

<b>Policy number</b>	58
<b>Policy name:</b>	Student Protection Plan 2020-21
<b>Version Number:</b>	3
<b>Developed by:</b>	Steven Mundin
<b>Policy status:</b>	Approved
<b>Date Approved:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2020
<b>Next Review due by:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2021
<b>Applicable to:</b>	Staff members, Governing Board, Students
<b>Related Policies/Procedures:</b>	Terms and Conditions for Taught Students Refund and Compensation Policy
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	Equality Impact assessment was undertaken for this policy.

## REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
2	29/05/20	Edited summary table and added EIA	Chrissy Moog
3	16/12/20	Dates updated.	Chrissy Moog

## **1. Introduction**

A Student Protection Plan is a document that is approved by the Office for Students (OfS) that every Higher Education provider is required to have in place.

It explains what actions we would take in the event that a risk to the continuation of your studies arose, as well as how we would communicate with you about this. Examples of events that could trigger the Plan include:

- The discontinuation of your course
- Organisation Closure
- Unanticipated or unforeseen changes which may affect our ability to provide the course to you

You can find a full list of risks in section 4 of this Plan.

## **2. Who does the Plan cover?**

If you are a Higher Education student at Higher Rhythm you are covered by this Plan.

## **3. Overview of our ability to assure continuation of study**

Whilst we recognise that there are certain circumstances where an educational institution may make a decision to close a programme, a site, or even their entire operation, at this point in time, the risks that could lead to these closures are considered to be extremely minimal for Higher Rhythm Ltd for the following reasons.

Our entire Higher Education provision will consist of only one programme; a HND in Music Technology / Production, for which we have received approval to deliver (from the awarding body) and we already have all necessary resources in place to launch and deliver this intended programme starting academic year 2021.

We only intend to recruit a maximum of 12 learners per year-group for our programme (supporting our vision of offering sector leading, real- industry based, high-quality education), and already hold expressions of interest from enough potential applicants to fill this programme.

This H.E offer is also just one aspect of our wider offer as an organisation, which includes short courses, Further Education, and professional services around the music and media industries, which we have been delivering for over 18 years, making our H.E. offer a safe and manageable expansion of current services, as opposed to comprising our entire business.

Over 19 years, Higher Rhythm has evidenced sound financial performance; we have reserves in place and we also have contingencies and continuity plans to deal with risks, which could affect our viability.

Our delivery team is comprised of several, experienced industry experts, with delivery also supported using a team of guest lecturers who will deliver specialist areas of learning within the programme. Due to this team having a diverse range of experience, with competencies that crossover, the likelihood that we are not able to deliver components of our H.E programme is also a very low risk.

In summary, the overall risk that Higher Rhythm as a Higher Education provider is unable to operate its course, its facilities or its wider organisation is therefore very low due to the single course, small-scale nature of our H.E provision (with no plans to develop further H.E. provision in other areas), and we can foresee no circumstances where this risk would change or differ depending on students' individual needs, characteristics or circumstances.

#### 4. Risk Assessment

The robust procedures and systems that we have to manage risk are contained in our Risk Management Policy.

Despite our strong operational position and extremely low-risk to our H.E. programme as outlined previously in this Student Protection Plan, we have detailed and analysed all possible major risks to the continuation of our H.E. programme and have produced the following risk assessment.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>How we will manage this risk</b>	<b>Person(s) accountable for this risk</b>
Loss of Premises / closure of a site.	Low	Our main facility is owned by the organisation. Additional dedicated space (in XP School) is already secured and fitted out with necessary equipment to provide a rapid solution to alternative accommodation in the event of an emergency.	CEO & GOVERNING BOARD

Reduction in the demand for course places.	Low	Higher Rhythm is already well established as a sector -leading organisation regionally and we have a good reputation and extensive networks (including our own radio station, Sine FM) to be able to recruit the relatively small number of students (12) required to make our programme viable. We will take advantage of our profile and networks to assure recruitment targets are met each year. We are confident, however, that our programme will still continue even if group size was smaller than planned.	CEO & GOVERNING BOARD
Losing key staff	Medium	Succession planning is in place. Team have crossover skills to cover absence or vacant positions. There is also an extensive volunteer team to identify potential new talent.	GOVERNING BOARD
Fail to deliver on time, to agreed standards, changes to material components of programme, suspension or closure of a course.	Low	We have a clear organisational structure and all responsibilities are clearly defined underpinned by externally assessed quality and management systems. We have a 100% project delivery record over 19 years and we have no plans to diversify into other / highly specialised fields of study. All relevant staff	EDUCATION COMMITTEE

