

## **1. Provider context**

New College Durham (NCD), situated in the Northeast of England, is a mixed economy College originally established in 1921. In September 1977, the Neville's Cross College and Durham Technical College merged to form one site. New College Durham became the base for a wide range of vocational higher education courses, including teacher education. The technical College site at Framwellgate Moor developed as a further education centre, offering vocational and academic courses to students aged 16 and over.

New College Durham is one of the largest further education colleges in County Durham and continues to be a high performing college. The campus has a dedicated higher education building and a sports and music building with significant investment in its Institute of Technology facilities to its main building, this being a purpose-built Institute of Technology centre which is home to the North East Institute of Technology (NEIoT). By constantly growing and adapting to meet the ever-changing needs of education, industry needs and the local and regional skills needs, New College Durham has continued to provide high quality further and higher education.

Office for National Statistics labour supply data<sup>1</sup> shows that there are 243,000 (72.4%) people in employment within County Durham, which is 3.0% less than the national employment rate of 75.4%. This difference results in a downward pressure on wages as the demand for employees is less and there is a greater supply of labour. If this is further broken down into a gender split, males employed in County Durham equate to 3.8% less than the national average.

Earnings by place of residence for employees in County Durham expressed as gross weekly pay is £450 per week. This, in comparison to the national average of £545 per week, shows a difference of £95 per week. This level of disparity applies to both female and male employees, with 77% of North East Graduates choosing to stay and work within the region according to Invest Northeast England.<sup>2</sup> Graduates from New College Durham remain strong links to the region's employment market.

Employment by occupation also suggests that there are key differences within the measures of standard occupational classification<sup>3</sup> (SOC 2010). In Major Group 2 for example, Professional Occupations, 18% of employees fall into this classification within County Durham, as opposed to 20.3% nationally; a difference of 2.3%. A similar difference in Major Groups Managers, directors and senior officials (group 1), Professional occupations (group 2) and associate professional and technical occupations (group 3). These differences align to the employee median earnings including those with a higher education qualification. The disparity in the shape of the labour and earnings data between County Durham and Great Britain as a whole, has an influence on the earning potential and occupational attainments that New College Durham graduates will achieve. This has a negative impact on the progression or further study metric, which the College has little control over. However, the College continues to develop new and innovative strategies to contribute to addressing these disparities within the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2022). LI01 Regional Labour Market: Local Indicators for Counties, Local and Unitary Authorities, October 2022 Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Invest North East England. (No Date). Education and Training.

<sup>3</sup> SOC 2010. SOC 2020. Office for National Statistics.

The College continues to strive to engage with students from across the County and the North East region as a whole, to support regional employment targets. In the Strategic Economic Plan for the North East, '*Creating More and Better Jobs*', the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) forecasts that 100,000 new employees with higher skills at level 4 and above will be required by employers in the North East by 2024.<sup>4</sup>

In February 2019, the NELEP published its Strategic Economic plan which outlined how it would create 100,000 better jobs by 2024 for the region. Labour force Higher Education qualification profiles for the North East of England are the lowest in Great Britain for the population holding qualifications of Level 4 and above. In the North East of England, only 622,000 people (28.6%) of the population hold Level 4 or above qualifications, compared to 33.9% for Great Britain as a whole; a difference of 5.3%. For County Durham, the difference widens further to a 7.2% disparity with 26.7% of the population holding a qualification of Level 4 and above.<sup>5</sup> The College's Higher Education offer focuses on the provision of professional and technical programmes to address employer needs in the County and works hard to engage Higher Education students in developing the higher-level knowledge and skill required to meet current and future employer needs.

To support the NELEP priorities, students have the opportunity to complete a Higher Level qualification at Level 5 which enables them to gain sustainable employment in their chosen Technical or Professional fields.

New College Durham's vision is to be recognised as a leading provider of both Further and Higher education in the North East region, nationally and internationally. Higher Education continues to be an important part of the College's strategic aims, which are to provide an inclusive environment for higher education students that anticipates the varied needs of its students and ensures all have equal access to educational opportunities. The College's vision, aims and values are strongly supported by a five-year higher Education Strategy, which aims to deliver excellence and align with the primary aim of the OfS to ensure we provide graduates who join the workforce with skills to meet the demands of a responsive and competitive global market.

