

Provider Submission for TEF 2023

1. Provider context

The Northern School of Art [the School] is a specialist art and design further education college situated in the Tees Valley, with a history of providing exceptional art and design education in the region since 1870. The School is one of only two remaining specialist art and design institutions in the further education [FE] sector in the UK, and is unique in the northeast of England as the only specialist provider of art and design education. Higher education [HE] has been central to its ethos and portfolio of provision for over 40 years, from the initial introduction of Higher National Diplomas in the 1970s to the current range of 15 undergraduate honours degrees and 4 postgraduate degrees validated by the Arts University Bournemouth [AUB] offered at its Hartlepool campus. Teaching at the HE campus is led by dedicated “HE-only” staff. The School’s FE offering, based at its Middlesbrough campus, was inspected by Ofsted in June 2009 and February 2022 and was rated Outstanding on both occasions. Through its high-quality provision, the School aims to provide an outstanding student experience and outstanding outcomes for its students.

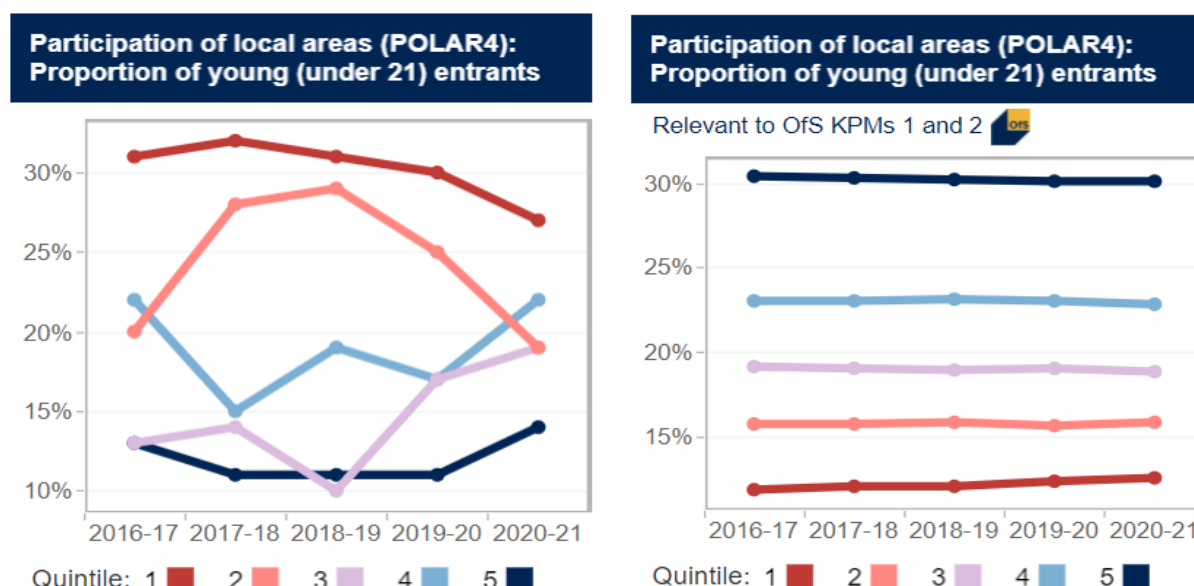


Figure 1: Participation of local area (POLAR4): Proportion of young (under 21) entrants at The Northern School of Art (Left) and All English Higher Education Providers (Right)

Many of the School’s students come from non-traditional HE backgrounds, demonstrated by the School’s POLAR4 Data – 52.1% of Level 4 entrants came from POLAR4 Quintiles 1&2 in 2022-2023. With regard to POLAR4 data, the national profile of students is largely reversed for students at the School, as shown in Figure 1¹. Following the changes to Access and Participation Plans [APP], the School reconsidered segmented areas of activity to meet individual needs, and made wholesale changes to the curriculum model of delivery and student support in 2020. The School’s transformative curriculum enables students from largely underrepresented backgrounds to achieve outstanding student outcomes. A high number of

¹ ¹ ‘Participation of local area (POLAR4): Proportion of young (under 21 entrants)’, May 2020, available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/> [last accessed 23rd January 2023].

these students also present with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – 39.6% of the undergraduate student body in 2022-2023. Internal analysis shows that the majority of the School's HE population in 2022-2023 is categorised as underrepresented, of which 79.6% have two or more intersections of disadvantage. The School sets out in its Academic Strategy 2021-2024² how it provides an academic experience at all levels of study that prepares students to excel in the creative industries and society.

The School's Strategic Plan 2019-2024 has been shaped through consultation with students, staff, and governors³. It sets out the School's vision to have more students undertaking continuously improving courses, studying in high quality, supportive, creative environments, developing the curriculum and fostering innovation. It challenges the School with six key outcomes related to curriculum development, student experience, teaching and learning, graduate employability and sustainability. The School's values, as per the Strategic Plan, are: Creativity and Excellence; Professional Practice, Employability and Enterprise; and Student Engagement, Support, Collaboration and Community.

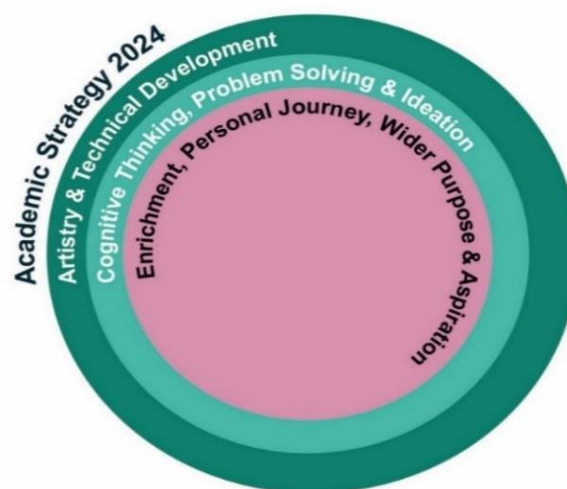


Figure 2: The Northern School of Art's Academic Strategy 2021-2024

The objectives are to constantly strive to provide the best creative programmes possible through a current, relevant curriculum offer, enhanced teaching and learning, improved student experience, growing student numbers, a sustained employability record and viable and healthy resources with fully embedded planning systems, through the mission statement characterised as simply, 'Exceptional education for creative careers'.

The School modernised its HE delivery model in 2020 to enable a more collaborative approach to delivery, mirroring the interaction between creative specialisms in the industry more effectively. The School's HE academic staffing structure has two Faculty Leaders who manage undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the specialist areas of Stage & Screen and Visual Arts. Faculty Leaders are supported by Senior Lecturers who are subject specialists, responsible for overseeing the academic delivery in their area with the knowledge and ambition to drive forward subject-specific pedagogical effectiveness.

The development of the provider submission was led by members of the School's senior management.

² The Northern School of Art's Academic Strategy 2021-2024, July 2021, available at <https://northernart.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/July-2021-Academic-Strategy-The-Northern-School-of-Art.pdf> [last accessed January 18th 2023]

³ The Northern School of Art's Strategic Plan 2019-2024, July 2019, available at https://northernart.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/StrategicPlan_A4_2019-2024-min-2.pdf [last accessed January 18th 2023]

The student submission was produced independently of the provider submission and its development was led by the Student Union President.

