

SGS HE Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS)

Provider's UKPRN: 10036143

Legal address: SGS College, Stratford Road, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 4AH

Contact point for enquiries about this student protection plan: Jo Kear (jo.kear@sgscol.ac.uk)

1. What is the SGS HE Student Protection Plan (SPP)?

The SGS HE Student Protection Plan (SPP) is designed to protect our degree-level students in the case of material change (e.g. programme changes, suspensions, closures) or institutional closure. The Higher Education (HE) and Research Act (HERA) 2017 and the Office for Students (OfS) conditions of registration requires HE institutions to have in force and publish a Student Protection Plan (SPP) to protect students' interests in the case of material change.

The SGS Student Protection Plan has been prepared following guidance from the OfS, and has been written in consultation with our students. The Plan is written with our students placed first and foremost. It is designed to provide assurance to all current and future students that we have in place robust arrangements to protect the continuation of their studies.

It should be noted that this Plan explicitly deals with risks to the continuation of study. It does not address risks to the quality of the content or delivery of courses and addresses these risks through its Quality Framework and other established policies and procedures.

SGS College does not have degree awarding powers and all degree courses are validated by our validating partner, The University of Gloucestershire.

2. Which students are covered by the SPP?

The SGS HE Student Protection Plan applies to all students registered with SGS on regulated higher education programmes from 2023–24 academic year onwards. This includes but is not limited to Foundation Degrees, Higher National Certificates/Diplomas, Bachelor's Degrees, Honours Level 6 ('Top up') Degrees, Higher/Degree Apprenticeships with HE qualifications and all L4+ qualifications that fall under the remit of OfS.

SGS remains mindful of all our students and their diverse range of needs. In the unlikely event of the realisation of any of the risks covered in this Plan, we will provide individual guidance and support for each of our students. This includes but is not limited to students sharing protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010). In implementing any measures to protect continuation of study we will consider the impact of changes for students with diverse needs, characteristics, and circumstances.

3. How does SGS monitor Risk?

Potential risks are monitored via a series of internal and external mechanisms. Risks related to the day-to-day delivery of programmes are monitored via core meetings and reporting at a departmental, faculty and College level and supported by robust compliance to our HE Quality and Data Reporting cycles. Regular partnership meetings with our validating university and formal quality checkpoints with additional awarding bodies and Professional Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) ensure constant review of these core relationships. College Governance and Corporation maintain the SGS Risk Register and receive information from Higher Education to make judgements against potential risks and assessment of their rating.

4. Risks to the Continuation of Study for Students

4.1 SGS College closure and/or loss of IT Services

The risk that SGS College is unable to operate is considered extremely low. SGS have been given consistently good financial health ratings since the organisation was merged in 2012. As part of our on-going conditions of being on the Office for Students' register of approved higher education providers, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provides the OfS with assurance about the College's financial sustainability and controls. The College's Disaster Recovery Plan sets out steps to protect core business in the case of major disruption to any of our sites, including the disruption of IT services, or disruption to curriculum delivery.

4.2 SGS exiting Higher Education

The risk that SGS College will decide not to continue to run higher education courses is extremely low. The College has continued to develop and expand higher education provision since merger in 2012. The College's commitment to continue to deliver and planned ambition to grow higher education provision is demonstrated in our HE Strategy and Portfolio Review processes. These internal processes have informed our recently approved Access and Participation Plan which sets out our spending commitments to our higher education students for the next four years.

4.3 The loss of Awarding Body approval or OFS registration

The risk that SGS will lose Awarding Body approval or OFS registration is considered low. The quality of higher education courses is rigorously maintained, and the College operates fully within statutory regulatory frameworks. In the event of a course losing Awarding Body approval or if the OfS restricts delivery of courses or suspends or deregisters either SGS or our validating Partner, the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), we would take all reasonable steps to minimise any disruption to student's studies and to work with the OFS, where possible, to continue to deliver the course until the normal duration of the course has ended.

