

# Student Protection Plan:

Provider's name: Doreen **Bird College** of Performing Arts Ltd.

Provider's UKPRN: 10002011

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The Student Protection Plan is structured according to a template provided by the Office for Students in 2018 during the initial registration process.

## Student Protection Plan for the period 2022-23

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

The College has assessed the following as potential risks to students' continuation of studies:

#### **Closure of the College (very low risk):**

The risk that the College as a whole is unable to operate is very low because the College is in a strong financial position having experienced several years of continued growth, increasing its number of Higher Education students from 253 across all three years of study in Academic Year 2015-16, to 457 students in Academic Year 2022-23. The College has reached an optimum number of students and does not anticipate any significant change in the coming years. The College would not wish numbers to contract as it would destabilise its financial model, but equally nor would it wish to grow significantly as its research indicates this could be detrimental to standards. Bird College welcomes applications from all sections of the community, regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender, and is committed to meeting the requirements of learners with special educational needs.

Our single Higher Education programme, a BA (Hons) in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre, is validated by the University of Greenwich. Our relationship with the University of Greenwich remains strong, and their own financial position, having historically run their accounts at a surplus and with significant reserves to draw on if required, ensures that we have business continuity plans in place should the Higher Education landscape change dramatically in the future. The [University's 2020/21 financial statements](#) indicate that the University and its subsidiaries generated a surplus before other gains of £9.3m in 2020/21, equating to a margin of 4.0% on total income, and had total net assets of £118.9m at the financial year end. The risk that the University of Greenwich as a whole becomes unable to operate is considered to be very low.

The University's financial management information and financial forecasts are regularly reviewed by the Finance Committee and the University's Governing Body to enable any corrective action to be initiated immediately, in the event of a deterioration in the University's financial position. The Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee actively oversee measures to ensure that the University achieves efficiency and value for money in its operations. In 2018, the University commenced a cost reduction exercise to address projected falls in revenue and to ensure that the University's financial position will continue to be sound. The University's financial management information and financial forecasts are regularly reviewed by the Finance Committee and the

University Governing Body to enable any corrective action to be initiated immediately, in the event of a deterioration in the University's financial position.

**Closure of the BA (Hons) Professional Dance & Musical Theatre Programme (very low risk):**

The risk that the College will no longer deliver its BA (Hons) in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme in the next four years is very low given the high demand from applicants to join this programme. Our statistics show that the College has achieved its 100% enrolment target each academic year since 2015.

**Loss of the College Campus (very low risk):**

The risk that the College's single-campus location from which it delivers its provision is no longer available is extremely low. With demand from applicants to the BA (Hons) in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme remaining high, the College is actively seeking further planned capital developments and a planning application has been submitted for providing new support spaces, replacement of teaching spaces and providing student accommodation for approximately 100 students. The College is extremely committed to its current location and its development.

**Loss of degree-awarding powers at our validating HE Institution (very low risk):**

The University of Greenwich was awarded indefinite degree awarding powers under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework gives the OfS the power to revoke a provider's authorisation to grant degrees. The risk of this to the University of Greenwich and therefore, Bird College, is considered very low, as the University intends to fully comply with the OfS Regulatory Framework and has established a Senior Management Group to oversee the University's application to register with the OfS and their compliance with the Regulatory Framework conditions of registration.

**Changes to components on the BA programme (low risk):**

The risk that the College is no longer able to deliver material components of its BA programme is low because modules are designed to be taught by integrated teams of academic staff and a wide network of industry professionals can be called upon for delivery of specific classes and productions to support students' learning and preparations for progression into the industry. These industry experts support the employability of students on the BA in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme at Bird College.

**Loss of license to sponsor migrant students under the Student (formerly Tier 4) route (moderate risk):**

The College acts as a Visa sponsor for migrant students coming to study from overseas, including from the European Union (EU). Our International Students may also be able to apply for a Graduate Visa upon completion of their studies here. The risk that the College will lose its license to sponsor migrant students under the Student (formerly Tier 4) route and/or have its 'track record of compliance' ('Student Sponsor - Track Record' status, formerly 'Highly trusted status) with the UKVI revoked is moderate. Should the College's application to Register with the Office for Students be successful, the risk of the College losing our Student Sponsor Licence will move from moderate to low, due to our low visa refusal rate for our students.

The College regularly reviews its processes related to international applicants and monitoring students whose visas are sponsored by the College, and undertakes regular internal audits of its processes with regard to this area. There is a risk for any provider that UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) could withdraw their licence to sponsor migrant students under the Student route. This would mean those students would not be able to continue their studies with us and would lose their right to remain in the UK unless another institution were able to provide sponsorship.

