

1. Provider Context

1. The City of Sunderland College, trading as Education Partnership North East is a large provider of further and higher education and skills in the North East of England. Education Partnership North East includes Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form and Northumberland College and was formed in March 2019 following the merger of City of Sunderland College with Hartlepool Sixth Form in 2017 and with Northumberland College in 2019. This new entity was branded Education Partnership North East (EPNE) and provides strategic oversight, while at the local level each delivery location retains the original college name. The College comprises of City of Sunderland College (3 campuses), Hartlepool Sixth Form (1 campus) and Northumberland College (3 campuses). Higher education is taught across the campuses. In this submission EPNE will be referred to as the College.

1.1 The College Vision and Strategic Aims

2. The College's vision is to place "Excellence at the heart of everything we do." The vision, strategic plan, goals, and professional values are at the forefront of the College's higher education provision. The 5 strategic goals are:
 - Goal 1: Shape and evolve a career focused curriculum
 - Goal 2: Create outstanding learning opportunities for our students
 - Goal 3: Unite our culture and empower our people
 - Goal 4: Strengthen our financial resilience and invest in our resources
 - Goal 5: Engage locally, regionally, and nationally and build our reputation.
3. The College operates in challenging socio-economic contexts, and this does not deter from an ambitious vision for all our HE provision and students. A coherent and employer led curriculum strategy is essential to the College's Strategic Plan 2019-2026 and is underpinned by our strategic goal 1 plan which sets out 4 clear and ambitious statements defining the College's high level broad and balanced curriculum intent.
 - **Innovative:** An innovative, quality, careers focused curriculum that supports student and College success.
 - **Inclusive:** Providing clear progression pathways including for the most disadvantaged, to ensure all our students can succeed in life and employment.
 - **Relevant:** Appropriately informed by market intelligence, responsive and relevant to the key regional and national markets.
 - **Coherent:** Meticulously planned and sequenced logically to develop students' long-term knowledge and skills development.
4. The strategic Higher Education Future Plan 2022-26 [001] sits below the main College's strategic plan. The plan sets out our strategic approach for HE across the College in shaping and evolving a well-designed HE technical skills focused curriculum, aligned to career progression and economic development. It has four aims:
 1. Relevant and innovative curriculum planning and design
 2. Excellence in teaching, learning, assessment, and support
 3. Accessibility and widening participation
 4. Higher education marketing presence and visibility for growth.
5. The College delivers and develops its higher-level qualifications to meet the demands of the local and regional economy including those priority areas set out by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the North East LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership), evidenced through a robust curriculum planning process and planning documents. The higher-level qualifications, including

higher apprenticeships provide progression routes into HE, that are targeted towards students who intend to advance their qualifications and careers and prefer to remain in the local area to study. Important to the approach and essential for HE within our College setting, is that the College has clear curriculum progression pathways from Entry to Level 5 and 6 where appropriate. This provides clear routes to HE for our students and raises aspirations. Admissions data shows that 50% of 2021 entrants were internal students, increasing to 73% for 2022 entry. [002].

1.2 Impact of Mergers

6. The strategic decision to merge with Hartlepool Sixth Form in 2017 and Northumberland College 2019 was fully supported by the FE Commissioner and local and regional stakeholders. Both were failing colleges from a financial, cultural, and quality perspective. The reasons for merger were part of a clear strategy to create a regional college group, a coherent education and skills approach across FE and HE, serving our local communities across the North East. Since merger, significant improvements can be evidenced through the FE Commissioner diagnostic assessment report, December 2020 [003]. A full endorsement of the College's approach was given, with no recommendations. It was noted that *"the board and senior leadership team provide strong leadership and communicate a clear vision for the group. All elements of the City of Sunderland College are fully focussed on ensuring quality in teaching, learning and assessment and ensure learners can participate fully and optimise life chances. Members of the board are skilled and provide support and scrutiny to leaders. The board and senior leadership team (SLT) share the same vision and educational goals"* An Ofsted monitoring visit in December 2021 noted significant progress had been made in what previously had been the requires improvement colleges of Hartlepool Sixth Form and Northumberland College. [004] To further highlight the level of improvements the College has gone through, it was graded Good overall, with Outstanding for Personal Development in a full Ofsted inspection, May 22 [005]. Where it is appreciated the FE Commissioner and Ofsted would have had an FE focus, this clear strategic ambition, vision to strive for excellence, leader, academic staff, and governor skills, benefit all our students HE, FE and apprentices including higher apprentices. College leaders, governors and academic programme leaders are clear on all HE areas for improvement, including the FT student outcome measures (1250 students) over the last 4 years of cumulative data, including pre and post-merger data.
7. At the point of merger in 2017, Hartlepool Sixth Form had a small amount of HE provision, 1 foundation degree through a franchised arrangement, and 1 non-prescribed programme at level 4 and above (less than 15 students). At the point of merger in 2019, Northumberland College had over 250 students studying at level 4 and above, several higher national programmes, foundation degrees, top up degree programmes, teacher education provision and some non-prescribed programmes at level 4 and above.
8. Prior to the merger and for a brief period post mergers Hartlepool and Northumberland's data were submitted in separate ILRs (Individualised Learner Record) to the data for City of Sunderland College.
9. The College recognised and understood some inconsistencies due to merger and made bold, swift decisions to stop some provision. Inconsistencies included, small class sizes detrimental to the students' learning experience and some poor teaching and learning. A review was undertaken to assess the quality, the learning experience, and the viability of each HE programme. As a result, the portfolio was rationalised to ensure that a high-quality learning experience was provided across each campus. This resulted in the removal of HE at Hartlepool Sixth Form as the programme offer did not provide the learning opportunities expected, with both programmes taught out within 1 year of the merger. Hartlepool has started to offer a small

number of adult and HE programmes from September 2020, following appropriate quality assurance processes. This only includes one higher national certificate in sport which was introduced following feedback from stakeholders.

10. The review at Northumberland College, resulted in the removal of programmes which had low student numbers which did not provide appropriate learning opportunities aligned to studying at level 4 and above. For example, Higher national certificates in Hospitality Management, Policing, Photography and Fashion and Textiles all had less than 5 students. Further work in 2019/20 and 2020/21 saw the rewriting of Land-Based and Early Years foundation degrees to improve the curriculum content and learning experience. This work is ongoing with the rewriting of Land-Based degree top up programmes in 2022/23 to provide a better experience for students progressing from the new foundation degrees.
11. A full strategic review was undertaken in respect of partnerships, as the mergers resulted in the College working with four universities, Pearson, and a range of awarding bodies for non-prescribed HE. The decision was made to reduce the number of partner universities to two and following approval by the Executive Leadership Team the programmes with Newcastle University and University of Huddersfield were moved to teach out. This has allowed for the creation of clearer progression pathways for example from foundation degrees to top up degrees with the same university. The last recruitment at Northumberland was September 2020 and most students had completed by summer 2022. The remaining students with deferred assessments are being supported to achieve during the academic year 2022/23.
12. The College had a Quality and standards review monitoring visit in December 2019, closely after the merger with Northumberland College, when it was continuing to review and combine processes and policies to ensure a consistent approach across all campuses. The College did not meet the judgment regarding a reliable, fair, and inclusive admissions system. No admission appeals had been received regarding admissions, however in its infancy there were inconsistencies across the merged colleges in procedures. Immediate actions were taken, which included a changed approach to admissions to ensure parity for applicants; staff received training in unconscious bias and training on how to better conduct interviews. A standardised interview rubric was implemented to support application decisions and all interview records were recorded on one internal system. This has ensured that application decisions are now fair, inclusive, timely, consistent across the College group and there have been no admission decision appeals in the subsequent period. In 2021/22 Wylie and Bisset, as part of an internal audit review [006], looked to provide additional assurance over areas such as policies and procedures for application, selection, and admission for HE courses, as well as the suitability determined whether there are any barriers to entry for prospective students. A strong level of assurance was provided with no recommendations and 9 good practice points [006]. For example, from the report *"We assessed the admissions methods used by the Group and benchmarked these against a number of our other educational clients within our client base. We found that the methods used by the Group reflects best practice across the sector."*

1.3 Size and Shape of the College's Provision

13. HE students make up 7% of the total student population of the College. Whilst this is a small population, the College has made significant £60m investments in new building assets and facilities over the last six years, to support student development and ensure excellent learning resources, of which our HE students have benefited. This has included investing in the digital infrastructure to improve connectivity. This investment has led to further innovation and the continual development of excellent learning technologies. The feedback on Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) completed in 2021/22 [007] showed overall high levels of satisfaction (4.43) for access to resources that meet learning needs (based on a Likert scale of 1 strongly

disagree and 5 strongly agree). Feedback shows excellence for Construction (4.76), Creative & Digital (4.66) and Education Care (4.64). Student experience measure on learning resources, demonstrates a 4-year positive trajectory for full time students (10.5% increase from the earliest year 1 to the most recent year 4) and part time (16.6% increase from earliest to most recent). Some specific HE relevant examples include:

