

1. Students involved in creating the submission:

I am a level student studying at Newcastle College University Centre, which is part of NCG. Previously, I studied on the . In , I was elected as a course representative and subsequently as the curriculum area representative for . In , I became a member of the Student Partnership and Engagement Committee (SPEC). The Student Partnership and Engagement Committee (SPEC) provides a platform for discussions regarding issues that matter to students, and reports on themes coming through feedback systems and the escalation of unresolved issues. Through my role on the SPEC, I was nominated to be the lead contact for this TEF student submission.

Other students were involved in gathering data for this submission by speaking to students about their experiences. They were a: Level Foundation Degree Integrated Health; Social Care and Well-Being student; a Level NCG FdA Culinary Arts student; a Level BSc Hons Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation student; a Level MSc Sport and Exercise student and a Level Interior & Spatial Design. Alongside this written submission a Level FdA Creative Content Video Production student was responsible for the creation of a student experience video. The student applied for the position through an advertised student fellowship opportunity and was chosen by members of the SPEC.

I have been supported by the Research and Student Engagement (RSE) team who have provided advice regarding the TEF criteria and format of the submission, as well as access to information, data and resources.

This submission has also been shared for comment and feedback with members of the Student Partnership and Engagement Committee who have helped to shape and develop the content.

2. How the data was gathered:

Data for this submission was gathered in the following ways:

‘Byte for Bite’ for student feedback surveys

Between October and December 2022, we conducted 3 cross campus in-person surveys to gather the thoughts and opinions of students about their experiences at NCG. This was conducted as part of the College’s ‘Byte 4 Bite’ student voice campaign where students are invited to give feedback on a range of issues and agendas in return for vouchers which can be exchanged for food at specialist food vans invited onto campus for the event. The initiative

is well-received amongst the student body because it allows for opportunities to speak to the Student Engagement team about issues that are concerning them.

During the events we spoke to 360 students from across the college faculties: October (142), November (109), December (109). This included students from the following areas: Health, Science and Welfare (171), Business, Education and Services Industries (90), Digital and Creative Industries (78), Energy, Engineering and Built Environment (21).

Survey Data

For this submission, the Research and Student Engagement team made available the data from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Higher Education Student Survey (HESS) from 2019 through to 2022 alongside feedback and comments made by participating students.

Group and Curriculum Forum data

We were also given the data and feedback from NCG Forums that were completed in November 2022. Group Forums involve an elected student representative gathering feedback from their classmates with regards to teaching on their course, resources, campus life and any other element of their studies. These views, issues and opinions are then taken to their Programme Leader to resolve or are escalated to the Curriculum Forum.

The Curriculum Forum is attended by the Head of Curriculum and all student representatives from classes within that curriculum area. Again, any issues that can be resolved by the Head of Curriculum are actioned, with any unresolved issues being escalated to be discussed at the College HE Forum. This is the most senior student forum and is chaired and attended by HE Senior Management and student curriculum representatives.

We decided to use the data from NCG Forums within this submission because they capture a broad overview of student voice from all students across all faculties within NCG.

Student Experience Video

To compile the Student Experience Video a student studying FdA Creative Content Video Production set about capturing NCG Student feeling about: The teaching they were receiving; their assessments; the feedback they receive; any academic support they receive; their programmes learning resources and their feelings about their voice within the institution. They produced a proposal and then spoke to students from across the curriculum areas to arrange video interviews. These interviews were edited together in a stylised manner, that removed the input from the interviewer and assembled the discussion on each topic sequentially from the participants.

Declaration

I can confirm that the University did not unduly influence the content of this submission. All names of students involved in the compilation of this submission have been anonymised for data protection purposes, in line with the submission guidance.

3. Student Experience and Outcomes:

Using the gathered data, we have structured this submission around the following elements: Student Satisfaction, Induction, Resources, Teaching and Learning, Academic Support, Student Voice, and Employability. The provided quotes given are representative of the general feeling of student opinion.

Student Satisfaction

During the October 'Byte 4 Bite' (B4B) session we asked (142) students to give their opinions about their life on campus and whether they were enjoying their student experience. An overwhelming majority of students (94%) rated their experience as good or excellent. When asked about what they like about studying their course, students highlighted that they felt as though they were given a lot of support from their teachers in terms of accessing content, academic support, and that teachers took a personal interest in helping them to develop.

"Staff are great. Explanations are clear and always help when stuck and give great feedback. They listen to student feedback" – (Level 6 Student, Illustration, B4B October)

These opinions of current students mirror those of previous cohorts, showing that the relationships between students and staff have been consistently strong and beneficial, as seen in the 84% overall satisfaction score in the 2022 National Student Survey:

"Our tutors provide a high-quality pastoral care and genuinely care for the wellbeing of their students. They find different ways to explain things to you to try and help understand. There's a good sense of community amongst the classroom." – (Student comment, NSS, 2019)

Students also commented that a key aspect of their positive experience was that they felt the wider community was safe, inclusive and supportive, and that their opinions and concerns were acted upon:

"I have _____, and this course was the first time my mental health has been taken seriously. This course is the first time I have felt like I could be unapologetically

myself. The first time I have felt like I am being taken seriously and treated like an adult.” (B4B October)

Induction

During the first ‘Byte 4 Bite’ survey in October, students were asked about their induction and enrolment experience, with questions regarding processes from initial enrolment contact through to the Freshers’ Fair being posed. 142 students were surveyed with students representing each curriculum area. The feedback received was enlightening as it highlighted positive aspects and offered areas for improvement. The findings were written up as a report and were presented as a Student Voice paper at the first Academic Board meeting of the year:

With regards to their induction, 79% of students marked their experience as 7 (or more) out of 10, with 37% of students scoring their experience as 10/10. Students expressed that staff were very welcoming and that the induction process had been very informative, giving them all of the information needed to begin their academic year positively. The majority of students (85%) felt that they had received information in a timely manner and that they had received enough information regarding course content and module guides. All students (100%) responded saying that they enjoyed the Freshers’ Fair and that they found the event useful and entertaining. Some students commented that more diversity in activities during the enrolment process would be appreciated, especially to differentiate the movement between different levels of study, such as for students who had studied previously on FE courses at the college. Other ideas such as providing students with academic planners would be beneficial as this would help them plan for the year ahead.

Resources

In November (109) students were asked about the quality of resources available to them in their studies and how they impacted on their learning with 80% of students surveyed saying that the resources were excellent or good. The main issue for students was that they felt the Wi-Fi was slow (28%). However, students also noted that the resources available in their programme areas were very good and contributed on the whole to a positive learning experience. Students highlighted the new study pods recently installed in the Performance Academy as well as the industry standard technology available in the Lifestyle Academy such as the diode laser machine in Hair and Beauty.

“Having access to the Lynton machine is brilliant. It has made the transition into the workplace and interview process much easier as we had something to relate to. Especially as this brand is used within industry a lot.” (Level 5 Student, FdA Aesthetic and Spa Management, B4B November)

This feedback is similar to that received in the previous NSS surveys where students said that resources on their courses helped them to achieve in their studies and have industry related experiences:

“Facilities for musical theatre course were amazing. Really lucky to have these facilities and the opportunities to work with other students was amazing, cannot fault”
(Student comment, NSS, 2020)

“Photography store has lots of equipment and very easy to access” (Student comment, NSS, 2019)

Teaching and Learning

November’s ‘Byte 4 Bite’ survey focused on the quality of Teaching, Learning and Feedback that students received. When asked students (109) how they would rate their experience of teaching at the college, 90% of students rated their experience as excellent (26%) or good (64%) whilst 79% of students said that no improvements could be made. These scores are broadly representative of the 2022 NSS results where 88% of students agreed that their experience of teaching and learning was good.

When asked about whether they felt that the feedback they received from their teachers was helping them improve there was a high level of satisfaction amongst students with 88% stating that the feedback they received helped them to progress, whilst 91% stated that the feedback was beneficial to their learning. Again, these figures are broadly in line with historical results, such as the 2022 NSS survey where 86% of students were pleased with their learning opportunities.