### **Epidemic / pandemic of disease (moderate risk):**

The Covid-19 pandemic, which commenced in the UK in 2020, affected the College's operations in 2019-20 and 2020-21 as a result of lockdowns and restrictions imposed by the UK Government. The College has safely carried out on-campus teaching and activities throughout the 2021-22 academic year, avoiding significant outbreaks by implementing Covid safety measures that reflected government guidance. The UK government has now removed all Covid-19 restrictions and has replaced its Covid-19 guidance for Universities and Colleges with guidance on managing infectious diseases in education and childcare settings. The College planned for normal on-campus teaching and activities in 2022-23 adhering to the latest safety guidance provided by the UK Government.

While the risk from Covid-19 is receding, there remains what we consider to be a moderate risk that continuity of study could be disrupted in 2022-23 by a major outbreak or by national or local restrictions that might be imposed by the UK Government, e.g. in response to a significant increase in Covid-19 cases or a new variant. If this were to happen, the risks to continuity of study might include disruption to teaching and assessment resulting from Government requirements to cease or reduce on-campus activities; those requirements also affecting students' ability to access key learning and study facilities such as libraries; and students' lack of access to IT facilities affecting their ability to study remotely.

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The College regularly reviews its processes to support the different needs of students sharing protected characteristics (including disability, gender reassignment, race and religion or belief) and has Policies and Procedures in place to ensure all its students are protected. This includes its Equity and Inclusion Policy and its Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure.

In their Student Protection Plan, the University of Greenwich, our validating Higher Education institution with whom we have a 'franchise' arrangement, refers explicitly to the potential closure of any of their collaborative partners. The University of Greenwich Student Protection Plan states that 'were a partner to cease operating or cease offering a programme of study, and for unforeseen circumstances it were not possible to teach out the programme to students already registered, any alternative programme offered to students (at another partner institution or at the University) might be taught some distance away. This would mean increased travel time and travel costs for those students affected.' As mentioned previously, the risk/likelihood of this happening at Bird College is very low. In this worst-case scenario, an equivalent programme to our BA in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre taught at the University of Greenwich will be offered, providing the opportunity for our 'partner' students to be taught at the University, if necessary.

The University of Greenwich operates a robust approval process for all their partnerships, with all partnership proposals subject to approval by the University's Partnership Scrutiny Panel. The University of Greenwich carries out regular programmes of review for all their collaborative partners, including an annual review of each partner's provision, and the reappraisal of partnerships every five years (or earlier, e.g. if there are concerns about the partner). The BA in Professional Dance and Musical Theatre at Bird College successfully underwent its last review by the University of Greenwich in January 2018 and was reapproved for a further 5 years until 2023-24.

Bird College has both a Financial Memorandum and a Memorandum of Agreement, which outlines our programme which is offered under the University of Greenwich franchised arrangement and also details termination procedures should the College wish to cease offering its programme. The University of Greenwich conducts regular monitoring meetings, application reporting and communication takes place between the Partnerships Manager at the University and senior management and registry staff at Bird College. The University of Greenwich also provides support to Bird College staff in terms of Away Days and Strategic Planning Meetings, among others.

Finally, a Higher Education Review of the University of Greenwich by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in 2015 included a review of the University's management of collaborative provision and found that the University of Greenwich met UK expectations in all of the indicators used by the QAA. The review identified as an area of good practice the "risk-based approach embedded in the work of the University's Partnership Scrutiny Panel, link tutors and annual monitoring activity that strengthens the management and oversight of partnership provision".

Given all of the above, our assessment of the severity of impact on students of all the risks identified is very low.

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

*Please find below an evidenced statement of the measures we have put in place to preserve continuation of study for our students in those areas where we consider the risk to be increased:*

This section focuses on the measures we have put in place to mitigate the risks which we have identified as 'moderate' in the section above, on the basis that these are risks with a greater likelihood of being crystallised. We are committed to providing students with support and advice in the event that any of these risks crystallise, and this section describes how we will do so. Free, independent advice to students affected by changes is also available from the University of Greenwich Students' Union's Advice Service:

<https://www.greenichsu.co.uk/advice/>

### **Loss of license to sponsor migrant students under the Student (formerly Tier 4) route (moderate risk):**

Should Bird College's Student (formerly Tier 4) Sponsor Licence be suspended, the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise the consequent disruption to those services and to affected students by, for instance;

- working with UKVI to allow enrolled students to complete their year of study/programme;
- allowing students already in receipt of a Visa, having been allocated a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from the College, to enrol and commence their studies;
- offering students who have not begun their travel to the College, the opportunity to postpone their application pending the resolution of the suspension;
- ensuring that the College is fully transparent in communication with students affected by this situation.