The key objectives of the NCD HE Strategy are:

- to enable students to aspire, succeed and progress through providing the highest quality HE learning opportunities in an environment which is both supportive and challenging;
- to develop an innovative, responsive, and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of the regional economy, with all programmes designed and delivered in partnership with a range of employers and key stakeholders;
- to maintain and develop accommodation and resources to support a distinctive, high quality HE experience;
- through the continuous development of our HE curriculum, to enable students to meet current and future demands within the labour market and support our students to access opportunities to develop higher level skills which contribute to the economy;

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<sup>4</sup> North East Local Enterprise Partnership. (2019). The North East Strategic Economic Plan; Creating More and Better Jobs.

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2021). Education, England, and Wales: Census 2021.

- to continue to develop our strategic relationships with industry, employers, awarding bodies and the wider sector, enhancing our external visibility and reputation and impacting positively on the student experience;
- to grow our HE provisions and student numbers through widening participation, targeted advice and guidance and provide clear progression opportunities for young people and adults into higher education;
- to work in partnership with our students and staff, empowering them to further develop our dynamic and engaged academic community through research, scholarship, and professional practice.

New College Durham's HE provision has increased in size and range and currently provides for over 2,322 students studying both full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) HE Courses. In 2021/22 59% of our HE students were female and 41% male. Most (86%) of our HE students are mature, aged 21 or over, and most of the College's HE students are recruited from widening participation neighbourhoods (as measured by POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2): 25% for FT and 51% for PT.

New College Durham was one of the first Further Education (FE) Colleges to be granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) in 2011. In August 2017, NCD following a desk-based assessment was granted powers for another fixed six-year term which is due to expire on 31 July 2023.

The College delivers a wide and rich tapestry of over 50 Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees, Higher National Diploma/Certificates, and professional qualifications. The College also plays a key role in delivering a wide range of higher level technical and professional qualifications to individuals and employers across the region. As a college our aim is to provide excellent vocational education which develops higher technical skills required of industry and employers.

Our Level 6 and Level 7 provision is delivered through a strong partnership with the Open University which includes full first Honours degrees in BA (Hons) Social Work and BSc (Hons) Podiatry, 13 Top-up degrees and two Level 7 Qualifications.

To continue to meet growing regional employer demands, the College also offers Higher National qualifications including Engineering, Construction and the Built Environment and Civil Engineering and professional qualifications such as Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

## **2. Student experience**

Excellence in the student experience at NCD is evidenced through the implementation of the College's vision, aims and values, supported by the College's strategic aims of the Higher Education Strategy. The key objectives of the strategy include ensuring the provision is of the highest quality and HE learning opportunities are in an environment which is both supportive and challenging. Developing further through our strong relationships with industry, employers, awarding bodies and the wider HE sector, all support our positive impact on the student experience. Our personal development for all students has recently been graded as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED, November 2022.

A strong focused vision for the delivery of a high-quality education, which supports the student journey within the College builds upon the College's proven delivery of high-quality education, whilst supporting its strategic ambition for a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement of all its curriculum and services.

The teaching and learning approaches adopted are based on current and contemporary pedagogical research and focused on meeting our student's individual needs. We do this by informed evidence-based research, continual professional practice and scholarly activity. Staff develop sessions, which are engaging and supportive and challenge and inspire our students to be reflective on their own practices and professional approaches within their subject specialisms. The College has invested significantly in its teaching and enhanced learning team which is having a transformational impact across the college in its practice. The Quality of Teaching Strategy focuses on higher education teaching and aligns closely to the HE Strategy. Ofsted recognised that Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced in their roles. They continue to improve their skills through sharing best practice and by attending a range of external training. Learners appreciate the fact that teachers have up-to-date industrial experience.

Leaders provide teachers with an extensive programme of training and support to help them improve their teaching practice. They have implemented a proactive coaching model so that staff are fully involved in their own professional development as teachers. Managers carry out frequent checks on the quality of teaching and provide comprehensive feedback to teachers on how they can improve their practice. Staff value this support highly and take pride in their teaching skills.

Students at New College Durham continue to rate the teaching and assessment very highly. In the National Student Survey (NSS) 2022, the College was rated 12% above the Top Quartile benchmark at 92%, and 11% above benchmark for Assessment and Feedback at 90%. In the NCD Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) workbook for the overall Teaching, metric for FT, PT and APP is above benchmark value at 90.4%, 90.2% & 90.5% respectively. Performance in the TEF assessment metric is also above benchmark at 87.9%, 88.0% & 89.9%. When analysing NSS response rates to benchmarks for the past number of years, our data has shown a consistent pattern of positive feedback from all our students confirming they are more than satisfied with the teaching, assessment and feedback, and academic support at NCD.

