



Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment for Variation of Degree Awarding Powers

NCG



Review Report

January 2022

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Summary of the assessment team's findings

Underpinning DAPs criteria	
Criterion A: Academic governance	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Met
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	Met
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	Met
Overarching criterion	
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

About this report

This is a report of an assessment of NCG conducted by QAA in January 2022 in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

Assessment for the variation and revocation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) is the process QAA uses to provide advice to the Office for Students (OfS) about the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education delivered by a provider in England that has an existing DAPs authorisation and where variation or revocation is to be considered.

The assessment was conducted in order to inform advice to the OfS on whether the provider's existing renewable powers be granted on an indefinite basis.

Provider information

Legal name	NCG
Trading name	NCG
UKPRN	10004599
Type of institution	Further education college
Date founded	2008
Date of first HE provision	2008
Application route	Variation of powers
Level of powers applied for	Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) up to and including Level 7
Location(s) of teaching/delivery	Newcastle College University Centre

	Carlisle College OLC Campus - Greater Manchester and London Kidderminster College
Subject(s) applied for	All subjects
Current powers held	Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) up to and including Level 7
Date current powers granted (if applicable)	2016
Number of current programmes as at July 2021, as taken from the Provider Information Form	7 Certificates in Higher Education 1 Certificate in Education and Training 41 foundation degrees 1 degree apprenticeship 44 bachelor degrees 5 Post GCE 4 master's degrees
Number of students as at July 2021, as taken from the Provider Information Form	2,158 full-time students 267 part-time students
Number of staff as at October 2021, as taken from the provider's staff spreadsheet	Academic Leaders: 31 Teaching staff: 135 Support Staff: 48
Current awarding body arrangements (if applicable)	N/A

About NCG

NCG is a Group of colleges (the Group/NCG) which has grown from being a regional Group based in the north-east of England to a Group operating across several English regions. It was initially formed in 2008 and during the period until 2017 it grew to comprise five colleges, namely Newcastle College University Centre (NCUC), Carlisle College, Kidderminster College, Lewisham College and Southwark College. The Group's administrative centre is based at NCUC in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The higher education (HE) student numbers provided by the Group in its Provider Information Form in July 2021 for each college were as follows.

	Full-time students	Part-time students
NCUC	1992	267
Carlisle College	70	0
Kidderminster College	6	0

In addition, a total of 90 full-time students were enrolled at the Group's partner college, the Organisational Learning Centre, as noted below.

The Group has not recorded any HE students in July 2021 for Lewisham College or Southwark College, although its HE Strategy includes the delivery of higher education at Southwark College.

The Group received Foundation Degree Awarding Powers in 2011, and Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2016. There have been no significant changes in arrangements in relation to NCG's Degree Awarding Powers brought about by the mergers that have taken place since the last assessment for Degree Awarding Powers. The Group has used these powers to approve and deliver programmes at levels from Level 4 to Level 7. As of July 2021 it offered eight programmes at Level 4, 42 at Level 5, 44 at Level 6, and 9 at Level 7.

Governance of the Group lies with its Corporation Board which delegates matters relating to higher education provision to its subcommittee, the HE Governance Committee. The Group's HE Academic Board reports to the Corporation Board through an Executive Board and is responsible for governance of academic standards and for the Group's regulatory framework. In each college of the Group there is a College Board, reporting to the Corporation Board, with responsibility for college strategy and business planning, relationships with staff and students, curriculum planning, quality of programme delivery, the student experience and safeguarding.

In 2020 the Group approved a partnership with an external college, the Organisational Learning Centre (OLC), leading to the delivery at OLC of two undergraduate programmes validated by the Group, in business management and in health and social care. In July 2021 a total of 90 full-time students were enrolled at OLC.

The Group has acknowledged in its submission that there are inconsistencies in its provision across its colleges in the level of knowledge and understanding on the part of staff of the Academic Regulations, in the time available to staff for reflection and subject-specific scholarship, and in a number of aspects of the student experience. The submission affirms that these inconsistencies arise from the expansion of the Group in the years to 2017, and that the Group regards the year 2021-22 as a transitional period during which these inconsistencies will be addressed and resolved.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA assessment team completed an assessment of the provider according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The OfS referred NCG to QAA for an assessment for the variation of powers on 2 July 2021 and the provider's submission and supporting evidence was received on 17 September 2021. The assessment began on 17 September 2021, culminating in a final report to the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers in April 2022 and final advice to the OfS.

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes
Institution: DN Colleges Group
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Ms Janet Faulkner
Institution: Leeds City College
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Dr Sarah Warnes
Institution: University College London
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor and Subject Assessor for Business and Management

Name: Ms Yvonne Hoggarth
Institution: Lancaster University
Role in assessment team: Institutional Assessor and Student Assessor

The QAA Officer was Dr Stephen Ryrie.

The size and composition of this team is in line with published guidance and as such is comprised of experts with significant experience and expertise across the higher education sector. The team included members with experience of a similar provider to the institution, knowledge of the academic awards offered and included academics with subject expertise. Collectively the team had experience of the management and delivery of higher education programmes from academic and professional services perspectives, included members with regulatory and investigative experience, and had at least one member able to represent the interests of students. The team included at least one senior academic leader qualified to doctoral level. Details of team members were shared with the provider prior to the assessment to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

The assessment team conducted the assessment by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers. The criteria used in relation to this assessment are those that apply in England as set out paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in the OfS's regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria and evidence requirements from the OfS's regulatory framework have been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA.

The assessment team received and considered an initial submission provided by NCG on 17 September 2021 consisting of the 'NCG Self-assessment' with a length of 129 pages accompanied by an evidence base comprising a total of 670 items. In the course of its initial analysis the team requested additional evidence on 1 October; this was provided by NCG on 22 October in the form of an additional 175 items of evidence. Following its analysis of evidence, the team met on 2 November and on 5 November to discuss its analysis. This led to a decision to visit NCG and to ask for further documentary evidence in advance of the visit. NCG subsequently provided a further 604 items of evidence on 19 January 2022. These items were accompanied by a number of 'narratives' whose purpose was to provide context for cognate items supplied in response to the team's requests for specific evidence items.

The assessment team met staff and students of NCG in a series of three online meetings on 26 January 2022. The meetings were with senior staff, with teaching and professional

support staff drawn from all colleges in the Group and from OLC, and with students from all levels of study and from all colleges in the Group and from OLC.

The team carried out sampling of assessed student work on a representative basis, by selecting modules at two levels representative of the Group's provision (Levels 4 and 5) and delivered at two different colleges (NCUC and Carlisle College). This led it to select a sample consisting of student work drawn from two modules, specifically 13 pieces of work from a Level 4 module at Carlisle College (BM102 Managing Business Organisations) and 15 pieces of work from a Level 5 module at NCUC (PFD200 Professional Development).

In each case, the work considered was made up of all of the work submitted by students taking the module.

Details of the evidence which the assessment team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' below.

Explanation of findings

Criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1 - Academic governance

- 1 This criterion states that:
- A1.1: *An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.*
- A1.2: *Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision is conducted in partnership with its students.*
- A1.3: *Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.*

2 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

3 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

4 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To determine if the HE mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, the team reviewed the Group's mission and strategy, available at www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/about-the-college, NCG HE Strategy_consultation_rnd2, [051] NCG Our Strategy Towards 2030, [053] TEF Gold Board Membership and TOR, [583] HE TEF Gold Programme Board ToR and Membership 2021-22, [A1014] NCG HE Outcome of Consultation, [A1087] NCG TEF Gold Programme Minutes - 03.09.20. [B1653]
- b To determine whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility in governance structures the team considered NCG HE Hub and Spoke Model, [001] NCG Corporation Structure, [002] NCG HE - Newcastle College Org Chart, [003] Kidderminster College Org Chart, [005] Southwark College Org Chart, [006] NCG HE Deliberative Structure, [007] NCG HE Deputy Principal HE JD-PS, [008] NCG Academic Registrar JD-PS, [009] NCG Director of HE JD-PS, [010] NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019, [056] HE Academic Board Minutes Reg update Bachelors and Masters - 13-12-2016, [061] HE Academic Board Minutes confirming 1st Emergency Regs 12-06-2020, [067] HE Academic Board Minutes confirming 2nd Emergency Regs 14-12-2020, [071] HE Academic Board ToR and Membership 2020-21, [244] NCG Deliberative Structure AB Update Apr 21, [245] HE Governance ToR, [247] HE Governance Committee minutes and papers, [250-280] HE Academic Board Minutes - 11-10-2019, [289] HE Academic Board Minutes - 16-10-2020, [292] HE Academic Board Minutes - 30-04-2021, [294]

Corporation Terms of Reference - Final and approved, [559] SOP Declaration, [580] 2020-11-13 Stone king - External Governance Review Report - FINAL, [850] 2021-03-15 Governance Review - Action Plan, [855] 2021-04-12 DB Governance Review Position Paper, [856] Breakdown of actions - summarised, [862] 2021-10-06 Updated Action Plan – IDAP, [A1021] 2020-11-23 NCG Corporation Meeting Minutes - 18th November 2020 - Final, [A1061] 2021-05-11 NT Corporation Minutes - 9th March 2021 - Main Meeting – FINAL, [A1064] Narrative Item 31, [B1168] College Board Terms of Reference 21-22 – Final, [B1335] 2021-12-07 College Board Work Plan -2122 Final, [B1336] Newcastle M1 Minutes, [B1337] HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes - 19-09-2019, [B1430] Minutes of the Corporation Board, [A1059-A1067] Meeting with senior staff, [M3] Governor Pen Portraits www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/governors/.

- c To determine whether academic policies support its mission, and whether the Group develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students, the team considered HE Policy and Procedure Tracker, [073] NCG Deliberative Structure AB Update Apr 21, [245] HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee Minutes and HE Tutorial Papers- 21-05-2020, [972] HE Tutorial Policy Papers - Academic Board 12-06-2021, [973] 2021-10 NCG Policy Framework, [974] HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes - 11-03-2021, [975] Print out from website 12-10-21 on HE policies, [A1025] Narrative Item 34, [B1343] Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021 COMMENTS, [B1344] Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021 COMMENTS, [B1345] Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021, [B1346], Evidence of Policy Consultation (1), [B1347] NCG Policies and procedures at www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/our-policies-and-procedures/.
- d To determine if students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance and management of higher education and are supported to do so, the team reviewed NCG HE Student Partnership and Engagement Framework, [084] HE Academic Board ToR and Membership 2020-21, [244] NCG Deliberative Structure AB Update Apr 21, [245] HE Governance ToR, [247] Student voice example- Student commentary HE Governance Minutes 19-11-2020 [493], HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee minutes 25-03-2021 [494], Student voice example- Parent Project - HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes 20-05-2021, [495] Student voice example- Fellow update - HE Academic Board Minutes 25-03-2021, [496] Student Fellow re training for deliberative structure 2021, [952] A1026 2020-11 Student Representative Induction - HE Governance Committee, [A1026] Student Submission IDAP FINAL, [A1131] Item 02 – HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes – 23-09-2021, [B1173] HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee Minutes 25-11.2021 reviewed. [B1411]
- e To determine whether there is a strategic approach to working with others and whether there is robust oversight and governance, the team reviewed HE Academic Board Minutes - 12-06-2020, [291] NCG Institutional Recognition of OLC Franchise Report, [301] OLC Validation Event Report - BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care, [302] OLC Validation Event Report - BA (Hons) Business Management, [303] Operations Manual NCG OLC V.08 FINAL, [304] OLC Franchise Partnership - Quality Assurance Summary, [305] OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance, [306] OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance Feb 2021, [307] OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance Nov 2020, [308] OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance July 2021, [309] Action Plan OLC - June 2021, [312] OLC Update Academic Board July 2021, [314] OLC Partnership Quality and Standards Update

May 2021, [316] NCG Due Diligence questionnaire completed by OLC, [332] NCG Due Diligence questionnaire completed by OLC, [332] NCG OLC Agreement Executed 16.09.2020, [334] OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance May 2021, [335] OLC Confirmation of due diligence process. [346]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

5 The team did not carry out any sampling in relation to this criterion.

What the evidence shows

6 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

7 Following the appointment of the new CEO in 2019 a review of the strategy and mission for the Group was undertaken. This resulted in the NCG Our Strategy Towards 2030 [053] which contains the mission, vision, values and key performance indicators for the strategic themes. The mission and strategy are published on the website. [<https://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/about-the-college/>]

8 The team saw evidence of consultation with staff, students and governors across the colleges in the development of the NCG higher education strategy in the HE Strategy consultation document, [051] as well as evidence of feedback being acted upon in the NCG HE Outcome of Consultation document. [A1087] Teaching and support staff [M2] confirmed that they had been consulted and demonstrated an understanding of the strategy. The strategy clearly states the vision and strategic objectives for the higher education provision within the Group. The mission is 'Enabling social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education'. The vision and strategic objectives contain a focus on inclusiveness, for instance by affirming as one of its guiding principles widening of access to, and success in, higher study and by echoing this in its objectives. This approach is applied through the Group's policies, for instance by the TEF Gold Programme, [583, 1014] which includes strategies for inclusive assessment and developing graduate attributes. A TEF Gold Programme Board has been established with terms of reference [583] which were updated for 2021-22. [A1014] The assessment team was provided with one set of minutes of this board [B1653] which demonstrated it functioning within its terms of reference. In response to a request for evidence of the impact of the programme, the Group provided a narrative [B1652] which did not identify impact but acknowledged that 'at this stage impact is constrained' and provided evidence of plans for fuller implementation. The team nevertheless concluded that evidence of the outcomes of the consultation with staff, students and governors [A1087] was sufficient to show that the Group's mission and strategic direction are coherent and published, are understood by staff, and are applied in its policies.

9 The structure chart [003] together with the terms of reference of the relevant HE committees clearly set out the responsibility and reporting of the management structure. There is a clear corporation structure [002] which is led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who, along with a number of committees with delegated powers, reports to the Corporation Board. Governance structures were reviewed in 2016 [SA p 21] resulting in the introduction of a subcommittee of the NCG Corporation Board, the HE Governance Committee. NCG characterised this as being in response to 'increased expectations about the effectiveness and risk management of governance arrangements'. [SA para 5 p21] Further revisions to the deliberative structures were made in April 2021 with the HE Academic Board reporting into the Executive Board which then reports into the HE Governance Committee and the NCG Corporation Board. [007] Minutes of the HE Academic Board [294] show that its membership includes members from each of the Group's colleges.

10 The Corporation Board is the governing body for the Group. The composition of the

Corporation Board includes up to 11 independent members, the CEO, at least one and no more than two members of staff and at least one and no more than two students. Student members can either be elected by fellow students or by a recognised association representing students (NUS). Under the terms of reference [559] its responsibilities include the determination and review of the education character and mission of the institution and the approval of the quality strategy of the institution. The assessment team saw minutes of the Corporation Board which evidenced the functioning of the Board within the terms of reference. [A1059-A1067] Minutes of the Corporation Board [A1059-A1067] show evidence of clear lines of accountability from the HE Governance Committee, supported by breadth of reporting and depth of scrutiny. This was exemplified, for instance, by scrutiny and discussion of the 'Quality and Performance' reports made to each meeting by the Group's Executive Director of Quality, and by discussion and scrutiny of the Group's policies, such as the Health, Wellbeing and Safety Policy in October 2020 and of the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy in July 2021. The assessment team concluded that there is effective governance by the Corporation Board.

11 The College Boards for each of the colleges in the Group report to the Group's Corporation Board [002] and have identical terms of reference [B1335] which were reviewed for the academic year 2021-22 to give each College Board across the Group the same specific areas of focus including college strategy and business planning, relationships with students, staff and stakeholders and quality of delivery. Although the terms of reference do not specify it, a work plan [B1336] was also introduced which details the proposed agenda items for each of the six annual meetings of the College Boards. In response to a request for evidence of the terms of reference for college boards being applied in practice, the assessment team was provided with a set of minutes [B1337] from the meeting in October 2021 of the Board of Newcastle College, of which NCUC forms a part - the minutes demonstrated the new agenda being effectively used, because there was evidence of discussion of required agenda items and of the actions and conclusions arising from the discussion. Although the team was not provided with comparable evidence from the College Boards of other colleges, it formed the view that there was sufficient evidence in the terms of reference and the work plan to show that College Boards have arrangements which would enable them to be effective in reviewing and approving quality and curriculum strategy. This is for the reason that the team found the work plan [B1336] to be credible because it requires each College Board to meet on six occasions each year, at each meeting to receive and consider reports on a variety of aspects of their responsibilities including reports on quality of delivery of provision, risk reports, audit reports and professional services reports as well as the HE Improvement Plan and the HE Annual Report, and also requires each Board to maintain a Register of Actions.

12 The HE Governance Committee has clear terms of reference [247] which were reviewed and updated in July 2021. [580] The terms of reference state that the membership includes the CEO and at least two other members of the Corporation Board and the HE Sabbatical Student who is also a student governor. The composition of the HE Governance Committee includes four governors who also sit on the Corporation Board. The HE Governance Committee has two other members, an external adviser, and a student governor. The Group provided the team with a narrative [B1168] which states that the role of the external adviser is to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of the committee as previously only the Chair had higher education experience. The team considers that the membership demonstrates depth and strength of leadership in that the external members have significant previous or current experience in higher education, including a former Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Sunderland and a former Principal and Chief Executive of New College Durham who was also a member of the Higher Education Funding Council Board and President of the Association of Colleges and Mixed Economy Group. [Governor Pen Portraits <https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/governors/>] The responsibilities of this committee include receiving

assurance that academic governance is effective and overseeing arrangements for the award of taught degrees and the development of related policies.

13 The deliberative structure chart [007] shows that the HE Academic Board feeds into this committee via the Executive Board. The team saw evidence of HE Academic Board minutes being received and noted in the HE Governance Committee minutes. [278]

14 Through review of minutes and papers of the HE Governance Committee from 2017 to 2021 [250-280] the assessment team saw evidence of challenge and questioning by governors. Minutes demonstrated a breadth of papers presented which included regular performance updates of higher education provision across the Group and consideration of the NCG annual review which covers all of the higher education provision within the Group. The committee is also kept up to date with higher education policy through a standing agenda item entitled National HE Policy update. This evidence [250 –280] gives the team assurance in respect of this committee overseeing higher education across the Group.

15 During 2019-20 NCG commissioned an external governance review for both its further education and its higher education provision [Sap 24] to review how well governance systems and structures work in practice and to identify improvements. The review applied the responsibilities of good governance from the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (2019) and also considered the Advance HE Briefing Note 24 - 'The factors that influence whether governance is effective' (May 2019). The report [850] identified areas of highly effective practices, areas of effective practice with recommendations for improvements and areas requiring more focused improvement across the three themes of Strategy and Planning, Capability and Culture and Structure and Processes. The review commented on the perceived 'high calibre and appropriate expertise' of five recently recruited governors, on 'numerous examples of governor insight and foresight' and the governors' apparent clarity regarding the NCG purpose and direction.

16 In addition, the report made nine high level, six medium and three low level recommendations for governance arrangements across both further education and higher education. This resulted in an action plan [855] drawn up by the Group and updated in October 2021; it was accompanied by a document entitled 'breakdown of actions' [862] which set dates for completion of the actions but did not allocate responsibility. The Governance Review Position Statement [856] dated April 2021 provided an update on progress against actions and a further update on progress was provided in the additional evidence, [A1021] showing that progress has been made against the actions due for completion by September 2021 including for instance the introduction of cross Group training for governors, the revision of agendas and the introduction of twice-yearly meetings between each College Board Chair, the Chair of the Corporation and the Executive Director to the Board. The assessment team concludes that sufficient progress has been made against the recommendations in the external governance review but due to the timing of the submission has not seen any evidence of impact of these actions.

17 The CEO is supported by the Chief Executive Group and Executive Board. The Executive Board comprises the executive leadership team with the heads of the service departments such as finance, information and data, people and development, quality and two executive Principals, the Deputy Principal and the Academic Registrar. The Deputy Principal is responsible for the strategic development of effective and sustainable high quality higher education while the Academic Registrar and the Director of HE each report to the Deputy Principal, with a clear demarcation of responsibilities, the Academic Registrar leading on assurance and Director of HE leading on operations, consistent with the management structure of the Group [001] and with the job descriptions of these roles. [008,009,010] The team's view was that these arrangements demonstrate appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

18 During 2020-21 the Group has taken steps to strengthen the clarity and differentiation of governance and management responsibilities and a paper dated 30 April 2021, reviewing the deliberative structure together with amended terms of reference, [245] was approved by the HE Academic Board. Amended terms of reference and composition of the HE Quality and Standards Committee and of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee show that they have Group-wide responsibilities, and report to the HE Academic Board with distinct remits: the former focusing on quality and the latter (renamed as the Teaching Learning and Enhancement Committee) focusing on enhancement. A reporting calendar [245] for these two committees and the HE Academic Board setting out what is to be reported to each committee has been introduced to ensure a comprehensive system of reporting. The assessment team saw evidence of these revised terms of reference and calendar of reporting being implemented in minutes of the committees [B1430, B1737] and concluded that these changes have strengthened clarity of function.

19 The HE Academic Board terms of reference [244] clearly define the responsibilities of the Board including its role as guardian of degree awarding powers and governance of higher education academic standards and its role in the monitoring and review of the HE Regulatory Framework. The Academic Regulations [056] affirm the HE Academic Board's responsibility for the assurance of standards across the Group's higher education provision.

20 The HE Academic Board minutes provide evidence of it exercising these powers, for instance through reviewing the regulatory framework in approving the emergency regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic, [067, 071] and through consideration and approval of updates to the academic regulations to accommodate new provision at Levels 6 and 7. [061] Further examples of powers being applied are the oversight of the development, implementation and operation of the Group's partnership provision, particularly regarding concerns with student achievement on OLC provision, [294] governance of academic standards in approving the draft degree outcomes statement to assure academic standards, [292] and monitoring progress against targets for NSS. [289]

21 The assessment team considered that this evidence shows that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied across the Group, because the minutes of the HE Academic Board show that it receives and considers reports and data from all colleges in the Group.

22 Academic leadership is evidenced from the Corporation for instance by the approval of the HE Annual Report by the Corporation Board [A1064] following its progress and approval through the deliberative committee structure and the approval of the vision statement within the revised HE Strategy. [A1061] There is also evidence of the Corporation Board challenging proposals in the HE Fees Policy [A1064] thereby providing evidence of scrutiny and challenge rather than just accepting proposals.

23 There are separate reporting structures for the individual colleges. The structure chart for NCUC [003] shows the management structure for the college's higher education provision, with higher education provision being led by the Deputy Principal (HE), but the structure charts for Carlisle College, [004] for Kidderminster College [005] and for Southwark College [006] do not show clear lines of responsibility for the quality and standards of higher education. However the Group's Submission [p29, para 57] describes recently established arrangements for the management of higher education at each college: at Carlisle College a Higher Education Manager has been appointed reporting to the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality; at Southwark College new Higher Education Lead has been appointed; and at Kidderminster College a post as Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Creative Industries post has been created to strengthen higher education leadership. The assessment team regarded the assurance of senior staff in discussion [M3] that these posts

are in place as being credible, and formed the view that the Group has established satisfactory arrangements for the governance of higher education within its constituent colleges.

24 The assessment team concludes that the Group's governance structures show sufficient depth and strength of leadership and clarity and differentiation of function and of responsibility as demonstrated by the experience of the governance committee, the positions and responsibilities within the senior leadership team, and the evidence of governance of academic standards by the HE Academic Board. The Group has clear and appropriate lines of accountability for academic responsibilities and a positive approach to evaluating its own governance structures. There is clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the Group's constituent colleges.

25 NCG has a suite of policies which support the vision and guiding principles in the HE Strategy to 2030 in respect of being inclusive and widening access to higher education. This is because the equality impact assessments applicable to each policy ensures that the policies are inclusive in that each requires assurance from the policy author that the policy or procedure does not impact unfairly on any protected characteristics. With a view to ensuring that policies are appropriately applicable across the Group, the policy framework [974] categorises policies as either 'compliant, cascade or local' with compliant policies being approved by the Corporation/Executive Board, cascade policies by the Corporation/Executive Board, and localised cascade approved by the college senior team or college board. Local policies are written and approved by the college senior team or board. The framework provides that all policies must undergo consultation and should not be put forward until a formal response has been received from all areas that are consulted. The assessment team saw evidence of the consultation with colleges from across the Group in the development of the HE Tutorial Policy [973] and the HE Course Transfer Policy. [972]

26 The assessment team concludes that its academic policies support the higher education mission, aims and objectives in that they promote a culture of inclusiveness and because there are arrangements for consultation and consistent application of policies across the Group.

27 The policy framework [974] contains the Group's approach to policy development and provides that all policies must undergo consultation and may not be put forward for approval until a formal response has been received from all areas that are consulted. The responsibilities and timelines for policy renewal were reviewed in a paper to the HE Quality and Standards Committee in March 2021[975] and resulted in updates to the Policy and Procedure tracker [073] to reflect the amendments to the timelines and names of committees.