Should the College's Student (formerly Tier 4) Sponsor Licence be revoked, the College will take all reasonable steps to minimise the consequent disruption to affected students by, for example:

- providing assistance to affected students to move to an alternative sponsor, including the University of Greenwich, its validating Higher Education partner.

### **Epidemic / pandemic of disease (moderate risk):**

As indicated, the College planned for normal on-campus teaching and activities in 2022-23 adhering to the latest safety guidance provided by the UK Government.

The welfare of students and staff is the College's highest priority. The College approach will always be based on official [UK Government guidance](#), developed in consultation with the [UK Health Security Agency](#) (formerly Public Health England). This was true during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when the College closed and moved all classes online until it was allowed to implement a controlled reopening.

The College will continue to adhere to the guidance and requirements set by the UK Government and the UK Health Security Agency in the event of any future outbreaks when restrictions may be imposed. The College's Infection Control Guidance sets out the principles to be followed in the event of a major Covid-19 (Pandemic) outbreak or increasing restrictions affecting our campus. In particular, the guidance emphasises that:

- Any measures or restrictions which we put in place beyond our usual infection control measures will be informed by guidance and/or discussions with the UK Health Security Agency and/or the relevant local authority Director of Public Health;
- We will prioritise the continuation of face-to-face teaching and on-campus activities. Limitations on students' on-campus attendance will only be imposed on a short-term basis as a last resort after other measures and following public health advice;
- Where measures are required that go beyond those required by our Infection Control Guidance, we will initially focus on measures which do not impact on students' attendance (e.g. enhanced cleaning and hygiene, increased communications to staff/students, moving activities outdoors where possible, reviewing ventilation, limiting residential field trips, mandatory wearing of face coverings following public health advice);
- Where it becomes necessary to limit students' attendance, we will do so following public health advice. This might happen where other measures have failed to break chains of transmission or where our campus is in an area which is subject to restrictions (e.g. in response to a new variant of Covid-19). We anticipate that limiting attendance would be done in a phased way, initially by reducing teaching on site and increasing social distancing; then by prioritising on site teaching for 'practical' courses where on campus teaching is most beneficial; and finally by prioritising on-site teaching for those courses where on campus teaching is essential.

In the event of another national lockdown or major local restrictions, we would re-introduce measures similar to those which we introduced in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to ensure continuity of study during the Covid-19 pandemic. These have included:

- Moving teaching and assessment online where required by government guidance or Covid safety requirements to enable students to progress and complete while our campus is closed;
- As indicated above, where limited on-campus teaching is permitted by government guidance, prioritising subjects with a 'practical' component or where on-campus teaching is essential (e.g. live performance components);
- Where permitted by government guidance, prioritising access to key on campus facilities which support students' learning such as libraries, including moving to 'click and collect' services as a last resort where we are permitted to do so;
- Implementing emergency amendments to our academic regulations to enable students to progress and complete;

- In consultation with the University of Greenwich, implement a 'no detriment' policy for students to help them demonstrate their full potential and counteract any detrimental impacts the pandemic may have on their assessments;
- Introducing an expedited student complaints procedure to ensure the swift and consistent handling of complaints relating to major disruption;
- Measures such as laptop loan schemes to address 'digital poverty' among students;
- Delivering teaching and assessment online or through local partners to International students who may be prevented by Covid-19 from travelling to the UK;
- Implementing Covid safety measures (e.g. social distancing, mandatory wearing of face coverings and Covid testing) in line with government guidance in place at the time;
- Promoting the uptake of vaccination among students and staff.

If any of the above measures become necessary, we will communicate with students about changes that affect them and will consult with students/the Greenwich Students' Union where reasonably possible. Further information about how we will communicate in the event of an outbreak is provided in our Infection Control Guidance.

#### **General risks:**

Should the College be no longer able to deliver its BA (Hons) Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme, the University of Greenwich would offer to deliver an alternative programme to students (at another partner institution or at the University). This relocation may involve inconvenience to some students, for example increased travel time and costs. The University of Greenwich will compensate students for reasonable additional travel costs incurred as a result of the transfer of their programme, with claims for compensation to be considered on an individual basis. While the risk of this is negligible, this arrangement is expressly stated in the University of Greenwich Student Protection Plan.