2. Student experience

Introduction

The School has consistently demonstrated its outstanding academic experience for all students in its NSS scores over the last five years, despite the challenges of being located in an area of economic deprivation and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022-2023, 31.5% of undergraduate students came from IMD Quintile 1 areas. In 2021-2022, the School achieved a score of 91.1% in the 'Overall Satisfaction' category.

Table 1 – National Student Survey and 'Overall Satisfaction' Rate (five-year period)

National Student Survey	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Response Rate	87.0%	83.0%	80.0%	82.0%	87.0%
Overall Satisfaction	90.8%	91.8%	85.4%	78.1%	91.1%

Whilst the School achieved a lower score in 2020-2021, the score of 78.1% was 2.7% above the sector-wide average, and 3.2% above the average for registered providers in England, reflecting the School's outstanding efforts in supporting its students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (see SE5).

The School takes pride in providing an outstanding experience for its students and was commended for its 'student-centred focus, with the student experience being at the heart of everything they did' by AUB in their quinquennial Institutional Review (2022).⁴

SE1. The provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

Teaching

Evidence that outstanding teaching and learning practices are highly effective and tailored to supporting the learning, progression, and attainment of the School's students can be seen in the NSS data in Table 2 overleaf. In 2021-2022, the School achieved a 93.1% score for the theme of 'The teaching on my course', 13.0pp above the sector average. The School also achieved a score of 91.8% in the theme of 'Learning Opportunities', 12.4pp above the sector average.

⁴ 'Confirmed report of AUB Institutional Review 2022', May 2022. Unpublished. Held electronically in The Northern School of Art's HE Quality Assurance area.

*Table 2 – National Student Survey – Sector Comparison (2021-2022)*⁵

National Student Survey	The Northern School of Art	HE Sector	Percentage Difference (%)
The teaching on my course	93.1%	80.1%	+13.0
Learning opportunities	91.1%	79.4%	+11.7
Assessment and feedback	86.1%	68.5%	+17.6
Academic support	91.5%	73.9%	+17.6
Organisation and management	82.1%	69.9%	+12.2
Learning resources	92.3%	80.9%	+11.4
Learning community	77.2%	68.2%	+09.0
Student Voice	85.1%	66.5%	+18.6
Students' union (association/guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.	63.7%	52.6%	+11.1
Overall satisfaction	91.1%	76.3%	+14.8

In all aspects of the academic experience, the School vastly outperformed the NSS sector averages in 2021-2022.

The Student Perception Survey [SPS] is an annual internal survey for all students at Levels 4, 5 and 7⁶. The SPS consists of 37 multiple-choice questions divided into nine themes, largely mirroring the NSS. In 2021-2022, the SPS was open for completion between 14 February 2022 and 15 March 2022; the response rate from Level 4 students was 93.0% and the response rate from Level 5 students was 81.0%. The average three-year response rate for Levels 4 and 5 is 76.0%. In the 2021-2022 SPS the School achieved a 97.0% score for the theme of 'Teaching on my Programme', and a 99.0% score for the theme of 'Learning Opportunities'. The School has achieved consistently high scores in the last three years, with an average satisfaction rate of 94.8% for 'Teaching on my Programme' and 97.3% for 'Learning Opportunities'.

The School ensures that its programmes provide all students with a clear and logical learning experience that encourages active engagement in the learning process. All programmes have been designed to provide a differentiated approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Each level of the programme has explicit learning gains embedded in the outcomes that indicate the range of their knowledge and understanding, including intellectual, practical, professional and transferable skills.

The School's three-year undergraduate programmes involve high contact time, providing exceptional support to the School's students, typically from underrepresented backgrounds. At Levels 4 and 5, this equates to sixteen hours per week, split between taught and facilitated learning sessions. At Level 6, contact with academic staff is maintained, with a shift towards self-directed study. All students have extensive and open access to all facilities and resources

⁵ 'NSS Sector and School Comparisons 2022', January 2023. Unpublished. Held electronically in The Northern School of Art's HE Quality Assurance area.

⁶ 'Student Perception Survey [2019-2020 to 2021-2022]', May 2022. Unpublished. Held electronically in The Northern School of Art's HE Quality Assurance area.

beyond their teaching (approximately 52 hours per week). Throughout their studies, students are taught by the same academic teams, allowing staff to build relationships with their students, helping them to tailor their taught material to the needs of the cohort. Through this, the School develops learners with a strong sense of purpose and provides a creative environment to flourish, in which all students develop cognitive thinking skills, problem-solving, and ideation. The development of these skills, combined with the School's proven record as a 'making' institution, supports the technical development and artistry of our future creative practitioners. This is achieved through a teaching and learning experience that is tailored to meet the individual needs, characteristics and starting points of our students and the requirements of the creative industry.

The School's pedagogical approach provides 'open ended' opportunities for individual learners, an essential component to creative production, whilst maintaining a rigorous academic structure that supports student learning, progression and attainment. A broad range of national and international exhibitions, live projects and performances have been established as part of professional practice-based modules across the School. The focus on industrial practice ensures that all students experience a professional learning environment that allows for real-world learning and prepares them for either further study or employment in their chosen creative industry or related fields. In their Institutional Review of the School, AUB commented that:

"[Students] confirmed the institution's approach to student centred learning. They appreciated the smaller study groups, access to extensive resources and the creative and supportive atmosphere. [...] They confirmed that industry engagement formed an important part of their study and they appreciated the "live" projects, on-line and face to face speakers and exposure to exhibitions and galleries and opportunities to display their work. They were extremely glad that they had chosen [the School] as their place of study [...]."

Assessment and Feedback

In 2021-2022, the School received a score of 86.1% for its outstanding assessment and feedback practices in the NSS, 17.6pp above the sector average, as highlighted in Table 2. The School has consistently outstanding scores in this area, with a three-year average satisfaction rate of 93.5%. Internal feedback from students, gathered through the SPS, also supports this. Questions 9 and 10 relate directly to the School's assessment practices and received an average score of 96.3%. The School has achieved consistently outstanding scores in this theme, with a three-year average satisfaction rate of 93.6%. Outstanding assessment practices are embedded within the curriculum, and their structure is tailored to supporting learning, attainment and progression into future industries and further study. This approach is evidenced in the School's Academic Strategy which states: 'through our academic research and engagement with our academic community we have developed a curriculum offer that succeeds in providing a transformative creative education experience at all levels of the School'.

