compensation

Where a student is required to transfer course or move to another institution there are likely to be implications for student finance arrangements. The College's Tuition Fee, Refund and Compensation Policy outlines information on the refund of tuition fees if the College is no longer able to preserve the continuation of study.

The College has incorporated provisions within its annual budget for the potential refund of tuition fees and other refunds and compensation payments to students. A combination of cash reserves and (where appropriate) insurance policies will be designated for those students where an increased risk of non-continuation of study has been identified.

If a student feels they have been disadvantaged because of any significant material change listed in the Student Protection Plan, they can apply for compensation through the College three-stage Complaints Process. Each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Please see the College Concerns and Complaints Policy for further details on how to make a complaint.

The College will consider compensation claims for:

- 7.1 Additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course.
 - 7.2 Commitments to honour student scholarships and bursaries as well as hardship funds that have already been approved.
 - 7.3 Maintenance costs and lost time in the unlikely event that it is not possible to preserve continuation of study.
- Tuition and maintenance costs where students must change course or provider.

All compensation claims are viewed in context, and consider:

- What mitigation the College has already put in place to satisfy the complainant.
 - The contract with the student, and how much of the contract is unfulfilled.
- Decisions about how much compensation is appropriate are taken on a case-by-case basis. The College always aims to resolve a complaint and refund, or compensation claim at the earliest stage possible.

7. Communication Feedback and Review

Both the Student Protection Plan and the Tuition Fee, Refund and Compensation Policy are available to prospective and current students on the College website. Should the Student Protection Plan need to be implemented, affected students will be contacted by a variety of methods. This will include, but is not limited to, in-person communication, direct telephone communication, personal written correspondence and email. Indirect communication will be presented through the College website.

Students wishing to provide feedback regarding the College's Student Protection Plan should send feedback to enquiries@obc.ac.uk. Students will also be given the opportunity to shape the way the College mitigates risks to non-continuation through input at course level Programme Committee meetings, as well as Student Committee and Student Council meetings.

This plan will be reviewed annually. The risks will be re-rated using the College's risk management framework. The updated risk to non-continuation will be validated by the Policies Panel of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The Approved Student Protection Plan will be agreed for publication by the College's Academic Board.

Appendix 1 Student Protection Plan (2024-2025)

No.	Risk to Non-Continuation	November 2024 Risk Score		Responsible Committee
1	Institutional closure or Campus closure	Negligible	5	Corporate Planning Board
2	Loss of eligibility as a registered provider of higher education.	Low	10	Academic Board
3	Loss or restriction of validation arrangement with delivery partners.	Medium	11	Academic Board
4	Major changes to in-year course content or delivery mode.	Low	10	Academic Board
5	Industrial action by college staff or third parties.	Negligible	5	Corporate Planning Board
6	The unanticipated departure of key members of college staff.	Low	10	Staff and Culture Committee