- HE Engineering students have benefitted from investment as part of the North East Institute of Technology. Students have access to industry standard robot cells, programme logic controllers with simulation, 3D scanning software, 3D solid modelling software and CNC (Computer Numerical Control) programming software. Lecturers plan and deliver sessions utilising the equipment with students having access to all resources. This is supported by the subject specific NSS data with 88.44% satisfaction for 30 FT Engineering students (response rate 81.8%) +18.2% above the provider benchmark.
- HE students in the Faculty of Digital and Creative have benefited from well designed and useful resources to develop the skills they need for industry. Examples include the Digital and Arts Academy equipped with a commercial theatre, recording studios, performance studios, art studios and new investment in 2021 within the computing team resulting in a nationally recognised immersive digital hub and newly equipped computing suites. The creative arts and design students are positive about learning resources, at 77.8% (69.6% response rate) which is 5.6% above the provider benchmark. Performing arts students are also positive with 86.5% (80.2% response), 11.8% above provider benchmark.
- The HE second year internal student survey (response rate 89%) ran in December 2022 highlighted that Creative, Digital, and Computing students were 100% in agreement that the access to library resources had supported their learning and that 91% of Sport and Public Services students also agreed. This level of agreement is replicated for access to specialist resources with 92% of Creative, Digital, and Computing students agreeing in the first-year HE student survey ran in Spring 2022 (response rate 88%) and 100% agreement in Sport and Public Services faculty.
- Investment in resources at the Northumberland campus has seen the satisfaction rates in the 2019 NSS increase significantly for learning resources improving from 69% in 2019 to 82% in 2021. A significant positive impact on students' learning experience has been seen in the investment of IT, with an increase in satisfaction from 66% in 2019 to 80% in 2021.

1.4 Student Numbers

14. In 2022/23 the College has 3 current partners:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| • University of Cumbria | Validated |
| • University of Sunderland | Franchised |
| • Pearson | Validated |

15. Newcastle University and University of Huddersfield are on teach out, with the last new entrants in September 2020. Entered teach out with University of Sunderland September 2022.

Higher Education Programmes Offered in 2021/22 and 2022/23

Courses		Awarding Organisation
HNC (Higher National Certificate)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNC Computing • HNC Performance (Musical Theatre Pathways) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNC Electrical and Electronic Engineering • HNC General Engineering 	Pearson

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UKPRN: 10001475

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HNC Healthcare Practice for England HNC Construction and the Built Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HNC Advanced Manufacturing Engineering HNC Business Management 	
HND (Higher National Diploma)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HND Art & Design HND Computing HNC Performance (Musical Theatre Pathways) HND Sport HND International Travel and Tourism Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HND Electrical and Electronic Engineering HND General Engineering HND Advanced Manufacturing Engineering HND Business Management HND Public Services 	Pearson
Foundation Degrees		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FdA Applied Music Practice FdSc Sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FdA Counselling FdA Education and Care 	University of Sunderland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FdSc Applied Animal Management FdSc Equestrian Performance and Coaching 		Newcastle University (teach out)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FdSc Animal Welfare and Management FdSc Equine Training, Coaching and Management FdSc Wildlife Conservation CertHE Working with Children and Families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FdA Working with Children and Families FdA Counselling FdA Children's Workforce Practice FdA Games Design and Production 	University of Cumbria
Top-Up Degrees		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BA (Hons) Working with Children and Families BA (Hons) Childhood Youth Studies BA (Hons) Games Design and Production BSc (Hons) Applied Animal Management BSc (Hons) Equestrian Performance and Coaching BEng (Hons) Engineering Management 		University of Cumbria
Teacher Education		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PGCE CertEd 		University of Huddersfield (teach out) University of Sunderland

16. The College does not have Degree Awarding Powers. The College offers Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, and Undergraduate programmes, together with some franchised Foundation Degrees. In addition, there is a range of professional programmes at the College, which align to level 4 or higher on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, such as AAT (Accounting or Taxation Technician).

1.5 Supplementary Information

1.5.1 Partnerships

17. The College partnerships with awarding organisations have adapted and changed over the four-year period. Following a review of each partnership to examine alignment with the College's vision, a decision was made and approved by Governors to continue working with University of Sunderland and University of Cumbria and move to teach out with the University of Huddersfield and the University of Newcastle (2020). The rationalisation of partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has reduced the burden on academic staff, ensured better quality overview and stronger alignment to priority areas. This has resulted in the development of communities of practice for academic staff developing and delivering University of Cumbria validated programmes. Staff are also supported in the successful validations of new programmes, which resulted in progression routes for students up to and including level 6. Good and best practice has been highlighted in the two validation events held in 2021/22 for example, *'I think this is a very well thought out and structured programme, with the only programme spec I've seen that I've been able to follow, and with the student handbook clearly setting out the goals and limitations of the course without the, extraneous, information that comes along with the programme spec'*.
18. The University of Sunderland has now taken the decision to change the way they work in partnership and for those programmes currently validated will now go into teach out from September 2022. The College swiftly took this as an opportunity to present and agree a refreshed strategic HE Future Plan [001] with the Board in December 2022 [008]. The College will look to continue to work with the University of Cumbria where we are their second largest partner, but in addition work with another partner who sees college partnerships as a key part of their business. Any strategic partnerships have taken account of regional priorities including the North East LEP Strategic Economic Plan, Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan, and the North of Tyne Combined Authority skills developments. The partnership with Cumbria and moving forward with a new partner, must align in terms of a mutually beneficial strategic alliance which encompasses and develops our academic programme portfolio and enhances student progression opportunities. In addition, collaboration around scholarly activity and to identifying and developing joint funding opportunities for both partners' advantage.
19. Provision with the University of Cumbria at the point of merger, 2019, included 1 foundation degree and 2 top up degrees. The development of a strategic partnership with University of Cumbria [009] in 2019 resulted in the validation of more full-time foundation degrees with progression to top up degree programmes with some programmes starting in 2020/21. This included the introduction of FdA Working with Children and Families, with a degree top up route to support widening access for mature students at the College.
20. The College entered a subcontracting partnership, with OLC (Organisational Learning Centre) to deliver higher national provision on a full-time basis to support widening access in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in 2017/18. This partnership was approved following a due diligence to ensure alignment with the College's strategic aims and vision. The College maintains oversight of the partnership through monthly management meetings and contract meetings. The provision is subject to the same quality processes as direct provision including visits to check educational learning, programme boards and annual monitoring. The NSS is open to all final year partnership students and in 2022 the response rate was 72% which was above the sector average. The OLC students have extremely high levels of satisfaction with 100% overall satisfaction in the NSS in 2022 and 2021. The partnership students' levels of satisfaction were in the top quartile for all questions in the 2022 NSS. The external examiner's reports in 2022 highlighted excellent quality feedback to students and excellent tutorial and pastoral

support as areas of good practice [010]. A successful quality review was undertaken by Pearson in 2022. The review noted that OLC had support sessions in place for the staff, through peer observations and formal observations per term by the Head of HE.

1.5.2 Subject Specialisms

21. Sector specialisms in areas such as health and care, construction, the visitor economy, engineering, and manufacturing, and digital are aligned to the key needs of the labour market and are embedded in both a career focused curriculum and investment in excellent facilities that equip students with relevant skills for industry and their education. The investment in the physical and digital resources of the College estate used by students to further their learning has been significant. This is evidenced in the positive NSS results in 2021 and 2022 for both taught and registered students (access to specialist resources: taught 84.82% (2022) and 84.78% (2021), registered 88.35% (2022) and 91.96% (2021)). The highest level of satisfaction is on access to course specific resources were in Engineering 90% (response rate (100%)), Land Based 92.31% (response rate 52%) and Education and Care 100% (response rate 100%). This has supported students to achieve higher grades on their programmes, as demonstrated for example by the engineering cohorts where 51% of assignment grades were distinctions in 2021/22.
22. External Examiners in 2022 have highlighted as good practice the quality of the subject specific resources including those in sport and construction [022]. This is reflected in the high levels of satisfaction in the MEQs completed by students in 2021/22 with a rating of 4.43 for the college resources meeting student learning needs (Likert scale 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree).
23. The College aims to support the regional needs by providing level 4 and 5 provision in key areas. College data shows:
 - Allied to health provision accounts for 28.2% of full-time provision and 18.2% of part-time provision
 - Health and social care students account for 22.4% of part-time provision
 - Engineering and manufacturing provision accounts for 20.35% of provision
 - Agriculture, food, and related studies account for 10.5% of provision
 - Business and management (which includes support for the visitor economy) accounts for 11.1% full time and 16.7% part time provision.