At Level 4 assessment practices include activities and learning opportunities that support **Experimentation, Making & Problem Solving**, which are aimed at building on the foundation

and essential principles developed in students' prior learning. In practice, this comprises a differentiated approach to meet the learning needs of the diverse backgrounds and abilities of the School's students. Learning is supported through a blend of guided and facilitated approaches. Students are encouraged to develop their independence by putting their learning into practice in self-directed study with open access to the School's workshops, creative studios, IT rooms and library spaces. Enhancement of this approach at Level 5 supports students to develop skills in **Advanced Experimentation & Specialist Creation**. Students are introduced to Learning Agreements where the approach to teaching and learning becomes increasingly more independent and students are provided with the opportunity to tailor their own creative practice and approach. This is supported by specialist lectures and seminars, live industry projects, tutorials, facilitated learning and self-directed study. The School's levels of learning for undergraduate study continue into Level 6, culminating with **Creation & Realisation**. The

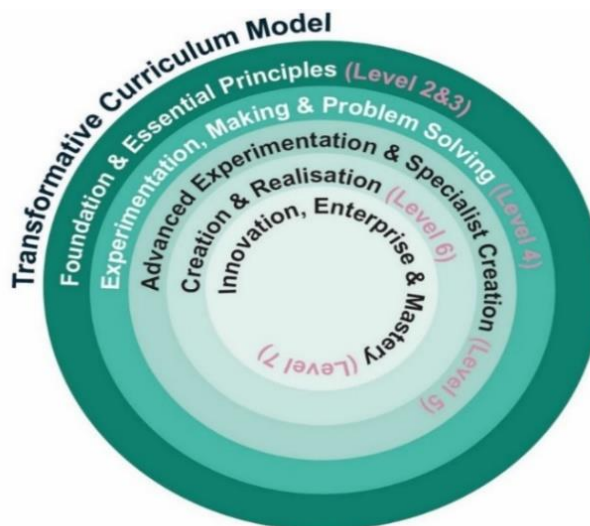


Figure 3: The Northern School of Art's Transformative Curriculum Model, taken from the Academic Strategy 2021-24.

'Dissertation/Report' module provides students with the opportunity for extended research and academic investigation into a self-initiated and negotiated topic, equipping them with a wide range of skills that can be applied to any area of information retrieval, analysis, and academic writing.

The 'Final Show and Portfolio' module at Level 6 is a springboard for students' commercial visions or progression to postgraduate study. All students present their work in a relevant professional context that highlights their progression as a critical creative practitioner. Students manage and deliver an individual external show that promotes their final portfolio of work, supported by self-promotion and marketing tools directed towards their own professional aspirations.

The School has embedded outstanding feedback practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting all students' learning, progression, and attainment. Questions 11 and 12 of the SPS relate directly to the School's feedback practices and received an average score of 94.3%. The School has embedded 'feed forward' within its teaching and learning practice. Feed forward offers constructive guidance on how to improve, rather than focusing on current attainment. A combination of feedback and feed forward ensures that assessment has an effective developmental impact on learning. Through the School's Academic Tutorial Procedure, academic tutorials are scheduled on every programme of study, at least once per module, and allow students to have detailed discussions with their academic staff relating to their progress in individual modules. This includes advice given in critiques, formative and summative assessment feedback, peer assessment, portfolio reviews with ILG members and informal guidance or discussion. The form of the tutorial session can be tailored to the

individual student, their learning needs, and their particular stages of professional development.

Academic staff take part in an annual verification exercise that ensures assessment practices are appropriate and that feedback and feed forward focus on the learning outcomes. This process enables staff to regularly evaluate and develop their own delivery and assessment practice, as they consider and review educational scholarship, student workload, quality, and differentiated approaches to teaching assessment and feedback across different subject specialisms. Academic members of staff are able to reflect on their learning, teaching and assessment practices by acting as external examiners, external advisers or as members on external validation panels.

The quality indicators provided by student feedback, obtained through external and internal student perception surveys, and the tailored approach to teaching, learning and assessment that have been embedded for a number of academic years, provide the School with confidence that student learning, progression and attainment are highly effective.

SE2. Course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

Course content is developed in partnership with creative industries, ensuring students develop their knowledge and skills to the fullest expectations of employers (see SE3). Course content ensures that students learn traditional techniques, whilst also placing them at the forefront of modern industrial practice. The School's three-year undergraduate programmes involve high contact time, specialist academic and pastoral support, and career coaching, to allow students to achieve their full potential, not only as academics or as artists, but as creative practitioners.

Evidence of student engagement and commitment to their learning and development can be seen in the consistently low percentage of non-submissions for assessment. Over the last three years, the School's average non-submission rate is 2.0%. In 2021-2022, the School's referral (re-submission) rate was 1.9%. The School also measures student engagement and commitment to learning through its in-year retention and continuation rates (explored further in SO2). The overall indicators on the OfS TEF Data Dashboard show a continuation (full-time) rate of 91.4%. The School targets an average in-year retention rate of 94.0% for all undergraduate levels of study. Despite the challenging environment generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, over the last three years, the School has achieved an average in-year retention rate of 94.0% at all levels.

The School also places a great emphasis on stretching students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. Evidence for this can be found in the NSS results. In 2021-2022, 94.1% of students agreed with the statement 'My course has challenged me to achieve my best work'. Question 4 of the SPS mirrors the NSS statement. Across the last three years, the School achieved consistently outstanding scores in this area, with an average satisfaction rate of 94.8%.

The development of the School's postgraduate offering also demonstrates the School's ambition in stretching students to develop further knowledge and skills beyond their undergraduate studies. In student feedback, graduates had reported that barriers such as financial cost, and separation from family, had impacted on their decisions not to enter postgraduate study. With this in mind, as of 2022-2023, alumni are eligible for a 20% discount on postgraduate fees. In the last three years, the School's postgraduate provision has grown, and students, employers and creative professionals from relevant industries have been involved in the successful validation and shaping of five postgraduate programmes.

Furthermore, in December 2022, the School ran an Internal Progression Survey [IPS] of 41 postgraduate students, all of whom had successfully graduated from the School's undergraduate programmes in 2021-2022⁷. The response rate was 75.6%. In the IPS, 100.0% of students reflecting on their undergraduate studies agreed with the statement 'studying at The Northern School of Art helped me develop and better understand my creative identity and my own abilities'.

SE3. The provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.

Research, Innovation and Scholarship

Across the School, research, innovation, professional practice and employer engagement contribute towards an outstanding academic experience for all students. The School has membership of a range of arts and education organisations, ensuring everyone involved in teaching or supporting learning can actively engage in pedagogical development in the higher and arts-based education sector. This includes, but is not limited to, United Kingdom Arts and Design Institutions Association (UKADIA), GuildHE, AdvanceHE, The Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD) and the Royal Society of the Arts Fellowship (RSA). Membership of these organisations has greatly benefited the academic experience for the School's students.

the UKADIA Widening Participation Working Group, allowing for the sharing of best practice with the creative education sector and acts as a space to influence higher education arts policy. The pooling and sharing of practices around widening participation and outreach has helped the School's academic staff understand the shifting pre-16 curriculum, allowing the School to develop its transitional arrangements for undergraduate students, improving continuation, completion and attainment rates (as shown in SO2).

The School also works in partnership with The Northern Creative Network [NCN] (previously NESCAN), engaging with over 1,000 art and design educators in the North East, and over 2,500 educators. NCN helps to deliver continuing professional development, industry insight, networking opportunities, and the wider distribution of resources to art and design educators nationally, aiming to improve pre-16 attainment for the School's future students. Similarly, the School plays an active role in partnering with Schools North East, an inclusive network led by Headteachers, creating a unique culture of collaboration within the region.

