

Cliff College Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: Cliff College

Provider's UKPRN: 10007912

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Student protection plan for the period 2021/22

1. An assessment of the range of risks to the continuation of study for your students, how those risks may differ based on your students' needs, characteristics and circumstances, and the likelihood that those risks will crystallise

Cliff College has identified the following potential risks to the continuation of study for our students. In each case we have described the level of risk, and how the risk might vary for different types of student

Risk	Description, likelihood and significance of risk
Cliff College becomes financially insolvent, and closes all courses	Cliff College is a constituent part of the Methodist Church. This means that in the event of a significant financial loss that rendered the College insolvent, the Methodist Church, which has significant financial assets, is likely to support the College financially until all existing students had completed their programme of study. As such, we consider this risk to be extremely low for existing students. The risk is higher (though still very low) for prospective students or students who are in the process of applying as under these circumstances, the College would not commit to continue a course that has not yet begun.
Cliff College loses validation with the University of Manchester	The validation contract that the College has with the University of Manchester indicates that in the circumstances where validation is withdrawn, the University shall continue to validate existing students either until the end of their programme, or at least until the end of that academic year. In practice, it is our view that the University would honour their commitment to enable us to teach out all existing students. As such, the risk of this eventuality is extremely low for existing students. The risk is also negligible for prospective students as it is our belief that the University would give the college significant notice before terminating any program, and therefore students would not be recruited to a program that fails to run.
A particular degree programme (eg. BATHM, BAMM, MA) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable	The College's view is that there is a moderate risk of degree programmes being cancelled due to insufficient student numbers. However, this would not affect students who have already started their course as the College is committed to completing any course that has already begun even if student numbers are low. The risk, therefore, is one that only applies to students who are in the process of applying for a course, or who have been accepted, but not yet begun.

A particular pathway (eg. children, family, pioneering mission) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable	For existing students, the College considers this to be a low risk as if the pathway is already running then this is likely to be due to the fact that the pathway has already recruited a sufficient number of students. It is not impossible that a large number of students from a particular pathway choose to leave the course. However, in these circumstances the College is committed to teach out that pathway so that students can complete the pathway in which they began their studies. For prospective students, we consider this to be a moderate risk. Some of our pathways are struggling to recruit and as such it is possible that a particular pathway may be cancelled after some students have been accepted onto that pathway, but before they have started their studies.
A particular unit (eg. Intro to Theology, Pioneering Mission) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable	For existing students, we consider this risk to be moderate-high. Each year, not all units attract a sufficient number of students for the unit to be viable. Such units, however, are always those that are optional within courses. The College would never cancel a unit that is core to a programme.
A particular mode of study is no longer available	There is near zero risk of this eventuality separate from the risks already identified. In other words, the College might have to suspend pathways or units, but they will not be in a position where they have to suspend a particular mode of study. This is due to the particular way in which we structure our part and full time programmes.

2. The measures that you have put in place to mitigate those risks that you consider to be reasonably likely to crystallise

Risk	Mitigating measures
A particular degree programme (eg. BATHM, BAMM, MA) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable	As indicated, this is not a risk that applies to existing students as the College is committed to teach out in this scenario. However, it might apply to prospective students who have not yet commenced their course but who have been offered a place of study. In this scenario, if a whole degree programme is recruiting poorly to such an extent that the programme is unviable, then the College will make a decision at least three months prior to the start of the course to terminate the programme, and will inform students who have applied or been accepted at that point. This will give those students enough time to apply to a different university or college, and Cliff College will assist student in this process by directing them to equivalent courses elsewhere. In order to facilitate this, the College has signed a memorandum of understanding with other theological colleges that are also validated by the University of Manchester. All of these Colleges run similar degrees to those provided at Cliff College, and therefore directing the students in this way will be of benefit to them.
A particular pathway (eg. children, family, pioneering mission) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable	As indicated, this is not a risk that applies to existing students as the College is committed to teach out in this scenario. However, it might apply to prospective students who have not yet commenced their course but who have been offered a place of study. In this scenario, if the pathway is recruiting poorly to such an extent that the pathway is unviable, then the College will make a decision at least two months prior to the start of the course to terminate the pathway, and will inform students who have applied or been accepted accordingly. This will give those students enough time to consider whether an alternative pathway on the same degree course is appropriate for them, or whether they should apply to a different university or college for a different degree.

	<p>If they do decide that an alternative pathway is not appropriate then the College will guide them towards other institutions that offer similar pathways. Once again, the MoU we have signed with partner colleges may prove valuable in this regard.</p>
<p>A particular unit (eg. Intro to Theology, Pioneering Mission) recruits insufficient student numbers to be viable</p>	<p>If a unit is cancelled due to low student numbers, the College will inform students at least one month before the start of the unit. The College will then assist students in choosing alternative units that will enable them to complete their programme of study. In this situation, there is no risk that the students will not be able to complete their degree; the risk is simply that the precise mix of units they choose may not be available. In addition, the College will actively consider running the unit the following year which will enable students who have missed it in one year to take it the next. This is possible because all students are allowed a certain number of credits from adjacent years and because we will arrange timetables to facilitate students in studying such units. The one exception to this is students in their final year who obviously do not have the option of studying a unit in a subsequent year.</p>

3. Information about the policy you have in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to your students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that you are no longer able to preserve continuation of study

Our refund and compensation policy is available as a separate document, and is reproduced in full below:

Cliff College Refund and Compensation Policy.