1.5.2.1 Health Professions

24. The College has a range of health simulation hubs at different campuses to support the delivery of HE provision, which plays a key role in workforce development for our strategic partner NHS Trusts, who rely on local pipelines for attracting and upskilling staff. This includes state-of-the-art health hub at our Bede and Ashington Campuses which provides outstanding facilities for simulated learning, which mirror environments students encounter in practice. They include three-bed hospital wards, treatment rooms and sluice areas with industry standard equipment, a self-contained apartment that features mobile device-controlled lighting and entrance cameras to mirror a modern home care environment. This ensures that our students learn in industry standard facilities and professional working environments which prepares them for placements and employment. This resource has been enhanced to support the delivery of higher technical qualifications from September 2023. Evidence from the College's J2 research external destination survey (section 3.4), for students who graduated in 2020/21, indicates that 56% of students who studied health, public services and care programmes are employed in this sector and a further 27% employed in the education and training sector (based on 52 responses). This is an improvement from the 2019/20 survey which had 34 responses and 26% were employed in this sector and 44% were employed in education and training.

1.5.2.2 Engineering and Manufacturing

25. The College is proud to be part of one of the first twelve Institutes of Technology in the UK, which were approved in 2019, as a collaboration between our College, and other local colleges, University of Newcastle, and employers such as the Esh Group and Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK. They aim to develop the high-level technical skills and qualifications that employers need both now and in future. The North East Institute of Technology concentrates on advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction and digital. The aim is for industry standard facilities in technical training that are making a real difference to skills development for individuals, employers, and the region. The use of industry level equipment has enabled students to develop skills which will improve the productivity of their employers. This is supported by comments from the external examiner report for 2022; *'the new IOT facility now on-line, it will be able to offer better practical opportunities with sufficient laboratories and workshops to support the selected subject specialisms being delivered'*. [020].
26. Additional evidence from the College's J2 research destination survey (section 3.4) (2020/21 graduates) confirmed that 85% of graduates (27 responses) were employed in engineering and manufacturing industry with a further 11% in business, administration, and law. This is an improvement from the 2019/20 graduates which had 73% employed in engineering and manufacturing sector.

1.5.2.3 Animal and Land Based

27. Investment in the Northumberland campus at Kirkley Hall from 2019 onwards has resulted in a brand-new indoor equine arena, which enhances the teaching experience of our HE students. It now has an international-standard 38 by 48 metre square indoor arena with viewing gallery, updated schooling field, paddock, stable block accommodation and tack room. The campus has a commercial zoo which is home to 150 species of animals. The campus has 400 acres with dedicated agriculture and arboriculture workshops. The students gain valuable work experience in preparation for their chosen careers. Recent graduates have gone on to work in a wide variety of roles, including zookeeper, dog walking business owner and animal management instructor. This is supported by the College's external destinations report completed in 2021/22 which shows of 32 respondents 12 (37.5% had progressed to employment and a further 11 (34.4%) had progressed to further study [018]. Year 1 HE surveys 2021/22 for FdA Animal Management indicate 95% agree "IT resources and facilities support learning" (21 students +7% on previous year and +9% on external benchmark, quartile A). This is confirmed in the MEQs [007] with 'access to learning resources met my need' having a 4.45 agreement level (Likert 1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree).

1.5.3 Modes of Delivery

28. The volume of HE students at the College has remained stable over the four-year period. However, the split between full time provision and part time has changed, partly due to the development of new partnerships, which has allowed the development of new programmes which meet the needs of students and regional employers.
29. PT programmes are offered to allow those in work or with other external commitments to up skill. These are delivered in evenings, day release and weekends to meet the needs of both students and employers. The number of PT entrants remained steady in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 however, despite the flexibility of delivery there was a decrease post the pandemic which is reflective of the sector.

1.5.4 Geographical Context

30. The College recruits most of its students from areas of disadvantage. Sunderland, Northumberland, and Hartlepool are each areas of high social and economic deprivation.

- Sunderland: Unemployment is 5.2% and well above the national average, with 20% of households workless. The proportion of residents with qualifications at level 2 and above is 11% below the national average. (Nomis December 2021).
- Hartlepool: Unemployment is 6.4% significantly higher than the regional average and almost double the national average. The proportion of residents with qualifications at level 2 and above is 2.8% below the national average. (Nomis December 2021).
- Northumberland: Unemployment is 4.6% which is above the national average; 20% of households are workless. The proportion of residents with qualifications at level 2 and above is 0.3% below the national average. (Nomis, December 2021).

31. The College is fully committed to positively influence the region, through supporting widening access and providing an alternative HE provider for students who may not wish to study at HEIs. For example, the College has chosen to have fees below the rate where an access and participation agreement would be required. In 2021/22 73.1% of HE students were classed as disadvantaged, +4.7% increase on 2020/21. 11% of students were included in multiple categories and 63.6% of HE students resided in deprivation postcodes, 6.5% increase on 2020/21. The College's offer is vital to serving the needs of the community as a result. The College campuses in Ashington and Berwick-upon-Tweed aim to provide opportunities for HE in cold spot areas. Hartlepool Sixth Form provides a small HE provision to compliment progression from Level 3 Sport.

1.5.5 Provider Structure

32. The CEO leads the overall College group, with a Principal at Sunderland College and Hartlepool Sixth Form appointed in 2021 and a new Principal for Northumberland College appointed in 2022. The Vice Principal for Curriculum Enhancement and Innovation is the strategic lead for HE across the College. A clear reporting structure is in place through the HE Group that feeds up to the Board of Corporation. There is clear oversight from an overall College perspective with a lead for HE and a meeting structure that brings all campus provision together. This approach enables each campus to focus on the education priorities in their geographic area and ensures that quality and standards are consistent and monitored across the College.

1.6 Other Information about the Context of the Submission

33. The Student President has led on the student submission, gaining feedback and comments from the wider student body through HE focus groups. The Lead for Higher Education and the Vice Principal, Curriculum and Innovation have collaborated with the Student President on both submissions, while still allowing for independence for the student submission. This has happened for example, through sharing information at the College's HE Group, emails and on a Teams site for sharing of information, queries, and data. The Lead for Higher Education and Quality and a HE Academic Support Tutor have supported the Student President in terms of advice and being a named point of contact for any queries, providing details on the courses being included and highlighting Office for Student training. A named Governor has provided additional support as a critical friend. Both parties were happy to share their submissions.

2. Student Experience

2.1 Annual Monitoring and Evaluation

34. The College has a robust annual monitoring and review process at programme, faculty, and College level. Programme level reports are completed at the end of each academic year to reflect on the quality of provision. Moderation of the reports are undertaken with a panel which includes the Faculty Director, Curriculum Manager and Lead for Higher Education Quality. The report covers the whole student journey from admissions to completion and includes reflections on student and external feedback, teaching, and assessment, continuation, and completion rates

for those students. All programmes have a quality improvement plan (QIP) which is monitored each semester and focuses on improving the student experience. The faculty Self-Evaluation Documents (SEDs) follow a similar approach. The moderation panel includes senior leaders, Associate Principal for Teaching, Learning and Quality and the Lead for Higher Education Quality. The QIPs are monitored by half termly meetings, Curriculum Performance Reviews (CPRs). The faculty SEDs feed into a whole College SED which is completed by the senior leadership team and approved by a panel include a Governor representative. The executive leadership team and Governors monitor the College QIP.