NCD has clear and consistently applied policies and procedures for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. These mechanisms of programme validation, annual monitoring and periodic review are clearly set out in NCD's regulations. The College's programme approval process ensures that threshold standards are initially set at the appropriate level, and then maintenance of these standards is ensured by the work of external examiners and through monitoring and review. Reports from external examiners confirm that academic standards are set appropriately and maintained over time, and that they are comparable with other higher education institutions.

Annual programme monitoring allow the programme team to reflect on quality, to record minor changes so that they can be considered together during re-validation and to produce a quality enhancement plan for the following year. Course Leaders produce APRs and also have oversight of the course-level Quality Enhancement Plans that are produced. The reports are structured around the OfS conditions, covering programme data (B3), academic experience (B1), resources,

support and student engagement (B2), assessment and awards (B4) and sector-recognised standards (B5). The data considered includes enrolment, retention, achievement, progression, attendance and student voice (NSS and college surveys). Course teams are required to comment on each aspect of the data. There is also discussion of academic standards including comments from external examiners. For each B condition, the report contains a self-evaluation judgement. Areas of good practice are noted, along with proposed mechanisms for sharing these practices more widely within the programme team or the school.

The College continues to support and develop research for the most effective approaches for delivering Higher Education programmes to students, building on the experience of raising academic standards with its further education students. Research has acknowledged that different approaches may be required in delivering to mature students who have frequently been out of education for some time, and who make for the majority of our part-time higher education student population.

Academic standards are consistently applied through the Colleges academic regulations. Staff follow the NCD policies and procedural arrangements for Higher Education provision, and regular monitoring and review processes are implemented, both internally through the Colleges HE committee system and internal audit, and externally using External Examiners and academics during programme approval and review board and Assessment Boards.

These systems are used to provide assurances to the Colleges governing body that the HE academic standards and quality of our HE provision is being maintained and is applied across all of our HE provision from levels 4 to 7. As part of the NCD partnership with Open University (OU) every five years we are required to undertake an institutional review. A recent review, conducted in November 2021, confirmed that the College continues to have robust and effective systems, policies and procedures in place to assure the academic standard and quality of the awards delivered at NCD.<sup>6</sup>

The College continues to assure the quality and standards of its HE provisions via number of mechanisms, including quality review process; data monitoring; External Examiners and student voice activities. External Examiners are involved in the approval of assignment briefs, confirmation of results and assessment boards where they confirm that students who are awarded credits and qualifications meet the required standards. External Examiner reports for 2021/22 confirm the standard of performance for all programmes are comparable with similar programme(s) or subjects in other UK institutions.

All aspects of the College's HE provision including validation, teaching and learning, assessment and awarding of qualifications, is underpinned by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the revised UK Quality Code which now sets out in the 12 themes advice and guidance. Whilst the validation processes vary slightly based whether the programme is validated by NCD or OU, both include internal scrutiny of the documentation to ensure threshold academic standards are met prior to the formal validation events. For programmes approved by Pearson there is no requirement for a validation event however, the College has been developed

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<sup>6</sup> The Open University. (2021). Institutional Reapproval Report, November 2021.

processes to ensure a standardised approach of programme design across all the HE provision to ensure academic standards are maintained throughout.

The College delivers awards through a well-planned and sequenced curriculum which is ambitious, relevant to local and regional employment and training priorities and that powerfully addresses the skills needs of employers. Academics and managers carefully design their curriculum to ensure that it develops the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and graduate outcomes that all students need for future development, progression, and employment. Employers play a significant role in shaping and informing our curriculum, assisting, and inspiring students through guest speakers, live assessments briefs and close involvement in the college's validation process. New College Durham is the only college in the Northeast that has recently received the highest judgement grade from OFSTED in the contribution made to addressing local skills needs. OFSTED November 2022. As well as being the only college in the NE achieving this outcome but it is also one of only five colleges in the UK receiving the judgement NCD have an External Stakeholder Engagement Strategy which involves all levels of the organisation collaborating and working in partnership with stakeholders and employers from the Chief Executive and Deputy Principal actively setting the direction of the College and the newly established Business Development Unit and Curriculum Managers working operationally to address employers training needs.

