

Provider submission template for TEF 2023

1. Provider context

Based in the heart of the Chapeltown community in Leeds, Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is the only Conservatoire for Dance, in England, outside of London. NSCD has evolved to provides the highest quality professional dance education and training for students demonstrating the potential to achieve and succeed within the dance profession. 2023 marks the thirty-seventh anniversary of this unique institution. NSCD has rapidly established itself as a provider of excellent higher education, as a sector influencer, with a growing world-class reputation as an institution which today offers professional training and education for graduates achieving careers as performers, teachers, producers, creators, and arts leaders. As well as undergraduate and postgraduate studies, it offers an 'Access to Higher Education' route through its two CERTHE programmes of study. The school currently has three undergraduate programmes and six postgraduate programmes in its portfolio ([Courses - Northern School of Contemporary Dance \(nscd.ac.uk\)](https://www.nscd.ac.uk/courses)). The school joined the register as a new provider in 2022, it was part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) between 2002 and 2022. Prior to that it was a registered provider and held a dormant HEI during its time with CDD. The University of Kent currently validates all NSCD's Higher education qualifications and in 2023, NSCD intends to make an application to the Office for Students to have its own degree awarding powers. Over the last five years, NSCD has remained resilient in terms of its recruitment and retention of talented dance students. **(Source: NSCD Admissions data 2018-2022 entry)** our ambition and offer is essential in the higher education landscape to meet the demand for dance programmes to replace those now gone from the sector. As emphasised in the current prospectus¹ and strategic plan, NSCD is committed to providing access to the most talented aspiring dance students from the age of 16, regardless of background, enabling everyone to fulfil their potential. As a centre of excellence, the school nurtures creative and performance talent, enabling contemporary dance graduates to pursue careers, with the skills and knowledge to contribute to art form development. The school's educational approach 'encourages the openness and personal growth required to become a dance artist' (prospectus 2016, p.3). NSCD has actively developed a learning culture within an inclusive environment, where all students are able to develop as individual dance artists, supported by their peers, tutors and professionals in the sector. It has strategically adopted and embraced values which reflect excellence and optimism in Higher Education provision:

NSCD values²:

- ***The transforming power of dance and arts education, to uplift, inspire, stimulate our emotions and help us create a tolerant and cohesive society***
- ***Inclusive learning and collaboration in a spirit of mutual respect and generosity***
- ***Curiosity, self-reflection and open-mindedness***
- ***Creative risk taking, innovation and investment in on-going artist and art form development***
- ***Aspiration, self-motivation and dedication in striving for excellence***
- ***Diversity - our differences, as well as the things we have in common, which inspire creativity and enrich our lives***
- ***Our relationship to local, regional, national and international communities and the wider dance ecology***
- ***The nurturing and investment that leads to independence and resilience***
- ***Using resources in a way that is responsible and environmentally sustainable***

¹ <http://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/prospectus/>

² <http://www.nscd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Strategic-Plan-2017-22-brochure-web.pdf> (page 6)

General information about the school³, its mission, vision and values and strategy⁴ are publicized on the school's website and are accessible for all audiences. School structure and governance⁵ arrangements are also publicly available. We follow University of Kent (UoK) academic regulations which outline how academic standards and quality assurance are managed. This is available on UoK website.⁶

Our strengths as an organisation are NSCD's community, its identity and reputation as a quality provider and its curriculum innovation and delivery. Our mission, which underpins NSCD's strategic plan⁷, is ***“to provide an inspirational learning experience, from first contact through into the profession, enabling aspiring dance artists, and dance professionals, regardless of background, to shape the future of dance”***. In considering the changing environment for Higher Education and pursuing the school's strategic aims, the principle of *‘NSCD to foster a generous, mutually respectful and inclusive creative community for students and all staff’*⁸ has been a significant driver for the School. The school is currently in the process of publishing a new strategic plan for 2023-2030 and this focuses upon four distinctive pillars: Who we are / our bedrock / our visibility and profile / our future. All four of these will facilitate continued growth in the quality of our student experience in relation to: our core businesses - quality education and professional platforming of student and professional work; financial resilience including student support; estates growth and development including partnerships and student opportunities outside of institution; our specialist global brand, networks and engagement with the sector.

Our committees' structure supports a holistic and integrated approach to the decision making, monitoring, and reporting of the school's core businesses around the quality of the student experience, alongside the school's ambitions and strategic framework. Facilitating policies which are student centered, encourage students to embody the policy and engage with policy review, reflecting the values of the organisation. Students contribute annually into policy review making suggestions as to how we can shape these to become even more user interfacing.

As an educational and professional resource Leeds dance now has: a stronger ecology internally and attracts more attention nationally; NSCD graduates are noted as being more business savvy, more creative, better connected, and more interdisciplinary; Through their work diversity is even more actively sought out and celebrated; with audiences for our student and graduate work growing with new audiences outdoors, online and in theatres. Our students connect with this resource, networking, and employment potential. As a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), we receive Arts Council, England (ACE) funding to develop pathways and excellence; increasing participation and engagement and graduate opportunities; developing people and capacity; developing places and spaces; improved graduate profile and advocacy. This connection with NSCD is best summed up by **Tom Riordan Chief Executive Leeds City Council (Source: endorsement letter for registration 22nd September 2021) who writes:**

“Fostering future talent is critical to Leeds’ future and the NSCD plays a significant role in this contributing to the city’s large student and graduate population. Pre-pandemic, there were 9,400 students studying cultural and creative courses in Leeds. Leeds City Council and our partners, such as NSCD, will continue our work to attract students to study here to underpin the city’s profile as a

³ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/>

⁴ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/vision-mission/>

⁵ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/governance/>

⁶ <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework>

⁷ NSCD Strategic plan 2017-2022 <http://www.nscd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Strategic-Plan-2017-22-brochure-web.pdf>

⁸ NSCD strategic plan 2012/13 to 2014/15

growing centre for creative and cultural excellence.” In January 2023, NSCD students sat at the heart of the opening for LEEDS 2023 (Awakening) performing work created by NSCD Principal Sharon Watson, MBE, DL. What we know from Leeds City Council is that our economy is growing as a result of our graduates choosing to stay and work in the institutions in the city.

In January 2022, the school had a formal QAA Quality Standards review (QSR) and proudly achieved ‘high confidence’ in all 13 assessment areas of the inspection.

We have approximately 270 FTE student cohort, all studying one subject area (Dance) although these come from all UK regions and from overseas, they live locally in the Chapeltown area within walking distance of the school. (**Source: NSS Student dashboard data 2018-2022**). In the last five years the cohort mix has changed marginally with 39% of students disclosing a disability including learning support need (not uncommon for students studying creative subjects (**Source: HESA dataset 2021**) and a third of students coming from over 26 countries overseas, adding to the diversity of the learning experience. We are continuing to grow in numbers of students identifying as People of global majority and in recent years we have recruited a number of students identifying both as gender fluid and from the trans community. In relation to applications, the school receives on average 480-500 undergraduate applications for 90 student places (30 places on the CERT HE programme and 60 places on the BA degree). From admissions data gathered at application (**Source: NSCD admissions data 2018-2022**) NSCD are still attracting applications from young people from Widening Participation (WP) characteristics, with over 30% of WP applicants on every course. On the BA course over 50% of applicants were from households with income under £42,875. With dance courses being squeezed out of the mainstream school curriculum, NSCD recognizes that we have more work to do to increase the number of male applicants, for example on the BA, only 17% of applicants were male and continue work to increase the number of students from global majority identities to enter the programme and see dance as a viable career opportunity. Since 2022, We have invested in an ‘NSCD experience day’ tour across 60 colleges and centers nationally to help to break down the perceptions held by gatekeepers. NSCD is the only conservatoire to have formal partnerships with 19 professional companies which support transition into work. We have a 15 and 30 credit professional placement modules in the undergraduate level 6 pathway to support students to complete their degrees should they be offered work in the final two terms of their course (this is common in the industry). Making NSCD a popular choice for study. Our aim to continue to identify and address any barriers and negative perceptions surrounding entrance to HE and ensure that we are consistently forward facing in our abilities to manage change effectively. Given the starting narrative of our student population we feel that the learning gain and exit velocity in which they achieve goes way beyond that of our competitors in terms of data analysis. The TEF workbook data shows that there is little difference in achievement between those of a WP characteristic and those who are not (Student characteristics data).

In gathering the narrative for this paper, we have drawn on a number of relevant quantitative and qualitative data sources. The TEF workbook data show excellent engagement with the NSS surveys from 2019-2022, with engagement from 76%-95.8% (+11.4-18.3%, above each years benchmark value.) This is also echoed in our student experience surveys with average of 72%+ engagement across the four year period. The examples quoted in the paper are where multiple voices say the same thing as a constant. Our strength is that we are a small specialist institution. As such all-academic staff teach across all programmes, students have opportunities to work with

each other and there are a multitude of face to face opportunities where conversations take place. This means that we build a strong close professional relationship with the students and gather as much information as we would from more formalised data capture methods. We have used some of these informal conversations, focus groups, student questionnaires and polls on Moodle as well as OfS workbook datasets, NSS reports, Annual programme monitoring reports, QSR report (January 2022), module evaluations and student experience surveys, staff, and industry endorsement, to tell our story.

Setting and monitoring of standards are done through mechanisms which include alignment to University of Kent's academic regulations, codes of practice, Boards of examiners' external examiners, programme approval, annual course monitoring, and student engagement. We use key national datasets to inform, benchmark and critically evaluate our activities. This ensures that our work is coherent, challenging, delivered well within the context of our subject area in comparison with other providers and it respected and influenced by industry/employer feedback. All feedback is benchmarked against comparative data sources in the sector. This enables us to report on standards and develop actions which resolve issues or provide enhancement. Feedback from student module evaluations and examples of assessment work are used proactively as formative feedback for following year groups on modules. We have four external examiners for the course provision whose feedback supports enhancement and assures the students that voices can be heard and responded to effectively.