“Tutors are always quick and efficient with their feedback and grades are received in a timely manner after submission. They are always supportive and you know that you can count on them to be understanding. There are also multiple learning opportunities, and opportunities for us to work within our industry, such as live briefs and talks.”
(Student comment, NSS, 2020)

Students also stated that the small class sizes had a transformative effect on their achievement, allowing for more personalised learning journeys and closer relationships with their tutors and peers. Students also noted that smaller classes allowed greater opportunities to participate in their classes and that feedback was incisive and individualised.

“Smaller class sizes have meant you are more able to ask lecturers questions you may have regarding specific aspects of the course” (Level 5 Student, BA Photography, B4B November)

There was also recognition from the students surveyed that they felt staff are well qualified and experts in their fields. The real-world experience of the staff has given students confidence that what they are learning is relevant and will be of benefit when they enter the world of work:

“My tutor is well experienced in the industry and is able to deliver their knowledge to the class through the lectures” (Student comment, NSS, 2021)

“Lecturers are experienced in the engineering field which allows them to share their experiences with students” (Level 6 Student, BEng Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering, B4B November)

Academic Support

During the ‘Bite 4 Byte’ session in November we spoke to 109 students from across the faculty areas at the college with regards to their knowledge of what academic support is available. 91% of students were aware of what support was available and knew how to access it. This was mirrored in the Group Forums (November) where there was a consensus across all of the faculty areas that students were happy with the accessibility and availability of academic support:

“Students are happy with the access to academic support.” (BA Advance Skin Techniques, Group Forum, Nov. 22)

“Academic support staff have been very helpful. We have used teams and email to contact and arrange meetings around work- life balance. The advice back is very helpful and working with the coaches to enhance our work.” (BA Tourism and Hospitality Management, Group Forum, Nov. 22)

Student Voice

During the Forums, which were held in November across all classes in the college, positive feedback was also received regarding student voice within the college. Students said that they felt listened to and valued and they felt that their opinions mattered.

“Since the last student forum staff have acted on what we asked for” (Level 5 Student, BA Music Production Student, Group Forum, Nov.22)

All students (100%) stated that they knew who their student rep was for their course and were aware of how to raise concerns with them. 85% of students had also seen the ‘Together we Changed’ poster campaign which is designed to inform students of changes made to the campus and resources, based on their feedback and requests. There has been

a strong impetus on improving student voice channels within the college, through initiatives such as 'Byte 4 Bite', and this has shown in the most recent National Student Surveys where student voice satisfaction has improved year on year: 2020 (76%), 2021 (77%), 2022 (82%).

"Students feel valued and changes to the course/module from student voice have been evident and beneficial" (Student comment, NSS, 2020)

Employability

In the December survey, when asked about how they felt their studies at NCG would enable them to gain employment within their desired industry 85% of (109) students stated that their studies were giving them vital employability skills that would have a direct impact on their work prospects or further study opportunities, and that their course would help them be work ready once they had graduated. There were a lot of positive comments from students regarding the relevancy of their studies:

"The content of the course has been engaging, challenging and most importantly the content has been relevant to industry. The course has assisted my theoretical and practical development as well as my professional and academic development."
(Student comment, NSS, 2019)

"I feel as though the course is a very good learning step for students and really pushes your abilities to the max such as remaining calm under pressure and working to deadlines. The topics are also related to the industry that we want to work in."
(Student comment, NSS, 2021)

Students were also very complimentary about their experiences working with the Careers and Employability Team, stating that they had received invaluable help with all aspects of developing their employability skills, from working on CV's and job interview techniques to understanding career prospects and further learning opportunities to aid progression and development:

"The advice was super inciteful and helped me get an overall understanding of what options I have from Level 5 and Level 6. The resources given were really helpful too, for both individual development but also the website that I can access in my spare time had careers and information. It's helped me understand what skills I need to develop and what qualifications I can go onto after completing Level 6." (Level 5 Student, FdA Children and Young People Early Years Educator, B4B December)

Conclusion

Throughout this process it has been hugely rewarding to get an insight and understanding of the NCG student experience. The general opinion of the students we have spoken to is that NCG offers an exceptionally supportive and inclusive environment for study. Students are fully invested in their learning and are aware of how their course leads to successful employment. This is reflective of my own experience on my courses at Newcastle College, which I have found exciting and engaging. I am looking forward to completing the rest of my studies, and know that my experiences here will ready me for my next steps, whatever they may be.