If Cliff College makes the decision to close a programme, pathway or mode of study on one of its validated programmes, or (in extreme circumstances) cease to operate, there may be circumstances in which it is not possible to preserve continuation of study for one or more students, or to offer an avenue of progression in a similar or equivalent programme of study. In these circumstances, this policy establishes the process by which the College would refund some or all of a student's fees and other relevant costs. This policy only applies to students on validated higher education courses.

The College has established reciprocal agreements with other Theological Colleges to facilitate transfer into parallel programmes of study, but this policy identifies the right of a student to compensation if such arrangements are not satisfactory, or present practical difficulties for the student.

The College only operates on one site, and therefore refunds relating to a closed location are not applicable.

This refund and compensation policy is reproduced in the College's *Student Protection Plan*. The policy applies to students who have already embarked on their course of study at the College. It does not apply to students who have not yet started their studies, and not yet paid any fees to the College. If a student has not yet started their studies, but has paid some or all of their fees to the College, that student will receive a full refund of all monies paid if their programme or pathway is cancelled for any reason.

Funds to honour this policy will be identified in the College's reserves.

a) Refunds for students in receipt of a tuition fee loan from the Student Loans Company.

In the unlikely event of a programme or pathway being cancelled, or the institution ceasing operation, during the course of an academic year (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), the College will arrange a transfer of tuition fee loan monies to the institution to which the student transfers, pro-rata according to the balance remaining of the academic year. If the student is unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, Cliff College will reimburse students for the full cost of their tuition loan and their maintenance loan for that academic year.

Should the College withdraw a programme, pathway, or cease operation entirely at the end of an academic year before a student has completed her or his studies (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), and the student be unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, the College will reimburse the student for tuition fees for the portion of their studies that have been completed at the College, and for maintenance loan for the portion of their studies undertaken at the College.

b) Refunds for students who pay their own tuition fees.

In the unlikely event of a programme or pathway being cancelled, or the institution ceasing operation, during the course of an academic year (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), the College will arrange a transfer of tuition fee loan monies to the institution to which the student transfers, pro-rata according to the balance remaining of the academic year. If the student is unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, the College will reimburse students for the full cost of their tuition loan and their maintenance loan for that year.

Should the College withdraw a programme, pathway, or cease operation entirely at the end of an academic year before a student has completed her or his studies (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), and the student be unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, the College will reimburse the student for tuition fees for the portion of their studies that have been completed at the College.

c) Refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by a sponsor.

In the unlikely event of a programme or pathway being cancelled, or the institution ceasing operation, during the course of an academic year (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), and a sponsored student be unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, the College will reimburse the sponsor the equivalent cost of the tuition loan and maintenance loan for that year.

Should the College withdraw a programme, pathway, or cease operation entirely at the end of an academic year before a sponsored student has completed her or his studies (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place), and the student be unable to transfer without significant disruption into continued study on a parallel programme at another College or University, the College will reimburse the sponsor for tuition fees for the portion of their studies that have been completed at the College.

d) The payment of additional travel costs for students affected by a change in the location of their course or funding to offset additional costs incurred by relocation (for example, students with caring responsibilities whose childcare costs increase significantly, perhaps by transferring from a provider with a subsidised crèche to one without).

Should the College withdraw a programme, pathway, or cease operation entirely (with arrangements for teaching-out not being in place) and the student transfer into a parallel programme of continued study at another College or University that requires additional resources (travel, childcare), the College will reimburse the student for receipted costs up to a maximum of £100 per week for a maximum of two years (undergraduate) or three years (postgraduate). The amount of reimbursement will be reduced pro-rata for part-time students.

e) Commitments to honour student bursaries.

Where the College has committed to offer a student a bursary for the duration of their studies, the College will commit to continue this support by paying this amount towards the costs of a parallel programme at another College or University.

4. Information about how you will communicate with students about your student protection plan

We will publicise our student protection plan in the following places:

- On our website in the sections that deal with applications
- On the 'all students' section of our CliffX virtual learning environment

We will reference our student protection plan in each programme's 'How to Apply' documents.

We will email all existing students to inform them of the plan, and where it can be located.

We will ensure that all staff are made aware of the implications of the plan by discussing it at our academic board and by circulating it to all relevant staff.

This plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by being circulated to all student representatives prior to our May board of studies meeting, and it will be a standing item on that agenda. This provides all student reps with an opportunity to comment on the plan prior to its adoption and sign off each year.

If any provision in this plan requires activation then the student representative for that programme and the student president will be informed as well as any individual students involved. If involved students wish to seek independent advice regarding the implementation of the plan then the College will make provisions for an independent adjudicator to help them. If involved students and/or student representatives wish to complain about the implementation of the plan then in the first instance, they should do so by writing to the Head of Academic Strategy: a.stobart@cliffcollege.ac.uk

If the student is not satisfied with the response they receive from the Head of Academic Strategy then the student may enact the various stages of the College's complaints policy. If the student remains dissatisfied then they may raise the issue with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>