In a focus group held in December 2021 students echo feedback loops and mechanisms we use to capture their views, suggestions for improvement and feedback. **(Source: Student focus group BA students, December 2021) "NSCD has communications with the students through many ways including questionnaires and having student representatives for each year to voice student opinions... We have year meetings and meetings with the head of undergraduate studies and management often and students can feedback (often anonymously) through surveys and end of module evaluations, Students always have the option to feed in consultations (as surveys and polls on Moodle) and in student voice forum... We also speak to our tutors all the time."** It is our aim to ensure that communication to and from the students is as inclusive as possible. Student feedback tells us that we are accommodating of student learner preferences, styles and neurodiversity, with information going out on email, face-to-face meetings, short posted videos and social media platforms. Student representatives what's-app groups have been a good way of capturing additional student voice and year meetings with leadership close the feedback loops. The voice of staff has been gathered through online staff infobase surveys and in academic and professional service staff forum meetings.

2. Student experience

NSCD's excellent student offering is courses that support the growth of the cultural industries they serve to build on students' knowledge and experiences and play a worthwhile contribution to leading graduates into the workplace, with a passion for continued professional development. Our curriculum is planned with the sector needs in mind, has adapted over recent years to ensure currency and great value for money creating graduates who readily feed into the world as performers, creators, teachers, producers, dance makers and dance leaders. A number of our graduates are award winning dance artists. The school represents a hub of arts activities and opportunities which aligns the student learning experience to the industry, taught by and alongside professionals, academics and researchers and their work. Our approach is always welcoming and throughout their journey we offer comprehensive guidance and support for the right study choices. From pre-enrolment, induction to graduation (and beyond with catapult and northern connections

artist development programmes) life at NSCD programmes a range of activities to support learning, extend learning and apply learning right the way through studies. NSCD embeds research ambitions and enterprise into all its courses and graduates find successful progression onto further study, support artist research and development and set up collectives to achieve successful funding and offer employment opportunities to other NSCD alumni. **(Source: NSCD BCI Returns 2019-2022)**

Over the last five years the school has utilised a number of theories of change initiatives to align student engagement with what is learned, moving away from any traditional vocational dance school traits, focusing our academic action plans to adopt much more measurable goals to achieve change. This approach led to our scaffolded curriculum and a move away from 32 disparate modules to a more connected, inclusive and focused curriculum. We have also used theory of change to enable us to focus upon revisions to assessment and the language we use when giving and receiving feedback and to facilitating more assessment mode choices e.g. presentations, essays, reports, practical exams, performance work and placements. This has aided clarity and focus to the learner journey towards the career pathways we are setting up for our students to be prepared for. This is enabling us to better makes decisions around what is taught, learned and assessed.

NSCD's annual monitoring summary of best practice **(Source: Annual monitoring report 2022)** identified four audited areas (Teaching, professional connections, approaches to assessment and support) which exemplify the school's approach to the delivery of the curriculum through innovation, in the way:

1. Excellence in teaching, relating to a clear understanding of the industry and embedding and embodiment of best practice across all courses and the scaffolded curriculum themes. There is true and holistic integration of professional practitioners and career focus into programmes. Courses are work related with plenty of scenarios for students to learn in professional and work related contexts.
2. Academic and professional modes of scrutiny and exceptional standard of marking, moderation and standardised approaches to the marking and feedback processes are applied. Students received individual and tailored feedback to support progression in learning and development and where there were opportunities for the industry to feed into the formative feedback given to students.
3. Students can input and shape assessment in a personalised and career focused manner. This leads to many opportunities for students to develop their own distinctive artist identity and voice.
4. Students comment a lot on the passion and commitment of all the staff in their abilities to support teaching, learning and student support. Student support comes in many distinctive and individualised formats. Students comment positively on the support they receive in all areas of mind, body and academic support.

The student experience at NSCD begins during the pre-application stage with several intervention activities which give potential students a sense of what level 4 study will be like and supports their application to the school. We focus upon the expectations of the practical application.

Interventional recruitment strategies included: Teaching Dance Placements for BA students (working as paid advocates) / Bursaries – for Summer School attendees / Boys Programmed activities / CAT Outreach and Toolkit bursaries / Audition Preparation days / NSCD+ Open Days. This continues to support the diversity of applications we receive.

NSCD has a policy to see all applicants through either a live or remote video submitted practical 'application'. This prepares applicants with an experience of the technical, creative, and critical reflection which is expected of them or the type of strands we will be developing in their first year of study. At this stage the panel can identify further questions we would like to go back to the

candidate to reach out with an additional opportunity to disclose a medical condition, disability, or existing injury. We have noted **(Source: NSCD applicant data 2018-2022)** as a result that nearly 85% of applicants feel comfortable to disclose any of the above at application stage, meaning we can offer further guidance, continue with diagnostic assessments and/or have a personal support plan in place for when the student arrives. We asked two new members of staff (

) for thoughts on the practical application **(Source: Two staff testimonials, December 2022)**:

I have been blown away at the level of access and support that the institution offers potential students and the passion of the team that supports them. The practical process is extremely equitable with the option to audition via video or in person, movement sequences can be learnt prior to the audition and tool kit days are offered to prepare learners for the application experience. This allows the panel assessing the practical application the opportunity to see the students in a variety of settings and gives a much more rounded view of the individual... the audition process now suits a varied breadth of learner profiles, those that thrive in an exam setting but also those more comfortable with course work and autonomy that can be found without a time pressure and those that like to react in the moment with the creative tasks we offer... during the day we can hear the students experience of the day and their aspiration for the future and again this is an opportunity to hear a student's articulation of potential rather than solely a physical demonstration."

By us considering what comes before NSCD we can shape the quality of transition into HE for learners and we know this impacts positively on a learners retention once here **(Source: data comparison of NSCD audition feedback from learners against acceptance and retention data of level 4 students, 2022 application and entry)**.

Students describe study at NSCD as being "intensive, hard work, challenging, high quality and enjoyable." **(Source: level 4 student experience survey July 2022)**. NSCD tries to instil all the values and purpose of the workplace from day one. NSCD has a student attendance policy⁹ in place, encouraging both student engagement with the learning process and improved balanced performance. This is monitored termly through Student Review Boards (SRBs), where each student's progress, attendance and attainment is discussed, with appropriate support packages assigned. Our policies are very student centred in their approach and application and three which are the most impactful is the ***NSCD Student Charter¹⁰, NSCD Supporting Students through Study and Student complaints policy and procedures***. The first supports a collegiate approach to being a citizen of the school, the second allows us to work in partnership with the students to identify and agree specific student needs and as a process to guide the student to making the right decisions for them, and the third although hardly ever needed, guides the student through the processes beyond student voice forum to identify what is not working and a system for dealing with informal and formal complaints and appeals.

We make a promise to the students through our contact, terms and conditions and student charter, that we will develop the industry-standard and personal skills needed to apply their learning to existing challenges through a project based application and problem-based learning in different arts contexts. As well as developing core academic and personal expertise like teamwork and project management, NSCD also works on interdisciplinary practices and explores collaboration through various module cited events. Opportunities students have to work alongside the industry and show their work publicly in all years, supports networking and trust in what we are aiming to do as an organisation. Consultation with students is integral to the programme design and delivery process. This is achieved by various means including focus

⁹ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

¹⁰ [NSCD Student Charter - Northern School of Contemporary Dance](#)

groups (where students can volunteer to be part of the group), and through online anonymous feedback through NSCD-Moodle, in Student Voice Forums (SVF), through representatives on LTQAC and Academic Boards and other email and informal discussions. We often reach out to alumni (especially in relation to major revisions to an existing programme) who can give an additional perspective, having gone through the present version of a programme. We balance views and opinions of the institution, present students and the industry voice and using consultation from all three areas, this informs the decision making around quality course design. In the recent QSR, the team concludes **“that NSCD designs and delivers high quality courses. NSCD’s approach to ensuring that the design and delivery of its course is of high-quality is informed by its strategic priority to enable students to become successful academics and practitioners.”** (Source: **QSR Report, January 2022**). Termly Student Voice forums are a really useful way to seek the student voice to celebrate what is working and consider what things we can change or adopt for the future. Students will often bring to the agenda items around timetabling, advice to students for the future, opportunities, communication strategies and resources. **(Sources: Student Voice Forum agendas and minutes 2018-2022)**. These forums feed into the quality of the student experience and support excellent relationship building.