28 Students are represented on boards and committees in the deliberative structure, specifically on the HE Governance Committee, the HE Quality and Standards Committee, the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the HE Academic Board as shown in the terms of reference and minutes of these bodies. [247, 244, 494, 495] The team also saw evidence of participation of students in colleges across the Group in minutes from: Programme Committee meetings at Kidderminster College [B1625, B1626]; Curriculum Forums at Carlisle College [B1600] and at Kidderminster College [B1601, B1602]; and 'Town Hall' events [A1071]. However, the submission acknowledges [p.31. para 71] that student representation in the deliberative structure at Group level is drawn only from NCUC students. A review of the deliberative structure in a paper 'Changes to NCG's Deliberative Structure' [245] as approved by the HE Academic Board in April 2021 [294], drew attention to limited representation of students and staff from colleges other than NCUC and to a need for greater awareness, dissemination and engagement across all colleagues and students: it specifies that from 2021-22 there will be one student representative on the HE Learning,

Teaching and Enhancement Committee and at least one student representative on the HE Quality and Standards Committee. Hence, the deliberative structure as approved by the HE Academic Board [245, 294] does not allow for student representation from all colleges because it only allows for a single student member of the HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. Although the submission affirms that the lack of representation from the other colleges will be addressed during 2021-22, the minutes of the HE Quality and Standards Committee for September 2021 [B1173] and of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee in November 2021 [B1411], and the composition of these committees [245] show no evidence that this has yet taken place. The team concluded that the Group does not have secure arrangements for the engagement of students from all colleges in the governance and management of the Group's higher education provision.

29 The assessment team saw evidence of the consultation with colleges from across the Group in the development of the HE Tutorial Policy [973] and the HE Course Transfer Policy [972] both of which were also discussed at the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) at which there was student representation. The assessment team saw evidence of consultation with staff beyond the deliberative structure as indicated in the narrative provided by the Group. [B1343] The list of policies taken to consultation in the Group's colleges [B1347] shows that since 2020 a total of five Group-wide policies were the subject of consultation with staff and in some cases also with students. This was exemplified in the comments received [B1344-B1346] on the Group's Fitness to Study Policy which showed evidence of thoughtful and constructive comment by members of staff. Policies and procedures are available for students via links in the student handbook which is available in electronic form to all students. For prospective students, policies and procedures can be found on the NCG website at www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/our-policies-and-procedures/ as confirmed by the Group. [A1025] The assessment team concluded that the Group develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students.

30 The Group approved its Student Partnership and Engagement Framework [084] in 2019: this outlines the Group's expectations in relation to student partnership and engagement. In response to a request for evidence of the impact of the implementation of the Student Partnership and Engagement Framework and of the HE student representative system, the Group provided a narrative [A1047] which related only to students at NCUC, but which demonstrated the impact of this framework including the increased number of students involved in shared projects, initiatives and activities and increase number of student representatives. Student representatives at NCUC are supported by the Research, Scholarship and Student Engagement Team which is responsible for ensuring attendance at meetings and training of student representatives. The assessment team saw evidence of training materials for student representatives at NCUC [952] and an induction presentation [A1026] for the student governor on the HE Governance Committee. The student submission [A1131] confirmed that the student governor felt able to make effective contributions to the process and felt that she had a positive impact.

31 The assessment team saw evidence of examples of student participation in deliberation in minutes of the HE Governance Committee, [493] the HE Quality and Standards Committee [495] and the HE Academic Board. [496] These examples showed students' contributions to discussion regarding the Group's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the support available to students who are parents, and the system of student representation itself, and additionally provided evidence of students' views leading to the identification of actions by staff of the Group.

32 At present NCG has a single partner, specifically the Organisational Learning Centre (OLC), which offers programmes leading to NCG awards on a franchise basis. Prior to establishing the partnership agreement with OLC in 2020, NCG undertook a due diligence

process [332] which resulted in a positive recommendation to proceed with the partnership by the Director of HE. [346] Minutes of the HE Academic Board [291] show that it subsequently approved the development of this partnership. This process was robust because it was based on an extensive analysis of OLC's legal standing, existing links, regulatory policies, financial standing, academic profile, and staffing base, and because it resulted in a report detailing the outcomes of this analysis. [332]

33 Subsequently NCG held an Institutional Approval event [301] in August 2020 leading to the approval of OLC for the delivery of programmes validated by the Group. The record of this approval shows that the process was robust because it considered a wide range of factors relevant to a decision to approve the partnership, including the findings of the due diligence report, [332] arrangements for assuring quality and standards of provision, and operational arrangements for programme delivery, as well as arrangements for health and safety, data security and financial arrangements.

34 Two subsequent programme approval events [302, 303] led to the approval specifically of the BSc Health and Social Care and the BA Business Management for delivery at OLC. The assessment team found that these processes were carried out with robust and effective oversight and with due attention to potential risks, because they made use of the Group's existing process for programme approval which, as described in Criterion B3, the team has found to be secure.

35 Following these events an Institutional Agreement [334] and an Operations Manual [304] were agreed and signed. These documents are suitable for governing the relationship between the Group and OLC because they detail the financial arrangements, the roles and responsibilities of each party and operational arrangements including staff roles and responsibilities for pastoral support and personal tutoring, student partnership, assessment, complaints, recognition of prior learning and admissions. Provision at OLC is subject to the same quality assurance arrangements as applies to provision within the Group itself, as evidenced by the Group's identification of and response to concerns relating to student achievement at OLC, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

36 The OLC Franchise Partnership - Quality Assurance Summary [305] sets out arrangements for oversight and quality assurance of provision at OLC. These arrangements affirm that NCG's academic regulations apply to provision at OLC, and that the collaboration is managed by a Partnership Board which reports to the HE Quality and Standards Committee. Minutes of meetings of the Partnership Board [427, 432] show that it is attended by senior staff of the Group and of OLC, and that it has given detailed consideration to operational matters including to student progression and achievement, to how the student voice is heard, and to staff training needs at OLC. The Partnership Boards termly reports [306-309, 335] show evidence of detailed attention to issues relating to the quality of provision at OLC including the establishment, monitoring and updating of an action plan whose elements relate to actions to secure standards or quality of provision at OLC. The effectiveness of these arrangements is evidenced by the Group's identification of concerns relating to academic standards in a programme being delivered at OLC and the subsequent interventions [312] carried out with oversight by the HE Quality and Standards Committee [316] and the HE Academic Board. [314] The assessment team formed the view that the Group has taken a strategic approach to the approval of its single partnership, and that its approval process has been informed by suitable due diligence and by the effective assessment of risk, and that it has effective arrangements for governance in relation to provision delivered at OLC.

Conclusions

37 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to

the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

38 The governance structure and the Group's positive response to the Governance Review shows evidence of effective academic governance, with a positive approach to evaluating its own governance structures. The Group's mission and strategic direction are coherent, published and understood, and its academic policies support its mission, aims and objectives. There is evidence of clarity and differentiation of function in relation to academic governance structures and arrangements for managing higher education provision across the Group, evidence that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied, and evidence of appropriate depth and strength of leadership. The assessment team therefore concludes that the Group has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

39 The Group develops, implements, and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students. There is an established student representative system and forums in place for students across the colleges to express views. While there is evidence of effective participation by students of NCUC in the Group's deliberative structure and evidence that such students are supported to engage effectively, there is currently ineffective representation of students of other colleges in the deliberative structure. Because of this, the assessment team concludes that the Group does not have secure arrangements for the engagement of students from all colleges in the governance and management of higher education provision at the level of the Group, and that there is no evidence that the Group has yet taken steps to implement its declared intention of addressing the limited representation of students from colleges other than NCUC in its deliberative structure. Hence, the team concluded that there is only weak evidence that academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with the Group's students.

40 The Group has a single partnership with OLC. It has taken a strategic approach to the development and approval of this partnership: its approval by the HE Academic Board has been informed by suitable due diligence and by the effective assessment of risk. The team therefore concludes that the governance and management of opportunities for partnerships working is robust and effective and that the decision to work with OLC was the result of a strategic approach.

41 In considering this criterion, the team noted the weakness in the Group's arrangements for engagement of students from colleges other than NCUC in the governance and management of the Group's higher education provision. However, the team also noted the numerous positive aspects of Group's arrangements: the Group has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities; academic governance is conducted in partnership with students from NCUC whose students form a large majority of the Group's student body; the effectiveness of arrangements for the governance and management of provision at OLC. The team formed the view that these positive aspects outweighed the weakness in arrangements for engagement of students from colleges other than NCUC in the governance and management of higher education provision. On balance the team concluded that this criterion is met.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

42 This criterion states that:

B1.1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

B1.2: A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

43 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

44 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

45 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To identify how the Group seeks to ensure that its academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are effective and implemented fully and consistently, the team reviewed NCUC HE Achievement Coordinator, [020] NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019, [056] NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] NCG Academic Regulations Section C 2021, [058] Minor and Major Modification Guidance, [138] HE Academic Board minutes Reg update MEC and Alt assessment - 07-06-2018, [064] HE Academic Board minutes confirming 1st Emergency Regs 12-06-2020, [067] HE Academic Board minutes Reg update to include partners - 16-10-2020, [068] HE Academic Board minutes confirming 2nd Emergency Regs 14-12-2020, [071] HE Policy and Procedure Tracker, [073] NCG HE Admissions Policy, [074] NCG HE Assessment Policy Draft 2021, [075] NCG HE Tutorial Policy, [078] NCG TLA Policy, [082] PR Complaints Flowchart, [098] PR Academic Appeals Procedure September, [103] PR18 Validation and Approvals Process, [116] PR19 Academic Misconduct Procedure and Process, [117] HE Academic Board minutes - 12-06-2020, [291] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling – NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev – NCUC, [371] Academic Appeal Example, [A1028] Complaints Example. [A1029]
- b To establish whether definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the Group are being maintained, whether these records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and whether there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] PR18 Validation and Approvals Process, [116] GU07 Programme Annual Review Report Guidance, [130] HE06 Moderation of module guide, [147] VAL05 Programme Specification, [220] Example of NCG Award

Certificate, [823] FdA Interior and Spatial Design Programme Annual Review Report HE27, [995] Moderation of module guide HE06 – dissertation, [A1003] Counselling programme specification, [B1424] BA Business Management Programme Annual Review, [B1543] BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Module and Delivery Specifications. [B1570]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

46 The team considered a sample of students' assessed work as described in 'How the assessment was conducted'.

What the evidence shows

47 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

48 NCG achieved Foundation Degree Awarding Powers in 2011 and Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2016. It has in place an academic framework and regulations [056-058] which are appropriate to its current status. The framework is appropriate because it covers provision at Levels 4-7 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and includes provision from admissions through to progression and award at each of the levels. The academic regulations provide detailed regulations covering admissions, all aspects of assessment, including mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct, appeals and complaints and classification of awards. The academic regulations are supported by a suite of policies which include, but are not limited to, the Admissions Policy, [074] the Validation and Approval Process, [116] the Assessment Policy, [075] the Academic Misconduct Procedure, [117] the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [082] the Tutorial Policy, [078] the Academic Appeals Procedure [103] and the Complaint Procedure. [098,820] These policies are comprehensive in that they cover the student lifecycle from admission to award and progression and the lifecycle of a validated programme from development through to validation and modification.

49 The team saw evidence of academic regulations and policies being applied fully and consistently. For instance, examples of records of treatment of academic misconduct [988, 989] show that the stages in the academic misconduct procedure [117] were followed consistently; examples of records of the approval of programmes [366, 371], as discussed in Criteria B2, and B3 show that the approval took place consistently with the process; examples of records of academic appeals [A1028, A1029] as discussed in Criterion B3 show that appeals were dealt with in accordance with the Academic Appeal Procedure. [103]

50 The renewal and approval of policies is tracked by the HE Registry on a central tracker [073] which allocates responsibilities for review and approval. The assessment team saw evidence of discussion and approval of policies by the relevant committees and boards as stated in the tracker. [073] The Academic Regulations have been periodically reviewed and amended since the time of introduction as evidenced by HE Academic Board minutes. For instance, amendments were made in June 2018 [064] to the Module Examination Committee process and in October 2020 [068] to ensure that partnerships were covered by the regulations. [067,071] Emergency regulations [067, 071] were introduced in 2020-21 to support students during the pandemic, and these were approved by the HE Academic Board at the June 2020 meeting. [291] The team found that the Group's academic framework and regulations are subject to approval by the HE Academic Board and that there is a secure process for reviewing and tracking amendments to its regulations. The assessment team formed the view that the Group has established transparent frameworks and regulations governing its provision and that these are implemented fully and consistently.

51 There is a consistent structure for programme specifications, expressed through a template [220] which requires specifications to include programme aims, the national

reference points used in its development, as well as its structure, its intended learning outcomes, and its approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The team formed the view that this structure provides a suitable basis for the definitive record of each programme.

52 The validation and approval process for new and amended programmes [116] states that post-validation documents are held by registry in a central repository in a non-modifiable form with read-only access for other staff. Examples of programme specifications [B1570, B1424] show that they are subject to version control and contain a table setting out a record of any modifications: the Academic Regulations [057] and Minor and Major Modification Guidance [138] set out the process for consideration and approval of modifications to programmes, based on clear guidance on their classification as either 'minor' or 'major'. Teaching staff from across the Group [M2] affirmed that curriculum leaders or heads of curriculum undertake a sign off process at the beginning of each academic year to confirm that module guides given to students are consistent with definitive programme specifications. The team found that this process was evident in examples of the moderation of module guides. [A1003,147]

53 Students are made aware of the basis for the delivery and assessment of their programme in module guides. As evidence that definitive records of programmes are used for delivery and assessment, the team considered two examples of module guides [985, 986] and found that they align with the definitive programme and module specifications, specifically the module learning outcomes, details of assessment tasks and the grading criteria. The team concluded that the Group has secure processes for maintaining definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and of each programme offered by it, and that these are used for delivery and assessment of programmes.

54 While the Group's guidance to programme teams [130] in relation to annual programme reviews does not explicitly include guidance on the use of definitive programme documentation to inform the review, examples of the reports of programme annual reviews [995, B1543] show evidence that programme teams have considered and reviewed the learning, teaching and assessment practices as set out in definitive programme documentation.

55 Students who have successfully completed their programme are provided with a certificate [823] which clearly states the name of the award and sets out a 'statement of academic record' which provides a record of marks achieved, although only those at the highest level of the award. The assessment team concluded that on successful completion students receive definitive records of their studies.

Conclusions

56 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

57 The Group has established frameworks and a comprehensive set of regulations governing its provision; there is evidence that these are implemented fully and consistently and that there is a secure process for review and updating of regulations overseen by the HE Academic Board as the Group's senior academic authority. The team concluded that the Group has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

58 The Group has established secure processes for maintaining definitive records of each qualification and programme that it approves, and the team saw evidence that these records are used for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review. On successful completion of a programme, students receive definitive records of their studies. The team concludes, therefore, that this criterion is met.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

59 This criterion states that:

B2.1 An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

B2.2 Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

60 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

61 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

62 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To verify that higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019, [056] BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Module and Delivery Specifications. [B1570]
- b To determine whether there is evidence which demonstrates the setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of external points of reference including students, the assessment team examined PR18 Validation and Approvals Process, [116] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev - NCUC, [371] Student voice example - Student commentary HE Governance minutes 19-11-2020, [493] 2020-21 NCG External Examiner Reports - Combined. [500]
- c To verify whether programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] VAL03 Validation Event Panel List, [218] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev – NCUC, [371] NCG Validation Event Report - FdSc Games Technology - NCUC. [372]
- d To determine whether credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of

the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied, the team examined Standardisation Event Evidence, [983] FD218_Internal Moderation of Assessment Decisions HE07, [990] PEC minutes - Carlisle College 05072021, [A1035] NCG Board of Examiners minutes 15.07.21, [A1043] NCG Board of Examiners minutes 16.07.22, [A1044] NCG Board of Examiners Minutes 28.09.21. [A1045]

- e To determine whether programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree awarding body are being maintained, the team considered GU07 Programme Annual Review Report Guidance, [130] HE27 Programme Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21, [162] HE Academic Board minutes - 14-12-2020, [293] NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2021, [409] FdA Interior and Spatial Design Programme Annual Review Report HE27, [995] NCUC Annual Review Report 20-21 FINAL, [B1139] BA Business Management Programme Annual Review. [B1543]

- f To determine whether, in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the Group makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise, the team examined PR13 Internal and External SPA Approval Process - issue 3 Final, [112] PR14 Monitoring responses to External Examiner reports, [113] EE14 NCG External Examiner Moderation Visit Agenda, [209] EE20 External Examiner Appointment Criteria, [213] EE24 NCG External Examiner Change of Duty Form, [214] VAL00 Checklist for Validation Documentation, [215] NCG EE Report BSc Health and Social Care - OLC, [310] NCG EE Report Response BSc Health and Social Care - OLC, [311] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - BA Creative Digital Design - NCUC, [370] HE Annual Review Report 2017-18, [414] NCG HE Annual Review Report 2018-19, [415] NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20, [416] NCG EE Report BA Business Management Top Up OLC, [489] NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2017-18, [497] NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2018-19, [498] NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2019-20, [499] 2020-21 NCG External Examiner Reports - Combined, [500] 2020-21 NCG Response to External Examiner Reports - Combined. [502]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

63 The team considered a sample of students' assessed work as described in 'How the assessment was conducted'.

What the evidence shows

64 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

65 Section A of the Academic Regulations [056] affirms that all qualifications offered are consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and that level descriptors are aligned to the FHEQ. This document also sets out award-level descriptors at each of Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. These descriptors are aligned with the FHEQ because they adopt the same terminology and cover the same aspects of skills, knowledge and understanding as that of the FHEQ in describing the achievement expected for awards at each level. The assessment team concluded that the academic regulations are sufficient to ensure that standards are maintained.

66 To verify that definitive records of programmes are aligned to the FHEQ and that

they set out learning outcomes and modes of assessment which are likely to enable students to demonstrate that they meet the descriptors contained in the FHEQ, the team examined an example, specifically the specifications of modules contributing to the BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation. [B1570] The team found that the specification of modules at Level 6 include learning outcomes which are aligned with descriptors at Level 6 in the FHEQ. The team concluded that there is evidence that programme specifications serve to maintain academic standards through their alignment with the FHEQ.

67 Samples of assessed student work for one module at Level 4 at Carlisle College (BM102 Managing Business Organisations - 13 samples of work across two assessments) and from one module at Level 5 at NCUC (PFD200 Professional Development - 15 samples of work with one assessment) demonstrate that the learning outcomes in each module reflect the appropriate FHEQ threshold level. In all cases the grades awarded were appropriate to the level of the work being assessed and to the quality of the work being assessed. The team formed the view that these samples provide evidence that learning outcomes and student achievement are consistent with the FHEQ.

68 Evidence drawn from Academic Regulations, definitive records of programmes and samples of student work led the team to conclude that the Group's qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

69 Evidence to show that external points of expertise are drawn upon in the setting and maintaining of standards is evidenced in the Validations and Approval Process, [116] which affirms that when a new programme is being assessed, panel members bring relevant internal, external and independent expertise, through the inclusion of students, employer representation and external academic representatives. Records of the validation of new programmes, for example of the FDA 3D Garment Design and Product Development [371] and the BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices, [366] show evidence of effective participation in validation events from external academics, employers and students, for instance in assisting the validation panel to consider graduate employability, staffing resources, programme pathways and modes of assessment.

70 The student voice, along with that of independent governors, is additionally heard in the HE Governance Committee whose minutes [493] show that the student representative has contributed effectively to discussions on topical issues relating to maintenance of standards, for instance to the implications for group working and dissertation research during the pandemic.

71 In considering the use of external expertise in maintaining standards, the team noted that external examiners' reports for 2020-21 [500] consistently show that external examiners had received sufficient samples of student work from a range of assessment tools to form a view on standards and that they were consistently satisfied with standards set for the awards concerned.

72 The assessment team formed the view that the setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students.

73 The Academic Regulations [057] include regulations governing processes for programme approval. These are clear and comprehensive because they specify aspects of programme design and delivery which must be considered in approving a programme, the minimum requirements for the assessment regulations for an approved award, and the required composition of panels for the approval of a programme.

74 The Group's procedures when composing a panel for a validation event [218] are consistent with the academic regulations [057] and ensure that panel members are

appointed who are HE Registry representatives, college representatives external to the curriculum, academic staff from other providers, employer and student representatives and senior management representation; the team formed the view that these arrangements are sufficient to ensure that panels have adequate breadth of experience.

75 The reports of validation events for BSc Counselling and Therapeutic Practices [366] and BA Creative Digital Design [370] show that the events considered the aspects of programme design and delivery specified in the Academic Regulations. [057] The reports led the team to the view that the qualifications offered are at the appropriate level and correspond to the FHEQ. This is because the validation processes give careful and detailed consideration to aspects of the programmes relevant to the maintenance of standards, including to assessment strategies, to modes of delivery and to requirements for admission.

76 In assessing whether approval events consider whether and how standards set in new programmes meet the required levels, the team noted that, for instance, the records of the approval events for BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices, [366] for FDA 3D Garment Design and Product Development [371] and for FdSc Games Technology, [372] shows evidence of detailed consideration of learning outcomes at the highest levels of achievement on each programme, of how assessment tasks will be designed to enable students to demonstrate these outcomes, and of how the volume of credit is related to the volume of assessment.

77 The processes specified in the Academic Regulations in relation to programme approval, and their implementation in respect of the composition of validation panels and of the reports of validation events led the team to conclude that programme approval arrangements are robust and applied consistently, and are in accordance with the Group's Academic Regulations, and that records of programme approval events show that these events verify that qualifications meet the required levels.

78 Examples of the minutes of meetings of the Group's Board of Examiners [A1043-A1045] show that credit and qualifications are awarded only on the achievement of learning outcomes. These minutes show that the Board received and considered detailed records of the achievements of individual students and that the Board heard and considered the views of both internal and external examiners in respect of the conduct of assessment and levels of student achievement. Agendas of these meetings include opportunities for consideration by the Board of any exceptional matters affecting students' performance, although no such matters were brought to the attention of the Board in the examples considered by the team. These minutes also consistently show that external examiners are satisfied that the Group is awarding credit based on achievement of learning outcomes.

79 The team saw evidence that procedures for the oversight of assessment processes are sufficient to ensure that academic standards are being monitored and maintained. For example, the record of the standardisation event in Health, Social Care & Counselling in September 2020 [983] shows evidence of thorough discussion by staff of the marking and moderation process with a view to ensuring that threshold standards are being met; minutes of the Carlisle College Programme Examination Committee [A1035] and those of NCUC Programme Examination Committee for Beauty Hospitality Travel and Tourism [A1036] show evidence of consideration of the views of the internal moderator and the external examiner on the overall marks awarded and of whether student achievement shows that standards are being met.

80 The team also considered the conduct of internal confirmation of outcomes of assessments prior to their consideration by the Board of Examiners. There is a Group-wide process [100] for the internal moderation of assessed work which sets out a detailed and comprehensive approach to ensuring that agreed grading criteria are used and that the

required standard for the assessment has been maintained. The implementation of the process was evidenced in examples of completed internal moderation forms [990] for assessment of modules in the Foundation Degree for Specialists in Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. These show evidence of a transparent system for the moderation of assessed student work by a second internal marker, with a clear record of the conduct of the process and a detailed record of its outcomes. This evidence gives confidence to the assessment team that grades awarded on the basis of assessed student work are consistent with the achievement of learning outcomes.

81 The assessment team formed the view that the Group has policies and practices which are sufficient to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the Group have been satisfied.

82 The Group's Higher Education Annual Review Reports for 2019-20 [409] and for 2020-21 [B1139] include a detailed and comprehensive review of data on student progression and achievement by curriculum area accompanied by an analysis of factors influencing trends in the data, summaries of programme approvals and changes during the year, evaluations of the reports of external examiners, examples of good practice identified through classroom observations and a list of areas identified for improvement during the year. This report provides a basis for consideration of how standards across the Group are being maintained. At the time of the assessment visit no record of the consideration of the report for 2020-21 by the HE Academic Board was yet available. However, the minutes of the meeting of the HE Academic Board in December 2020 [293] show evidence that the Board received and considered the report for 2019-20, and that it gave detailed attention to matters relating to student progress and achievement, including to the maintenance of standards for first-class honours degrees.

83 To enable it to consider the Group's arrangements for ensuring the maintenance of standards at programme level, the team considered the template for Annual Review Reports [162] and the Group's guidance for such reports. [130] While the template and the guidance include no specific requirement for consideration of the maintenance of standards, they ensure consistency of reporting by requiring consideration of and reporting on aspects of programme delivery likely to be relevant to standards, including assessment practices and consideration of the views of external examiners. The team also considered two examples provided by the Group of Programme Annual Review reports, specifically those for FdA Interior and Spatial Design in 2019-20 [995] and for BA Business Management in 2020-21. [B1543] These reports show that a significant feature of the reviews was consideration of the effects and impact of changes made to delivery and assessment due to the pandemic. In that context, the maintenance of standards was considered in relation to final levels of student achievement in comparison to previous years and to arrangements made to secure the continuing integrity of assessment tasks. The reports considered also ensured consistency in their approach by including a review of programme strengths and of actions required, as well as of progress towards meeting actions from the previous year.

