



## **Student Protection Plan**

### **Introduction**

This Student Protection Plan (SPP) provides assurance to you (our current and future students) that we have in place appropriate arrangements to protect the quality and continuation of study for you all. This plan sets out our approach to protect your interests in a transparent and clear way. The SPP assures that procedures are in place to protect your interests and you have redress to the Office for Students (OfS) if you feel our SPP is not mitigating risks to your satisfaction.

We are actively supporting and encouraging widening participation and we are aware that ranges of students studying at the College may have differing needs, circumstances and are from diverse cultures. We are committed to Equal Opportunities **[See QAE Manual: Part 4: Admissions P39]** and our SPP gives regard to the possible different needs of students sharing particular protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. Our plan provides the actions we are taking to mitigate these risks.

### **Key features of the Plan**

The key features of the plan ensuring your protection to study are as follows:

- a) The provision of a Risk Register Assessment underpinning support for your continued study.
- b) A statement of our Financial Performance demonstrating low risk to inability to operate successfully.
- c) A Business Continuity Plan in the event of unforeseen or surprising circumstances occurring.
- d) A Refund and Compensation Policy in the event of no longer being able to preserve continuation of study.
- e) Effective communication of the SPP on our website and appropriate mediums of communication.
- f) Clear measures in place to ensure business continuity.

### **Student Protection Plan for the period 2019-20**

#### **1. An assessment of the range of risks to your continued study accounting for your differing needs, characteristics and circumstances and an assessment of the likelihood that those risks will crystallise (Low, Moderate or High)**

The risk that the College as a whole will be unable to operate is very low because our financial performance is sound and we have produced both a Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register Assessment to address and mitigate all possible uncertainties and ensure the continuation of the business **[See Risk Register and Risk Management Strategy]**

Our Risk Register covers the following areas:

- Student Recruitment
- Student learning experience
- Financial Risks
- Human Resources

- Property and Estates
- Attendance and SLC Records
- Board of Directors
- Senior Management Team
- Statutes and Regulations
- External Policy Context
- Curriculum Change
- Information Resources

It is measured in terms of risk likelihood expressed as Red (High Risk), Amber (Medium Risk) and Green (Low Risk) and is visited every six months at SMT meetings and reviewed annually. A robust Student Protection Plan (SPP) now further strengthens it.

Our ability to continuously deliver at the Adler Street campus is high with little or no risk to students as we have a lease for the next 3 to 5 years. We also have the opportunity to expand the campus if it becomes available.

The risk that we may be unable to deliver material components of our courses is moderate to high because our modules are tailor made by Pearson. At present it is uncertain whether HND/C's will continue to be supported as programmes of higher education and may move to further education attracting a lower fee base. We have little or no control on the design of modules or assessment procedure.

We are dealing with this in the following ways in the short term:

- a) Seeking registration with the Office for Students (OfS)
- b) Ensuring that we have competent staff to write programmes for validation

and in the long term

- c) Seeking validation of undergraduate programmes in our specialist areas
- d) Pursuing Taught Degree Awarding Powers

## **2. The measures we have put in place to mitigate risks to your study that we consider are reasonably likely to crystallise.**

The clearest risk we face at the College at present is the future of our accredited programmes with Pearson. We believe in the current climate this risk to be increasing and we need to achieve Taught Degree Awarding Powers and validate our own programmes in the long run to mitigate the risk.

Other risks, some indirect include the following:

Failure to recruit the UK/EU students: This is mitigated by the application of effective College policies and robust monitoring supported if necessary, though highly unlikely, by a Refund and Compensation Policy [**see Section 3 p 3.**].

Failure to achieve an adequate level of student retention that puts course continuation into jeopardy: This is mitigated by fingerprint technology to ensure student attendance and followed up with a dedicated student monitoring and attendance report.

Failure to maintain and/or improve teaching, learning and assessment quality: This is mitigated by robust quality assurance and enhancement systems, procedures, policies and practices, approved by the QAA and overseen by the HoQE.

Failure to ensure adequate student representation across ICON College able to support student study: This is mitigated by ICON striving year on year to retain 'good practice' from the QAA in this area.

The College's facilities fail to provide appropriate resources to support the student learning experience: This is mitigated by the Teaching, Learning and Resources Committee (TLRC) which ensures sufficiency of learning resources through updating IT skills, improving the ICON VLE and increasing the library stocks.

Failure to recruit staff to deliver the requisite standards: This is mitigated by the operation of a staff recruitment system that begins with a person specification and job description followed by interview with experienced members enabling us to recruit qualified and subject specialist staff.

Maintenance of financial stability to mitigate unforeseen risk e.g. changes in funding: This is mitigated by the Board of Directors who continuously monitor finances with rational decision-making and have done so successfully since 2004.

Overall, the College operates a Risk Management Strategy and a Risk Register and has undertaken a thorough review of all potential risks to the College. The SMT reviews the Risk Register every 6 months, reporting annually to the Board of Directors.

### **3. We provide information for you about the policy we have in place to refund tuition fees and any other relevant costs. This also covers compensation, where necessary, in the event that we were no longer able to preserve your continued study**

The Refund and Compensation policy provides clear and transparent information about a refund and/or compensation in the event of our inability to maintain continuation of study. The policy has been reviewed by the Office for Students and is available on the College website [**See Refunds and Compensation Policy 2018**]. The Academic Board has also evaluated the policy prior to approval by the Board of Directors. Its aim is to give you full protection under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 for refunds and/or compensation, where reasonable. The policy covers the following areas:

- Refunds for students in receipt of tuition fee loans to the Student Loan Company;
- Refunds for students who pay their own tuition 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;
- A commitment to honour student bursaries, where appropriate;
- Compensation for maintenance costs and lost time where it is not possible to preserve continuation of study and
- Compensation for tuition and maintenance costs where students have to transfer courses or provider.

#### ***Delivering financial implications of the Refund and Compensation Policy***

We have cash reserves of 12 months which would be sufficient to provide either a refund or compensation to the students to whom we have identified an increased risk of non-

continuation of study. Also the Risk Register we have produced gives us a clear indication of the likelihood and weight of each risk enabling us to be proactive if the risk is growing.

Furthermore, we are putting in place insurance arrangements to provide refunds and compensation for those students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study. We guarantee this will be in place by August 2019.

#### **4. This section provides information on how we communicate to our students about the SPP**

We will publicise our SPP to current and future students in the following ways:

- On the College website
- On the ICON VLE
- In the Student Handbook

We will ensure staff are aware of the implications of our SPP through initial staff development **[See: SPP Action Plan]**. It will be the responsibility of each Head of Department to make staff aware of the implications of the SPP when changes are being proposed. This will also be monitored by the Academic Board which signs off changes.

**5.** Access to all documents cited in this SPP is available with the Principal.