Curriculum currency comes through a number of validation panels and scrutiny panels conducted by the University of Kent with panel members from other HEIs, CDD, sector representation and our student body. These concluded that we successfully meet exact standards of quality assurance in our delivery with high student engagement, satisfaction and successes (outcomes) **(Sources: UoK course validation reports 2018, 2019, 2020)**. The undergraduate programme follows a carefully crafted scaffolded curriculum of five strands (Performance in context, Research projects, Creative practice, Teaching and Dance techniques) which progress and intensify over the three years in logical sequence, balancing the traditional needs of the profession with innovation insight (for example the traditional stage craft and venues alongside site specific and technology for dance, including screen dance and community engagement). Our careers programme led from level 5 and level 6 with guest input, facilitates skills to support career choices including CV and resume writing, funding and grant applications, audition preparation, careers abroad options and visas, setting up own company registration and paying tax and insurance as well as ethics approval and safeguarding. At level 4 we begin to look at career paths in the industry to further understand possibilities as performers and artists (independent and collaborative artists), teachers, producers and creators. Success is supported early through Q&A sessions with employers, mock auditions and network opportunities with professional organisations. In house we created two teaching qualifications as an integral strategy to develop knowledge, skills and experience in teaching learning and research, as a key progression for UG students and as a staff development and professionalisation route. In 2023 98% of contract staff will have a formal teaching qualification (postgraduate diploma in Arts Learning and teaching in higher education, PG ALTHE) and make a fellowship application to AdvanceHE. Staff studying on the programme tell us in their experience survey feedback (August 2021) **“The PGDip ALTHE has given me the opportunity to re-evaluate and reflect on my teaching practice. It has provided a much-needed chance to catch my breath, reconnect with the current literature, and think about what I value and want to achieve going forward... it has encouraged me to reframe my teaching and help re-shape a potential vision for the future. It has also provided me with a fantastic community of peers from outside of my institution with whom I can share questions, challenges, and exchange”**. Research is an integral part of our approach to teaching and artistic practice. All courses have a strand of research project, with the performance courses exploring practice research, whilst the MA Dance Teaching and ALTHE focus upon education action research paradigms.

During seven annual planning days, the school faculties consider the widest range of techniques, genres and creative and critical methodologies, for students to engage with that are most useful to them in their day-to-day development as an individual and artist. Theoretical underpinning relates directly to all practical experiences in studios, seminars, and lectures to ensure that students can both contextualise their experiences in relation to history, cultural and social contexts and the wider issues which closely connect dance to modern societies communities and employment. Students have cited that this balance of context, theory, research, and practice **“gives us useful skills and experiences that will help us after graduating”** and alongside our careers programme embed into all years of the degree facilitates students to connect study with the world of work possibilities. **“The course and modules we study helps us to understand what possibilities there are in this work field and prepare us ahead of leaving NSCD.”** Often in feedback students like to look at their experience in a holistic way and will repeatedly tell us that **“our experience at NSCD has been, that the entire learning environment is well designed to support and listen to the questions, queries and needs of each individual student.”** (Source: Focus group December 2021, BA students). Course content balances the development and understanding of the subject area, with the personal developmental needs and expectations of having graduates with particular skills and useful skills in other domains. This is particularly encouraging practice research, leadership and project management potential, useful to those embarking onto a portfolio career. NSCD often introduces concepts, ideas and experiences which are unfamiliar to students (such as creative problem solving and embodiment). Going beyond familiar is often commented on as a good thing by students (Source student experience surveys 2019-2022) where **‘vulnerability in a cared for environment is a strength.’** In annual monitoring reports staff have analysed and reflected upon skills development in modules, saying **“this supports engagement, curiosity and commitment by students to want to learn new things and it tells us as an institution that we are trusted greatly by our student body to support cared for risk taking and innovation”**. This has been especially important to students who have an infinity for work supporting social justice and grassroots development. **“The course content is hugely useful in allowing me to push my practice as an artist in a nuanced and holistic way...there is a wide variety of course content that you can engage with to suit your interests, passions and career focus and therefore its engaging and helps develop skills useful to yourself and others.”** (Source: Focus group December 2021, BA students). **“Our practice and research are important, we are encouraged a lot to explore ourselves in the context of the wider world by staff and guests, as this is part of the learning experience and success”** (Source: Level 6 student, student survey, Moodle 2022).

Pushing the boundaries of academic practice further is supported through continued staff development. All staff are being encouraged to undertake the NSCD's Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Learning, and Teaching in Higher Education (PG Dip ALTHE), an internationally recognised professional development qualification, has a focus upon reflexive practice on teaching and supporting learners, programme development, curriculum and assessment design, and the context of academic framework regulations, inclusivity and research informed professional practice/teaching. Curriculum innovation from professional development supports the foundation of major assessment choices undertaken by the students and their action research projects have facilitated many innovative changes to the present curriculum. The course has also been popular with other conservatoire institutions. As well as curriculum content, we monitor and develop the quality assurance of all teaching and learning through NSCD's formal observation scheme¹¹. There is also opportunities throughout the year for staff to collaborate with industry professionals on artistic and other research projects. Seven staff continue to work in the industry as award winning

¹¹ HR: teaching staff peer observation policy

choreographers and producers in time taken for continued professional development. The school supporting staff with 10 days research and scholarly practice in its workload allocation enables us to be confident that delivery of curriculum is research informed and led (**Source: NSCD biannual peer observation scheme data 2019 & 2022**). On 12th & 13th January 2023, Staff (and students) disseminated some of this work alongside 96 delegates from the sector at the annual NSCD knowledge exchange conference (held at the school) and in April 2023 we will be holding a Black Women in leadership symposium as a national platform to network, celebrate and open up discourse. Curriculum innovation through action research forms a major strategic arm to the school's curriculum enhancement and feeds into the school's Research and scholarship strategy 2022-2027¹². Collaboration and dialogue with the sector and industry leads us to adopt changes and to think about graduate profiling. Students had been supportive of discussions to shift our focus from all product based output, summative assessment to proportional process driven assessment. In 2017, during the revision and validation of the course curriculum and structure, NSCD embedded continuous assessment as a key element of the formative and summative assessment process in nearly all modules. It was supported by industry professionals who confirm that the development of graduates to consider the artistic process as much as the product is important. This shift has developed student ownership of their work at another level, in the development of their physical and creative self. We have noted a much more nuanced development of professional skills (engagement, self-management, and meeting deadlines). As well as other professional attributes. It tests a student's ability to manage independent study tasks, ability to prepare self for next learning experience, additional influences (i.e. fitness and mindfulness), reflexivity and physical/emotional development. To support this journey all students learn further study related skills to support this including journal writing, critical thinking, observation and communication methodologies, useful tools to support growth and development. These were not traditionally considered in a dancers training. In a focus group (**Source: Focus group December 2021, BA students**) students confirmed that 'we continually evaluate the process of assessing continuous assessment with input from student body.' The positive impact of continuous assessment was repeated over and over by the focus group as being "is really useful for me as a learner, as it encourages me to be consistent with my engagement to learning. I feel it also gives students the best opportunity for progression of knowledge, taking experiences further in milestones". The learning, environment, and resources always play a key part in the positive feedback we receive from students. Annual investment in the infrastructure has supported this. NSCD always scores highly in all surveys around student support. In day two of the induction programme, all students take *Quickscan* which helps us to further distinguish students with learner support needs or disabilities. Our Student Review Board actively identifies areas for specific individualised support. The review board provides continued support for students to access education and remove the barriers that would prevent them from coming to school. During covid our well-being team managed to secure appointments with students (often 6 months before the NHS could). Students are encouraged to speak to student services at the earliest opportunity if they experience difficulties with their studies so that all options can be considered including in rare occasions intermitting studies. Over the years, students' engagement with student services¹³ has led to developments of further provision of in-house support including the appointment of a body work supervisor to support injury and referral processes. Injury is a natural occurrence in dance training, and this has significantly supported students arriving to study with pre-existing, undisclosed injuries (a commonality now). We also committed to recruiting a full-time student

¹² <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/research/>

¹³ student population data analysis – student dashboard (2017-2022)

support manager in 2021 alongside the existing in-house counselling team and counsellor with special knowledge of eating disorder and disordered eating (a legacy of the industry but not at NSCD). Our canteen provision works with student services to provide nutritionally balanced and environmentally sustainable food for the students and support from a Leverhulme grant enables us to provide means tested emergency support packages for free school meals, food vouchers, support for household bills and subsidised physiotherapy appointments to name just a few.

(Source: Leverhulme report and Student dashboard July 2022) Two-thirds of our student population receive a financial student support package from NSCD, ranging from £450-£1,530. In student surveys **(Sources: Student experience surveys, NSS, module evaluations and Student voice forums 2019-2022)** students continuously praise, the variety and ease in which they can access support (Academic, well-being, injury, learner support, English language support, finance support and contact with Leadership). They are appreciative of open door access where possible, and recognise that all environments support openness and where asking for help is seen as a strength not a weakness. **“The environment is accepting; open door (in person, email, online) policy; encourage you to ask for help, asking for help isn’t a weakness I am pushed and supported; inspired by the people around me...Students can access free counselling, support for dyslexia, etc. whenever they want.. Support feels really accessible within the school, there is not a tutor that isn’t as excited about your learning as you are.” (Sources: Level 4 and Level 5 student experience surveys 2022).** Students acknowledge the fantastic physical and learning resources they have and additional extras such as quiet spaces for reflection and extensive library resources to support their learning. NSCD’s library is considered by the sector as a national resource for dance, recently gifted the IM Marsh Collection from Liverpool John Moores University. Students since 2017 have said how important Moodle is to their studies, as a virtual learning environment, supporting resources and course management and developmental tasks. As well as our chosen medium for online marking and feedback. **“The studios are big clean spaces, there is a library full of recourses and an online media archive, useful to watch previous works/assessments and Moodle has resources tailored to your modules.. I can access support feedback and grades whenever I need to” (Source: NSS student survey comment level 6 student, 2022).**