⁷ 'Internal Progression Survey Winter 2022', January 2023. Unpublished. Held electronically in The Northern School of Art's HE Quality Assurance area.

The impact of staff scholarly activity and research is evident across all facets of the students' learning experiences. Important and impactful initiatives have been developed across the School to encourage student engagement. An ongoing research initiative explores current pedagogical issues within higher education with reference to the School's Access and Participation Plan and working with students who have been through the state education system in the UK. This has enabled the development of strategies to support students in their achievement and also explores and discusses the challenges of higher education delivery in the current climate, with specific reference to students studying at The Northern School of Art. This has helped developed academic staff's understanding of the realities of underrepresentation, and has allowed the sharing of best practice in providing tailored support.

The pedagogical effectiveness of staff is developing; a clear and positive trajectory is forming with scholarly activity and research increasingly occupying more space in the institution. Staff engagement with widening access and participation through several diverse and impactful initiatives has featured strongly since 2021, in particular with the embracing of digital pedagogies and digital innovations in teaching and learning.

Professional Practice

Our creative staff have significant engagement with the creative industry leading to a positive impact on the students' academic experience. Recently, staff and students have collaborated on exhibitions in the region. At Platform A, a gallery dedicated to innovative developments in contemporary art, students and staff have collaborated through the Celebrating Hidden Middlesbrough programme, which uncovers the hidden histories, people and places of Middlesbrough and finds creative ways to celebrate them. In addition, students from all programmes have exhibited in online exhibitions including, but not limited to, TEBBS Contemporary Art, Stay Connected, Virtual Exhibition '42,602,038 +, Connectivité and Picasso Baby. This has enabled students to work with regional galleries and organisations such as Disgraceland, Pineapple Black, and WET DOVETAIL, and national organisations including University of Lincoln, Holy Biscuit and Hackney Downs Studios. The collaboration on digital and physical exhibitions has expanded the opportunities for students to exhibit work, build wider networks, lead curation projects and develop their portfolio as creative practitioners. Similarly, staff and students have collaborated with North East Screen in the creation of short films and in developing support mechanisms for filmmakers.⁸ Through working with emerging professionals, production companies, artist filmmakers and organisations such as The British Film Institute, students have been exposed further to professional practice in industry, developing their technical skills and career readiness.

Employer Engagement

Industrial liaison and employer engagement are central to the School's approach to teaching and learning, and the wider academic experience. Staff liaise with industry on several levels - visiting speakers, work experience placements with students, exhibiting student work in theatres, film studios and galleries as well as continuing to work in the industry themselves. The School draws internally and externally from academics, business support teams and

⁸ 'Could your business supply Hartlepool's growing film and TV Industry', North East Screen, November 2022, available at <https://northeastscreen.org/event/could-your-business-supply-hartlepoons-growing-film-and-tv-industry/> [last accessed January 18th 2023]

industry practitioners in the design, development and review of all current and new provision. For example, in developing its new BA (Hons) Animation programme, introduced in 2022-2023, the School liaised with Aardman Animation, who offered advice on programme content, professional practice, and the skillsets students would need to develop in order to successfully progress into industry. In 2022, the School became the first of five Aardman Academy Partners in the UK.⁹ In November 2022, eighty students from across the School took part in intensive masterclasses with creative professionals with Aardman, whilst teaching staff also took part in a 2-day development programme. This School-wide partnership encompasses the importance the School places on building strong links with the creative industries to ensure that programmes and their content, are relevant and stretch all students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for their professional aspirations. Through this process, teaching and learning is tailored to the demands of all students and the demands of industry and supporting students' development, progression into, and attainment in those industries.

The Northern School of Art seeks to deliver 'exceptional education for creative careers' – it does this by engaging with a wide range of partners working across each creative sub-sector to ensure that teaching and learning are in line with the latest developments in and requirements of industry. Accordingly, each course has developed an Industrial Liaison Group [ILG] where students and academic staff engage with external partners on a range of issues:

- ensure industrial currency in the development of the curriculum, and new programmes of study;
- ensure the currency of curriculum delivery in technical, cultural and legal areas of the sector;
- ensure that students gain a direct insight into the working of the creative sector;
- facilitate live-brief projects, work experience and other opportunities for students; and
- ensure that the School has a current view of employer needs in the creative sector.

Each ILG is a single body of Visiting Fellows [VF] – working with a single course or across a faculty. Academic staff work in partnership with VFs, with discussions encompassing current and future: skills needs; technical developments; software; direction of the sector etc. Staff report on the impact of this engagement through the Annual Programme Review and Programme Strategic Meetings process, throughout the academic year.

Findings from the annual staff survey demonstrate that staff believe in high-quality provision and the academic experience of students enrolled at the School. In 2022, 95.0% of staff agreed with the statement 'The School has a reputation for the high quality of its provision', a 7.0pp increase on the 2021 score. All results are anonymous and external collation of data is handled by York College. The survey was open from 31st May 2022 until 8th July 2022. The response rate in 2022 was 54.0%. Through the NSS, students scored the 'Learning Opportunities' at the School at 91.1%.

⁹ 'Partnership with Aardman Academy Announced!', The Northern School of Art, October 2022, available at <https://northernart.ac.uk/partnership-with-aardman-academy-announced/> [last accessed 18th January 2023]

SE4. There is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

The School provides outstanding support for staff professional development, paying for all approved staff development throughout the length of the programme. Funding for staff development is only granted where the anticipated results will directly contribute to organisational improvement and/or academic experiences.

based on current staff numbers, this will mean that approximately one fifth of academic staff will hold a Level 8 qualification. Undertaking doctoral study allows staff to demonstrate their passion for research in their area, engage with like-minded peers and researchers and ultimately, be at the forefront of knowledge in their field, strengthening and enhancing their academic practice, ultimately benefitting the student experience.

Investment in staff also funds trips to national or international conferences, events and necessary staff training/upskilling identified by staff during their annual reviews. The School's staff development strategy encourages all academic staff to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy [HEA], aiding them as part of an integrated approach to engage in academic reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. At the start of the 2022-2023 academic year, 19 HE academic staff had achieved their HEA Fellowship. By the end of 2022-2023, all Senior Lecturers will have achieved HEA Fellowship. Two members of HE staff are Principal Fellows of the HEA.

Academic staff are also able to reflect on their learning, teaching and assessment practices by evaluating their roles as external examiners, external advisers or as members on external panels. Currently, academic staff fulfil external examiners role at twelve institutions nationwide. Opportunities to discuss new information from statutory and regulatory bodies and professional organisations are provided internally through the deliberative structure and externally through, attending conferences, or webinars, by GuildHE, OfS, QAA, JISC, CHEAD, and UKADIA. Staff also participate in collaborative external projects, undertake active research as part of higher-level qualifications and attend industry events. New information can be triangulated through discussion with colleagues, peers, and ILG members.

SE5. The provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

In their Institutional Review, AUB reported that the School is a “*very caring and thoughtful organisation with students’ best interests genuinely at the heart of all their activity.*” Survey

data shows that students agree with this statement. In 2021-2022, the School achieved outstanding scores in all areas of 'Academic Support', improving on its 2020-2021 NSS scores. In this theme, the School scored 91.5%, 17.6pp above the sector average, as shown in Table 2. In the SPS, the School has also scored highly in the theme of 'Academic Support'. In 2021-2022, the School achieved an overall score of 97.0% in this area. Over the last three years, the School has maintained an outstanding score of 96.3% in this area.

A key objective for the School, as per its Academic Strategy, is to provide 'an inclusive curriculum where all students are supported to access, participate and achieve'. Taught sessions are led by highly qualified academic staff, supported by smaller group and/or individual tutorials. This leads into independent, facilitated learning, in which students have open access to facilities and Creative Technicians. Additional academic support (digital learning, digital skills, academic writing etc.) is available to all.

In providing outstanding academic support, the School recognises the starting points of its students. In 2021-2022, 32.6% of the School's undergraduate population came from IMD Quintile 1 areas. In 2021-2022, 38.4% of the School's undergraduate population came from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas. In 2022-2023, this has increased, with 49.4% of the undergraduate population coming from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas. Of the current undergraduate population, 39.6% have a disability.

The School strives to support all students in developing their technical, soft and employability skills throughout their academic experience. The School promotes learning and teaching through a community of collaborative practice that creates confident, independent practitioners, through striving to be inclusive, differentiating its approach and providing a nurturing creative arts community where students have their own space, identity and sense of belonging. In the IPS, 96.9% of respondents felt that the learning community and support within the School helped them to 'plan and meet my creative aspirations'.

Previously, the mean overall module pass rate for all undergraduate students from 2014 to 2017 was 92.1% across the School – below the School target. Following an extensive review, the School introduced Interim Examination Boards. Attended by representatives from student support, academic teams and management, these enable the examination of all grade profiles, referral (re-submission) issues and identify individual support needs, and the tailoring of interventions. The student support and academic teams note areas of concern, and issues around differentiation, and arrange further tutorials. This dialogue highlights individual students requiring additional support, enabling a more proactive approach to engaging struggling students. As a result of these tailored interventions, the average module pass rate for all undergraduate students has increased to 95.9% as of 2021-2022.

Furthermore, the School recognises its own geographical context, in an area with historically high levels of unemployment amongst young people¹⁰. By developing employability and creative professional skills, the School enables all students to adapt to the changing economic role of creativity and innovation. The School develops students' curiosity, encourages risk-

¹⁰ 'Hull, Durham and Hartlepool among youth unemployment hotspots', Children & Young People Now, April 2021, available at <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/hull-durham-and-hartlepool-among-youth-unemployment-hotspots> [last accessed 18th January 2023]

taking in creative practice through experimentation, and provides opportunities to build on the results. In the IPS, 84.4% of respondents felt 'well informed about the opportunities [they] could advance into' after graduation. Similarly, 90.6% felt that 'the School provided a range of activities that prepared [them] for [their] future steps'.

At a strategic level, the NSS and SPS provide a mix of quantitative data and qualitative commentary that is passed onto programme teams, reviewed at annual programme reviews [APRs] and actioned. The School also reviews its Access and Participation Plan, Academic Strategy, and Operating Plans at Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, Academic Board and Academic Committee meetings, and provides reports to Academic Board. Key data sets are regularly presented to the Corporation Board, and students and academic staff who are governors are able to provide additional insight into the student experience.

In 2021, the Quality Assurance Agency [QAA] commissioned a project to explore how outcomes-based approaches were used by the UK Higher Education sector to assure the quality and standards of education and awards during the first COVID-19 pandemic year, with the aim of informing future policy and practice. The School was selected as an example of good practice in adapting and maintaining communication and developing alternative strategies for supporting all students during the pandemic¹¹.

SE6. Physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

Evidence of the School's outstanding virtual and physical learning resources can be found in both the NSS and SPS scores. In the 2021-2022 NSS, 92.3% of respondents agreed with the statement 'The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well', whilst 94.3% agreed with the statement 'I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to'. The School has also achieved outstanding scores in this area in the SPS over the last three years, with an average score of 95.7%. Students have the opportunity to develop their skills and make effective use of learning resources, including the safe use of high-quality specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments. The School's Academic Strategy identifies that in providing an outstanding environment in which to work, through physical and digital resources, all students are able to develop cognitive thinking skills, problem-solving and ideation.

The School has continued to invest in the HE campus. In 2017-2018, the School constructed 1 Church Street, in an overall project of c.£11M. Within this, the School developed exceptional specialist workshops, studios, and regenerated resources to support and enhance the curriculum offer, ensuring that the student experience matches industry expectations. As a result of student feedback, the School has ensured that students have ownership of their full studios, and that specialist studios are only shared during collaborative or interdisciplinary projects. All students also have access to all specialist workshops that they can book into to support self-defined briefs or projects, alongside access to a wide range of Creative Technicians. The experience of interacting with a broader range of academics and technicians'

¹¹ 'A Launch Pad for Future Success: Using Outcomes-based Approaches to Scaffold the Pandemic Year and Build for the Future', Quality Assurance Agency, June 2021, NSS Sector and School Comparisons 2022', January 2023. Unpublished. Held electronically in The Northern School of Art's HE Quality Assurance area.

enables students to draw from a far wider range of expert skills, opinions, and working practices in the production of their solutions to module outcomes.

Two further projects were also completed in 2022. The Scott Building is the new home of the BA (Hons) Production Design for Stage and Screen and BA (Hons) Model Making & VFX programmes and, unusually, allows for the design and build of full-scale theatre, film & TV sets. This enhances programme delivery and collaborative projects across the School's Stage and Screen faculty. The Northern Studios [TNS], a commercial TV and Film production facility, also opened in October 2022, providing opportunities for students to work alongside leading industry productions (see SO1).

The School also develops its digital learning resources. During the pandemic, the School addressed digital poverty

The School consistently develops and updates its Moodle virtual learning environment with learning materials. Here, the School hosts technical demonstration content for modules, and external guest speaker sessions. At enrolment, all students receive a digital learning induction. In developing all programmes, the School ensures that its students have access to, and use of, current specialist software.

The School's partnership with Aardman Academy (see SE3) supports students and academic staff across the School. The partnership allows for students, academics and international industry to collaborate extensively, and supports students and staff by delivering training, both digitally and physically, providing portfolio feedback and an extensive suite of masterclasses and events.

SE7. The provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

The School recognises the importance of student engagement, and the advantages that it can bring to those who participate in formal and informal feedback structures. In considering student engagement, and the student voice, the School routinely provides opportunities for all students to contribute to the development of their academic experience and their HE programmes across the deliberative structure.

The School values engagement with the student body, and uses the SPS as a feedback mechanism for evaluating the student voice. Over the last three years, students' feedback on the student voice and its impact on the development of programmes has been outstanding, with an average score of 92.2%.

Formal training programmes have been developed,
to support and monitor student representatives and Students' Union Officers in fulfilling their roles. In 2022-2023, the Students' Union Executive Team is made up of ten officers, including the SU President. Furthermore, the School's Academic Board, which provides academic governance in matters relating to research, academic standards and quality, and student experience relating to higher education provision,

Where appropriate,

student representatives have also been invited to participate in meetings of other formal working groups, such as the Student Induction Working Group.