84 The team concluded that the Group's arrangements for annual review at programme level and at Group level are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the Group's academic standards are being maintained.

85 The Group's HE Annual Review Reports in respect of 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 [414, 415, 416 respectively] include analyses of student achievement across the Group at threshold levels and at levels beyond the threshold. The team considered that this provides evidence that the Group takes steps to demonstrate that the standards they set and maintain

above the threshold are reliable over time.

86 The assessment team considered the Group's use of external examiners in establishing and maintaining standards. It found that there are clear criteria for the appointment of external examiners, [213] a clear approval process for their appointment, [112] a clear process for monitoring responses to external examiner reports, [113] and clear arrangements for supporting external examiners in their roles, as shown for instance in the induction checklist, [204] the agenda for external examiners' induction event, [205] and the standard agenda for external examiners' moderation visits. [209] The criteria for appointment [213] include requirements that external examiners have knowledge and understanding of UK sector-agreed reference points for academic standards as well as relevant academic or professional qualifications at least to the level of qualifications being examined.

87 The team considered the 52 external examiners' reports in respect of 2020-21 [500] and the Group's responses to them, [502] and the NCG Chief External Examiner Reports 2017-2020. [497-499] The team also considered the external examiners' reports for provision at OLC, specifically for the BSc Health and Social Care [310, 311] and for the BA Business Management. [489] The team found that these consistently show that external examiners were satisfied with standards set for the awards concerned, and that they consistently confirmed that standards are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK providers. External examiners also consistently expressed satisfaction with the nature and level of assessment tasks and confirmed that they had received sufficient samples of student work from a range of modes of assessment to form a view on standards. As discussed in Criterion B3, the team also found that there are clear and robust processes for considering and responding to issues raised in external examiners' reports and that the Group makes scrupulous use of external examiners in maintaining standards through the moderation of assessment tasks and of students' assessed work. The team's view is that the Group's use of external examiners supports the setting and maintaining of academic standards and the comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications.

88 Records of validation events for the approval of new programmes provide further evidence of the use of independent expertise. For example, the records of the validation of BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices [366] and of the BA Creative Digital Design [370] show that there were external members of the validation panel drawn from employers and external academic representatives, as well as student representatives: these members led or contributed to discussion of issues relating to the maintenance of standards in respect, for instance, of ensuring recruitment of suitably qualified students, of enabling students to develop skills through the use of live employer-based briefs, and of steps to be taken to ensure that modes of assessment cover all relevant learning outcomes. The team concluded that NCG is making secure use of external and independent expertise to support the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

Conclusions

89 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

90 The Group has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the standards of its higher education qualifications. It has appropriate procedures for the design and approval of programmes that ensure that its qualifications meet the threshold standards described in the FHEQ. Evidence of the process for programme approval, and its implementation in respect of the composition of validation panels and of the reports of validation events led the team to conclude that programme approval arrangements are robust and applied consistently and are in accordance with the

Group's Academic Regulations. The setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students, through the use of external examiners and of external expertise in programme approval and through the voice of independent governors and student representatives in the HE Governance Committee. External examiner reports comment positively on comparability of standards with similar programmes or subjects in other UK providers.

91 Evidence from definitive records of programmes led the team to conclude that the Group's qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the threshold academic standards of the FHEQ. Samples of students' assessed work provide evidence that learning outcomes and student achievement are consistent with the FHEQ.

92 Evidence from records of meetings of the Board of Examiners and from outcomes of processes for the oversight of assessment show that the Group has policies and practices which are sufficient to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only when learning outcomes have been achieved.

93 Arrangements for annual reporting at programme level are consistently applied through use of a Group-wide template and guidance. Examples of programme annual reports demonstrate a consistent approach to reporting and show that arrangements for annual reporting at programme level are sufficient to verify that standards are being maintained. Examples of HE Annual Review Reports show that they provide a basis for consideration by the HE Academic Board of how standards across the Group are being maintained. The team concludes, therefore, that this criterion is met.

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

94 This criterion states that:

B3.1 Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

95 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

96 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

97 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

Design and approval of programmes

a To verify that the Group has effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, that the responsibility for approving new programmes is clearly assigned including the involvement of external expertise, that relevant staff are informed of and provided with guidance and support on the processes for approval and of their role within them and that close links are maintained between learning support services and the programme planning and approval processes, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] PR18 Validation and Approvals Process, [116] HE28a NCUC Curriculum Area HE Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21, [163] HE30 NCUC College Summary HE Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21, [165] HE33 NCG Strategic Planning Approval Form, [168] SPAM Sub-Committee ToR, [246] HE SPAM Committee minutes - 12-07-2021 - modifications Example, [248] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC, [366], NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev - NCUC, [371] NCG Validation Event Report - FdSc Games Technology - NCUC, [372] NCG Validation Event Report - Cert HE Mech Man Engineering - NCUC, [373] NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2021, [409] Newcastle_College_HigherEducation_CurriculumFootprint 2021-22, [880] Narrative Item 35, [B1414] Inclusive curriculum checklist (draft), [B1416] NCG Validation and Approval Process Training, [B1426] Narrative Item 37, [B1427] Item 10 - NCUC Validation Recommendations 1819, [B1428] Item 11 - NCUC validation Update (Sep 2020), [B1429] HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes - 19-09-2019, [B1430] Cumbria Police Emails, [B1686] IET Notes from Employer Consultation 171121, [B1687] and met with teaching and support staff, [M2] and with senior staff. [M3]

Learning and Teaching

b To verify that the Group articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and

reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, and that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the team considered NCG Our Strategy Towards 2030, [053] NCG TLA Policy, [082] GU11 HE Tutorial A Guide for Staff 1920 (NCUC), [134] HE Academic Board minutes - 12-06-2020, [291] NCUC Forum Minutes 24 March 2021 FINAL, [492] CPD Strategy [726] Tutorial audit - Business, [824] Carlisle Tutorial Records, [A1123] Kidderminster Tutorial Records, [A1124] NCUC Tutorial Records, [A1125] Student Submission IDAP FINAL, [A1131] NCUC Annual Review Report 20-21 FINAL, [B1139] Tutorial Record Grace Cummins, [B1248] Calum Wright Tutorial Record, [B1249] Leanne Bradley Tutorial Record, [B1251] NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Update, [B1320] HE only space engineering, [B1434] Counselling space, [B1435] MPA HE only spaces, [B1438] NCUC forum minutes Dec 21, [B1439] Carlisle Business and Engineering spaces, [B1445] LTIG agenda minutes 20 May, [B1447] LTIG agenda minutes 7 May, [B1448] NCG digital strategy August 2021, [B1449] Narrative Item 52, [B1466] WRG records 20/21, [B1467] WRG records 20/21, [B1467] WRG records 21/22, [B1468] SRG testimony Beauty, [B1469] WRG feedback MPA, [B1470] Student feedback MPA, [B1471] WRG/SRG testimonials A&D, [B1475] Narrative Item 53, [B1477] Narrative Item 50, [B1597] HE LTA strategy, [B1614] Narrative Item 10, [B1718] Learning Resources Academic board 7 Oct, [B1739] LTEC Resource capital monitoring, [B1740] HE Resource updates, [B1744] and met with students, [M1] and senior staff. [M3]

Assessment

- c To verify that the Group operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought, that staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, that the Group operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice, and that processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section C 2021, [058] NCG HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, [077] NCG TLA Policy, [082] PR HE Moderation Process, [100] PR19 Academic Misconduct Procedure and Process, [117] GU Assessment - A Guide to Good Practice in Assessment, [121] VAL06 Programme Handbook, [221] VAL7c NCG Level 4 Generic Module - RPL MDD, [225] Action Plan OLC - June 2021, [312] OLC Update Academic Board July 2021, [314] OLC Partnership Quality and Standards Update May 2021, [316] 2020-21 NCG External Examiner Reports - Combined, [500] 2020-21 NCG Response to External Examiner Reports - Combined, [502] RPL process notes for staff - Feb 2020, [749] RPL process notes for students - Feb 2021, [750] Programme Proposal and Validation Evidence - Education, [980] GT101 Games Design Module Guide 2021-22, [985] HSC301 Policy in Practice Module Guide 2021-22, [986] Academic Misconduct Example 1, [988] Academic Misconduct Example 2, [989] FD218_Internal Moderation of Assessment Decisions HE07, [990] Moderation plan HE09, [991] Moderation plan HE09, [991] AAP Workflow 21-22 v4, [A1075] HE Alternative Assessment Plan Panel ToR and Membership 2021-22, [A1076] Student Submission IDAP FINAL, [A1131] Kidderminster Module Guides 21-22 Re-audit, [B1234] Online academic support - other colleges 1-2-1, [B1298] Coaching Needs Analysis Examples (Carlisle, Southwark), [B1299] NCG Quality Training - Assessment and Moderation Training 2021, [B1401] NCG Quality Training - OLC Quality Training London Dec

21, [B1406] Narrative 45, [B1451] RPL Nos by Prog - IDAP, [B1452] Narrative Item 46, [B1549] Poor Studentship Case Study, [B1551] and met with students, [M1] and teaching and support staff. [M2]

External examining

- d To verify that the Group makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work and that it gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section C 2021, [058] PR HE Moderation Process, [100] HE07 Moderation of assessment decisions, [148] EE Guidance Handbook, [197] EE19 NCG School Response to EE Report Template, [212] NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2021, [409] NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2022 presentation, [410] NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20, [416] NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2018-19, [498] 2020-21 NCG External Examiner Reports - Combined, [500] 2021-22 External Examiner Feedback - HE QS Paper 23-09-2021, [A1017] Narrative Item 47, [B1453] Narrative Item 48 and 49, [B1454] NCG HE Improvement Plan 2019-20 (Sept 2020), [B1455] Dissertation Supervisor Training, [B1457] Dissertation Supervisor Guidelines, [B1458] NCG Summary Higher Education Annual Review Report 2018-19, [B1465] BA Business Management Programme Annual Review. [B1543]

Academic appeals and student complaints

- e To verify that the Group has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement, and that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint, the team considered PR Complaints Flowchart, [098] PR Academic Appeals Procedure September, [103] HE13 Completion of Procedure Letter, [154] NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20, [416] NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20, [416] NCL-complaints-procedure, [820] Academic Appeal Example, [A1028] AAP Workflow 21-22 v4, [A1075] HE Alternative Assessment Plan Panel ToR and Membership 2021-22, [A1076] LD H30 Training 1819, [A1132] LD Module Guide Training 1819, [A1133] Narrative Item 32 and 57, [B1154] Complaints and Compliments Policy, [B1155] Student 1. Step 1. Stage 1 complaint 15.10.20, [B1156] Student 1. Step 2. Stage 1 outcome letter 22.10.20, [B1157] Student 1. Step 3. Info sent regarding taking complaint to next stage 30.11.20, [B1158] Student 1. Step 4. Stage 2 request 14.12.20, [B1159] Student 1. Step 5. Email confirming receipt of Stage 2 14.12.20, [B1160] Student 1. Step 6. Stage 2 Holding Letter 16.12.20, [B1161] Student 1. Step 7. Stage 2 outcome letter 14.01.21, [B1162] Student 2. Step 1. Stage 1 Complaint 25.05.2021, [B1163] Student 2. Step 2. Email advising complaint be investigated at stage 2 25.05.21, [B1164] Student 2. Step 3. Holding Letter Stage 2 27.05.2021, [B1165] Student 2. Step 4. Email trail from student acknowledging complaint is resolved 17.06.21, [B1166] Student 2. Step 5. Email confirming complaint completed 22.06.21, [B1167] Narrative Item 44, [B1350] Student-Guidance-on-HE-Academic-Appeal, [B1352] The NCG Complaints Policy, www.ncgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-06-Complaints-and-Compliments-Policy.pdf, accessed 17 November 2021, The Carlisle College Complaints Policy www.carlisle.ac.uk/files/Custom%20Complaints%20Procedure%202019.pdf accessed 29 October 2021, The Kidderminster College Complaints Policy, www.kidderminster.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-21-Complaints-

[Policy.pdf](#), accessed 29 October 2021, and met with students [M1] and with senior staff. [M3]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

98 The team considered a sample of students' assessed work as described in 'How the assessment was conducted'.

What the evidence shows

99 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

Design and approval of programmes

100 NCG has robust process in place for designing, developing, and approving programmes. The NCG Programme Planning Development and Approval procedure is articulated in the Academic Regulations. [Section B Assurance of Academic Standards, Approval, Monitoring and Review 057] All proposed programmes are subject to Strategic Planning Approval by the HE Academic Board. [168] The regulations clearly set out the Group's expectations that academic approval must ensure standards of NCG's awards are maintained, satisfactory human and physical resources are available, standards of quality and teaching are maintained, attention is given to external reference points and that the approval panel should be drawn from inside and outside of the field of study, and inside and outside of the college providing the programme and include employers.

101 The standardised 'curriculum footprint' model [880] in place at NCUC provides a model, which starts at the point of validating a new course, ensures a consistent approach to the allocation of contact hours, types of assessment, learning resources and teaching resources including lectures, tutorials, and project supervision across the college in order to ensure parity of the student experience. The submission acknowledges [p.60, para 21 and p.53] inconsistency across the Group in this respect and affirms that the curriculum footprint model will be fully adopted at Carlisle, Kidderminster and Southwark Colleges and the OLC in September 2022. However, in discussion, senior staff from across the Group [M3] affirmed that most elements of the curriculum footprint were now in place across all colleges, offering credible descriptions of, for instance, arrangements for tutorial support and for provision of student contact hours. This was supported by a detailed description [B1450] of the steps taken at colleges across the Group in 2021-22 to implement the curriculum footprint. The team formed the view that the Group has established a clear approach to achieving consistent implementation of the curriculum footprint across its colleges.

102 The NCG Validation and Approval Process [116] consists of 26 steps commencing with the initial submission to the Strategic Planning and Modification (SPAM) Committee through to Registry ensuring the completion of all documentation for an award. This provides a clear plan because actions required at each stage are assigned to lead responsibilities. This guide also includes the process for programme modifications. In evaluating the Group's approach to the design and approval of new programmes, the assessment team considered the terms of reference of the SPAM Committee [246; B1688] which show that it scrutinises proposals for new or modified programmes and will either recommend, or not, a course for development to the Higher Education Quality Standards Committee, and thence to HE Academic Board. SPAM Minutes [248] show that the committee gives careful consideration to decisions on major and minor modifications and approval prior to validation.

103 The responsibility for approving a new programme is primarily assigned to a validation panel. Records of the validation of new programmes show evidence of consistent and comprehensive consideration of proposals by such panels. For instance, the reports of the validation of the FDA 3D Garment Design and Product Development in May 2021 [371]

and of BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices in May 2021 [366] show that in each case the validation panel discussed a wide range of aspects of the proposed programmes, including but not limited to coherence of programmes with alternative pathways, staffing, teaching and assessment approaches, student recruitment and learning resources. The reports of the approvals of the higher level apprenticeship Certificate of Higher Education in Mechanical Engineering in May 2021 [373] and of the FdSc Games Technology May 2021 [372] show that the panels gave careful and detailed consideration to the programmes' links to employers in the industry. Any conditions arising from programme approval events must be met within one month with recommendations being reported to HE Quality and Standards Committee six months post validation. The assessment team confirmed this process in practice [B1427; B1428; B1429] and that it provides evidence of monitoring through deliberative structures including through the HE Quality and Standards Committee. [B1430]

104 Reports of validation events [366, 371, 372, 373] also show that programme teams are fully aware of the nature of the approval process and of their part in it, because they were able to engage in constructive discussion of aspects of programme design and delivery and because programme teams were typically able to respond positively to questions raised by validation panels. The assessment team additionally noted that the staff training programme includes aspects of curricular design and a specific validation and approval process workshop tailored at taking staff through the timeline and process of validation. [B1426] Additionally, Development Managers work closely with the curriculum areas to offer support from the initial development of a programme being presented to a Strategic Planning and Approval event through to the validation and implementation of programmes. [B1426] Staff, including those at partner colleges, confirmed their engagement in these activities. [M2]

105 The reports of validation panels [366, 371, 372, 373] show that their composition consistently includes both internal and external membership. In each case, there is an external academic member from another provider as well as a representative employer. The assessment team noted instances of employer engagement in course development and design. For example, the computing foundation degree at Carlisle College was informed by Cumbria Police and the curriculum for the foundation degree in engineering arose as an outcome of engineering and energy employer breakfast meetings. [B1686; B1687]

106 The Group demonstrates that it develops programmes on an ongoing basis through annual monitoring and review as discussed under Criterion E. These arrangements take into account aspects of programme delivery and surveys and feedback from students, employers and external examiners. The process results in programme improvement plans to be implemented in the following academic year.

107 The team formed the view that the Group has effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, that the responsibility for approving new programmes is clearly assigned including the involvement of external expertise, that relevant staff are informed of and provided with guidance and support on the processes for approval and of their role within them.

108 The team found that close links are maintained between learning support services and the programme planning and approval processes. This is because the programme planning and approval process includes from inception learning support services such as the SEND Adviser, Head of Learning Technology and HE Achievement Co-ordinator. [B1414; B1416; M2] The library is a key area involved in supporting the development of programmes through the validation and revalidation of all higher education courses. Curriculum colleagues work with the library team to provide core reading.

Learning and teaching

109 The Higher Education Strategy to 2030 [053] aspires to 'exceptional teaching, learner experience and outcomes' in addition to ensuring an outstanding learning environment with innovative and relevant courses.

110 The Group's current Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Policy, [082] although not specific to higher education, sets out the expectations for the quality of the academic experience in alignment with the NCG strategic theme of 'exceptional teaching, learner experiences and outcomes' to ensure that 'all students develop technical, academic or applied skills, knowledge and inclusive behaviours'. The team formed the view that, while the TLA Policy forms a basis for high-quality teaching and learning because it sets out a set of behaviours by teaching staff for the delivery and evaluation of high-quality teaching and learning and because its aims are aligned with NCG's strategic aims, it is not specific to higher education provision, leading to a risk that the nature of teaching and learning might not be appropriate to higher education. The first draft of a Learning Teaching and Assessment strategy [B1614] specific to higher education provision was approved by the LTAC in November 2021 as confirmed by its minutes. [B1467] An additional narrative [B1597] informed the assessment team that the strategy is currently out for wider consultation with teaching and support staff and with students. Although this strategy was not in place at the time of the assessment, the team formed the view that the draft strategy would, if securely implemented, provide a credible basis for practice in higher education learning, teaching and assessment across the Group. However, the lack of a currently-implemented strategy means that there is a risk that programme delivery across the Group may not be appropriate to higher education in respect, for instance, of the type or the level of learning.

111 The HE Strategy towards 2030 includes Objective 5: 'Outstanding digital and physical learning environments' [053] with a key priority being to have 'established HE only learning environments'. To evaluate the extent to which this ambition is being achieved, the assessment team sought to confirm the current context. In analysing how NCG maintains learning environments, the assessment team considered evidence originating from students' views, specifically the student submission [A1131] and the minutes of NCUC Forum meetings, [B1439; 492] at which student representatives meet senior staff to discuss aspects of provision. The team considered feedback from curriculum forum meetings including Engineering, Counselling, Media and Performing Arts and Carlisle College [B1434;B1435; B1438; B1445] (which are explained in the following paragraph); and the Learning Technologies Innovation Group minutes. [B1447-48] The assessment team found that the NCUC forum meetings are attended by students and a range of staff including the Director of Higher Education, Quality Improvement Managers and the heads of service and support functions. Learning resources is a standing agenda item, and the minutes of meetings record matters raised, actions taken or to be taken with lead responsibilities identified. [B1439; 492] The student submission [A1131] confirms that students are satisfied with the specialist facilities which provide access to industry-standard resources and that they feel physically safe and protected in using them, the dedicated HE spaces, and the IT Helpdesk and that library staff are responsive to their needs. Furthermore, students state the virtual learning environment (VLE), particularly during the pandemic, supports their learning, that resources are accessible, and they feel safe working in that digital space. [A1131] Students whom the team met expressed satisfaction with the quality and accessibility of their learning environments [M1] while teaching and support staff also confirmed they are able to comment on the learning environments. [M2]

112 The 'Work ready, Study ready' scheme, [B1466] introduced in 2019-20 and reviewed and revised for 2021-22, is available to students at NCUC and reflects its desire to establish a reputation for the work-readiness of its students and for employability skills to be

'at the heart of the student experience', by providing funding for students at Levels 4 and 5 to support activities for enhancing their employability skills through, for example, work placements or memberships of professional bodies, or for staff industry updating as direct enhancement for work-related opportunities. The evidence in student feedback testimonials [B1470; B1471; B1475] shows that initiatives implemented in the creative industries have resulted in positive outcomes as Music and Performing Arts students have been funded to undertake industrial training or to attend dance practitioner-led workshops and the learning experience of Art and Design students has been enhanced through a series of guest speakers. Activities are tracked, with costings on Study/Work Ready Scheme records [B1467, B1468] which also include narrative comments to demonstrate the impact. The assessment team noted also the range of student testimonials expressing positive views about the scheme [B1469; B1470; B1471; B1475]. The team noted that the scheme is available only to students at NCUC and that the Group's response to a request for evidence of the outcomes and impact of the scheme [B1466] did not include any indication of plans to widen its availability to other colleges. The team formed the view that the 'Work Ready, Study Ready' scheme positively impacts on the learning experience at NCUC because students value the exposure to industry specialists and see these opportunities as building towards their future employability, but that the lack of intention to widen the scheme is indicative of a lack of commitment to full parity of provision across all colleges.

113 The team requested additional evidence of where actions had been taken to improve the physical, virtual and social environments. The narrative response [B1431] provided such examples and cited additional evidence of Curriculum Focus meetings as follows. In Engineering a classroom with high specification computers was established; [B1434] in Counselling, a counselling academy was set up to simulate a practitioner environment; [B1435] Media and Performing Arts students were consulted in the decision-making process for resources in a new musical theatre studio; [B1438] and at Carlisle College higher education spaces have been created for business and engineering students. [B1445] This enabled the team to confirm actions taken specifically for higher education students resulting from student requests in the maintaining of learning environments that respond to student feedback towards improving their academic experience.

114 As a direct outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, NCG created a centralised Learning Technologies Innovation Group (LTIG), which includes representation from all NCG colleges. Its purpose is to plan and implement a standardised VLE across NCG to facilitate a blended approach to online learning and to review the NCG Digital Strategy. [B1449] The terms of reference [B1446] and minutes of the LTIG meetings [B1447-48] evidence that the Group has set key performance indicators, identified champions and is developing a training programme to roll out across all of the provision. The ambition stated in the digital strategy [B1449] is for digital and physical environments to be 'seamlessly integrated and fully complimentary (*sic*)'. Some early successful outcomes include the updating of computers, Wi-Fi upgrades and laptops being provided to 2,625 students and 1,063 staff cross the Group and ensuring safe and secure virtual learning spaces. [B1449] Given that the creation of the LTIG is a relatively new strategic initiative to drive the maintaining and enhancing of physical and learning environments, the assessment team was not able to evaluate any longer term outcomes but formed the view that it is likely to contribute towards the Group's approach to providing accessible and reliable opportunities for every student.

115 To establish how NCG ensures strategic oversight of the monitoring of learning resources through deliberative structures, the team considered a narrative paper, [B1718] the NCG Annual Review Report 2020-21, [B1139] the NCG HE Improvement plan 2021-22, [B1320] reports presented to HE Academic Board, [B1739; B1744] and resource capital monitoring through LTAC. [B1740] The assessment team confirmed that the Annual Review Report includes learning resources and learning community sections which record areas for improvement and actions to be taken. [B1139] The HE Improvement Plan contains actions

with success measures to increase student satisfaction with learning resources [B1320] which are monitored through the Quality Review processes.

116 Furthermore, the team noted two papers presented to HE Academic Board in July and October 2021 [B1744; B1739] to address the falling benchmark satisfaction indicator for learning resources in the NSS21 results. This resulted in an action plan to support a £150,000 investment which commits to increased level of resourcing in a range of digital facilities, capital equipment, learning and social spaces across each of the colleges in the Group. [B1739] The impact of this investment is being assessed through LTAC; the most recent evidence shows an update paper presented to the LTAC meeting in November 2021. [B1740] The team concluded that NCG is taking specific planned actions which are monitored through the deliberative structures to maintain the physical, virtual and social learning environments and which are targeted towards increasing student satisfaction levels in their use. The assessment team formed the view that, based upon the evidence provided, NCG is maintaining physical, virtual and social learning environments because it takes steps to improve the academic experience and is responsive to student feedback.

