

Nazarene Theological College Student Protection Plan

Provider's name: Nazarene Theological College

Provider's UKPRN: 10004538

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Student protection plan for the period January 2025 and following.

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

The Senior Leadership Team and the College's Board of Governors undertakes an annual assessment of risk, and so ensures a regular review of both the level of risk and the likelihood of risk.

The risk that the provider as a whole is unable to operate is low: the College has been in continuous operation since 1944, and at no point has had to suspend operations in whole or in part. The College carries a very low level of debt, has been in operating surplus for the past five years, and has built up reserves to help the College navigate passages of financial turmoil (this in addition to the high capital value of the Didsbury-based property). The College is also supported by the International Church of the Nazarene, and its Board of Education is committed to supporting its educational institutions. The College Principal is working with external advisors to develop an institutional business plan, and to review the College's strategic plan, which forms the basis for the Governor's strategic direction. The College is fiscally conservative, so has contingencies in place to deal with short-term downturns in income that might arise from changes in its market.

The risk that individual courses may cease to operate is regularly reviewed (by Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Committees): the risk currently rates as low because of a continual pattern of sustainable enrolment, both at Undergraduate and at Postgraduate levels. Although enrolment on some course elements may seem to be low (ie, on certificate courses), since these are embedded parts of larger diploma and degree programmes their viability is linked to the larger cohort, not simply to those who choose those discrete awards. The College regularly reviews recruitment patterns, and has discontinued courses where patterns of delivery indicate: the College ceased operating a pathway in the MA in Theology (Community Justice) because of low recruitment: there were at the time no students pursuing the pathway or admitted to it. We are committed to 'teaching out' students who start a programme of study with us: we note, for instance, our revision to a previous BA in Youth Ministry, which was discontinued and a new programme in 'Youth and Community' introduced. We saw students on the previous award through to completion (including any part time students). The College has a relatively stable set of courses, and so we are confident that, though these are revised from time to time, they do not present a high risk. Clearly, an issue for every institution is succession planning for academic staff, to ensure continuity in subject specialism. This is part of the College's strategic planning, and a regular part of our strategic review.

Part-time students are, clearly, a slightly higher risk, only because they will be in a programme longer than those who are full time. However, the consistency of programmes, and the fact that our various programmes share common units, means that the level of risk is assessed as low. The College also has an extensive range of external specialist-practitioners, who help support some of the units with a basis in professional competencies (a number of whom are our own graduates), and this provides an excellent basis for ongoing specialist support.

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

If the College is unable to continue delivering any specific pathway in the BA or MA degree due to student numbers or patterns of recruitment, the College is committed to 'teaching out' cohorts of students currently enrolled, both full and part time. In the more specialist MA, this can be supported by use of specialist visiting lecturers (should the College lose specific specialist permanent staff). The College also has an agreement in place with three sister Theological Colleges, with similar programmes, for a reciprocal arrangement whereby, in case of course closure (or institutional closure) students will be eligible to transfer to similar courses, subject, of course, to the usual academic regulations that govern such transfer.

If the College loses a member of staff who is a PhD supervisor, then several options are in place: first, the option of the supervisor remaining in a supervisory role for the College, even if other contractual obligations are ceased (e.g. if a member of academic staff retires, he or she may continue to supervise existing students); student will be offered a transfer of supervision within the College (each PhD student has a team of two supervisors, and the College has a wide pool of supervisors beyond permanent faculty who are approved for such roles: in an incident some years ago, where a senior supervisor suffered a stroke, existing supervisors assumed lead roles for his PhD students); should the supervisor move to another academic post at another institution, the student would be allowed to transfer registration to another institution to remain with the supervisor, or offered alternative supervisory arrangements at NTC.

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 has drafted a 'Refund and Compensation Policy', which is attached as Appendix #1.

The College has liquid assets in the region of £250,000 which would be used to provide refunds and compensation to students in the case of course closure; should the College itself cease to operate, then the assets generated by sale of the property (2022 valuation: £8,500,000) would be used to provide refunds and compensation to students. The College has business indemnity should there be a problem with the physical site (such as fire, etc.), which would ensure on-going delivery of all courses.

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

The 'Student Protection Plan' will be made available to current students on the College web site, and on Moodle, the 'virtual learning environment,' where other student-facing policies are retained and updated. A link to the plan will also be made available in the Student Handbook, and the 'Essential Guide.' It will be made known to prospective students through the letter of contract that is sent to all students who are offered a place on a course of study.

The Student Protection Plan has been considered and agreed by elected student representatives on the Administrative Council, who have been consulted in the design of the plan. The adoption of it by the Administrative Council, and subsequently by the Board of Governors, involved student participation at every stage. The Refund and Compensation Policy will be subject to regular review by the Council, and so students will continue to be engaged in the review process. This SPP will be reviewed annually by the Compliance Committee.

Members of the academic staff also participate in Administrative Council, and will be fully informed of the policy. It will form a part of the process and documentation of course approval, linking to the question of risk, resources, and viability, so that implications of course closure are considered as and when new courses or pathways are developed.

Should a *course or course pathway or mode of study* be discontinued, then the following procedure would ensue:

- 1) Students currently enrolled on the course or pathway or mode of study would be informed of the decision by email and/or by post, informing them whether the College intended to 'teach out' the cohort, or to cease delivery without teaching-out the cohort. Students will always be allowed to complete the academic year on which they are enrolled; they will be informed of any change at least 60 days prior to the start of a new academic year. They will be directed to the Refund and Compensation Policy.
- 2) Students who have been offered a place of study where a course is discontinued will be informed at least 60 days prior to the start of the course, and informed of the range of options available to them, including transferring to an alternative course, transferring to an alternate institution, or withdrawing from study. They will be directed to the Refund and Compensation Policy.
- 3) Where students' course or pathway is not taught out, the College will identify an independent arbitrator to determine levels of refund and/or compensation. The College will also direct students to other independent advisors for advice, and fully brief such advisors on closure plans.

Should the College *as a whole* cease operations, then the following procedure would ensue:

- 1) Students currently enrolled on a course would be informed of the decision by email and/or by post, informing them whether the College intended to 'teach out' their cohort, or to cease delivery without teaching-out their cohort. Students will always be allowed to complete the academic year on which they are enrolled; they will be informed of any change at least 60 days prior to the start of a new academic year. They will be directed to the Refund and Compensation Policy.
- 2) Students who have been offered a place of study prior to institutional closure will be informed at least 60 days prior to the start of the course, and informed of the range of options available to them, including transferring to an alternate institution, or withdrawing from study. They will be directed to the Refund and Compensation Policy.
- 4) Where students' course or pathway is not taught out, the College will identify an independent arbitrator to determine levels of refund and/or compensation. The College will also direct students to other independent advisors for advice, and fully brief such advisors on closure plans.