



Student Protection Plan

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Related Policies	Tuition Fees Policy.

Amendment History

Revision Summary	Date Approved	Author

Irish Baptist College

Student Protection Plan

As part of the Irish Baptist College's validation with Spurgeon's College, London, the following Student Protection Plan is in place for the incoming academic year.

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

The Irish Baptist College was founded in 1892 in Dublin, moved to Belfast in 1963 and to its current premises in Moira in 2003. The College has a long and proven track-record in training men and women for Christian service in a range of vocations, most notably for pastoral and missionary service. The College offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as a range of non-validated courses. The programmes are rigorously academic and vocational and are designed for those from Baptist and non-Baptist churches wishing to train for Christian work. The risk to a course being unavailable or withdrawn due to lack of demand is low.

The Irish Baptist College's financial position is underpinned by its being the Training Department of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland (ABCI). This means that the College draws upon the support of the Churches and shares common premises and a budgetary context with other Association Departments. Whilst there are significant financial pressures within the Higher Education sector in the UK, and the College has not been immune from these pressures, yet the location of the College as the Training Department of the Churches helps to mitigate some of these pressures.

The Executive Committee of the ABCI and the College Management Committee receive detailed reports from the Principal and Director of Training and detailed financial reports on a regular basis. These reports include:

- monthly management accounts with updates on variance reports against budget;
- annual financial statements (including independent auditors report);
- financial updates at each Management Committee;
- risk register.

The assessment of the Executive Committee and Management Committee 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 Management Committee and the Finance and Staffing Committee regularly monitor the cashflow situation through management accounts examined at the meeting. The Principal and Director of Training review monthly management accounts in consultation with the Association's accountant.

The College's Risk Register identifies the key risks, likelihood of occurrence, potential impact upon the College and actions being taken to reduce and mitigate risks. The Register is subject to annual review by the Finance and Staffing Committee and then by the Management Committee. The risk that Irish Baptist 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.

Since its foundation in 1892, the Irish Baptist College has been training, educating and forming men and women for Christian ministry, mission and leadership in the UK and Ireland and around the world. From 1976 this has involved participation in delivering degree programmes validated by various accrediting institutions since that time. The College has, therefore, extensive experience in the field of Higher Education in the delivery of degree programmes with a proven commitment to quality and standards as is exhibited by the academic and vocational success of its graduates and recent QAA reports.

The Irish Baptist College has a long history of successfully delivering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It also has a strong record of recruiting high quality faculty lecturers and guest teachers to deliver its programmes. There is therefore, a very low risk of any course failing to be delivered to the highest of standards. 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.

The Irish Baptist College has processes and controls in place to ensure compliance with its UK Home Office sponsor license. The Director of Training is the College lead on sponsor license compliance. The risk of suspension or loss of the sponsor licence is low. 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 through Board of Studies and Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) representation and Student Voice committee. Students are also represented on the College Management Committee.

2. The measures that have been put in place to mitigate those risks that the College considers to be reasonably likely to crystallise

The College is seen as a centre of excellence for ministry training and theological education and has the confidence of the churches of ABCI. Institutional failure is most unlikely and is mitigated through risk management and internal control processes, quality assurance processes and governance structures.

There is also an exceptionally low risk of any of the College's programmes ceasing to operate. A refund and compensation policy will operate in the unlikely event 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.

3. Information about the policy in place to refund tuition fees and other relevant costs to students and to provide compensation where necessary in the event that the College is no longer able to preserve continuation of study

The College's refund policy is incorporated into its Tuition Fees Policy section 21-23. This is available on the College website.

4. Information about how the College will communicate with students about the student protection plan

The student protection plan will be communicated to current and future students by publishing it on the College website.

The Board of Studies reviews recommendations for changes to validated programme, and the Management Committee oversees the work of the Board. This entails reviewing the student protection plan annually to ensure that staff approving changes are aware of the implications of the student protection plan when changes are proposed.

The Student Representatives, both as part of the Board of Studies and as part of the Student Voice Committee, 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), the College will communicate these changes through updates to programme handbooks and module syllabuses, issued to students via the VLE platform 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, the College will endeavour to offer help to eligible applicants in securing a place in a comparable institution elsewhere.