117 The Group's approach to enabling students to monitor their progress is through its tutorial policy [134] and its system for tracking the progress of each student. [Submission, p.81, para 16] Students from across the Group whom the team met expressed positive views [M1] about their tutorial support and about opportunities for students to monitor their academic progress. The tutorial policy was approved by HE Academic Board in June 2020 as being applicable across all colleges. [291] It has been implemented at NCUC and the Group has confirmed [Response to first Additional Evidence Request] that it has been implemented in other colleges in 2021-22: this was further confirmed in discussion [M2] by a member of teaching staff from Carlisle College. The team concluded that the Group's tutorial policy is clear, detailed, and comprehensive because the HE Tutorials Guide for Staff [134] describes a process for the provision of tutorials to support individual students which promotes self-assessment of a range of skills, and which requires SMART target-setting in which the individual student identifies how targets will be achieved and any additional support required.

118 To verify their implementation, the Group carries out audits of practice against policy at its constituent colleges: during 2020-21 it undertook an audit of module guides at Carlisle College, and an audit of tutorials in its business curriculum area at NCUC. The latter was triggered by the routine Programme File Audit process [B1477]. The audit [824] of the tutorial records of a total of 96 students on undergraduate programmes show that for 89 (93%) of these students there was no record of staff input to one or both of the two tutorials which each student should have had by that point in time. The outcomes showed, further, that in respect of the total of 79 postgraduate students, in every case either the record of tutorials was blank or that there was no record of staff input. The submission document noted that some Business students had not received a tutorial experience in line with the Group's policy and affirmed that this had since been addressed [p50, para 68] which prompted the team to request evidence of the effectiveness of any follow-up actions taken with their impact. The narrative provided as additional evidence [B1477] stated that the issues revealed in the audit arose from non-compliance with recording rather than from students not having received their tutorials, and that a subsequent action plan had resulted in these issues being resolved, as evidenced in the outcomes of a second audit. The Group provided the team with some further examples of tutorial records [A1123-5; B1248-51] which showed evidence of the tutorial policy being followed but since the basis on which these had been selected was not clear, the team could not assess the strength of the evidence across the provision.

119 The team discussed the Group's tutorial support with a group of students drawn from all of its colleges [M1]. In discussion students affirmed that they value the tutorial

support which they receive and that they have the opportunity for student-led target setting and progress monitoring, which encourages them to reflect on their strengths and areas for development. Nevertheless, on the basis of the Group's audit of tutorial provision in the Business curriculum area, the team concluded that the tutorial policy had not been securely implemented resulting in inadequate tutorial provision for students in at least one curriculum area, but that there was evidence that the Group had taken steps to address this failing.

Assessment

120 The Group's approach to assessment is laid down in its Academic Regulations. [NCG HE Academic Regulations 2019 Section C – Assurance of Academic Standards 058] These set down the parameters for module assessment, assessment strategies, scheduling and amount of assessment, the conduct of assessment, submission of assessment, marking conventions and classification, internal marking and moderation, achievement of credit and reassessment.

121 The Group's Guide to Good Practice in Assessment [121] supports the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [082] by setting out clear expectations in relation to assessment. It contains guidance on levels, general assessment at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7, learning outcomes and suggested assessment tasks, marking and internal moderation guidelines and comprehensive descriptions of a range of key terms. A range of active verbs are included in relation to the categories of learning outcomes with examples of contextualised grading criteria.

122 The Group provides programme teams with a standard template [221] for the content and structure of handbooks provided for students. This shows that handbooks should contain detailed information about the nature and timing of assessment tasks for each module in the programme, and about the nature of feedback (formative or summative) to be provided for each. The Group has carried out an audit of module handbooks at each college: the outcomes in respect of, for instance, Kidderminster College [B1234] show evidence of consistent checking that the information relating to learning outcomes and their assessment contained in handbooks is the same as in definitive documentation for the programme.

123 The process for moderating marks is supported by moderation plans which clearly set out staff roles and responsibilities for the internal moderation and double marking of assessments. [991] The assessment team found that the Guide to Good Practice in Assessment, internal moderation plans and module guides together form a secure basis for valid and reliable assessment processes because they provide a comprehensive guide for staff and students in understanding and implementing the Group's approach to making academic judgements and because they enable opportunities for staff and students to engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

124 The Group's arrangements for internal moderation of assessments are set out in its Higher Education Moderation Process. [100] This process is detailed and comprehensive because it confirms that all assessment tasks require internal moderation; it sets out clear requirements for approval of an assessment task and for subsequent approval by an external examiner; it specifies the timescale (20 working days) for the provision of feedback to students and includes a clear and detailed description of the procedure for double marking of assessed work. In response to a request for evidence of the outcomes of internal moderation the Group provided a record of internal moderation of assessment for the Level 5 module FD 218 Action Learning for Teaching in a Specialist Area of Disability in 2020-21 at NCUC [990] and the moderation plan for the FdEng Electrical Electronic Engineering in 2021-22 at NCUC [991]. In each case the team found that there was evidence that the

process was securely followed. Although the Group did not provide evidence of internal moderation at colleges other than NCUC, the team noted that staff of all colleges had in 2021 taken part in Group-wide training in assessment and moderation [B1450, B1401]. The team also noted evidence in the reports of external examiners [500, 502] that internal moderation takes place at all colleges of the Group. The team concluded that the Group has a secure process for internal moderation of assessed work and that there is evidence that it is effectively implemented at NCUC. The team formed the view that the Group's arrangements for internal moderation are clearly articulated and consistently operated.

125 The team examined two examples of module guides for students, specifically those for GT101 Games Design [985] and for HSC301 Policy in Practice. [986] These guides provide students with a clear insight into the intended learning outcomes for the credit-bearing modules, providing a clear indication of the nature and weighting of assessment with detailed contextualised grading criteria. This is helpful in enabling students to develop an understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. The student submission [A1131] confirmed that module guides provide helpful information to students in relation to the expectations of assessments and that students have opportunities to discuss their academic progress with staff, both informally and through formal tutorials. Students [M1] were unanimous in confirming the usefulness of module guides which are explained by their tutors resulting in a shared understanding of assessment criteria and what is required of them to achieve the relevant grades and the basis on which academic judgements are made. [M1]

126 Consideration of the role of the external examiner in respect of the moderation of assessment tasks is identified in the Higher Education Moderation Process [100]. The comments of external examiners in their reports [500, 502] provide evidence, in respect of provision at NCUC, of a comprehensive and thorough approach to marking and internal moderation commensurate with other UK higher education providers. In respect of other colleges, these reports provide evidence that internal moderation takes place but provide only limited evidence of the quality of internal moderation.

127 As part of the Group's risk-based approach towards the collaborative partnership with OLC, all assessed work by students at OLC is required to be blind double-marked before NCG link tutors conduct 100% moderation, using the OLC Moderation Form for that purpose. [Submission p42; 355] The NCUC programme team flagged some concerns relating to the grade profile of students identified through the moderation of assessed work in two modules on the OLC Business Management programme which resulted in early intervention and an action plan [312] being approved through the HE Quality and Standards Committee [316] and through the HE Academic Board. [314] The action plan focused on increasing both staff and student understanding of learning outcomes and the link to assessment; staff were also required to refer to learning outcomes during taught sessions and students were provided with practical activities to increase their understanding of grading criteria. This has been followed up in December 2021 by a quality training session led by the Quality Improvement Manager [B1406] and the NCG Quality Training Session for Assessment and Moderation, [B1401] attended by all OLC teaching staff. The team found that these steps provided assurance that NCG took appropriate action, by reporting through the deliberative structure, to ensure the consistency of the quality of assessment practice at OLC.

128 The Alternative Assessment Process (AAP) [119] was developed in 2021 [B1350], based on an earlier process established in 2018; it is intended to ensure that the assessment of students with additional learning support needs is addressed consistently and fairly. It is depicted in a flowchart which illustrates the inter-related roles of the adviser, tutor and student. [A1075] All cases are taken through the AAP Panel, chaired by the Academic Registrar. The panel membership includes the HE Leads from each college. The terms of

reference of the panel [A1076] show that this process would enable the monitoring of the effectiveness of the assessment plans and would provide consistent assurance of the levels of student support to promote academic achievement. The procedure has not yet been tested in use but is likely to be effective in securing reasonable adjustments to assessment arrangements for students requiring them. This is because, as set out in the procedure and in the explanatory document [B1351] there are clear criteria for eligibility, a clear timescale for requests to be made, and clear arrangements for the involvement of professional support staff in decision-making, as well as helpful guidance for students.

129 The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy was approved by HE Academic Board in December 2017 following consultation with staff at Carlisle, Kidderminster, and Southwark Colleges. [077] The policy is practical and comprehensive because it defines clear aims for the policy, details the process by which applications for RPL will be assessed, and sets out the upper limits on volumes of credit which may be awarded. Students are encouraged to undertake an online Recognition of Prior Learning module [225] to help with their understanding of the evidence that needs to be submitted to successfully claim credits. The module requires the individual student to complete the module largely on an independent basis, leading to the production of a portfolio for awarding credit based on certificated or experiential learning. Clear process notes guide staff [749] and students [750] through the online RPL application process. The arrangements for RPL are included in the validation documentation of new programmes and student handbooks: for example, the programme approval and validation file for the suite of foundation degrees in Education and Training demonstrates a clear articulation of the RPL process as it would apply to applicants in that area. [980] RPL decisions are taken by a panel which is chaired by a member of HE Registry. The team was presented with data showing evidence of over 100 RPL decisions [B1451, B1452] being taken annually with the majority of applications being made for Engineering, Hospitality and Tourism, and Sport from individuals who are working in those sectors. This reflects the colleges' mission as providers of vocational higher education and enables students who are in work to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved learning outcomes through prior certificated or experiential learning. The team concluded that comprehensive guidance material is sufficient to appropriately inform staff and students of the recognition of prior learning process.

130 NCG HE Academic Regulations 2019 Section C - Assurance of Academic Standards [058] set out the Group's approach to academic misconduct and other forms of unfair practice and includes that all students will be offered advice and guidance on how to avoid academic misconduct. The process for pursuing cases of academic misconduct and other forms of unfair practice is clearly set out in the Academic Misconduct Procedure and Process document. [117] The process is comprehensive and transparent because it provides useful examples of categories of malpractice with associated penalties, describes the three-stage formal process for considering allegations of malpractice with timescales for each, and sets out a process for appeals. Clear pro formas are available [190-193] to ensure consistency of process at each stage. The team considered records of two examples of the consideration of allegations of malpractice [988, 989] and found that in each case the process had been followed and had led to secure judgements.

131 NCG provides opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the skills to develop good academic practice through induction, [117] the study skills modules which form part of each programme and through the Learning Enhancement Team (LET) discussed under criterion D. The team saw evidence of a range of activities including: online academic support being provided for students at Kidderminster College; [B1298] a response to a case of poor studentship being addressed through sessions delivered by the LET team; [B1551] the programme of academic study skills delivered at Kidderminster; [B1549] and coaching needs analysis being conducted for students at Carlisle College. [B1299] Teaching and support staff [M2] and students [M1] confirmed that these LET interventions had been useful

in supporting the understanding of the skills required to demonstrate good academic practice. The team formed the view that there are secure processes for investigating and responding to allegations of academic malpractice and that students are supported in developing their understanding of good practice.

132 The team found that NCG operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, to enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes because of the clear documentation provided, evidencing the implementation of the Academic Regulations and confirmed by external examiners.

External examining

133 NCG sets out in its Academic Regulations that the external examining process is fundamental to ensuring the quality and standards of awards offered are comparable with those across the higher education sector in the UK. [NCG HE Academic Regulations 2019 Section C – Assurance of Academic Standards 058] The regulations cover the appointment of external examiners whereby all nominations for appointment must be confirmed by the HE Academic Board and set out their responsibilities which include ensuring that comparability of standards is maintained, that standards set for awards are appropriate and approving the form and content of proposed assessments that count towards an award. External examiners are provided with a guidance from the HE Registry [Guidance for External Examiners 197] that gives general guidance on roles, responsibilities and contractual arrangements.

134 The role of the external examiner in respect of the moderation of assessment tasks is identified in the Higher Education Moderation Process [100] and in the template for external examiners' reports, [500] which contain clear guidance on this role in respect of the role of the external examiner in sampling assessed work and in confirming the attainment of suitable standards. Assessment decisions are internally moderated and then forwarded to the external examiner for comment and feedback. [148; B1454]

135 In addition to subject-specific external examiners, NCG has appointed a Chief External Examiner whose role is to report to the HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee and to the HE Academic Board on the overall effectiveness of the assessment processes and Boards of Examiners across the whole provision. [B1453]

136 External examiners' reports are summarised in the HE Annual Review, [416; B1465] which is presented through the deliberative structures to the governing body, with the main commendations and areas for improvement articulated within the body of the report. The review is informed by the examples of good practice and areas for improvement identified by external examiners and tracked by the HE Quality and Standards staff and HE Leads in each college. These in turn feed into the NCG Annual Report which is received by the HE Academic Board and college local boards. [409, 410] The HE Quality and Standards Committee received a paper [A1017] in September 2021 which provides a full and detailed description of recommendations made by external examiners across the Group. External examiners' reports also inform the preparation of annual programme reviews: for instance, the report of the review of the BA Business Management [B1543] includes a summary of the main points of the external examiner's report and identifies actions to be taken as a result. The assessment team formed the view that these processes are clear and robust, and that the Group makes scrupulous use of external examiners in the moderation of assessment tasks and of students' assessed work.

137 Responses to external examiners' reports are required to be completed by the relevant programme leader within 28 working days of receipt of a report, using a standardised pro forma. [212] Responses are expected to address comments and

recommendations with stated actions towards their achievement and measurement. The combined set of responses for the 2020-21 academic year [502] shows evidence of timely, careful and thorough consideration of external examiners' comments and recommendations including strengths and examples of good practice, and of the identification of actions in response to them. The responses are timely because they define actions with dates for intended completion at suitable points during the forthcoming academic year; they are careful and thorough because they detail the intended response to each comment or recommendation in turn, including identification of the person or role responsible for any necessary action. A paper presented to the HE Quality and Standards Committee [A1017] in September 2021 showed evidence of consideration by the committee of comments in external examiners' reports at programme level across the Group, of confirmation that an action plan resulting from these comments had been prepared and of responsibility for reviewing progress against action plans. In discussion [M2] teaching staff from different colleges were able to offer examples of actions in programme delivery and assessment in response to comments from external examiners. The team found that full and serious consideration is given to programme-level external examiner reports and that the Group makes considered and timely responses to comments and recommendations.

138 To evaluate the effectiveness of the Group's response to external examiners' reports, the team considered the Chief External Examiner's report for 2018-19 [498] which recommended a review of the effectiveness of the ways students and staff were being supported for their roles in the dissertation process and for research methods training along with the staff development for dissertation supervisors. This report additionally noted that the quality of feedback provided to students was consistent at programme levels but there was 'substantial variation' across disciplines, and that there was little evidence of 'explicit feed forward', with the suggestion for this to become an output from staff development events. These recommendations subsequently informed the development of the AIMS framework for feedback on assessed work discussed under Criterion C and led to the development of further information and guidance for students and staff in relation to dissertations, [B1457-1458] as reported in the HE Annual Review Report 2018-19 [B1465] and the NCG Improvement Plan 2019-20, [B1455] with progress reports at each Quality and Standards Committee. As a measure of the impact of these steps, the Group drew attention to an increase from 44% to 70% in the proportion of external examiners' reports indicating good to excellent dissertation support in 2020-21. [B1454] The team regarded this as indicative of effective responses by the Group to external examiners' reports.

139 The team found that the Group gives full and serious consideration to comments and recommendations made in external examiners' reports and makes considered and timely responses to them.

Academic appeals and student complaints

140 The Group's Academic Appeal Procedure [103] enables a student to request a review of an academic decision that could impact upon their academic progress. There is a student guide to the appeal process which provides a clear insight into the grounds upon which academic appeals might be pursued. [B1352] The process is fair and timely because it clearly states its purpose and scope, explicitly details the stages and timescales of the process for considering an appeal and the roles of those involved in it, and sets out the method by which an appellant who is dissatisfied with the outcome may have recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator(OIA). It is accessible because it is publicly available on the NCG website.

141 The number of appeals each year is reported in the HE Annual Review. The most recent available review, for 2019-20 [416] states that there were nine appeals in 2018-19 and seven in 2019-20, all of which were resolved. The record of the consideration of an

appeal in 2020 [A1028] shows that the process was carried out in accordance with the Academic Appeal Procedure. Examples of two appeals enabling enhancement were provided, [B1350] both of which related to the alternative assessment plans which led to a review of the process to ensure parity of support for students with learning disabilities as a result of which the alternative assessment plan is now jointly created in partnership with the student, tutor and learning support staff and ratified by a panel. These examples illustrate the provider taking enhancement-led actions arising through the academic appeals process. The assessment team formed the view that the Group has effective procedures for handling academic appeals.

142 The Group affirmed, in response to a request from the assessment team [B1154], that all colleges in the Group follow the NCG complaints policy [B1155] which states that it was approved in June 2021. The policy is accessible on the NCG website [<https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-06-Complaints-and-Compliments-Policy.pdf>, accessed 17 November 2021] and clearly outlines the stages involved in considering a complaint and the timescales for each. However, the process detailed in the policy contained weaknesses. It does not clearly provide contact details (such as an email address) to which formal complaints may be sent in respect of Kidderminster College and Carlisle College, leading to a risk of uncertainty or delay in initiating a formal complaint. Although the evidence base included a Completion of Procedures letter template, [154] the process does not make clear whether or at what stage a Completion of Procedures letter would be issued, leading to a risk that complainants would lack certainty about whether or when they should expect to receive such a letter. The process includes a statement about the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) which is misleading because it fails to make clear that a complainant may refer a complaint to OIA. The assessment team concluded that the complaints policy is timely but that the above weaknesses mean that it lacks fairness.

143 In considering the accessibility of the complaints policy, the assessment team noted inconsistencies in the nature of information available to students. The flowchart [098] which describes the Group's approach to handling complaints indicates that complaints are considered within the college concerned and affirms that college websites include detailed information about the relevant policy and procedure. The evidence base included the complaints procedure for NCUC, [820] approved in December 2020 which resembles but is not identical to the NCG policy. The assessment team also considered the complaints procedure found on the websites of two colleges, specifically Carlisle College [<http://www.carlisle.ac.uk/files/Customer%20Complaints%20Procedure%202019.pdf>, accessed 29 October 2021] and Kidderminster College. [<https://www.kidderminster.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-21-Complaints-Policy.pdf>, accessed 29 October 2021] The procedure at Carlisle College differed from that set out in the NCG policy [B1155] in respect of the purpose and timescales of its stages leading to the risk that complainants could be misled about the expected time for completion of each stage. The procedure at Kidderminster College was described as the 'NCG Complaints Policy' but appeared to be an outdated version of that policy, in that it was approved in July 2019 while the NCG Complaints and Compliments Policy was approved in June 2021. While the two versions resembled each other, they differed significantly in respect of the timescales allocated for each stage of the process leading to the risk that complainants would be misled about the expected time for completion of each stage. However, the team noted that during the course of the assessment each of the colleges in the Group published the same version of the NCG procedure [B1155] on its website and noted also that students from colleges across the Group [M1] confirmed that they knew how to access the complaints policy. The team concluded that the information about the complaints policy is accessible to students at colleges within the Group.

144 In respect of arrangements for handling complaints from OLC students, senior staff

affirmed [M3] that OLC follows the NCG policy. However, the OLC website does not publish the NCG policy and, despite a request to do so, NCG did not provide evidence to show how OLC students are informed of this policy. In the meeting with students, those from OLC affirmed that they would know whom to contact to initiate a complaint and that there are posters in classrooms about the complaints process. Despite this, the absence of evidence to show that OLC students are informed of the applicable complaints policy led the team to conclude that the complaints policy is not readily accessible to students at OLC.

145 The number of complaints each year is reported in the HE Annual Review: that for 2019-20 [416] states that there were 19 complaints in 2018-19 and 18 in 2019-20 which were all resolved internally. The assessment team asked the Group to provide a record of examples of a complaint being handled through the process; this was provided following the second request. [B1156-B1167] The two examples show cases going through Stages 1 and 2 with communications and outcomes letters showing the process being followed, although none of these progressed beyond Stage 2 where the Head of Higher Education determined the outcome. The Group provided two examples of complaints leading to enhancements in provision: the first in 2018 resulted in additional staff training sessions on writing module guides; [A1132, A1133] the second in 2020 led to the creation of the Alternative Assessment Panel to consider adjustments to modes of assessment for students with particular needs. [A1075, A1076] The assessment team formed the view that there is evidence that the Group has taken appropriate action following complaints.

146 The assessment team formed the view that the Group now has a clear procedure for handling complaints which is timely and accessible to students in all locations with the exception of OLC. There is evidence to show that the process has been properly followed and evidence to show that the Group has taken appropriate action following complaints. However, the procedure contains weaknesses which mean that it lacks fairness. These weaknesses, evident in two of the Group's colleges and at OLC, are indicative of a lack of secure oversight by the Group of this aspect of its provision. There is evidence to show that the process has been properly followed and evidence to show that the Group has taken appropriate action following complaints.

Conclusions

147 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

148 The Group has effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes which provide a high-quality learning experience to students and learning opportunities that are consistently and rigorously quality assured. Responsibility for new programme approvals is clearly assigned, and relevant staff are informed of and aware of procedures for approval and of their role within them.

149 Close links are maintained between learning support services and the Group's programme planning and approval arrangements and the Group has taken action to embed the standardised 'curriculum footprint' across its colleges to ensure parity of curricula, learning and teaching activities and associated resources.

150 The Group has a strategic approach to learning and teaching through its Higher Education Strategy to 2030. However, its current Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Policy is not specific to higher education. This leads to a risk that programme delivery across the Group may not be appropriate to higher education in respect, for instance, of the type or the level of learning. Although approved by LTAC in 2021 the Group has yet to implement its higher education specific Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy which the team considers would, if securely implemented, provide a credible basis for practice in higher

education learning, teaching and assessment across the Group.

151 NCG has a strategic approach to maintaining physical, virtual and social learning environments through its deliberative committee structure. Students are enabled to monitor and reflect on their progress through a tutorial system: students from across the Group spoke in positive terms about the tutorial support available to them, and although the Group has identified failings in this system, it has taken steps to address them. However, the lack of intention to widen the 'Work Ready, Study Ready' across the Group scheme is indicative of a lack of commitment to full parity of provision across all colleges.

152 There is a secure basis for valid and reliable assessment processes with a comprehensive guide for staff and students in understanding and implementing the Group's approach to making academic judgements, enabling opportunities for staff and students to engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. There is a practical and comprehensive process for the recognition of prior learning, and effective procedures for handling academic appeals. The Group's arrangements for internal moderation are clearly articulated and consistently operated. The Group has taken appropriate action through its established structures to ensure the consistency of the quality of the academic experience in respect of assessment at its partner college OLC.

153 The Group makes scrupulous use of external examiners in the moderation of assessment tasks and of students' assessed work, gives full and serious consideration to comments and recommendations made in external examiners' reports, and makes timely responses to them.

154 The Group has taken action during the assessment period to ensure a clear and accessible procedure for handling complaints is consistently applied across all colleges. However, there are weaknesses in the fairness of the complaints procedure at colleges within the Group, and the complaints policy is not readily accessible to OLC students, leading to a risk that students at OLC would be misled about the procedure to be followed in the event of a complaint. These weaknesses are indicative of a lack of secure oversight by the Group of this aspect of its provision.

155 In considering this Criterion, the team noted weaknesses in some of its aspects. The lack of a currently-implemented strategy for the delivery of higher education leads to a risk that the nature of teaching and learning might not be appropriate to higher education, but this is mitigated by the Group's recently approved Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy specific to higher education which, if securely implemented, provides a credible basis for practice in higher education learning, teaching and assessment across the Group. Although the Group's tutorial policy had not been securely implemented, resulting in inadequate tutorial provision for students in at least one curriculum area, this was mitigated by evidence that the Group had taken steps to address this failing. There are also weaknesses in the fairness and accessibility of the complaints procedure. The team also noted the Group's effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the Group's secure basis for valid and reliable assessment processes including arrangements for internal moderation which are clearly articulated and consistently operated, the scrupulous use made by the Group of its external examiners, and the action taken to ensure the consistency of the quality of the academic experience at OLC. The team considered that the weaknesses in the evidence for this criterion are outweighed by its positive aspects: this is because there is mitigation for two of the three areas of weakness and because of the positive strengths in processes for the design, development and approval of programmes and because of the secure basis for valid and reliable assessment processes. The team concluded that, on balance, the Group has demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver programmes and qualifications that provide a high-quality academic

experience to all students and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. The team concludes, therefore, that this criterion is met.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

156 This criterion states that:

C1.1 An organisation granted powers to award degrees assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students. Everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level(s) and subject(s) of the qualifications being awarded.