		understand this Student Protection Plan and its relation to course changes. We also operate a Teach Out policy as a contingency.	
Technology failure	Medium	Backup systems ready to go (tried and tested in disaster scenarios). Excellent IT knowledge across org staff and external support retained. Cloud-based serviced email and management systems in place to minimise likelihood of significant data loss. Equipment replacement is also on-going.	CEO
Total financial failure or, closure of organisation.	Low	We are in good financial health with multiple on-going contracts in place. Our financial reserves are on target and we operate sound financial management systems. In the event of financial failure, however, we have a Teach Out policy in place which would be triggered to minimise disruption to students' continuation of studies.	CEO & GOVERNING BOARD
Loss (or restriction) of centre/ programme approval from awarding body.	Low	There is only one H.E course being delivered and this course was only introduced (by Pearson) in 2018 making removal of the qualification highly unlikely in the near or mid future. The usual notice of termination from the awarding body is 12 months, allowing delivery to conclude for all registered students. In the event that we receive notification that the	EDUCATION COMMITTEE

		<p>qualification is to be removed, we would immediately start to identify an alternative equivalent.</p>	
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In the event that we are no longer able to deliver our H.E. programme, for whatever reason, we have a Business Continuation Plan in place which identifies procedures and policies for 'Teaching Out' and also details the method by which such closure will operate, which in summary, prioritises an approach where affected students could complete their studies, to the original timescale, before any closure occurs, irrespective of the type of event which led to the decision to discontinue a course.

## 5. Refunds, relevant costs and compensation in the event of non-continuation of study

We have a Refund and Compensation policy in place, which covers areas such as:

- Refunds of tuition fees from loans from the Student Loans Company
- Refunds for students who have paid their own tuition fees
- Refunds for students whose tuition fees are paid by sponsors
- Payment of travel costs for students affected by a change in their course location.
- Commitments to honour student bursaries.
- Compensation for maintenance costs / lost time if continuation of study is not maintained.
- Compensation for tuition and maintenance costs if students need to transfer course / provider.

This policy is available online and can be found at:  
<https://www.higherrhythm.co.uk/public-policies/>

Our entire Higher Education provision will consist of only one, 2-year HND programme with a maximum of 12 learners per year-group. We have insurance in place which will provide refunds and compensation for all students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non- continuation of study, or should a non-continuation of study situation occur. We also hold sufficient cash reserves to provide refunds and compensation as a contingency.

## 6. How we will communicate with students about our Student Protection Plan

### General Communication:

This Student Protection Plan and all future versions of the plan, will be available on our website at <https://www.higherrhythm.co.uk/public-policies/>.

We will ensure that all relevant staff are made aware of our Student Protection Plan and have a comprehensive understanding the content, scope and implications of the Student Protection Plan so that wherever course changes are proposed, the impacts of those potential changes can be considered with regard to the Student Protection Plan.

*Arrangements to communicate with affected students if the plan needs implementing:*

Should any aspect of the Student Protection Plan need implementing, we will communicate this with each student via face-to-face discussion, email / notification via the Higher Rhythm student resource site and letter by recorded post.

If there are to be material changes to a course we will notify and consult with the affected students in advance of the changes, about any changes that are needed. Following this consultation, the minimum notice period we will give of the relevant material changes discussed being implemented is 14 days.

If we need to implement the measures detailed in this Student Protection Plan, we will support all affected students collectively and individually, through appropriate steps such as: offering students a place on an alternative course from a UK based provider, delivering a modified version of the same course, or ensuring assistance is made available for affected students to transfer to another UK based institution. We will communicate this with students via face-to-face discussion, email / notification via the Higher Rhythm student resource site and letter by recorded post. Students would be treated as individuals with information, advice and guidance tailored around their personal circumstances.

## **7. Our commitment to you as a student**

We commit to:

- Being open and transparent with students if any risk to the continuity of your studies arises, and inform you in a timely manner;
- Taking reasonable steps to protecting your studies if we discontinue the course;
- Considering the impact upon our students before deciding to implement any substantial changes to the course or discontinuing it;
- Taking into consideration the needs of all our students and the impact on them of any proposed changes and protective measures. We will provide a clear rationale for changes that take into account the needs of current and future students;
- Informing the OfS of any changes that may necessitate a review of the Plan or any of the measures contained within it; and
- Regularly seek students' views on this Plan as part of our student feedback processes.

## 8. Reviewing the Plan

Our Student Protection Plan will be reviewed annually and we will involve student representatives in this review to ensure that the Student Protection Plan develops through reflecting the student voice as a key driver of its on-going development. This process will start in March each year, involving student reps in workshops to help shape the plan for the following academic year and the finalised Student Protection Plan will be signed off by our Governing Board in May each year.