The student voice is encouraged and enhanced by the Student Assemblies and Programme Boards of Study. Student Assemblies are attended by the full cohort of students and the programme team. Programme Boards are attended by wider academic teams, including the Faculty Leader, pastoral and academic support teams. These mechanisms allow the School, in partnership with its student body, to define, promote, monitor and evaluate the student experience, and enable all students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement processes. Previously, student spaces were split into 'bays', and each student was assigned a 'bay'. As a result of student feedback presented through Student Assemblies and Programme Boards, this changed; the School has ensured that students have ownership of their full studios. Students can reconfigure the spaces to suit their ongoing needs, individually or as a cohort. Specialist studios are only shared during collaborative or interdisciplinary projects.

Students work with staff to continuously improve their academic experience. During the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SU President joined the senior management, discussing its daily impact, challenges, solutions and success stories in the changing academic experience across the School. Based on these conversations, the 2019-2020 academic year was extended, allowing students further access to facilities, teaching staff and equipment where possible.

As sustainability in the creative industries has become a more important topic for students, students at the School pushed for programmes to become more environmentally sustainable. The BA (Hons) Production Design for Stage and Screen is now ALBERT accredited, as of 2020, demonstrating a conscious impact in reducing the environmental impact of programmes school-wide. In a recent BAFTA event, the School's academic team were invited to discuss this with industry professionals, highlighting that this move had been fuelled by students, with a desire to reduce their chosen industry's impact on the planet.

The School has a well-established system of student representation for each of its programmes. Student representatives for each cohort are selected to serve for one academic year. All new student representatives attend training. Student representatives are provided with regular opportunities to meet and discuss the experiences of their cohorts across programmes. Feedback from the Programme Boards of Study is considered by the School's Academic Board and actioned as appropriate.

To ensure the feedback loop is closed and that students receive timely updates on the feedback they have put forward through the student voice, the Students' Union works with the school to carry out 'You Said, We Did' activities. These activities come in the form of programme specific email updates from the Faculty Leaders, monthly newsletters from the Students' Union which tackle school wide issues and an open letter which is shared with all students.

3. Student Outcomes

Introduction

The School is committed to providing the highest quality teaching and learning experience for all students, enabling progression from FE to undergraduate study; and careers in the creative design industries and performing arts sectors; industries dominated by people qualified to at least degree level.

SO1. The provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Students Succeed In...

As a specialist art and design institution, the School's approach is developed to meet and mirror the needs of creative industry practice and is highly effective in supporting students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This tailored approach includes opportunities for the use of specialist studios as in the creative industries, access to academic staff with relevant creative and current industry experience, a creative curriculum developed in line with creative industry practices, opportunities to engage with like-minded creative professionals and peers, and the underpinning of practice with theory. This tailored approach to teaching and learning that differs from general providers in a number of ways. In developing its physical resources across the School, students have specialist studios. This includes spacious, fully equipped workshops and multi-disciplinary studios. The School is unusual in that all workshops can be booked and used by students from any programme. There are no barriers to learning. Whilst the School builds personal strengths and independence, it also encourages students to experiment and work interdependently in the design and development of their chosen outputs.

All academic staff have significant industry experience within the creative sector, with many still working collaboratively with industry and holding portfolio careers (see SE3). Each of the specialist workshops is supported by a team of specialist creative technicians that bring their skills and knowledge in providing insight into the manufacture and production that students can draw upon and use to further their personal progression. Students also benefit from a range of academic specialists with 6 hours of taught time and 10 hours of facilitated learning with access to studios into the evenings. The School curriculum enables multiple programmes, through aligned modules, to work collaboratively. For example, programmes in the Faculty of Stage and Screen can work collaboratively on a single project to create a film or theatre production. In the School's recent validation events (May 2022) the requirement for collaborative practice was highlighted for the validation of the new BA (Hons) Animation programme.

The School measures the success of students in their studies through the continuation rates (explored in SO2) and attainment rates. The majority of the School's student population (79.6%) can be classed as having multiple intersections of disadvantage – their economic

background, identifying as disabled, or their age etc. Despite this, the outstanding attainment rates consistently achieved by students from all backgrounds demonstrate the outstanding support for students to succeed in, and ultimately progress beyond their studies. Over the last three years, an average of 69.5% of completing students have left with a BA (Hons) Second Upper class or above, consistent with pre-pandemic levels, further highlighting the School's high academic standards.

Progress Beyond...

Within all programmes, technical development, soft skills, employability skills (learning gains) are embedded to progress students to creative careers in industry. In meeting with students as part of the School's Institutional Review, AUB found that:

"industry engagement formed an important part of [study, and students] appreciated the "live" projects, on-line and face to face speakers and exposure to exhibitions and galleries and opportunities to display their work".

The School has established and developed its employability and enterprise service: Folio. Folio offers coaching and mentoring to students looking to develop their skills and knowledge in areas including, but not limited to: marketing, funding and finance, community arts practice and postgraduate programmes. There is a focus on practical advice including searching for jobs, preparing professional CVs, writing funding bids and pitching for business opportunities. This is particularly important, as annual employment data released by The Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] shows that 32% of the creative industries workforce is self-employed, compared with 16% of the UL workforce¹². Folio also works to develop and enhance work experience opportunities and live projects for students to engage in. For example, in 2021-2022, a joint project with Tees Valley Museums saw students from both faculties working as creative producers to support the pre-shoot casting and location scouting for new works by internationally renowned photographer Alice Hawkins. Folio also works with Hartlepool Borough Council to provide dedicated work studios to graduates at a subsidised rate. The BIS Whitby Street Studios are located besides the School's HE campus.

The School's development of its physical resources has also provided further opportunities to students, ensuring they progress in the creative industries beyond their studies. The objectives of creating The Northern Studios [TNS] were to promote TV/film production, encourage the relocation of support businesses to Hartlepool and promote regeneration, further strengthening future creative opportunities for students in local industry. The creation of TNS was an anchor element in the North East's successful bid to secure £25M of BBC spend in the region in the period to charter renewal in 2027. The first major production in TNS is ongoing, and has actively engaged with students across the School.

SO2. There are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

The overall indicators on the OfS TEF Data Dashboard show a continuation (full-time) rate of 91.4%. Internal analysis demonstrates a three-year average in-year retention rate of 94.0%

¹² 'Insights for Policymakers: Freelancers in the Creative Industries', Creative Industries: Policy and Evidence Centre, May 2021, available at <https://cdn2.assets-servd.host/creative-pec/production/assets/publications/Freelancer-policy-briefing.pdf> [last accessed 18th January 2023].

across all levels. The School continues to achieve outstanding completion rates, despite the challenges proposed in an area of economic deprivation, the characteristics of the undergraduate student body and the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall indicators on the OfS TEF Data Dashboard show a completion (full-time) rate of 80.5%. Internal data shows that the three-year average rate for the completion of final year of study is 99.3%.

