



**Cheshire College
South & West**



Student Protection Plan

Key Information	
Reference Number	CCSW - SPP
ELT Post Responsible for Update and Monitoring	Vice Principal – Innovation, Curriculum and Quality
Published on Website	Yes
Date Approved by Academic Board	29 June 2026
Date approved by ELT	30 June 2026
Date Approved by Governor's Committee (if applicable)	08 July 2026
Date of Next Review	30 June 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporation was established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 for the purpose of conducting South Cheshire College. The College is an exempt charity for the purposes of Part 3 of the Charities Act 2011.
- 1.2 The College was incorporated as South Cheshire College. On 31st March 2017, South Cheshire College merged with West Cheshire College. West Cheshire College dissolved, and the assets and liabilities transferred to South Cheshire College. On 1st January 2018, South Cheshire College formally changed its name to Cheshire College South & West. The College is currently progressing a planned merger with Macclesfield College, with completion anticipated in August 2026. Cheshire College South & West will remain the continuing legal entity and OfS-registered provider; Macclesfield College will dissolve and relevant assets, liabilities and HE student arrangements will transfer to Cheshire College South & West. References within this plan reflect the expected post-merger operating model and will be reviewed again following completion, or earlier if the planned arrangements materially change.
- 1.3 The College is financially secure and operates across four College campuses in Cheshire; Chester, Crewe, Ellesmere Port and, Macclesfield. The College's current assessment is that the risk of campus closure is low. However, any proposed closure, relocation or material change to HE delivery at a campus would be managed through this plan.
- 1.4 This plan lays out the measures that Cheshire College South & West (CCSW) will take in order to protect the student interest and assure continuity of study in the event of a material change or closure of a programme, module, campus, delivery mode, awarding or validating partner or College.
- 1.5 There is a requirement by the Office for Students (OfS) for this College to have a Student Protection Plan. This plan has been approved by the College Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the College's Full Corporation Board. This plan is reviewed every 3 years by the Academic Board, which has student representation. The College will review the plan and its supporting risk assessment annually and following any material change to the College's circumstances, provision or operating model, update the plan where necessary.
- 1.6 The measures contained in this plan are in addition to statutory rights, which remain unaffected. Should CCSW need to invoke any of the measures contained within this plan then the College will make student support services available to all students so affected, this may include assistance from the Student Financial Adviser, College Counsellors and Careers Advisers. Advice and guidance would be available to groups affected collectively and for individual support. Where students are affected by LLE-funded modular delivery, support may also include advice on credit transfer, module sequencing, student finance implications and the impact on progression to a full award.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any individual on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity or nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, socio-economic status or any other personal characteristic. This policy covers all students, applicants and offer-holders for Higher Education courses, including students transferring from Macclesfield College following the planned merger.
 - 2.1.1 For the purposes of this plan, references to higher education provision, programmes and students include credit-bearing modules and modular pathways, including provision funded through the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

3. The Colleges' Commitment to You as a Student or Prospective Student

- 3.1 CCSW will include student consultation and representation in decision-making. The College will do this by the inclusion of student representatives on the Academic board in the College's HE deliberative structure who will then report back to Student Senate and through student focus groups.
- 3.2 Should this protection plan need to be triggered, students, applicants, offer-holders and, where relevant, Macclesfield College HE students transferring into CCSW will be contacted by email to the email address supplied by the student and, where applicable, to their CCSW email address and by letter to the address held

by the College. Contact will be made by a member of the Admissions Team or relevant HE team within 5 College working days of the date on which an applicable change was decided upon or notified to the College. Communications will explain the nature of the change, the expected impact, the options available, the support arrangements in place and the timescale for further updates.

- 3.3 CCSW will take all reasonable steps to avoid implementing material changes during an academic year, during a module already in delivery, or close to the start of an academic year or module start date.
- 3.4 In the event of programme, pathway or module closure, or where a material change may affect a student's ability to continue or complete their studies as planned, the College will normally seek to teach out existing students within an agreed timescale at the College, where this is viable and in the interests of students. For modular provision, the College will seek to offer a suitable alternative module, deferred delivery, transfer route or refund/compensation option where appropriate. Students will be kept informed and consulted during any period of change and, where relevant, advised on credit, progression, transfer, refund/compensation and student finance implications.
- 3.5 CCSW undertakes to update the College websites, module information, offer-holder communications and any other listing services within 5 College working days of a decision or notification of significant change arising from the planned merger, and any decision to put a programme, module, campus or the College as a whole into a "continuity period".
- 3.6 Where changes are such to render it impossible for prospective students to study on their intended programme and/or with the intended financial support, the College will endeavour to offer eligible applicants a place on an alternate and appropriate CCSW programme or assist existing CCSW offer-holders in securing a place elsewhere.
- 3.7 This includes all scenarios outlined below.

4. Measures the College will take in specific situations

- 4.1 In the following paragraphs, a number of risks and scenarios are identified, along with the measures the College will take in order to protect continuity and quality of study, as an addition to, or by way of further detail on, the general undertakings above.
- 4.2 Inclusion of a scenario should not be assumed to mean the College considers it likely to occur. The College considers the risks highlighted below to be minimal, but recognises that the planned merger and the introduction of LLE-funded modular provision require ongoing monitoring.
- 4.3 The College has a risk management process that identifies and scores the impact and likelihood of a risk. This determines the overall risk score and whether it is a material risk. The scoring is as per the following table:

IMPACT	(5) Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25
	(4) Major	4	8	12	16	20
	(3) Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
	(2) Minor	2	4	6	8	10
	(1) Almost None	1	2	3	4	5
		1. Rare 2. Unlikely 3. Possible 4. Likely 5. Almost Certain				
		Likelihood				
Low Risk						
Medium Risk						
High Risk						

4.3.1 Updating of programme content, regulations and policies

Low Risk	Risk Score: Impact 1, Likelihood 4 and overall Risk Score 4 This is a low risk as the impact would usually be minor and the likelihood is likely due to normal curriculum developments in response to local need and merger activity.
----------	--

- 4.3.1.1 An ongoing commitment to quality assurance and enhancement at CCSW and any of its validating HEI partners means that, from time to time, programme content, regulations and policies will be updated. Where updates to content are made, for example substitution of modules, changes to module content, delivery mode or assessment activities, these will be proposed via the Academic Board appropriate HE quality and governance route, where students are represented, before approval.
- 4.3.1.2 Changes to regulations and policies may be prompted by a validating or accrediting partner and will be considered at the Academic Board (and/or Executive Leadership Team), where students are represented.
- 4.3.1.3 Revised regulations shall only apply to students first enrolling after College approval (and partner HEI approval where applicable) of those revisions, unless changes are not deemed significant, thus different regulations may apply to different cohorts on a programme and will be documented in the Programme Handbook for that cohort.
- 4.3.1.4 New or revised policies shall apply to all students from the start of the academic term or module following approval by the College's Academic Board (and/or ELT), with a proviso that for the remainder of the current academic year or module period, no student may be treated disadvantageously in comparison with the previous policy unless the change is legally or regulatorily required.

4.3.2 Closure of an Individual Programme, Pathway or Module

Low Risk	Risk Score: Impact 2, Likelihood 3 and overall Risk Score 6 This is a low risk because impact on students could be minor given the advance notice and support to identify other programmes. The likelihood is possible during portfolio review, merger implementation and smaller cohort sizes.
-----------------	---

- 4.3.2.1 The College may make a strategic decision to close a programme, pathway or module because insufficient enrolments render it non-viable from an academic, student experience or resourcing perspective; because it has been superseded in the College portfolio; because it no longer aligns with the College's mission; because of changes to awarding, validating or regulatory requirements; or because portfolio alignment is required following the planned merger.
- 4.3.2.2 In such cases and where possible, the College will offer existing students a choice of the following options, noting that the College undertakes not to close a programme within 3 calendar months of the start of an academic year: where this is reasonably avoidable, and not to cancel a module after teaching has commenced unless this is unavoidable.
- 4.3.2.3 To continue as planned to be "taught out" on the original programme, where the College considers this to be a viable option on academic and student experience grounds, noting that this may itself be subject to the number of students so electing. Throughout this document, an on-course student means one who is actively enrolled, pursuing their course and attending classes at the relevant point.
- 4.3.2.4 To transfer to a similar or replacement programme at CCSW, where available.
- 4.3.2.5 To transfer with CCSW's assistance to a course at an alternate provider.
- 4.3.2.6 To invoke the College's Tuition Fees Policy in relation to a potential refund or partial refund. The Tuition Fees Policy is available on the College website at: [Policies & Procedures - Cheshire College South & West](#).

4.3.3 Closure of a Specific Site or Campus

Medium Risk	Risk Score: Impact 4, Likelihood 1 and overall Risk Score 4 This is a medium risk as impact would be major but is rare to occur
--------------------	---

- 4.3.3.1 On resource, academic, student experience or health and safety grounds it may be necessary to close a site or campus and/or move programmes between sites. Unless taken on the grounds of emergency relocation due to unanticipated events, or on the grounds of a material improvement of facilities, the College undertakes not to close a site or relocate a programme whilst teaching is underway for the academic year, nor within a month of the start of an academic year.

- 4.3.3.2 Where a site is closed, or programme relocated, programmes and services affected will be delivered instead at appropriate alternate premises of the College. In such circumstances, students will not be routinely offered other options.
- 4.3.3.3 Where relocation materially affects a student's ability to continue, the College will consult affected students and consider reasonable mitigations such as timetable changes, blended delivery, travel advice, support adjustments, transfer options, deferral or refund/compensation where appropriate.
- 4.3.3.4 Loss or Suspension of Registration, Designation or Student Finance Eligibility, including LLE Funding

Low Risk

Risk Score: Impact 3, Likelihood 1 and overall Risk Score 3

There is a low risk as impact would be moderate and it is unlikely to occur.

Where the College's OfS registration, designation or student finance eligibility is withdrawn, suspended or is not successfully renewed, and depending on the circumstances, the College will appeal the decision and/or make a new application with a view to restoration for the coming academic year or relevant module start date.

- 4.3.3.5 Where appropriate the College will also apply for "teach out designation", allowing eligible existing students to continue to access student tuition and maintenance loans, including those making new loan applications, for the remainder of their studies while on their current programme at CCSW, which was designated up to that point.
- 4.3.3.6 In the event of teach out designation not being granted, the College will endeavour to transfer existing eligible students, in receipt of or seeking loans, to an approved alternate provider, should they so wish.
- 4.3.3.7 However, de-designation may also relate to, or lead to, the closure of the College and provisions made below should also be noted.

4.3.4 Loss, Suspension or Restriction of Student Sponsor Licence Arrangements

Low Risk

Risk Score: Impact 2, Likelihood 1 and overall Risk Score 2

This is a low risk as impact would be minor and is unlikely to occur.

- 4.3.4.1 It is noted that the College does not currently seek to admit international students to its HE programmes. In the future, should the College seek to recruit international students and where the College's student sponsor licence is withdrawn, suspended or restricted, prospective international students who have made an application to study will be contacted.
- 4.3.4.2 The College will assist existing offer-holders in securing a place elsewhere. Depending on the circumstances, the College will appeal the decision and/or make a new application for a student sponsor licence with a view to the restoration of this for the coming academic year. Current sponsored students will be contacted by the College within 5 College working days of notification of United Kingdom Visa and Immigration's decision, to advise whether they may continue under existing CCSW sponsorship or are required to return to their home country to make a fresh visa application.
- 4.3.4.3 In the latter case, on request and where sponsor licence regulations permit, the College will endeavour to transfer the student to an approved alternate provider with appropriate sponsor licence.

4.3.5 Withdrawal or Non-Renewal of Validation

Low Risk

Risk Score: Impact 2, Likelihood 2 and overall Risk Score 4

This is a low risk as impact would be minor and is unlikely to occur.

- 4.3.5.1 Where the above occurs for one, more or all programmes, in line with the College's validation agreements with an awarding organisation or its partner HEIs, current students registered will normally be permitted to complete their intended studies at the College, subject to normal maximum timescales. If, for whatever reason in line with the validation agreement, the partner awarding organisation or HEI determines that this cannot occur, then the College and involved parties that in all cases current on-course students may continue with their current programme at the College for 22 teaching weeks following communication of the decision to end validation and until the end of the term in which the 22-week period ends.

4.3.5.2 Following an awarding organisation or partner HEI decision to no longer validate programme(s), the College will work to identify an alternate validating partner, with a view to putting this arrangement in place within 22 teaching weeks of the decision. Students will be advised and supported by the College in choosing between the following options, if they become available:

- 4.3.5.2.1 completing their studies at CCSW under the existing partner's awarding or validation arrangement;
- 4.3.5.2.2 transferring to a CCSW programme validated by another partner (if possible); and
- 4.3.5.2.3 transferring to an approved alternate provider (*if neither of the above are possible*).

4.3.6 Closure of College

Medium Risk	Risk Score: Impact 4, Likelihood 1 and overall Risk Score 4 This is a medium risk as impact would be severe but is very unlikely to occur
-------------	--

4.3.6.1 As with all providers, an extreme set of events may lead to the prospect of the College being closed or a decision taken to exit the market served by the College. This may be triggered, for example, by the College becoming insolvent or through falling student demand, withdrawal of awarding, validation or regulatory matters, or a major event rendering the College's mission non-viable. Following the planned merger, this scenario will be assessed in relation to Cheshire College South & West as the continuing legal entity and OfS-registered provider.

4.3.6.2 In such cases, the following will apply:

- 4.3.6.2.1 Where a decision to close is taken, the College will immediately enter a "continuity period" allowing all existing on-course students to continue with their current programme at the College for 22 teaching weeks following communication of the decision to close the College and until the end of the term in which the 22-week period ends.
- 4.3.6.2.2 Where transfer to an awarding, validating or alternate provider is indicated in the above, this will be considered with Pearson, relevant university partners and/or appropriate alternate providers, subject to the student's award, credit achieved, mode of study, location and the receiving provider's entry, validation and regulatory requirements.

4.3.7 Risks Arising from the Merger and Transfer of Provision

Low Risk	Risk Score: Impact 2, Likelihood 2 and overall Risk Score 4 This is a low risk as impact would be minor and is unlikely to occur
----------	---

- 4.3.7.1 The planned merger with Macclesfield College is not expected to interrupt students' studies. However, inadequate management of the transition could result in unclear or inaccurate information, disruption to student support, or uncertainty regarding course delivery, awarding arrangements, student records or complaints routes. The likelihood of disruption is reduced because the merger is being closely managed through formal transition arrangements, named responsibility groups and governance oversight.
- 4.3.7.2 Cheshire College South & West will remain the continuing legal entity and OfS-registered provider following the anticipated completion of the merger in August 2026. HE students, applicants and offer-holders transferring from Macclesfield College will be covered by this plan.
- 4.3.7.3 The College will maintain oversight of the transition and ensure that student records, course commitments, delivery arrangements, awarding or validating arrangements, student support and relevant communications are transferred and updated appropriately.
- 4.3.7.4 Existing contractual commitments and material information previously provided to transferring Macclesfield College HE students and offer-holders will be honoured by Cheshire College South & West, unless a change is required by law, regulation, an awarding or validating partner, or is agreed through appropriate consultation with affected students.

5 Publication of the Student Protection Policy Plan

- 5.1 CCSW will publicise the student protection plan to current and future students by publishing the Student Protection Plan on the College's websites, mention of the plan at new student interviews at the pre-enrolment stage and raising awareness of the plan at new student induction and communicating directly with affected students, applicants or offer-holders where the planned merger, LLE-funded modular provision or another material change may affect them.
- 5.2 CCSW will refer students to it in their course handbook. The College will continue to communicate and consult with students about the plan. If necessary, students can complain about the way we implement the plan via the student complaints process, as depicted below:
- 5.3 Complaints
 - 5.3.1 Students, applicants and offer-holders who are dissatisfied with the way this plan has been implemented may use the College's published complaints procedure.
 - 5.3.2 Where relevant, the procedures of Pearson or a validating university partner may also apply. Eligible higher education students may refer a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator after the College's internal procedures have been completed and a Completion of Procedures Letter has been issued.
- 5.4 The College will review the risk assessment and this student protection plan annually for relevance and risk followed by a full review every 3 years and will involve students in this review.
- 5.5 This update was considered through the College's higher education governance arrangements, including student representation through Academic Board and Curriculum and Quality Committee. Feedback received was considered as part of the final review, and records of consultation are retained by the College.
- 5.6 The College will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of this plan by including it in staff development and training. Staff continual professional development will also include and review best practice guidance regarding consumer protection law.