If there are, however, any substantive changes to our risk position, or there are sector requirements or significant new activities being undertaken by Higher Rhythm that requires inclusion in the Plan then this would trigger an earlier review. Should the Plan be triggered, we will conduct a review of the Plan to ensure that it operated as effectively as possible to protect the continuity of study for our students.

## 9. Complaints

If you have any issues or concerns with the way this Plan has been implemented or feel that any aspect of the way this Plan has been implemented could be improved, please refer to our Learner Complaints Policy and Procedure for Higher Education and Further Education learners, available on our website at <https://www.higherrhythm.co.uk/public-policies/>

Students who are dissatisfied with a decision relating to a complaint they have raised may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), an independent body which reviews students' complaints.

**As a provider with a focus on widening participation with the majority of entrants into our provision being non-mainstream learners, we have an existing culture of inclusivity, which will ensure accessible and supportive information and advocacy for our Higher Education Students. This Student Protection Plan is associated with our Terms and Conditions for Taught Students, and will also be referred to in the Higher Rhythm 2020-2021 Higher Education Student Regulations handbook.**



## Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Proposal (policy/strategy/function/service being assessed)	Student Protection Plan 2020-21
Those involved in assessment:	CEO, Quality and Media Services Manager
Is this a new proposal?	Yes
Date of Initial Screening	December 16, 2020

What are the aims, objectives?	To set out HR's Student Protection Plan
Who will benefit?	Staff, students, stakeholders
Who are the main stakeholders?	Staff and Governing Board
What are the desired outcomes?	To provide an educational environment with a primary focus of protecting students.
What factors could detract from the desired outcomes?	Non-awareness of this current policy.
What factors could continue to the desired outcomes?	Regular follow up and updates about blended learning.
Who is responsible?	Quality and Media Services Manager
Have you consulted on the proposal? If so, with whom? If not, why not?	Yes, Governing Board.

Which protected characteristics could be affected and be disadvantaged by this proposal (please tick)		Yes	No
Age	<u>Consider:</u> Elderly, or young people		✓
Disability	<u>Consider:</u> Physical, visual aural impairment, Mental or learning difficulties		✓
Gender Reassignment	<u>Consider:</u> Transsexual people who propose to, are doing or have undergone a process of having their sex reassigned		✓
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<u>Consider:</u> Impact relevant to employment and/or training		✓
Pregnancy and maternity	<u>Consider:</u> Pregnancy related matter/illness or maternity leave related matter		✓
Race	<u>Consider:</u> Language and cultural factors, include Gypsy and Travellers group		✓
Religion and Belief	<u>Consider:</u> Practices of worship, religious or cultural observance, include non-belief		✓
Sex/Gender	<u>Consider:</u> Male and Female		✓
Sexual Orientation	<u>Consider:</u> Know or perceived orientation		✓

What information and evidence do you have about the groups that you have selected above?

N/A

Consider: Demographic data, performance information, recommendations of internal and external inspections and audits, complaints information, ethnicity data, audits, service user data, etc.

**How might your proposal impact on the groups identified? For example, you may wish to consider what impact it may have on our stated goals: Improving Access, Reducing Social Inequalities, Developing Confidence, Developing skills, Supporting Vulnerable People**

Examples of impact re given below:

- a) Planning a trip with the students to a location, which may have impact on people with limited mobility.
- b) Planning to extend access to studio without considering how the services may be accessed by people with limited mode of transportation.
- c) Redesign of a services that is used by people who may not have English as a first language, and may be excluded from normal communication routes.

Please list the positive and negative impacts you have identified in the summary table on the following page.

Summary	
Positive impacts (note the groups affected)	Negative impacts (note the groups affected)
N/A	N/A

Summarise the negative impacts for each group:

N/A

What consultation has taken place or is planned with each of the identified groups?

N/A

What was the outcome of the consultation undertaken?

N/A

What changes or actions do you propose to make or take as a result of research and/or consultation?

Briefly describe the actions then please insert actions to be taken: N/A

Will the planned changes to the proposal:

Please state Yes or No

Lower the negative impact?	N/A
Ensure that the negative impact is legal under anti-discriminatory law?	N/A
Provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations i.e. a positive impact?	N/A

Taking into account the views of the groups consulted and the available evidence, please clearly state the risks associate with the proposal, weighed against the benefits.

N/A

What monitoring/evaluation/review systems have been put in place?

This policy, along with other policies, will be reviewed annually.

When will it be reviewed?

December 15, 2021

Date Review completed:	December 15, 2020
Signature:	Steven Mundin
Approved by:	G. Ap Harri / M. Abonyi / Y. Robinson / K. Sparrow
Date Approved:	December 16, 2020