As a specialist art and design institution, in an area of economic deprivation, the School places a great emphasis on the experience of students and monitoring continuation and completion data of students. As a result, data shows that the School has outstanding rates of continuation and completion for all students on all programmes. According to the OfS Student Outcomes Data Dashboard, the School's indicator values for Continuation and Completion are 11.5pp and 5.9pp above threshold, respectively. In considering the outcomes for its students, the School evaluates the characteristics of the student population. Historically, a high percentage of the School's undergraduate population are disabled – in 2022-2023, this equates to 39.6%. Nationally, students who self-reported as disabled tended to have lower continuation and completion rates than students who did not report a disability¹³. Similarly, historically, a high percentage of the School's undergraduate population have come from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas – in 2022-2023, this equates to 26.4%. In 2022-2023, only 11.6% of the undergraduate population came from POLAR4 Quintile 5. Nationally, students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas had lower continuation, and completion rates than students from Quintile 2 and above. In spite of these challenges, and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the School has outstanding rates of continuation and completion for its students.

SO3. There are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.

The School is proud of the depth of engagement with the creative sector and aims to successfully progress students into the creative industries. As a specialist art and design institution, unique in the northeast of England - an area of severe economic deprivation, the School faces a number of challenges in supporting its students. In 2019-2020, 21.6% of the School's undergraduate population came from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the creative industries is also significant. In December 2020, the Policy & Evidence Centre [PEC] and the Centre for Cultural Value [CCV] established a partnership to examine the impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector. The partnership established that, in the six months following the beginning of the initial lockdown, 55,000 jobs were lost in music, performing and visual arts (a 30% decline)¹⁴. Regional employment in the creative industries fell year-on-year (2019-2020) by approximately 16%, and was unchanged in 2021. Looking across all DCMS sectors, over the same time period, the North East experienced a 4.8% fall in employment, whilst nationally, there was a 4.5% growth. This

¹³ 'Student Characteristics: Student Outcomes Data', Office for Students, November 2022, available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/51a83529-f7d4-4e8e-b854-22fb0a971460/student-characteristics-data-student-outcomes-report-2022.pdf> [last accessed January 18th 2023].

¹⁴ 'A Jobs Crisis in the Cultural and Creative Sectors', Creative Industries: Policy & Evidence Centre, December 2020, available at <https://pec.ac.uk/blog/how-covid-19-is-impacting-the-cultural-sector-with-the-loss-of-55-000-jobs-in-the-arts> [last accessed 18th January 2023].

demonstrates that the North East experience was, in comparison to the national experience, more difficult, and that employment in the region has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.¹⁵

The School also acknowledges issues in the methodology of the new Graduate Outcomes Survey, particularly around the recognition of portfolio careers, and the large proportion of self-employed creatives in the cultural sector (as highlighted in S01). In their July 2020 report, PEC highlight 'that creative graduates have different motivations and different career pathways to non-creative graduates' and that current measures miss 'much of the nuance of creative work and creative workers'¹⁶. As a specialist arts provider, even minor data issues have a disproportionate impact on the School's progression data.

In spite of these sector-wide, nationwide challenges, and the challenges posed by the changes in data collection for progressing students, the School has outstanding rates of progression for its students. In the most recent dataset (2019-2020 completers), as the creative and cultural sectors continue to recover from the pandemic, 57.5% of students progressed into further study and/or graduate employment, a significant improvement on previous years. The overall headline employability rate for the School's 2020 graduate cohort is 88.0%. The School strives to prepare students for further study and/or employment within the creative and cultural industries. In the IPS, 89.3% of students answered the question 'Do you feel the School provided a range of activities that prepared you for your future steps?' positively. Similarly, 92.9% of respondents answered the question 'Whilst studying, do you feel that you have been given the skills to excel and contribute within society?' positively. Since 2020-2021, the School has offered postgraduate provision. In the last three years, the School has grown its postgraduate offering, having successfully validated five postgraduate programmes. The postgraduate provision has been developed with feedback and input from relevant industries and employers. In 2022, in developing two new MA programmes, the School engaged with industry advisers, who commented:

The academic content of both courses illustrates strong strategic pathways to empower postgraduate students to create autonomous working lives that are diverse, ethical, and inclusive. These interconnected pathways also lay the groundwork for possible future doctoral study, as they demystify research design and methodologies through practice. [...] The academic course content emphasises the importance of situating the work of practice-led researchers in circular arts networks which mirror both academia and the 'real world'. The power of working with peers and partners can be understood as essential to today's art/design scene with its high level of collaborative artist/designer-led projects and gallery spaces and is essential to accessing future funding from bodies such as Local Authorities and Arts Council England.

¹⁵ 'DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates 2019: Employment', Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport, April 2020, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2019-employment/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2019-employment> [last accessed 18th January 2023]

¹⁶ 'Insights for policymakers: Graduate motivations [...]', Creative Industries: Policy & Evidence Centre, July 2020, available at <https://pec.ac.uk/policy-briefings/graduate-motivations-and-the-economic-returns-of-creative-higher-education-inside-and-outside-the-creative-industries> [last accessed 18th January 2023]

Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment practices are embedded within the MA curriculum, and their structure is tailored to progression into higher study or employment. In 2021-2022, approximately 25% of undergraduates progressed to postgraduate study with the School. In future years, the School hopes to further develop its postgraduate offering, contributing to a higher rate of progression for its undergraduate students.

SO4. The provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

The School sets out, in its Academic Strategy, how it provides a personalised academic experience at all levels of study that will ready and prepare students with an 'exceptional education for creative careers'. Educational gains are embedded within departmental operational plans, nested within the curriculum, and contextualised within programme outcomes.

The School's creative curriculum goes further in ensuring that students' personal development and educational gains are at the centre of their learning experience, tailored to their individual learning needs and starting points. This curriculum includes enrichment of the student experience to provide tailored opportunities for personal journey development, enhancing the learning experience to contextualise the wider purpose of creative practice, and meeting, stretching, and challenging individual aspirations. Each programme aim blends the transformative curriculum model (Figure 2), enabling students to demonstrate Experimentation, Making and Problem Solving at Level 4, Advanced Experimentation and Specialist Creation at Level 5, and Creation and Realisation at Level 6:

Cognitive skills are captured in the following programme aims:

- To enable you to review, consolidate and extend your knowledge and understanding of your field of study and apply this to a range of contexts
- To enable you to identify, analyse, interrogate and integrate the relationship between theories and practice

Soft skills development is captured in the following programme aims:

- To provide opportunities for individually-focused research and investigation that informs your creative practice and personal development
- To enable you to communicate effectively in a variety of forms appropriate to a range of contexts and audiences

Employability and career readiness are captured in the following programme aims:

- To encourage independent approaches to creative practice and project management, including planning and organisation, investigation, evaluation and collaboration
- To enable you to produce work to a standard appropriate to the professional context of your field of study, informed by research and experimentation

These learning and educational gains are mapped and contextualised within the School's Academic Strategy 2021-2024 where students will:

- Become a member of a community of collaborative practice that creates confident, independent practitioners.
- Learn the craft of “how to be creative” in order to respond to challenges that are thrown into the mix when creating work, developing their artistry, creative charisma, resilience and identity.
- The School aims to develop social and emotional intelligence and teach students to be influential communicators. Students learn how to be self-disciplined organisers and understand the importance of professional practice. Health and wellbeing also have an important part in the community, including gaining resilience for life and employability.