4.4 The risk of notice from our validating partner, the University of Gloucestershire

The risk that the Strategic Alliance with our validating partner, the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), is low. The Alliance with UoG has existed since 2012 and a 10-year Memorandum of Understanding with them is established. If the Alliance is terminated, a contractual commitment exists to support and protect our students and allows for the running out of courses to ensure all registered students can complete their study. Students may also choose to bank their interim award and continue their studies at another institution.

4.5 The risk of closure of one of our satellite sites

The risk of closure of one of our satellite delivery sites is considered low. The Bristol Zoo Society (BZS) provide the rooms, facilities and some teaching for our HE Zoological Management and Conservation programmes. A contract supports the College's well-established relationship with the BZS which is reviewed on an annual basis. If this contract was terminated, a contractual commitment exists to ensure that all registered students are supported to complete their programme of study.

The Royal West of England Academy (RWA) provide the building which houses our Bristol School of Art. We have been renting these facilities since 1991. If our contract with RWA was terminated, there is a 5 year 'break out clause' which would allow more than adequate 'run out' time for our HE courses delivered on this site. This would also give time for the relocation of these courses to the art department at our WISE campus.

4.6 The risk that SGS makes the decision to close a course due to low recruitment

SGS College do reserve the right to close courses where demand is low to preserve the student experience and ensure business viability. The College continuously reviews demand throughout the application cycle. Where a decision is made to close a course, the College is committed to informing applicants as soon as possible so they can find alternative options, including those at our partner University. Applicants are given advice and guidance from the HE Admissions Team and from subject-specialist tutors to advise on alternative relevant opportunities, including exploring opportunities for study at other UK HE providers.

4.7 The risk of course closure in subsequent years of study due to low student numbers

The risk of course closure part way through year due to low student numbers is extremely low. In the event of a course closure or suspension, our preferred approach at SGS would always be to 'teach out' (to continue running the course so that all registered students can complete their study). This is to ensure continuity of both study and experience for students.

4.8 The risk of loss of subject-specialist staff impacting course delivery

The risk of a subject-specialist member of staff leaving impacting on course delivery and student experience is considered low. All our academic staff contracts require a minimum of one term's notice and no full-time courses are dependent on single teacher delivery. Our

curriculums have been designed to be delivered by integrated teams of academic staff. In the event of a major change (e.g. long-term sickness, death) we will work with departmental management and the curriculum team to ensure that the gap is filled. We will move to external recruitment should a skills gap be identified in the team. If necessary a programme may be suspended for a brief period while replacement staffing is secured, or a new venue is secured. At this point a hybrid delivery model may be temporarily instigated.

4.9 The risk to study from industrial action and activities

The College has formal and established processes and procedures for consultation and negotiation with trade unions. If industrial action does occur, we are committed to ensuring that normal business is maintained as far as possible and that any disruption to students is minimised. We will take all necessary steps within our power to ensure students are not disadvantaged by industrial action.

4.10 The removal of the College's licence to sponsor migrant students

If our licence to sponsor migrant students is suspended or revoked, then the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption to our student's studies and will work with UK Visas and Immigration to support any transition to alternative providers where necessary.

4.11 The loss of Professional Statutory Regulatory Body Accreditation

The loss of Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation is considered a low risk. The College works closely with our PRSBs to ensure we continually meet their quality standards. If we did lose accreditation with one more regulatory, body we would take all reasonable steps to minimise any disruption to our student's studies and to work with the PSRB, where possible, to continue to deliver the course until the normal duration of the course has ended.

4.12 Protection for students with a disability or learning difference

A sizeable proportion of HE students at SGS identify as having a disability or learning difference. The College is committed to ensuring that these students have equity of experience. In the event of course closure or suspension we would work closely with the student and alternative provider to try and secure opportunities for continuation.

5. Refunds and Compensation

SGS College considers the risks identified through the College's risk management process to continuation of students to be very low. However, In the unlikely event that we are unable to preserve a course of study and an alternative course or provider could not be found, you would be entitled to a refund and/ or compensation as per our [Higher Education Fee & Bursary Policy 2024-25](#). This Policy is revised on an annual basis and ensures that it makes provision for:

- Refunds if the College has closed.
- Refunds if the College materially reduces the content of a student’s learning programme, or if the advice given at the time of enrolment is deemed by the College to be inaccurate.
- Refunds for students in receipt of a tuition fees loan.
- Refunds for students who pay their own tuition fees.
- Refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor or employer.
- The payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course.
- Commitments to honour student bursaries.
- Compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study.
- Compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider.

Additionally, we will ring-fence sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation for those students for whom we identify an increased risk of non-continuation of study.

6. Communicating the Student Protection Plan

To students and future students

We will communicate the provisions in our Student Protection Plan (SPP) to current and future students by:

- Publishing our SPP on the College website.
- Publishing a current Fee Policy and Complaints Policy on the College website.
- Providing students with Terms & Conditions prior to enrolment.
- Referencing the Plan in our Student Contract.
- Promoting the provisions of the Plan on student digital channels (e.g. Teams, Ecampus) to make applicants and students aware of the provisions within the Plan.
- Detailing the purpose and provision of the Plan in the Programme Handbook.
- Ensuring the Plan is clearly written and available in a range of accessible formats.

We will review and develop our Student Protection Plan:

- Through formal discussions with our Student Ambassadors and Class Representatives.
- Through our reporting structure as set out in our Students as Partners Strategy.
- Through reviewing in the Spring term prior to application.

In the unlikely event that our Student Protection Plan needs to be implemented we will:

- Share the policy with students at an early stage should the risk of course or College closure significantly increase. This is part of the College's consumer protection law obligations.
- Give students at least 30 days' notice (in writing) when we need to make material or major changes to their course.
- Hold open meetings and work with elected representatives to ensure all students affected have equal opportunities to understand the process and its implications.
- Provide specific additional support for students with disabilities and any additional learning needs.

To staff:

We will ensure that staff are aware of the Student Protection Plan at induction and on a rolling basis during Staff Development events. Staff will be reminded of the implications of the SPP when they propose course changes and will follow established protocol for notifying students of these changes. The SPP will be included on the quality channel of the HE Staff Teams site. Appropriate reference to the provision of the Student Protection Plan, including a student's right to redress as outlined in the Complaints procedure, will be outlined in staff training.

General Enquiries and Communication

For any **general enquiries** regarding the Student Protection Plan, please contact Jo Kear, Director of Higher Education (jo.kear@sgscol.ac.uk)

If enquires have arisen in connection with the implementation of any measures within the Student Protection Plan, students should first use the local contact provided to them as part of the process affecting their programme. Should students have queries remaining after attempting to resolve their enquiry at a local level they may approach the Director of Higher Education.

SGS College's Complaints procedure for students can be found on the College website and this procedure should be used if a student has a complaint about the implementation or lack of implementation of this plan.

All policies and procedures relevant to this Student Protection Plan can be found on our website: [Policies and Procedures \(sgscol.ac.uk\)](#)

7. Campuses and Satellite Sites

Campuses	
SGS Filton Campus Filton Avenue Bristol BS34 7AT 0800 0567 253	SGS Horizon Campus Units E & F Horizon 38 Taurus Road Filton Bristol BS34 6FB 0800 0567 253
SGS Stroud Campus Stratford Road Stroud GL5 4AH 0800 0567 253	SGS WISE Campus (including University Centre WISE) New Road Bristol BS34 8LP 0800 0567 253
Satellite sites	
Bristol School of Art Queens Road Clifton Bristol BS8 1PX 0800 0567 253	Bristol Zoo Project Hollywood Mansion House Hollywood Lane Bristol BS10 7TP 0800 0567 253