157 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

158 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

159 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To assess NCG's approach to ensuring its programmes have sufficient and appropriately qualified staff with relevant academic and professional expertise to deliver its programmes, the team considered Staff spreadsheet levels 5-7 - Sept 21, [000] NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] NCG TLA Policy, [082] PR12 Staff Approval Process, [111] HE Staff Approval 2017-18, [296] HE Staff Approval 2018-19, [297] HE Staff Approval 2019-20, [298] HE Staff Approval 2020-21, [299] HE Staff Approval 2021-22, [300] OLC Validation Event Report - BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care, [302] OLC Validation Event Report - BA (Hons) Business Management, [303] Operations Manual NCG OLC V.08 FINAL, [304] NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev – NCUC, [371] Staff approval CVs 2021-22 – combined, [509] Staff CVs - Industry involvement - combined, [537] Staff Approval Tracker records, [300] Plus 1 Applications, [636] CAR HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 MS AT (MS is the mentor), [B1483] KIDD HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 JG NW (JG is the mentor), [B1484] NCUC HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 BM DR (BM is the mentor). [B1485]
- b To assess whether NCG has appropriate recruitment processes, the team drew on NCG Recruitment Policy, [092] UK Right to work, [848] Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 1, [754] Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 2, [755] Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 3, [756] NCUC interview assessment forms NCUC childcare Curriculum Leader pw. [B1502-1504]
- c To determine whether NCG makes a rigorous assessment of appropriate staff/student ratios, the team considered NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling – NCUC, [366] NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev – NCUC, [371] HE33 - SPA Form - BSc Computing Carlisle, [474] Digital Arts - Business Planning Example, [510] Newcastle_College_HigherEducation_CurriculumFootprint 2021-22, [880] IDAP

Self-Assessment Improvement Plan 2021-22, [A1082] Meeting with senior staff. [M3]

- d To assess whether NCG provides development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship and to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design, the team considered NCG HE Staff Training and Development Framework, [088] Welcome Back 2020, [480] QD112 ITLA CPD Plan 2021-22 Health and Science, [512] GPTT Welcome Pack, [529] Caroline Walker-Gleaves Presentation, [547] HE Core Training Tracker September 2021, [550] Knowledge Organiser Pedagogy 7.6.21, [551] Knowledge Organiser Scholarship 7.6.21, [552] Module Guides vs Levelness - FHEQ Training, [553] Training - HE learning and Teaching, [554] FHEQ Levels 6, 7 and 8 Descriptors, [555] HE pedagogy refresher, [556] Staff Development Framework LTAC 2019-20 NCUC, [603] FHEA Overview 2017_18, [632] H30 Training Schedule SoY - 1718, [641] H30 Training Schedule Semester 1 - 1718, [642] H30 Training Schedule Semester 2 – 1819, [644], CPD Strategy, [726] CPD Strategy [726] IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan 2021-22, [A1082] HE Training Tracker September 20-21 NCUC, [B1314] HE Training Tracker September 2021 – SW, [B1315] HE Training Tracker September 2021- CAR, [B1316], HE Training Tracker September 2021 KCHE, [B1317] NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Update, [B1320] NCG PD Day 4th January 2022 Event Schedule, [B1370] NCG Validation and Approval Process Training, [B1426] Meeting with staff, [M2] Meeting with senior staff. [M3]
- e To assess whether academic staff have opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, the team considered Staff CV Tracker, [481] Staff CVs - Industry involvement - combined, [537] Reflections on being an External Examiner. [522-528]
- f To assess whether staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental, the team drew on NCG Academic Regulations Section C 2021, [058] and met with students [M1] and teaching and support staff. [M2]
- g To assess whether NCG has relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices that are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, and whether staff have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the team looked at NCG HE Assessment Policy Draft 2021, [075] NCG HE Assessment Framework, [086] NCG HE Staff Training and Development Framework, [088] PR20 NCG HE Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process 2018, [119] GU Assessment - A Guide to Good Practice in Assessment, [121] HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee minutes - 27-05-2021, [249] FHEA Overview 2017_18, [632] FHEA Overview 2018_19, [633] FHEA Overview 2019_20, [634] FHEA Overview 2020_21, [635] H30 Training Schedule SoY - 1718, [641] H30 Training Schedule Semester 1 - 1718, [642] H30 Training Schedule Semester 1 - 1819, [643] H30 Training Schedule Semester 2 - 1819, [644] HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee minutes and HE Tutorial Papers- 21-05-2020, [972] QD047 health Teacher Actions Tracker, [A1078] 2021-22 Teacher Development Plan - NCUC, [B1357] 2021-22 Teacher Development Plan - KIDD, [B1358] M Newrick Striving for Excellence Plan 2122 New, [B1359] Southwark JE Obs 23rd March 21 + Reflection, [B1360], M Newrick Observation of Practice, [B1407] and met with students, [M1] teaching and support staff, [M2] and senior staff. [M3]

- h To evaluate staff understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching and active engagement with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered, the team reviewed NCUC HE Research, Scholarship and Student Engagement Manager JD-PS, [017] NCUC HE Research, Scholarship and Student Engagement Coordinator JD-PS, [018] NCUC HE Research, Scholarship and Student Engagement Assistant JS-PS, [019] CoP Terms of Reference, [434] Communities of Practice Summary, [435] CoP minutes Beauty - 06_07_2021, [437] CoP minutes Creative Industries 15_07_2021, [438] CoP minutes Business 06_07_2021, [439] CoP minutes Education 15_07_2021 – SWK, [440] CoP minutes Education 08_07_2021 – CARL, [441] CoP minutes Travel 16_08_2021, [442] 3 Minute Thesis, [475] Research Portal, [477] HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee minutes 25-03-2021, [494] NCG Staff Research Outputs, [531] Staff RSA Guide 26012021, [538] RSA and CV Workshop PD Day 27 April, [539] HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2017, [647] HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2018, [648] HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2019, [649] HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2021, [650] Doctoral forum terms of reference Draft June 2021, [724] and met with teaching and support staff [M2] and senior staff. [M3]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

160 The team considered a sample of students' assessed work as described in 'How the assessment was conducted'.

What the evidence shows

161 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

162 NCG has a clear policy and procedure to ensure that it has appropriately qualified teaching staff because the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [082] sets out that all teachers at NCG will work towards achieving a recognised teaching qualification within two years of appointment. The Group's Academic Regulations [057] for programme approval require all staff to be qualified at, or to be working towards a qualification at, one level above the level they are teaching. In order to assure this, academic staff CVs are considered within the programme approval processes and evidence for this was seen in validation event reports: for instance, the validation reports for BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices in May 2021 [366] and for FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Development in May 2021 [371] showed that the validation panel checked the planned staffing levels for each programme as well as the qualifications of academic staff expected to teach on the programme. Examples of staff CVs [509; 537] detail qualifications, experience and professional status, and these demonstrate that staff have relevant academic and professional expertise and that staff qualifications are consistently in subjects appropriate to their curriculum area.

163 NCG's Recruitment Policy [092] is appropriate because it sets out the requirement to verify appropriate qualifications and references [848 UK Right to Work Document Evidence] and to include an activity or assessment at interview to evidence suitability to the role. For teaching roles this will usually include a micro teach exercise. Examples of interview assessment forms were provided for HE lecturer, learning support and management roles [754-756, B1502-1504] and these included clear and specific higher education-focused questions designed to establish candidate suitability for a higher education role. The team formed the view that the Group has appropriate staff recruitment practices.

164 Recognising that not all teaching staff of the Group may possess sufficient expertise and qualifications to teach at higher education levels, the Staff Approval Process [111] requires the approval of individual members of staff for teaching on higher education programmes to be carried out by the Staff Approval Panel. Records of meetings of the Staff Approval Panel [296-300] show that it gives careful and detailed consideration to the qualifications and professional experience of individual members of staff before permitting them to teach at higher education levels. The Staff Approval Process, [111] as implemented through the Staff Approval Panel, is thorough because it considers the staff member's skills set and CV, and their experience of teaching higher education at the level required. The team concluded that the evidence of its recruitment practices and of its staff approval process shows that the Group makes a rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach all students.

165 The team considered the effectiveness of policies to ensure that staff have relevant academic and professional experience by examining the Group's summary spreadsheet of qualifications of academic staff [Staff Spreadsheet 000]. Across all disciplinary areas and across all colleges, of a total of 175 staff, 28 (16%) had a teaching qualification specific to higher education, 98 (56%) had a teaching qualification which was not specific to higher education, and 49 (28%) had no teaching qualification. At OLC, the corresponding figures from a total of 7 staff were respectively 5, 2 and 0. The evidence submitted suggested there was some variation between disciplinary areas - for example: in Art and Design, 15 of a total of 17 staff (88%) had no teaching qualification; in Engineering, 6 of a total of 8 staff (75%) had no teaching qualification. There was also variation between colleges: at NCUC, 23 of a total of 156 staff (15%) had a teaching qualification specific to higher education, while the corresponding figures were 1 of a total of 13 staff at Carlisle College; and 4 of a total of 6 staff at Kidderminster College. The team formed the view that academic staff do not consistently have teaching qualifications specific to higher education.

166 In mitigation, the team noted that for staff without requisite qualifications at the appropriate level the Group offers mentoring and funding for study towards higher level qualifications. The team noted arrangements for supporting the mentoring of staff through the Staff Approval Panel records and Staff Approval Tracker records [300] which showed that mentoring is taking place by specifying detailed mentor arrangements and allocations. [296-300] The description of the Teacher Mentor Process [B1483] sets out a clear purpose for mentoring in relation to the characteristics of higher education teaching and a clear set of expected behaviours and actions by the mentor to serve as a model of best practice. Records of the conduct of mentoring of individual members of staff at NCUC [B1485] and at Kidderminster College [B1484], and records of Teacher Development Plans for teachers at Carlisle College [B1488] and at Kidderminster College [B1489] attest to the support that mentees receive in regular meetings with mentors, with actions and outcomes related to the Group's practices in respect of support for students. Study being undertaken towards higher level qualifications is recorded in the Staff Spreadsheet [000] and in the record of consideration of applications from staff for funding. [636] These documents show that a total of 31 staff were being supported in 2020-21 to achieve higher qualifications, and that there is a detailed process of consideration of applicants taking into account the specific programmes and levels on which applicants may teach. The team formed the view that while there are variations in staff qualifications and expertise in some disciplinary areas, there are sufficient arrangements in place to address this, providing confidence that the Group assures itself that its programmes have appropriately qualified staff with relevant academic and professional expertise.

167 In considering arrangements for ensuring the qualifications and expertise of teaching staff at OLC, the team noted that the OLC Operations Manual [304] details OLC's obligations in relation to NCG awards: specifically, it details the requirement that all staff teaching, facilitating learning, and assessing students on higher education programmes are

competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities, reiterating NCG's Academic Regulations that all staff should be qualified at, or working towards, one level above the level they are teaching. The implementation of this policy takes place through the validation by the Group of programmes delivered at OLC: records of these validations [302, 303] show careful consideration of staff qualifications and experience, comparable to the process used within the Group itself. The assessment team reviewed OLC Staff CVs [587] which provided evidence that all teaching staff at OLC are qualified teachers and hold awards at a minimum of postgraduate certificate level or above. This provides a good assurance that NCG has comparable, appropriate processes in place in its partnership arrangement for verifying that staff are appropriately qualified and have relevant academic and professional experience.

168 Evaluation of the evidence of the Group's arrangements for recruiting, mentoring and supporting teaching staff, for approving staff to teach in higher education, and for assuring the expertise of staff in its partner led the team to have confidence that the Group assures itself that its programmes have appropriately qualified staff with relevant academic and professional expertise.

169 In considering the numbers of staff available to teach students, the assessment team noted that staff/student ratios are reviewed at the initial planning stage of programme approval as part of Strategic Planning Approval (for instance in the approval of BSc Computing at Carlisle College [474]), at validation events (for instance in the reports of the validations for BSc Skills Counselling and Therapeutic Practices [366] and for FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Development [371]), and during annual business planning (for instance in the Digital Arts Business Planning Example [510]). As discussed in Criterion B3, the Group has taken action to embed the standardised 'curriculum footprint' across its colleges to ensure parity of curricula, learning and teaching activities and associated resources. The team considered that there were sufficient mechanisms in place to provide assurance that numbers of available teaching staff are actively managed.

170 The assessment team saw evidence in the HE Staff Training and Development Framework [088] that NCG promotes and encourages Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and that it facilitates an annual workshop to introduce staff to the application process. Staff at NCUC considering applying for fellowship were supported in 2020-21 through a half-day workshop with an external consultant, [972 HE LTEC Minutes] although this support was not available at other colleges. The FHEA Overviews for 2017 to 2021 [632-635] show that, in total, 27 members of staff have been awarded HEA fellowship since 2016, with the majority at NCUC. The Group affirmed in its submission [p.68, para 59] that support of staff at other colleges in respect of HEA Fellowship was to be revised from September 2021. The evidence to support this intention is its appearance in the HE Improvement Plan [B1320] which shows access to and support for HEA fellowship being prioritised across colleges in 2021-22, and shows that a group-wide advice session for staff took place, leading to expressions of interest from individual staff being invited in November 2021. The team's view of the credibility and oversight of the implementation of the HE Improvement Plan is discussed in Criterion E1. The team formed the view that the Group offers support to staff at all colleges in the Group in respect of HEA Fellowship.

171 The Group's arrangements to support reflection on and evaluation of practices in respect of teaching, learning and assessment include individual teacher's development plans and classroom observations. In discussion [M2], teaching staff from colleges across the group confirmed that each teacher has a Teacher Development Plan: examples of these plans [B1357, B1358, B1359] show evidence of individual staff setting specific time-based targets for their practice in teaching and assessment based on an evaluation of their current expertise and show evidence of subsequent evaluation of the impact of meeting those targets. Classroom observations are intended to support the evaluation of teaching: records of classroom observations [A1078, B1360, B1407] show consistent evidence of identification

of strengths, areas for development and steps to be taken to secure good practice.

172 Minutes of the meeting of LTAC in May 2021 [249] show evidence of discussion of the implementation of a range of other means of evaluating teaching and learning across the Group, including 'teaching triangles' (Kidderminster College) developmental observations (Southwark College), peer review of teaching (Carlisle College) and coach-supported peer observation drawn from evidence-based practice at NCUC. The team formed the view that their identification and discussion at the LTAC offers assurance of the Group's commitment to the evaluation of its practices in relation to evaluating teaching and learning.

173 The NCG Assessment Policy [075] and Assessment Framework [086] set out expectations for colleges in relation to assessment and provide a framework of guidance and documentation to ensure effective, transparent and fair assessment. The framework is comprehensive and clear because it specifies expectations for the standards and design of assessments, and for feedback on students' assessed work, and because it is supported by documents outlining expected practices in relation to assessment, specifically the Guide to Good Practice in Assessment, [121] and the HE Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process [119]. The 'core training' which all academic staff of the Group are required to undertake covers the Assessment Framework, the guide to good assessment practice and the assessment tariff guidelines: in discussion [M3] senior staff credibly confirmed that all academic staff at all colleges had completed this training with the exceptions of some who had been unable to do so because of unavoidable absence.

174 In considering the Group's arrangements for providing feedback to students on their assessed work, the team noted the NCUC HE Feedback Strategy [882] which provides helpful but limited guidance to staff. It is helpful because it sets out the purpose of feedback and gives clear examples of different types of feedback. It is limited because it gives no indication of the volume or extent of feedback which should be provided and no indication of the nature of feedback which is likely to be useful to students at each level of study. However, to ensure the quality of feedback on assessed work across the Group, it has adopted the AIMS framework whose guidance [882] clearly sets out expectations for both staff and students in relation to feedback on assessment, as affirmed also in posters [883, 884] for students. Teaching staff [M2] from colleges across the Group expressed positive views about the AIMS framework, confirmed that many staff had attended AIMS training, and that the framework is in place at colleges across the Group. In considering the samples of feedback on students' assessed work, as discussed in Criterion D1, the team found that feedback was likely to be effective in supporting students' academic development but that, on the basis of the samples examined, the Group is not offering consistently high-quality feedback on all assessed work. However students [M1] were unanimous in confirming that they receive high quality feedback which is developmental and discussed in partnership with them. The student submission states that students find their work to be 'challenging and rewarding'. [A1131] and confirms that feedback is delivered effectively, through both written and the academic tutorial mechanisms. However, on the basis of the AIMS framework set in place across the Group, the team concluded that the Group has credible arrangements in place to ensure teaching staff have expertise in providing feedback which is constructive, developmental and timely.

175 In considering the Group's approach to supporting its teaching staff in reflecting on and evaluating their practice in teaching, learning and assessment, the team took into account the support available for gaining Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, and the Group's arrangements for the evaluation of teaching and for the development and spread of good practice in assessment. The team concluded that the Group has taken effective steps to enable its staff to evaluate and strengthen their practice in teaching, learning and assessment through subject-specific and educational scholarship, and that teaching, learning and assessment is informed by reflection on and evaluation of

professional practice.

176 NCG has an evidence-based Research and Scholarly Activity (RSA) Framework [087] in place, underpinned by five core principles: enhancing teaching and learning, supporting staff, supporting students as researchers, engaging with external bodies, externalising research outputs. There is a dedicated Research, Scholarship and Student Engagement (RSSE) team whose roles show [017, 018, 109 Job Descriptions] that it is intended to support the enhancement of research, scholarship and student engagement. Although based at NCUC, the RSSE team has initiated a web-based research portal [477] available to staff and students across NCG colleges whose purpose is to act as a central point for research information for staff and students and improve the internal and external visibility and status of research activity. The RSSE team has produced a Staff RSA Guide [538] and delivers related training sessions. [539 RSA and CV workshop] The Staff RSA Guide [538] details the support available to staff to develop research and scholarly activity, including grant funding for project work and conference costs, funding for higher degrees, 1-2-1 training sessions with the RSSE team, 1-2-1 support, a doctoral forum, [724 ToR Doctoral Forum] support for HEA fellowship, annual Staff Research Conference, Innovations in Higher Education and Professional Practice (IHEPP) journal [494 HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee]. Staff from colleges across the Group [M2] confirmed their engagement in these activities. These initiatives are comprehensive, and outputs are reported to LTAC: [494] for example, staff and student contributions to NCUC publications are disseminated through the Annual Staff Conference, [647-650 Annual HE Staff Conference Programmes] and through publications and conference presentations. [531 NCG Staff Research Outputs] These initiatives also provide good opportunities for staff to engage in reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and in subject-specific and educational scholarship across all its colleges. The team concluded that the RSA Framework is sufficient to enable staff understanding of current research and to directly inform and enhance teaching.

177 The submission notes that staff at NCUC in receipt of Plus One funding, an initiative which supports staff of the Group to achieve higher level qualifications, must annually present at an external conference and present at the NCUC staff research conference. The HE Staff Research Conference Programmes for 2017 to 2021 [647-650] and the 'Three Minute Thesis' competition [475] which replaced the Conference in 2020, demonstrate a wide range and scope of research activity, linked to professional practice, disciplinary and educational domains. The Group presented evidence confirming staff engagement in research and advanced scholarship in their discipline in a document detailing staff publications and conference activity from 2017-2021. [531 NCG Staff Research Outputs] The Group additionally supports scholarly activity through communities of practice: the Communities of Practice Terms of Reference [434] identifies the purpose of discipline-based communities of practice activity as opportunities for colleagues across NCG's colleges to share experiences with blended learning; to share best practice in subject pedagogy; to engage in subject-sector activities and communication and collective learning networks. There are nine curriculum communities of practice across NCG including OLC: in discussion staff from colleges across the Group confirmed [M2] their involvement in communities of practice and their usefulness in enabling the development of practice. The Communities of Practice Summary [435] and the Community of Practice minutes [437-442] show evidence of active participation by staff across the Group's colleges. Outcomes of the work of Communities of Practice are discussed in Criterion D1. The assessment team found that NCG supports staff in research and scholarship related to their discipline at a level commensurate with the level and subject of qualifications offered.

178 The HE Continuous Professional Development Strategy 2021-24 [726], applicable to all colleges, is ambitious and comprehensive because it sets out 'to support teachers in developing and maintaining the appropriate skills and knowledge in order to design and

deliver outstanding teaching and learning which is underpinned by research and evidence', with a focus on developing teachers' roles as dual professionals, including 'vocational upskilling, pedagogic change and practitioner research'. The strategy sets out that it will provide wide-ranging staff support including support for teacher training, induction and mentoring, support for teachers as researchers, scholarly activity, CPD programmes and support for study towards further qualifications. This provides a strong assurance of NCG's strategic intent in clearly setting out an ambitious framework to provide staff with development opportunities and enable them to enhance their practice and scholarship.

179 In assessing the implementation of the strategy, the team considered the HE Staff Training and Development Framework [088] which outlines expectations in relation to training and development for academic staff, comprising induction, core training and continued professional development. The HE Core Training Tracker Sept 21 [550] details the core training for academic staff, which is comprehensive because it includes academic regulations, academic integrity, data, preparing for Examination Boards, recognition of prior learning, working with external examiners, charring validation events and principles of 'great teaching'. Academic staff [M3] affirmed that all staff at all colleges have undertaken core training in 2021-22 with the exception of those unable to attend because of personal circumstances: this was consistent with records of attendance at core training at each college. [B1314-B1317] The team formed the view that staff are offered opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.

180 Group-wide induction training for academic staff includes a training needs analysis, web-based How2s, teacher conferences and masterclasses, outlined in the Great Place to Teach welcome pack. [529] This is appropriate to the development of expertise in teaching, learning and assessment because it covers key indicators of high-quality teaching, a software tool for self-assessment of skills and access to a web-based system with practical ideas and tools to support the identification of students' learning needs. The submission (p.60; para 19) acknowledges inconsistency in induction processes and in the completion of core training across colleges: at NCUC, induction processes are more developed, comprising a six-week induction programme in addition to the Group-wide induction training. The IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan [A1082] affirms that standardised induction for new academic staff will be put in place across all colleges for 2021-22. Despite the current inconsistency in provision, the team concluded there was sufficient evidence to provide assurance of sufficient induction for academic staff.

181 There is a well-developed and diverse programme of CPD offered at NCUC [603 NCUC Staff Development Framework example] which includes CPD days, and H30 (HE Half Hour training) on a range of topics including NCG's VLE, the system for checking the academic integrity of assessed student work (Turnitin), academic writing [641-44 H30 Training Schedules], masterclasses [547 Presentation], and three Professional Development days per year. At NCUC there are also 'Welcome Back' events at the start of the academic year. [480 Welcome Back 2020] Staff teaching at levels 6 and 7 across all colleges and at OLC have access to a range of six HE-specific training activities as detailed in a series of documents describing their purpose and content [551-556]. These are likely to be effective in supporting high-quality teaching and learning because they cover topics including effective pedagogy, discipline-based scholarly activity, and the national framework for higher education qualifications.

182 The submission [p.50; para 64] acknowledges variability in the uptake of CPD sessions, uptake being greater at NCUC than other colleges. However, the Group has acted on this, for example, in holding HE Professional Development days across all colleges and implementing mechanisms to track staff attendance at them [B1320 NCG HE Improvement Plan; B1370 NCG Professional Development Day; B1316 – B1317 HE Training Trackers] Meetings with academic staff [M2, M3] confirmed awareness of and active engagement with

CPD activities on the part of staff from all colleges.

183 There are satisfactory arrangements for ensuring core training and induction training across the Group, and well-developed arrangements for supporting staff in developing high-quality teaching at NCUC; the Group is in the process of improving the consistency of CPD arrangements for teaching staff at all of its colleges. The staff training programme includes a session which covers aspects of curriculum design workshop relating to the programme approval process designed to familiarise staff with the process of validation. [B1426] The team concluded that the staff development framework [088] and the HE Continuous Professional Development Strategy [726] offer satisfactory opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design.

184 The Staff CV Tracker [481] and Staff CVs [537] provide comprehensive details of staff commercial, industry and other external activity such as external examiner or adviser. Currently, of 135 staff whose details are shown on the CV Tracker, [481] 73 have commercial or professional practice outputs, and 25 have external examiner appointments at other providers; staff reflection on external examining activity [522-528 Reflections] provides evidence of engagement with, and evaluation of, external examining practice. The team formed the view that there is evidence of widespread external professional practice among academic staff, and that academic staff have opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education providers.

185 The uniform provision across the Group of sufficient induction training, the widespread uptake of core training and the provision across the Group of training activities likely to be effective in supporting high-quality teaching and learning led the team to the view that there are development opportunities for all teaching staff to enable them to enhance their practice and scholarship.

Conclusions

186 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

187 While NCG has no specific policy in relation to staff/student ratios, the arrangements for planning and oversight of staff numbers led the team to the view that there are sufficient mechanisms in place to provide assurance that numbers of available teaching staff are actively managed and that the Group has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students.

188 Evidence from the Staff Training and Development Framework, from teacher development plans, from records of classroom observations and from the implementation of the Group's approach to assessment feedback show that the Group enables its staff to evaluate and strengthen their practice in teaching, learning and assessment through subject-specific and educational scholarship, that teaching staff are offered opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, and that teaching, learning and assessment are informed by reflection on and evaluation of professional practice.