In the rare situation where our BA programme could no longer be delivered and it is not possible to transfer the student to an appropriate alternative programme of study at the University of Greenwich, the University will assist the student in transferring to a different programme at the University or to a different programme at another provider. Bird College is a founding member of the Alliance of Musical Theatre Conservatoires (AMTC) (<http://amtc.uk.com/>) and would assist the University of Greenwich in this process through its close links to similar institutions delivering high quality musical theatre education and vocational training. The College also has close links with other providers accredited by the [Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre](#) (CDMT), further options should students need to be transferred to a different programme at another provider. Any compensation will be as set out in the University of Greenwich's [Tuition Fee Policy and Procedure](#) (undergraduate taught students), which Bird College adheres to, and this arrangement is expressly stated in the University of Greenwich Student Protection Plan.

In the exceptional circumstance that our BA programme is closed and the University of Greenwich is not able to preserve continuation of study, compensation arrangements will be as per the University's [Tuition Fee Policy and Procedure](#) (undergraduate taught students), which Bird College adheres to, and this arrangement is expressly stated in the University of Greenwich Student Protection Plan.

Should the College be affected by significant events involving theft, fire, flooding, fraud, terrorism, vandalism or IT and utilities failure, the College has a comprehensive **Business Continuity Plan** in place, which is subject to review by its Senior Managers and Board of Directors.

The Business Continuity Plan is reviewed at the end of each Academic Year. The CEO and Principal at Bird College ensure that very effective insurance arrangements are in place and that disruption from any of the aforementioned events would not have a financial impact on the quality of students' education and training.

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

*Please find below a link to our refund and compensation policy:*

Students on the BA (Hons) Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme at Bird College fall under the University of Greenwich's Charging and Refund Policies for undergraduate taught students, available at:

<https://docs.gre.ac.uk/rep/sas/charging-and-refund-policy>

As indicated in their Student Protection Plan, we believe the University of Greenwich has sufficient reserves and assets to provide refunds and compensation for the students for whom we have identified an increased risk of non-continuation of study. The University had total net assets of £118.9m as at 31 July 2021.

### **4. Information about how we will communicate with students about our student protection plan**

We will communicate our Student Protection Plan to current and future students by publishing it on our [website](#), by signposting the Student Protection Plan when offering applicants a place of study, and by linking to the plan in our BA (Hons) Professional Dance and Musical Theatre programme handbook, which is provided to all students in electronic format and the point of enrolment. Furthermore, the University of Greenwich signpost their own Student Protection Plan in their [Terms and Conditions](#) for applicants and in their [Principal Conditions of Registration](#).

We will communicate the Student Protection Plan to staff via all-staff emails. We will ensure that staff are aware of the implications of our Student Protection Plan when they propose programme or course changes by linking to the plan from by linking to the plan from our quality assurance procedures and from our guidance on teach-out provided by the University of Greenwich.

Our Student Protection Plan has been developed by senior management at Bird College and cross-refers to the [University of Greenwich Student Protection Plan](#), as our validating Higher Education institution with whom the College has a 'franchise' arrangement.

The Student Protection Plan is reviewed annually by senior management and Student Representation will be involved in periodic reviews. The Student Representatives will actively engage with their peers to obtain feedback about the Bird College Student Protection Plan, including complaints about the implementation of the Plan. The Student Representatives will present the feedback, including any complaints, in meetings with the CEO and Principal, who have overall responsibility for the Student Protection Plan. The Student Representatives will also support and promote the sharing of the Plan with their peers to ensure all students are able to actively engage with the College and its implementation of its Student Protection Plan.

The College would consider making independent advice about its Student Protection Plan available to students if requested, and the Student Representatives will be notified about the procedure for requesting independent advice at the point of undertaking their elected role.

The Student Protection Plan covers a range of potential risks to students' continuity of study and what both Bird College and the University of Greenwich will do in the event that a risk occurs. How we will communicate and consult with students will depend on the nature of the situation in which the Student Protection Plan has to be implemented. The overarching principle is that we will consult with students at the earliest opportunity to ensure that students are fully informed and can give their views. We will normally do so through the Bird College Student Representatives, and through existing mechanisms that we employ to involve students in their teaching and learning, such as the termly Academic & Programme Board meetings.

## 5. Information about students' right to complain

Students who are dissatisfied with changes affecting them and how both Bird College and/or the University of Greenwich has implemented the measures set out in this Student Protection Plan may complain to the University using the University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#).

If a student remains dissatisfied having completed the University's complaints process, they may be able to complain to the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education \(OIA\)](#), which provides a free, independent ombudsman service for the higher education sector.

Students may also seek free, independent advice about their complaints from [Greenwich Students' Union's Advice Service](#).

### Document Control:

Document title: **Student Protection Plan for the period 2022-23**

Approved by: Bird College CEO and Principal, 01 September 2022

Approved by OfS: Awaiting confirmation of Registration with the OfS.

Date of next review: June 2023