2.1.1 In-year Monitoring and Evaluation

35. The College's approach to HE in-year monitoring and evaluation (Quality Enhancement and Quality assurance) feeds into a wider policy for Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Quality. This policy and accompanying approaches encompass provision from Entry Level to Level 6 and are underpinned by the UK quality Code, Office for Students regulations, Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and guidance on quality assurance from HE awarding organisations.
36. The approach to quality enhancement monitors the quality of provision and identifies processes which are used to support students to successfully transition into, continue through and complete their programmes.
37. This approach raises the profile of HE within the College, for example, the themes from external examiner reports are discussed at each meeting which allows for programme level input before any decisions are made in respect of enhancing learning opportunities for HE students. Also, fortnightly Performance, Quality and Standards (PQS), chaired by Executive Leadership has HE as a standing agenda item to monitor delivery across the College. The PQS meeting receives reports on the student experience and student outcomes. This meeting is used to ensure excellent quality and consistencies across the group, PQS [012].
38. Higher education reporting and committee structure consists of:
 - HE forum – Teaching staff to share practice and propose enhancements
 - HE Co-ordinators – Remit of maintaining quality and student experience
 - Performance Quality & Standards – HE Directors to monitor quality, standards, and performance data.
 - HE Group – Strategic oversight and agreement, with Directors and Senior Leaders to have strategic.
39. CPRs which are held every 6 weeks at a faculty level and include review of HE continuation, completion, and progression. Notice to improve which is completed following CPRs on identified programmes where performance is below expectations.
40. The College uses internal QDP student surveys [011] to widen student voice beyond the NSS. QDP surveys, which are benchmarked against 1.3 million other students and 101 providers, quartile A rated responses are in top 25% of colleges, quartile B are in top 50%. The questions have been amended over the last few years to provide HE students on different years to reflect separately on their experience. This approach was introduced in 2020/21 and has enabled the academic teams and the College to reflect more effectively on student feedback. Response rates for surveys are consistently above 80%.
41. MEQs [007] are completed across all programmes and analysed at module, programme, faculty, individual college, and College group level. Students can provide in year feedback in meetings with student representatives, Programme Leaders and Faculty Directors. Feedback regarding placements on some education and care programmes led to changes in timetables. Following, Sport students' feedback, led to new portable IT devices being provided to support the assessment.

42. This approach has led to improvements in College, faculty and programme level continuation and completion rates for example in Higher National Certificate and Diploma programmes in Sport were placed in notice to improve in 2021/22. Overall indicator for Sport and exercise science programmes continuation rate 78.5% (110 students, 78.6% BM), completion rate 68.4% (80 students, 69.2% BM). Internal data for start year 2020/21 continuation 80.0% (30 students) completion rate 70.3% (37 students).

2.2 Curriculum Planning and Stakeholder Engagement.

43. The College has a robust curriculum planning process, that has been further developed over the last three years. All curriculum areas require employer and student feedback on the appropriateness of their curriculum plan. All faculties follow an annual cyclical course design and development process (looking three years ahead), which includes robust and rigorous authentication approval with the group's senior leadership team. The course offer takes account of national priorities, examples of this include:

- The FdA in Animal Management now offering a Conservation and Ecology pathway to address the Governments agenda for rewilding, wildlife habitat management and conservation.
- HND provision in Sport and UPS including Sport England's 10-year vision 'Uniting the Movement', along with AoC Sport and CIMPSA's LMI (Local Market Intelligence) reports.

44. The course design and development process across the College is fully inclusive of local employers and key external stakeholders, ensuring the needs of the local economy are supported and met.

- University of Sunderland and Northumbria Police co-designed and co-delivered HND Public Services units including guest workshops and academic visits.
- Robson and Prescott, Newcastle University and other key stakeholders supported the redesign of the FdA Animal management programme, supporting currency of modules and content aligned to the changing research into the management of animals.

45. Within the 2021/22 academic year two new programmes have been written and fully validated for future delivery.

- FdA and BA (Hons) Games Design and Production
- BEng (Hons) Engineering Management.

46. Assessment adaptation meet the needs of students. The inclusion of student feedback from MEQ's, NSS, QDP surveys and other qualitative mechanisms in relation to assessment methods are embedded across the College and used to develop best practice.

- Within Sport, the model of unit delivery has been influenced by staff and student feedback with certain units being delivered across both Semester 1 and 2 to support a deeper understanding and have better impact on application of theory to practice along with the transfer of learning from one unit to another. For example, Fitness Testing & Assessment and Psychology of Sport are delivered 'long and thin' across the academic year in our FdSc Sports Coaching programme.
- Within Travel and Tourism changes made included adaption to submission dates.
- Within the Technical Faculty at Ashington, in the final year of the BA (Hons) programme, students have contributed to the delivery in terms of reorganisation of sessions to better fit workload. Evaluations were disseminated for each module and at the close of the programme, feedback was positive with no wider issues.

47. The College is part of the National Uni Connect programme through the North East consortium and is a member of strategic group leading the regional project. The Uni Connect project aims to support 16–19-year-olds to transition to HE before their twentieth birthday and is specifically

targeted at working with those students who live in post code areas where there are good GCSE pass rates but poor participation in HE (cold spots). In 2021/22, 73.1% of students were classed as disadvantaged, +4.7% increase on 2020/21. 11% of students were included in multiple categories and 63.6% of HE students resided in deprivation postcodes, 6.5% increase on 2020/21. The College delivered an extensive range of activities to students in 2021/22 to encourage HE progression. Through Future Me activity over 9,500 engagements were recorded with target students, via 97 distinct types of activities including HE advice and guidance, skills and attainment, finance, application guidance and transition. The College had 2153 cold spot students and 4058 no target students (34.6% cold spot students) and in 2021/22 1865 cold spot students and 3743 no-target students (33.3% cold spot students). To support the opportunities for students to progress to study at level 4 and above the College made the decision to offer level 4 higher programmes (higher national certificates and Cert HE) in subjects with lower levels of progression. This has seen an increase in the number of students studying at level 4 for example, HNC Computing increased enrolments in 2022/23 to 28 from 12 in 2021/22.

48. Sunderland College was a National Beacon Award winner in 2017/18 for its engagement with employers and is deeply connected to the communities it serves. The College was again recognised in 2020/21 as a commended college for employer engagement, related to how employers engage in curriculum developments, learning experiences and opportunities for students. Examples of this can be seen through our employer advisory groups, such as in health and creative. The Health Academy of Excellence membership represents the diversity in the sector, with membership including NHS Trusts, charity sector, health and social care employers and the local authority. The Creative Arts employers group works in partnership to promote and develop the region's creative industries.

2.3 Teaching

49. The College's approach to teaching, learning and assessment [013] encompasses higher and further education provision, ensuring that all students experience excellent learning opportunities.
50. 100% HE practitioners complete and analyse their teaching and learning through an annual self-reflection against the College's professional standards for teaching and learning. HE Programme Leaders utilise the self-reflections to drive their own professional development plans. 52% of HE Programme Leaders rated their confidence in delivering academic learning experiences as "experienced" and 34% of HE Programme Leaders rating their confidence at the highest level, "excelling". In most instances, the most experienced and skilled staff deliver HE at the College.
51. HE Programme Leaders identify, or are directed to, opportunities for their personal and professional development through performance management reviews, curriculum reviews, self-assessment, and reviews of teaching and learning. Following peer observations, HE Programme Leaders meet to discuss one another's approaches, identifying what needs development, and good practice that can be drawn upon and shared. This has supported teams to develop high quality teaching and some outstanding practice across the College and has contributed to high levels of student satisfaction with teaching, learning and assessment. HE student feedback through 2022 NSS indicates a high level of satisfaction with the teaching on their course at the College, with Registered students at 87.86% and Taught students at 81.45% (NSS benchmark 79.85%).
52. The College has a year-on-year improvement for FT student satisfaction in reference to teaching on my course. The overall TEF indicator at 85.6% for "the teaching on my course." is broadly in line with the provider benchmark (480 students, 84.7% BM). The College's teaching in the most recent, year 4 shows 7% improvement to 88% (100 students) from year 1 (110 students) for full time students. The indicator is now outstanding, materially above the provider benchmark.

53. NSS data prior to 2019 includes separate data sets for Sunderland and Northumberland College. The data from 2019 includes responses for the whole College. Prior to merger, the levels of student satisfaction at Sunderland for teaching were significantly higher than Northumberland (88.01% and 81.82% respectively). The results for 2019 were lower than the previous levels of satisfaction at Sunderland (84.46%) due to combining of a failing college's data. The strategies the College has put in place post-merger to support teaching and learning is showing a positive impact on most courses, particularly for FT programmes.
54. The College recognises that PT students are less satisfied with the teaching on their course and the overall indicator for 210 students is marginally below the provider benchmark and has declined in the most recent year 4 for 40 students. This is due to poor teaching on one programme in allied health, FdA Counselling. The course was placed in notice to improve, where there has been some progress it has not been at the pace required. The decision has been made to not take any new entrants on HE Counselling courses until the College has re-assurance of quality.
55. The College recognises that to create outstanding learning opportunities through excellence in teaching and learning it is:
- Informed by those who have a firm and common understanding of the intended curriculum
 - Enabled by those who are willing to adapt and seek ways to continually improve.
 - Created by those who go beyond, working in partnership with students to improve their learning.
 - Facilitated through student-centred professional development.
 - Developed through a culture open to new learning and professional challenge.
56. The College approach to teaching, learning and assessment is inclusive of all provision types and all professional practitioners. The College understands that "one size doesn't fit all" and therefore this approach allows for differentiation in its application for HE practitioners. The approach is guided by the College strategy and vision of excellence alongside external frameworks including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
57. Specialist resources are available and used effectively by staff and students to improve the student experience and the majority are of a high standard. For example, learning environments within creative and performing arts mirror professional practice and include visual displays to enhance the quality of teaching within the classrooms. Outstanding specialist resources within the Creative, Digital and Computing Faculty are industry standard allowing students to work with resources they will find in employment. The majority of creative and performing arts staff are working practitioners in the digital, creative industries, such as games designers, artists, photographers, musicians, performing and displaying regionally and nationally. This current, industry experience helps to improve the student experience.
58. There is a variation between the different age groups, in satisfaction with the teaching on programmes which are broadly in line with the provider benchmark and indicate very high quality teaching. FT: 31 years and over students (120 students) at 90% are more positive about the teaching on their course than under 21 years and 21-30 age groups at 84.8% (300 students) and 81.3% (70 students).
59. Asian students (40 students) are highly positive about the teaching on their course at 87.8%, materially above the provider benchmark (BM 85.4%). White students (390 students), remain positive at 84.2% and receive very high-quality teaching, broadly in line with the College's provider benchmark at 84%.