External Examiners are a fundamental part of New College Durham and validating partners' frameworks for quality assurance and the quality of assessment. Annual reports from External Examiners are submitted at the end of the academic year to confirm the academic standards and quality of the programmes delivered and that they are comparable with similar programmes across the sector. 33 External Examiner reports have been received for the academic year 2021-2022 covering HE provision from level 4 to level 7 and across the NCD, OU and Pearson validated programmes. External Examiners comment regarding our programmes include:

*"I feel that the standards of this programme are very high. To me the standard is definitely very much comparable with that of the undergraduate education students I teach... some of the highest scoring work would not look out of place alongside that of postgraduate students."*

*[FdA Supporting Learning and Teaching, July 2022]*

*"The course was designed before the current QAA Benchmark Statements; this practice focus has meant that the benchmark statements continue to be met in their current form. I cannot see any subject specific or generic skills that are not met by NCD, which is terrific."*

*[FdA Early Childhood Studies, July 2022]*

*"This looks like a programme that is growing, and has a good standard of teaching and learning, which is well organised with scope to be a larger provider in the area, and I am looking forward to working with the team and assisting with that development where possible."*

*[BA (Hons) Counselling Studies (Top Up), July 2022]*



Research and scholarship are at the centre of all HE provision and NCD seeks to support both staff and students with the development of scholarly activities to aid in the provision of excellent learning, teaching and assessment practices. There is substantial evidence of this through research projects presented for NCD ethical approval, a wider range of staff engagement with vocational practice in industry contexts, peer observation of teaching between colleagues, collaborative projects, presentations at a variety of conferences, performance of musical works, extensive artistic exhibits, industry practice, along with journal articles and book content written by staff. These activities highlight that staff within the institution are proud to present the results of scholarly activity in the public domain, engage with the wider academic community, and it ensures staff are focused on producing and maintaining highly relevant and effective programmes that are current and viable, demonstrating outstanding practice which is informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. Examples have included:

- The Colleges well attended annual NCD Higher Education Research and Innovation Conference showcases excellent research and scholarly activity conducted by both HE staff and students during the academic year and across NCD as a multidisciplinary event. Delegates at the conference attend diverse curriculum research presentations that encourages co-learning and the development of academic and personal skills. The conference was a resounding success, and all staff and students embraced the innovation and enthusiasm shown by the HE Scholarship Manager and the impact has led to an increased awareness of research and raising interest from students in continuing their studies;
- A combined and innovative research project encompassing Podiatry and Sports students and staff was presented at a number of different conferences (the Podiatry Conference, the Diabetes and Vascular Symposium, the AOC College HE Research and Scholarship Conference and the Advanced HE Teaching and Learning Conference) during 2019/20. The 'Heart and Sole' Project was nominated for a National Innovation Award (Manchester 2022) and was placed in the top three for its category.

To support the development of scholarly activity the HE Scholarship Manager works endlessly to promote exciting opportunities for staff and students to highlight positive scholarly endeavours. The College fully supports staff applying for HEA Fellowship and sees this as a vehicle for engagement in critical reflection on teaching practice, a key priority is increasing the number of staff across the institution holding Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship status, a kite mark of excellence in Higher Education, by supporting staff during staff development to complete applications.

Table 1 shows the College current Fellows this number can fluctuate in line with staff career progression however, as staff are recruited to the College, managers continuously review the process and encourage new staff to engage in the HEA process, and as such, supporting the application development is a continuous process.

The College recently added 3 new Fellows and 1 Senior Fellow to the table below and is currently working with 12 academic staff who are working to complete their applications at Fellow level in 2022/23. An initiative is being developed to increase the number of staff in management positions (Heads of School and Curriculum Managers) engaging with HEA Fellowship, with a focus on developing further applications at Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) level.

Description	Staff numbers
Associate Fellow	1
Fellows	12
Senior Fellows	4

**Table 1 - HEA Fellowship status**

Moving forward the kite mark is to be used in the recruitment of staff promoting the importance of this for staff development and how the College will financially support applications and support the achievement of such fellowships across the organisation in its commitment to professionalism in teaching and learning in higher education, demonstrating our practice in teaching and learning is fully aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

Consistent excellent teaching is supported and enhanced by ensuring academic staff are appropriately qualified, trained and are industry specialists or practitioners in their own right. All New College Durham staff are expected to undertake a minimum annual commitment of 30 hours formal and informal professional development. The College holds three (College-wide) staff development days, of which Higher Education development and training are provided for the full Higher Education staff community. In addition, a series of staff development opportunities are made available throughout the year, with additional bespoke HE45 workshops, which focus on specific Higher Education areas of interest and relevance within the HE sectors.

All Heads of School have a staff development plan in place to ensure all students are taught by staff who have the appropriate academic qualifications and have contemporary technical skills and knowledge. Plans are monitored by Heads of School, the Assistant Principal and Vice Principals throughout the academic year to ensure actions are completed and the impact on the student experience is reviewed regularly. The College invested significantly in the continuous development of staff both teaching and support staff to ensure they have the highest level of skills and knowledge to ensure outstanding delivery and teaching of the HE curriculum. Managers regularly review the needs of their provision and work closely with the Learning and Development Manager to agree annual training plans.

The College is committed to providing all students with effective and outstanding academic and pastoral support. All students' have access to a well-structured support offer that includes a Higher Education Academic Support Tutoring service (HEAST), Programme Learning Coaches (PLCs),



Advice, Support and Careers (ASC) and Higher Education Learner support along with a pastoral framework. All HE students at NCD are also allocated a personal tutor when they start their programme. The tutor become the student first point of contact and remain consistent through the individual students' studies.

In addition, the highly effective Learning Support Team at NCD are committed to ensuring that all students can fully participate in College life and achieve and progress in education and learning. Support services are aimed at addressing the specific needs of the mix of students studying at NCD. The College supports students with special educational needs and disabilities including specific learning difficulties, autism spectrum conditions, mobility and physical difficulties, sensory loss, medical conditions, mental health and wellbeing. The range of support services can include initial assessment, advice and guidance, in class support and support 'drop-ins', regular contact and reviews with a dedicated team of Access Advisers, support with examination access arrangements, and assistive technology loans. This support offer was judged as outstanding' in the recent OFSTED inspection in November 2022.

Personal Learning Coaches (PLCs) offer one to one sessions to provide support on a range of study related issues such as time management, organisation and motivation as well as being a listening service for any personal issues. Through reflective questioning and target setting, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and make positive progress by developing the necessary skills and confidence to enter the workplace or further study.

The Higher Education Academic Support Tutor (HEAST) role was initially developed in February 2017 to raise students' confidence and resilience with an initial focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in particular young, white males. Since its initial development the service has continued to effectively serve all our HE students developing their Academic writing skills and support their academic progress assisting them to recognise their strengths and areas for enhancements to achieve their academic goals. Throughout the pandemic, the Higher Education Academic Support Tutor (HEAST) Service proved to be an essential academic support resource for students who were isolated from their usual academic and pastoral support systems. The number of students reaching out for this service was also testament to the resilience and motivation of NCD HE students themselves, who remained extraordinarily attentive to their academic work and the motivation required to succeed.

Throughout the College closure, 261 tutorials and Q&A discussions with students were delivered, as well as responding to general enquiries from staff members about academic writing and academic skills support via online instruction. The number of tutorials held during this time demonstrated how this additional support had built on the excellent face to face tutorial model used pre-pandemic to offer more flexible, timely support leading to early intervention strategies for students deemed as 'at risk' on not engaging with their studies.

Student feedback is quoted below with some of the positive comment's students have expressed regarding the service received:

*"I just wanted to send you a quick email to thank you for your support over the course of my studies. You were invaluable to me, especially when I was returning to academic writing I passed my degree with a Distinction grade. That would not have happened without your support."*

*[BSc Podiatry, June 2021]*

*"Thank you for all your help & support with my course, I got a distinction am over the moon. I am now back in September doing the top up degree."*

*[FdA Visual Arts, June 2020]*

This support service provided at NCD are designed to provide a consistent quality offer, while also helping students to monitor their own progress and performance more systematically allowing them to develop the skills, they require to their longer-term career aspirations.

The College continues to update a wide range of resources in response to the needs of students, with significant levels of investment in front of class and back of class technology, this enables staff to be at the forefront in embedding digital learning tools seamlessly into sessions and to increase the capability of students to cast and share work with peers during learning sessions.

NCD has a range of effective learning resources and services to support our HE students. HE students have a dedicated University Centre with collaboration and break out space. The purpose-built centre includes general teaching classrooms, an IT classroom and a large breakout and social space. The library within the main building has over 40,000 books, 100 print journals and an excellent collection of online resources such as e-books, e-journals, collections of articles and specialist resources. There are more than 25 additional computers and printing facilities, which can be accessed by all students as well learning areas for students to use their own devices and study. The College also provides Media spaces that are equipped with industry standard Apple Mac Computers with software appropriate to the needs of teaching and learning, across the higher education provision. The college has launched a modernisation programme for learning environments, and this will go over two years to the value of £700,000 investment. College Managers are working with students through the creation of an innovative student led 'Think Tank' as an additional tool to collect student voice and provide students a chance to have a key input into future plans relating to the layout and use of the University Centre building

All new students receive a Library induction, which is delivered over a number of weeks enabling students' confidence and assistance locating and accessing all the key resources available to them to support their studies. Students upon enrolment are issued with MS Office 365 accounts, which allows them access to the college network and their learning resources while working remotely.