189 Evaluation of the evidence of the Group's arrangements for recruiting, mentoring, and supporting teaching staff, for approving staff to teach in higher education, and for assuring the expertise of staff at OLC led the team to conclude that the Group has appropriate staff recruitment practices, that staff involved in teaching and assessing student work are appropriately qualified to the levels and subjects of qualifications being awarded, and that the Group makes a rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach all students. Although in some curriculum areas not all staff have teaching qualifications, this weakness is mitigated by the Group's arrangements for staff mentoring and for supporting

study towards higher qualifications.

190 The Group has established a framework which clearly sets out expectations for both staff and students in relation to feedback on assessment, and which is in place at colleges across the Group. Students whom the team met expressed positive views about the quality of developmental feedback. However, the samples of assessed work examined by the team showed that the Group is not offering consistently high-quality feedback on all assessed work. On the basis of the framework set in place across the Group, the team concluded that the Group has arrangements in place to ensure teaching staff have expertise in providing feedback which is constructive, developmental and timely.

191 The implementation of the Research and Scholarly Activity Framework, and evidence of staff engagement with it, is sufficient to show that there are good opportunities for staff to engage in reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and in subject-specific and educational scholarship across all of the Group's colleges. The assessment team found that the framework is sufficient to enable staff understanding of current research and directly inform and enhance teaching, and that the Group supports staff in research and scholarship related to their discipline at a level commensurate with the level and subject of qualifications offered.

192 The staff development framework and the HE Continuous Professional Development Strategy offer opportunities for academic staff to gain experience in curriculum design and assessment design. Academic staff have opportunities through external examining to engage with the activities of other higher education providers.

193 The uniform provision of sufficient induction training, the widespread uptake across the Group of core training and the provision across the Group of training activities likely to be effective in supporting high-quality teaching and learning led the team to the view that there are development opportunities for all teaching staff to enable them to enhance their practice and scholarship.

194 The team noted weaknesses in some areas of this criterion relating to the numbers of teaching staff with teaching qualifications and to the consistency of the quality of feedback on assessed work as indicated by the sample of assessed work considered by the team. However, the team also noted that there is mitigation for the former weakness and that, in respect of the latter, the Group has established a framework which clearly sets out expectations for both staff and students in relation to feedback on assessment, and which is in place at colleges across the Group. Bearing in mind the positive features identified in this criterion - in particular: the mechanisms to ensure that numbers of available teaching staff are actively managed and that there are appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students; the arrangements for recruiting, mentoring, and supporting teaching staff and for approving staff to teach in higher education; the arrangements to enable staff to evaluate and strengthen their practice in teaching, learning and assessment through subject-specific and educational scholarship; and the opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice - the team concludes that this criterion is met.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

195 This criterion states that:

D1.1 Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

196 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

197 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

198 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To verify that the Group takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students, the team considered NCG HE Fitness to Study Policy, [083] PR20 NCG HE Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process 2018, [119] VAL07a ACS100 Academic Study Skills MDD 2018, [223] VAL07b ACS100 Academic Study Skills MSpec 2018, [224] CoP Terms of Reference, [434] Alternative Assessment Plan SWAY 20-21, [810] ASC100 Module Guide 2021. [875]
- b To verify that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs, the team considered Welcome Day Invite 2021-22, [476] NCUC Summer School summary 2021-22, [878] Induction Checklist 20-21, [891] Flying start induction materials screenshots, [A1126] Induction Attendance DET Carlisle, [B1262] Induction Attendance PGCE Carlisle, [B1263] HECl- Induction Attendance KC, [B1264] HN ECEC- Induction Attendance KC. [B1265]
- c To verify that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered, the team considered: NCUC Forum minutes December 2020 FINAL, [491] NCUC Forum minutes 24 March 2021 FINAL, [492] NCUC Evidence of Counselling Services, [A1079] Kidderminster Counselling Leaflet [A1080] Carlisle Tutors Referral Form, [A1081] Southwark counselling services, [A1134] NCUC CSS 4-year trend referral data 21/22, [B1295] Counselling Appointments Kidderminster, [B1296] Narrative Item 8. [B1668]
- d To verify that the Group's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs, the team considered Narrative Item 9, [B1219] FdA Aesthetics and Spa Management FT Programme Tracker, [B1220] NCG HE NCUC QR1 21-22 Health, [B1221] NCG HE Kidd QR1 21-22, [B1222] Health At Risk Success data RAG and final outcome, [B1253] Case study support intervention Health. [B1254]

- e To verify that the Group provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, the team considered VAL7e PFD200 Professional Development MDD 2018, [227] VAL7f PFD200 Professional Development MSpec 2018, [228] VAL7h PRD 100_Personal-Development_MDD 2018, [230] VAL7i PRD 100_Personal-Development_Mspec 2018, [231] VAL7j WKL200_Work-Based-Learning_MDD 2018, [232] VAL7k WKL200_Work-Based-Learning_Mspec 2018, [233] VAL7l WRL100_Work-Related-Learning_MDD 2018, [234] VAL7m WRL100_Work-Related-Learning_Mspec 2018, [235] Communities of Practice Summary, [435] CoP Terms of Reference HE support v2, [599] Academic CV Guidance, [916] Technical CV Guidance, [917] Creative CVs - Top Tips, [918] CV Workshop Booklet, [919] How to Tailor your CV to a Particular Job, [920] Engineering CV Guide, [921] Finding work in 2021 - post COVID, [922] How to Tailor your CV to a Particular Job workshop, [923] Psychometric tests - students, [924] Employability workshop - Interview techniques, [925] 5 job searching tips in 2021, [926] Job market COVID-19 guidance, [929] Is self-employment right for you, [934] FAQs - Graduate CVs, [936] FAQs - Cover letters, [937] CoP Business Case Study (NCUC & Carlisle), [B1211] CoP computing, [B1213] Coaching Needs Analysis Examples (Carlisle, Southwark), [B1299] JB obs PYZ Teaching Excellence 2020-2021 digital version, [B1398] Narrative Item 46, [B1549] Impact of LEC support - Case studies, [B1550] Poor Studentship Case Study, [B1551] Literature Review workshop, [B1553] BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 4 Research Methods 1 module guide, [B1556] BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 5 Research Methods module guide, [B1557] BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 6 Dissertation module guide, [B1558] Analytical Writing and constructive argument, [B1559] Study Skills & Academic Literacies, [B1560] and met with students, [M1] and teaching and support staff. [M2]
- f To verify that the Group supports students to make effective use of learning resources including specialist facilities and the use of digital and virtual environments, the team considered Library Induction, [594] Student IT Induction, [A1022] Flying start induction materials screenshots, [A1126] Digital Technologies Welcome - 2021-22, [A1127] Resource Document (including Staff CVs), [B1733] and met with students. [M1]
- g To verify that the Group's approach is guided by a commitment to equity, the team considered NCG Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025, [758] PR20 NCG HE Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process 2018. [119]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

199 The team considered a sample of students' assessed work as described in 'How the assessment was conducted'.

What the evidence shows

200 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

201 In setting out the Group's arrangements for enabling student development and achievement, the submission does not describe an overall strategic approach but instead draws attention to a variety of mechanisms intended to support the academic, personal and professional development of students. These include the arrangements for student induction, the Fitness to Study policy, [083] the Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process [119] and Alternative Assessment Plan Process, [810] the termly Student at Risk meetings, the Community of Practice for higher education support, [434] the programme trackers designed

to track the progress of each student, the provision of study skills in modules designed for that purpose [223, 224, 875] and the services of professional support staff in advising and counselling students. The team formed the view that these arrangements taken as a whole, would, if securely implemented, form a sufficiently comprehensive approach to enabling student development and achievement for all students.

202 The submission [p.82, paras 30-33] describes the support offered to students before and at initial enrolment. At NCUC this is described as consisting of communications about practical aspects of entry to higher education as well as insights into student life, wellbeing and available forms of support, supplemented by invitations to events at which they may meet teaching staff. This was illustrated by the Welcome Day Invite 2021-22, [476] and by a Summer School intended to give confidence to new entrants: the NCUC Summer School summary 2021-22 [878] notes that it was attended by 97 students and that its programme covered a range of aspects likely experienced in higher education in terms of academic study, use of resources and wellbeing. Similar induction activities are provided at Carlisle College, Kidderminster College and at OLC, and records of these activities at each of these colleges [B1262-B1266] show that they were well attended by students in September 2021.

203 An online student handbook [A1126] is accessible to all students through the Student Information Platform/intranet. Its content includes the 'flying start' induction materials for 2021-2022 which covers, for example, the NCG student IT induction, how to access Microsoft accounts, information about student representation, central support services, videos on disability support, financial support, pastoral support and employability support. The range of its content and its availability in electronic form means that it is comprehensive and accessible. The inclusion of material relating to a variety of aspects of student support services means that it considers the choices and needs of different students.

204 The Induction Checklist [891] is used as the basis of induction activities across the Group in order to guide consistent induction activities for new students and to ensure they have been inducted into the college and their programme of study. The checklist is detailed and comprehensive because it covers a wide range of aspects of provision focused on three areas: HE Student Entitlement, College Processes and Procedures, and Teaching and Learning. It is generic in content, enabling it to be used on any programme of study, thereby enabling the choices and needs of different students to be addressed.

205 The assessment team formed the view that there are effective arrangements for the induction of students entering their programme, and that these arrangements take account of the choices and needs of different students. This is because induction activities take place widely across the Group and are guided by a detailed and comprehensive checklist, and because there are a variety of complementary activities including a Summer School and a Welcome Day.

206 There are differing arrangements for the provision of advisory, support and counselling services at each college, reflecting the differing scales of their provision. At NCUC the Overview of Counselling Offer [A1079] describes the workshops and one-to-one counselling services available to students and affirms that 93 higher education students made use of these services in 2020-21. Evidence of the availability of advisory services at other colleges took the form of a leaflet [A1080] describing the services offered at Kidderminster College and how to access them, a template referral form for Carlisle College [A1081] and a description [A1134] of the Mental Fitness service offered at Southwark College. Despite these differing arrangements, students at all colleges [M1] expressed positive views about the availability and helpfulness of counselling and support teams, and about access to academic coaches and learning enhancement coaches.

207 In considering the levels of uptake by students of these services, the team noted that data in relation to NCUC [B1295] showed a year-on-year increase for the past four years in referrals to the central support services in relation to pastoral, well-being and mental health support. At Kidderminster, evidence [B1296] shows four students were referred for counselling in 2020-21, and that there are no students at Carlisle or Southwark accessing mental health or counselling services.

208 In response to a request, the Group provided a narrative [B1668] describing the work of student support services at each of its colleges: these include welfare, counselling, mental health and disability services. At NCUC, the support offered to individual students is monitored on a regular basis with reviews completed by support staff every six weeks. Examples of these reviews [B1304] show evidence of thoughtful discussion and careful analysis of the needs of individual students, leading to the identification of appropriate actions for the student and/or the adviser.

209 The work of support services at NCUC is monitored by means of 'at risk' meetings between curriculum and college support services in respect of students requiring support [B1673] and by means of a quality and audit cycle of all support services [B1674] which allows monitoring of staff caseloads and the quality of the support provided to students. In addition, the minutes of NCUC Forum Meetings [491, 492] between senior staff and student representatives show that students' views about the quality of their experience are being acknowledged and acted upon by senior staff. The narrative [B1668] states that in 2021 NCUC monitored the work of its support services team by means of a full audit of student records which led to the identification of a need for staff training on the quality of reviews, and that this training took place in September 2021. The Group provided descriptions of the services offered by support staff at each of its other colleges [B1668] but did not respond to a request for evidence to show how the work of student and staff advisory support and counselling services at these colleges is being monitored. The team concluded that the Group takes effective steps to monitor the effectiveness of advisory, support and counselling services at NCUC and to identify resource needs there, but that there is no evidence that it does so at its other colleges.

210 The team considered the mechanisms in place for monitoring student progression and performance. The submission affirms [p.15, para 92; p.81, para 16; p.88, para 59] that the Group uses 'programme trackers' to track the progress of each student and that these are used by staff to identify students at risk and to add support for individual students. The team considers the use of the programme tracker is effective because it enables high risk students to be identified and to target interventions which support students to monitor their progress and further their academic development. An example of this in relation to the FdA Aesthetics and Spa Management [B1220] showed that it comprised a detailed summary of the progress to date of each student, including grades achieved and an evaluation of whether each student is at risk of failure.

211 As described in a narrative, [B1219] the programme tracker is used to inform quarterly quality reviews of student progress. An example of the outcome of a quality review relating to programmes in Health and Social Care [B1221] shows that it comprises a summary of data on student progress on each programme against key performance indicators. The summary is comprehensive because it includes data on retention, withdrawals, predicted achievement, attendance, referrals to support services, and identification of students at risk, and because it shows progress against key targets using a clear red-amber-green rating.

212 While the programme tracker is implemented only at NCUC, Carlisle College, Kidderminster College and Southwark College have, from September 2021, used the quality review system to track and report student achievement [B1219]. An example [B1222] of a

quality review from Kidderminster College showed that it includes the same key data as the example [B1221] from NCUC, and that it too shows progress on key performance indicators using a clear red-amber-green rating. As an example of the effectiveness of its approach, the Group provided evidence of the use of its programme tracker in Health Social Care and Counselling in 2020-21, when a total of 55 students at Levels 4, 5, and 6 were identified in the programme tracker as being at risk: as shown in the analysis [B1253] of the characteristics and outcomes of each at-risk student and in a supporting statement [B1254] by the Group, 51 of the 55 students achieved positive outcomes at the end of the year. The team considers that that use of the programme tracker and evidence of its effective implementation at NCUC, and the tracking based on quality review systems at other colleges demonstrate that NCG's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and to provide accurate management information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

213 The Group provides opportunities for students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression through a variety of forms of support. Module guides for modules in Professional Development, [227, 228] in Personal Development [230, 231] and in Work-based Learning [232-235] show that these modules are dedicated to supporting students' professional and personal development and that they are included in all of the Foundation Degree programmes across the Group. The assessment team also confirmed that students' learning is supported through their academic development by activities including study skills and academic literacies, [B1560] academic writing and constructive argument, [B1559] and literature review workshops. [B1553] An illustrative example in Sports and Exercise shows modules building through the levels from Research Methods 1 at Level 4 [B1556] to Research Methods 2 at Level 5 [B1557] leading to the Critical Research Project at Level 6. [B1558] Students whom the team met confirmed that they found these modules helpful. [M1]

214 Support for the development of professional skills arises from the guidance available to all students of the Group from the employability and careers team in terms of finding employment, [922] the employability workshop, [925] job searching tips, [926] and the Job Market and COVID guide. [929] In support of personal and professional development, the employability and careers team provides the 'Developing a career plan' [A1129] presentation to give students the opportunity to begin planning for their career so they are ready for graduation: the presentation includes reflective activities, and guidance and support available to the students. Psychometric test presentations [924] enable students to prepare themselves through practice for such testing during interviews for jobs after graduation. These resources are all useful because they provide advice and guidance to students in relation to job searches and interview preparation. There is helpful support for students with writing CVs in a variety of curriculum areas, [916-921, 923] and cover letters, [936-937] along with guided support for students who may wish to be self-employed. [934] The team's view was that these forms of support are likely to develop students' professional and personal development as well as their future career management skills.

215 The Group has formed 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) whose purpose as set out in their terms of reference [599] is to establish a network of pastoral and academic support across the Group's colleges to encourage support staff and curriculum teams to work collegiately to develop practice. The CoP Summary [435] shows that a total of 16 subject areas have formed CoPs. As evidence of the potential impact of CoPs, the Group offered two examples. The first relates to the Business Departments in NCUC and Carlisle [B1211] whose teaching staff met in December 2021 and decided to utilise their skills sets and share teaching resources to provide specialist lectures, to make arrangements to cover unexpected staff absences and to jointly prepare learning materials to an increased depth. The second example relates to the CoP in computing shared by Carlisle College and NCUC [B1213] which has resulted in 2021 in the sharing of assessed work and teaching materials

at Level 6 to ensure a consistent level of academic challenge to students. While these arrangements have been established too recently for their impact to be evident, the team formed the view that the work of CoPs is likely to support students' academic development across the Group's colleges.

216 The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) provides enhanced academic support for students in their academic development through a range of activities including individual meetings, one-to-one coaching sessions, group sessions, skills workshops, and dissertation masterclasses, all of which aim to support good academic practice skills with Learning Enhancement Coaches delivering these sessions who are overseen by the HE Achievement Coordinator. [B1549] In 2020-21, over 500 students made use of the LET's services and the LET delivered 87 workshops. Although the LET is based at NCUC, it provides services to all other colleges in the Group by means of in-person visits and online meetings [B1549], and a Learning Enhancement Coach has been appointed specifically for online cross-campus support. Evidence was provided of this in the form of records of meetings including one-to-one virtual support sessions for Carlisle College students [M2; B1298] and coaching needs analysis conducted with students at Carlisle College [B1299] and Southwark College. [B1549].

217 The LET members also provide support where cases of poor academic practice are identified by the curriculum teams. Illustrative examples were provided of instances where individual students had received support [B1551] and where cohort level interventions had taken place with a group of students to address referencing issues in their written work. [B1550] In discussion with students from across the group [M1], the team heard enthusiastically positive views about the key role the LET members play in supporting their academic development. The review team noted that the student submission affirmed that students value the contribution of the support, pastoral and academic enhancement of team members towards their learning environment and promoting academic success. [Student Submission] Teaching and support staff [M2] spoke positively about the close working relationships which academic and LET staff enjoy.

218 The team heard from teaching and support staff [M2] that a key driver for 2021-22 is to improve the cross-campus academic support, ensuring consistency across all colleges - examples to illustrate this priority included a Learning Enhancement Coach (LEC) being appointed specifically for online cross-campus support, and LET team members who set up virtual meetings in light of COVID-19 restrictions having recently undertaken in-person visits to the colleges in Kidderminster, Carlisle and Southwark. Examples of early outcomes were presented as evidence through the records of meetings including one-to-one virtual support sessions from the LECs for Carlisle College students [M2; B1298] and coaching needs analysis conducted with students at Carlisle College [B1299] and Southwark College. [B1549] The assessment team concluded that the LET plays a key role in promoting the academic development of students across the Group because it is effectively integrated into the academic experience.

219 Academic skills are also developed in feedback on students' assessed work, as evidenced in the samples examined by the team which showed that supportive 'feed-forward' feedback was given in terms of how the student could improve the work to meet the necessary learning outcomes and academic level. For six of the 13 pieces of work from Carlisle College 'feed-forward' feedback was poor, but for all other pieces of work at Carlisle College and for all pieces of work from NCUC 'feed-forward' feedback was of high quality. The team's view was that these forms of support are likely to be effective in supporting students' academic development but that, on the basis of the samples examined, the Group is not offering consistently high-quality feedback on all assessed work.

220 In assessing the evidence of support provided within the curriculum and by

professional support staff, the assessment team concluded that the Group provides opportunities for all its students to develop skills that will enable their academic, personal and professional progression.

221 Learning resources generally provided for all students include widely available information technology software, the Group's VLE, and the resources of the Group's library service. The materials available to new students during their induction programme include the IT Induction Presentation, [A1022] the Flying Start induction materials for all students [A1126] and the induction presentation for the Digital Technologies programme. [A1127] These include wide-ranging introductions to the general IT resources available for student use, particularly Microsoft products, with links to more detailed descriptions on how to access and use particular systems. These are supplemented, if necessary, by information skills sessions led by a librarian. The VLE, described in the Group's Resource Document, [B1733] is used to provide students with lecture materials, tests, general information, discussion boards, staff contact details and module guides, and is introduced to students during their induction programme. The library induction [594] includes a description of learning resources available from the Group's libraries, in the form of learning spaces, online resources including specialist databases, e-books and online journals. The Resource Document [B1733] also affirms that library resources are checked at the point of programme approval to ensure that all required texts are available, and that ready access to library resources is supported by reading lists, including online resources, for each module available in the library catalogue. In discussion, students from across the group [M1] expressed positive views about the availability and suitability of learning resources including library resources and IT resources.

222 The team discussed the use of specialist facilities with students [M1] to assess their use. Students spoke in very positive terms about specialist facilities, citing as examples the accessibility and usefulness of resources (at NCUC) in photography and in sports, and (at Kidderminster College) in mathematics and in dance. The team formed the view that the Group supports students to make effective use of learning resources including specialist facilities and the use of digital and virtual environments.

223 The Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 and 2024-25 [758] sets out how NCG is committed to enabling equality and supporting diversity across the partner colleges by the considerations given to assessment of performance, which covers access to education, and success measured by continuation to study and attainment. Progression to employment and further study is included in the plan, [758] including specific information dedicated to BAME students, disabled students and other groups who experience barriers to entry to higher education and which takes into consideration different household incomes and socioeconomic status. This document [758] sets out [page 16] a clear plan which details in the context of the above the objectives, and targets measures, for example improving continuation rates, to close the gaps in attainment for first degrees and upper second between BAME and white students by 5% by 2024-25.

224 The Alternative Assessment Procedure [119] details the procedures to follow to support students who disclose a learning disability, with the aim being able to support each student in an appropriate way enabling them to successfully complete their programme of study. As described in Criterion B3, the process has not yet been tested in use, but is likely to be effective in securing reasonable adjustments to assessment arrangements for students requiring them.

225 The Group has demonstrated a commitment to equity towards its student body through the consistently applied process for monitoring student progress and achievement already discussed, through its approach to access to its provision as expressed in its Access and Participation Plan, and through its recently established process for ensuring a consistent

approach to forming alternative assessment plans for students with particular needs.

Conclusions

226 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

227 The team noted weaknesses in some areas of this criterion. While the Group takes effective steps to monitor the effectiveness of advisory, support and counselling services at NCUC and to identify resource needs there, that there is no evidence that it does so at its other colleges. The evidence of the sample of assessed student work indicates that the Group is not offering consistently high-quality feedback on all assessed work.

228 However, the team also identified positive features identified in this criterion. There are effective arrangements for the induction of students entering their programmes, which take account of the choices and needs of different students; there is a system which enables the Group to monitor student progression and performance accurately and to provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs; the Group provides opportunities for all its students to develop skills that will enable their academic, personal and professional progression with the exception of the weakness in the consistency of feedback on assessed work; and the Group supports students to make effective use of learning resources including specialist facilities and the use of digital and virtual environments.

229 The team concluded that the positive features are sufficiently strong to allow it to conclude that, on balance, the Group has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The team concludes, therefore, that this criterion is met.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

230 This criterion states that:

E1: An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

231 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

232 The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the provider's submission.

233 Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

- a To verify that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the Group's higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] NCG HE Annual Review Policy and Procedure - for approval Sept 21, [079] NCG HEPIM Guidance Process 2021-22, [095] GU07 Programme Annual Review Report Guidance, [130] HE27 Programme Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21, [162] HE Academic Board Minutes - 14-12-2020, [293] NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2021, [409] NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 June 21, [424], NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Sept Oct 21 Update, [978] FdA Interior and Spatial Design Programme Annual Review Report HE27, [995] PIM improvement evidence 19-20 and 20-21, [A1008] Activity Cycle 21-22 - NCG Colleges, [A1010] IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan 2021-22, [A1082] IDAP Update Academic Board Update 07-10-2021, [A1101] NCUC Annual Review Report 20-21 FINAL, [B1139] NCUC HE QIP 21-22 FINAL, [B1140] Carlisle Campus HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1141] Carlisle College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL, [B1142] Kidderminster College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1143] Kidderminster College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL, [B1144] OLC College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL, [B1145] OLC HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1146] Southwark College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1147] SWK College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL, [B1148] Digital Arts - NCUC Curriculum Area Higher Education Annual Review Report, [B1230] BA Business Management Programme Annual Review, [B1543] Narrative Item 40, [B1563] Carlisle College PIM 1 Actions, [B1564] OLC PIM 1 Actions, [B1565], the Request for Additional Evidence, and met with teaching and support staff. [M2]
- b To verify that clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of the Group's academic provision, the team considered NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020, [057] NCG HE Annual Review Policy and Procedure - for approval Sept 21, [079] NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 June 21, [424] IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan 2021-22, [A1082] Carlisle Campus HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1141]

Kidderminster College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1143] Southwark College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL, [B1147] Narrative Item 15, [B1169], Narrative Item 12 [B1318], NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Update, [B1320] NCG HE Car QR1 2122, [B1322] 1QR1 Actions - Health (NCUC), [B1325] Car QR1 Actions, [B1326] Kidd QR1 Actions, [B1327] Southwark QR1 Action, [B1328] OLC QR1 Actions, [B1329].