The student voice and engagement with students has always been of paramount importance to the school in relation to making things happen and as a way of capturing opinions early and for noting trends. The QSR team noted student engagement as a strength **“NSCD actively engages students, individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience and has a clear and effective approach to such engagement. Students interviewed by the team were able to cite examples of improvements made consequent upon their feedback, and how NSCD positively acted upon suggestions made. These discussions also encompassed larger-scale changes to enhance student engagement, including the appointment of the Students’ Union President... There is student representation on Academic Board and the Learning, Teaching and Quality Assurance Committee. The team found that the methods used to individually engage students were appropriate, including through the use of informal feedback, module evaluations and student surveys. NSCD’s approach to the collective engagement of students was supported by its governance structures, primarily the Student Voice Forum which provides student-led discourse between student representatives, academic staff, and the professional services in relation to the quality of student’s educational experience.” (Source: QSR Report, January 2022).** It isn’t surprising that our scores **(Source: OfS workbook table 23: student voice)** are high and acknowledge this relationship. With scores over three years ranging between 83.3%-86.8% (83.1 average) being between 11.4%-18.3% (in year 4) above the benchmark value. Even in year 3 at the height of the most affected cohort during covid, our lowest score for student voice 73.8%, was still 12.5% above the benchmark value that year. Students will often cite what we do well in relation to the practical applications of teaching and learning and support. It is the opportunities which students’ value and remember the most and

where staff have been able to teach aspects of the curriculum, re-framed through public engagement and through an industry lens. The following narrative is drawn from multiple annual course monitoring report evaluations:

Students have enjoyed the off-site delivery of the Level 4 research module, which combines opportunities for the year group to study Site and Screen subject skills within the setting of the historic Temple Newsam in Leeds. This has resulted in a collaborative partnership between the City Council and NSCD. Level 5 students identified the support given through the curriculum to develop their research interests, offering flexibility in assessment to allow students to pursue their interests, there was positive feedback from the External Examiner on this and by students in module evaluations. The programme of extra-curricular sessions continued to be a strength at NSCD, with a number of sessions including Parkour, flying low, gaga techniques, acrobatics, Yoga and Jazz being delivered by suitably qualified returning graduates. Level 6 value the professional advice given by tutors and industry professionals.

Other curriculum approaches identified as positive by the students was: from level 4 in a number of modules we saw the use of directed study tasks embedded into the modules. The outcome of these group tasks was skills development in collaborative working practices, knowledge development and the embedding of technology into the heart of the curriculum as the students shared research and practice-based outcomes, posted on Moodle and discussed their findings in a Moodle forum. An innovative approach to the scheduling of the level 5 performance projects saw students experiencing their technique sessions as a part of the project rather than as something compartmentalised and separately assessed, reflecting a professional scenario. This supports the students to understand the requirements that will be placed on them as professionals, provides opportunities to network, offers exposure to the school, and stretches the students' abilities to combine their skills and work towards public performance. The level 6 research module mirrors the arts council artist development grants and strategic approach, culminating in a micro-tour of a collection of their works providing students with invaluable research-based performance experience mirroring real world applications. Performance exchanges with other institutions including **Rambert School** and **LCDS** and **Leeds Beckett University** are popular to apply knowledge exchange and skills transfer in other contexts. **(Source Annual course monitoring reports 2019, 2022, 2021 and 2022)**

NSCD prides itself in its facilities of 8 purpose built dance studios with media facilities, a comprehensive dance learning resource center with Library and computers, well-being and injury prevention/bodywork studio and gym, canteen, social spaces counselling suite, learner support office and an operating dance house theatre to showcase work alongside professional artists and companies. In the recent QSR, the panel toured the facilities and concluded **"NSCD has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience... The team's own observations led them to conclude that NSCD has highly specialised facilities and learning resources, and that developments, such as the investment in injury rehabilitation facilities, serve to ensure a high-quality academic experience."** NSCD uses its facilities and virtual learning environment well to support students to engage fully in all aspects of the learning process and as a means to access their marks and feedback. This is also enriched by the very social nature of learning in the creative paradigm in which NSCD operates in the studios and the opportunities students have to work with each other. Students at NSCD report excellent satisfaction with learning resources **(Source: OfS workbook table 20: learning resources)**, with the national benchmark for performing arts valued at 76.7%, NSCD over the 4 years has achieved 82.2%- 94.6%. This often achieves of 5%-14% above the yearly benchmark levels. Even in year 3 when NSCD achieved 82.2% the benchmark was 68.2, NSCD was 14.4% above the benchmark in

this area. Even during covid and covid affected years (years 2 & 3) NSCD's learning resources were measured positively by the students.

The intensity of our school week and the fact we connect so much with the industry is what makes the school a conservatoire in the eyes of the students and the sector. Students can spend up to 30 contact hours a week in the studio, plus have independent study, rehearsals and other projects on, in even and weekends, with spaces being open from 8.30am-9pm 7 days per week. This is alongside the academic underpinning of practice. Creation and performance sits at the heart of all of our programmes, where students have the opportunity to work in each year with a professional choreographer for 5 weeks on a project. Wrapping around this we may change the type of technique classes' students have leading up to and into each project to support the style of the project work. Project work supports students understanding of professional contexts including an accurate reflection of a true working day. By commissioning artists to work as co-authors with our students to create work and present this nationally and internationally, through our Riley Theatre programme and within other platforms, we are able to take the 'taste and brand' of NSCD to new audiences. Student work is important to the dance ecology in relation to audience interest. Our students performed to nearly 3000 people in 2021-2022, with additional workshops and wraparound learning activities with nearly 700 people. Live streaming of the undergraduate student work during covid (and afterwards), meant that our students learned different performance skills or online work and were connected to a global audience market.

NSCD recruits qualified and exceptional specialists in their field. All continue to produce work as artists for the sector, working alongside their job at NSCD. In addition to the 48 contracted staff (in academic and student support roles), on average NSCD employs approximately 68 guest artists to feed into the HE curriculum per year. In 2021/22, 28 of these were NSCD alumni, 23 were graduates of other conservatoires and 17 were graduates from other HEIs. We believe this supports the dance ecology and helps present students to see positive trajectory of employment opportunities. **(Source: Annual programme monitoring report 2022)** Employing graduates enables NSCD to further support and plan for their professional development. This enables our students to have a much closer alignment to the industry and facilitates better networking and collaborative practices. Students often take part in staff research projects too as co-producers of the work. Over the years we have invested in taking on contracted staff, moving away from purely guest input to deliver the curriculum, as some similar institutions do. We believe that this impacts positively on the quality assurance of all aspects of the student experience. This is reflected consistently in qualitative responses in student surveys **(Sources: NSCD student experience surveys and NSS survey 2018-2022)** where students favor the academic and pastoral support and access to tutors. There are excellent opportunities, where the curriculum is supported by guest input during the year. Students value greatly the input they get from guest artists, companies and employers. In the focus group **(Source: Focus group December 2021, BA students)**, students told us **"there is a good balance between our own research, professional connections to artists and development to our own practices that enable us to transfer all skills we have to new environments"**. For some students having guest input can facilitate quite specific transformation (a strategic aim to develop the individual). **"Work with different choreographers made me see more ways to work as a group, and also learned how to choreograph more efficiently and with clarity."** **(Source: Level 4 student experience survey 2021.)** In the recent QSR process the panel concluded that **"observations of teaching and learning sessions confirm that staff are appropriately qualified and highly skilled with expertise in theory, research, and practice. Sessions were interactive with individual and collective student engagement, and inclusive in using different teaching and learning approaches to meet diverse learning preferences."** This was supplemented by the views given by the students who

when “met by the team are very positive about the expertise of the teaching staff and agree that there are sufficient appropriately skilled and qualified staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Students confirmed remained current in terms of their continuing professional engagement with the sector.” (Source: QSR Report, January 2022) NSCD greatly values the impact and relationship it has with alumni, sector individuals, companies and organisations. Their feedback on our students, graduates and input into curriculum design / delivery is what supports us to be cutting edge and ahead of the game. The more voices and experiences brought into the school, the more common place, healthy and open, discussion becomes, this directly feeds into the work that is created and performed and then the layers of this are fed into society and back into the dance industry when the students become part of the work force. In many ways NSCD is ahead of the industry, its graduates that have had an inclusive and diverse learning experience and reaped the rewards and richness of this, are driving change in the professional dance settings. We continued to employ a wide range of national and international guests to support our excellent in-house training, to facilitate networking between students and professionals in Europe and beyond. As part of their experiences students have opportunities to connect and collaborate with other artists and institutions outside of the school. These have included: Level 6 students worked with Studio Wayne McGregor on Leeds Light Night celebrations in partnership with Leeds Dance Partnership; Level 4 & Level 6 students targeted new audiences with performances at Temple Newsam; Level 6 students participated in LC3 Exchange at the place in London; Level 6 students performed a revived performance of *Ocean* choreographed by Jamaal Burkmar (NSCD Graduate) at Move-it to over 1,000 people and at the Nadine Senior gala at the West Yorkshire Playhouse; Students have collaborated with Leeds conservatoire for Music and Leeds Arts University on a number of collaborative arts projects (live and through film); Students have undergone performance placements with Choreographer Gary Clark and with Opera North; At level 5 a new partnership was built with **Leeds dock authority**, with students presenting a series of pop-up works on cultural, political and environmental themes around the dock area as a festival. **(Source Annual course monitoring reports 2019, 2022, 2021 and 2022).**

Despite many other dance HE courses finding it a challenge to support the student experience from dance being a ‘hobby to a career’, When looking at NSCD’s student continuation and progression data over the last four years, we can see that we have always had excellent retention and progression and the 4 years of data tells us that we have achieved or exceeded the benchmark in years 2-4. Overall NSCD is 0.3% above the benchmark in this area and year data has improved steadily to 90% in year 4, being 1.4% above the current benchmark for continuation. We are conscious however that with such small student total numbers 10% is reflective of 2.7 students. Students who relate to this percentage of the data are those who intermit studies because of prior injury and our suggested rehabilitation, mental health support needs or family issues. In the last four years we haven’t received any student’s withdrawal or non-continuation because of the quality of provision of the course content or delivery. Students at NSCD often take longer to intermit as we attempt to provide support first and include wrap around alternative assessment choices to support completion of level first. 99% of students who intermit studies usually return to complete their studies with us within a 2-year period of intermission. Progression is important to NSCD to enable students to map a journey with the school through undergraduate study to the profession (either directly or via an extended arm through our postgraduate provision). In the last five years the average progression to study at postgraduate study of NSCD UGs is approximately 75% with 50% **(Source: NSCD admission data 2018-2022)** staying at NSCD to

continue this journey. The School has established a number of cultural partnerships¹⁴ locally, nationally and internationally, which support or provide employment opportunities. Partners include The Leeds Dance Partnership (founding membership),¹⁵ Leeds 2023,¹⁶ the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Children's Young People's Dance Network North (CYPDNN), Dance HE, 2faced, ACE Dance and Music, Company Chameleon, Phoenix Dance Theatre, Protein Dance, BlackBox Dance Company (Denmark), Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, Stopgap Dance Company, CandoCo, Tanzmainz (Germany), SEAD (Austria) and Mark Bruce Dance Company. NSCD has collaborative links with a wide range of institutions, including Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden, Fontys Academy for Creative Industries in Antwerp, University of Linz in Austria, Artichoke in Milan, Copenhagen Contemporary Dance School, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, School of the Arts (SOTA) and LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. The school offered study abroad opportunities at level 5 with institutions in Stavanger, Norway and Parts and Fonyts Amsterdam and Tilburg in the Netherlands, with an annual exchange of 4 students from HKAPA in Hong Kong to us in level 6, from 2020-present. **(Source Annual course monitoring reports 2019, 2022, 2021 and 2022)**. What we know from Facebook datasets is that our students' have confidence to see the world as potential employer with a significant number of graduates 35% working in countries which are not their home domicile after graduation.

NSCD prides itself in the quality of the taught experience. This is reflected in the 4 year data **(Source: OfS workbook table 11: the teaching on my course FT)** where 87.8% - 93.8% satisfaction. The data remains steady and is improving over the years, with no downward trend. In year 4 the score is 13.2% higher than the OfS benchmark and 8.1% higher than the subject benchmark average. There is little difference (only 1%) between the proportion of students reported to have disabilities and their non-disabled peers in relation to them excelling the national benchmark, who support NSCD to exceed the benchmark by more than 7%-8.5% against their benchmarked peers' responses in the sector. Academic support **(Source: OfS workbook table 17: academic support)** remains consistently high over the 4 years of data return, with an exception to the trend in year 2, due to the impact of covid. In a typical year the students rated the school 88%-92.5% which consistently exceeded the sector benchmark by between 10.3%-115.5 (in year 4). One of the recognised strengths of the subject is its face to face contact and its ability to draw people together in supportive environments and whilst NSCD did its very best to achieve this, students felt that online connection and lock down did not compare fully to being onsite and face to face. Year 2 was an unusually anomaly to the trend in the data over the 4 years and the most recent year (year 4) reflects a more accurate reflection of the excellence NSCD provides with a score of 91.3% (15.5% above the benchmark average) and 9.1% above the subject benchmark. In 2022 NSCD introduced some targeted support sessions (including peer mentors) for students we have identified as Quintile 1 & 2, although support is published and praised, some students least booking appointments and seeking early support are those in this characteristic. To date results are positive and we hope this will address the -5% differential in this area. In the 2021 NSS survey, 98% of students said they were able to contact staff when they needed to.

The School remains responsive and open to the shifting dance industry landscape. NSCD has encouraged students to have unlimited discovery and follow diverse pathways, to be curious in their enquiry and include the possibilities of broader cross arts skills and collaborations including dance photography and light design for dance. All of this has created a clear foundation and

¹⁴ <http://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/partners-collaborators/>

¹⁵ <http://www.cityofdance.co.uk/>

¹⁶ <http://leeds2023.co.uk/>

direction upon which future course development and revisions could take place in line with our future estates' development aspirations¹⁷

There are several other key strategies the school employs recognize how important it is to engage with students in their learning and support the facilitation of active learning experiences. Faculty meetings focus a lot on discourse around curriculum delivery and assessment design, much of which later informs programme developments. The introduction of NSCD-Moodle in 2017 and annual structural enhancement provides a technical foundation to facilitate student engagement, coming out of faculty discourse. To support these developments and to implement ideas around this discourse, we invested in some enhancement posts (Curriculum Leads in 2021) to oversee the following key areas of pedagogy, professional placement, assessment, guest input, research, visibility (verve) and creative response (from 2022).

NSCD has worked with colleagues in the sector through its membership with DanceHE to facilitate and host two conferences. Along with staff attending other conferences, these have no doubt had an immediate effect the resources to network and enhance the total learning experience. From 2023, NSCD has allocated w/c 9th January to a learning and teaching and knowledge exchange annual conference, for staff and students to attend to promote enhancement and innovation and to encourage discourse around transfer and adoption of effective practices and approaches to teaching, learning and artistic practice. We believe that this will support the sharing of good practice and allow us to develop another strand of our strategic aim, where students may be co-authors/producers in the creation and dissemination of new knowledge. This we hope will further raise NSCD's national and international teaching and learning profile and reputation¹⁸. In addition to this we are curating and international symposium around industry leadership within the sector (April 2023).

Covid for us, like many institutions offered significant challenges as a provider which traditionally focused upon the intensity of face-to-face delivery as its primary and expected mode of delivery. March 20th, 2020, is engraved in our minds and it was testimony to the passion and dedication of staff in all departments of the school who gave up well-earned spring vacations in order to transform the teaching spaces, create 'bubbles' for the student cohort and re-imagine the curriculum in small spaces and online as well as completely transform the assessments for the students. Finance and student support looked at additional hardship bursaries including helping students to upgrade their broadband in houses and offer laptop loans, so that online learning could take place. We ensured that during lockdown periods students has support packages, for those stranded in the UK over Christmas periods we ensured they had food vouchers and additional well-being support. When students were allowed to return the school put in place a hybrid of on-site and online learning with additional online classes downloaded onto Moodle for extra enrichment. This meant students could be taught in safer small cohorts of 15 who tested rigorously twice a week, with student services monitoring isolation. Students and staff received a weekly covid bulletin updating them on changes to regulations and rules and how the school would be adopting these. A weekly online Monday morning whole school zoom meeting led by the Vice Principal with input from department heads and the CEO enabled us to achieve as much consistency and quality to their education as we could. In the 2021 student experience survey taken by all Level 4 and Level

¹⁷ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/estates-development/>

¹⁸ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/about/vision-mission/>

5 students we added an additional question "Please include some comments on how you feel NSCD has responded to these unprecedented times during the Covid-19 pandemic". Student responses were excellent and focused upon telling how well we had done (and continue to do). Narrative drawn from a sample of 86 undergraduate responses (**Source: 2021 L4 and Level 5 Student experience surveys n=112**):

"The adaptation was very quick to the new format required in Covid-19. I felt like there was lots going on behind the scenes in keeping the school up and running. The modules were speedily adapted. Understanding that the global pandemic is unpredictable and unavoidable, I am grateful that NSCD has efficiently given its best in delivering all the modules online. Personally, I am driven with the given online classes despite being at a different side of the world. Nobody expected this to happen, and I think all the staff did a very good job under the circumstances. They were great in every sense. Classes were supportive and challenging at the same time. I am glad our education didn't stop even sometimes I felt like it was getting too much. It has supported both staff and students through the journey of bringing our training online. Online classes have been better than I thought. All teachers adapted well to online teaching and provided a well thought out term of classes. I think we had a satisfying schedule. I could really feel like the whole staff was putting 100% of themselves to provide the best support they could. There has been a really great effort from the school and the staff to keep us in training in some form and providing predominantly equal amounts of support despite us not being in the building. The best the school can do has been done. I feel honestly that they wanted to be 'ahead' of the other schools with their response to the virus and pushed us to become an online school, which at first didn't seem possible with such a hands-on course. NSCD really cares! I feel that when the teachers were at home although it wasn't the best experience it gave us a community feeling that we would all get through this together. I think NSCD did really well in managing the situation and giving us alternatives ways to learn. I struggled a lot with the Wi-Fi connection, but it wasn't a problem anymore after the few days of Zoom classes, as I got used to it. The risk assessment form and Moodle training about working from home was important to do and it was a good thing that they did this kind of thing, got us prepared and kept us safe. Forever grateful for the good energy from all teachers. The teacher's enthusiasm has gotten me through this last half term, although it was hard to keep momentum at certain times, I still felt supported by the school. 100% of staff had given great classes, providing student support, keeping us in the loop and learning, adapting as we go along. Managing to move courses online and tutors and staff being willing to help students across all aspects of the course is great. Obviously, some tutors were able to adapt and manage better than others, but all tutors seemed to be trying their best. It was also a comfort to see staff managing with the challenges of online learning as it made you feel less alone as a student. The speed at which the school was able to reorganise the course around the need for online and distance learning was impeccable. Tutors have always been available to contact if I had any concerns about assignments and I feel the school has offered a solid support foundation to enable us to continue our studies and training to the best of our ability, considering the circumstances. Modules were redesigned extremely quickly - and effectively - to suit the situation, and tutors accommodated confusion with understanding, working quickly to clear things up where necessary".

Given how students felt around what positive things NSCD did during the pandemic, it is not surprising that this same cohort most affected by the pandemic gave us such promising student satisfaction scores in 2022 (**Source: NSS student survey 2022**) of 92% overall satisfaction.

NSCD led the way in guiding CDD to create and present a no detriment policy to the University of Kent, which they adopted institution wide to ensure that measures were in place to protect the student outcome and experience during the covid years 2020 and 2021. There is no doubt that covid presented challenges to all institutions especially when we consider that the industry sector these students were working with and hoping to be employed, was closed for the whole duration of the pandemic, leaving students more fearful and anxious about their future than ever. The effect of covid has been noted on education. For the first time ever more than 59% of our new student body are assigned to the well-being team to support anxiety and for mental health related conditions from school or college pre-entry to university. During Covid there was a significant increase in the student population (**Source: Student dashboard data 2021**) meeting the counselling team for more than 6 appointments. The well-being team coped well in comparison with other regional HEIs.

All feedback received from students (**Sources: Student experience surveys and NSS 2022**) around Health & Wellbeing Support was positive, 32% of which were from a WP profile. **“The huge amount of support received from the school throughout all aspects of the academic work, financial work and wellbeing! Feel very supported and welcomed in the school, which is very warming, especially with my disabilities affecting me this year, in particular I feel I am able to find new ways of adapting movement and working with my body instead of forcing myself to injury.”** (BA Student experience survey, 2022). The Learner Support team feedback was also successful with 58% of users being from a WP profile. 54% of students who received financial support were from a WP profile. **“This massively impacted positively on my wellbeing as I wouldn’t be stressed about money or a part time job as I get anxious when I have to balance, especially with the intensity of the course and how I want to put 100% in. Overall, would be a massive help especially as I can’t rely on my parents and are independent.”** (BA student experience survey,). When the QAA team met students during the QSR, the focus group of students echoed much of the quality sentiment that the school felt it was achieving and the panel noted that **“the students met by the team agreed that NSCD has a strong and individualised approach which facilitates successful academic and professional outcomes, and were enthusiastic in their appreciation of teaching teams, and NSCD’s facilities and support systems, which they felt were both accessible and effective. In particular, support for English language was praised by those for whom it is not a first language, together with the personalised financial and organisational support for students, especially during the Covid19 pandemic. Students also confirmed both the formative and summative feedback on their submitted work was helpful in developing them academically and professionally and praised the different support with further progression to industry, including specifically the value of placement-based learning to their professional outcomes.”** (Source: QSR Report, January 2022)

There is clear parity around what NSCD feels are its areas of best practice, how quality as a measure is important in the sector, how this is assessed by our students and our regulator. During the QSR process the panel evidenced that: **“Students regard their courses as being of high-quality and value NSCD’s approach to designing and delivering courses which enable them to develop as both academic and technical experts. Staff are able to articulate what ‘high quality’ means in the context of NSCD ensuring through course design and delivery that course are of high quality through consistent and continued collaboration with external industry practitioners and relevant action research projects. Employers explained how they work with NSCD teams to ensure that the design and delivery of placements are of a high quality by providing students with productive placement opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes.”** When the inspection team observed ten classes in the undergraduate and CERT HE programmes they evaluated that: **“The teams’ observations of teaching provided evidence that teaching sessions are organised and well planned with clear shared objectives. They allow inclusive opportunities for student engagement and targeted ongoing feedback. Teachers are experts in their profession and able to contextualize design and delivery of sessions to support preferred individual and collective learning styles. Teaching is also supported by good facilities aligned to meet the requirements of the diverse forms of delivery involving theory and practice within a dance curriculum context.”** (Source: QSR report, January 2022). Students are aware and supporting our ability to guide their transition into the workplace. Over the last 7 years we have provided a number of opportunities through project work, internships, guest teaching for alumni to support enhancement of teaching and learning initiatives and through other departments such as marketing to promote visibility. Careful and strategic use of HEIF funding has facilitated a number of knowledge exchange projects, career development connections, co-produced work for students and professionals and support to manage how our assets support our graduate artists in the region with mentoring, rehearsal studio space and performance of their work (Riley Theatre). This alongside our Arts council supported work for graduates such as Northern connections¹⁹, Catapult²⁰ and Accelerate²¹ enable us to proactively share with our students how we can provide opportunities which *“nurture and profile some of the*

¹⁹ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/opportunities/northern-connections/>

²⁰ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/opportunities/catapult/>

²¹ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/opportunities/accelerate/>

most promising creative voices in the region". We also provide opportunities for students to enrich their activities through the partnership with Leeds Dance Partnership.

Qualitative data from the **NSS 2021 report** offer insight of the student opinions and thoughts around their experience and this data source has been chosen as it mirrors the student responses since 2019 and below is typical of what the student have to say in relation to the important themes; teachers and teaching, relationships and the positive social connections made to support learning, health and well-being support and the detail and depth of the curriculum:

- **You have a good connection with the staff in the whole of the conservatoire. Good facilities and quality of teaching. Facilities, communication with staff, physicality demanding, great location and house options, great city.**
- **Teaching staff are extremely hardworking, dedicated, and generous with their time and energy, are really encouraging and supportive. Caring nature of staff members and their ability to teach from the perspective of getting an academic perspective and professional stance, how what they're teaching will be useful in students' professional practice, and how they can apply things to other aspects of their lives to make for a rounded learning experience. Very physical and collaborative. High standard and excellent breadth of what is taught. Skilled teachers and musicians. Just that the staff here are committed to the success and growth of their students. And it truly feels like a family, I feel part of a wholesome community. I feel I have really grown in confidence during my time.**
- **There is a nice sense of community as a student body we know each other, there is respect and we have chances to work together in different projects. NSCD has a great community and I have been able to apply myself to the fullest.**
- **The support from the school surround mental health and guidance is excellent. There is a lot of support provided by the school in terms of well-being that goes over and beyond, and that has helped me immensely. The staff are very understanding and always offer support. The counsellors are very good and effective and over all the school do their absolute best to make sure the students are healthy and have access to resources they need. In terms of the training, it is a very high standard within which I have learnt a lot about my body and feel able to apply knowledge to other areas and use it in protecting my mental and physical bodies.**
- **There's always been clear a communication from all levels of the school.**
- **Staff at NSCD always do their best to create an environment in which we are encouraged to explore and experiment with the art form, as well as other disciplines of the student's individual interests. Teaching staff are open to questions and discussions may we have any ideas we'd like to explore and are knowledgeable in their respective specialist area.**
- **The course has been good at trying to adapt during COVID times. Staff try their very best to support students when needed. Sense of energy and team within the university is excellent.**
- **The option to do Research or a Teaching module was an effective way to steer personal interests. The staff are inspirational and hardworking. The Live Music Accompaniment for every class is amazing. The range of guest teachers was good. (Source: NSS survey 2021 – student comments engagement rate 81.1% $n=50$)**

3. Student Outcomes

There is no doubt that effective teaching, a supportive and thriving learning environment and community drives NSCD's success in student outcomes. This is evident in the manner in which the individual is considered in the planning, delivery and support mechanisms in place and the manner in which students can shape assignments which test learning outcomes through a person's strengths and career relevance. Other initiatives drive a strong sense of a personalised learning experience and successful outcome and for NSCD this has been to de-colonise its curriculum embracing of gender fluidity in opening out all gendered vocabulary to all or removing it completely and allowing students to shape assignments with encouragement to be inclusive of cultural and social contexts personal to individuals and groups. NSCD believes that the best art work reflect the people doing it and living it. Formative and summative assessment relevant and useful for feeding forward and progression sits at the heart of curriculum design, with a wide range of assessment methods and choices which support industry application. NSCD knows that students graduate with

a strong understanding of the subject material and confidence to retain and apply that in a relevant way in their lives and work.

Progression and retention is high at NSCD and this includes opening up our offer and making spaces for those who would not have traditionally made it into the school. The course portfolio design is structured in a manner to promote ease of access and progression. In 2018 and we introduced a CERT HE in Contemporary Dance, followed by the CERT HE in Cultural Dance forms (in 2021) as we noted in our practical application process there were applicants who weren't quite ready for the complexity of our degree and need a more intense focus upon just technique and creativity. These versions of level 4 programmes has proved very successful. Of the 27 on average CERT HE students **(Source University of Kent Board of Examinations completion data 2018-2022)** 98% progress to further study, training or work. Approximately 75% of these stay on to continue their journey in either Level 4 or Level 5 of the degree at NSCD or progress to other conservatoires to carry on undergraduate study **(Sources: NSCD Exit interviews and Admissions data 2018-2022).**

NSCD checks whether academic standards are being achieved by considering student performance at half termly Student Review Boards (SRBs) and at individual student level through the marking of assessed work and confirming results at a board of examiners. University of Kent policies and procedures are in place to ensure assessment is secure. All work is either submitted through Moodle (Turnitin submission) or seen live (as in performances, creative work and teaching/performance placements). All work seen live is recorded and later uploaded onto the NSCD media archive to support formative feed forward opportunities. Academic standards are checked at modular level, prior to the submission of marks by module leaders who complete a module assessment board (MAB) where they check that marks have been entered onto the system correctly and confirm that marks are correct. At module level, NSCD has an excellent system for appointing double markers and panel marking in the assessment process, the moderation process²², external examiners visits and review of work at institution level through the Annual Programme/Course Monitoring reports,²³ which analyse module performance, feedback, progression, and success. Further acknowledgement of academic standards come through the evaluation of results data, retention, employment statistics, and student and industry feedback. Whilst there is still some work to do with students around their perception around assessment and feedback **(Source: Ofs workbook table 14: assessment and feedback)** we have target strategies in place. Our issues like many creative subjects surround the personal nature and subjectivity of the arts. We are working with students embrace objectivity through the criteria (available from September) and the double marking and panel marking helps to remove any subjectivity. We are also encouraging students to become co-authors in the criteria to support this. We truly believe that this will significant make a difference in two areas of the survey (Marking being fair and criteria available in advance), thus improving the overall score in general. We did note in year 2 this was the lowest it has been but know that this was covid year where students were nervously anxious about a predicted impact on their achievement and results, there were lots of unknowns at this time. We did however re-do a mirror version of the NSS in June 2020 for level 6 (76% engaged the same as the NSS) and interestingly the score for assessment and feedback scored (85%, +34% on their NSS scoring of the same question.) We know there is a natural correlation between when the NSS is completed and the height of the level 6 research projects (dissertations) happening which has a biased influence on student reporting, so another strategy we are putting in

²² See assessment overview document <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/policies-and-procedures/>

²³ See document 003 annual programme/course monitoring reports 2016-2021

place is more formative feedback loop during this period for level 6. We do know that students value the input and support of staff, the passion and time staff give to students and their knowledge and expertise which is shared freely (identified in other questions). Although the score of 65.8% (against the benchmark of 70.6, -4.6%) this is unusual in the context of the rest of the scores and overall satisfaction scoring and we are very confident this will change.

Engagement with surveys is important to NSCD. These are important feedback loops for us to evaluate quality and standards. Engagement with the NSS (**Source: OfS workbook table 20 engagement statistics**) and our own end of year student experience surveys (a mirror of the NSS) is excellent from 76% (the lowest during covid lock down year) to a more usual 95.8% engagement in year 4 (a more typical trend year). Strong engagement with the surveys, enables us to believe that what the students say, is a more accurate picture of the cohort's beliefs. (**Sources: NSS survey data 2018-2022**) Analysis and reporting to academic board and the governors of the data over five years, has shown that NSCD in the areas of **teaching, academic support, learning resources, students voice and overall satisfaction** have always been above the sector benchmark. Scores averaging 85%+ in all areas in all years. The only area where NSCD (like all creative subjects in the sector) where we are slightly underperforming (**Source: OfS workbook table 14: assessment, and feedback**) is assessment and feedback on the NSS. This area fluctuates the most according to the cohort and through focus groups with students (level 5 and Level 6) in 2020 and 2021, we have been able to gain understanding as to the possible reasons for this. Students have told us that "art is subjective and shouldn't be marked", they have talked openly around their difficulties to understand "accepting a mark" when so much of themselves goes into the work (interests and autobiographical elements). What we know is that where much of their personality, self and by default using their body as the tool for communication, it is difficult for the students to depersonalise the mark achieved, and even though students were receiving excellent grades of for example 68-75, they were disappointed with this mark. As a strategy we are working with students in discourse and dialogue around expectation to achieve marks of 80-100 and this is shifting slowly and positively in the right direction. Also focus groups did compliment the feedback. They do recognise that feedback is good and helps them to develop and grow and they did recognise the support staff give them during the assessment process. NSCD will continue to build strategies to support students to depersonalise this, one strategy we are piloting with level 5 and 6 is for the students (as a cohort) to co-author the assessment criteria for creative practice and research project modules (then approved by Learning and Teaching committee). Early signs are positive as it looks like students are embodying the criteria "their criteria" into the whole assessment process. We are also using peer assessment in the formative stages of the assessment and feedback process. In 2022 NSCD has also been building strategies into all modules to target specific elements of the NSS survey e.g. 'criteria available in advance' by ensuring students understand the purpose of module guides (available in September), containing all assessment items and criteria (centre written in the first instance), with milestone references to the criteria in class during the assessment process. We realise that that are practical things we can do in the curriculum to enable students to have something concrete to draw upon in evaluation surveys. What we also note is that in the QSR the panel having scrutinised over 1,114 pieces of student assessed work, including grades and feedback, concluded: **"Assessed student work demonstrates that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the relevant threshold standards have been met. Therefore, based on their scrutiny of the evidence provided, the team concludes that this Core practice is met."** And that **"Assessed student work confirms that assessment tasks and linked criteria provided students with the opportunity to achieve at levels beyond threshold. The team found that students were achieving beyond threshold levels and in line with and beyond levels achieved within other**

higher education providers.” The QSR panel met a group of 20 students representing all courses and evidenced that “Students confirmed that they found the assessment and classification processes to be reliable, fair and transparent. Staff who the team met demonstrated that they fully understand the requirements for the use of external expertise, and the assessment and classification processes. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met”. (Source: QSR report, January 2022).

NSCD values highly its engagement with External examiners, who through their attendance on-site, get to see practical work, view written work, grades, and feedback online through NSCD-Moodle and listen to the marking discussion and moderation process by the panel of markers or first and second markers. Their report and attendance at Board of Examiners, confirm that academic standards are set and achieved. Their reports and our responses are published alongside appropriate actions. Each year the examiners comment on the high quality of the work seen, how rigorous the assessment process is and how individualised the feedback is to support growth and progression. As critical friend, the external examiners support NSCD with suggestions and help us to identify areas for enhancement for example in 2021 we piloted two feedback strategies written online and online recorded feedback through Moodle, this has proved very successful and facilitated learners to listen to feedback in a way which supports their learner preference and then see the mark published one week later. Actions drawn from the External Examiners report are inputted into the school action plan, which is also included in the annual programme monitoring reports. All of this is considered by NSCD, set in accordance with the FQHE and is comparable with other UK HEPs (especially looking at national benchmarks), and whether student achievement is comparable with other institutions. External examiner reports, our responses, ACMR/APMR and school action plans are available on Moodle (Student infobase) for all students to read during the year. NSCD encourages its staff to become External Examiners, and this facilitates the sharing of practice arising from this experience through discussion sessions held during points of the year. Suggestions from discussions have helped inform policy and process developments. There are currently 3 members of NSCD staff who are external examiners or programme development consultants, supporting professional development and curriculum enhancement.

Overall, NSCD student completion data (**Source: OfS Table 5 TEF Data table full-time completion**) displays an excellent upward trend in the achievement and outcomes of its students. As a usual norm given the rate of intermission because of positive injury prevention interventions or students pausing study because of being offered significant contracts with the profession or due to family circumstance, we feel that 88.8% represents excellence in the sector of the creative and performing arts, particularly against those courses not using bodies as a primary learning tool. A small increase in completion data in years 2-4 has been down to the introduction of a 15 and 30 credit professional placement module, enabling students to complete credits through professional work and learning contracts, supported by assessment from NSCD tutors, for students offered jobs in terms 2 and 3 of their final year (who would have usually intermitted or left study). Many of our student body are affected by lack of maintenance support and this was particularly relevant to our European student in the last four years. Financial troubles in countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece has most influenced non completion (-6.1% differential – non UK). NSCD has excellent student support measures in place and that supports limited differential in the data between those students’ taking intermission or not completing with disabilities and those who identify without. In relation to successful outcome of those completing the programme, 2022 student outcome data (**Source University of Kent, Board of Examiners data**) is a fair and accurate representation of the student successes we see from the undergraduate courses. We should note that to NSCD the

CERT HE programmes are a qualification in their own right and validated as such. We are not sure these have been included in the OfS workbook as such. We state this as students completing this course then apply for undergraduate study again either at NSCD, another conservatoire (namely LCDS, Trinity Laban or Rambert school) or on occasion another university, there is no direct continuation or progression, students have to re-apply for study onto the degree at either level 4 or level 5 direct entry. This is seen by students as a positive as 25% of CERT HE students like to have the choice to study in Leeds and London.

Table 1 & 2 Student success 2022 (Source: UoK board of examiners results, July 2022)

CERT HE programmes: (93% of cohort were UK domicile, 40% of cohort were WP category)

	Completed with Distinction	Completed with Merit	Completed with Pass	Failed	Withdrew from the programme
CERT HE	62%	27%			
WP category alone	64%	27%			

BA Degree: n=49 (67% of cohort were UK domicile, 42% of cohort were WP category)

	Completed with a 2:1 or above honours	Completed with 2:2	Completed with 3rd class	Failed	Withdrew from the programme
BA Hons	94%*				
WP category alone	64%	27%			

* Please note that high% due to UoK no detriment policy and preponderance applied at the board

Student achievement at NSCD remains consistently high in 2022 94% of students graduated with a 2:1 or above. Although this was particularly high due to UoK no detriment policy being enforce, it is not uncommon for this to average at 78% (**Source: UoK board of examiners data 2018-2022**). Long discussion is had at board of examiners around this and all panel members (UoK, NSCD and external examiners) agree that it is because of the high calibre of practical student work being assessed.

In a recent survey (**Source: Level 6 student skills development survey January 2022,**) students were asked to rank and identify skills which they feel have been developed as part of the course. They were asked to choose the skill, if they felt they had developed it but only if its development had been noted in feedback. 100% of students noted critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving and confidence with practice research as key skills development. This was shortly followed by 95% acknowledging improved academic writing and referencing. Students talk openly around the contexts in which these skills can be applied and themes emerging focus upon being able to project manage, apply for funding, talk openly about theirs and others work and formulate positive responses to critical debate on social media. In relation to the practical work, students also identified that other skills such as time management, communication, working with others, confidence, networking ability and empathy for others (especially when problem solving and team working) have developed, been learned or improved and is important to them. Curious, confident, eager, reflective and socially aware are five holistic traits that NSCD students named as being their identity, emerging from their studies. When asked about how different they are as human beings in relation to the value of the HE experience, students feedback around feeling “independent, more mature, less anxious than school, being more confident to take creative risks, having authenticity in what they want to find out and explore, be able to support others, make opportunities happen and be kinder, more open.” (**Source: Student exit surveys 2019-2022**).

Each week NSCD publishes an opportunities newsletter to students and alumni and this inspires students and graduates to view possibilities in the wider world, early networking and collaboration, as well as auditions and job opportunities. To fully understand how UG students feel the course

prepares then for employment or further study. The comparison of data and narrative from **(Sources: Board of Examiners student results 2019-2022, Annual Programme monitoring reports 2028-2022, samples of student feedback analysed by QAA in QSR 2022 and student reflection focus group December 2021, BA students)** tells us that students are excelling in their outcomes. We follow data produced by <https://discoveruni.gov.uk/> NSCD students over the last five years have shown that their appetite leads them onto higher postgraduate study predominately on one of four PG courses at NSCD (50% of level 6 graduates in 2022) or to other conservatoires such as LSCD, Trinity Laban or Rambert School. As a new provider we have not yet seen enough data from student outcomes surveys. Recent data shows that 84% of our graduates are in PG study or working in the dance industry. Usually 10% of NSCD graduates **(Source: Student exit surveys 2019-2022)** are setting themselves up as self-employed dance artists or working with existing well-known companies. Over the last 5 years, NSCD graduates have received more than £3.5 million of successful project grant funding **(Source: ACE financial reports 2019-2022)**. The curriculum is delivered always in a work related or work-based setting. Students and employers tell us that this makes the transition easy into employment settings as the contexts are familiar. The extra-curricular work students engage with is connected to themes in the professional setting and workplace, for knowledge and skills transference. Student success rate at the school has always been excellent. This is often due to the very close alignment and input we have from the industry supporting learning and employment opportunities. External examiners and sector input always comment upon the high calibre and quality of the student work. On many occasions it has been noted that the level 6 work is of Master's quality **(Sources: NSCD Annual monitoring reports 2016-2022, External examiner reports (2017-2022))** The exit velocity of the cert HE programmes and the fact that so many stay on in their journey at NSCD is also a contributing factor to the successful outcomes. Student success in all its forms is of paramount importance to the school, it is reflected in the current and future Key Performance indicators (KPIs), where their achievement are considered by the leadership team with information provided to the academic board and board of governors.

NSCD strives to ensure students understand the fundamentals that underpin their chosen professions. Students with a WP profile have retained and progressed at the same rate as all other UK domicile students, with degree outcomes as well evenly awarded across the student characteristics. We are continuing to work with an external organisation (SEER) around accurate capture and research into the longitudinal journey of our graduates and we expect this to present an absolute picture by 2025. Given the very nature of the performance portfolio career this is sometimes challenging to collect accurately at one given moment. However we have really tried to capture this through a number of methods. We ask students to complete an exit survey in their last week with us, through a forum on our VLE system. Approximately 96% of students have engaged with this in the last 3 years. From those who completed the exit surveys we can see that 90% of UG's intend to continue dance study or work in the dance industry. Our BCI return data and the fact that many of our UG stay with us to PG level study means we can capture the live destinations of graduates as they get offered work, over a longer window of opportunity. This is excellent. Each January (since 2017) we do a sweep of all social media platforms including Facebook, linked in and Instagram to see what graduates of the July and September exam boards say they are doing. 89% of graduates enter into significant professional roles in the dance profession six months after graduation. We know this increases due to positive announcement of arts funding during the financial year between February and April (looking at updates on posts). With more opportunity comes employment. Looking back from 2017-2021 we can see that 70% of graduates enter a freelance role at some point in their early careers. There is also a trend for students to set up

companies in arts such as yoga, Pilates and life coaching and this trend ties into the covid period and the need to look for alternative routes to employment and also as a mirror which relates to the social consciousness of our graduates to make a difference. A number of graduates have stayed in Leeds over recent years, Leeds dance ecology is part of a thriving arts and cultural sector which allows NSCD graduates to remain in the city and grow the vision. NSCD is a fundamental resource for supplying the region with teachers and artists. We are presently working ACE to determine the best way in which the school can access how many of its graduates have achieved successful grants from ACE. From graduate interactions and early conversations with ACE, we hypothetically know that this is significant. Through enhanced professional relationships as 'partnerships' we have been able to imagine and secure an infrastructure of peers willing to springboard our graduates into the profession focusing on artist development which seeks to empower artist on the cusp of reaching wider audiences to expand their creative and touring possibilities. Within each of our relationships with organisations, it enables us to respond to the challenges and possibilities of current sector scenarios, situations and crisis, having experienced the pandemic which remains part of the thinking and planning. By partnering with others in the sector **Serendipity, Dance City, Dance Xchange, Spin Arts, Akram Khan, Hofesh Shechter, Gateway studios**, we provide continued meaningful artist development support beyond the day to day. The benefit to NSCD is in the offer we can make to graduates. The diversity of the partnerships support with the intention that every student will connect to others with whom they can relate. NSCD has a unique position in the sector and therefore impact the dance ecology nationally. Leeds is a cultural destination as identified by Leeds City Council, Leeds 2023 and Welcome to Yorkshire, creates opportunities, supports retention, quality of life and is an accessible centre to work. As a centralised voice our graduates feed more than dance activity into the sector by supporting and profiling arts and culture locally nationally and internationally. As they create and venture into the wider world of employment they continue to impact and influence: **(source: Annual programme monitoring report 2021)**

- **Research and creation**, dancers are working more broadly and deeply for the benefit of themselves, the wider arts and culture sector, securing new commissions and new income
- NSCD graduates as sole traders and self-employed artists and small company collectives, we have supported them in our careers programme to develop new skills including **new fundraising knowledge, new contacts, and opportunities; new ways to work digitally**; and secured additional income and commissions. **(Source: Arts Council England funding success publications 2019-2022)**
- The profile of NSCD graduates is scaling up. People around the UK and from across the globe have been able **to witness our graduates online and through organised overseas visits**.
- **Diversity in dance** amongst our cohort and graduate connected projects is improving. Extra efforts have been made to recruit people from these backgrounds, and tailor support effectively.

Overall satisfaction of our degree in the NSS survey **(Sources: NSS survey data 2018-2022)** and in internal NSCD student experience surveys **(Sources: NSCD student experience survey data 2018-2022)** is consistently high over the last five years ranging from 84%-92%. 92% upward trend in year 4. Given the critical culture that dancers work within, we are pleased with these results and when compared with other organisations in the sector, we perform very well. Each year since 2017 the Vice Principal has compared the NSS data **(Source: Unistats published annual data 2017-present)** of 15 similar arts organisations (which have dance courses, including own data against average CDD scores for the eight collective schools in that umbrella). Each year in this comparison, NSCD if its own data counted alone, we would be in the top 5 institutions. Over the years NSCD has consistently achieved higher average scores than CDD averages, and this was certainly a factor to decide to be an independent organisation once again.

In November 2021, reflected on our students during work placement, saying **“their ability to thrive in what is a highly professional setting and contribute to our company’s processes of creation is, I believe, testament to the depth of training and professionally relevant education that they are receiving at NSCD. Its graduates are dynamic, strong and driven. There are many examples of the influence that its alumni have had within the professional dance sector, not only as performers but also as leaders, makers and managers. Arts professionals who have come into the industry and been able to function within what can often be a challenging and demanding professional environment, bringing individuality and a drive that can eventually bring about change and growth... I would suggest a clear recommendation with regard to the formative arts education at NSCD that has at its roots respect for the voice and determining ongoing experience of the individual.”** (source: external testimonial November 2021) Holstebro Dance company Director also echoes this saying **“The students of NSCD have always come to Holstebro with a strong technical foundation and work ethic, eager to gain a thorough understanding of the professional field of dance...The students have always been well equipped with the understanding of the diversity that working in this field entails and have hereto been well equipped to meet these challenges. We find NSCD’s ability to achieve this to be unique to them and also the school’s greatest strength.”** (Source: Letter to the school dated 2021) and Director of 2faced dance company reminds us of our distinctiveness as an organisation **“NSCD provides an exceptional and nurturing training programme for young people wishing to enter the sector. The training produces not just fantastic dancers but well-rounded individuals who are polite, vocal, and hard working. They have managed to distinguish themselves from other organisations by being able to offer extensive opportunities for their students to have real work opportunities, work with leading international and national artists and provide further opportunities for development. NSCD understands that the dance sector has shifted and changed and has responded brilliantly by diversifying their courses, teaching and programmes. This enables students to be better prepared for entering the world of work.”**

The ambition of the organisation continues to impact community and sector developments as our graduates engage and drive forward future strategic vision of other institutions, NSCD and the sector. The courage and determination of our students and graduates are aligned with the values of the organisation, evidenced and nurtured to their fullest potential through inspired action. Graduates are featured well in publications²⁴ and NSCD is in the process of updating its alumni pages on our website²⁵ We have an even stronger infrastructure to support the delivery of students working with a clear vision, everyone knowing we are driven by our purpose and vision for the future to represent and empower students of the now, the future and a stronghold for our graduates. Motivation alone is not enough, our framework which can withstand external knocks and become inherently stronger over time. Our industry remains influenced and impacted by and with our young people educated through excellent principles and values.

4. References

OFS Workbook data tables / NSCD admissions data (applications and enrolments 2018-2022 / Employer registration endorsement letters (September 2021) / NSS Student data dashboard 2018-2022 data and comments / HESA Data set 2021 / Student focus group December 2021 (BA students attended) / NSCD BCI returns 2019-2022 / Staff written testimonials and reflections as part of the PGALTHE course / NSCD Audition feedback from applicants’ 2022 entry.
Level 4 and Level 5 student experience surveys (2018-2022) / NSCD policies, NSCD strategic vision, mission and plan, student charter / Student Voice forum meetings minutes and agendas 2019-2022 / University of Kent validation reports 2018.2020 / WhatsApp student group messages / Moodle survey targeting education gain questions (December 2022 = 13 responded) / NSCD student dashboard 2018-2022 / NSCD Annual monitoring reports 2018-2022. / QAA Quality Standards review final report (January 2022) / UoK Board of Examiners results (July 2022.)

²⁴ See One Dance UK’s One: The One Dance UK Magazine, issue 11, Autumn 2021 (page 41.)

²⁵ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/alumni/>