In addition, there are a number of specialist resources available to support the teaching and learning of HE programmes. Key specialist resources include:

- two fully equipped community-based podiatry clinics which provides a wide range of equipment for analysing, assessing and treating patient's podiatry needs. The clinics are seen as an important community service within the area attracting high levels of patient satisfaction;
- a student design and media centre which includes a collaborative space, TV studio and Mac rooms to support students learning in film and media production, visual and graphic design and IT software analysis and development;
- an advanced design and manufacturing centre developed in association with a number of regional engineering and advanced manufacturing companies;
- a fully equipped health ward to support student learning in health and social care;
- an immersive teaching area for health and life sciences students to simulate industry related scenarios;
- specialist computer servers which enable students to develop cyber security strategies and solutions as part their FdSc programme in Cyber Security;
- sports students have access to a dedicated Strength & Conditioning lab, a range of fitness testing equipment to test physiological markers (VO2Max, cholesterol, glucose etc.), a 4-badminton court sports hall, a fully equipped fitness suite, an air-conditioned dance studio and two outdoor football pitches.
- within the North East Institute of Technology facilities there is £5 million investment in facilities including a state-of-art Business Improvement Modelling facilities which is used for level 4, 5 and 6 qualifications.

A further £6 million of capital investment was approved by College Governors to develop facilities and infrastructure in line with LEP priorities which will focus on STEM growth within the region. This investment is underpinning our Institute of Technology developments which reaffirms the College's commitment to supporting future skills development within the region. The income brought to the College through the NEIoT has been in the region of £5million to provide facilities and resources to allow training and upskilling for employees in emerging themes such as retrofit, modern methods of construction, hydrogen and electrification.

These key investments in accommodation and resources by the College is focused on providing a high-quality learning experience that enhances pedagogical practice for both staff and students. The new HE spaces have received much praise from students, partner validating bodies and local employers. This investment has been directly linked to the Higher Education skills needs of the region and the North East LEP priorities as highlighted previously. The College at the end of the financial year 2021/2022 had £21.5m in reserves with a detailed capital programme of future and planned capital expenditure.

The College has a number of major capital projects in progress and planned over the next five years which include a £10.5m on site extension for Technical and Higher Education called T.H.E. Hub building which will include 24 new teaching spaces including new classrooms, hospital ward, immersive suite, IT classrooms (cyber security, CISCO Laboratory and Research and Development), a Dental Suite, Science Laboratories, Optometry and Sensory Room. This is currently under construction and planned to open in September 2023.

There is a planned new 4G Sports Pitch which is currently being considered by the local Council Planning Department, this will provide Sports students with the ability to learn outdoors all year round without fear of weather conditions. This is planned for construction immediately after the T.H.E Hub building is complete with an anticipated completion date of September 2024 with an anticipated cost of around £5m.

Annually the College sets aside as part of its budget setting, £1.5m capital programme monies, these are split between IT (replenishment and new technology), Estates (essential maintenance to the campus) and to Curriculum for enhancement to student learning. In addition, over the next 5 years an additional annual £250k has been earmarked for campus modernisation (furniture, IT, refurbishment) so that the College can continue to deliver a first-class student experience in a comfortable, modern environment.

The College continues to bid for various capital and revenue to continue to invest in the development and effective delivery of Higher Technical Qualifications. The College was successful in securing capital and revenue funding as part of the Higher Technical Qualification bid through the NEIoT in 2021/2 and recently securing funding as part of an HE Technical Skills Injection Fund.

Student Representatives are nominated and receive training and on-going support from the Students' Union to equip them to fulfil their roles in College communication, student enhancement and quality assurance effectively. Each programme level has its own student representative who are invited to attend course and school team meetings and attend termly College HE Student Forums chaired by the Student Union President.

In addition, a full time Students' Union President (paid role) is appointed each academic year who works closely with the students' reps but also attends the College strategic meetings such as HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, Higher Information Group, HE Academic Board and the College Corporation Board. The student experience is a standing item at both College and School level meetings and any actions are recorded and acted on. Minutes and actions from these meetings are available to all students via the College's VLE and demonstrate specific examples of where the student voice has led to enhancements at College level.

A strong student voice is promoted within New College Durham which drives the HE provision and ensures students are at the heart of everything we do. Schools collect individual student module evaluations throughout the academic year, at the end of course/level an additional evaluation is undertaken by programme teams in partnership with students. These are then used to inform curriculum design, help curriculum teams reshape and refresh module content. Recent examples include:

- a. the creation of higher-level Degree Apprenticeships in Management. Teams worked in conjunction with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and Open University in the development of the Management Degree Apprenticeship;
- b. the creation of bespoke and unique top-up awards for BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Development; BA (Hons) Popular Music with the Open University which will enable students currently studying on Foundation Degrees in these specialisms to progress, succeed and graduate at level 6;

- c. the redesign of the Foundation Degree Computing provision to create separate pathways which enable students to focus on particular fields within computing to achieve their career aspirations gained HTQ approval during cycle one for the delivering in September 2022.<sup>7</sup>

As well as programme design the student voice is also key to the College's resource strategic decision making. In the academic year, 2016 and 2017 an investment of over £800,000 by the College created a brand new dedicated Higher Education student social space for Higher Education students to meet and work in. This major investment by the College has recently been redesigned with further refurbishment to ensure our Higher Education students can make efficient use of this space and was in direct response to students asking for a combined space where they could meet together to both relax and work. Feedback on this new facility has been positive across the Higher Education student community.

Students are consistently involved in consultations and new developments related to key changes and enhancements to the Colleges HE provision. For example, the student body took a proactive approach during the College's previous involvement in the subject level TEF pilot, speaking at conferences and engaging the whole student community within the consultation of the TEF and Access and Participation Plan (APP) review. Representatives from the Students' Union have also been invited to express their views on this TEF submission. However, students have this time, chosen to decline the offer due to workload concerns, preferring to prioritise their own aspirations during their studies.

### **3. Student Outcomes**

The College continues to demonstrate a strong, highly effective monitoring, support and quality assurance system which enables all its students to be successful in reaching their full potential and career aspirations. The Colleges monitoring processes identify both areas of risk and individual students 'at risk' regularly.

Curriculum Managers along with Course Leaders review their student progress data (in-year retention, continuation, and attainment) fortnightly in team meetings this information is then shared at Quality Reviews (held four times a year) chaired by the Head of School and with the HE Quality Manager in attendance. From these meetings, good practice is shared across academic teams and interventions (when required) are actioned and dealt with in a timely manner to ensure robust strategies for improvement and student successful completion. Both the analysis and progress against any interventions are monitored closely against College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by governors at the HEQCS Committee and senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Head of School and Curriculum Leaders have access to key performance data, this is critical to enabling them to make informed decisions to ensure they provide the highest standards of education to their students. The delivery of a high performing curriculum means that all members of staff need to be able to access accurate and relevant information that drives accountability to their decisions and enables them to carry out their role to the highest possible standards.

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<sup>7</sup> Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. (2023). Approved Higher Technical Qualification.

HE attendance data, while not a KPI is identified as an early risk indicator along with students voice and individual student 1-2-1 progress reviews all of which are consistently monitored across the academic teams. Attendance rates are consistently high for all levels of Higher Education and for the majority, above the 90% original threshold set for both full time and part time provision, this will continue to be monitored closely through the curriculum quality review process.

Higher Education continuation rates for our students are strong. 91.4% of our first-degree students continued in their studies which is demonstrated in the OfS matric. Continuation for Part-time students and Apprenticeship students is also positive, with both showing measures above the matric benchmark, +7.9% for Part-time and +3.7% for Apprenticeships. Undergraduate students' continuation data is mostly with the matric benchmark across the Colleges provision at 78.1% with the exception of Business and Management undergraduates (78.0%) and Education and Teaching undergraduates (83.7%). Further analysis identified while studying a Business & Management qualification student who successfully completed their level 4 qualification, there was a small proportion choosing not to return to complete their Level 5. While the College recognised and monitored closely its progression between levels, setting clear targets with curriculum teams,

The College will continue to have a clear focus on progression, during quality reviews cycle.

Students within the Education and Teaching are typically small as identified with the metric a with only 80 aggregated across the 4 years. The majority of enrolments obtaining an undergraduate degree in Teaching and Education do so to obtain or maintain employment in occupations such as Teaching Assistant, Cover Supervisor or Educational Support Workers and as such the majority of our students in these areas are both mature and already in employment because of this some negative continuation is contributed to change of job role within their organisation. Completion rates against OfS matric benchmark across all level and modes of study (Full-time, Part-time and Apprenticeships) are positive and above the TEF Matric benchmark value.

Completion rates against OfS matric benchmark across all level and modes of study (Full-time, Part-time and Apprenticeships) are positive and above the TEF Matric benchmark value (83%, 85.3% and 74.9%) retrospectively.

New College Durham is proud of its positive outcomes for students and continually excel in terms of learning gain, many of our students are recruited from low participation areas with many of our full-time students starting with "non-traditional" qualifications. In 2021/22 students completing Top up Degrees 68% of students achieved either a first-class Honours degree or a 2:1, on Foundation Degrees 49% of our students were awarded a distinction and 50% of our Higher National students (mainly Engineering and Construction) received higher classifications of a Distinction.

