



Spurgeon's College

STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

As part of Spurgeon's College registration with the Office for Students the following Student Protection Plan is in place for the period 2019/2020

Provider's UKPRN: 10006093

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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

Spurgeon's College is one of the UK's leading theological Colleges. Founded in 1856 by the great Victorian preacher and philanthropist Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the College continues with its mission 'To train men and women for Christian mission, ministry and leadership in the contemporary world.' At its inception in 1856 the College had a single student; today it has a student body of over 570 students on designated courses (full and part-time) and has 92 ministers in training/placements in Baptist and non-Baptist churches. Over 5000 churches worldwide have been served by Spurgeon's ministers and its ministers are active today in 35 countries around the world. Spurgeon's College is the largest of the Baptist theological colleges in the British Isles and is seen as a centre of excellence for theological education and ministerial formation. The College offers undergraduate, postgraduate and counselling courses as well as a range of non-validated courses. The programmes are specifically designed for those from Baptist and non-Baptist churches wishing to train as ministers and this demand continues to be strong. Therefore the risk to a course being unavailable or withdrawn due to lack of demand is low. The College's degrees are validated by the University of Manchester.

Spurgeon's College's financial forecasts include a thorough assessment of the financial sustainability of the College. The Board of Governors have considered this both in terms of the College's track record but also in regard to a forward-looking forecast, which includes the incorporation of a business plan out to 2023. There are significant financial pressures within the whole theological education sector in the UK and Spurgeon's College has not been immune from these pressures. As a consequence, the Governors approved

a five year business plan which articulates the measures that the College will take to ensure continued financial viability.

The Governors will be proactive in their oversight of the delivery of the five year business plan. They receive detailed reports from the Principal and senior management of the College and detailed internal and external financial audit. These reports include:

- management accounts with updates on variance reports against budget;
- financial forecasts and annual financial statements (Finance Group and external auditors)
- financial updates at each Board of Governors meeting;
- risk management report (Finance Group); annual report against expected performance;
- audit reports; annual audit report; external audit management report; and detailed consideration on specific matters of concern.

The assessment of the Governors of the College is that financial viability is a critical component of enabling continued success in delivering an excellent quality of theological education and ministerial formation. Budgetary control and financial reporting is considered low risk. Reserves policies and cashflow sensitivity is considered medium/high risk. To mitigate this risk, the Governors have initiated the regular monitoring of cashflow situation by the Finance Group with quarterly management accounts examined at the Board of Governors meeting and regularly by the Principal and Heads of Department. Borrowing is considered low risk and is considered regularly at Board meetings.

The College's Risk Register identifies the key risks, likelihood of occurrence, potential impact upon Spurgeon's and actions being taken to reduce and mitigate risks. The Register is subject to annual review by the Finance Group and then by the Board of Governors meeting. It is monitored throughout the year with an annual report on risk management presented to the full board for approval.

The risk that Spurgeon's College will not be able to deliver courses at its current location is considered low. In the case of a catastrophic event that rendered part of campus unusable, the College has an insurance plan that would enable the continuity of business and the continuation of designated courses.

In January 2018 the Governors took the decision that the College will seek Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAPs). The College's main validating partner is the University of Manchester (UoM). The UoM recognises that a number of its validated partners were considering seeking TDAPs. The UoM supports Spurgeon's College's intention to seek TDAPs and is currently in conversation with the College concerning exit and validation arrangements. The Governors have secured the funding necessary to enable a successful application by Spurgeon's College for TDAPs.

The UoM and Spurgeon's College have been in discussion over an exit arrangement following the anticipated end of their validation agreement. The UoM will continue to accept new students onto its validated programmes up to and including the academic year 2019/20. The exit arrangement with the UoM guarantees that students on a UoM programme can continue their studies through to completion. Spurgeon's College and the UoM have signed a new validation agreement to underpin this part of the exit arrangement

between the two institutions.¹ Students considering seeking admission on a UoM validated programme can have confidence that they will be able to continue their studies, should they choose to, through to completion.

Since its foundation in 1856, Spurgeon's College has been training, educating and forming men and women for Christian ministry, mission and leadership in the UK and around the world. From the 1930s this has involved participation in delivering degree programmes, initially another institution's degree programme, but from 1974 the transition was made to designing and delivering its own degrees, validated by an accredited partner. Spurgeon's has over forty years' experience writing its own undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and substantial experience in delivering doctoral programmes. It is a mature, self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by effective (actual and in prospect) quality systems. The Governors and Senior Management are confident that the College will be successful in its application for New Degree Awarding Powers (TDAPs).