As students move through these transitional levels they are supported to explore the correlation between deeper and wider relationships within the creative sector. The School also gradually introduces the development of internal, then external, knowledge transfer and exchange partnerships. This includes access to a thriving alumni and ongoing support from specialist industry and educational practitioners to effectively prepare students for work as creative freelance practitioners, employees or within further study.

SO5. The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

As students transition into higher education, the School considers information raised during application to tailor the teaching and learning experience. Members of the support and academic teams discuss learner needs and implications for delivery, to meet educational gains. As each cohort will have a different profile, this methodology supports a differentiated delivery model. These learning preferences are discussed at subsequent tutorials to encourage engagement.

In evaluating the support students receive, the School recognises that an effective induction process is essential for all HE programmes, establishing routines for students, and helping them succeed in achieving their educational gains. This is particularly important for students with additional needs and those students classed as underrepresented in HE. Students are asked to provide feedback on their induction at each year of study through the SPS. Students have consistently provided outstanding feedback on their inductions at the School, with a three-year average score of 90.7% to the statement ‘the induction for this year of study gave me all the information I needed at the start of the year’. Each student is considered at bi-annual Interim Examination Boards that track individual performance, enabling the School to provide additional support through student services or academic support. Students can also ‘self-refer’

for additional support by specialist academic support staff or with external providers, available for one-to-one support. Throughout the year, students also have access to personalised tutorial sessions, at least once per module.

Reflection and evaluation of the support students receive in achieving these educational gains is recorded within the Annual Programme Review [APR] process. Alongside the APRs, Programme Strategic Meetings [PSM] enable enhanced evidenced discussion around a number of topics, including but not limited to, innovation in curriculum development, live projects, programme vision, resources, the attainment of cohorts, the impact of collaboration with internal and external partners and student feedback (such as Student Assemblies, Programme Boards and SPS). At PSMs, key performance indicators [KPIs] are reviewed across all programmes in areas such as attainment, pass rates, external examiner reports, continuation and completion rates. PSMs are held in the Autumn and Spring. The Spring meetings allow for a review of progress in the academic year. The PSMs feed into the deliberative structure, through the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee, to Academic Board, and ultimately, to the Corporation Board. This allows for support and development strategies to be developed across the School, tailored to the needs of programme cohorts or individual students, in order to ensure learning gains are achieved.

The School also aims to develop student's employability and career-readiness, the School also reviews its programme-based and School opportunities at PSMs. Students have opportunities to engagement with commissions, exhibition, curation, live briefs, awards and fund-raisers as they develop their professional profile. They develop and refine their specialist practice, throughout the programme, building a solid understanding of the creative sector. The programme provides a balance of cognitive skills, theory and design practice with cross-disciplinary collaborations and live-project opportunities to provide a comprehensive knowledge of design innovation. The programmes are further enhanced through engagement with practitioners and visiting professionals. Over the last three years, this has led to over 500 engagements for students.

SO6. The provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

In measuring general cognitive gain, the School evaluates its ability to create confident, independent practitioners, as per the Academic Strategy. In considering cognitive gains and attainment in context, the School considers the characteristics of its undergraduate student population. Nationally, the attainment rate of qualifiers from IMD Quintile 1 areas in 2020-21 was 15.5 percentage points lower than students from IMD Quintile 5 (73.1 percent compared with 88.6 percent)¹⁸. In 2021-2022, 32.6% of the School's undergraduate population came from IMD Quintile 1 areas. The success of cognitive gains for all students, from all backgrounds, can be seen in the attainment data for 2021-2022. The attainment gap between POLAR4 Q1&2 vs POLAR4 Q3&5 was 2.1pp. Similarly, the gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 was 2.2pp.

¹⁸ See footnote 12.

Recent graduates have also faced instability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2022, ONS released experimental statistics from the Student Experiences Insights Survey [SEIS] in England. Within this, 58% of third year or higher student reported that the pandemic made them feel less likely to achieve the level of attainment they had expected at the start of their degree course.¹⁹ In spite of these challenges, the School, and its students, demonstrate consistently outstanding achievement and attainment rates, given the characteristics of the undergraduate student population. Attainment rates are evaluated at multiple points throughout the academic year, particularly at bi-annual Interim Examination Boards. These are attended by representatives from student support, academic teams and management. They enable the examination of grade profiles, referral (re-submission) issues, and identify individual support needs and further opportunities for discussion on appropriate and tailored interventions. Overall, over the last three-years the high-grade attainment rate for all students is 69.5%.

The School also effectively measures the development of soft skills for students throughout the student journey. The School can evaluate its success in developing social and emotional intelligence, developing confident, influential communicators and developing self-discipline. In their September 2021 interim report, 'Turbocharging the Future', the University Partnerships Programme identified that only 26% of home applicants felt completely ready to start their higher education studies²⁰. Similarly, in the 2020-2021 NSS, nationally, only 42% of students felt that their institutions had taken appropriate steps to support their mental wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in the School's IPS, 100.0% of respondents felt that the School had helped them 'develop my sense of resilience whilst studying', and 96.4% felt that the School had supported them to achieve their own 'personal development goals in a way that met [their] learning needs'. In the School's SPS, students are asked to evaluate their personal development in three questions (Q25-27) focusing on confidence, problem-solving and communication skills. Student respondents have consistently provided overwhelmingly positive responses, with a three-year average satisfaction rate of 89.8%.

The School evaluates its ability to develop its student's employability and creative professional skills, in order to achieve roles in creative careers, through mechanisms such as the IPS. In answering the question 'How well did the Northern School of Art prepare you for your 'next step' after graduating?', students scored the School at 4.2 out of 5. 85.7% of respondents felt that they 'well informed about the opportunities you could advance into once graduating'. Further evidence of students successfully preparing for industry and employment within the creative sector can be found within student success stories. Between 2020 and 2022 students won or were nominated in over 33 regional, national and international competitions including, Kodak/NAHEMI Kodak Awards, APEX Film Festival (Arizona, USA) and New Designers Liberty Fabrics.

¹⁹ [Coronavirus and third year or higher students in higher education, England 29 November to 20 December 2021.pdf?](#)

²⁰ 'Turbocharging the Future', University Partnerships Programme, September 2021, available at <https://upp-foundation.org/student-futures-commission/news/turbocharging-the-future/> [last accessed 2023]

Following changes to the NSS in 2022-2023, the School will measure the personal development and career readiness of its Level 6 students through new additional questions.

4. Conclusion

The School provides outstanding support to individual student journeys, considering all backgrounds and starting points, providing an outstanding academic experience, and succeeding in its aim of progressing students into the creative industries or further study. Educational gains are at the heart of the academic curriculum, ensuring that learners are nurtured, stretched to their full potential, and ultimately emerge successful in meeting their individual aspirations. The development of these skills, alongside the School's outstanding record as a 'making' institution, supports the artistry of future creative practitioners and creative educators.

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