On three-year Honours degree courses the figure is 41% for higher classifications, however the professional nature of both the BSc (Hons) Podiatry and BA (Hons) Social Work courses in which there is a large practice based component, places a greater requirement for students to balance the demands of academic work with their professional practice. As in previous years many students on the Social Work and Podiatry courses receive job offers prior to completion of their



course. In 2019 100% of BSc (Hons) Podiatry students and 96% of BA (Hons) Social Work gained sustainable employment.

Student destination data is collected at the end of each academic year, with the College being in a position around January to assess the final position for the previous year. The data for 2021/22 was collected by [J2 Research](#) with 217 students being contacted.

The information collected internally demonstrates intended positive destination of our HE students the results of this survey found 93% of our student intended destination was positive with 45% gaining employment and 39% continuing to progress to further study with New College Durham on one of our Top up provision. Other data we have included:

- 4.61% started their own business;
- 2.76% gained PT employment;
- 1.84% progressed on to a higher apprenticeship.

The remaining 6.92% are looking for work but have not yet gained employment.

Externally the graduate destination data collected by the Graduate Outcomes Survey is less positive due to the challenge of graduates being unable to be contacted 15 months after they finish their studies. The TEF metric demonstrates this through particularly low survey response rates for FT, PT and Apps academic year 2019- 20 at (46.1%, 51.0% and 55.2%). This limited data presented in the TEF metric, does not represent a true picture of our overall provision and student progression, while the college is working hard with the student body to discuss student outcomes survey before they graduate, we may always find this challenging due to the nature of the survey.

## **Educational Gains**

The College clearly articulates its strategic approach to learning and teaching in its Strategic Plan and HE Strategic Plan. The focus in the Strategic Plan is on the creation of a skilled and highly qualified workforce that is central to the College's strategy, along with engaging with businesses in designing innovative and high-quality curricula that enhances employability, in line with the College's values of accountability, safeguarding, partnerships, inclusion, respect, and excellence (ASPIRE).

The HE Strategy, covering the same five-year period, identifies its strategic aims in the higher education area, including work to meet the needs of both employers and students, working with students as co-contributors of enhancement, ensuring staff have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills and continuing to develop partnerships that align to the vision and values of the College.

The Colleges clear and robust Higher Education processes are designed to support and develop students beyond the arrangements for learning, teaching, and assessment, these are articulated through a range of different processes including, the specialist support services such as disability and careers advice and cover both the generic provision of services to a cohort of students and the targeted support for individual students. The Colleges Higher Education Academic and Pastoral Support Policy sets out how students' academic and personal progression will be supported. The

HE Academic Support Tutor service at NCD and lecturers support students pastorally are in place including the provision of a named HE Tutor for all Higher Education Students'. Embedding of academic skills into the curriculum and Careers advice and guidance are all available to support professional and academic progression.

When designing and approving its provision, NCD carefully considers the learning objectives of the programmes to allow students to develop skills, knowledge and attributes to secure career opportunities, consistent with its strategic aims and vision. It has thorough procedures in place for course design, development and approval. There are clearly assigned responsibilities at each stage of its process and NCD has experience of applying these through the validation and revalidation of its own foundation degrees. The development and approval process involves external academic and employer engagement as well as students, and close links are maintained with the learning and support services to ensure that programmes are appropriately resourced.

The College's data management systems produce a range of reports for college managers, staff and the HE Development and Quality Unit. These reports are discussed as part of the HE Quality Cycle to monitor programme and individual student performance. Student grades are uploaded in advance of the exam pre-boards and exam boards. This allowed the Vice Principal for Higher Education, programme teams, external examiners and representatives from HEDQU to discuss student progression, and performance including grades and classifications.

NCD has in place effective means of critically reviewing its own performance, responding to identified weakness and further developing its strengths. The main method for the scrutiny and monitoring of its Higher Education provision both at course and institutional level is through its annual review process which is a comprehensive and rigorous process which considers performance data, student feedback and external examiner input.

The outcomes are received and discussed through its higher education committees with strategic oversight and monitoring of performance against KPIs maintained at Corporation. Areas for Improvement are actioned through Quality Enhancement Plans and based upon reflective analysis of the performance of programmes.

To strengthen NCD's internal critical self-assessment, NCD engages with external expertise to review its own performance. An example of this has been the recent successful institutional review by the Open University.

#### 4. References

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