The exit arrangement with the UoM allows Spurgeon's to admit students onto a UoM validated programme up to and including the academic year 2019/20. The Senior Management intend to apply for New TDAPs early in 2019. As a mature, self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards, the Governors and Senior Management of the College are confident that its application for New TDAPs will be successful. If, however, there is a delay in its application for New TDAPs, the College will seek a new validation agreement with a new validating university. Spurgeon's College has been in negotiations with a new university partner regarding its research programmes (MTh, DMin and PhD) and anticipates that a formal agreement, between the two institutions will be signed by May 2019. The Senior Management will, as a contingency measure, discuss the possibility of a short-term validation arrangement with the new university partner (expected to validate its research programmes) to mitigate against any delay in either the College's registration with the OfS or New TDAPs applications.

Spurgeon's College has a long history of successfully delivering undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes. It also has a strong record of recruiting high quality academics to deliver its programmes. None of the College's designated courses are over-reliant on a single individual for delivery. Continuity of staffing and the College's large pool of associate lectures ensure that there is little risk of any course failing to be delivered to the highest of standards. Spurgeon's College has never closed a programme without teaching it out.

There is a low risk that certain modules would be challenging to run without certain key staff, but a high likelihood that similar or revised modules would be able to replace these, if necessary at short notice. The College has never had a module close while in operation without teaching it out. Students are informed when they make module choices and in registration information that, in the event that an optional module does not attract sufficient numbers to be viable in a particular year, it may be withdrawn and an alternative module offered. Similarly, if the necessity arose, students would be informed how places are prioritised should a module be oversubscribed and what alternative modules would be available.

¹ Dated 1 Dec 2018.

Spurgeon's College has processes and controls in place to ensure compliance with its Tier 4 sponsor license. The Director of Operations is the College lead on Tier 4 sponsor license compliance. The College's internal control measures and good practice are such that the risk of suspension or loss of the College's Tier 4 sponsor licence is low and that the College would take adequate measures that would ensure reinstatement before there were consequences that would affect students.

Student representatives are consulted about major programme changes. Student representatives members of the College's Academic Board, the body which oversees the courses, standards and outcomes of the courses offered through the College. Students are also represented on the College Council, the body which holds the Governors to account while providing advice to, and acts in advocacy for, the College and its programmes.

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

The College was established in the mid nineteenth century and through continued and careful use of its assets to deliver its business plan its overall sustainability is sound. There is a strong demand for its programmes because it is seen as a centre of excellence for theological education and ministerial formation. Institutional failure is most unlikely for as long as the measures described above continue. It is mitigated through its financial forecasting and sustainability planning, its risk management and internal control (including internal and external audit) processes, its business continuity planning, quality assurance processes and governance structures.

There is also an exceptionally low risk of any of the College's programmes ceasing to operate. Even its most specialist programmes would be taught out. A refund and compensation policy is in place in the unlikely circumstances that a programme ceased to operate, including arrangements where a programme was being taught out.

There is a low risk that certain modules will close from time to time. Again, The College has never had a module close while in operation without teaching it out. Students are informed about the way programme changes are handled through our terms and conditions, referenced above.

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

The College's refund policy is incorporated into its Fees Policy section 25-27. This is available on the College website:

[http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/uploads/Policies%202018/Tuition%20Fees%20Policy%20\(Dec%202018\).pdf](http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/uploads/Policies%202018/Tuition%20Fees%20Policy%20(Dec%202018).pdf)

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

We will publicise our student protection plan to current and future students by publishing it on our website alongside our terms and conditions.

The Academic Board which approves programme changes, the Board of Governors that oversees the work of the Academic Board, will review the student protection plan annually

to ensure that staff approving changes are aware of the implications of our student protection plan when changes are proposed.

The Student Representatives, both as part of the Academic Board and as part of the Staff / Student liaison, will review the student protection plan annually. In this way students will be an integral part of the approval and review of the plan.

Annual reviews may result in changes, for example, to the range of modules on offer or to module content. Where such changes are minor (for example, changes to individual elements of a programme that do not lead to a substantive change in overall content or the learning outcomes of a programme), Spurgeon's College will communicate these changes through updates to programme handbooks and module syllabuses, issued to students via Moodle (the College's VLE) each year, by the start of the academic year. In the event of significant changes (for example, changes to the way a degree classification is calculated), the College shall ensure that these changes are brought to the attention of affected students as soon as reasonably practicable, normally by email with no less than one term's notice.

If any more substantive measures in this plan need to be enacted, such as teaching out a programme, there will be consultations with students through our committee structure, liaison with the Student Representatives, a meeting of affected students and by correspondence. This process will include making sure students are aware of their options under this Plan and, where appropriate, our refund and compensation policy.

Where changes are such to render it impossible for prospective students to study on their intended programme and/or with the intended financial support, we will endeavour to offer help to eligible applicants in securing a place elsewhere and/or liaise with UCAS with a view to allowing the applicant a substitute choice in their application.