- c To verify that ideas and expertise from within and outside the Group are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team considered NCG HE Student Partnership and Engagement Framework, [084] SPA Narrative Item 19, [B1685] IET Notes from Employer Consultation 171121, [B1687] FdEng 2022 SPA Approval Form, [B1688] Emails from Barclays Bank Wealth Manager in support of Business HE curriculum, [B1692] Digital Advisory Board minutes 020420, [B1693] Digital Advisory Board minutes 041119, [B1694] NCUC STEM 4 Yr strategy Dir Ind Strat present to CEO 040620. [B1695]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

- 234 The team did not carry out any sampling in relation to this criterion.

What the evidence shows

- 235 The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations

Plans for the transitional year

236 In considering the Group's plans for using its degree awarding powers in future, the assessment team noted that, as described in this report at "About NCG", the Group regards 2021-22 as a transitional year for ensuring consistency in staff knowledge and understanding of the Academic Regulations, and in a number of aspects of the student experience. The NCG HE Improvement Plan [the 2017 Plan] [424] was first developed in 2017 [Submission, p.26, para 34] and has been subject to regular oversight and updating by the HE Academic Board as shown by minutes of the Board in the period 2017 to 2021 [281 – 295]. For convenience, this report uses the term 'the 2017 Plan' to refer collectively to the original plan and its subsequent updates. The current version of the 2017 Plan [978] applies to all colleges, and sets out eight areas of improvement: improving programme organisation and management; enhancing the learning community and student voice; improving NSS participation and student satisfaction; improving student retention; ensuring inclusivity across the curriculum; increasing the participation rate for the Graduate Outcomes survey; improving achievement data for levels 5, 6 and 7; and improving student satisfaction with learning resources.

237 The 2017 Plan was updated in October 2021 [978] to show details of progress made to September 2021 across the seven of the eight identified improvement areas, noting that the eighth area had no progress updates because it was added to the plan in October 2021. Across these seven areas, the plan identifies the college, the person(s) responsible, and the target date for each of the actions within each area. The plan also shows progress to September 2021 for each action using a red / amber/ green rating for each. The Group provided information to the team, in January 2022, on current progress towards completion [B1320] which shows that, of 195 actions for which progress had been reported, a total of 103 (53%) were rated as green, 79 (41%) as amber and 13(7%) as red. The team formed the view that this data indicated that there was a need for continuing oversight of steps being taken to complete the plan during 2021-22 onwards.

238 The team found that the 2017 Plan does not form a secure basis for strengthening the Group's provision during its self-declared transitional year. Although it identified

proposed actions, the college and the person responsible for each, and the target date for completion of each, the team found that the 2017 Plan lacks precision and specificity of action-setting in relation to the identified key themes for improvement, with many of the measures of achievement being only procedural (such as reporting to a committee) or unmeasurable (for instance, sharing of practice).

239 The team also considered how and to what extent the Group had taken steps to monitor progress towards completion of the 2017 Plan; it noted that the 2017 Plan in respect of the updates made in 2021-22, had been approved by the HE Quality and Standards Committee in March 2021 [975] and by the HE Academic Board in April 2021 [294], and the team accordingly considered whether and how these two bodies had subsequently overseen progress towards completion. The HE Quality and Standards Committee considered progress towards completion in September 2021; although its minutes [B1173] show that it noted actions rated as 'red', the minutes do not show that it took any action to address these. Minutes of the HE Academic Board show that it did not consider the 2017 Plan at its meeting in July 2021 [295] but that it did receive a report on progress in October 2021 [B1172] when it noted points made by members in response to the report but did not show consideration of whether progress on the plan was satisfactory or whether any action was desirable to address any unsatisfactory progress. The team considered that minutes of the meetings of the HE Academic Board and the HE Quality and Standards Committee, since their approval of the updated 2017 Plan, indicate of a lack of rigour in overseeing progress towards completion of the plan.

240 The submission acknowledged the need for greater evaluative commentary on impact in the 2017 Plan, and Narrative Item 15 [B1169] outlined plans to establish a more robust process for monitoring progress on, and the impact of, actions identified in future quality improvement plans. In considering the robustness of the plans described in Narrative Item 15, [B1169] the team formed the view that its judgement would be based on the effectiveness of the implementation of the College HE Improvement Plans for Kidderminster College, [B1143] Carlisle College [B1141] and Southwark College [B1147]. These plans showed the status of actions identified for each college as follows. For Southwark College, all four identified actions were 'On Track' for completion; for Kidderminster College, of a total of 19 identified actions, 10 were 'Completed', 6 were 'On Track' and 3 were 'Not On Track'; for Carlisle College, the status of all 29 identified actions was not shown. Hence, across all three colleges, of a total of 52 identified actions, 10 (19%) were 'Completed', 10 (19%) were 'On Track', 3 (6%) were 'Not on Track' and the status of 29 (56%) was unknown. The team concluded from this analysis that there was insufficient evidence to show that College HE Improvement Plans had been effectively implemented, and hence that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate the robustness of the Group's plans [B1169] to establish a more robust process for monitoring progress on, and the impact of, actions identified in quality improvement plans.

241 The team concluded that, while the 2017 Plan identifies issues to be resolved across the Group during the 'transitional year' of 2021-22, it does not form a satisfactory approach to addressing these issues. This is because of actions which are not expressed in terms which enable a judgement as to their successful completion and because of a lack of rigour by the HE Academic Board and the HE Quality and Standards Committee in overseeing progress towards completion of the plan. In consequence, there is a risk that necessary improvements may not be securely implemented, leading to a potential risk to academic standards or to the quality of the student experience.

242 The Group's DAP Submission [p.52] acknowledges 'gaps, inconsistencies and/or weaknesses' in its provision, and states that these had led to the identification in its DAP Submission of 'areas for improvement'. As a result, and during the course of the assessment, the Group created an IDAP Self-Assessment Quality Improvement Plan [the

2021 Plan] [A1082]. The 2021 Plan was developed in October 2021 as a result of the Group's DAP submission and subsequently approved by the HE Academic Board [Request for Additional Evidence]. The 2021 Plan sets out 'areas for improvement' which were identified by the Group from its DAP submission, but which did not form part of the 2017 Plan. The team formed the view that the omission from the 2017 Plan of areas for improvement arising from gaps, inconsistencies and/or weaknesses in its provision was indicative of an insufficiently rigorous, cohesive approach to the formulation of quality improvement planning at institutional level.

243 The team noted, as confirmed in the Group's narrative [B1318] and in recognition by the Group of the omission from 2017 Plan of items included in the 2021 Plan, that in the course of the assessment the Group had merged the 2021 Plan into a single NCG Improvement Plan [the Combined Plan] [B1320]. However, the team considered that the Combined Plan, provided to it in January 2022, was too recently developed to form a secure basis for conclusions relating to the Group's approach to planning, and hence gave no further consideration to the Combined Plan.

244 The Group provided an updated version of the 2021 Plan [A1101] showing progress on completion of actions to October 2021. The 2021 Plan [A1082] and its update [A1101] set out a total of 46 actions intended to address the 'areas for improvement' identified by the Group. The team found that the 2021 Plan, if securely implemented, would be likely to enable the Group to satisfy itself that it will continue to meet the DAPs criteria and to securely operate its powers across all of its colleges that deliver higher education. This is because the 'areas for improvement' relate primarily to the support and development of consistency of provision across all colleges in the Group; because actions clearly relate to the DAP criteria and are classified under five headings using the terminology of the criteria, namely academic governance, regulatory frameworks, scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff, environment for supporting students, and evaluation of performance; because actions are specific, measurable and time-bound with a named person responsible for oversight; because actions consistently relate to securing a uniform approach or operating uniform processes in using DAP powers in all colleges; and because the plan includes records of progress updates at the HE Academic Board, HE Quality and Standards Committee and the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. Identified actions relate, for example, to the appointment of student and staff representatives to the HE Governance Committee from colleges other than NCUC; to establishing a peer observation process at Kidderminster College; and to including standardisation meetings in the Communities of Practice for common NCG awards. The team noted that numerous intended actions relate to the need to establish a common framework for the implementation of degree awarding powers across the Group, and noted evidence [A1082, A1101] of the intention to monitor progress by means of updates to the HE Academic Board, HE Quality and Standards Committee and HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee in the course of 2021-22. However, the team found that, at the time of the assessment, it was too soon to see evidence of the impact of this plan because target dates for completion of the actions in the plan range from October 2021 to December 2022 and the updated Plan [A1082] showed that none of the 46 actions had yet been completed.

245 In assessing the Group's ability to take effective action to assess its own performance at Group level, the team considered the contributions and significance of the 2017 Plan and of the 2021 Plan. The team found that the manner in which the Group had used and overseen the 2017 Plan should be given greater weight in its assessment than that given to the 2021 Plan. This is because the 2017 Plan has been in use for several years since 2017 while the 2021 Plan was created in September 2021, and because the 2017 Plan has, since 2017, been subject to regular monitoring and updating by Group's established deliberative processes through the HE Academic Board, while the 2021 Plan has been developed only as a consequence of the Group's preparations for the DAP assessment, as

evidenced in the report [A1101] about the 2021 Plan presented to the HE Academic Board in October 2021. The weaknesses and omissions in the 2017 Plan and in its oversight accordingly led the team to conclude that there is not a rigorous, cohesive approach to the formulation of quality improvement planning at institutional level.

246 The principles of continuous quality improvement are clearly articulated in NCG's Academic Regulations Section B. [057] These regulations are comprehensive because they set out the core purpose of review to ensure programme currency and validity; evaluate student achievement and the overall student learning experience; evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment practices; ensure that appropriate action is taken to address issues of quality, standards and enhancement; and consider the level of ongoing external involvement, and relevant external issues. These regulations [057] set out to incorporate ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation through the annual cycle of monitoring and action planning.

247 The Group's annual cycle of quality assurance is implemented in accordance with its academic regulations, as shown in its Activity Cycle - 2021-2022 NCG [A1010] which sets out key monthly activities to be undertaken across all colleges. These are detailed in terms of templates, process, guide and intended outcomes, as well as the roles responsible for actioning the stated activities, including student representatives, HE Lead, Programme Lead and registry. The team formed the view that the schedule of activities is likely to support effective oversight of standards and quality because of the detailed specification of each activity and its date for completion, because of its links to supporting process documents and templates and because of the specification of individuals responsible for each activity.

248 The NCG Higher Education Annual Review Policy and Procedure [079] sets out the process for annual reporting across the Group. Annual reviews at programme level and (at NCUC only) curriculum level are used to inform the Annual Review Reports for each college and the Group's Higher Education Annual Review Report. In each case, these reports are accompanied by improvement plans identifying actions to be taken to secure standards or quality. The team noted that, at colleges other than NCUC, curriculum areas comprise either a single programme or two programmes, and formed the view that in these cases the absence of annual reporting at curriculum level would not be likely to endanger oversight of standards and quality.

249 The guidance [130] and the template [162] for programme annual reviews provide a clear structure for reporting in order to ensure consistent inclusion of data on student progression and achievement accompanied by analysis leading to identification of good practice and areas in need of improvement. Examples of programme reports in respect of 2020-21 for BA Business Management [B1543] and of 2019-20 for FdA Interior and Spatial Design [995] show evidence of critical assessment of factors contributing to student success and of identification of actions to address areas requiring improvement. Each report concludes with a summary of actions completed arising from areas requiring improvement as identified in the previous year's review.

250 The team considered an example of a curriculum Annual Review Report, in respect of Digital Arts in 2020-21. [B1230] This report, in addressing actions taken to ensure high quality provision during the pandemic, showed evidence of a critical assessment of steps taken to establish a successful approach to digital teaching, learning and assessment, as well as an analysis of data on student progression and achievement and an analysis of student views as expressed through NSS results and from internal surveys based on questions aligned to those in the NSS. The report also contains details of actions to be taken to address areas requiring improvement and a summary of actions completed arising from areas requiring improvement as identified in the previous year's review.

251 College Annual Review Reports and the accompanying college improvement plans for NCUC, [B1139, B1140] Carlisle College, [B1142, B1141] Kidderminster College [B1144, B1143] and Southwark College, [B1148, B1147] as well as for OLC, [B1145, B1146] are prepared to a common structure, and provide a clear commentary on a range of quality assurance indicators including key performance indicators (such as retention and achievement), academic standards and quality (such as quality review processes, audits and evaluation of student feedback), enhancement initiatives (such as a 'student as producer' initiative), and externality (such as employer engagement in programmes). These reports demonstrate transparent and evaluative reporting of higher education activity at institutional level, for example in RAG-rating NSS performance by college. The college improvement plans [B1140, B1141, B1143, B1146, B1147] show clear setting of measurable targets with dates for completion and the allocation of responsibility to a named member of staff.

252 The NCG Higher Education Annual Review Report 2019-20 [409] includes an extensive analysis of key data on student progression and achievement and, in its supporting analysis, identified, for example, issues with learner retention from Level 4 to 5 and within 3-year degree programmes. This self-assessment led to the identification of eight themes for improvement within the Group for the following academic year, subject to the subsequent approval by the HE Academic Board. Minutes of the HE Academic Board in December 2020 [293] show that these improvement themes were considered and approved.

253 In discussion, teaching and professional support staff from across the Group's colleges were able [M2] to clearly articulate how actions identified in quality improvement plans at college or programme level had been addressed and their impact, for example, in improvements to student voice and representation, and through developments in the Group's tutorial programme, with resultant improvements in continuation rates.

254 The Academic Regulations Section B [057] and the Annual Review Policy and Procedure [079] affirm that operational monitoring of actions arising from annual reviews is conducted through quarterly Quality Performance Reviews in each college which examine the overall effectiveness of operations within a college against key performance indicators with the aim of promoting an institutional approach to the continual development of high quality and standards. The team saw evidence of Quality Performance Reviews having taken place at Carlisle College, Kidderminster College, Southwark College and OLC, [B1322, B1222, B1323, B1324 respectively] showing consistent approaches by staff of each college to the evaluation of progress on achieving targets set in improvement plans. Actions on areas for improvement deriving from Curriculum Quality Performance Reviews are rated (red, amber, green), cross-referenced to College Annual Reviews and followed up with an action plan. The team saw examples of action plans from NCUC, Carlisle College, Kidderminster College, Southwark College and OLC [B1325-B1329 respectively] which showed clear lists of actions undertaken and planned, as well as timescales, named responsibilities for completion, and a summary of progress to date for each of them. Actions for improvement relate, for instance, to securing the processes for identifying and supporting 'at-risk' students and to securing student access to online library resources. In discussion, [M2] teaching staff and professional support staff confirmed their awareness of Quality Performance Review meetings and their outcomes, and their usefulness, for example, in reviewing on-programme and end-of-programme student achievement.

255 Annual reviews at programme, curriculum, college and Group levels show clear evidence of critical self-assessment across all of the Group's colleges, and show that self-assessment is based on evidence derived from data and from the evaluation of the experience of programme delivery. Action setting is clearly articulated: action plans at programme and curriculum level and improvement plans at college level demonstrate a commitment to taking action to respond to identified areas in need of improvement. Staff have shown a clear awareness and understanding of actions being taken arising from

outcomes of reviews. The arrangements to ensure consistency across the Group of reviews at programme and college levels and the effectiveness of these reviews in identifying and addressing areas for improvement show that there is clarity within the Group about responsibility for managing its provision in relation to how the quality of provision is monitored. Quality Performance Reviews constitute a clear mechanism for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision.

256 The team formed the view that these arrangements are sufficiently robust to mitigate the potential risk to standards and the quality of the student experience arising from the lack of rigour in overseeing progress towards completion of the 2017 plan.

257 Programme quality is also managed through Programme Improvement Meetings (PIMs). The HE Programme Improvement Meeting Process document [095] sets out that the PIM process is designed to support and improve underperforming programmes, identified through the evaluation of data such as student satisfaction, retention, achievement, complaints and external examiner feedback. Other risk triggers for a PIM can include qualitative data resulting from external examiner reports, student feedback or where staffing changes may impact on the academic experience. [A1008 PIM Improvement Evidence 2019-20 and 2020-21] These approaches indicate that this is an effective process for identifying and responding to weaknesses in programme design or delivery. The PIM Process document [095] details that HE Quality Improvement Managers and college HE Leads conduct PIMs, which are held three times a year mid-way through the timetabled Quality Review Meetings which are planned into the annual quality cycle. [095; B1563]

258 Although PIMs have so far been undertaken only at NCUC, the PIM process has been adopted at all other colleges including OLC with effect from September 2021, as confirmed in the IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan [B1320] and the Group's narrative [B1563]. The submission (p.108, para 49) notes that in 2020-21 there were 29 NCUC programmes in the PIM process; this represents 31% of the total of 95 programmes delivered at NCUC as identified in the Group's Provider Information Form. The submission states that, at the end of the year, 45% of the programmes in the PIM process had followed the procedure fully and were deemed sufficiently improved to be moved out of the PIM process. The proportion (31%) of programmes in the PIM process at NCUC, and the proportion of these (55%) which continued in the process for longer than one year, were seen by the assessment team as sufficiently high to suggest it likely that there would also be programmes at other colleges which would benefit from this process. At colleges other than NCUC the team found that the first round of PIMs had taken place during December 2021 with action plans put in place for the business and management programmes at Carlisle College [B1564] and at OLC [B1565] and for the Southwark College provision. [B1225] The assessment team formed the view that the PIM process plays an effective role in the quality assurance of learning opportunities at NCUC as it is systematically embedded there, and that there is already evidence of effective implementation of the process at other colleges from 2021-22 onwards.

259 Some curriculum areas across the Group have made use of external expertise in the course of programme design and development: the team saw evidence of the following examples.

260 Staff from the Engineering curriculum team held an employer forum and workshop whose notes [B1687] show that representatives of six local and national engineering employers provided input into the form and content of a proposed new engineering programme arising from recognition of changes brought about by advancements in technology and the demands of a specific set of skills within the industry. The Group affirmed in its narrative [B1685] that as a result the structure of the programme was modified and its content updated to include specific skills identified by employers, and that this

informed the subsequent Strategic Planning and Approval form [B1688] for three proposed Foundation Degrees in Engineering (FdEng) programmes.

261 The Business curriculum team at NCUC have worked with a national bank to review the business curriculum with a view to aligning new programmes with identified growth areas within regional plans. Communication with the bank [B1692] attests to its involvement in a review of existing content, learning outcomes and assessment methods alongside consideration of current working practices and of the skills and knowledge expected of a graduate entering employment. The narrative [B1685] affirmed that this has led to more robust development of key employability skills and to a greater focus on innovation, enterprise and commercial development throughout the programme, and to plans to ensure that these areas are included in future programmes.

262 The minutes of meetings of the Digital Advisory Board for the Digital Technologies curriculum area in November 2019 and April 2020 [B1693-B1694] show that it was attended by six representatives of technologically based employers and that its discussions centred on curriculum structures and content likely to develop skills and qualities needed of graduates entering employment. Advice from the Digital Advisory Board has also informed the development of a FdEng Engineering with Applied Digital Technologies in 2020-21 as part of the Group's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Strategy. [B1695]

263 In addition to the use of external expertise in programme design and development, the Group makes use of independent external expertise in its arrangements for programme approval, as discussed in Criterion B2 where the team found evidence of effective participation in validation events from external academics, employers and students.

264 The Student Partnership and Engagement Framework [084] aims to actively engage students in shaping and developing quality assurance and the enhancement of the higher education experience, by providing opportunities for effective representation. The mechanisms by which the student voice contributes to programme development and approval are discussed in Criterion A1, where the team found that students are supported to engage effectively in the Group's deliberative structure.

265 The assessment team formed the view that the Group has effective arrangements for gathering and using ideas and expertise from outside and within the organisation in respect of programme approval, design, delivery and review, through employer input and the student voice.

Conclusions

266 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

267 With a view to ensuring consistency of provision across its constituent colleges in the course of its self-identified transitional year in 2021-22, the Group has assessed its performance and identified areas in need of improvement as set out in the 2017 Plan and the 2021 Plan. However the 2017 Plan does not form a satisfactory approach to addressing these issues, because of actions which are not expressed in terms which enable a judgement as to their successful completion, because of a lack of rigour by the HE Academic Board and the HE Quality and Standards Committee in overseeing progress towards completion of the plan, and because of the omission from the 2017 Plan of actions to address areas for improvement identified in the 2021 Plan. Although the Group has outlined plans to establish a more robust process for monitoring progress on and the impact of actions identified in future quality improvement plans, the team was unable to evaluate the robustness of these plans because they have not yet been implemented. The weaknesses

and omissions in the 2017 Plan and the lack of rigour in overseeing its completion led the team to conclude that there is not a rigorous, cohesive approach to the formulation of quality improvement planning at institutional level.

268 The 2021 Plan identifies 'areas for improvement' which were acknowledged in the Group's submission, but which did not initially form part of the previously-developed 2017 Plan. The 2021 Plan, if securely implemented, would be likely to enable the Group to satisfy itself that it will continue to meet the DAPs criteria through the establishment of a common framework for the implementation of degree-awarding powers across the Group, and to securely operate its powers across all of its colleges that deliver higher education. However at the time of the assessment, it was too soon to see evidence of the impact of this plan.

269 The Group has a clear policy and procedure for annual review of its provision, aligned with its Academic Regulations. The evidence of the implementation of this policy, in the form of annual reviews at programme, curriculum and college level, shows that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the Group's higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal monitoring and review. The quarterly Quality Performance Reviews within each college constitute a clear mechanism for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision. The team formed the view that the Group's arrangements for annual review of its provision sufficiently robust to mitigate the potential risk to standards and the quality of the student experience arising from the lack of rigour in overseeing progress towards completion of the 2017 plan.

270 The process for Programme Improvement Meetings (PIM) is systematically embedded at NCUC, and there is evidence of effective implementation of the process at other colleges from 2021-22 onwards. The PIM process plays an effective role in the quality assurance of learning opportunities provided by the Group.

271 Despite the weaknesses in the development and monitoring of the HE Improvement Plan, the arrangements for annual review supported by quarterly Quality Performance Reviews and the PIM process are sufficient to show that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the Group's higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal monitoring and review.

272 Consideration of the involvement of employers in programme reviews and in subsequent design and development, of independent external expertise in programme approval and of the contribution of the student voice to the Group's deliberative committees led the team to the view that the Group has effective arrangements for gathering and using ideas and expertise from outside and within the organisation in respect of programme approval, design, delivery and review.

273 Although the development and monitoring of the 2017 Plan during its self-declared transitional year constitutes a weakness in the Group's approach to the evaluation of its performance, the team identified positive features in respect of arrangements for annual review, for monitoring and discharging actions, and in the use of expertise from outside and within the organisation. On balance, the team found that NCG takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths. The team concludes, therefore, that this criterion is met.

Full Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

274 The Full DAPs overarching criterion is that 'the provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems'.

275 The Group has in place effective means of critically and regularly reviewing its own performance at programme and curriculum levels, and, in recognition of its multi-site nature, at the level of each of its constituent colleges. The process of monitoring the academic provision is robust with deliberative committees considering annual reports for key areas of delivery across the Group. Critical self-assessment also takes place at programme level through annual programme reviews and at college level for each college in the Group. Annual programme review reports and college reports consider data and feedback from a range of sources and lead to the identification of appropriate actions in improvement plans. Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging identified actions raised through internal monitoring and review. Although weaknesses and omissions in the NCG HE Improvement Plan [the 2017 Plan] and in its oversight show that there is not a rigorous, cohesive approach to the formulation of quality improvement planning at Group level, the Group has identified desirable improvements to its arrangements for the use of its degree-awarding powers across the Group in its IDAP Self-Assessment Quality Improvement Plan [the 2021 Plan]. This plan, if securely implemented, would be likely to enable the Group to satisfy itself that it will continue to meet the DAPs criteria and to securely operate its powers across all of its colleges that deliver higher education, but at the time of the assessment it was too soon to see evidence of its impact.

276 The team noted that the development of the 2021 Plan indicates that the Group has taken an active approach to the formulation of quality improvement planning at Group level, although the effectiveness of its approach is blunted by weaknesses and omissions in the 2017 Plan and in its oversight. The team also noted the strength of the Group's approach to arrangements for the annual review of its provision, the use of data and feedback, and mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions. The Group's arrangements for annual review of its provision are sufficiently robust to mitigate the potential risk to standards and the quality of the student experience arising from the lack of rigour in overseeing progress towards completion of the 2017 Plan. In considering the Group's commitment to the assurance of standards, the team concluded that, on balance, these positive features outweigh the weaknesses and omissions in the 2017 Plan and in its oversight, and accordingly judged that the Group has a proven commitment to the assurance of standards.