2.4 Assessment and Feedback

60. The College's approach to assessment aims to motivate, inspire, and challenge individual students. FT students are extremely positive about assessment and feedback and evidenced in the overall TEF indicator at 83.8% (480 students), materially above the provider benchmark by +3.9% for the College's mix of students. This outstanding quality has been replicated in the 2 most recent years with both significantly above the provider benchmark +8.1% in year 3 (110 students) and year 4 (110 students). This is replicated in the internal surveys completed by QDP with second year students: 90% agree "When I meet the hand-in dates I receive quick feedback" (2020/21 91%, 246 students & 2021/22 90%, 133 students; both quartile A and above external benchmark).
61. Clear and effective assessment processes and internal and partners HEIs assessment boards ensure reliable assessment of learning. 97% of year 2 students agree or strongly agree with the statement "Assessment of my course is fair", +1% on previous year and consistently in A quartile and 3% above external benchmark.
62. Overall, the assessment and feedback for PT students (210 students) is high quality at 83.7% and broadly in line with the provider benchmark for the College's mix of students. The College notes the improvement, particularly in year 3 and 4, which are now above the provider benchmark by +2.6% and +3.2% respectfully. Feedback within FdA Counselling students is not very high quality at 77.5% (90 students), -4.2% below the provider benchmark. PT health and social care students (100 students) receive outstanding assessment and feedback at 89.9%, +5.5% above provider benchmark.
63. Feedback was positive from external examiners in 2021/22 on the quality of assessment feedback and creative assessment methods; this is a two-to-three-year positive trend on several programmes. This feedback was across several awarding organisations and was reported to the HE Group in November 2022 [016] where it was agreed that the sharing of good practice should be included in workshops to support the enhancement of learning opportunities for all HE students.
64. Students are supported to achieve higher grades on all programmes and assessment is designed to enable students to build on their previous assessments. External examiners commented on how assessment feedback includes feedforward, this is mentioned positively over the last three years. This approach is evident in several programmes including HND Public Services where students in year one achieved pass criteria (80%) and progress to achieve distinctions in year two (41%). This is a two-year trend as prior to this the students' grades were impacted by the pandemic emergency academic regulations.

2.5 Academic Support

65. The College provides high quality academic support for all students, though FT students remain more positive about support provided. FT students appreciate the outstanding academic support provided, evidenced through the outstanding overall indicator at 87.5% (480 students), materially above the provider benchmark by +4.7%. PT students with Allied health, FdA Counselling, delivered through a franchise agreement, (90 students) are not positive about their academic support. During the pandemic, some students on this programme, which is allied to health, requested that they were able to access on-site, face to face delivery as they believed that their programme fell under the medical programmes which the Government had advised could continue with face-to-face delivery. The College worked with the University to resolve the situation and it was agreed that the programme did not fall under this criterion and therefore had to follow the guidelines for remote delivery. The delivery and assessment continued under the emergency academic regulations of the University and students continued and completed the programme. However, as the National Student Survey was completed during this period, the

feedback was negatively impacted by this situation. Despite the cohort on the programme raising concerns the continuation rates are at provider benchmark and the completion rates are significantly above the provider benchmark (87.4% compared to 79.3%). This is not repeated for the second part time programme which had significant levels of satisfaction for Academic Support which had a 100% response rate in the 2022 NSS and 100% satisfaction in all question related to academic support. PT Health and social care students appreciated the outstanding academic support provided, significantly above the provider benchmark by +6% for 100 students.

66. At each campus students have access to the same level of support include HE Academic Support Tutor, which is provided face to face and remotely as required, intensive support, counselling, and welfare. Alongside this each campus has a learning centre which contains the relevant materials to support HE programmes.

2.6 Learning Resources

67. The College provides high quality learning resources, which have been invested in and improved, as referenced in section 1.3. FT students appreciate the improvements in the learning resources as evidenced in the improved trend between year 2 at 72.9%, marginally below the provider benchmark and year 4 (110 students) at 86.9% now outstanding. PT students have access to the same quality learning resources. There has been significant difference in the levels of satisfaction for PT students in relation to learning resources, between year 1 at 58.8% (80 students) to year 4 at 75.5% (30 students) and are now recognised by the PT students as very high quality.
68. Following the mergers there has been significant investment in resources including land-based provision, immersive hubs, and health hubs. There has also been investment in additional online resources to support the changes in the curriculum. This is reflected in the positive improvements in the NSS for the students (2020 41.67% improved to 80.77% in 2022). The level of satisfaction is replicated in more recent internal surveys focusing on HE provision with 91% of first year students (2021/22) agreeing that they can access specialist resources and 87% agreeing that the library has supported their learning.
69. During the pandemic, the College utilised Teams to support learning, teaching and assessment which students were very positive. This is reflected in the level of satisfaction for teaching on NSS and internal surveys during the pandemic. NSS 2021 (completed during second lockdown) response rate for taught students was 71% with 84.11% satisfied with teaching on the course. This was also supported in internal surveys conduct at the start of 2021 (I find my course intellectually stimulating: first year students 96% and second-year students 93% agreement). As a result, with feedback from academic staff, the college made the decision to move the virtual learning environment to Teams to support learning everywhere and online delivery.
70. The learning centres have developed bespoke sessions to support students to develop academic skills to study at higher education level. This includes referencing and plagiarism, with one-to-one support available to supplement the regular sessions.
71. The MEQs for 2021/22 include feedback on how access to resources have supported the students' learning needs. The MEQs are completed across all programmes and all years and provide a current picture in respect of student feedback. The students are asked to respond on a Likert scale of 1-5 (5 strongly agree) and the overall results show that for resources students continue to feel positive with an agreement of 4.43 overall. This is particularly strong in Creative and Digital (4.66), Engineering (4.43), Construction (4.76), Land Based (4.45) and Education and Care (4.58) where students have access to industry standard resources.

2.7 Student Engagement / Student Voice

72. The College has outstanding, comprehensive, and effective approaches to engaging students individually and collectively in the quality and improvements of their learning experience. FT and

PT students appreciate their active involvement in student voice, evidenced through both overall indicators being marginally above provider benchmark. Student feedback is gained through a HE committee structure, attendance on the HE Group and governor committees of the Student President, focus groups, MEQs, NSS and internal surveys. The feedback is used to stimulate ideas for enhancement and identify concerns with regard student satisfaction across all elements of the learning experience and actions are incorporated with local level development plans to resolve these or minimise the impact these are having on student experience and learning outcomes.

73. Students are positive about student voice within the College, noted through QDP surveys. In 2021/22 1st year HE students, 93% agree "I am asked for my views about the course" (259 students, quartile A, +4% external benchmark), 88% agree "I am told what has been done because of learner views", (246 students, quartile A +2% external benchmark). 85% of year two students agree they are told what has been done because of student views (2021/22, 135 students, B quartile).
74. Students as partners are intrinsic to and fully included within the design and development of programmes taught across the College. Students make a critical contribution to the course design and development of their programmes. Staff utilise current and previous student feedback well to adapt and amend where required. Identified strengths and areas for development are all reviewed and actioned as part of a robust student voice process, examples include:
- On health programmes students indicated they would like to have more opportunity to explore the role of a domiciliary care worker. As a result of this feedback, staff liaised with Embracing Care, and they visited the College to speak to students and inform planning.
 - Students within Counselling provision stated that they would benefit from the addition of more guest speakers within sessions. Staff responded to this and planned in dedicated time for guest speakers to visit. For example, speakers from the LGBTQ+ community.
 - The modules and assessments on the FdSc Animal Management were selected following a robust scoping session with students which resulted in three pathways being developed and the introduction of a Wildlife and Conservation route.
75. Students are represented well at all levels of the College structure. Student representatives are included within the membership of the Governing Body, Equality and Diversity Committee, and HE Group. Students are included as members of curriculum planning reviews so that they can directly and effectively contribute to programme development. An established student representation system is in place across the College. An example of good practice is HE student voice Forums at Kirkley Hall Campus which provides the opportunity for students to identify what was going well and areas for improvement at college. All forum meetings are action-based, and outcomes are shared on VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) course pages. The Student Voice strategy and code of practice for student representation and the guidance handbook for student council representatives fully support student involvement in the design, delivery and overall management of the College's provision and services [015].
76. The College operates an annual student conference in which FE and HE students are provided with the opportunity to feedback on specific developments they believe would improve the experience of continuing and future students at the College.
77. To further compliment the formal Student Council systems and processes, the Student Council have regular meetings with the Student President to provide student views into future strategic and operational decision-making processes.
78. HE students also attend Governor lunches on a termly basis, where they can feedback on their experience as a student and raise any issues that they do not feel have been addressed. Management updates are provided to governors at the next committee, which ensures actions

are taken and closed off. Agricultural students (previously Northumberland College) have been less positive regarding student voice and would be noted as below the provider benchmark, however, student voice at Northumberland has been improved post-merger. At one lunch session students based at Kirkley Hall requested a dedicated space to support the development of a community. This was implemented in 2021/22 and resulted in an increase in levels of satisfaction in learning community on the NSS from 25% in 2020 to 73% in 2022. [014].

2.8 Professional Development

79. Professional development is fully embedded across the College, called Enabling Excellence it is underpinned by three guiding principles:

- Principle 1: Professional development is each person's responsibility and will be made possible and supported by the College
- Principle 2: Professional development benefits the College's students/ stakeholders by improving quality of practice
- Principle 3: Professional development is recorded and shows the effect on each person's practice

80. It is recognised that the provision of time is an enabler for professional development and therefore in addition to individual professional development activities:

- The College organises group wide professional development days during the academic year; the themes and content of these days will be set by the Senior Leadership Team including Keynote from David Price OBE on digital professional development conference.
- Professional development per academic year focuses on HE staff maintaining their expertise.

For teaching staff this includes:

- maintaining and updating knowledge of subject and/or industry expertise, with reference where relevant to associated guidance Enabling Excellence: Industrial Updating with Impact
- maintaining and updating teaching expertise and technical skills through collaboration with employers / industry insights.
- Scholarly activity e.g.:
 - Development of flipped learning to support science-based modules
 - Use of Planet E-Stream to support students' formative assessment in performance HE provision

81. To support the staff who are delivering HE the College has bespoke staff development sessions including a HE conference which allows HE academic and support staff to be exposed to external practise and to share their own pedagogical developments. This has included programme development, moving to on-line delivery and use of technology to support learning opportunities. The Quality and Standards Monitoring visit in December 2019 noted *'the annual Higher Education Conference being accessible for all the staff involved in the delivery and support of higher education'*. During the pandemic, the conference was moved to online delivery to ensure that sharing of good practice continued.

82. In partnership with the University of Cumbria during 2021/22 the College has supported 6 staff to successfully apply for HEA Fellowship. The collaborative project has a College HE member of staff acting as a mentor to those going through the process. This adds to those who already had fellowship and the programme will continue with another cohort started in October 2022 and another planned for January 2023. The long-term aim is to support all HE academic staff to apply for HEA Fellowship by 2024.

83. The College is supportive of staff engaging with external activities and several staff are engaged as External Examiners at a range of HE providers. The College also represented FE Colleges

on Advance HE's project board for the Degree Standards project looking at developing External Examiner training. As a result, the training was piloted at the College with staff completing the training. Staff have also been supported to be involved with the development of new higher national programmes with Pearson such as HTQ Computing.

2.9 Recognised Teacher Status

84. In 2021/22 the College introduced a formal approval process for academic staff who are appointed to teach on programmes at level 4 and above. There are three routes for approval; qualification, experiential (academic) and experiential (industrial). The applications are reviewed by the RTS (Recognised Teacher Status) panel which consists of the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, Associate Principal Quality, Teaching and Learning, Lead for Higher Education Quality, and representative from the faculty directors. Staff can be fully approved, approved with restrictions, or not approved. The outcomes from the RTS panel are reported to the HE Group for final approval.
85. Staff who are new to teaching HE at the College, either as an external appointment or a staff member teaching level 4 for the first time, are allocated a mentor who is an experienced HE academic. Staff are also provided with resources to support their transition to teaching at level 4 and the mentoring activity is monitored by the Lead for Higher Education Quality.
86. The expectation is that teaching staff have a qualification one level higher than the qualification that they deliver on. Where this is not the case the academic member of staff will have recent industry experience and/or significant HE teaching experience and/or supported to study themselves at a higher level.

2.10 Teaching Resources

87. Across the College, HE students benefit from multi-pound sports academies designed for sporting and academic excellence including the Martin Nugent Elite Performance centre and sports science laboratory.
88. Tutors are allocated 13 hours per 24 hours of teaching within which to plan the learning experience of their students and complete other non-teaching activities including teaching materials development. HE Programme Leads have additional remission for HE programme enhancement and writing. The periodic review undertaken by the University of Sunderland, 2018 [017] found that teaching staff engaged in material development once teaching has been completed so that due account can be taken of the student feedback gained. Academic staff also engage in a two-day planning period before the start of each academic year ensuring any final adjustments to teaching materials are made.
89. Teaching consists of formal lectures, practical learning, activities uploaded to Teams/Google, seminars, group work and tutorial sessions. The provision of additional learning opportunities on some programmes adds value to the student experience, including visits by performing arts students to New York, exposing them to a diverse music scene, and visits by professional organisations such as NextGen, Northumbria Police as well local employers and universities. These add valuable opportunities for teaching and learning outside of the classroom and have provided additional assessment opportunities linked to the students' relevant sector.
90. Overall, in the QDP surveys, 2020-21 97% and 2021-22 98% of first year students who responded agree "I receive good support from my teacher" (2020-21 293 students, quartile A, +6% external benchmark, 2021-22 246 students, quartile A, +7% external benchmark). This was high across all programmes with only one being below 95% agreement. Overall, in 2020/21 96% (290 students, quartile A, +9% on external benchmark) and in 2021/22 92% (265 students, quartile B, +4% external benchmark) agree "I find my programme intellectually stimulating" with 60% of programmes having 100% agreement.

91. In 2020/21, overall, 97% of second year students who responded agree, "I am helped to develop my own ideas and work on my own" (246 students quartile A, +6% external benchmark), 96% agreed in 2021/22 (141 students, quartile A, +4% external benchmark) and 94% (135 students, +1% external benchmark) in 2022-23. This is particularly strong in Education and Care, Construction, Creative, Sport and Public Services which all had high response rates and 100% agreement. The level of agreement 'I find my programme intellectually stimulating' in the 2022 NSS for taught students is poor at with 78.76% in 2022 and 77.7% in 2021 NSS. The College had highlighted this as an area for improvement on a minority of programmes with 60% of programmes having a 100% agreement response. Targeted staff professional development started in 2022 for academic staff and managers to address. This will be continued to be monitored through the module evaluation questionnaires, reported through the committee structure and impact to be measured.

3. Student Outcomes

92. The monitoring and valuation processes used to improve student outcomes are detailed in section 2.1.

3.1 Continuation

3.1.1 Continuation Part time (PT)

93. Part time continuation for overall indicator (1,190 students) and year 1, 2 and 4 are broadly in line with provider benchmark. Year 3 continuation rates were materially above benchmark, by +7% with very strong statistical confidence (250 students). Internal data for year 5 PT continuation rate is 81.4% (183 students), the College recognises that this excludes franchised provision with the University of Sunderland which represents a further 56 students. This would indicate very high quality for part time programmes. PT continuation rates for programmes at level 5 (500 students) are outstanding and materially above the benchmark by 7.1%.

94. Continuation rates for under 21 years is materially below the benchmark by 5.9% this relates to provision in Childcare, Production manufacturing engineering and Tourism management. Childcare and Production and manufacturing engineering were moved to teach out 2018/19, with Tourism management moving to full time model in 2017/18 which better suited under 21 years progressing students.

95. PT continuation rates for those without a disability reported, were materially above the provider benchmark. However, for those with a reported disability it is materially below the benchmark at 58.3% (100 students, 69.9% provider benchmark (BM)). Business and management programmes had poorer continuation rates for those students who reported a disability in year 1 and 2, however, year 3 and year 4 100% continued with their study (23 students). Other subject areas have too low numbers to identify trends in those who reported a disability. Internal data in year 5 for continuation rates indicates 85.7% continuation rate (14 students).

96. There are very high quality continuation rates in some of the biggest subject areas which represents 40% of the students. Programmes have a timetable that fits around employment and work demands. Education and teaching programmes at 89.6% (210 students, 83.8% provider BM) and Health and Social Care at 79.5% (220 students, 76.7% BM) have outstanding quality in the student outcomes.

97. A further 41% of students studied on programmes which were broadly in line with benchmarks indicating high levels of quality these include Business and Management 1.9% above at 65.4% (240 students, 63.5% BM), Architecture, building and planning 1.9% below at 78.8% (80 students, 80.7% BM), Allied health 0.3% below at 76.7% (160 students, 77.0% BM).

98. However, PT continuation for engineering programmes are materially below the benchmark by 5.2%. Those that remain on programme have high levels of completion and are broadly in line

with benchmarks 0.4% above. Continuation rates for computing programmes are also below the benchmark.

3.1.2 Continuation Full-time (FT)

99. The College fully recognises some inconsistencies in student outcomes. There is a significant four-year improved trajectory of +9.5% from year 1 68.5% to year 4 78%. However, the College remains below the provider benchmark for continuation rates for FT provision. Internal data for year 5 would indicate further improvement in continuation for full time programmes to 83.9% (274 students). The College recognises that this data excludes franchised provision with the University of Sunderland (11 students on FdA Applied Music Practice). As previously outlined the early data is an amalgamation of data pre-merger. At the point of merger, where there was evidence at Northumberland College of not high quality programmes, these were placed into teach out. This included programmes in Policing and Creative arts where student numbers were low. A review of monitoring and evaluation of HE programmes was undertaken, and a consistent approach applied to all programmes to ensure timely intervention to support the student experience.
100. First degree programmes continuation rates are generally high quality and are broadly in line with the provider benchmark at 2.4% below. This reflects the quality of student experience where programmes have included a top up year for Level 6 for example BA (hons) Working with Children and Families.
101. Continuation rates for those from Black and Mixed backgrounds are broadly in line with benchmarks, 4-year combined data for those from Asian backgrounds is below, however, internal year 5 data for those from Asian backgrounds are broadly in line with benchmarks at 78.6% (14 students).
102. Continuation rates for female students are broadly in line with benchmark at 80.8% (770 students), however male continuation rates are not very high quality at 10.8% below. Historic lower levels of continuation relate to Business and Sport programmes. Male continuation rates in year 5 are 80.8% (104 students) demonstrating an improved performance and a reflection of further quality enhancement.
103. Some subject areas have continuation rates materially above the benchmark indicating outstanding quality and this is triangulated with quality of student experience, these subjects representing 17% of students: Performing Arts 2.5% above at 83.1% (120 students, 80.6% BM), Education and training 5.4% above at 91.5% (60 students, 86.1% BM) and Engineering 8.5% above at 88.0% (30 students, 79.5% BM).
104. Some subject areas have continuation rates broadly in line with benchmark indicating high quality provision these represented 18% of students: Creative Arts and design 2.3% above at 81.8% (90 students, 79.5% BM), Politics at 0.6% above at 78.3% (20 students, 77.7% BM) and Sport and exercise science 0.1% below at 78.5% (110 students, 78.6% BM).
105. Continuation rates for the following subjects are materially below the benchmark: Business and Management (160 students), internal data for those who started in 21/22 has improved to 77.2% (149 students), Computing programmes (40 students). Both have QIPs in place to improve.

3.1.3 Continuation Apprenticeship

106. Apprenticeship continuation rates demonstrate excellent improvement in the last available 4-years and are outstanding at 89.1%, +6.8% above the provider benchmark by year 4 (most recent). There has been a significant improvement between apprenticeship continuation rates between year 3 and 4 by +12.2%. The executive leadership team placed apprenticeship provision in intervention in 2017/18 which included weekly data meetings and led to the significant improvement in year 4. Continuation rates in Business and management programmes and Engineering continue to remain above the benchmark. Health and social care are below the

benchmark by 5.4%, however, the proportion of apprenticeships at Level 4 and above in year 1 to 4 is small and has only grown in subsequent years. Clear QIPs are in place to address.

3.1.4 Subject level

107. The College offers a range of HE programmes in various technical subjects and provide progression routes for internal Level 3 students. There has been a focus on providing an equitable level of support for those students who decide to study at one of the College's campuses, including access to resources, HE academic Support and intensive support services.
108. Subject areas with high levels of continuation including; Creative arts and design, Performing arts and Education and training have adapted the delivery of programmes to enable students to complete a one-year programme and then progress to the second year if appropriate to student goals. A review was undertaken of Business and management and Computing programmes as these had been highlighted internally as having poor continuation rates in 2019. The Faculty Director along with Curriculum Managers and students produced an action plan to improve the learning opportunities. The actions included changes to the entry criteria and admissions process to ensure that applicants were aware of the demands of the programmes and the challenges of studying FT whilst working. There was a strategic decision taken to amend some programmes to one-year higher national certificates to provide students with the opportunity to step off or progress to a top up of a higher national diploma. The pandemic impacted on the programmes in 2020 and 2021, however there are now improvements in the continuation rates for Business and management, improved by 22.3% from 2017/18 (54.96%, 51 students) to 2021/22 (77.2% 149 students). Computing programmes which represent a small number of FT and PT students (over 4 years 40 students and 30 students respectively) continue to be monitored to bring about required improvement.
109. The College introduced a Level 5 programme for Policing which had clear articulation routes to universities to enable students wanting to work towards a Policing Degree. The programme had been introduced following feedback from students and university contacts. However, the programme only ran for two years as it became apparent that the focus was too niche and did not provide students with the opportunity to progress in other areas. As a result, the programme was changed to a generic public services qualification which has seen continuation rates improve to 70% for starts in 2020/21 and 80% for those that started in 2021/22.
110. Land based provision became part of the College portfolio after the merger with Northumberland College. There has been significant investment in the infrastructure to support the curriculum, including equestrian centre and online science resources. In addition, the provision was rewritten and moved to another university partner to reflect the feedback from students and external stakeholders.
111. Full time bioscience relates to a previous partnership that existed with the University of Sunderland where the College delivered the first year of a four-year degree programme. These were students who did not meet the entry criteria for the standard three-year degree and did a foundation year at the College. Several students decided to not progress to study the degree at the University which was outside of the control of the College.
112. Programmes allied to health recruit mature students who often have a range of family commitments outside of their studies. The programmes as well as requiring classroom-based study require students to complete placements. Students are aware of this when they apply and enrol on programme however this has presented challenges in respect of managing the demands on their time. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 2020/21 and 20/22 30% of withdrawals related to personal issues.

3.2 Completion Rates

3.2.1 Completion Part time

113. Completion rates for part time programmes are outstanding for the College's mix of students and courses. The College in year 1, 2 and 4 are materially above the provider benchmark with year 3 being broadly in line with the benchmark. They demonstrate an improvement of 1.3% between years 1 and 4 and above the provider benchmark for overall indicator, and for each year. Completion rates for the following subjects are outstanding and are well above the benchmark (4 years combined); Education and training 92.2%, (430 students, 85.0% BM) and Health and Social Care 86.1%, (120 students, 74.3% BM), Business and management 67.0%, (400 students, 62.4% provider BM) and Engineering 82.8%, (230 students, 82.4% provider BM).
114. Completion rates for different types of students including 31 years and over, female and male, those from Q1 or Q2 and non-UK are materially above the benchmark for 4 years combined. Completion rates for different types of students including under 21, 21 to 30 years and those with a disability are broadly in line with the benchmark. This indicates high levels of quality for the provision of different types of students in line with their peers.

3.2.2 Completion full time

115. There have been improvements in the quality of student experience which has led to improved continuation rates for FT programmes, however, the College recognises that the historic data for completion rates will not demonstrate improvements in completion until year 6 and year 7. For those entrants in 2016/17 on full time programmes lower completion rates were seen in FT HND Business. The recruitment of these students was predominately through recruitment agency and the College stopped this practice in 2019/20. There are also lower completion rates for Land-Based programmes which were delivered by Northumberland College and are an impact following the merger on City of Sunderland College data. Internal data for year 5 (excluding University of Sunderland franchised provision 77 students) predicts 67.3% (257 students).
116. Further interventions and actions have been taken on individual programmes. Examples include curriculum teams such as construction entering the College's internal quality processes 'notice to improve' and changes within HN Policing. Changes to that programme included moving from HN Policing to HN Public services, changes in staffing, move of campus to be closer to the wider curriculum leadership and team for support, and access to better curriculum specific learning resources. Completion rates have improved from 52.4% in 2018/19 (21 students) to 65.2% in 2020/21 (16 students), with predicted completion at 68.75% for 2022/23. The number of high grades (distinctions) has improved for second year students from 9% in 2020 to 41% in 2022. There has been an increase in high grades for first year students from 2% in 2020 to 9% in 2022.
117. Completion rates for Level 4 are broadly in line with benchmark and for first degrees are outstanding 12% above at 89.5% for 60 students. Students who reported a disability complete at broadly the same rates as those who did not report. Those from black backgrounds completion rates are materially above the benchmark +9.9% at 87.9% (30 students, 78.0% BM). Females perform better than males in line with provider benchmark, however, the gap in completion rates is narrower. Completion rates for those eligible for free school meals are broadly in line with benchmark 0.9% above at 72.6% (170 students, 71.7% BM).

3.2.3 Completion Apprenticeships

118. There was an improvement of 15.1% between year 3 and year 4 (most recent) for completion rates for apprenticeship programmes. Strong improvement of 13.1% between Year 3 (50 apprentices) and Year 4 (50 apprentices) This is a direct result of intervention within the apprenticeship team to improve the performance of apprentices and ensure they complete their

programmes. The introduction of the Executive Director of Apprenticeship role in 2019 and Vice Principal Partnerships to strengthen the College's quality within apprenticeships leading to completion rates now outstanding and materially above the benchmark by +3.9%. The improvements in continuation rates for Business and management programmes has not yet led to improvement in the completion rates for those apprentices. It is predicted that the impact of the College's intervention will be seen in starts 2018/19 year 6 and 2019/20 year 7.

3.4 Progression data

119. PT progression data is materially below the provider benchmark overall by 8.5% at 64.9% (180 students, 73.4% BM) 38.4% survey response rate. Similarly, FT progression data is materially below the benchmark overall by 10.5% at 44.5% (220 students, 55.0% BM) 36.0% survey response rate. Due to the low Graduate Outcomes response rates, the College utilises J2 Research to conduct destination surveys [018] with students who graduate. This includes HE provision and is conducted annually. This section will utilise reports that have been provided by J2 Research to provide further context on progression data due to the small numbers in the Graduate Outcome data. The College is addressing the low response rate for the Graduate Outcomes, and this is a long-term action in the overall College's QIP 2022.
120. The College's HE provision aligns to the vision of striving for excellence and allows students to progress positively in their education, career, and life in general. 89.1% of students who responded, have a positive destination (294 responses). 10.9% of those responded have a negative destination which includes gap years, voluntary work and those not looking for work. On the low response rate Graduate Outcomes 58% of the 153 respondents indicate a positive destination.

Summary of J2 Research data

Known Destination	Graduating in 19/20 Response rate 74.7%		Graduating in 20/21 Response rate 76.7%	
	%	No.	%	No.
Employment	42.91%	118	45.15%	149
Apprenticeship	1.09%	3	1.21%	4
Traineeship	0.36%	1	0.30%	1
Further education	0.73%	2	3.64%	12
Higher education	41.09%	113	38.79%	128
Grand Total	86.16%	237	89.1%	294

121. Of those in employment graduating in 2020/21 academic year 77.7% responded "yes" to 'Has your time learning helped you to perform your current job better?' This is 11.6% higher than 20/21 respondents. This is high for those who completed a level 6 qualification in 2020/21 with 95.8% agreeing (24 responses)
122. The J2 research asks respondents to reflect on whether the course they studied was relevant to their future career paths. For those graduating in 2020/21 91.4% agreed or strongly agreed (191 respondents). The graduates are also asked if the course is relevant to their current role and 76.1% agreed or strongly agreed (159 respondents).
123. Of those in HE graduating in 2020/21 71.7% were studying a bachelor's degree, 1.7% a PGCE and 1.7% master's degree. In 2020/21 this was 68.6%, 4.3% and 5.7% respectively. Those that responded who had studied at level 5 78.4% had progressed to a degree programme (40 responses).

4.0 Educational Gains

124. The College's strategy guides the approach to educational gain for our HE students. The key driver for the College is the first strategic goal; Shape and Evolve a Careers Focused Curriculum [019]. This provides a roadmap for academic and support activities at the College to support beyond the academic programme and to enable our students to progress. A second driver is the College's second strategic Goal: Create Outstanding learning opportunities for our students.
125. To achieve the College's vision of striving for excellence, the curriculum is ambitious, responsive, and future focused to ensure the College can deliver excellence for students, apprentices, employers, and communities. The curriculum is inclusive and aims to equip students with the essential knowledge and cultural capital to succeed. Further, the curriculum is appropriately informed by market intelligence, responsive and relevant to the key regional and national markets. Finally, the College aims to provide the best student experience possible through outstanding approaches to personal development, the development of employability skills and citizenship.
126. The College recruits students from areas of deprivation and low participation rates in HE as highlighted by the data with over two thirds of entrants in IMD quintiles 1 and 2 across the four years covered by this submission. The entry criteria for HE programmes are lower tariff, and the College supports applications from non-traditional with approximately 50% of entrants aged over 25 years old. Modes of delivery for HE are based on meeting student and employer needs, so as a result some programmes are offered both full and part time or evening only delivery. The College predominately delivers Level 4 and 5 technical qualifications again to meet the needs of the local communities, this is vital provision for some individuals who would have no other opportunity.
127. The College understands the type of students recruited to its HE programmes and although many enter with lower tariffs, they make substantial progress to complete their qualification. This is demonstrated across several programmes especially in technical qualifications. e.g., students who completed HNC Engineering in 2020/21 the completion rate for entrants with work experience and a level 2 qualification was 91% compared to 95% with entrants with a level 3 qualification. This is also demonstrated in Early years with applicants joining with significant levels of industry experience and lower levels of formal qualifications. For programme finishing in 2020/21 the overall completion on the foundation degree was 79% with entrants with no formal qualification, level 1, or level 2 all having 100% completion.
128. This is not only how the College defines educational gain, in line with the College's strategic goals, it is important that students gain knowledge and skills that enable them to progress either in further study or employment. This is done by ensuring that through the qualifications, graduates of the College can apply relevant theories to practice, demonstrate problem solving skills, grow in confidence and holistically develop beyond their courses. Delivery approaches across the faculties ensure a career focused approach, with real world learning and project-based learning, which is steeped in the development of employability skills.
129. In the Faculty of Digital and Creative no programme requires a work-based element to be completed, however many dual professional staff ensure an array of work-based opportunities occur on all programmes, such as HE student involvement and leading on citywide Halloween and Christmas events including for the last two years, HE student led commercial performance at Hylton Castle in partnership with English Heritage and Sunderland BID.
130. In the Faculty of Sport, Public Services and Wellbeing. significant contribution from employers from uniformed services and the sport and physical activity sectors directly shape the curriculum offer and how this is delivered, ensuring the curriculum is meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Co-designed and co-delivered examples include:

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- The vast array of masterclasses and work experiences (inc virtual delivery) provided by Sport and leisure employers, the Army, Fire Service, Police and Ambulance Service for our Sport and Uniformed Public Services students.
- Uniformed Public Services career mock interviews with the Army, Fire Service and Northumbria Police for our Uniformed Public Services students

4. References

- 001 Higher Education Future Plan 2022-26
- 002 Admission data 2021 and 2022 entrants
- 003 FE Commissioner Diagnostic Assessment Report: City of Sunderland College, Dec 2020 004 Ofsted monitoring report
- 005 Full Ofsted Inspection report
- 006 Wylie and Bisset audit report, July 2022
- 007 Module Evaluation Questionnaires
- 008 Board of Corporation minutes December 2022
- 009 Memorandum of Understanding, University of Cumbria and EPNE.
- 010 External Examiner report for HND Healthcare Practice for England 2022
- 011 QDP student surveys
- 012 PQS minutes
- 013 EPNE – Strategic Overview – Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- 014 HE Group minutes November 2022
- 015 Student Voice Strategy and code of conduct
- 016 Governor student meeting notes and responses
- 017 University of Sunderland Periodic Partnership review 2018
- 018 Destination data J2
- 019 EPNE Curriculum Plan 2019-2023
- 020 External examiner reports in sport, construction, engineering and manufacturing 2022