277 The Group's HE Strategy articulates a clear vision and purpose for the provision of higher education. There are clearly defined deliberative structures which facilitate debate and the sharing of ideas. There is evidence of clarity and differentiation of function in relation to academic governance structures and arrangements for managing higher education provision across the Group. Staff are brought together as members of deliberative committees such as the HE Academic Board, the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the HE Quality and Standards Committee and are actively involved in the development of institutional strategy and policy. Leadership and management roles are well defined, with clear allocation of responsibilities and reporting lines. Staff also come together in the design and development of modules and programmes with development teams including academic and learning support staff and teaching and support staff contributing to the approval and review of provision as approval panel members. There are clear opportunities for teaching staff to engage in developmental activities, and the development of networks of staff with common academic interests in Communities of Practice enables the identification and dissemination of aspects of good practice in support of learning, teaching and assessment. The Group's Research and Scholarly Activity Framework promotes staff understanding of current research to directly inform and enhance

teaching. The team also noted the lack of a teaching and learning strategy specific to higher education, the lack of consistent student representation from across the Group in its deliberative structures, and that the evidence of the sample of assessed student work indicates that the Group is not offering consistently high-quality feedback on all assessed work. Nevertheless, the team concluded that these weaknesses are outweighed by the above strengths, and formed the view that the Group comprises a self-critical, cohesive academic community.

278 The Group has exercised its degree-awarding powers across its colleges through its common regulatory framework which provides adequate safeguards to ensure academic standards, and which is effectively operationalised in policy and procedure. This framework is implemented consistently within each of the Group's colleges. Programme approval and review arrangements demonstrate the effective use of external and independent expertise and take account of external reference points to ensure that standards are set at levels which correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. Definitive records of qualifications are maintained and are used as the basis for programme delivery and assessment. Credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. Full use is made of external examiners to ensure that standards are fully maintained and are comparable with those of other UK providers. The team concluded that the Group's commitment to the assurance of standards is supported by effective quality systems.

Conclusions

279 The observations in the above paragraphs in this section, along with the conclusions for each of the criteria A-E in this report, enabled the team to form a judgement in relation to the overarching criterion. While there are weaknesses in the Group's approach to the assurance of standards and to the cohesiveness of its academic community, the team formed the view that these weaknesses are outweighed by the strengths described in the preceding paragraphs. On balance, the team accordingly conclude that the Group meets the overarching criterion and has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by effective quality systems.

Annex

Evidence

This section lists the evidence that has been used to substantiate key findings outlined in the report. This does not represent the full evidence submitted by the provider.

000 Staff spreadsheet levels 5-7 - Sept 21
001 NCG HE Hub and Spoke Model
002 NCG Corporation Structure
003 NCG HE - Newcastle College Org Chart
005 Kidderminster College Org Chart
006 Southwark College Org Chart
007 NCG HE Deliberative Structure
008 NCG HE Deputy Principal HE JD-PS
009 NCG Academic Registrar JD-PS
010 NCG Director of HE JD-PS
017 Scholarship and Student Engagement Manager JD-PS
018 Scholarship and Student Engagement Coordinator JD-PS
019 Scholarship and Student Engagement Assistant JS-PS
020 NCUC HE Achievement Coordinator
051 NCG HE Strategy_consultation_rnd2
053 NCG Our Strategy Towards 2030
056 NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019
056 NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019
056 NCG Academic Regulations Section A 2019
057 NCG Academic Regulations Section B 2020
058 NCG Academic Regulations Section C 2021
061 HE Academic Board Minutes Reg update Bachelors and Masters - 13-12-2016
064 HE Academic Board Minutes Reg update MEC and Alt assessment - 07-06-2018
067 HE Academic Board Minutes confirming 1st Emergency Regs 12-06-2020
068 HE Academic Board Minutes Reg update to include partners - 16-10-2020
071 HE Academic Board Minutes confirming 2nd Emergency Regs 14-12-2020
073 HE Policy and Procedure Tracker
074 NCG HE Admissions Policy
075 NCG HE Assessment Policy Draft 2021
077 NCG HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
078 NCG HE Tutorial Policy
079 NCG HE Annual Review Policy and Procedure - for approval Sept 21
082 NCG TLA Policy
083 NCG HE Fitness to Study Policy
084 NCG HE Student Partnership and Engagement Framework
086 NCG HE Assessment Framework
088 NCG HE Staff Training and Development Framework
092 NCG Recruitment Policy
095 NCG HEPIM Guidance Process 2021-22
098 PR Complaints Flowchart
100 PR HE Moderation Process
103 PR Academic Appeals Procedure September
111 PR12 Staff Approval Process
112 PR13 Internal and External SPA Approval Process - issue 3 Final
113 PR14 Monitoring responses to External Examiner reports
116 PR18 Validation and Approvals Process
117 PR19 Academic Misconduct Procedure and Process

119 PR20 NCG HE Alternative Assessment Procedure and Process 2018
 121 GU Assessment - A Guide to Good Practice in Assessment
 130 GU07 Programme Annual Review Report Guidance
 134 GU11 HE Tutorial A Guide for Staff 1920 (NCUC)
 147 HE06 Moderation of module guide
 148 HE07 Moderation of assessment decisions
 154 HE13 Completion of Procedure Letter
 162 HE27 Programme Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21
 163 HE28a NCUC Curriculum Area HE Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21
 165 HE30 NCUC College Summary HE Annual Review Report TEMPLATE 2020-21
 168 HE33 NCG Strategic Planning Approval Form
 197 EE Guidance Handbook
 209 EE14 NCG External Examiner Moderation Visit Agenda
 212 EE19 NCG School Response to EE Report Template
 213 EE20 External Examiner Appointment Criteria
 214 EE24 NCG External Examiner Change of Duty Form
 215 VAL00 Checklist for Validation Documentation
 218 VAL03 Validation Event Panel List
 220 VAL05 Programme Specification
 221 VAL06 Programme Handbook
 223 VAL07a ACS100 Academic Study Skills MDD 2018
 224 VAL07b ACS100 Academic Study Skills MSpec 2018
 225 VAL7c NCG Level 4 Generic Module - RPL MDD
 227 VAL7e PFD200 Professional Development MDD 2018
 228 VAL7f PFD200 Professional Development MSpec 2018
 230 VAL7h PRD 100_Personal-Development_MDD 2018
 231 VAL7i PRD 100_Personal-Development_Mspec 2018
 232 VAL7j WKL200_Work-Based-Learning_MDD 2018
 233 VAL7k WKL200_Work-Based-Learning_Mspec 2018
 234 VAL7l WRL100_Work-Related-Learning_MDD 2018
 235 VAL7m WRL100_Work-Related-Learning_Mspec 2018
 244 HE Academic Board ToR and Membership 2020-21
 245 NCG Deliberative Structure AB Update Apr 21
 246 SPAM Sub-Committee ToR
 247 HE Governance ToR
 248 HE SPAM Committee Minutes - 12-07-2021 - modifications Example
 249 HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee Minutes - 27-05-2021
 250-280 HE Governance Committee minutes and papers
 281 HE Academic Board Minutes - 08-09-2017
 282 HE Academic Board Minutes - 08-12-2017
 283 HE Academic Board Minutes - 03-05-2018
 284 HE Academic Board Minutes - 07-06-2018
 285 HE Academic Board Minutes - 11-10-2018
 286 HE Academic Board Minutes - 07-12-2018
 287 HE Academic Board Minutes - 23-04-2019
 288 HE Academic Board Minutes - 04-06-2019
 289 HE Academic Board Minutes - 11-10-2019
 291 HE Academic Board Minutes - 12-06-2020
 292 HE Academic Board Minutes - 16-10-2020
 293 HE Academic Board Minutes - 14-12-2020
 294 HE Academic Board Minutes - 30-04-2021
 296 HE Staff Approval 2017-18
 297 HE Staff Approval 2018-19
 298 HE Staff Approval 2019-20
 299 HE Staff Approval 2020-21

300 HE Staff Approval 2021-22
 301 NCG Institutional Recognition of OLC Franchise Report
 302 OLC Validation Event Report - BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care
 303 OLC Validation Event Report - BA (Hons) Business Management
 304 Operations Manual NCG OLC V.08 FINAL
 305 OLC Franchise Partnership - Quality Assurance Summary
 306 OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance
 307 OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance Feb 2021
 308 OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance Nov 2020
 309 OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance July 2021
 310 NCG EE Report BSc Health and Social Care - OLC
 311 NCG EE Report Response BSc Health and Social Care - OLC
 312 Action Plan OLC - June 2021
 314 OLC Update Academic Board July 2021
 316 OLC Partnership Quality and Standards Update May 2021
 332 NCG Due Diligence questionnaire completed by OLC
 334 NCG OLC Agreement Executed 16.09.2020
 335 OLC Partnership Update to HE Governance May 2021
 346 OLC Confirmation of due diligence process
 366 NCG Validation Event Report - BSc Counselling - NCUC
 370 NCG Validation Event Report - BA Creative Digital Design - NCUC
 371 NCG Validation Event Report - FdA 3D Garment Design and Product Dev - NCUC
 372 NCG Validation Event Report - FdSc Games Technology - NCUC
 373 NCG Validation Event Report - Cert HE Mech Man Engineering - NCUC
 409 NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2021
 410 NCG HE Annual Review Report 19.20 NCL Board 01.02.2022 presentation
 416 NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20
 424 NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 June 21
 434 CoP Terms of Reference
 435 Communities of Practice Summary
 437 CoP Minutes Beauty - 06_07_2021
 438 CoP Minutes Creative Industries 15_07_2021
 439 CoP Minutes Business 06_07_2021
 414 HE Annual Review Report 2017-18
 415 NCG HE Annual Review Report 2018-19
 416 NCG HE Annual Review Report 2019-20
 440 CoP Minutes Education 15_07_2021 - SWK
 441 CoP Minutes Education 08_07_2021 - CARL
 442 CoP Minutes Travel 16_08_2021
 474 HE33 - SPA Form - BSc Computing Carlisle
 475 3 Minute Thesis
 476 Welcome Day Invite 2021-22
 477 Research Portal
 480 Welcome Back 2020
 481 Staff CV Tracker
 489 NCG EE Report BA Business Management Top Up OLC
 491 NCUC Forum Minutes December 2020 FINAL
 492 NCUC Forum Minutes 24 March 2021 FINAL
 493 Student voice example- Student commentary HE Governance Minutes 19-11-2020
 494 HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee minutes 25-03-2021
 495 Student voice example- Parent Project - HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes
 20-05-2021
 496 Student voice example- Fellow update - HE Academic Board Minutes 25-03-2021
 497 NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2017-18
 498 NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2018-19

499 NCG Chief External Examiner Annual Report 2019-20
500 2020-21 NCG External Examiner Reports - Combined
502 2020-21 NCG Response to External Examiner Reports - Combined
509 Staff approval CVs 2021-22 - combined
510 Digital Arts - Business Planning Example
512 QD112 ITLA CPD Plan 2021-22 Health and Science
522 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Catherine McCabe
523 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Haley Bowes
524 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Jane Pollinger
525 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Libby Lagun
526 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Mandy Rogerson
527 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Marisa Giblin
528 Reflections on being and External Examiner - Mike Abraham
529 GPTT Welcome Pack
531 NCG Staff Research Outputs
537 Staff CVs - Industry involvement - combined
538 Staff RSA Guide 26012021
539 RSA and CV Workshop PD Day 27 April
547 Caroline Walker-Gleaves Presentation
550 HE Core Training Tracker September 2021
551 Knowledge Organiser Pedagogy 7.6.21
552 Knowledge Organiser Scholarship 7.6.21
553 Module Guides vs Levelness - FHEQ Training
554 Training - HE learning and Teaching
555 FHEQ Levels 6 7 and 8 Descriptors
556 HE pedagogy refresher
559 Corporation Terms of Reference - Final and approved
580 SOP Declaration
583 TEF Gold Board Membership and TOR
594 Library Induction
599 CoP Terms of Reference HE support v2
603 Staff Development Framework LTAC 2019-20 NCUC
632 FHEA Overview 2017_18
633 FHEA Overview 2018_19
634 FHEA Overview 2019_20
635 FHEA Overview 2020_21
636 Plus 1 Applications
641 H30 Training Schedule SoY - 1718
642 H30 Training Schedule Semester 1 - 1718
643 H30 Training Schedule Semester 1 - 1819
644 H30 Training Schedule Semester 2 - 1819
647 HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2017
648 HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2018
649 HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2019
650 HE Staff Research Conference Programme 2021
724 Doctoral forum terms of reference Draft June 2021
726 CPD Strategy
749 RPL process notes for staff - Feb 2020
750 RPL process notes for students - Feb 2021
754 Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 1
755 Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 2
756 Lecturer Interview Assessment Form Example 3
758 NCG Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025
810 Alternative Assessment Plan SWAY 20-21
820 NCL-complaints-procedure

823 Example of NCG Award Certificate
 824 Tutorial audit - Business
 848 UKRighttoworkDocumentEvidence
 850 2020-11-13 Stone king - External Governance Review Report - FINAL
 855 2021-03-15 Governance Review - Action Plan
 856 2021-04-12 DB Governance Review Position Paper
 862 Breakdown of actions - summarised
 875 ASC100 Module Guide 2021
 878 NCUC Summer School summary 2021-22
 880 Newcastle_College_HigherEducation_CurriculumFootprint 2021-22
 891 Induction Checklist 20-21
 916 Academic CV Guidance
 917 Technical CV Guidance
 918 Creative CVs - Top Tips
 919 CV Workshop Booklet
 920 How to Tailor your CV to a Particular Job
 921 Engineering CV Guide
 922 Finding work in 2021 - post covid
 923 How to Tailor your CV to a Particular Job workshop
 924 Psychometric tests - students
 925 Employability workshop - Interview techniques
 926 5 job searching tips in 2021
 929 Job market COVID19 guidance
 934 Is self-employment right for you
 936 FAQs - Graduate CVs
 937 FAQs - Cover letters
 952 Student Fellow re training for deliberative structure 2021
 972 HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee Minutes and HE Tutorial Papers-
 21-05-2020
 973 HE Tutorial Policy Papers - Academic Board 12-06-2021
 974 2021-10 NCG Policy Framework
 975 HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes - 11-03-2021
 978 NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Sept Oct 21 Update
 980 Programme Proposal and Validation Evidence - Education
 983 Standardisation Event Evidence
 985 GT101 Games Design Module Guide 2021-22
 986 HSC301 Policy in Practice Module Guide 2021-22
 988 Academic Misconduct Example 1
 989 Academic Misconduct Example 2
 990 FD218_ Internal Moderation of Assessment Decisions HE07
 991 Moderation plan HE09
 995 FdA Interior and Spatial Design Programme Annual Review Report HE27
 A1003 Moderation of module guide HE06 - dissertation
 A1008 PIM improvement evidence 19-20 and 20-21
 A1010 Activity Cycle 21-22 - NCG Colleges
 A1014 HE TEF Gold Programme Board ToR and Membership 2021-22
 A1017 2021-22 External Examiner Feedback - HE QS Paper 23-09-2021
 A1021 2021-10-06 Updated Action Plan - IDAP
 A1022 Student IT Induction
 A1025 Print out from website 12-10-21 on HE policies
 A1026 2020-11 Student Representative Induction - HE Governance Committee
 A1028 Academic Appeal Example
 A1029 Complaints Example
 A1035 PEC Minutes - Carlisle College 05072021
 A1043 NCG Board of Examiners Minutes 15.07.21

A1044 NCG Board of Examiners Minutes 16.07.22
 A1045 NCG Board of Examiners Minutes 28.09.21
 A1059-A1067 Minutes of the Corporation Board
 A1075 AAP Workflow 21-22 v4
 A1076 HE Alternative Assessment Plan Panel ToR and Membership 2021-22
 A1078 QD047 health Teacher Actions Tracker
 A1079 NCUC Evidence of Counselling Services
 A1080 Kidderminster Counselling Leaflet
 A1081 Carlisle Tutors Referral Form
 A1082 IDAP Self-Assessment Improvement Plan 2021-22
 A1087 NCG HE Outcome of Consultation
 A1101 IDAP Update Academic Board Update 07-10-2021
 A1123 Carlisle Tutorial Records
 A1124 Kidderminster Tutorial Records
 A1125 NCUC Tutorial Records
 A1126 Flying start induction materials screenshots
 A1127 Digital Technologies Welcome - 2021-22
 A1131 Student Submission IDAP FINAL
 A1132 LD H30 Training 1819
 A1133 LD Module Guide Training 1819
 A1134 Southwark counselling services
 B1139 NCUC Annual Review Report 20-21 FINAL
 B1140 NCUC HE QIP 21-22 FINAL
 B1141 Carlisle Campus HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL
 B1142 Carlisle College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL
 B1143 Kidderminster College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL
 B1144 Kidderminster College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL
 B1145 OLC College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL
 B1146 OLC HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL
 B1147 Southwark College HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 FINAL
 B1148 SWK College Higher Education Annual Review Report 2021 FINAL
 B1154 Narrative Item 32 and 57
 B1155 Complaints and Compliments Policy
 B1156 Student 1. Step 1. Stage 1 complaint 15.10.20
 B1157 Student 1. Step 2. Stage 1 outcome letter 22.10.20
 B1158 Student 1. Step 3. Info sent regarding taking complaint to next stage 30.11.20
 B1159 Student 1. Step 4. Stage 2 request 14.12.20
 B1160 Student 1. Step 5. Email confirming receipt of Stage 2 14.12.20
 B1161 Student 1. Step 6. Stage 2 Holding Letter 16.12.20
 B1162 Student 1. Step 7. Stage 2 outcome letter 14.01.21
 B1163 Student 2. Step 1. Stage 1 Complaint 25.05.2021
 B1164 Student 2. Step 2. Email advising complaint be investigated at stage 2 25.05.21
 B1165 Student 2. Step 3. Holding Letter Stage 2 27.05.2021
 B1166 Student 2. Step 4. Email trail from student acknowledging complaint is resolved
 17.06.21
 B1167 Student 2. Step 5. Email confirming complaint completed 22.06.21
 B1168 Narrative Item 31
 B1169 Narrative Item 15
 B1173 Item 02 – HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes – 23-09-2021
 B1211 CoP Business Case Study (NCUC & Carlisle)
 B1213 CoP computing
 B1219 Narrative Item 9
 B1220 FdA Aesthetics and Spa Management FT Programme Tracker
 B1221 NCG HE NCUC QR1 21-22 Health
 B1222 NCG HE Kidd QR1 21-22

B1230 Digital Arts - NCUC Curriculum Area Higher Education Annual Review Report
 B1234 Kidderminster Module Guides 21-22 Re-audit
 B1248 Tutorial Record Grace Cummins
 B1249 Calum Wright Tutorial Record
 B1251 Leanne Bradley Tutorial Record
 B1253 Health At Risk Success data RAG and final outcome
 B1254 Case study support intervention Health
 B1262 induction attendance DET Carlisle
 B1263 Induction attendance PGCE Carlisle
 B1264 HECI- Induction Attendance KC
 B1265 HN ECEC- Induction Attendance KC
 B1295 NCUC CSS 4-year trend referral data 21/22
 B1296 Counselling Appointments Kidderminster
 B1298 Online academic support - other colleges 1-2-1
 B1299 Coaching Needs Analysis Examples (Carlisle, Southwark)
 B1314 HE Training Tracker September 20-21 NCUC
 B1315 HE Training Tracker September 2021 – SW
 B1316 HE Training Tracker September 2021- CAR
 B1317 HE Training Tracker September 2021 KCHE
 B1320 NCG HE Improvement Plan 2021-22 Update
 B1322 NCG HE Car QR1 2122
 B1325 1QR1 Actions – Health (NCUC)
 B1326 Car QR1 Actions
 B1327 Kidd QR1 Actions
 B1328 Southwark QR1 Action
 B1329 OLC QR1 Actions
 B1335 College Board Terms of Reference 21-22 – Final
 B1336 2021-12-07 College Board Work Plan -2122 Final
 B1337 Newcastle M1 Minutes
 B1343 Narrative Item 34
 B1344 Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021 Paula Miller
 COMMENTS
 B1345 Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021 Rachel Gibson
 COMMENTS
 B1346 Item 04c - NCG Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure June 2021
 B1347 Evidence of Policy Consultation (1)
 B1350 Narrative Item 44
 B1352 Student-Guidance-on-HE-Academic-Appeal
 B1357 2021-22 Teacher Development Plan - NCUC
 B1358 2021-22 Teacher Development Plan - KIDD
 B1359 M Newrick Striving for Excellence Plan 2122 New
 B1360 Southwark JE Obs 23rd March 21 + Reflection
 B1370 NCG PD Day 4th January 2022 Event Schedule
 B1398 JB obs PYZ Teaching Excellence 2020-2021 digital version
 B1401 NCG Quality Training - Assessment and Moderation Training 2021
 B1406 NCG Quality Training - OLC Quality Training London Dec 21
 B1407 M Newrick Observation of Practice
 B1411 HE Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee Minutes 25-11.2021 reviewed
 B1414 Narrative Item 35
 B1416 Inclusive curriculum checklist (draft)
 B1424 Counselling programme specification
 B1426 NCG Validation and Approval Process Training
 B1427 Narrative Item 37
 B1428 Item 10 – NCUC Validation Recommendations 1819
 B1429 Item 11 – NCUC validation Update (Sep 2020)

B1430 HE Quality and Standards Committee Minutes - 19-09-2019
 B1434 HE only space engineering
 B1435 Counselling space
 B1438 MPA HE only spaces
 B1439 NCUC forum minutes Dec 21
 B1445 Carlisle Business and Engineering spaces
 B1447 LTIG agenda minutes 20th May
 B1448 LTIG agenda minutes 7th May
 B1449 NCG digital strategy August 2021
 B1451 Narrative 45
 B1452 RPL Nos by Prog - IDAP
 B1453 Narrative Item 47
 B1454 Narrative Item 48 and 49
 B1455 NCG HE Improvement Plan 2019-20 (sept 2020)
 B1457 Dissertation Supervisor Training
 B1458 Dissertation Supervisor Guidelines
 B1465 NCG Summary Higher Education Annual Review Report 2018-19
 B1466 Narrative Item 52
 B1467 WRG records 20/21
 B1468 WRG records 21/22
 B1469 SRG testimony Beauty
 B1470 WRG feedback MPA
 B1471 Student feedback MPA
 B1475 WRG/SRG testimonials A&D
 B1477 Narrative Item 53
 B1483 CAR HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 MS AT (MS is the mentor)
 B1484 KIDD HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 JG NW (JG is the mentor)
 B1485 NCUC HE Mentor Termly Review Nov 21 BM DR (BM is the mentor)
 B1502 NCUC interview assessment forms NCUC childcare Curriculum Leader pw
 B1503 NCUC interview assessment forms NCUC childcare Curriculum Leader ab
 B1504 NCUC interview assessment forms NCUC childcare Curriculum Leader ms
 B1543 BA Business Management Programme Annual Review
 B1549 Narrative Item 46
 B1550 Impact of LEC support - Case studies
 B1551 Poor Studentship Case Study
 B1553 Literature Review workshop
 B1556 BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 4 Research Methods 1 module guide.
 B1557 BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 5 Research Methods module guide.
 B1558 BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Level 6 Dissertation module guide
 B1559 Analytical Writing and constructive argument
 B1560 Study Skills & Academic Literacies
 B1563 Narrative Item 40
 B1564 Carlisle College PIM 1 Actions
 B1565 OLC PIM 1 Actions
 B1570 BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Module and Delivery Specifications
 B1570 BSc Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Module and Delivery Specifications
 B1597 Narrative Item 50
 B1614 HE LTA strategy
 B1653 NCG TEF Gold Programme Minutes - 03.09.20
 B1668 Narrative Item 8
 B1685 Narrative Item 19
 B1686 Cumbria Police Emails
 B1687 IET Notes from Employer Consultation 171121
 B1688 SPA FdEng 2022 SPA Approval Form
 B1692 Emails from Barclays Bank Wealth Manager in support of Business HE curriculum

B1693 Digital Advisory Board Minutes 020420
B1694 Digital Advisory Board Minutes 041119
B1695 NCUC STEM 4 Yr strategy Dir Ind Strat present to CEO 040620
B1718 Narrative Item 10
B1733 Resource Document (including Staff CVs)
B1739 Learning Resources Academic board 7th Oct
B1740 LTEC Resource capital monitoring
B1744 HE Resource updates

Meetings

The meetings included senior staff, teaching and professional support staff drawn from all colleges in the Group and from OLC, and with students from all levels of study and from all colleges in the Group and from OLC.

M1 Meeting with students
M2 Meeting with staff
M3 Meeting with senior staff

Other evidence

[The NCG Complaints Policy https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-06-Complaints-and-Compliments-Policy.pdf](https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2021-06-Complaints-and-Compliments-Policy.pdf)

[The Carlisle College Complaints Policy http://www.carlisle.ac.uk/files/Custom%20Complaints%20Procedure%202019.pdf](http://www.carlisle.ac.uk/files/Custom%20Complaints%20Procedure%202019.pdf)

[The Kidderminster College Complaints Policy, https://www.kidderminster.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-21-Complaints-Policy.pdf](https://www.kidderminster.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-21-Complaints-Policy.pdf)

[Governor Pen Portraits https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/governors/](https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/governors/)

[NCG Policies and procedures https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/our-policies-and-procedures/](https://www.ncgrp.co.uk/guide-to-information/our-policies-and-procedures/)

[The Group's mission and strategy https://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/about-the-college](https://www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/about-the-college)

QAA2843 - R13219 - May 2024

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557000
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk