



Designated Quality Body  
in England

# Assessment for Variation of Degree Awarding Powers

## New College Durham



Review Report

December 2022

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## Summary of the assessment team's findings

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

### About this report

This is a report of an assessment of New College Durham conducted 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 providers existing renewable powers be granted on an indefinite basis.

## Provider information

Legal name	New College Durham
Trading name	New College Durham University Centre
UKPRN	10004576
Type of institution	Further Education Corporation
Date founded	1977
Date of first HE provision	1977
Application route	Assessment for the variation of powers from time-limited to indefinite powers
Level of extended powers applied for (if applicable)	N/a
Location(s) of teaching/delivery	Durham London (through the LSC partnership)
Subject(s) applied for	All subjects
Current powers held	Foundation degree awarding powers up to and including Level 5
Date current powers granted (if applicable)	2011
Number of current programmes as at October 2022	20 x foundation degrees
Number of students as at October 2022	2,075 full-time 101 part-time
Number of staff as at October 2022	63 teaching staff (32 of which specifically teach HE) 7 managerial staff 10 professional support staff
Current awarding body arrangements	The Open University validates the College's Level 6 provision. The provider also delivers HNCs and HNDs through Pearson.

## About New College Durham

New College Durham (NCD) is a further and higher education college which was granted foundation degree awarding powers in 2011 and had its time-limited powers granted for another six years in 2017. NCD has used its powers to develop and validate 20 foundation degrees across 13 subject areas. NCD's other higher education provision includes full degrees awarded by The Open University, HND and HNCs and higher and degree apprenticeships. In 2021 the Department for Education confirmed that it had no objection for NCD to use the title New College University Centre as a sub-brand of NCD's higher education provision.

In 2019 the NCD agreed a collaborative partnership with the London School of Commerce (LSC) to deliver two NCD foundation degrees: FdA Business and Management and the FdSc Supporting Innovation in Health and Social Care. NCD intends to undertake a review and re-validate the partnership in 2023 under the current agreement.

## 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 New College Durham to QAA for an assessment for the variation of powers on 21 June 2022 and the provider's submission and supporting evidence was received on 30 September 2022. The assessment began on 30 September 2022, culminating in a final report to the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers on 23 February 2023 and final advice to the OfS.

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Liz Crolley

Institution: University of Liverpool

Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor/Subject assessor  
(CAH 07-01 Business and Management)

Name: Janet Faulkner

Institution: UCEN Manchester

Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Steve King

Institution: University of York

Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor/Subject assessor  
(CAH 11-01 Computing)

Name: Cara Molyneaux

Institution: Lancaster University

Role in assessment team: Student assessor

The DQB Officer was Siobhain O'Mahony.

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 potential 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 in 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.

In the course of the assessment, the team read 531 documents in support of the application which included a provider submission document. An initial 148 documents were provided as supporting evidence with NCD's submission document. Following an initial desk-based analysis of this evidence, against the DAPs criteria, a request for additional evidence was made. This request covered areas from the five DAPs criteria which had been identified as requiring further evidence and clarification. The team also requested a representative sample of 100 items of assessed student work across the subject areas to determine how NCD applied its own academic regulations and the quality of the feedback to students. An additional 328 documents and a sample of 100 pieces of assessed student work were provided in response to the request for additional evidence. Following analysis of the assessed student work sample the team requested a further sample of 25 items of assessed student work as the student feedback in some areas of the original sample was weak. A further 47 documents were submitted leading up to, and including, the period of the visit.

The assessment had been referred by OfS as a desk-based assessment only and, after the receipt of the additional evidence, the team agreed that a one-day visit was required in order to further explore the collaborative arrangements with the LSC and determine how the partnership was being managed by NCD. The one-day visit was conducted online and included two separate meetings with students from NCD and LSC, two separate meetings with NCD and LSC staff and a final meeting with senior staff from NCD.

Details of the evidence 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 assessment 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 as follows:
- a To determine whether NCD's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood, and applied consistently, the team reviewed the College Strategic Plan 2021-26, [001] HE Strategy, [002] Statement of Purpose, [003] NCD Strategy Schema, [006] Back to Business Presentations 2021 and 2022, [149] and Academic Regulations. [053]
- b To determine whether NCD's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the team reviewed the Admissions Policy, [054] College Strategic Plan, [001] HE Strategy, [002] EDI Policy, [095,466] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE Academic and Pastoral Support Policy, [116] Scholarship Policy, [174] Careers Education Policy, [452] Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy [108,178] and Statement of Purpose. [003]
- c To determine whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of NCD in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision, the team considered the Academic Board terms of reference and minutes, [035, 275] Terms of reference for HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (HETLAC), HE Strategic Approval Panel, HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, [048-050] Corporation ToR, [151] HE Quality, Curriculum and Students Committee (HEQCS) terms of reference and minutes, [150, 036] HE Committee Structure, [034, A1.2] HE Approvals Committee, [105] Corporation minutes 20-21 and 21-22, [250-1]

Corporation Committees terms of reference, [151] Minutes of HETLAC, [048, 413] Minutes of HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB), [232, 281-3] and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]

- d To determine whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied, the team examined Academic Board terms of reference and minutes, [035] Minutes of HE Quality Curriculum and Students Committee [036] and HEQCS schedule of business [037] and viewed NCD's website. [<https://www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk/about-the-college/corporation-and-structure>]
- e To determine whether there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the team examined Corporation Membership, [027] SLT Structure, [007] CVs/Bios for SLT, [320-327] and New College Durham External Board Review Executive Summary 5 July 2022. [028]
- f To determine whether NCD develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the team examined terms of reference and minutes as follows: Committee Composition, [026] Academic Board terms of reference and minutes, [035] HE Strategy, [002] ToRs for HETLAC, HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, [048,050] HE Student Forum, [147,180,193,194] Trailing Module consultation evidence, [181] HE Information Group, [062] and Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards, [070] and staff development sessions. [289, 292, 293]
- g To determine whether NCD will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted degree awarding powers, the team considered the OU Revalidation. [004]
- h To determine whether students individually and collectively are engaged in the governance and management of NCD and its higher education provision, with students supported to be able to engage effectively, the team reviewed: HE Strategy, [002] Committee Composition, [026] Academic Board terms of reference and minutes, [035] ToRs for HETLAC, HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, [048,050] HE Approvals Committee, [105] Corporation Committees terms of reference, [151] Student Feedback overview, [100] HE Student Forum, [147,180,193,194] Student voice activity 2020 and 2021 examples, [253] Students' Union - student voice example (HETLAC), [328] Minutes of HETLAC, [048,413] and Minutes of HEASQB. [232,281-3] The team also met with students from NCD and LSC students [M1, M2] and NCD staff. [M3]
- i To examine whether, where NCD works with, or proposes to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, the arrangements are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk, including the carrying out of due diligence, the team reviewed the College Strategic Plan, [001] HE Strategy, [002] College Risk Register, [041] LSC Due Diligence Evidence, [152] LSC contract audit report, [042] Due Diligence Process, [044] Due Diligence Template, [040] Partner and Programme Approval Checklist, [045] HE Collaborative Partnership Manager, [024] Higher Education Quality Data and Enhancement Coordinator, [025] Operations Manual Template, [046] and Statement of future plans. [519]
- j To determine whether the arrangements for working with other organisations are defined in a written legal agreement and are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of NCD's provision, the team considered LSC Contract audit report, [042] LSC Operations Manual, [154] and Operations Manual Template,



[046] LSC Internal Meetings, [043] [486] LSC Collaborative minutes, [047] Collaborative Partnership Meetings ToR 2022-23, [517] HE Approvals Committee, [306-7] Collaboration Agreement appendix: Partner responsibilities, [485] Strategic Partnership meeting minutes, [153] and NCD responsibilities-checklist, [518] Statement of Future Plans, [519] LSC Strategic Partnership Minutes 2021-2022, [153] HE Approval Committee LSC Minutes 17.10.2019, [306] HEAC Minutes - LSC Staff changes 2020-21 and 2021-22, [307] LSC staff CVs, [503-7] LSC staff observations, [508-9] LSC Staff Development Calendar, [298] 25.05.21 Meeting NSS and LSC Survey Updates, [274] NSS and LSC Survey Updates 2021, [285] and LSC Start of Programme Surveys Induction. [511] The team also spoke with NCD and LSC staff [M3, M4] and NCD senior staff. [M5]

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

4 The team considered all evidence submitted by NCD relating to this criterion. This evidence was sufficient to meet the purpose of the assessment and no further sampling was requested.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

6 NCD's Strategic Plan [001] (covering its further and higher education provision) lays out the intended direction of NCD over the period 2021-26. The plan outlines five strategic aims which are underpinned by key priorities. Within the Strategic Plan, the curriculum strategy includes eight supporting priorities which cover the lines of business, including the HE Strategy [002] The coherence of the overall strategy and its associated sub-strategies is set out in the Strategy Schema [006] which shows the relationships between the constituent parts. The strategy was launched to staff in August 2021 [149] along with a one-page Statement of Purpose [003] that summarises NCD's vision, contribution and values in an accessible format. The HE Strategy, covering the same five-year period, lays out seven strategic aims in the higher education area, including work to meet the needs of both employers and students, working with students as co-contributors of enhancement, ensuring staff have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills and continuing to develop partnerships that align to the vision and values of NCD. [002]

7 The HE Strategy includes key performance indicators (KPIs) in terms of student numbers, progression and award, and National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes. NCD's vision and values, as well as higher education-related policies, are published on the website. NCD academic and professional staff [M3] were aware of the HE Strategy, and saw its influence, for instance in curriculum design, and in the attention paid to employer and student feedback. The team found reference to the HE Strategy in a number of policies, including in the section of Academic Regulations [053,section B3.1d] which deals with programme design and which states that programmes should be 'compatible with NCD mission and strategy'. The team also noted that the Periodic Review template [160] required programme teams to explain how a programme would continue to support NCD HE Strategy for growth and sustainability.

8 NCD policies, such as those on HE Admissions, [054] Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, [095,466] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE Academic and Pastoral Support, [116] Scholarship, [174] Careers education information and guidance, [452] and the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, [108,178] support particular elements of NCD's Strategic Plan [001,003] and align effectively with the HE Strategy, [002] thereby supporting NCD's HE mission, aims and objectives. For instance, the HE Academic and Pastoral Support policy [116] articulates NCD's intention 'to channel and

direct the provision of tutorial support in ways which will maximise student retention and achievement and raise aspirations for employment or promotion and/or higher-level study' and aligns with the HE Strategy aim to 'improve retention of students through targeted academic and pastoral tutorials'. Similarly, the Scholarship Policy (HE) [174] articulates an intention to 'support the development of scholarship and scholarly practices for staff, students and employer partners across NCD', which supports the Strategic Plan's theme to 'support our teaching staff to develop engaging, innovative, and inclusive teaching practices which are strongly informed by up-to-date educational research.' The Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2021-26 [108,178] articulates how NCD intends to make best use of technology and digital learning, aligning with the strategy's aim to 'deliver innovative and flexible teaching, learning and assessment making best use of technology and blended learning.' The team noted that while there are few direct references to the NCD Strategic Plan in the various policies the policies were nevertheless aligned to the plan, forming a coherent supportive structure to enable NCD to make progress towards the aims of the plan and support the application of its higher education mission, aims and objectives. Therefore, the team considered that the higher education element of NCD's mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently.

9 The Corporation [ToR 151] provides strategic oversight for the whole of NCD. [150] Examination of the minutes of Corporation [250-1] shows that there is regular reporting of summaries of higher education-related matters to Corporation (such as the HE Annual Report), and the minutes of the HE Quality, Curriculum and Students Committee (HEQCS) [036] show that the more detailed monitoring and evaluation of higher education strategies is being carried out at this level, for example, discussion of the higher education KPIs and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). Examination of the terms of reference for committees of the Corporation [151] reveals that the various committees have clear areas of responsibility delegated from Corporation. The HE Quality, Curriculum and Students Committee (HEQCS), as a subcommittee of the Corporation, has responsibility for monitoring and evaluating higher education-related strategies, on behalf of Corporation. [ToR HEQCS 150] Its terms of reference clearly explain the strategies for which it is responsible, from HE Strategy through to Quality Strategy. HEQCS also considers KPIs on student recruitment and achievement and student support services and approves the Annual Report on Higher Education and the report on Access and Participation.

10 Academic Board, as the senior academic authority, [ToR 035] has prime responsibility for academic standards and monitoring of the quality of NCD's higher education provision. It has delegated responsibility from Corporation for NCD's foundation degree awarding powers, and it provides advice and develops and evaluates strategy and policy in line with OfS regulatory requirements. Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for monitoring the quality assurance processes for higher education provision, and for the validation of new programmes and re-validation of existing programmes, though these powers are carried out through HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB). [050] Academic Board is also responsible for the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and for ensuring that good practice is shared across NCD, and these powers are also exercised through the HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (HETLAC). [048]

11 The Deputy Principal chairs Academic Board and there is representation from each school with higher education provision. The Students' Union President represents students. The team found that the function and responsibility of Academic Board is clearly articulated by its terms of reference. [035] The detailed responsibilities of Academic Board include monitoring of the HE Strategy, and oversight of the quality assurance and academic standards of all HE courses across NCD, including partnerships. Academic Board also approves the new curriculum portfolio, has oversight of the complaints and appeals

procedures, and receives reports on academic complaints, appeals and academic misconduct.

12 Minutes of Academic Board meetings through the year [Academic Board terms of reference and minutes 035, 275] show that the function and responsibility of Academic Board are consistently applied. Agenda items reflect the terms of reference, with clear distinction between items for approval, for discussion and for information. For instance, in November 2021, Academic Board approved the HE Annual Review report, a new Operations Manual for the LSC partnership and the higher education KPIs for 2021-22. There were also updates on the Access and Participation Plan (APP), LSC partnership, and student engagement. Matters scheduled for approval included a revised Academic Malpractice procedure, the Academic Calendar for 22-23, including periodic review and validation events, and an amendment to the Academic Regulations concerning trailing modules. [035] The team's scrutiny of the terms of reference and minutes of Academic Board showed that the function and responsibility of the Board are both clearly articulated and consistently applied.

13 The two formal subcommittees of Academic Board - HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, and HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, have clearly set out remits, and minutes which demonstrate that their functions and responsibilities are distinct (respectively academic standards, and teaching and learning). [048, 050] Each subcommittee reports to Academic Board, [035] which in turn reports to the Corporation subcommittee, the HE Quality Curriculum and Students Committee. [036, 037, 150] In addition to receiving reports from these two formal subcommittees, Academic Board receives reports, on an irregular basis, from the HE Strategic Approvals Panel (HESAP), [049] when a Head of School proposes to deliver a new qualification. [532 Overall NCD responses to clarification questions]

14 Consideration of HEASQB minutes [232, 281-3] shows that the Board covers a wide range of topics related to academic standards and higher education provision: the HE Annual Report, partnership issues, amendments to Academic Regulations, feedback from assessment boards, higher education survey results (NSS and internal), and higher education KPIs. The discussion captured is detailed and shows that summary reports are passed up to Academic Board where appropriate. Similarly, recent minutes of HETLAC [048, 413] show coverage of topics related to teaching and learning and the student experience such as the APP, widening participation, student voice/engagement activities and reports, staff development (scholarly activity) and the 'no detriment' policy during the pandemic.

15 HESAP minutes [049] show consideration of new awards, with discussion of how they fit with the higher education strategic direction of NCD, considering local, regional and national social, economic and demographic factors, and checks on alignment with the academic standards of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), stakeholder engagement, resource implications and risk factors.

16 The team concluded that the governance arrangements, through Corporation and its subcommittees, and the management arrangements, through Academic Board and its subcommittees, were clear and had appropriate differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels.

17 NCD's management structure is led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), [007] under the Principal [323] and Deputy Principal Curriculum. [322] There is a Vice-Principal with specific responsibility for Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and International Studies. [326] The remaining SLT members cover Curriculum, Business Development, and Quality. [325, 324, 327] Consideration of the CVs of the current postholders demonstrates significant higher education experience.

18 The Corporation of NCD [027] currently has 16 members. Members' biographies [<https://www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk/about-the-college/corporation-and-structure>] show that these members come from a variety of backgrounds, including finance, education and business and have experience of both public and private sector working. A 2022 review of NCD's governance [028] concluded that the Board (Corporation) is highly proficient, and that governance is effective. Having considered the CVs and biographies of the individuals involved in the SLT and the Corporation, the team concluded that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership in NCD.

19 NCD's HE Strategy [002] contains an ambition to provide students with opportunities for effective student representation in decision-making processes. At the highest level of college governance, both Corporation and HEQCS, the subcommittee specifically concerned with higher education provision, have two student members. [026] Academic Board's membership includes the Students' Union (SU) President, [035] and its two major subcommittees, HETLAC and HEASQB, both have two student representatives as members, with an additional Students' Union representative on HETLAC. [048,063] The team found that there were good opportunities for the student voice to be heard at the approval stage for policies and procedures. However, it found less evidence of student involvement at the development stage of policies and processes. At the meeting with senior NCD staff, [M5] the team heard that student involvement could chiefly be found at curriculum level, where opportunities for consultation had been enhanced during the pandemic. However, where policies would have an immediate effect on students, there is a student consultation as part of the revision policy. The HE Student Forum [147,180,193,194] is also a body where student input on proposed policy and regulation changes is sought. For instance, in February 2022, the HE Forum discussed a proposal for amendments to the Academic Regulations concerning trailing modules. [180] This led to a student focus group, which, along with input from staff and external examiners, fed into an Extraordinary Meeting of Academic Board [181] which approved changes to the Academic Regulations to take effect in September 2022, which included the removal of trailing module information.

20 Staff are included in the membership of groups through the academic governance structure where policies and procedures are discussed and approved (Academic Board, HETLAC and HEASQB). [035,048,050] Staff development sessions [289, 292, 293] show evidence of the dissemination of information around policies and higher education-specific information to staff, such as NCD priorities, human resources and appraisal processes, approaches to academic integrity and overview of the higher education sector. The evidence also shows that LSC is kept informed of policy and procedure developments through the regular collaborative partnership meetings. As examples, the minutes show that LSC was informed of updates to the approval of the new Operations Manual, and the Engagement and Learning Policy, [047, 7/9/2021, p1] and of teaching and assessment policies. [047, Minutes of 18/01/2022, p8]

21 The Students' Union President is a member of the HE Information Group, which considers the information needs of higher education students. [062] Higher education policies and procedures are communicated to students through the website and the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students confirmed that they could easily access policies through the VLE. [M1,M2] Handbooks are also used to signpost students to relevant policies, at programme level, [090, 259-262, 530-1] in the HE Student Handbook [121] and in the LSC Student Handbook. [263]

22 The team heard from senior staff [M5] that employer involvement in policy development and approval was less developed, but that if there are policies that impact on employers they are consulted, in order to ensure that the employer viewpoint is considered. The team heard also [M5] that, currently, employer engagement is more focused on

programme content than policies, with significant employer consultation in the validation process.

23 Overall, because of the extensive opportunities for student involvement, the team agreed that NCD develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its students and staff, but concluded that it had not seen sufficient evidence about the involvement of employers and other external stakeholders. [070]

24 NCD has been exercising foundation degree awarding powers since 2011. In 2017, these powers were renewed for another six-year term. In November 2021, based on NCD's track record in the exercise of its foundation degree awarding powers, The Open University re-validated NCD as a partner institution, with a significant number of commendations of good practice, such as 'the demonstrable commitment to HE Administration and HE Quality Assurance' and 'the comprehensive integration between the website, Student Record System, Admissions Hub, Online Enrolment and the Results Calculator Systems to reduce error. [004] The team found that the existing governance structures and committees have enabled the successful demonstration of the effective discharge of their responsibilities and monitoring of the higher education provision under the existing foundation degree awarding powers, and this gives the team confidence that these arrangements will remain appropriate.

25 NCD's HE Strategy [002] includes student representation under the theme of students as co-contributors to enhancement, specifically mentioning the provision of opportunities for student representation on the governing boards, in the validation process, on HE committees and in meetings at curriculum and programme level. The Students' Union President plays a major role in such engagement, representing students at Corporation and its major higher education subcommittee HEQCS. [151] Students are represented, through the Students' Union President and others, on the major higher education management committees (Academic Board, HETLAC and HEASQB). The minutes of these committees confirm student attendance and engagement in discussions and decisions. [035, 048, 413, 232, 281-3] At programme level, student representatives are invited to Programme Team meetings. [Student Feedback Overview 100]

26 Academic and professional staff from NCD [M3] reported that student representatives are trained and supported in their roles by the Students' Union, but students themselves reported [M1,M2] that they were supported and guided by their tutors, with advice about what the role entailed and its responsibilities. Regardless of the source of support, all the student representatives who met the team reported that they felt well-supported.

27 Individual students have many opportunities to submit feedback and thereby give opinions about the management of NCD. [100] These include the HE Student Forums, at both school and college level, which meet regularly and cover a wide range of topics, both academic and non-academic. [147,180,193-4] The Head of School chairs school-level forums, with minutes circulated to the whole cohort. [100] Students are invited to complete surveys (start-of-programme and on-programme), with action planning to follow when results fall below clearly articulated expectations. Summaries of survey themes are presented to HEASQB. [100]

28 Despite the inconsistencies of information about the source of training for student representatives, the team recognised that representatives felt they were well-supported, and therefore concludes that there is support for effective student engagement, and that students individually and collectively are effectively engaged in the governance and management of NCD.

29 NCD has been in a collaborative partnership with the London School of Commerce (LSC) since 2019 which is defined by a written legal agreement. [485] Under this

partnership, NCD's FdA Business and Management and FdSc Supporting Innovation in Health and Social Care are offered in London. Before the partnership was finally agreed, a due diligence process was conducted to give NCD confidence in LSC's capacity to deliver NCD foundation degrees in accordance with the UK Quality Code and OfS regulatory requirements. The team considered the evidence for this due diligence process which included audited accounts, QAA Educational Oversight reports, complaints summaries, student feedback surveys, CVs of staff who would deliver the programmes, and various LSC policies and procedures, such as the Quality Framework and Data Protection Policy [152] and confirmed that a thorough review had taken place. The level of risk of the partnership is reflected in the college-wide risk register where, in 2022, the residual level of risk was deemed to be 'medium' with 'strong' assurance. [041] Senior staff confirmed that a review and revalidation of the LSC partnership will take place in 2023 [M5] under the normal cycle of the partnership. [M5, 519]

30 Once the initial cohort of students had been admitted to LSC and started their courses, NCD commissioned its internal auditors to review the arrangements with LSC to provide assurance that the contract is being managed effectively. The audit report of March 2021 [042] concluded that NCD could have 'a substantial level of assurance over the management of the LSC contract.' [042] There were four recommendations (of 'medium severity': 'Significant issue or weakness which should be addressed by the College as soon as possible'), such as the completion of an Operations Manual and the use of a standard method of sharing information between LSC and the College, and five areas of good practice. The recommendations have all now been addressed. Following the audit, NCD approved a revised Due Diligence Process, [044] with a new due diligence template [040] and a new Checklist for Partner and Programme Approval. [045] The team agreed that the new process provides a robust structure for the approval of any new partnerships because it includes the requirement for a business case, a checklist of due diligence requirements such as partner and programme information, and outlines of various stages of approval through the NCD deliberative structure. The Internal Audit report [042] on the LSC partnership arrangements confirms that a written contract exists, and the team reviewed the part of the contract which sets out the responsibilities of the two parties. [485] The team concluded that NCD's arrangements with the LSC were based on a strategic approach which was informed by an effective risk assessment including due diligence checks.

31 In order to support the LSC partnership, a Higher Education Collaborative Partnership Manager [024] and Higher Education Quality Data and Enhancement Co-ordinator [024] have been recruited to work closely with NCD and LSC staff. [024, 025] The team heard from staff at NCD and LSC [M3,M4] their view that the partnership was effective, and the staff stated that effective partnership working was facilitated by joint meetings at various levels being held. Operational meetings take place on a fortnightly basis, tracking at-risk students, along with 'almost daily' contacts between individuals at NCD and LSC. [M4] There are four Strategic Partnership meetings per year, [153] plus quarterly meetings (Collaborative Partnership meetings) to review data on retention, continuation, achievement and student satisfaction. [047,517] These quarterly meetings also support the Annual Programme Report and QEP processes. There are also internal NCD meetings to consider data on, for example, admissions and enrolments, quality, resources, marketing, and assessment boards. [043,486]

32 Much of the day-to-day operation of the LSC provision is covered in an Operations Manual. [154] The team found that the policies and processes, to a large extent, mirror the operations at NCD, with some necessary adjustments to reflect that there are two entries per year at LSC (April and November), at different times from the NCD entry.

33 Exam Boards are run by NCD, with senior College staff chairing, and curriculum staff and registry staff from NCD present. The same external examiner has oversight of NCD

and LSC-equivalent programmes, including script sampling. Exam Board meetings consider NCD and LSC students separately (due to the timing of cohort intakes), but the involvement of the external examiner and NCD staff ensures consistency of academic standards.

34 External examiners report on both NCD and LSC student work, and there is a single Annual Programme Report (APR) and QEP, but both LSC and NCD programme teams are expected to respond to external examiner comments.

35 The team confirmed that there was a written legal agreement [042,485] covering the partnership between NCD and LSC and found that other parts of the oversight and governance arrangements for LSC provision are similar to the arrangements at NCD and include approval of staff to teach at LSC through the HE Approvals Committee, [503-7,306-7] teaching observations, [508-9] and student surveys. [274,285,511] The team did find that LSC staff were not aware of NCD's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process (as detailed in B3 paragraph 136) but concluded that, based on the arrangements and the management of the partnership with NCD and LSC through meetings, oversight at the relevant committees and through the operations manual and policies, the provision at LSC is subject to the same robust oversight and governance as NCD's provision.

## Conclusions

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

37 NCD has an effective academic governance structure with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. This is because NCD's academic governance and management structures are sound and are supported by academic policies that are appropriate and consistently applied. The senior academic authority of NCD is Academic Board, which has strategic oversight of higher education provision at NCD, according to the strategy approved by Corporation. The HE Strategy, forming a coherent part of the College's Strategic Plan, is published, understood, and consistently applied. The various terms of reference evidence that there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in NCD with respect to its academic governance structure and the management of its higher education provision. There is appropriate strength and depth in academic leadership, as senior staff with responsibility for governance and regulatory frameworks have relevant academic, finance and business experience.

38 Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of NCD's higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students. There is student representation on formal committees, and students confirm that their contribution is valued. Although there is effective student involvement in policy development and approval, the involvement of employers and other external stakeholders is less well developed, but employers play a key role in the programme validation process.

39 NCD has a significant history of the effective exercise of its foundation degree awarding powers, with 11 years' experience since it was first awarded the powers in 2011. This experience, together with recent positive external review outcomes (OU revalidation), gives the team confidence that the arrangements would remain appropriate into the future.

40 As NCD works with LSC to deliver learning opportunities for students in London, it ensures that its governance and management of the LSC provision is robust and effective. The team saw that the partnership with LSC was in line with NCD's Strategic Plan, which affirms the importance of working with partners who share NCD's vision and values. The LSC partnership was established after a robust due diligence process, and there are multiple layers of joint committees of NCD and LSC staff, with clear articulation and differentiation of

function and responsibilities, as evidenced by the internal audit report. The provision at LSC is subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the provision at NCD.

41 The assessment team concludes therefore that the 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 assessment 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 as follows:

- a To identify how NCD seeks to ensure that its academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are effective, transparent and implemented fully and consistently, the team reviewed a range of documents, including NCD's Access and Participation Plan, [005] Curriculum and Quality Directorate, [008] Academic Board, [035] HE Committee Structure, [034] Due Diligence Template, [040] LSC Contract Audit Report, [042] LSC Internal Meeting Minutes, [043] Partnership and Programme Approval Checklist, [045] Operations Manual, [046] LSC Collaborative Minutes, [047] NCD Policy Management Procedure, [051] Policy Monitoring and Control, [052] Academic Regulations for the Award of Foundation Degrees, [053] HE Admissions Policy, [054] Higher Education Assessment Policy, [055] HE Academic Appeals Policy, [056] Complaints Policy, [057] Examinations and Assessment Policy, [058] Academic Registry, [059] Fd Film and Media Production Validation Documentation, [067] Programme Guide Film and Media Production, [090] Quality Assurance Verification and Moderation Policy, [099] Student Handbook, [121] assessed student work, [ASW] NCD Fd Continuing Students Induction, [122] LSC-NCD Student Guide, [126] Complaints Procedure, [145] Assessment and Moderation Academic Appeal Procedure, [146] NCD Fd New Starters Induction, [123] Module, Progression and Award Board Minutes, [157,158] Programme Specifications, [182-185] Examples of Student Transcripts, [186-188] NCD Certificate Example, [189] Module Specifications, [199-201] External Examiner Reports, [222-224] HE Overview, [272] Staff Guidance of Regulations Explanation, [273] Complaint Report, [366] Email referring to informal complaint, [367] Teach, Learn, Innovate updates, [313, 389] NCD Response to Clarification Questions [532] and the NCD Self-assessment document.
- b To identify how NCD maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the organisation, the team reviewed the most recent Programme Specifications [182-185] and

Module Specifications [199-201] as well as the Records Management Policy [060] and Procedure for the Management of Assessment Boards. [064]

- c To assess how the definitive and up-to-date records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and that there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study, the team reviewed the Academic Registry Policy [059] a Sample of Student Transcripts, [061] Higher Education Diploma Supplements, [186-188] NCD Module Progression and Award Board Minutes 2020-21, [157] NCD Module Progression and Award Board Minutes 2021-22, [158] Programme Specifications, [182-185] External Examiner Reports [222-224] and NCD Response to Clarification Questions. [532]

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

45 The team considered all evidence submitted by NCD relating to this criterion. This evidence was sufficient to meet the purpose of the assessment and no further sampling was requested.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

47 NCD has a comprehensive set of academic frameworks and regulations that are designed to govern its higher education provision. They are comprehensive because the Academic Regulations for the Award of Foundation Degrees [053] covers the full scope of NCD's foundation degree provision. The Regulations consist of five sections and include: A: the Regulatory Principles Governing the Award of Foundation Degrees at NCD; B: Design, Approval, Validation, Monitoring and Review of Foundation Degrees; C: Regulations Governing Assessment and Progression; D: Regulations Relating to External Examiners; and E: Regulatory Principles Governing Recruitment and Admissions to Programmes. These Academic Regulations [053] are underpinned with a set of policies and procedures. [053: A3.2 p11] The Academic Regulations provide the regulatory framework, and supplementary policies and procedures outline how these regulations need to be operationalised to ensure effective outcomes. [053: A3.2, p11] These regulations and policies apply to the delivery of courses both at NCD and at the LSC.

48 Academic Board is responsible for the oversight of all higher education provision, including that delivered by partners. [035] Academic Board is ultimately responsible for the approval of new programmes and re-validation of existing provision and the Principal signs off on approval. [067] The academic regulations are subject to annual review, informed by observations from students, academic staff, external examiners, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and other stakeholders with a direct interest in the regulatory framework. [053] This process ensures that they are accessible, comprehensive, fair, and satisfy the requirements of relevant PSRBs. The team is satisfied that there is evidence of this continued review of the academic regulations. Over the last three years minor changes have taken place which have included updating terminology to reflect changes in the sector, changes to NCD's structure and a temporary amendment to accommodate the impact of the pandemic. More recently, during 2021-22, a consultation has taken place to review the regulation relating to trailing modules. Following extensive discussion, including consultation with students, an amendment to the regulations will be implemented in September 2022. The change involves the removal of the regulation (C6.7b) which permits a student to progress to Level 5 trailing up to 20 failed credits.

49 NCD's regulations and frameworks are supported by policies and procedures relating to key operational areas such as admissions, assessment, appeals and complaints. The Admissions Policy [054] explains that students can apply directly to NCD or through

UCAS. [053, p31] The HE Admissions Policy [054] claims to have been designed to take into consideration OfS requirements and UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance. The policy contains its aims, the entitlements of students, and responsibilities of students, staff and NCD. It also refers to an Admissions Appeals Policy and process with a link to access that policy. [056] It is not immediately obvious from the Admissions Appeals Policy what the process is for a student to appeal or on what grounds the student can appeal. HE Admissions at NCD are not highly centralised and the decisions are devolved to curriculum teams. The Admissions Policy is supported and underpinned by an Access and Participation Plan. [005] Admissions to programmes delivered at LSC are administered directly by LSC [542] in line with NCD entry requirements and targets agreed at Strategic Partnership meetings. The NCD Recognition of Prior Learning policy is used for both LSC and NCD students. [542]

50 The HE Assessment Policy [055] includes the aims of the Assessment Policy and the responsibilities of staff and students. The Procedure for the Management of Assessment Boards [064] and the Roles and Responsibilities of Staff at Assessment Boards [068] ensure that there is a clear process for the approval of marks to support the Academic Regulations. The Quality Assurance Verification and Moderation Policy [099] outlines the roles and purpose of two types of 'quality assurers': the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) and the external examiner or External Quality Assessors (EQA). There is mention of assessment sampling within this document, but no expectation established for size of sample. [099, p5] The minutes of the Board of Examiners do not confirm explicitly that modules have been marked and moderated according to NCD's procedures and quality assurance processes, but the marks are confirmed at Assessment Boards [157; 158] and confirmation is provided within external examiner reports, [222-224] and the team is satisfied that NCD operates in accordance with its policies.

51 NCD's Academic Appeals Policy [056] 'establishes the principles' of an appeals policy, which means that it provides the framework which enables an academic approach to be investigated. The Assessment and Moderation Academic Appeal Procedure [146] outlines the procedure to be followed if a student wants to appeal. This is clear because it explains the criteria for an assessment appeal (procedural error, administrative error or mitigating circumstances that were not able to be evidenced earlier). It also explains that appeals cannot be based on dissatisfaction with academic judgement and distinguishes between a complaint and an appeal. Each stage of appeal is outlined clearly: submission, investigation, and potential outcomes, including the option for further appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The process is transparent because it is referred to in the Student Guide [121] and the policy is available on the website. Appeals from students at LSC are directed to NCD. [040, p48]

52 NCD's Complaints Policy [057] establishes the principles of the policy: its scope, fairness, responsibilities of key people in NCD, categories of complaint, stages of complaint, confidentiality and proportionality. The Complaints Procedure [145] explains the process to be followed in order to submit a complaint. This includes formal and informal stages.

53 There is evidence that the Complaints Policy is implemented in accordance with its established principles because the Complaints Report [366] and email referring to an informal complaint [367] provide examples of complaints in which the processes have been followed in accordance with the principles. As with appeals, the documentation is transparent because it is referenced in the Student Guide, [121] and both the Appeals and Complaints Policies are easily accessible through the internet. The partnership Operations Manual [046, p46] states that complaints are dealt with by the partner institution (that is, LSC), and both the Operations Manual and Section 12 of the Complaints Policy [057] inform LSC students of the right to appeal to NCD if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint.

54 To test that the Academic Regulations were operationalised and understood, the team viewed a sample of programme specifications that was presented for the re-validation of the FdA Film and Media Production [067, pp40-54] which included examples of module specifications. [067, pp55-105] It is hard to judge the workload in such modules through a review of the module specification and word count of assessments but there is some evidence of consideration of student volume in the programme re-approval process. [067] The team requested further information in the form of a wider sample of course documentation in other subject areas aligned to the assessed student work sample [ASW] and this provided reassurance that the programmes are delivered in accordance with NCD's own regulations, which are consistent with the expectations associated with foundation degrees and, in the judgement of the team, the content of syllabi and assessments looked reasonable for their respective credit values.

55 The Academic Regulations [053, p3] state that the regulations should be clearly understood by staff and students. The evidence shows that the regulations are available to students. The students' Programme Guide [090] contains a link to the Academic Regulations as does the Student Handbook [122] which also provides information of a more general nature relating to the student experience, such as campus facilities and learning support. The Programme Guide [090] also states that there is an introduction to the academic regulations in student induction and this can be verified by the evidence, for example, in the NCD Fd New Starters Induction. [123] NCD enables staff to remain up to date and aware of regulations, policies and procedures. There is evidence of how staff are provided with guidance on the academic regulations, [HE Overview, 272] and Sections A-E of the Academic Regulations are outlined, paying particular attention to key points relating to assessments, how extenuating circumstances should be managed, how programmes are evaluated, and changes made, appeals and complaints. This also includes information on how quality assurance in higher education provision is overseen by the HE Development and Quality Unit (HEDQU), how regulatory directives from the OfS and guidance from QAA are overseen and incorporated into NCD regulations and policies, the cycle of quality assurance activity [HE Overview, 272] and are directed to other documentation and new staff undertake continuous professional development (CPD) relating to quality assurance processes. [273] The documentation produced by staff [Module Guides, 199-201] shows consistency with academic regulations and therefore demonstrated that staff have understood the academic regulations.

56 In operationalising the partnership with LSC, NCD has developed an Operations Manual [046] to help to establish operational aspects of key procedures. For example, it explains that Partnership Managers are responsible for academic and student welfare. It also outlines NCD's expectations for those members of staff holding other roles, such as the Module Tutor.

57 The team concludes that NCD has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications which are appropriate to its status and that the College reviews its policies and procedures regularly to ensure that these are fit for purpose.

58 NCD already awards its own higher education qualifications and the existing Academic Regulations, policies and procedures in place provide a framework for future development of new programmes and collaborations. [053, 044, Appendix A] NCD has a framework to establish and review regularly academic policies and procedures. [051] The evidence shows that each policy document indicates the date when it was last reviewed, the version number, when implemented and when it is next due for review. [052] The HEDQU holds a schedule of when each policy is due to be renewed and hosts an automated system (a Policy Monitoring Site) that sends an alert to the policy holder when the document is due for revision. Course documentation is updated annually and other policies and procedures

either every three or five years, or earlier if the need arises. Most policies reviewed by the team had been reviewed within the last two years and all were in accordance with their stated guidance. Changes to policies and procedures are disseminated through an annual HE overview, [272, 273] or in-year through Teach, Learn, Innovate newsletters and updates. [313, 389] Students are informed of any changes in the annual continuing students inductions. [122]

59 A definitive list of NCD's approved programmes is published on the website, as is a set of definitive course documentation [[Higher Education \(newcollegedurham.ac.uk\)](http://Higher Education (newcollegedurham.ac.uk))] Programme specifications [192-185] and module specifications [199-201] are produced to a standard template. The course documentation shows that the academic regulations [053] are implemented consistently because module specifications [199-201] and programme specifications [182-185] specify credits, and level and learning outcomes appropriate to their FHEQ level. The evidence shows that the programme and module specifications are updated annually because each version is dated and there is a record of each update at the bottom of each document, consistent with NCD's own Records Management Policy. [060]

60 There are some minor inconsistencies in the presentation of documentation considered by the team, for example, the Fd Visual Arts Programme Specification [184] does not include the full title of the award, but, overall, the team reviewed sufficient evidence of accurate course documentation to be satisfied that it reflects NCD's academic frameworks and regulations. Currently, NCD has awarding powers for Certificates of Higher Education and foundation degrees in arts, education, engineering and science. [053, p5] All students who receive an award will receive a degree parchment and a transcript of studies supplement. [053, p10]

61 The Academic Registry Policy [059] outlines the institutional approach to confirming awards. All awards and grades are recorded on NCD's system, and all exit awards are administered by Academic Registry which deals with all awards, including those for non-higher education provision. This policy states that students are provided with an annual transcript and a diploma supplement at the end of their programme and the team received evidence in the form of transcripts, [061] and higher education diploma supplements [186-188] which demonstrated that students are provided with records of study that accurately reflect their qualifications as outlined in the academic regulations. An NCD Certificate Example [189] shows that the certificate includes the student's name, title of the degree, date of issue and the NCD as the awarding body. The higher education diploma supplements [186-188] provide the student's name, qualification, information on the qualification, including level, transcript of studies, dates of attendance, and any additional recognised activities. One example in the sample [188, p9] was confusing as it seemed to consist of a student who had studied only 80 credits at Level 5 and yet was awarded a FdSc. This led the team to doubt that the basis on which the qualification was awarded was consistent with NCD's regulations and therefore clarification was requested. In response, NCD confirmed that the student had obtained the required credit, but the transcript downloaded only partial credit. [532] NCD was investigating the reason for this anomaly, but the team was reassured that this was an outlier caused by an anomaly in the downloading/printing of transcript rather than inaccurate application of academic regulations. For this reason, the team is confident that the information held on record accurately reflected the students' programme of study and is confident that the information provided to students accurately reflects their programme of study.

62 The academic requirements for an award are transparent because the Programme Guide [090] contains information for students on FHEQ levels, number of credits required to pass/progress, programme learning outcomes and programme structures. The Programme Guide also includes a glossary of terms that might be new to students when discussing assessment, and explains academic integrity, penalties for late submission and the

mitigating circumstances process. Terminology that is potentially new to students is also covered in the Fd New Starter Induction session. [123]

63 Annual Programme Monitoring Reports [182-185] confirm alignment with the programmes and modules as defined in the programme specifications. External examiner reports [222-224] confirm that they receive relevant programme documentation and report on a programme-basis, confirming that the definitive record of programmes used for delivery, monitoring and assessment are clearly understood and used consistently by all stakeholders.

## **Conclusions**

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

65 The team considers that NCD has comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations relating to the award of academic credit and qualifications which are supported by appropriate and coherent policies and procedures. NCD's academic regulations, policies and procedures are clearly presented in its Academic Regulations and in a set of accompanying policies and procedures, which are comprehensive in coverage and accessible to both staff and students. These documents, which are maintained centrally, clearly articulate how NCD governs the award of academic credit. NCD reviews its policies and procedures regularly and systematically to ensure that they are effective and align with sector practices.

66 NCD maintains definitive, secure and up-to-date records of all approved programmes and qualifications and has clearly defined checks to ensure that any changes are formally approved and communicated effectively to those involved, and this includes provision delivered at LSC. Such definitive documents are clearly embedded into NCD's functions to ensure that these inform the delivery, assessment, monitoring and the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

67 The team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

## Criterion B2 - Academic standards

68 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.*

69 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**

70 The QAA assessment 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 as follows:

- a To ensure that NCD's 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 NCD's Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards, [070] Sample (Re)Validations, [067-069, 204-206, 208-210, 212-214] Academic Regulations [053] Validation Event Terms of Reference, [348] external examiner documentation for Cyber, Business and Management and Public and Community Service. [242-244]
- b To determine whether 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, the team examined NCD's Periodic Review Procedure for an NCD Award, [071] Periodic Review Evidence, [156] FdA Public and Community Services Periodic Review May 2020, [203] FdA Childhood Studies and Professional Practice Periodic review May 2020, [207] Periodic Review Board Terms of Reference, [159] Periodic Review Template, [160] External Examiner Handbook, [085] external examiner training, [086] introduction email, [087] Process, [088] Tenure tracker, [089] Internal and Validation Event: comments and issues for discussion guidance, [347] Validation Event terms of reference, [348] sample external validations, [067, 205, 209, 213] external examiner documentation for Cyber, Business and Management and Public and Community Service, [242-244] Academic Regulations, [053] HE Forum, College-level, [147,180,193-4] HE Forum, school-level [351-4] and NSS and LSC Survey results report. [285]
- c To determine whether NCD's 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 the Process

for Validating or Revalidating awards, [070] Example of Validation docs, [067-069, 203-206, 207-210, 211-214] Academic Regulations, [053] Academic Standards and Quality Board minutes, [063] Validation Event Terms of Reference, [348] HEQMP 9-2-1 Validation Document with Guidance Notes, [346] and Internal and Validation Event Comments and Issues for Discussion Guidance. [347]

- d To confirm that credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) 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 considered Academic Regulations, [053] Validation Event documentation, [067, 205, 209, 213] HE Assessment Policy, [055] Moderation and Training support evidence, [483] HE Quality Assurance Assessment & Moderation Procedure HEQMP 4-3, [227] Internal Quality Assurance Form, [228] Assessed Student Work, [ASW] Management of Assessment Boards, [064] Roles and Responsibilities at Assessment Boards, [065] Assessment Board Schedule 2021-22, [066] external examiner documentation for Cyber, Business and Management and Public and Community Service, [242-244] External Examiner Handbook. [085]
- e To determine whether NCD's programme 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 Academic Regulations, [053] FdA Early Childhood Studies Annual Report, [419] FdA Business and Management Report 21-22, [513] Annual Report 2021-22 (London, Business and Management) LSC, [514] Annual Report 2021-22 (London, SIHSC) LSC, [515] FdSc Supporting Innovation Annual report 21-22, [516] Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Reports, [131-134] Periodic Review Procedure for an NCD Award, [071] Periodic Review Evidence, [156] FdA Public and Community Services Periodic Review May 2020, [203] FdA Childhood Studies and Professional Practice Periodic Review May 2020, [207] Periodic Review Board Terms of Reference [159] Periodic Review Template. [160]
- f To determine whether NCD makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, the team considered Academic Regulations, [053] external examiner documentation for Cyber, Business and Management and Public and Community Service, [242-244] External Examiner Handbook, [085] external examiner training, [086] Introduction email, [087] External Examiner Process, [088] EE Tenure Tracker, [089] HE Approvals Committee. [105]

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

71 A representative sample of 100 pieces of assessed student work was requested along with supporting documentation such as assessment briefs and module handbooks. A further sample of 25 assessed student work was requested after analysis of the initial submission.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

73 NCD's Academic Regulations for the Award of Foundation Degrees [053, A2.4-5] contain a clear statement that NCD awards are defined with reference to the FHEQ, and that



awards are required to conform to the generic descriptors and expected skills set out in the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

74 NCD's Guidance on the Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards [070] lays out the four stages of the validation process (with an additional Outline Planning Application for new programmes). At validation events, whether new validations or re-validation of existing awards, one of the principal questions to be addressed by the validation panel [348] is whether a programme's stated aims, learning outcomes and academic standards are aligned to the relevant level in the FHEQ. Subject Benchmark Statements and Degree Characteristics Statements are listed as reference points in the examples of validation documentation considered by the team. [067, 205, 209, 213]

75 The validation documentation (Film and Media Production, Public and Community Services, Early Childhood Studies and Travel, Tourism and Event Management) clearly demonstrates that the programme and module learning outcomes are appropriate to the stated Levels (4 and 5) of the FHEQ. [067, 205, 209, 213] Additionally, external examiner reports for a different sample of courses [242-244] all confirm that academic standards are set appropriately. On the basis of NCD's Academic Regulations [053] and the award validation/re-validation process [070] which are comprehensive and set out clear mechanisms, the team concluded that NCD's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to relevant levels of the FHEQ.

76 When a programme undergoes validation or re-validation, an internal approval event occurs before the main external validation event. The outcome of this is confirmation that the programme and programme team are ready for external validation. The (external) Validation Panel includes an external academic and a representative of the relevant employment sector, [348] providing external and independent points of expertise, and this panel composition is confirmed in the validation evidence. [067,205,209,213] The external academic is expected to have subject-specialist knowledge and to be familiar with the concept of a foundation degree. The academic panel members, as a whole, are responsible for confirming the appropriateness of the programme in terms of its content and delivery, and the resources to support it, and in its alignment to the requirements of NCD's Academic Regulations. [053] The representative from the relevant employment sector has a responsibility to advise the validation panel on the appropriateness of the knowledge and skills being developed by the programme for the needs of the sector. [348] The validation process takes account of external points of reference by considering FHEQ levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and Degree Characteristic Statements. [347] For example, in the 2022 validation of FdA Film and Media Production, one of the conditions of the internal validation was that the programme aims and learning outcomes should be reviewed and aligned more closely to the Subject Benchmark Statements. [068] The same internal validation also set a condition that the verbs in module learning outcomes should be reviewed to demonstrate higher thinking skills (Bloom's taxonomy), to differentiate between Level 4 and Level 5 outcomes. [068]

77 Once a programme has been approved and is being delivered, the External Examiner Process [088] requires examiners to report on whether academic standards are appropriate, based on relevant external reference points. This is manifested in the standard statement on each examiner's academic standards report confirming 'The standards set for this award are appropriate.' [242-244] External examiners also approve assessment briefs; sample assessed student work and take part in Examination Boards. [053]

78 Periodic Review [071] is the initial step in the re-validation of an existing award, taking place in the year before a re-validation is due. The purpose of a Periodic Review is to ensure that all interested parties have taken part in critically reflecting on the programme and to reflect on standards, including input from the external examiners, and whether the

programme is fully consistent with the FHEQ and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. In examples of periodic review documentation, [156(2),203,207] three out of four reflective reports give consideration to Subject Benchmark Statements, and external examiners comment in all four reports that academic standards are maintained and that programmes are comparable with similar programmes; however, there is no mention of the FHEQ. Each Periodic Review panel contains three independent members of staff from beyond the programme team or school, but within the NCD academic community. [159] There is thus no formal involvement of external and independent points of expertise at this initial stage of the process, though the Periodic Review template [160] does require the programme team to reflect on external examiner feedback, and on employer interactions.

79 The role of students as 'experts' in the setting and maintaining of academic standards can be seen in several places: first, the Students' Union President (or their line manager) is a member of the validation panel, as witnessed in each sample seen. [067, 205, 209, 213] Second, each re-validation event takes evidence from a student consultation, and interviews a sample of students. [070] There are also multiple opportunities for students to comment on academic standards, at module level, at HE Forum meetings and in internal and NSS surveys. [147, 180, 193-4,351-4,285]

80 The team came to the conclusion that, notwithstanding the lack of formal involvement of any independent expert in the periodic review process and the inconsistent evidence of the consideration at periodic review of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, later stages of the validation/re-validation process were well covered by external experts, giving confidence that, overall, the setting and maintaining of academic standards did take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students.

81 Part B of the Academic Regulations [053] defines the regulations for programme approval, by reference to the programme approval process described in the Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards. [070] The arrangements are robust because they are detailed and cover all necessary steps. When a new programme is being proposed, the first step is an Outline Planning Application, [211] which includes market intelligence, risks, projected student numbers, employer and student engagement in the development, and alignment with NCD's academic strategy, as well as consideration of the programme structure. The Outline Planning Application is considered by the HE Strategic Approval Panel, [211] which can give conditional or unconditional approval or refer the application back for re-work. For both new and existing programmes, the ensuing stages are identical: internal approval, followed by an external validation event, followed by sign-off by the Principal (or delegate). [070] At each stage, conditions can be set for approval, and there is a clear process to ensure that the conditions have been met before progression to the next stage.

82 Detailed procedures and guidance for staff on approval arrangements are found in NCD's Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards, [070] Validation Event Terms of Reference, [348] and in the template documents [346,347] which respectively help those staff writing the validation documentation and help reviewers with prompts for issues to be discussed at internal and validation events. The team found that NCD's programme approval arrangements feature systematic processes, along with clear guidance and templates, which provide a framework to ensure awards are set at the appropriate level.

83 The team's consideration of the documentation for a number of recent validations, confirms that the approval arrangements are applied consistently. [067-069, 203-206, 207-210, 211-214] These examples cover both re-validations and a new programme, and show a rigorous application of the processes, with conditions being set where required and evidence being supplied that the conditions have been met.

84 The team therefore concluded that NCD's processes and procedures for programme approval 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 NCD's own academic frameworks and regulations.

85 NCD's Academic Regulations [053: A4.4, A6.3, A8.1] set out the rules for the award of credit and qualifications, based on the achievement of learning outcomes, and evidenced through assessment. Awards are clearly defined by the credits achieved and the level at which they have been achieved. The level of credit assigned takes account of the generic qualification descriptors in the national Qualifications and Credit Framework. NCD's Award Framework [053: Section B3] requires that a student will achieve credit by achieving module learning outcomes, on the evidence of assessed learning.

86 The Academic Regulations state that awards are defined with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) [053, p3] and that validated awards are consistent with the descriptors of the learning outcomes of each appropriate level. The credit values relate to notional learning hours, and are consistent with the FHEQ, with one unit of credit equal to 10 learning hours and each level equivalent to 120 credits (1,200 learning hours). The concept of student learning hours is not one that is transparent in all the course documentation available to students, such as the Module Guides [199-201] or Programme Handbook. [121] However, there is evidence of consideration of expected student volume/workload hours included in programme validation documentation [067] and this is consistent with the stated and approved credit framework. The criteria for the award of a foundation degree are set out in the Academic Regulations. [053, p9] The criterion used to determine overall marks is either a weighted average of the aggregated overall marks for best 100 credits at Level 5 and the best 20 module credits at Level 4, or the weighted average of the aggregated overall marks of all awarded credits at Level 5. These criteria are appropriate and consistent with the FHEQ because they require 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5. The award framework is determined taking into consideration the range of learning outcomes, the national qualification descriptors and any UK benchmarks. [053, p7]

87 The criteria lack some clarity in terms of the relationship between the classifications used by NCD and the descriptors of the FHEQ for the foundation degree. The categories of Pass, Merit, Distinction, Distinction\* replace the more conventional classification of 1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd at undergraduate level and the more typical (though not universal) Pass, Merit, Distinction at foundation level. It is more typical for a Distinction to equate to 70+% and the inclusion of a Distinction at 60+% is unusual. Nevertheless, the terminology used in learning outcomes for Levels 4 and 5 outlined in Programme Specifications [182-185] is consistent with the qualification descriptors for Levels 4 and 5 in the FHEQ (and outlined in QAA's Characteristics of Foundation Degrees), and the Level 5 learning outcomes meet in full the FHEQ descriptors because they use language that reflects an appropriate level of study and refer, for example, to 'knowledge and critical understanding', 'critical analysis' and 'evaluation' of information, and 'the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.' In addition, the team is satisfied that the numeric marks awarded to student work, from the sample reviewed, were appropriate. In this respect the team is satisfied that the course documentation reflects the principles found in Section A of NCD's Academic Regulations [053] In the assessed student work sample, the team found assignment briefs containing grade descriptors laid out for students for each assessment on a module; these descriptors were more specific than the generic qualification descriptors mentioned above, in paragraph 85 [ASW]

88 Course and module specifications are supplied by each programme team as part of validation documentation. [067, 205, 209, 213] In each set seen by the team, the course

specification clearly states the learning outcomes for the whole programme, and the module specifications, including learning outcomes, are supplied with a mapping to show how the course-level outcomes are distributed across the modules, in terms of teaching and summative assessment. The documentation showed that course learning outcomes are set at standards that are consistent with NCD's regulations and aligned to the FHEQ.

89 Section C of NCD's Academic Regulations [053] together with the HE Assessment Policy [055] and moderation evidence, [483] explains how NCD's assessment and moderation practices work to implement the regulatory framework for the award of credit and qualifications. The HE Quality Assurance Assessment and Moderation Procedure [227] is supported by a number of template documents [228, 242-244] for the Internal Moderation and External Examiner Sampling stages. The assessed student work considered by the team confirms that NCD's assessment processes are consistently followed by staff and that grades reflect accurately the achievement of learning outcomes, thereby confirming that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated by assessment, and that those learning outcomes have been set at the appropriate level. [ASW]

90 NCD's schedule for Assessment Boards [066] covers module boards, progression and award boards, combined module and progression and award boards, and resit boards. The documentation is clear and detailed. Evidence from external examiners suggest that Boards run smoothly, as examiners are asked about processes for assessment and examination and determination of the award, and all of the samples of external examiner reports seen contained positive responses. [242-244]

91 For NCD foundation degree awards which are offered by LSC, the Examination Board process is similar, though the timing of Boards is slightly different, to cater for different term dates. [066] Module and Progression Boards which consider LSC students are convened and chaired by NCD staff. These Board meetings consider only LSC students because of timing, but equivalence of processes and standards is achieved as the meetings are conducted by NCD staff, under NCD processes. The same external examiner covers NCD and LSC cohorts. [M3, M4]

92 Having considered the available evidence on assessment processes and outcomes, the team concluded that it was satisfied that credit and qualifications would be 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 NCD have been satisfied.

93 Section B of NCD's Academic Regulations [053] covers the principles and processes for programme design, approval, validation, monitoring and review. The monitoring and review arrangements include periodic review and re-validation of programmes (normally on a five-year cycle) and annual programme monitoring and the production of Annual Programme Reports (APRs). APRs allow the programme team to reflect on quality, to record minor changes so that they can be considered together during re-validation and to produce a quality enhancement plan for the following year. Course Leaders produce APRs [419,513-6] and also have oversight of the course-level Quality Enhancement Plans that are produced. The reports are structured around the OfS conditions, covering programme data (B3), academic experience (B1), resources, support and student engagement (B2), assessment and awards (B4) and sector-recognised standards (B5). The data considered includes enrolment, retention, achievement, progression, attendance and student voice (NSS and College surveys). Course teams are required to comment on each aspect of the data. There is also discussion of academic standards, including comments from external examiners. For each B condition, the report contains a self-evaluation

judgement. Areas of good practice are noted, along with proposed mechanisms for sharing these practices more widely within the programme team or the school.

94 For NCD-based courses, a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is also submitted, and the whole report is signed off by the Head of School. For courses offered at LSC, however, there is no such plan as part of the APR, because all the necessary enhancement actions are recorded onto a single plan, which is the one contained in the APR for the NCD offering of the course.

95 The team was satisfied that this mechanism was effective. All of the APRs seen by the team were detailed, reflective documents, evidencing that the course team had thought carefully about the quality of the programme and the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in allowing students to show that they had met the learning outcomes, and explicitly addressed external examiner comments. [419, 513-6] For instance, the FdA Business and Management external examiner commented that LSC teaching staff could usefully improve the quality and quantity of the feedback they gave to students. The APR notes that this has been disseminated to the lecturing and marking team to provide more precise and focused feedback which would enable students to do better in summative assessments and future modules. In addition to the annual report, a Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Report [131-134] is presented to HEQCS twice a year. These are detailed reports regarding all of NCD's higher education provision and include analysis of KPIs, reports on partnerships, updates on emerging themes and school updates.

96 NCD requires that all programmes are re-validated on a five-yearly basis, with periodic review happening in the fourth year of each cycle, as a preparation for the re-validation process. [071] As for annual review, this requires the course team to produce a reflective evaluation, but this time over the period since the previous periodic review or validation, rather than just for the previous year.

97 The team came to the conclusion that NCD's programme monitoring, and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently and explicitly address whether the threshold academic standards are achieved.

98 External examiners are a fundamental part of NCD's framework for quality assurance, providing external and independent expertise. Further detail on the appointment and management of external examiners can be found in the report section on Criterion B3. The reporting mechanisms for external examiners are thorough; they are required to submit four types of report each year: on assessment briefs, on EQA sampling, on academic standards and an overall annual report. [088] They may also be requested to comment by email on programme modifications or staff changes. Examples of external examiner reports seen by the team [242-4] included all of these reports, along with examples of course teams' responses to each external examiner's annual report. Issues raised by the external examiner are, where appropriate, added to the course QEP. [242-4] All of the reports use standard templates, which means that examiners are asked to confirm, each year, that the standards of the award are appropriate and comparable with similar courses in the UK with which the examiner is familiar. In the reports seen by the team, all examiners gave this confirmation. Each year, a summary of external examiners reports is considered at HEASQB, [282] which allows the identification of any trends across the various courses, as well as giving that Board oversight of this aspect of the quality assurance framework. However, in the reports seen by the team, there were no trends identified, although it was reported that all external examiners had given their confirmation on the standards of the award and comparability with other UK institutions. All of the evidence seen by the team supported the views of the external examiners.

99 A single external examiner is appointed to oversee the provision for both NCD and LSC students, in order to ensure comparability of standards. As the cohorts of NCD and LSC students are considered at separate exam boards, the examiner is able to give separate academic standards reports, but their annual report covers both NCD and LSC provision. [243] The examiners have confirmed that academic standards are comparable across the two offerings.

100 The team concluded that a robust external examiner process is in place at NCD, which, together with the evidence of the process's consistent implementation, provided confidence that appropriate use was being made of external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. Based on the minutes of the HE Approvals Committee, [105] the team concluded that external examiners who were appointed have the necessary knowledge of higher education and sufficient up-to-date knowledge to be able to confirm that academic standards are maintained and comparable to those found in other higher education providers.

## **Conclusions**

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

102 NCD has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. These mechanisms of programme validation, annual monitoring and periodic review are clearly set out in NCD's regulations, where there is a requirement to take appropriate account of relevant external expertise, external reference points and feedback from students. The team saw samples which showed that procedures are applied consistently and robustly. Validation, periodic review, and annual reports seen by the team demonstrate that these mechanisms work effectively in practice.

103 NCD has also shown that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. NCD's programme approval process ensures that threshold standards are initially set at the appropriate level, and then maintenance of these standards is ensured by the work of external examiners and through monitoring and review. Reports from external examiners confirm that academic standards are set appropriately and maintained over time, and that they are comparable with other higher education institutions. Reports from external examiners are used in annual programme review and in periodic review, and issues raised by examiners are addressed. In particular, the periodic review process ensures that external examiner reports over a number of years are reviewed, giving reassurance that standards are maintained over time.

104 The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

## Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

105 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.*

106 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

107 The QAA assessment 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 as follows:

#### Design and approval of programmes

- a To check that the NCD operates effective programme design, development and approval, the team scrutinised a range of documentation, including NCD's Academic Regulations, [053] HE Strategy, [002] the HE Quality Activity Cycle, [038] Partnership and Programme Approval Checklist, [045] HE Strategic Approvals Panel, [049] Periodic Review Template, [060] FdA Film and Media Production - FDD - Revalidation Documentation - JUNE 2022, [067] FdA Film and Media Production - Internal Approval Event Report, [068] FdA Film and Media Production Principal Sign Off, [069] Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards, [070] Periodic Review Procedure, [071] Major and Minor Modifications to a NCD Higher Award and Externally Validated Awards, [077] Note for Chairs (of Validation Event), [092] HE Approvals Committee, [105] Periodic Review Evidence, [156] Periodic Review Board Terms of Reference, [159] FdA Business and Management Surveys, [166] Validation and Periodic Review PPT, [190] FdSc Cyber Security Validation Documentation, [192] Integrative Counselling Revalidation Event Minutes, [197] FdSc Cyber Security Event Minutes, [198] FdA Public and Community Services Periodic Review, [203] FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Internal Event, [212] HE On Programme Survey Analysis, [277] HE On Programme Survey Meeting, [278] HE Academic Standards and Quality Board Minutes, [279-283] Sample Evidence of Effective Student Engagement in Programme Reviews, [335] Annual Programme Report, [419] FdSc Sports Coaching and Development, [449] HE Business and Management EE Response Statement, [490] LSC Response to EE Report, [491] and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]
- b To assess how relevant staff are informed of and provided with guidance and support on these procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them the team reviewed Staff Induction, [106] Virtual Staff Induction, [107] Academic Regulations Presentation, [128] Assessment Boards Process, [129] Back to Business Presentations, [149] Staff Development Day Periodic Review Presentation and Validation, [190] Roles and Responsibilities of Validation Panel Members, [191] FdSc Cyber Security Validation Documentation, [192] Extract from Teach, Learn, Innovate Newsletter [313] as well as the LSC Collaborative Partnership Minutes

[047] to cover the support for staff at partner institution and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]

- c To check that responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and subsequent action is carefully monitored, the team reviewed the Academic Regulations, [053] Process for Validating or Re-validating NCD Awards, [070] Evidence of Periodic Review, [156] Validation and Periodic Review PPT, [190] Validation Panel Members Roles and Responsibilities, [191] FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Outline Planning Application, [211] FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Internal Approval Event, [212] FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Validation Event, [213] and the FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Definitive Sign-Off. [214]
- d To verify that coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained, the team reviewed the Academic Regulations, [053] Programme Specifications [182-185] and Overall NCD Request for Additional Information. [498]
- e To assess how close links are maintained between learning support services and NCD's programme planning and approval arrangements, the team reviewed a series of evidence, including HE Academic Development Manager, [018] HE Academic Support Tutor, [021] HE Academic Administration Coordinator, [022] HE Academic Administrative Officer, [023] HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, [048] HE Strategic Approvals Panel and Minutes, [049] FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Outline Approval Application, [211] HEQMP 9-2-1 Validation Document with Guidance Notes for Development Team, [346] Learner Support Statement, [349] Memo to Panel Identifying Memo FdSc Cyber Security Validation Event. [350]

### **Learning and teaching**

- f To verify how the organisation articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, the team reviewed the NCD Strategic Plan, [001] HE Strategic Plan, [002] Statement of Purpose, [003] Quality Strategy 2021-26, [039] Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, [108, 178] Individual Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plan, [109] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE Scholarship Framework, [112] Back to Business Presentations, [149] Overview of Sessions, [289-294] LSC Learning Environment and Resource Survey, [489] and the self-evaluation document. [SED]
- g To review how the organisation maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, the team considered the student feedback overview, [100] Student voice activity 2020 and 2021 examples, [253] module feedback, [233-241] HE Student Forum meetings chaired by the Students' Union President, [180, 193, 194, M1] LSC Staff Student Liaison Committees, [246-249] School Forums, [351, 352] a wide range of internal surveys [166-171] and the NSS, [284-287] programme Quality Review meetings [140-144] and held meetings with students at NCD [M1] and LSC. [M2]
- h To assess NCD's approach to monitoring and analysis of student feedback on the learning environment the team considered the HE Induction Survey Summary Analysis, [172] Student Forum Minutes 16 Feb 2022, [180] Corporation Minutes 2020-2021, [250] Corporation Minutes 2021-2022, [251] HEQCS Minutes 2021-2022, [252] 25.01.21 Meeting NSS and LSC Survey Updates, [274] Academic



Board Minutes 14.05.2021 V2, [275] HE Induction Survey Results Comparing 2019 with 2020, [276] HE On Programme Survey Analysis (2020 with 2021), [277] HE On Programme Survey Meeting 08.03.2021, [278] HEASQB Mins 08-03-2021 V2, [279] HEASQB Mins 25.05.2021 V3, [280] HEASQB 17.09.19 V2, [281] HEASQB Mins 03.11.2021 V2, [282] HEASQB Mins 06.11.2019 V2, [283] NSS 2020 Update and Comparisons, [284] NSS and LSC Survey Updates 2021, [285] NSS Results Meeting 03.11.20, [286] NSS Update 1920 03.11.20 Meeting, [287] Remote Learning Survey June 2020 Analysis, [288] Meeting with NCD students, [M1] Meeting with LSC students, [M2] NCD staff, [M3] LSC staff, [M4] senior staff. [M5]

- i To check that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the team reviewed a range of documents, including the HE Withdrawal Procedure, [072] HE Withdrawal Policy, [073] assessed student work, [ASW] NCD FdA Film and Media Production Programme Guide, [090] HE Tutorial Guidance Pack, [125] HE Student Experience and Quality Enhancement Committee, [131] Programme Specifications, [182-185] Module Specifications, [199-202] Example Independent Learning Plans, [219-221] Sample Student Assessed Work, [310-318] Meeting with Students and LSC Collaborative Partnership Minutes. [047]

## Assessment

- j To verify that NCD 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, the team reviewed NCD's Academic Regulations, [053] Assessment Policy, [055] Examinations and Assessment Policy, [058] Procedure for the Management of Assessment Boards, [064] Roles and Responsibilities of Staff at Assessment Boards, [065] FdA Film and Media Production Revalidation Documentation, [067] Procedure for the Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances or Mitigation, [075] External Examiner Handbook, [085] HE Quality Assurance: Assessment and Moderation Procedures, [099] HE Approval Committee Minutes, [105] Minute of Boards of Examiners, [157, 158] HE Approval Committee Minutes, [161, 162] External Examiner Reports, [222-224] IQA-EQA BMS511, [229] External Examiner Sampling Reports, [242-244] Summary of External Examiner Reports, [245] LSC Module Award Board, [230] Staff training on assessment and feedback, [310-318] Responses to External Examiner Reports, [490, 491] Overall NCD responses to clarification questions, [532] sample student assessed work and meeting with staff from LSC. [M4]
- k To identify how staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, the team reviewed the HE Induction Programme, [120] HE Student Handbook, [121] HE Continuing Students Induction, [122] HE New Starters Induction, [123] LSC NCD Student Guide, [126] Mitigation Presentation, [127] Extensions, Exceptional Circumstances Presentation, [130] the criteria included in the Module Guides [338-341] and the Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]
- l To verify that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the team reviewed the role of the Academic Support Tutor, [021] NCD FdA Film and Media Programme Handbook, [090] HE Student Handbook, [121] HE Continuing Students Induction, [122] , HE New Starters Induction, [123] LSC Partnership Due Diligence Evidence, [152] Programme Specifications, [182-185] Module Guides, [338-341] and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]

- m To assess how NCD operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice, the team reviewed the Academic Integrity Policy, [079] Academic Malpractice Procedure, [080] and Academic Malpractice Procedure (old), [081] Academic Integrity Note, [265] LSC Operations Manual, Section 9d, [266] Emails to student regarding Academic Malpractice, [267-268] Report from AO Panel, [269] Academic Malpractice Hearing Outcome letters, [271, 272] a Report from AO, [269] and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]
- n To identify that the processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, the team reviewed NCD's Examinations and Assessment Policy, [058] Process for the Management of Assessment Boards, [064] Roles and Responsibilities at Assessment Boards, [065] External Examiner Handbook, [085] Quality Assurance Assessment and Moderation Policy, [099] Assessment and Moderation Academic Appeal Procedure, [146] LSC Operations Manual, [154] Minutes of HE Approvals Committee, [163] EE Academic Standards Report, [222] EE Annual Reports, [223-225] IQA-EQA report, [228, 229] External Examiner Documents, [242-244] Feedback and Assessment Staff Resources, [314] HETLAC Minutes, [315] Moderation and Training Support Evidence [483] and a Sample of Student Assessed Work.

### **External examining**

- o To establish whether NCD makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, the team considered the Academic Regulations 2021-22, [053] External Examiner Handbook, [085] External Examiner Introduction, [086] EE Introduction email, [087] External Examiner Process, [088] HE Annual College Report 2019/20, [179] EE Academic Standards Report - FdA Early Childhood Studies L4 and FdA Childhood Studies and Professional Practice L5 (teach out), [222] EE Annual Report Business and Management, [223] EE Annual Report Early Childhood Studies and Professional Practice Summative report, [225] EE Document Cyber, [242] EE Documents for Business and Management, [243] EE Documents Public and Community Services, [244] Summary of External Examiner Annual Reports, [245] EE Annual Summative Report - FdA Graphic Design, [319] Moderation and training support evidence, [483] NCD/LSC Annual Report - HSC, [515] NCD Annual Report 2021-22 (London Business and Management) LSC, [514] Overall NCD responses to clarification questions, [532] meeting with Durham staff, [M3] meeting with LSC staff, [M4] meeting with senior staff. [M5]
- p To assess whether the organisation 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 the external examiners Academic Standards Report - FdA Early Childhood Studies L4 and FdA Childhood Studies and Professional Practice L5 (teach out), [222] EE Annual Report Business and Management, [223] EE Annual Report FdA Business and Management, [224] EE Annual Report Early Childhood Studies, [225] EE Document Cyber, [242] EE Documents for Business and Management, [243] EE Documents Public and Community Services, [244] Summary of External Examiner Annual Reports, [245] 490 HE Business and Management EE Response Statement Sept22 (1), [490] LSC Response to EE Report AW\_09.08.22, [491] NCD Annual Report 2021-22 (London Business and Management) LSC. [514]

## Academic appeals and student complaints

- q To determine if the organisation has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience and that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement, the team considered the HE Admissions Policy, [054] HE Assessment Policy, [055] HE Academic Appeals Policy 2020, [056] online access to appeals procedure - Academic Appeal Procedure [newcollegedurham.ac.uk] Complaints policy, [057] complaints procedure, [145] NCD HE Annual Report 2019-20, [179] HE Admissions Appeals Policy, [097] HE Admissions Appeals Procedure, [098] Operations manual, [046] Assessment and Moderation Academic Appeals Procedure, [146] NCD/LSC Operations Manual. [154]
- r To establish if appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint, the team considered the Complaint Report (002), [366] Email Evidence Relating to Informal Complaints, [367] HE Annual Curriculum Support Department - Function Report Administration 21.07.22 (002), [368] Response 080722. [369]

## How any samples of evidence were constructed

108 A representative sample of 100 pieces of assessed student work was requested along with supporting documentation such as assessment briefs and module handbooks. A further sample of 25 assessed student work was requested after analysis of the initial submission.

## What the evidence shows

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

## Design and approval of programmes

110 Section B of NCD's Academic Regulations [053] outline the principles governing the design, validation, approval and review of foundation degrees. All awards go through a formal approval process/initial validation and then an annual review, a periodic review (a year before revalidation) and revalidation (usually every five years). [070; 071] The Periodic Review Report [071] is approved by the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB). The evidence shows that this process operates effectively because the examples of recent programme reviews and validations have followed the regulations. For example, the FdA Film and Media revalidation [067-069] and the FdSc Cyber Security [192; 198] both provide evidence of a set of documentation and minutes of the event that follow their own processes. This has ensured that the programme structures, credits, learning and teaching and assessment design are consistent with the academic regulations, and that the design facilitates the delivery of learning outcomes that are appropriate and mapped against modules and assessments.

111 According to the Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards, [070] programme validation involves five stages (four in the case of revalidation, which does not require initial outline approval). Stage 1 is an outline approval, and the proposal is considered by the HE Strategic Approval Panel. Stage 2 is the development process and involves the programme team. Stage 3 is an internal approval event. Stage 4 is the validation event. The approval process involves external validation as well as internal scrutiny. Once stages 1-4 are endorsed, final approval sits with the Principal or delegate. As an example of this process, the team noted the case of FdA Film and Media Production where the documentation submitted [067] followed the format specified by the guidance [070] and was signed off using the appropriate template by the Principal. [070] The Academic Regulations [053, Section B2.3, p4] state that definitive approval sits with the Principal who authorises awards. The

evidence in the documentation is consistent with this, for example, through evidence of the definitive sign-off by the Principal of the FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management Approval. [214] Where a programme is approved subject to conditions, the team saw evidence that these conditions and subsequent actions are followed up and monitored appropriately. [214] The assessment team is satisfied that the responsibility for approving new programmes is clearly assigned, includes external expertise and that any subsequent actions are monitored.

112 The principles of programme design include that external reference points such as the FHEQ should be considered when designing programmes, [053, Section B, p5] for example, in relation to the number of credits and achievement at different levels required for awards. In order to be approved, each module specification must include module title, credits, indicative content, details of assessment and resources. A review of the programme and module specifications shows that this principle is applied consistently and effectively. The roles and responsibilities of each internal member of the validation panel are established clearly. [Validation Panel Members Roles and Responsibilities, 191] External verifiers are active in the approval of programmes, as demonstrated in the validation of the FdA Integrative Counselling [197] and FdSc Cyber Security [198] and in the periodic review of the FdA Public and Community Services. [203] The team reviewed evidence that the requirement for involvement of external expertise through external examiners and employers in programme approval is satisfied. [070] For example, the Fd Travel, Tourism and Event Management Outline Planning Application summarises the views of a wide range of relevant employers [211, p5] and there is evidence of external academic review in the Validation Event. [213] Otherwise, external involvement in the programme monitoring and review process tends to involve existing external examiners.

113 The principles of programme design also include that students' views should be considered when designing programmes. [053, Section B, p5] While students do not form part of the validation panel, there are special sessions organised for students in validation events, such as the Integrative Counselling Revalidation Event. [Minutes 197] Students' views are considered more broadly through a student forum, at programme team meetings, start of programme and on-programme evaluations and module evaluations. Student views are sought during the design stage of programmes [211; 212] through consultation with existing students on other (related) programmes. As an example, when the Fd Travel, Tourism and Event Management programme was validated, students of Tourism Management and Event Management programmes were consulted and asked their views on the attractiveness of the new programme. [212, p7] The team noted from the validation documentation for the FdSc Cyber Security that the programme had incorporated more practical activities in the design of the new programme as a result of student feedback on a module that had run as part of another programme, [192, p32] and the validation documentation for the new FdSc Sports Coaching and Development [449] discusses the input of consultation with existing students on other (related) programmes in the design of the new programme. While there is less evidence of the student voice feeding into either validation or programme review through committee membership, module evaluations [233-241] and the HE Student Forum [180] are used to provide an effective mechanism to incorporate student views into programme design and review. The HE On Programme Survey Analysis [277] shows that data is gathered on student views regarding a range of aspects relating to programme delivery (including learning, teaching and assessment, academic support, course organisation, resources, student voice, the college environment and work placements). While the team found that few actions resulted from this analysis, [278] it considered that this is a result of few issues being raised rather than a gap in the effectiveness of the process because the results were largely positive. That these results were then discussed at the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board [279-283] shows evidence of how the process is operationalised.

114 Periodic Review Board terms of reference [159] state that the role of the review is to ensure regulatory requirements, both internally and externally, are maintained. The process includes a detailed review of delivery, student recruitment, performance, and destination data as well as qualitative reflections on the programme that includes student and employer feedback, and comment on changes in the market. [Periodic Review Template 160] The evidence shows that this process operates effectively because the documentation provided showed detailed analyses of these aspects of the programmes. [Periodic review event 156]

115 Annual review involves an analysis of the quality and standards of each programme and involves input from staff, external examiners and students. The evidence shows that the annual review process is robust because the team was able to identify actions that have taken place as a result of the review. [Internal approval panel report 068] There is evidence of annual programme monitoring review taking place in accordance with the Academic Regulations. [053] For example, the Fd Early Childhood Studies Annual Programme Report [419] includes an analysis of data relating to student recruitment and performance, and resources; the student voice is recorded, and actions identified (for example, an action to review induction). The programme report includes comments from the External Quality Assurer (that is, the external examiner) and any action points are identified and monitored through the QEP. [490; 401] For example, one external examiner commented that greater clarity was needed in the sign-off of module marks at LSC and this was reviewed to ensure IQA sign-off prior to external examiner review. This action point was added to NCD's QEP. [490] The Quality Activity Cycle [038] shows how the policies and procedures relating to programme review are embedded within the cycle of the academic year. This includes a timeline of all activities relating to quality assurance: from review of external examiner reports in the summer, the annual review in September, quality review planning and scheduling (to update policies due for renewal), then starting IQA and EQA processes, reporting updates on actions during the year, module evaluations, review of student performance at different data points and Assessment Boards, among other activities.

116 The evidence shows that NCD has an effective process for making changes to programmes, through its major and minor modifications procedure. [077] Major modifications are approved by the HE Strategic Approval Panel and minor modifications at the HE Approval Committee. [077,p1] The team considered the process to be effective because the terms of reference and minutes of the HE Strategic Approval Panel [049] demonstrate that approvals are considered in accordance with the regulations and processes outlined. For example, minutes show that outline approval of the new FdA Travel, Tourism and Event Management programme was considered as a result of feedback from a previous review and from students, staff and employers, that changes proposed were considered carefully, and that issues relating to the strategic relevance of the programme, potential market, and academic coherence were considered as well as the student experience and employability. [212] The terms of reference and minutes of the HE Approvals Committee [105] also show that minor modifications to module and programmes, such as changes to staffing, external examiners and module learning outcomes or assessments that do not have an impact on the overall programme learning outcomes are considered by this committee in accordance with the published procedures. The team is of the opinion that NCD operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

117 The evidence shows that there are several mechanisms that create opportunities for staff to be informed of their roles and responsibilities in relation to programme design, development, approval and monitoring. The Staff Development Day Periodic Review and Validation presentation [190] provides an outline of the process for staff involved in these processes and in the delivery of higher education programmes. The Roles and Responsibilities of Validation Panel Members [191] outlines the role of those involved in more detail. The evidence includes an extract from a staff newsletter, Teach, Learn and Innovate, [313] that shows that staff are provided with training on learning and teaching. One

of the stated aims of such sessions is to provide staff with up-to-date knowledge on quality assurance processes and annual reporting and review. A Back to Business presentation [149] outlines a new NCD Lecturer Development programme for staff new to teaching. Staff new to higher education are given an overview through the induction programme which covers regulatory bodies and academic regulations. [524] The evidence shows, then, that relevant staff are informed of and provided with guidance and support in their roles relating to the design and approval of courses.

118 NCD confirmed that, currently, there are no programmes with 'pathways' or similar multiple elements. [498] Nevertheless, NCD's Academic Regulations [053 Section B3.6-8] explain how programmes maintain their coherence in cases where more than one subject is studied, indicating how two subjects can be combined and the protocol for using 'and' and 'with' when combining subjects of equal and major/minor balance respectively. [053, Section B, p7] In the sample of programme specifications seen [182-185] mapping of learning outcomes, knowledge and understanding, and skills show coherence within programmes and pathways. The team is assured that the academic regulations are designed to accommodate future programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways.

119 There is clear evidence that links are maintained between learning support services and programme planning. This takes the form of holding discussions within committees, and through approval and review processes. The terms of reference and membership of some of the key deliberative committees, such as the HETLAC, [048] include support services and, importantly, in the context of programme planning and approval, the HE Strategic Approvals Panel [049] where resource implications are considered. The input of student support services is not sought explicitly in this process, but the need for additional resources, including human resources, are considered during the programme approval process. The minutes of the HE Strategic Approvals Panel provide evidence of this in operation, [049, p9-12] and consideration of student services and library resources is mentioned in the outline planning application. [for example, 211] Notes and guidance are provided for the development team to consider student support [346] and the example of a memo identifying the requirement to consider student support [350] to the FdSc Cyber Security validation panel members also confirms that views on student support services are considered within programme planning arrangements.

120 The evidence shows that the roles of staff in NCD are designed to connect learning support services with curriculum planning. The role of the HE Academic Development Manager [018] includes providing an integrated approach to student learning with the broader student experience; the HE Academic Administration Coordinator, [022] supported by the Administrative Officer [023] is to liaise between academic and professional services; and the job description of the HE Academic Support Tutor includes liaising with curriculum development to ensure coherence between learning support, curriculum development and programme planning. The job descriptions of the Academic Development Manager, [018] HE Academic Support Tutor, [021] Academic Administration Coordinator [022] and HE Academic Administrative Officer [023] all include making connections between curriculum planning and academic support. The team agreed that close links are maintained between learning support services and NCD's programme planning and approval arrangements.

## **Learning and teaching**

121 NCD clearly articulates its strategic approach to learning and teaching in its Strategic Plan [001] and HE Strategic Plan. [002] The focus in the Strategic Plan is on the creation of a skilled and highly qualified workforce that is central to NCD's strategy, and on engaging with businesses in designing innovative and high-quality curricula that enhances employability, [001] in line with NCD's values of accountability, safeguarding, partnerships, inclusion, respect and excellence (ASPIRE) or Statement of Purpose. [003] This is reflected

within the HE Strategic Plan [002] that includes among its key academic objectives 'to enable students to aspire, succeed and progress', to develop 'an innovative, responsive and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of the regional economy... and meets the current and future demands of the labour market.' The Quality Strategy [039] is complementary to the Strategic Plan and its three main strategic aims, and rather than developing the same themes, the focus is on how it can support learning and teaching. Its aims are 'to develop and deliver consistent outstanding, teaching, learning and assessment and enable our staff to explore, develop and acquire pedagogic and technical skills to enhance students learning experience; to ensure highly effective monitoring, support and quality assurance systems which further enhance teaching, learning and assessment; and to ensure our students play an active part in assessing and enhancing the quality of the student experience.' [039, pp4-5]

122 NCD's Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [110] states its expectation that staff will all familiarise themselves with documents and procedures relating to learning and assessment. Staff are encouraged to reflect on their approach to learning and teaching in their Individual Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plan. [109] This is supported by a HE Scholarship Framework [112] that supports, and is consistent with, NCD's Quality Strategy in that a commitment to developing outstanding teaching, learning and assessment is embedded in the expectations, development, CPD and scholarship of staff. There is mention of core training for all higher education staff that is delivered by the HEDQU and the Back to Business presentations 2021 and 2022 [149] provide examples of how NCD's strategy is communicated to staff. The evidence, including a staff development calendar and staff development training records, shows an overview of sessions held with staff to disseminate organisational policies and practices, including its approach to learning and teaching. [298-294]

123 The team verified evidence of staff involved in programme planning and approval engaging with NCD's strategic approach to learning and teaching which includes six characteristics: [110, p7] Effective Differentiation; Teaching Toolkit; Learning Climate; Learning Outcomes and Progress; Effective Questioning; and Assessment for Learning. These principles, as well as the Technology Enhanced Learning objectives [108] are integrated into programme validation documentation. For example, course validation processes require courses to outline their learning and teaching strategy and how these principles and objectives are incorporated into the proposed programme. For the processes seen by the team, this involved, as an example, outlining the principles of the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy in the documentation for the FdSc Cyber Security Validation. [192, p15]. The team is satisfied that NCD articulates its vision of learning and teaching, communicates its vision clearly to staff and ensures that its key values, aims and principles are reflected in its provision.

124 NCD students enrolled on the FdA Business and Management, [166, 167] FdA Public and Community Services [168, 169] and FdSc Cyber Security [170, 171] programmes have consistently scored NCD higher than sector average benchmarks on questions relating to learning environments. These survey results demonstrate that, overall, it is likely that all students experience a learning environment that is safe, accessible and respectful. More generally, module evaluations [233-241] confirm that students are able to feed back on their wider learning and teaching experience and that, on the whole, they feel this is of high quality. Furthermore, results from the NSS have been consistently high over a three-year period. Comparing results for 2020, the data indicates that students are satisfied with their experience at NCD. Responses from students in all key areas, except for learning resources and overall satisfaction, exceed the sector top quartile results. While the questions relating to learning resources and overall satisfaction are below the top quartile benchmarks, results still exceed the sector average benchmarks. [179] Students get to know about any changes made by 'You said we did'. Students are also invited to the course team meetings where the

action plans are reviewed, and students play an active role in those discussions. [M3] Students based at NCD confirmed that they are kept informed of changes based upon their feedback. [M1] These NCD students provided an example of broken benches being replaced with sofas to maintain and improve physical spaces for higher education students. [M1]

125 LSC students have full access to the physical spaces available, including lecture and tutorial spaces, common or break-out spaces, library and IT facilities, as appropriate, and teaching and support staff. [M2] These facilities and resources are outlined to students during the induction process. [154, M2] As well as physical spaces, LSC uses a student portal as the VLE [529] as a fundamental part of its learning environment. This supports traditional lecture, seminar and tutorial learning through the online provision of lecture notes, interactive discussions and virtual support packages of learning materials. [529, M2, M4] LSC students have access to online library resources available through the VLE [529] and automatic membership of the Students' Union, enabling them to access support, advice and wider services on offer. [154] Students are aware and make use of these resources. [M2]

126 The team found that students at NCD are supported well in enabling them to monitor their progress and further their academic development. NCD changed its data management system in May 2022. [542] Monitoring student progress is embedded within the ethos of learning at NCD and forms a core part of the curriculum and learning outcomes on programmes of study. [Fd Film and Media Programme Handbook 090] Evidence of this also includes a number of features of student support. Students are allocated a personal tutor and sessions are timetabled to discuss their academic progress. [090, p24] They also have access to personal learning coaches [090, p20] who provide additional support on learning skills. A Higher Education Academic Support Team (HEAST) provides specific academic-related support, for example, in referencing and developing critical skills. The HE Tutorial Guidance Pack [125] outlines an online process whereby students develop and monitor individual learning plans with their tutors. In this way, students are able to monitor their own progress regarding engagement and academic performance through their Independent Learning Plans. [219-221] Furthermore, programme [182-185] and module specifications [199-202] show that formative feedback is to be provided to students during the course of their studies which allows students to monitor their progress and academic development. [090, p16] Students are also able to monitor their progress specifically against learning outcomes through the provision of feedback associated with each assessment. A review of a sample of assessed student work [ASW] showed that academic strengths and weaknesses are identified against learning outcomes, and that students are supported in their academic development. For students who do not engage with their studies there is a HE Withdrawal Procedure [072] and HE Withdrawal Policy [073] and students are contacted during this process.

127 The progress of students studying at the LSC campus is monitored and discussed at the Collaborative Partnership Meetings [047] where it was reported that students 'at risk' of failure were to be offered support. It was not clear in the original evidence submitted what support was offered to students who were not 'at risk' so clarification was sought. Further clarification [532] confirmed that students who study at LSC have a separate system to manage student engagement and learning experience. [reported in the Annual LSC Report in 131] Staff at LSC discuss student attendance and progress on a monthly basis. During their studies, students are supported by lecturers, and teaching assistants perform the role of the HEAST at NCD. Academic administrators and special learning needs officers, where appropriate, ensure all identified needs are met. Students also confirmed that they are able to view their marks and comments on their progress on their VLE. [M2] The team concluded that students at NCD and LSC are enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development.



## Assessment

128 NCD's assessment framework is set out in Section C of its Academic Regulations, [053] and its Assessment Policy [055] has been developed to emphasise an inclusive approach to assessment, consistent with NCD's strategic approach to learning and teaching, with active learning and participation at its centre. NCD states that the outcomes of its Assessment Policy [055] will be measured by a range of methods, including student and staff feedback, external feedback, profile of student achievement, and feedback on the observation of teaching. The evidence verifies that NCD operates valid processes of assessment which enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the credit being sought, and that it measures its outcomes according to the methods outlined in its Assessment Policy. This is because the content of each assessment is mapped to intended learning outcomes (examples are outlined in module guides [338-341]); the setting of assessments and the marking criteria and descriptors are verified internally and externally, [099] marking is verified internally and externally, and marks for all modules are verified at Boards of Examiners. [157; 158] External examiner reports all confirm that assessments are appropriate and conducted in accordance with NCD's own regulations. [64; 65; 222-224]

129 NCD's Assessment and Moderation Procedures [099, p4] refer to two types of quality assessors: internal quality assurers (IQAs) and external quality assessors (EQAs or external examiners) and outlines the respective roles. IQAs are trained through an induction to ensure they understand the role outlined in NCD's Roles and Responsibilities of Assessment Boards. [065] The team reviewed the verification process through examples of student work, which included assessment briefs as well as marking criteria, associated submissions and graded feedback of this work. [ASW] IQAs and EQAs both approve assessment briefs. The team saw evidence of marking and internal moderation (IQA sampling). IQAs are also responsible for producing sampling plans and the team saw examples of these plans [229] in which the IQA confirms a mark and gives a comment to justify it for a number of students on the module. The IQA also confirms that correct marking criteria have been used, that marking is consistent, and that feedback is appropriate. There is no standard requirement for moderation sampling at NCD explicitly stated in the academic regulations but reference to 'good practice' of a minimum sample size for external assurance of the higher of 8% or 10% is mentioned in the HE Quality Assurance: Assessment and Moderation Procedures, [099, p10] and a standard internal moderation sample of four pieces of work per assessment component is mentioned elsewhere in one programme re-validation documentation. [067] It does not seem, however, that this sampling size is used consistently [242-244] and the norm can be lower in the case of external examiner samples. This anomaly could lead assessors to take an inconsistent approach.

130 The minutes of the LSC Module Award Board [230] are unclear and do not contain sufficient detail on their own to be assured that the academic regulations are being applied and that students are able to demonstrate the extent to which they achieve the learning outcomes for their credit. The minutes report two cases of academic malpractice, but do not specify which category and no interviews had taken place. It is not clear that there are module leaders present, which would be inconsistent with the Assessment Boards Process [129] or Procedure for the Management of Assessment Boards. [064: 4b] These issues were followed up through a request for further evidence. The team was able to verify that academic integrity cases were followed up (see paragraph 135); that students are awarded credit only when they had achieved the learning outcomes is discussed under Criterion B2.

131 External examiners (EQAs) are involved in all assessments. They verify the setting of the assessment and review a sample of submissions. Their comments on the marking and moderation processes are mainly positive and this, together with the team's assessment of the above evidence, confirms that the assessments are valid and reliable. The team saw evidence that action points that result from external examiner reports are identified and

followed up appropriately. [490; 491] For example, when an external examiner raised a query regarding inconsistent practices in the sign-off of marks [243] this was addressed through standardisation activities, collaborative meetings, and training and development opportunities. [542]

132 Decisions relating to recognition of prior learning (RPL) are taken by the HE Approval Committee. The terms of reference of the HE Approval Committee [105] says its role is 'to discuss, confirm and monitor decisions on RPL' and the evidence provided examples of students who had applied for RPL in the minutes of an HE Approval Committee. [105, 161, 162] This includes one case of a student applying for 'retrospective' RPL, which raised the issue of a need to support staff further in the RPL process. [162, p5] The RPL Policy applies to students on both NCD and LSC programme but LSC [M4] staff were not aware of an RPL policy for students admitted to programmes delivered at LSC. However, to date this has not had an impact on the achievement of learning outcomes or the award of credit or qualifications as no students have been accepted onto LSC courses through the RPL route. [M4]

133 NCD engages students in the promotion of a shared understanding of academic regulations and policies and provides information on the basis on which academic judgements are made and provides them with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. The HE Continuing Students Induction slides, [122] and HE New Starters Induction [123] include an overview of assessment processes and signposts students to key regulations and policies that show that staff engage with students to ensure a shared understanding of how academic judgements are made. Presentations on policies such as the Extenuating Circumstances (Mitigation) Presentation [127] and the Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances Presentation [130] are aimed at raising awareness of regulations and policies among students. Programme handbooks [090] include an introduction to academic integrity and a useful definition, while the HE Student Handbook [121] informs students of the importance of academic integrity and provides some overarching comments on assessments and examinations, introducing students to the concept of marking, and internal and external moderation. The handbook explains that staff 'use clearly set out criteria' for marking. These criteria are included in module guides [338-341] and evidence that expectations are clearly established in terms of assessments.

134 Students at LSC are provided with a student handbook [126] which contains a statement on academic misconduct but there is less evidence of how students can gain an understanding of academic malpractice or develop their skills. The assessment team requested further evidence regarding the opportunities students had to develop an understanding of good academic practice, particularly when delivery is through LSC. The evidence included an Academic Integrity Note [265] in which it is explained that Section 9d of the Operations Manual [266] includes details of how the NCD Academic Malpractice Policy and Procedure will be applied and explained that this policy is new and will be applied from November 2022. The Operations Manual claims that any potential breaches of academic integrity or malpractice will be investigated according to NCD procedures and regulations. [046, p40]

135 NCD considers the issue of unacceptable academic practice through its Academic Integrity Policy [079] and Academic Malpractice Procedure. [080; 081] The Academic Integrity Policy [079] sets out the scope and responsibilities of students and staff for promoting high standards of academic integrity and includes a link to the QAA Academic Integrity Charter. The (revised) Academic Malpractice Procedure [080] provides details of the procedure for dealing with academic malpractice and definitions of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, and other academic malpractice and provides a tariff table of the penalties to be applied should academic malpractice be proven. The old version of the Academic

Malpractice Procedure [081] contains some useful elements that are now absent from the revised version (such as an advisory letter template informing a student of potential malpractice, and an action plan to support and educate students). While few cases of plagiarism are reported to Boards of Examiners, the team found evidence that cases of academic malpractice have been identified, through a Report from an Academic Offence Panel, [269] and that students have been invited to discuss potential academic malpractice. [267; 268] Consequently, the team is satisfied that cases of academic malpractice are being identified. The Academic Malpractice Hearing Outcome letters [271; 272] show that NCD is investigating cases and responding to them in accordance with the policies. The team concludes that NCD operationalises its processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice and implements its own regulations as outlined in Criterion B1.

136 The Examinations and Assessment Policy [058] and the Process for the Management of Assessment Boards [064] provide a broad outline of principles and responsibilities of Assessment Boards. Those involved in the operation of Assessment Boards have a clear set of responsibilities outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities at Assessment Boards. [065] The Quality Assurance and Moderation Procedure, [099] details the role and purposes of Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) and External Quality Assessors (EQAs or external examiners).

137 Each assessment component of each module is approved by the assessor, the IQA and the EQA at the time of setting. There is evidence of this in the Approval of Module Assessment Brief documentation provided. [243] The Assessor then puts forward a sample of assessed work for every assessment component to the IQA, who completes an IQA Sampling Plan. The IQA comments on the performance of individual students and the feedback provided to them. Training is provided for assessors and IQAs. [314] Sufficient examples of sampling plans were provided in the evidence to assure the assessment team that this process is solid. [an example is provided in 483] The sample of student assessed work is made available to the EQA, who completes an EQA Academic Standards Form or Report. [222; 242-244] These reports are presented to the Assessment Boards. In addition, the external examiners provide an Annual Report [223-225] that summarises their findings, provides suggestions for actions and improvements, if appropriate, and confirms academic standards. A review of the assessment sample showed that marking and moderation are carried out in accordance with the stated processes. Assessed student work usually included comments from both Assessor and IQA. The IQA reports [228; 229] show evidence of internal moderation and of the external quality assurance template and report. External examiner reports confirm that the internal marking and moderation processes are followed, though with the caveat mentioned below (paragraph 143).

138 The External Examiner Academic Standards report confirms that the external examiners are satisfied with the marking and moderation processes. [222] The external examiner annual reports [223-225] provide more detail on this process at programme level. The team notes that one of the external examiners mentions less consistency in marking, and in particular the quality of feedback to students at LSC. [224] NCD responded to this report and took action, including further development of the IQA form, and the revised IQA process has been implemented during the latest round of IQA/EQA in September/October 2022. These changes have been discussed and evidenced in the Annual Report [514 and 515] and in the response to the external examiner. [490 and 491] The minutes of HETLAC [315] provide evidence that changes to assessment and moderation processes are also made based on feedback from IQAs. An example is the creation of a new marking rubric, for use at LSC, following comments from IQAs that marking and feedback to students were using language inconsistently. This shows that the process for marking, and moderation of assessments is working effectively by those involved in the process because an issue was identified, and appropriate action taken.

139 The process at LSC is similar to that at NCD and the Operations Manual [046] outlines how marking and moderation processes should be carried out at LSC, with the added layer of moderation by an NCD assessor. Student assessments are marked by staff at LSC, a sample is moderated by staff at LSC, then by an IQA at NCD [046, p21] The IQA form asks the NCD Assessor (or moderator) to check the sample to ensure the assessment is appropriate, that it has been marked using the agreed criteria, that feedback to students is appropriate and that standards are comparable to those at NCD. The LSC Collaborative Minutes show that detailed discussions around assessment and marking take place. [047]

### **External examining**

140 NCD's procedure for external examiner appointment and management [088] is authored by the HE Quality Manager, approved by the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board and reviewed at five-year intervals or sooner if required. This document outlines the external examiner appointment process, initial requirements of an external examiner when in post, external examiner responsibilities, EQA sampling and the responsibilities of colleagues and departments in relation to the external examiner's duties. The proposal and appointment of any external examiner is underpinned by the QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise, and Section D of the NCD Academic Regulations for Foundation Degrees. [053] NCD has in place a formal process for the proposal, approval and appointment of external examiners. [088] This is conducted by the HE Approval Committee (HEAC), a subcommittee of the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB), which reports to Academic Board. Upon appointment, external examiners of foundation degree provision receive an introduction email from the HE Quality Manager which contains Section C and D of the Academic Regulations [087] and the External Examiner Handbook. [085] External examiner reports confirm a high level of support for new external examiners to undertake their role. [222] Once appointed, external examiners receive training and guidance regarding their role on the assurance of standards of modules through an induction delivered by the HE Quality Manager. If the programme is also delivered at LSC then the HE Collaborative Manager jointly delivers the induction, which enables a coordinated approach to external examining across both campuses. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] Together, the handbook [085] and a 30-minute induction presentation through Teams [086] provide external examiners with information about NCD's organisational structure and background, the role of the HEDQU, an outline of external examiner responsibilities, the Assessment Board process, and fees and expenses, and includes key documents and templates.

141 The team is assured that NCD makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, in validation and ongoing running of programmes. The team is clear that external examiners are provided with all necessary moderation documentation in a timely manner and with plentiful scripts to allow them to fully prepare and participate [223, 225, 242] and to familiarise themselves with programme materials and deadlines. Folders include student script and feedback forms as well as the IQA paperwork and a blank template which is described by one external examiner as 'really accessible and supportive.' [225] Newly appointed external examiners comment that the support provided to them is helpful. [223, 225]

142 The sample of student work, assessment feedback and internal quality assurance (IQA) form are made available to the external examiner who, after having reviewed the samples and the feedback, completes the External Quality Assurer Sample of Student Work [242, 243, 244] which is returned to the Programme Leader. Subsequently, the external examiner submits the External Examiner Academic Standards Report [222, 242, 243, 244] to the relevant assessment board which provides an overview of all student work seen, the marks of which are presented at the Board.

143 The external examiner for FdA Business and Management [224, 1/8/22] raised issues regarding the sign-off of moderated marks between LSC and NCD and a lack of evidence of moderation in some modules. While the external examiner confirmed standards, the team was concerned about the operation of marking and moderation processes, particularly at LSC, where it is also noted by the external examiner that standards of academic skills are not as high. NCD confirmed [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] that any issues raised by external examiners are addressed using a number of mechanisms between NCD and LSC through standardisation activities, collaborative meetings, programme-level meetings and training and development opportunities. Based on these activities, further developments to both the IQA form and the IQA process have been implemented during the latest round of IQA/EQA in September/October 2022. These changes have been discussed during internal quality meetings with the IQA team and Curriculum Managers, and are included in the Annual Report [514 and 515] and in the response to the external examiner. [490 and 491] Action was taken in response to the issues raised in the Collaborative Partnership Meeting minutes (Jan 2022) regarding quality of feedback on the FdA Business & Management at LSC. The Curriculum Manager for the FdA Business & Management programme undertook a number of standardisation meetings with the LSC Programme Director, between February 2021 and September 2022. These discussions focused on support available for students as part of the assessment process, as well as feedback from the IQA process with regards to feedback on assessment. This has also been incorporated into the Annual Report for 2021-22, [514 and 515] the response to the external examiner report [490 and 491] and will form part of the QEP for 2022-23. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532]

144 The external examiner is required to provide a series of written reports culminating in the External Examiner Annual Report which is a key feature of NCD's Annual Monitoring and Evaluation process. External examiner annual reports are sent to both NCD and LSC programme teams along with the official response template. The LSC response is sent to the external examiner with that of NCD. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532, Responses to the FdA Business and Management 2021/22 report 490, 491] Academic staff at NCD and LSC [M3, M4] gave clear examples of actions taken in response to external examiner recommendations, including addressing academic literacy and changing the order of assessments to ensure that appropriate academic skills are developed. The team also saw evidence of issues raised by external examiners in relation to quality of feedback [224] at LSC feeding into the Collaborative Partnership meetings [047] and the programme annual report [513] and also IQA documentation and processes being further developed.

145 Annual Programme Reports [419, Section 2b, and Section 5] evidence that external examiner feedback [419, Section 8] is considered. Actions are monitored through the quality review process, where curriculum teams are expected to report updates/progress. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532]

146 The external examiner submits an annual summative report [223,224,225, 319] at the end of the academic year, following the Summer Board. The report consolidates the Academic Standards Reports submitted to the Module Assessment Board(s) and Progression and Award Board(s) and provides an opportunity for the external examiner to give commentary on the award/programmes they have moderated with respect to teaching, learning and assessment. It notes areas of good practice and innovation and makes recommendations to enhance the quality of the learning provided to students. These reports [223-225] confirm that external examiners are in regular contact with programme teams throughout the year, [225] are provided with an opportunity to meet with students, [225] attend exam boards [223] and assessment boards (including virtually if required). [225, 242] The NCD/LSC Annual Report for Health and Social Care confirms that external examiners are consulted on any changes made to assessments. For example, it was identified that students at Level 4 have struggled with the assessments for the SIH404 Exploration of

Health Conditions module. Following feedback from students at both LSC and NCD, and agreement from the external examiner and through NCD's modification process, the assessment has been changed from an examination to a report. [515]

147 Overall, the team is satisfied of the robustness of the established external examiner process, evidenced with plentiful supporting documentation. NCD, and LSC responses ensures that issues and appropriate actions are addressed, monitored and reviewed. The team is clear that NCD 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.

### **Academic appeals and student complaints**

148 The NCD/LSC Operations Manual [154] confirms that NCD has a Complaints Policy [057] and Procedure [145] published on its website [[What are our policies and procedures? \(newcollegedurham.ac.uk\)](http://newcollegedurham.ac.uk)] for students based at NCD. The first informal stage of the process is for students to talk to the tutor to resolve the issue and then to approach the Head of School should they remain dissatisfied. Following a response by the Head of School, should the issue remain unresolved, a formal complaint can be made; after which, should the student remain dissatisfied, a student may appeal the decision by writing to the Principal. Each stage of the complaints process (informal, formal or appeal) has a timeframe of 14 calendar days to be responded to. For NCD students, a completion of procedures letter is provided to the student once the formal procedure has been exhausted and the student referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

149 Section 12 of the Complaints Policy [057] relates to external providers (LSC), and states that NCD expects all partners to follow their own complaints procedure. If an LSC student complainant has exhausted the partner complaints process, the complaint may be referred to NCD for review. The NCD Administration Manager will determine if the complaint is eligible for review and will then review the complaint under the NCD Complaints Policy. [057] The LSC student will be supplied with an investigation report and a letter of completion. At this stage, if still unsatisfied, the LSC student could apply to the OIA. The process for the OIA outlined in the Complaints Policy will then be followed. [154]

150 NCD confirmed that it has not had any formal complaints and staff told the assessment team this is because student feedback is sought, analysed and applied, and that resolution can be sought without escalation. [M3] To determine how NCD use informal complaints data, the team considered two complaint reports and NCD's response. [366-369] These were not related to the foundation degree programmes in scope of the assessment but confirmed the quality and timeliness of responses. They also provided an indicator of the student experience. Informal complaints or concerns are normally reported at school or curriculum level with actions taken to achieve early resolutions. [M3, M4] Where early resolution is not possible, the complaint follows the published Complaints Procedure. [145] At LSC, informal student complaints are monitored by the Administration Manager. Such an approach is likely to be robust enough to enable trends to be analysed and enhancements put in place. However, the team considers that as informal complaints are not formally recorded or logged there is a small risk that informal student complaints would not be considered within the formal committee structure to ensure actions are taken to resolve a complaint at the earliest opportunity.

151 The Administration Manager monitors student complaints and compliments. The team found some evidence of informal higher education student complaints collected in this way during 2019-20 and 2020-21 and how these were responded to. [366-369] Staff confirmed that small student groups mean that staff find it easy to manage student expectations. Students generally raise issues at the student groups where issues are usually

resolved. Students can raise issues with the module leader and then programme leader and then curriculum manager. College-wide issues would be addressed at the student forum, otherwise a formal letter has to be raised by the students. [M3] The team found evidence that deliberative senior-level committee HEQCS minutes [252] discuss complaints and appeals.

152 All students studying at NCD have a right of appeal against academic decisions made by an awarding body that affect their academic progress. The NCD HE Academic Appeals Policy [056] and Procedure [146] set out in the NCD/LSC Operations Manual [154] apply in relation to any request for a review of a decision of the academic body, including NCD provision delivered by a partner. The procedure identifies the grounds of an appeal, and the academic appeal process, and defines what does not constitute an academic appeal. Before initiating an academic appeal, students are advised to discuss their concerns with a relevant member of the programme team (including relevant partner curriculum staff). In addition, advice may be sought from the Students' Union. A flowchart clearly outlines the three-stage process. The HE Development and Quality Unit (HEDQU) collates the student appeal application and evidence and forwards it to the Vice Principal responsible for higher education. Within seven days of the date of the Academic Appeals Panel, the student will be informed in writing of the outcome. For students studying at a partner institution (LSC), a copy of the outcome letter will also be sent to the partner representative(s) to ensure they understand the outcome and any relevant next steps for the student. The partner will then support the student as required. [154]

153 HEDQU has oversight and takes responsibility for the management and response to academic appeals. [Academic Appeals Procedure 146, Academic Appeals Policy 056] Academic appeals are reported to the Governors annually through the NCD HE Annual Report. Six cases received in 2020-21 were resolved as part of the Stage 1 investigation process. Four cases were rejected due to insufficient evidence provided to support an academic appeal, and two cases (LSC students) were considered under mitigating circumstances. [SED p48] Six academic appeals were received this year, an increase from 2019-20 (+3). All were resolved as part of the early resolution/informal stage of the Academic Appeals procedure. [HE Annual Report 032] Academic Appeals, Academic Misconduct, Fitness to Practice and Mitigation were included in the annual report in 2020-21 for the first time in light of their ability to influence the student experience. The inclusion of a range of new data provides a transparent overview of provision. [HEQCS minutes 2021-22 252]

154 Students agreed that they have access to the HE Academic Appeals and Complaints Policies and Procedures through the College website [[Academic Appeals Policy \(newcollegedurham.ac.uk\)](https://www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk)] in programme handbooks and on the VLE. [M1, M2] LSC students [M2] provided an example of a complaint which was satisfactorily resolved. Students confirmed that they could submit complaints through a generic LSC email address, through a lecturer, through the VLE or by speaking to a member of staff.

155 The team concluded that NCD had demonstrated effective procedures are in place for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, and the procedures are fair, accessible, timely and enable enhancement. The team also concludes that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint.

## Conclusions

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

157 When designing and approving its provision, NCD carefully considers the learning objectives of the programmes to allow students to develop skills, knowledge and attributes to secure career opportunities, consistent with its strategic aims and vision. It has thorough procedures in place for course design, development and approval. There are clearly assigned responsibilities at each stage of its process and NCD has experience of applying these through the validation and revalidation of its own foundation degrees. The development and approval process involves external academic and employer engagement as well as students, and close links are maintained with the learning and support services to ensure that programmes are appropriately resourced.

158 NCD clearly articulates its strategic approach to learning and teaching. The focus in the Strategic Plan is on the creation of a skilled and highly qualified workforce that is central to NCD's strategy, and on engaging with businesses in designing innovative and high-quality curricula that enhance employability, in line with NCD's values. The team is satisfied that NCD articulates its vision of learning and teaching, communicates its vision clearly to staff and ensures that its key values, aims and principles are reflected in its provision. There are robust arrangements in place to enable students to monitor their progress and further their academic development. Students hold tutorials with a personal tutor and access to personal learning coaches to discuss their progress and can access their online profile through the VLE.

159 NCD has a clear and effective approach to gather student feedback on their experience of physical, virtual and social learning environments. Students can access learning environments that promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. NCD has effective procedures in place to ensure the learning environment meets the expectations of students. It does this by proactively monitoring the learning environment it provides for students and continuously plans for its improvement.

160 Students are provided with clear and comprehensive information on the expectations for assessment processes. Staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made through inductions and programme and module handbooks, as well as through shared descriptors. NCD's processes for marking assessments and moderating marks are clear and consistently operated by those involved. NCD operates valid and reliable processes of assessment which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. There are clear processes in place for the recognition of prior learning and for the prevention and identification of and response to academic malpractice.

161 NCD makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. 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 responses.

162 NCD has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience; these procedures are fair, accessible, and timely. The team found the approach to informal complaint resolution is likely to inform trends and enable taking enhancement actions.

163 Overall, the team conclude that NCD has demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high-quality academic experience to all students and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

164 The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.



## Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

### Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

165 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.*

166 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

167 The QAA assessment 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 as follows:

- a To determine if NCD has appropriate staff recruitment practices, the team reviewed the NCD Recruitment and Selection Policy, [175] job descriptions [010, 013, 014, 016, 017, 018] and NCD Scholarship Framework. [112]
- b To assess if NCD has made a rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff:student ratios, the review team considered the NCD Recruitment and Selection Policy, [175] job descriptions for academic and support staff, [010,013,014,016-018] staffing grids for teaching departments, [398-408] staff CVs, [103,104,498-507, 016-025] Validation minutes and documentation, [067,197, 198, 208, 254] the Guide to the Process of Validating or Re-Validating Awards, [070] Operations Manual, [154] and HE Approvals Committee minutes. [105, 306, 307, 373]
- c To determine the induction processes for all staff the team considered presentations, [106, 107, 111] induction for 2022-23 for higher education staff, [272] job description, [103] Teaching, Learning and Assessment Toolkit [433] and spoke to NCD and LSC staff. [M3, M4]
- d To assess whether learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, the team considered the NCD Strategic Plan 2021-26, [001] the HE Strategy 2021-26, [002] the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] The Teaching & Enhanced Learning Procedure and flowchart, [374, 375] teaching observation reports, [370-372, 520-522] Individual Teaching, Learning and Assessment Development Plan [109] and a demonstration of the VLE. [Demos]
- e To assess the academic and (where applicable) professional expertise of staff, the team considered job descriptions for academic and professional support staff, [010, 013, 014, 106, 017,018] departmental staffing grids, [398-408] academic staff CVs, [103,104, 498-507] CVs, biographies and job descriptions of professional support

staff [320-327, 377-384,014,016-025] and Overall NCD responses to clarification questions. [532]

- f To determine whether staff actively engage with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, the team considered staff CVs, [103,104, 498-507] teaching learning and assessment plan, CPD/Scholarship logs, [493-497] school skills needs analysis, [201,300,303,305] minutes of the HE Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee, [386] Scholarship Policy, [174] NCD HE Annual Report 2019-20, [179] HE Research and Innovation Conference, [255] and discussions with staff. [M3, M4]
- g 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 determine that staff actively engage with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered, the team reviewed the HE Research and Innovation Conference, discussion with staff, [M3, 4 & 5] best practice bulletins, [385,387,389] collaborative research projects, [387] CPD/Scholarship logs, [493-497] NCD Strategic Plan 2021-26, [001] HE Strategy 2021-26, [002] Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, [108, 178] digital demonstration to team, [demonstration] NCD Scholarship Framework [112] and HEA Fellowship support. [SED, M3,]
- h To investigate NCD's approach to giving staff opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the team reviewed the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] The Teaching & Enhanced Learning Procedure and flowchart, [374, 375] Individual Teaching, Learning and Assessment Development Plan, [109] teaching observation reports, [370-372, 520-522, 508, 509] CPD/Scholarship logs, [493-497] discussions with staff, [M3 & 4] critical reflection of practice document, [418] and staff development sessions to support HEA Fellowship applications. [419-425]
- i To assess the development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship, the team considered the NCD HE Scholarship Framework, [11] Academic Board minutes, [035] Enhanced Learning Activity Cycle 2022-23, [115] CPD Schedules, [289-293, 298] Lifelong Learning Evaluation of Training, [492] skills needs analysis [300, 301, 303, 305] induction materials, [106, 107, 111, 272] the Critical Self-Assessment and responses to clarification questions. [532]
- j To assess the expertise of staff in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental, the team reviewed a sample of assessed student work, the Assessment and Moderation Procedure, [227] Quality Assurance Sampling Report, [228] Internal Moderation of Assessment Decisions, [229] Collaborative Partnership Meeting minutes, [047] Annual Report, [514, 513] Response to external examiner report, [224] HE Annual Report 2019-20, [179] Teaching and Learning Innovation workshops [312] and feedback and assessment toolkit page, [314] and held discussions with students [M1, M2] and with staff. [M3, M4]
- k To determine the experience of curriculum development and assessment design, the team looked at staff development [190] validation guidance. [191,340]
- l To review the level of staff engagement with the activities of higher education in other organisations, the team considered The Open University Institutional Review Report, [004] the Critical Self Analysis, and discussions with staff and senior leaders. [M3, M4, M5]

## How any samples of evidence were constructed

168 A representative sample of 100 pieces of assessed student work was requested along with supporting documentation such as assessment briefs and module handbooks. A further sample of 25 assessed student work was requested after analysis of the initial submission.

## What the evidence shows

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

170 NCD's Recruitment and Selection Policy [175] includes a commitment to a fair, efficient and effective recruitment process and clearly outlines stages and procedures for recruiting new members of staff. The policy is appropriate as it clearly lays out the responsibilities for each step of the recruitment process and checks that must be undertaken, including verification of identity, right to work, relevant qualifications and DBS disclosure. The policy contains suggestions for assessment tasks for different types of positions, for example, for teaching staff, assessment of the quality of teaching style/skills through micro-teach sessions, classroom observations or lesson preparation. Job descriptions for both academic and professional support staff considered by the team contain appropriate expectations for qualifications, skills and experience for the level and nature of the post. [010, 013, 014, 016, 017, 018]

171 The Recruitment and Selection Policy [175] does not contain any detail regarding the level of qualification required for academic staff but the NCD Scholarship Framework [112] and the submission document [p35] states that academic staff who deliver on the higher education provision are required to hold appropriate qualifications for their subject specialism as well as holding or working towards a qualification at least one level higher than the level they deliver. Job descriptions [013] for academic tutors do not make any specific reference to higher education but do require a Level 6 qualification as essential and a postgraduate qualification as desirable. Staffing grids for teaching departments [398-408] evidence that staff have appropriate qualifications and expertise for the courses on which they teach with only a small number of staff not possessing qualifications higher than the level taught. Of the 12 CVs [103, 104, 498-507] reviewed across both NCD and LSC staff, all held a higher qualification than the level being taught. The CVs reviewed detailed qualifications and experience and demonstrated that the staff qualifications are in subjects appropriate to their curriculum area and that the majority of tutors have appropriate industrial expertise. This was also evidenced in the pen portraits of staff in module handbooks reviewed. [340, 341] The CVs, biographies and job descriptions of non-teaching staff [320-327, 377-384, 014, 016-025] evidence that support staff have the appropriate skills and experience for the position. The job descriptions and CVs reviewed together with the recruitment policy [175] give the team assurance that NCD had robust recruitment processes in place to ensure that staff across the different academic and non-academic roles have the appropriate skills and expertise for their role.

172 Staff profiles are considered during the validation process to ensure that staff have the expertise for the modules they will be delivering. The Guide to the Process of Validating or Re-validating Awards [070] issued to validation panel members lists the points for consideration of which the qualifications and experience of staff is one. The guidance [070] states that staffing requirements are to be considered at the Strategic Planning Approval stage and that staff CVs are required for both the internal and actual validation event. Roles and Responsibilities of Validation Panel Members [HEQMP9/4a supplied as part of the FdA Public and Community Services validation documentation 204] lists the quality, qualifications and experience of the staff as something that needs to be considered. This was evidenced in the Film and Media re-approval documentation, [067] FdA Integrative Counselling, [197] FdA

Early Childhood Studies. [208] The minutes of the revalidation event for FdSc Cyber Security [198] demonstrate robust enquiry regarding staffing levels and qualifications of tutors with subsequent conditions in the Validation Approval Report [254] regarding departmental commitment to staff development to ensure future proofing the specialist modules.

173 The Operations Manual for the partnership with LSC [154] requires LSC to provide NCD with up-to-date CVs and to ensure that the HE Approvals Committee are notified of any changes to staffing. There is evidence of robust scrutiny of CVs of staff from LSC in the minutes of the HE Approval Committee (HEAC). [306, 307] Through scrutiny of the CVs, HEAC determined that all were approved to teach on the higher education programmes. Staffing changes after a validation have to be approved by HEAC. [105] Minutes of HEAC, September 2021, [105] demonstrate the committee reviewing applications for staff changes on courses. The approval process of this committee is thorough as it considers the staff members' skill sets and CVs in relation to the proposed modules to be taught. The approval committee were presented with the rationale, CV and revised module specifications and in some cases, the external examiner had been consulted. The team concludes that the processes for ensuring appropriate skills and qualifications for staff are robust and applied consistently.

174 There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff. It is comprehensive because it starts before the employment commences with access to the online portal containing sessions on safeguarding and other information for new starters [M3] and offers substantial support in the initial months of employment, including signposting to the teaching and innovation team for lesson planning advice, IT training and systems and digital competencies. [M3] There are generic presentations [106, 107, 111] and a new enhanced induction for 2022-23 for higher education staff. [272] This includes an introduction to the HE Development and Quality Unit and higher education quality activity and quality audit cycles and an overview of regulatory bodies. For staff who do not have a teaching qualification (the job description [103] states that a teaching qualification is desirable and not essential), there is a six-month programme: Teach, Learn, Innovate; the toolkit [433] of which includes the allocation of a mentor, second marking support and a developmental observation within the first four weeks of teaching. Both LSC and NCD Staff [M3, M4] were positive about the support, giving examples of how they had been supported as tutors new to higher education and as new members of staff. These included being introduced to higher education by teaching just one module with mentor support, lesson observations undertaken by a member of the College's Management or Enhanced Learning Teams, second marking of the first batch of assessments to ensure the quality of the feedback and appropriateness of marks, and through observing delivery of other modules. Both mentors and mentees spoke enthusiastically about the support and what they had gained from the process, including building relationships. LSC staff [M4] confirmed that LSC staff undertake both the LSC and NCD inductions. [M4] These examples give the team confidence that there are measures in place to ensure that academic staff have the appropriate skills and expertise.

175 The use of reflection to inform practice and the sharing of good practice can be seen by NCD's response to teaching through the pandemic. NCD identified a challenge with the introduction of synchronous remote learning during the pandemic and the need to upskill staff with digital delivery and assessment skills. The SED [p35] states that staff were provided with training and support both individually and collectively; this was confirmed by NCD staff and through the demonstration of the VLE [Demos] Twilight CPD sessions were used to share good practice and the 'Improving Learning Stream channel' allowed staff to access instructional videos at flexible times. NCD also supports staff with funding to complete digital skills qualifications. [M3, M4] NCD's Strategic Plan 2021-26 [001] asserts 'the best use of technology' in teaching, learning and assessment and to support this and further develop these skills and pedagogy of staff, NCD has developed a Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2021-26 [108] with strategic aims to enhance staff confidence

and capability in the use of technology and to promote digital innovation. The SED [p36] states that as a result of these initiatives NCD has seen an improved use of e-assessment but acknowledges that this remains an ongoing area for development.

176 The SED [p36] states that the improving learning team identifies appropriate research on the use of digital technologies and use this research to develop frameworks for synchronous and asynchronous learning. NCD demonstrated the Technology Enhanced Learning Virtual Learning Community to the team [Demonstration] which provides a community to share good practice, facilitates discussions between tutors and provides resources to assist tutors in online delivery and assessment. The evidence is an example of how NCD provides opportunity for reflection and the sharing of good practice.

177 NCD sets out the standards and expectations in respect to teaching and assessment in the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy. [110] This policy references external standards across the further and higher education sector, including the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and also refers to the UK Quality Code and the expectations of the Office for Students in regard to the Teaching Excellence Framework. This policy clearly lays out the responsibility of teaching and assessment staff and identifies six characteristics (the NCD 6) of effective teaching, learning and assessment which include effective differentiation, teaching toolkit, learning climate, learning outcomes and learner progress, effective questioning, and assessment for learning. There is no differentiation between higher education and further education tutors. This policy was updated for the 2022-23 academic year with some changes to the observation process as detailed in the Teaching & Enhanced Learning Procedure [374] and associated flowchart. [375] The Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [110] and the revised process in the Teaching and Enhanced Learning Procedure [374, 375] apply to both higher education and further education staff.

178 The assessment team reviewed six examples of the observation process in practice in the form of a 'Learning Visit' [370, 371, 372, 522] and two trainee/mentee visits. [520, 521] These observations covered intent, implementation and impact and resulted in the identification of good practice and areas for enhancement. The observer report forms contained a section on self-reflection by the observed. The three which were fully completed demonstrated considered reflection and evaluation of the session. All six contained an action plan but this was only partially completed in three of the learning visit forms. The team also reviewed two remote learning observation reports for LSC staff [508, 509] which covered three LSC sessions. These varied in format but still provided a detailed observation with actions for development. Findings from lesson observations for new and existing staff are reported to the HE Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. [386] This report specifically covered higher education observations across both NCD and LSC and identified good practice and areas for development.

179 Appendix A of the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [110] details the observation process and the procedure for managers to 'effectively measure teaching, learning and assessment in their area. This starts with curriculum teams identifying teaching, learning and assessment targets to be developed through the curriculum area quality improvement plan (QIP). Each member of teaching staff has their own Individual Teaching, Learning and Assessment Development Plan [109] and agrees their teaching, learning and assessment targets for the coming year. This is then monitored by the member of staff and their line manager through 1:1 meetings at three points throughout the year. These individual learning plans feed into appraisals and provide the opportunity for tutors to reflect and evaluate the learning, teaching and assessment practice by identifying areas for development and actions that need to be taken. The Individual Teaching, Learning and Assessment Development Plan [109] considered by the team contained targets for development, appropriate actions and a summary of impact on

practice. The development plan feeds into appraisals and into the Head of School's skills needs analysis. The team agreed that the observation and development plan processes provide opportunities for teaching staff to engage in reflections and evaluation of their teaching, learning and assessment practices.

180 Good practice is also shared through 'Best Practice Bulletins, [385, 387, 389] the three staff development days, teaching and learning innovative leaders collecting evidence of high impact learning approaches. [311, 375, 389, 429-433] These, together with collaborative research projects, [387] peer observation and the mentor process, give staff the opportunity to draw on expertise and experience from across NCD.

181 NCD has a training and development budget, and staff identify their needs through the training analysis procedure. Staff apply using the Lifelong Learning Application Form which feed into the skills needs analysis [300, 301, 303, 305] and classifies each as desirable or essential. These are approved by the SLT, and activity is monitored by the Training and Development Manager to ensure that strategic objectives are met. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] Staff record and evaluate the impact of the training in their CPD/scholarship log and TLA plans. [493-497] Staff [M3] described a range of external CPD which they had engaged with, including external CPD industry updates; attendance at conferences; upskilling opportunities and higher qualifications (12 higher education staff are currently studying courses including four at Level 6; six at Level 7 and two at Level 8); industry days to look at current practice; regular professional CPD for areas with PSRBs and 'return to industry' days. NCD undertakes a review of training in the form of a report entitled Lifelong Learning Evaluation of Training. [492] This reviews the training provided across NCD, the impact of the training and identifies areas of development for the following academic year. This is presented to the SLT, the Lifelong Steering Group and Finance and Resource Committees [M5] and gives assurance that there is effective support to sustain and enhance scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness of teaching staff.

182 The Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy [110] is complemented by the revised Enhanced Learning Activity Cycle 2022-23. [115] This outlines CPD activities in each month which are categorised by theme, including curriculum management, enhanced learning, technology-enhanced learning and peer learning. This activity cycle contains direct reference to Ofsted preparation but also contains sessions which refer to research, research strategies and metacognition. In response to clarification, NCD stated that the sessions are differentiated for higher and further education staff with specific higher education CPD sessions.

183 CPD schedules [289 - 293] include both higher education-specific and wider College CPD sessions. These include CPD sessions on the HE Landscape, Academic Integrity, Making effective use of the library's journal systems, HE Ethics process, Mitigation and criticality in assessment. Records [289-293] demonstrate that sessions were well attended. There is also a schedule of CPD sessions covering similar higher education sessions for LSC staff. [298] Attendance at these sessions varied according to the theme and ranged from one for new staff to 10 on a session including assessment processes.

184 To support this continuous development, the SED [p36] states that a new Teaching and Enhanced Learning team has been created for the academic year 2022 into 2023 and that this will consist of a teaching and learning innovation manager and four teaching and learning innovation leaders. The job descriptions [377-380] indicate that these posts work across all provision within NCD and do not specifically target teaching within higher education. The CVs provided [381-384] indicate that the postholders do not have higher education experience. Their role is to work with and inspire teaching staff in the craft of teaching resulting in higher levels of student satisfaction, retention and achievement. Senior staff [M5] reported that they had already seen a positive impact on the culture of NCD from

their focus on research and pedagogy and enabling tutors to take responsibility for enhancing their teaching. The Teaching and Enhanced Learning team has also impacted upon staff recruitment, enabling NCD to recruit staff in areas such as engineering with excellent vocational skills but no teaching experience as the team has been able to support the transition. This academic year there are 27 new staff going through this process across NCD.

185 NCD fully supports staff to apply for HEA Fellowship and sees this as a vehicle for engagement in critical reflection on teaching practice. [418] As of October 2022, there are 17 members of staff who have achieved fellowship at different levels with plans for an additional 15 fellows by 2023. To support staff to achieve fellowship, NCD provides a series of staff development sessions with the HE scholarship manager. [419-425] The Critical Reflection of Practice document supplied [418] states that COVID impacted on the applications for fellowship as no applications were made during that time.

186 The team concludes that through the support for CPD and HE Fellowship, staff are provided with opportunities to engage with the pedagogic development of their discipline and have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.

187 In 2021-22 to further develop the academic community, NCD developed the NCD HE Scholarship Framework. [112] The Academic Board minutes June 2022 [035] state that this was in response to a condition set by The Open University in the Institution re-approval in November 2021. [004] This required NCD to set out 'systematic measures aimed at ensuring a proactive sustained higher education culture among its teaching staff.' The framework was presented to the Academic Board June 2022. [035] The framework is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education and includes reference to core training which is evidenced in the training logs provided, [289-299] and in the promotion of the Advanced HE Fellowship scheme. The framework is comprehensive in that it outlines the criteria which NCD expect staff to evidence or be actively working towards to demonstrate scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness. There are increasing requirements based on the level taught, for example, for teaching at Levels 4 and 5 there is a requirement of 'engagement in collaborative RSA with staff and students which leads to a scholarly output' whereas for those teaching at Level 6 the requirement is the dissemination of 'RSA outputs through the HE Conference, Research Seminars and E-Journal'.

188 The framework builds on the 2017 Scholarship Policy [174] and sets out the expectations of staff teaching at each level and the measures taken by NCD to support them, for example through remission for engagement in projects and funds to support membership of relevant professional bodies. All staff have a scholarship log where they record CPD undertaken and comment upon its impact. Scholarship logs [493-497] demonstrate that staff are actively engaged in scholarly activities to inform their approach to teaching, learning and assessment. NCD acknowledges that the impact of the framework has been limited so far [M3, M5] as it was only introduced at the start of the 2022-23 academic year. The Scholarship Manager has been meeting with Heads of Schools to identify projects and will present the action plans for each school at the next Academic Board. [M5]

189 LSC has its own approach to research and scholarly activity and have a Research and Innovation Centre which supports its vision and develops and implements LSC's overall research strategy. [SED, M3 & M5]

190 NCD appointed a 0.5 FTE post of HE Scholarship Manager in November 2020 to support scholarly activity across the organisation. This is a two-year fixed-term post. NCD

has provided a summary of the impact of this post [308] which includes the organisation of two research conferences in 2021 and 2022, two proposals for external funding, supporting staff in Advance HE Fellowship applications and delivering development on research ethics.

191 Research and scholarly activity are also promoted to higher education staff through the annual NCD Higher Education Research and Innovation Conference. This showcases research and scholarly activity by higher education staff and students. In the 2020-21 academic year the online conference was attended by 32 staff and 368 students and in 2021-22, 31 staff and 172 students attended the onsite conference. The conference overview [255] states that 'all schools were represented by selected students who presented case studies and displays of creative work'. NCD confirmed that the 2022 conference concentrated on showcasing student work whereas previous events have involved both staff and students.

192 There is an expectation from NCD that curriculum areas engage with an Annual School HE Enhancement Project with the possibility of access to an Enhancement Project fund which would provide each school with 50 hours' remission to support a collaborative project. The SED [p38] states that previous projects have had a successful impact with staff presenting at external conferences. NCD reports that the pandemic impacted upon research and scholarly activity. During 2019-20 five curriculum areas identified a range of projects but due to the COVID pandemic these were halted so that staff could concentrate on the move to online learning. NCD has stated that School Enhancement Projects will be re-established in the 2022-23 academic year. [Clarification questions 532]

193 The team saw evidence that staff are engaged in CPD to inform their practice and to remain current and have some level of scholarship activity through the HEA Fellowship applications and the engagement with other providers. There was more limited evidence in regard to engagement with research activities. Prior to the pandemic, a number of staff engaged in external conferences with presentations of research at the AoC College HE Research and Scholarship Conference 2020 and in 2019-20 at the Podiatry Conference, the Diabetes and Vascular Symposium and the Advanced HE Teaching & Learning Conference. Staff [M3] enthusiastically discussed projects that they had been involved with, including joint exhibitions with students both at NCD and internationally, and the Heart and Soul project which involved collaboration across different disciplines. NCD acknowledges that the pandemic has impacted on the engagement in research and scholarly activity. While at present there is limited engagement in research, partly due to the pandemic, the team has confidence from discussions in meetings [M3, M5] and the participation before the pandemic, that this will again increase with the launch of the RSA Framework and the support from senior management.

194 The HE Quality Assurance: Assessment and Moderation Procedure [227] sets out expectations in relation to assessment and provides guidance to ensure effective, transparent and fair assessment. The procedure is comprehensive and clear because it specifies expectations for the standards for feedback on students' assessed work, and expectations and responsibilities of assessors and internal quality assurers. NCD provides training for staff on assessment and feedback within the Teaching, Learning and Innovation workshops [312] and provides toolkits on feedback on assessment [314] for staff to access when required.

195 To assess NCD staff expertise in providing feedback on assessment, the team reviewed 100 pieces of assessed student work. [ASW] The team saw evidence of use of the Quality Assurance Sampling Report [228] and Internal Moderation of Assessment Decisions [229] and external moderation by the external examiner. The team found that, on the whole, the feedback was detailed, constructive and developmental with a small sample of less detailed but still constructive feedback. An issue was raised in the Collaborative Partnership



Meeting minutes [047] highlighted by the IQA process for the FdA Business & Management at LSC in 2020-21 regarding the quality and consistency of feedback on the course. This was also highlighted in the external examiners report 2021-22 [224] but was not the subject of a recommendation by the external examiner and therefore not responded to in the programme team's response. [490] It was, however, reported in the programme annual report [514] with the action to discuss with the relevant teams to improve the quality of feedback.

196 It was not possible to make a judgement regarding timeliness as not all feedback was dated. However, NCD monitors timeliness through Turnitin software. Students reported [M1, M2] that the feedback was timely and constructive across both NCD and LSC courses. The team concluded that staff have expertise in providing feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental. As NCD has identified the risk at LSC through the IQA process and are monitoring the progress it is felt that the risk is low in regard to this continuing.

197 At present, there are 63 staff teaching across the HE programmes of which 32 teach higher education only. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] Teaching contracts require staff to undertake 864 hours of delivery per academic year; however, most staff teaching higher education teach a maximum of 24 hours per week. NCD stated [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] that most staff teaching higher education teach up to a maximum of 24 hours per week over 32 weeks which is equivalent to 768 hours of delivery per year. Academic staff [M3, M4] stated that they felt supported and prepared to teach and assess across the different levels. The approach to calculating staff:student ratios is complicated by the fact that the majority of staff teach on both further and higher education courses. The student:staff ratio is 12:1. This is calculated at school and curriculum level with the Head of School being responsible for staffing within their department. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] The validation and staff approval processes discussed in detail above consider both the suitability and sufficiency of staff for modules and courses and thereby gives the team assurance that there is rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff:student ratios.

198 There is evidence of engagement with other providers of higher education through their relationship with LSC, encouragement for staff to become external examiners, (currently four are employed as external examiners) and engagement as validation panel members for other institutions. [SED p39] NCD provides guidance [191] and training [190] for staff to encourage participation on internal validation panels and to promote opportunities as external validation panel members. NCD values its relationship with The Open University [M5] and link tutors and use their engagement to inform its own practice, an example being the actions taken in response to the conditions imposed during The Open University Institutional Review, which resulted in the HE Scholarship Framework.

## **Conclusions**

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

200 The Strategic Plan 2021-26 states that NCD will 'deliver innovative and flexible teaching, learning and assessment making best use of technology and blended learning' This is supported by Strategic Aim 4 in the HE Strategy 2021-26 which aims to ensure staff are provided with the opportunity to continually develop their knowledge and skills, which will enable them to make a positive contribution to the future academic direction of their discipline.

201 These strategies are operationalised across both NCD and LSC through recruitment policies and practices which ensure that staff have the appropriate academic and professional expertise. These, together with the robust scrutiny of staffing requirements during the validation and higher education staff approval processes, ensure the expertise and level of staffing.

202 There is a wide range of evidence to demonstrate that staff engage in self-reflection of their teaching and learning practice. This is facilitated through the observation of teaching process and the individual teaching and learning plans. NCD is committed to the development of its staff and their teaching practice, and this is demonstrated through the introduction of the Teaching and Enhanced Learning team, and the HE Scholarship Manager post is a positive move to further develop the pedagogy and scholarly activity of staff.

203 There are extensive CPD opportunities available for both professional and academic staff through professional upskilling, higher qualifications and support for HEA Fellowships. The majority of staff teach across both higher and further education, but the induction process and mentoring scheme ensure that staff are prepared to teach and assess higher education.

204 Even though, at present, the engagement in research is limited there is an academic community which is fostered through sharing good practice, peer observations, mentoring, cross-curricular projects and the Higher Education Research and Innovation Conference.

205 The team therefore concludes that NCD has effective processes in place to ensure 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.

206 The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

## Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

### Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

207 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.*

208 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**

209 The QAA assessment 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 as follows:

- a To assess whether NCD 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 the College HE Strategy, [002] Estates and Facilities Strategy 2021-2026, [176] ICT Systems Development and Reporting Strategy, [177] and Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy. [178]
- b To check that induction for students studying at LSC and NCD is effective and account is taken of different students' choices and needs, the team reviewed the LSC Operations Manual, [154] Quality Monitoring Report June 2022, [133] HE Induction Programme 2022-23, [524] Induction Presentation - NCD Bus Nov22, [525] Induction Presentation - NCD HSC Nov22, [526] NCD HE Student Handbook 2022/23, [121] NCD Continuing Student Induction information, [122] HE Student Handbook and Programme Guide, [090] NCD New Starters Induction information, [123] Students' Union Presentation, [124] LSC/NCD Student Guide 2021, [126] Library induction, [113] LSC Student Induction Information, [127-130] Student Portal screenshot [529] and met with NCD students, [M1] LSC students, [M2] and LSC staff. [M4]
- c To assess how student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered, and whether NCD's approach is effective, the team considered the HE Academic and Pastoral Support Policy, [116] the Higher Education Academic Support Tutor (HEAST) Service, [117-119] NCD HE Annual Report 2019-20, [179] HEAST Annual Report, [468] teaching assistants job description, [528] resources available to students, [512] Overall NCD responses to clarification questions, [532] LSC Partnership Due Diligence Evidence, [152] survey analysis, [489] LSC Annual Reports, [514-515] minutes of internal meetings, [486] LSC on site visit reports, [487-488, 508] and met with students [M2] and staff. [M4]
- d To determine how NCD identify and support students at risk, the team considered HETLAC Mins, [413] HE Tutorial Guide, [125] M3, M4, M5, LSC Teach Assistant Job Description, [528] HEAST evidence [117-119] and spoke to staff. [M3, M4, M5]

- e To establish how NCD 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 the HE Quality Review Schedule 2020-21 V1, [135] HE Quality Review Schedule 2020-21 V6, [136] HE Quality Review Schedule 2021-22 V1, [137] HE Quality Review Schedule Re-arranged 2021-2022 V2, [138] HE QR1-3 Meeting Minutes-Childhood Studies-18.05.2022, [139] QR 1 Design, Visual, Film & Computing Mins - 19.11.20, [140] QR 2 Music\_PA Mins - 25.2.21, [141] QR3 FdA Business and Management 18.05.21, [142] Quality Review 3 Agenda V1 (New B3), [143] Quality Review Agenda Template 21\_22 reviewed, [144] Access and Participation Plan, [005] HETLAC Minutes, [413] the Annual Reports, [2020-21 032, 2019-20 179] Academic Malpractice procedure, [080] Overall NCD responses to clarification questions [532] and met with staff at NCD and LSC. [M3, M4 M5]
- f To determine if NCD provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, and how these opportunities result in students experiencing high-quality academic, employment and future career management skills, the team reviewed the Careers Education Policy, [452] FdA Business and Management programme handbook, [530] Access and Participation Plan, [005] New College Durham HEAST Job Description, [021] Staff CVs, [103-104] New College Durham Student Handbook, 2022-2023, p33, [121] FdA Childhood Studies and Personal and Professional Practice, [256] FdA Supporting Learning and Teaching Level 5 Module Guide NCD-LSC, [257] and FdSc Supporting Innovation in HSC Validation Doc. [258] The team also met with students. [M1, M2]
- g To establish how NCD provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments, the team considered the Digital Strategy covering higher education provision, [177-178] Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy, [108] Extracts from Annual reports and validation documents, [436] HEQCS Minutes 2021-2022, [252] and FdA Film and Media Validation. [144]
- h To test whether NCD's approach is guided by a commitment to equity, the team reviewed the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy January 2022, [095] student Handbook, [121] Equality Diversity and Inclusion, [451] Equality and Diversity Newsletter Autumn Term 22, [456] Equality Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report June 2022, [457] Admissions Policy [054] and Access and Participation Plan. [005]

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

210 The team considered all evidence submitted by NCD relating to this criterion. This evidence was sufficient to meet the purpose of the assessment and no further sampling was requested.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

212 NCD's HE Strategy [002] sets out a commitment to develop an innovative, responsive, and inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of the regional economy, with all programmes designed and delivered in partnership with a range of employers and key stakeholders. [002] The strategy includes key objectives to enable students to aspire, succeed and progress through providing the highest quality higher education learning opportunities in an environment which is both supportive and challenging; and to maintain

and develop accommodation and resources to support a distinctive, high-quality higher education experience. The strategy also outlines its aim to use resources and accommodation effectively to support a high-quality student experience. It does this through continued investment in facilities and resources to develop students' skills specifically aligned to the needs of the local, regional and national economy. NCD, through its Estates and Facilities Strategy 2021-26, [176] has a clear and robust ongoing programme to develop existing and new physical technical infrastructure, recreational facilities and services. This is driven by the Curriculum Strategy set out within the Strategic Plan [001] and supported by the ICT Systems Development and Technology Enhanced Learning strategies. [177, 178] The Estates and Facilities Strategy 2021-2026 [176] ensures that staff work collaboratively to align educational and training provision with the priorities of the local, regional and national economy. The team agreed that this represents a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how the organisation enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students.

213 The HE Induction Programme [524] sets out how students are to be advised about and inducted into NCD and their programme of study over the first four weeks of programme delivery in several short sessions. Inductions are contextualised for students by programme teams and there is a guide for staff outlining a proposed induction schedule/timeline. This guide supports staff with providing relevant information and resources, including assessment and regulations, and student support. A new starters induction presentation [123] encompasses essential information, including a programme overview, the assessment process, academic regulations, support services, health and wellbeing, facilities, student voice, and academic integrity.

214 Partnership managers based at NCD and LSC are responsible for the induction of students at both campuses [LSC Operations Manual 154, NCD HE Induction Programme 2022-23, 524] and are responsible for organising a joint induction programme for new students. Students at LSC undertake an induction programme [LSC Student Induction Information 127-130] informed by college processes and regulations set within the context in which they are studying. For each intake, a short student guide is provided to all students within one week of their start date. [126, M2] This includes essential information in relation to communication, the VLE, [529] attendance, academic integrity, student welfare, safeguarding and Prevent, library and learning services, Students' Union membership, FAQs in relation to fees, Student Loans Company, withdrawal processes, housing, council tax exemption, late submission and mitigation processes, and useful contacts at both NCD and LSC. LSC staff [M4] conduct face-to-face induction sessions for students, in their study groups, one week before the start of the course. These sessions introduce the programme of study as well as key information in relation to the support available to students, key contacts, how to access their VLE student portal [529] and the regulations relating to their study.

215 The HE Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Report June 2022 [133] includes strategies to improve student induction in an effort to address the increases in Fail Level and Fail Withdraw students at LSC. One example of action taken is the production of a range of bespoke presentations, which are available on the VLE. These presentations [525, 526] cover key higher education regulation, college-level, and programme-level information which is contextualised to a particular programme and signposts students to the HE Student Handbook and Programme Guide, which contain additional information for student needs. [090] All of these resources are made available to students throughout the academic year through the VLE. [121-124, M2] Staff confirmed that students also have an induction to the library [113, M4] and that library tours usually happen in the first week with talks and small group tours of the physical library. [M4]

216 NCD staff described how induction involves making students aware of good academic practice, referencing, resources, Turnitin software and levels of skills of academic

writing. Students seek support through advice and guidance and through the one-to-one student recruitment process where needs are identified. Standard induction across NCD can be amended with bespoke add-ons by the course teams and support for additional support. Mitigation and appeals information shared at induction is reiterated throughout the year, especially at assessment time. The team found this approach to induction to be thorough and effective in providing information about the course, timetable, resources, policies, support and career services. The inductions are tailored to different students' needs. This approach ensures that all students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of different students' choices and needs.

217 When asked about their induction, NCD students said they were given good advice prior to enrolment. Students confirmed that at induction they were given a pamphlet on the use of Teams, a health and safety briefing, information on career development and that the course and qualification was explained. Students confirmed that a college handbook includes the contact details of people who would be able to give them help and guidance, that they received the marking criteria on the first day, and information about how they would receive feedback. Students also confirmed that they received an induction to the library and IT. [M1] Students are therefore appropriately advised about and inducted into their study programmes in an effective way and account is taken of their different choices and needs.

218 Ongoing monitoring and review of student support at LSC takes the form of survey analysis, [489] Annual Reports, [514-515] through internal meetings, [486] and through NCD on-site visits to LSC. [487, 488, 508] Effectiveness and currency of resources are monitored through student feedback surveys, performance data and IQA reports. Resources and support mechanisms are discussed and monitored at various meetings and committees such as the internal operational and quality meetings, Collaborative Partnership meetings and Strategic Partnership meetings and as part of annual monitoring where annual reports have separate sections about the opportunities available for students to engage with student support, any improvements made and the sharing of good practice. As a result of points raised during the 2021-22 academic year, additional resources have been provided by NCD in relation to access to online learning materials, mitigation and academic study skills through the Blended Learning Consortium. For the 2022-23 academic year NCD will be trialling Online Student Surgeries, and further teaching assistants have been employed by LSC to continue to support students through their academic tutorial system. LSC has also increased the number of staff in their Registry department and extended the office opening hours to accommodate students attending evening sessions process. [152, 512, Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] Students with additional support requirements are identified by programme teaching teams and directed to the appropriate support. This support requirement is then discussed during Quality Reviews where detailed evidence is recorded and then also discussed at the HETLAC meetings. [413] Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that the monitoring of student support takes place and student needs are considered.

219 NCD used a number of data management systems leading up to May 2022 to produce a range of reports for college managers, staff and the HE Development and Quality Unit (HEDQU). The reports were discussed as part of the HE Quality Cycle to monitor programme and individual student performance. Student grades are uploaded in advance of the exam pre-boards and exam boards. This allowed the Vice Principal for Higher Education, programme teams, external examiners and representatives from HEDQU to discuss student progression, and performance, including grades and classifications. After much consultation regarding how crucial an effective data management system is in capturing key milestones in the student journey, NCD moved in May 2022 from the previous data management systems to a new data management system which records student details and enrolment information. This data management system is used to record and track attendance of all

students, to track performance through target setting and reviews of progress against targets and will be used from January 2023 to facilitate the pre-boards, module and progression boards and award boards. Senior staff confirmed that it is still too early to evaluate the effectiveness but that curriculum areas received training on the system and will utilise it when the marks come in. Exam boards have been modified in response to the new system in terms of capturing ownership of communication of data to students. [M5]

220 NCD also use software to check data compliance, checking reports to ensure data is recorded accurately between years (continuing learners and breaks in learning especially) and the use of data-checking tools provided by OfS. Destination data is tracked and recorded through the system during the academic year 2022-23 in line with Office for Student Progression Indicators. The Data Analyst (HE) supports curriculum teams to ensure data reports are appropriate for monitoring student performance accurately. [Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532]

221 Curriculum managers along with course leaders report their student progress data (continuation and attainment) to HEDQU (monthly) and at HE Quality Reviews (held four times a year). [135-144] Data is reported for all students, including those from underrepresented groups. From these meetings, good practice is shared across academic teams and interventions to address additional student support needs (when required) are actioned and dealt with in a timely manner to ensure robust strategies for improvement and gaps are identified, addressed and actions documented. Both the analysis and progress against any interventions are monitored closely against NCD KPIs. Curriculum managers report their student progression data through NCD's management information system and at HE Quality Reviews.

222 The team was satisfied that this approach provides for an effective system to monitor student performance accurately and provide timely, secure, and accurate information to satisfy staff information needs.

223 The Higher Education Academic and Pastoral Support Policy's [116] stated aim is to 'channel and direct the provision of tutorial support in ways which will maximise student retention and achievement and raise aspirations for employment or promotion and/or higher level of study'. To support the aim the policy sets out five objectives, including to support students to develop generic and transferrable skills which underpin the learning development in undergraduate study and to recognise and respond to individual needs of students. The team found the policy to be clear, coherent and comprehensive. This is because the policy outlines the entitlements of students which include access to information related to academic and pastoral support, the allocation of a personal tutor, assessment of personal support needs and referral to specialist support services where additional support needs are identified. The policy also sets out the key responsibilities of students, staff and the College in support of the policy.

224 At NCD, the HE Academic Support Tutor service (HEAST) [117, 119] was introduced in February 2017 as an academic support mechanism to raise students' confidence and resilience with a key focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in particular young, white males, as well as students with learning difficulties or mental health conditions. During the 2019-20 academic year, HEAST has managed over 640 support meetings, arranged by both staff and students. [179] HEAST is available to all students on higher education programmes and NCD aims for this provision to contribute to 'levelling the playing field' for students who start their higher education programmes while facing systemic/socio-economic barriers to success, attainment, and progression. A large majority (about 97%) of 1:1 bookings were made by students with at least one indicator of disadvantage, and/or were from groups underrepresented in higher education. [179] The HEAST Annual Report [468] outlines the use of the service by specific target groups who are

prone to experiencing disadvantage. To observe this more efficiently, additional monitoring data was added and tracked throughout the year, including the percentage of bookings from students who possessed one or more characteristics of disadvantage. [468 p5]

225 During their studies, LSC students are supported by both lecturers and teaching assistants [528] as well as academic administrators and special learning needs officers. [M2] In addition to face-to-face lectures, students receive additional assessment review sessions online where they can pose academic queries to teaching staff. [M2] Academic skills sessions are embedded across the module delivery. [M2] Additional learning support and resources are available on the VLE and student portal, including how to write an academic essay, how to avoid plagiarism and academic misconduct as well as guidance on how to conduct research and search for relevant sources to support their learning. [M2] LSC students also have access to pastoral services, including careers advice [452] and support for disabled students. [512, Overall NCD responses to clarification questions 532] LSC employ teaching assistants [528] who provide academic support in line with the HEAST role at NCD. Programme leaders at LSC promote an open-door policy where students are encouraged to discuss their concerns and issues affecting their engagement and progress on the programme. This includes one-to-one sessions before and after teaching and learning sessions to support students with additional learning needs. [515]

226 Senior staff confirmed that the level of support provided for students at LSC is comparable but different to that offered to students studying at NCD due to the different cohort body. NCD students are unprepared for work and therefore NCD offers support and guidance around careers and beyond guidance contained within the curriculum. [M5, 452] For example, at NCD, there are opportunities for business students to engage with a local incubation centre to be supported in starting businesses. Many LSC students are mature and in employment and may have been out of education for a long period of time. Therefore, they may need different support from NCD students, including personal learning coaches [090, p20] and time management advice and guidance often due to parenting or other work-related responsibilities. [M5] LSC has a dedicated Registry team that supports students in relation to pastoral care, as well as identifying when students may need to access academic support from the team of teaching assistants. [M4, 528]

227 All students are provided with access to a named HE tutor when they start their programme. Students can meet their HE tutor individually three times during the academic year as part of induction, at mid-point and at year end. The role of the HE tutor [125] is carried out by a member of the programme team and aims to support all students as they settle into their studies; monitor and discuss progress during the year by identifying challenging personal and academic targets, feedback on assessments and reflection to support areas for development including academic skills; and to offer guidance on future study or employment following completion of the programme.

228 Fortnightly meetings between key operational staff at both LSC and NCD use an 'at risk' tracker to identify students who may need more bespoke support. [M3, M4, M5] In addition to the 'at risk' tracker, the team at NCD compile various data sets to determine specific groups of students that may require additional support or more consideration within the context of the provision. [M4] For example, all continuation, achievement and withdrawal data are analysed in relation to protected characteristics and categories of underrepresented groups identified within the Access and Participation Plan [005] and then updates are discussed at HETLAC. [413] Trends are identified and discussed during collaborative meetings to determine actions to be progressed by LSC in relation to improving outcomes for specific sets of students. [M3, M4] The team was content this enables NCD to evaluate how effective the early intervention strategies are for support and allows NCD to monitor any gaps.



229 NCD staff described positive relationships with LSC staff where NCD share resources with LSC staff, for example, both external and industry reports, presentations and case studies. [M3] The team is content the arrangements outlined above ensures that LSC students, in terms of enabling student development and achievement, can get a similar and comparable experience to students at NCD, and determines that there are sufficient and effective arrangements in place at both NCD and LSC for student support.

230 NCD's approach to developing student skills to make effective use of the learning resources is set out in college-wide processes, including the ICT Systems Development and Reporting Strategy [177] which commits to 'delivering a high-quality ICT service and provide support, advice and guidance to all College stakeholders.' The strategy identifies five key aims which include to provide a responsive, flexible, and innovative service to respond to digital change and provide technologies that enhance digital skills teaching and learning. The Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy [178] articulates how NCD intends to make best use of technology and digital learning so that, from the outset of their studies, students are engaged in digital learning opportunities, in readiness for future employment.

231 Students are provided with a range of opportunities to make use of digital and virtual environments. The FdA Visual Arts validation documentation (June 2022) [436] demonstrates that students have access to traditional studio-based facilities for wet work, craft-based activities, and access to rooms for digital exploration. Foundation degree students have use of mixed media spaces that are equipped with industry-standard computers with software appropriate to the needs of teaching and learning, including Adobe Creative suite. Some rooms also include A4/A3 scanners, A3 printer/copiers, digital tablets, printing presses and sinks for mixed media working. Mixed media spaces offer the benefit of being able to cater for students wishing to engage in a range of art and design-related activities. [436] The FdA Film and Media validation document demonstrates significant investment in rooming resources providing appropriate accommodation for seminars, workshops and self-directed study. For example, the Digital Creative Suite includes a TV and radio studio with recording gallery, editing suites, Apple Mac suites with top-of-the-range design technology, an open plan design studio, and a professional meeting area for employer presentations and briefs. [436]

232 In terms of general IT facilities NCD students [M1] confirmed that the new VLE platform works better than the previous system. Students can access the VLE digital resources remotely and students expressed that it is more straightforward to use. Students confirmed they can also use this technology to make direct contact with their tutor which elicits quicker responses. NCD therefore provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments.

233 The College stated in its self-assessment that a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is based on its values of accountability, safeguarding, partnerships, inclusion, respect, and excellence (ASPIRE). This is supported by the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy [466] which is a college-wide policy committing to 'encouraging everyone to realise their full potential and provide equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of their protected characteristics.' It aims to ensure EDI is embedded in the curricula, policies and staff and student recruitment and highlights its values and principles such as accountability and respect. The policy outlines its key principles and the responsibilities of staff and students. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion statement [451] includes that EDI is driven collectively by the Principal, SLT and the Board of Governors. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Newsletter Autumn Term 2022 [456] provides an update to staff college-wide on EDI issues, events and staff development.

234 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2021/2022 [457] sets out key college-wide strategic objectives for the coming year. These include exploring the business benefit of NCD signing up to the Race Equality Charter (REC) and the monitoring of the Access and Participation Plan to ensure recommendations made by the OfS requesting variations to their 2023-24 APP are included (by the end of July 2022). Key priorities identified for higher education provision for the coming year include setting out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes. [457 p12] The report also confirms that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering group will monitor and review these objectives. Throughout 2022-23 data will be reviewed, and any emerging cross-college trends or themes will be prioritised, and opportunities explored as to ways in which NCD can further enhance the experience for staff and students. [457]

235 NCD Admissions (HE) Policy [054] also promotes transparent processes that seek to minimise barriers to applicants and ensure all applicants receive clear and accurate information that will support them in making an informed decision about their course of study. The APP states that the NCD Learning Support Policy supports an inclusive approach to learning that enables all individuals to reach their academic potential. [005 p11] The student handbook [121] informs students of NCD commitment and approach to operate and promote a fair and respectful culture through a policy of equality and diversity. The team found that based on the College's approach, it is guided by a commitment to equity, underpinned by its EDI policy. The team concluded that in the setting and monitoring of targets, NCD's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is strong and should enable a college-wide culture of equality and the rights of others.

## **Conclusions**

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

237 NCD has in place, monitors, and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students studying at NCD and LSC to develop their academic, personal, and professional potential. The team found evidence that NCD has a strategic, coherent, and integrated approach to the provision of learning environment to support achievement and progression through its HE Strategy and supporting strategies, including the Curriculum Strategy, Estates and Facilities Strategy and Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy.

238 Student inductions, through the HE Induction Programme, are comprehensive, taking place over a four-week period and contextualised by programme leaders providing information about the programme, timetable, resources, policies, support, and career services. Systems are in place that monitor student progression and performance and enable the provision of information for academic and non-academic management information needs. NCD is currently moving to a new data management system that will record and track attendance of all students, track performance through target setting and reviews of progress against targets, and from January 2023 facilitate the pre-boards, module and progression boards and award boards.

239 Ongoing monitoring and review of support services, which has led to the consideration and provision of additional resource needs, takes place through the analysis of student surveys, through internal meetings, on-site visits to LSC, analysis of performance data and IQA reports. Resources and support mechanisms are discussed and monitored at various meetings and committees and as part of annual monitoring.

240 The team was clear that NCD has mechanisms in place designed to support and develop students beyond the arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment. These include the specialist support services, such as disability and careers advice, and cover both the generic provision of services to a cohort of students and the targeted support for individual students. NCD's Higher Education and Academic and Pastoral Support Policy sets out how students' academic and personal progression will be supported. The HE Academic Support Tutor service at NCD and lecturers and teaching assistants at LSC support students pastorally and other means are in place, including the provision of a named HE Tutor and the embedding of academic skills into the curriculum to support academic progression. Careers advice and guidance is available to support professional progression.

241 NCD's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion supported by its Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy ensures EDI is embedded in the curricula, policies and staff and student recruitment and demonstrates its commitment equity.

242 The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

## Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

### Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

243 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.*

244 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**

245 The QAA assessment 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 as follows:

- a To determine whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the team considered NCD's Strategic Plan 2021/25, [001] HE Strategy 2021/25, [002] Quality Strategy, [039] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE committee structure, [034] HETLAC Minutes, [048, 413] HE Academic Standards and Quality Board Minutes, [050, 063] Quality Enhancement Plans, [033, 513, 516] Minutes of the Corporation Board, [217, 250, 251] HE Quality Activity Cycle, [038] HE Annual Reports, [032, 179] Academic Board minutes, [035, 275] HE Quality and Students Committee minutes, [036] Quality Review Board documentation, [135-144] programme annual reports, [419, 513-516] discussions with staff and senior leaders, [M3, M4, M5] Collaborative Partnership Meeting minutes, [047] LSC Internal meeting minutes, [043] and External Review of Governance. [028]
- b To establish whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the team considered the Quality Strategy, [039] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE Committee structure, [034] HETLAC Minutes, [048, 413] HE Academic Standards and Quality Board Minutes, [050, 063] Quality Enhancement Plans, [033, 513, 516] Minutes of the Corporation Board, [217, 250, 251] HE Quality Activity Cycle, [038] HE Annual Reports, [032, 179] Academic Board minutes, [035, 275] HE Quality and Students Committee minutes, [036] Quality Review Board documentation, [135-144] programme annual reports, [419, 513-516] discussions with staff and senior leaders, [M3, M4, M5] Collaborative Partnership Meeting minutes, [047] LSC Internal meeting minutes, [043] schedules of business, [030, 037] terms of reference, [048, 049, 150, 151] and Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Reports. [131-134]
- c To determine if ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team considered discussions with staff, [M3, M4, 5] Summary of External Examiners Report, [245] External Examiners report, [224] Collaborative Partnership meetings, [047] Programme Annual Report, [513] Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] Guide to the Process of validating or

revalidating awards, [070] Periodic Review Procedure, [071] programme documentation, [067,071] minutes of periodic reviews, [156, 203, 207] and the Self-Evaluation document. [SED]

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

246 The team considered all evidence submitted by NCD relating to this criterion. This evidence was sufficient to meet the purpose of the assessment and no further sampling was requested.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

248 The principles of continuous quality improvement are clearly articulated in NCD's Strategic Plan [001] with values including accountability and excellence echoed in the HE Strategy 2021-2026. [002] These are operationalised in the Quality Strategy [039] which is comprehensive in that it outlines the whole-college approach to quality enhancement for the five years leading up to 2026. It sets key objectives and strategic aims in relation to delivering outstanding teaching, learning and assessment, quality assurance systems and student engagement. The strategic aim relating to quality assurance systems is 'to ensure highly effective monitoring, support and quality assurance systems which further enhance teaching learning and assessment.' The Quality Strategy [039] details how this will be achieved, an example being in relation to Strategic Aim 1 by 'providing high quality teaching and learning based on evidence from pedagogy...'. The team saw evidence of related policies and documents to support this strategy. These included the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, [110] HE Strategy [002] and the Quality Strategy. [039]

249 The team found that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of NCD, and it has clear structures and processes to facilitate this, including the annual review process and the deliberative structures [034] from the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB) and HETLAC through to the Academic Board and HEQCS through to the Corporation (these are reviewed in more detail in Criterion A). The team examined the business schedules [030, 037] for these boards and committees and confirmed that these demonstrate the reporting, monitoring and assigning and discharging action take place throughout the academic year. Examples of this include the review of the inductions feedback leading to an action to review the length of the induction (HETLAC), [048,413] the monitoring of KPIs in the HEASQB, [050,063] and the scrutiny of the HE Annual Report at the Corporation Boards. [250]

250 The principle of critical self-reflection is clearly articulated in NCD's Academic Regulations which are comprehensive because they set out the core purpose of review to ensure programme currency and validity, external review through the use of external examiners, evaluation of student achievement and the overall student learning experience, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment practices. To support this there is a comprehensive HE Quality Activity Cycle. [038] It is comprehensive in that it covers all activities of monitoring and review to be undertaken throughout the year, including quality review, student voice, external examining, programme review and validation and periodic review. The team saw evidence of this being applied in practice with the presentation of the HE Annual Report 2020-21 [032] to the Academic Board [035] and HEQCS [036] in November 2022.

251 Monitoring of curriculum performance is conducted through annual monitoring and Quality Review meetings which are held three times a year. [135-144] Each higher education programme leader completes an annual programme report (APR). The APRs for NCD and

LSC programmes [419, 513, 514, 515, 516] provide evidence of critical reflection and require the course team to make a judgement as to how their programme meets threshold academic standards. They contained a detailed analysis of performance, student surveys, the academic experience and the effectiveness of the assessment strategy. The NCD APRs contain Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs) for the next academic year which detail the area for enhancement, actions to be taken, persons responsible and anticipated impact. However, they do not review the QEPs from the previous year. They merely confirm whether all actions have been addressed in the sign-off sheet. Senior staff confirmed [M5] that the LSC APRs [514, 515] do not include QEPs but feed into NCD programme QEPs; [513, 516] the reason for this being that they are the same courses and therefore only require one QEP.

252 The QEPs are signed off by the HE Quality Manager following monitoring throughout the year at the three Quality Review meetings. [M5] The team reviewed schedules [135-138] agendas [143, 144] and minutes [139-142] of the Quality Review meetings. The first Quality Review in November reviews the QEP from the previous year and subsequent meetings review performance against KPIs, OfS conditions of registration and a review of the QEP. The Quality Review Boards feed into the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board (HEASQB). The LSC programmes are not included in the Quality Review meetings, instead they undergo similar reviews in the Collaborative Partnership Meetings. Review of the minutes of these partnership meetings [047] found similar robust scrutiny and analysis of data as occurring in the Quality Review meetings. From examining the Quality Review meeting minutes, [139-142, 047] the team found substantial evidence of critical self-reflection throughout the year, enabling early intervention to take place if required.

253 The HE Annual Report 2020-21 [032] contains a detailed review of performance data across the whole higher education provision, including both NCD and LSC courses. This reviews performance against KPIs which were approved by the Academic Board and HEQCS. The 2019-20 report [179] refers to the partnership with LSC but does not review the performance of courses delivered at LSC due to the different starting dates. This was on the agenda for the September 2020 LSC internal meeting. [043]

254 The HE Annual Reports [032,179] also review NSS results, destination data, academic misconduct cases and appeals. The evaluation on these areas was more limited and sometimes just a presentation of the data but there had been previous analysis of the NSS as evidenced in the minutes of the Corporation Board, [250] HEQCS, [036] Academic Board, [275] HE Academic Standards and Quality Board [050] and HETLAC. [048]

255 The team saw sufficient evidence of NCD reviewing processes to assess their effectiveness and taking steps to improve. An example of this is in the Annual Report 2020-21 [032] where the communication and operational working of the relationship with LSC was reviewed and as a result a new fortnightly operational meeting was introduced. This resulted in a greater focus on KPIs in year, thereby facilitating interventions at an earlier stage. The Annual Report also reviewed NCD's progress in relation to technology-enhanced learning development and the establishment of learning communities. An area for enhancement was identified in relation to the introduction of synchronous remote learning and the development of interactive learning. In response, NCD initiated bespoke training programmes and an online learning community [demonstration by college] to improve staff confidence and competence.

256 The HE Annual Reports [032, 179] identify actions for the Quality Enhancement Plan but do not allocate responsibilities or timeframes for completion. The 2019-20 report [179] provides an update on progress against areas for enhancement identified in the previous Annual Report by confirming if the areas for enhancement have been addressed in full and the impact fully evaluated and identifies any that have not been completed. This process was amended in the 2020-21 report [032] which included a detailed update on the

areas for enhancement with the progress made at each milestone and at the end of year and the impact of the actions. The team is satisfied that there is robust monitoring of the quality enhancement plan by the Academic Board [035] and HEQCS. [036]

257 In addition to the APRs, a Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Report [131-134] is presented to HEQCS twice a year. These are detailed reports and include analysis of KPIs, reports on partnerships, updates on emerging themes and school updates. These provide assurance to the committee regarding quality and standards across both NCD and LSC courses.

258 In addition to the annual monitoring processes, there is also the Periodic Review Procedure. [071] This process provides an opportunity for course teams to critically reflect on the performance of their course over the validation period. The team found evidence of sound reflection on the performance of the course and actions taken in response to feedback in minutes of periodic reviews. [156, 203, 207]

259 Overall, the team concluded that the annual monitoring processes through APRs and periodic review process along with reporting through the deliberative structures provided effective processes for critical reflection and resulting appropriate action.

260 NCD uses expertise from outside the organisation in a number of ways throughout the student lifecycle. These include the use of external examiners to identify good practice and any areas for development. There is a clear external examining process [088] which outlines the responsibilities and procedures as detailed in Section B3. The external examiners reports are collated, and an overview is reported in the Annual Report detailing themes arising out of the reports and identifying areas of good practise and areas of enhancement. A summary of external examiners reports [245] is also shared with the SLT. Staff from both LSC and NCD [M3, M4] gave examples of actions taken in response to external examiner recommendations, including addressing academic literacy and changing the order of assessments to ensure that appropriate academic skills were developed. The team saw evidence of issues raised by external examiners in relation to quality of feedback [224] at LSC feeding into the Collaborative Partnership meetings [047] and the APR [513] and also of IQA documentation and processes being further developed. The team's review of external examiner reports, annual reviews and from the staff meetings [M3, M4] showed that this process was a valued source of external expertise.

261 There is also extensive evidence of NCD using external reference points to inform its practice. This can be seen by the reference to the UK Quality Code and the UKPSF in the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. [110] The guide to the process of validating or re-validating awards [070] and the partner and programme approval checklist indicates the requirement to include external advisers in the form of external examiners or industry experts to be on the approval panel for new courses or partnerships. The same requirement is reiterated in the Periodic Review Procedure. [071] External reference points such as Subject Benchmark Statements are used in programme documentation. [067, 071] References to engagement with employers in preparation for periodic review are also contained in the minutes for the Periodic Review of FdSc Applied Sport and Exercise Science. [156]

262 An example of using external expertise is the accreditation of the digital courses as higher technical qualifications. This requires mapping of the courses to the relevant occupational standards and extensive consultation with employers. [SED] In meetings with assessors, [M3, M4, M5] staff articulated how they use employers to inform the curriculum, including industry contacts, students who work in the industry, support to undertake annual industry updates and 'return to industry' days.

263 The team also sought evidence of the use of external expertise in the External Board Review [028] in 2022. Following the appointment of a new Head of Governance and seven new independent members, an external review of governance effectiveness was commissioned. This review was conducted by an external consultant and included a desk-based review of board documents and surveys and discussions with board members and senior staff. This review found that the governance is well managed and highly effective with no resulting actions but a couple of recommendations, including allowing more time for free debate.

264 The established partnership with The Open University offers another source of external expertise. The reviewers saw evidence of NCD taking action in response to recommendations following the Institutional Reapproval by The Open University in November 2021. The report [004] identified the engagement of staff with external reference points to inform the setting of standards and the relevance of programmes to the employment sectors they serve as a feature worthy of commendation. The positive report included just two conditions and one recommendation. One of the conditions was in relation to the development of systematic measures aimed at ensuring a proactive and sustained process for enhancing a higher education culture. There is evidence of NCD acting upon this condition by developing the HE Scholarship framework. [112] The actions in response to the conditions and recommendations were reported to the Academic Board June 2022. [035]

265 NCD makes effective use of feedback from students through participation in the deliberative committee structure, student-staff liaison committees, student surveys, and more informal methods. These are discussed in more detail in Criterion A. Students [M1, M2] provided evidence of both NCD and LSC taking their views into consideration and taking appropriate action. These ranged from heating in classrooms and issues with modules to study spaces for higher education students.

## 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 The team concluded that critical self-assessment is embedded within the HE Quality Strategy and the resulting policies and processes, and that NCD takes effective action to assess its own performance and responds to identify weaknesses and develop further its strengths. NCD has clear and robust monitoring and review processes that result in the HE Annual Report and Quality Enhancement Plan. The annual review process at both course and institution level provides evidence of critical self-assessment, identifying both weaknesses and strengths with resulting action plans.

268 There are some variations in the reports in regard to depth of review of certain aspects, for example in the HE Annual Reviews there was limited analysis of NSS results, destination data, academic misconduct cases and appeals but not sufficient to impact the confidence of the team. The team found strong evidence of self-reflection being used to enhance the student experience and this, together with the monitoring of quality enhancement plans and performance, support the conclusion that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the higher education provision.

269 External expertise is used in the design and approval of programmes as evidenced by approval documentation and minutes. External expertise is also used to inform delivery, content and assessment through the use of external examiners, and employer contacts. Meetings with students and committee minutes show clear evidence of student engagement being used to inform the curriculum and learning environment.



270 Through the annual monitoring and periodic review robust monitoring and review processes identify good practice and areas for enhancement which are actioned appropriately. NCD uses a range of external expertise to inform all aspects of the student and course lifecycle. The team saw a range of evidence of effective assessment of performance through the annual monitoring process. The quality enhancement plans and subsequent monitoring demonstrate effective responses to weaknesses. These processes also facilitate the identification of strengths which are then shared across the institution.

271 The team has seen substantial evidence of NCD being a self-critical institution that takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

272 The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

## Full Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

273 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.'

### Conclusions

274 NCD has in place effective means of critically reviewing its own performance, responding to identified weakness and developing its strengths. The main mechanism for the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision at course and institutional level is through the annual review process which is a comprehensive and rigorous process which considers performance data, student feedback and external examiner input. The outcomes are received and discussed through its higher education committees with strategic oversight and monitoring of performance against KPIs maintained at Corporation. Actions are discharged through the Quality Enhancement Plans based upon reflective analysis of the performance of programmes. To complement NCD's internal critical self-assessment, NCD has engaged with external expertise to review its own performance and the external review of its governance is an example of that. NCD also utilises its relationship with its awarding body on its other higher education provision which can positively impact its foundation degree programmes, such as the development of the HE Scholarship Framework. NCD is proactive in seeking views to improve its provision from within and outside the organisation and engages its staff and students as well as external examiners and external advisers in areas of programme design, course approval and review.

275 NCD has a cohesive academic community. Its intent is outlined in its HE Scholarship Framework which builds on its Scholarship Policy and is demonstrated through the opportunities it provides to staff to develop while delivering or supporting its higher education provision. Staff involved in the delivery and support of higher education are also involved in the design and development of curriculum. Staff and students are members of higher education-focused committees. Staff and students are effectively engaged throughout NCD's deliberative structure and are given opportunities in feeding back on their experience of the curriculum and on programme design through the course approval process. NCD encourages and supports staff development and promotes opportunities for staff to engage in pedagogical development through further qualifications and scholarship. The HE Scholarship Framework, although recent in its introduction, has the potential to strengthen the academic community through collaboration with staff and students through research scholarly activity.

276 NCD has clear and effective quality systems in place for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. Programme approval and review arrangements are robust and demonstrate the 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 Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies. There are clear processes for the development and re-validation for programmes which have been applied appropriately and where student and external input has been considered. The team considered NCD's qualifications to be well defined and set at appropriate levels. The team found that credits and qualifications are awarded in accordance with NCD's academic regulations and only awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes and academic standards have been demonstrated through appropriate assessment. Annual monitoring processes and reporting mechanisms are in place to provide ongoing monitoring of standards which are effective, as are the processes for the setting of assessments, ensuring that the standards have been set appropriately. NCD makes appropriate use of external examiners to ensure that assessments are set at the right level and ensuring comparability with the standards of similar programmes and full

and considered responses are provided to their recommendations. NCD's quality systems are guided by a framework of regulations and policies which the team considers to be clear in detailing its approach to admissions, appeals, complaints, assessments, marking, moderation and programme approval and monitoring. The team found the frameworks to be implemented fully and consistently.

277 The observations in the above paragraphs in this section, along with the conclusions for each of the DAPs criteria A-E in this report, demonstrate that NCD 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

### Initial submission and evidence 30 September 2022

New College Durham Self-Assessment  
001 College Strategic Plan 2021-26.pdf  
002 HE Strategy 2021-26 Final 8-7-21.pdf  
003 Statement of Purpose.pdf  
004 OU Institutional Reapproval Report Nov 2021.pdf  
005 NewCollegeDurham APP 2020-25.pdf  
006 NCD Strategy Schema.pdf  
007 SLT Structure.pdf  
008 Curriculum and Quality Structure.pdf  
009 Curriculum Structure.pdf  
010 Head of School - Health Lif.pdf  
011 Curriculum Manag.pdf  
012 Adv Curr Manager.pdf  
013 Lecturer in Podiatry.pdf  
014 Vice Principal - Higher Educ.pdf  
015 HEDQU Structure.pdf  
016 Head of Higher Education.pdf  
017 HE Quality Manager.pdf  
018 HE Development Manager June 2021.pdf  
019 HE Scholarship Manager.pdf  
020 HE Data Analyst.pdf  
021 HE Academic Support Tutor.pdf  
022 HE Academic Administration Co-ordinator.pdf  
023 HE Academic Administrative Officer.pdf  
024 HE Collaborative Partnership Manager.pdf  
025 Higher Education Quality Data and Enhancement Co-ordinator.pdf  
026 Committee Composition 07.09.2022 - FDAP.pdf  
027 FDAP The Corporation of New College Durham - Corporation Members 1 September 2022.pdf  
028 New College Durham External Board Review Executive Summary 5 July 2022.pdf  
029 NCD Assurance map.pdf  
030 Corporation Schedule of Business 2022-23.pdf  
031 HE KPI dashboard for 2021-22.pdf  
032 Higher Education Annual Report 2020-21.pdf  
033 College HE Quality Enhancement Plan 2021-22 MAY updates.pdf  
034 HE Committee Structure.pdf  
035 Academic Board ToR and Mins.pdf  
036 HEQCS Minutes 21-22.pdf  
037 HEQCS Schedule of Business for 2022-23.pdf  
038 HE Quality Activity Cycle.pdf  
039 Quality Strategy 2021-26.pdf  
040 Due Diligence Template for HE Strategic Partnerships.pdf  
041 College Risk Register as at 01 July 2022.pdf  
042 LSC Contract Audit Report.pdf  
043 LSC Internal meeting minutes.pdf  
044 Due Diligence Process for HE Strategic Partnerships 2021-2022.pdf  
045 Partner and Programme Approval Checklist.pdf  
046 Operations Manual Template.pdf

047 LSC Collaborative Mins 21-22.pdf  
048 HETLAC ToR and Mins.pdf  
049 HESA ToR and Mins.pdf  
05. FdA Housing and Communities PPD1 L4 Module Guide and Student Samples.pdf  
050 HE Academic Standards and Quality Board ToR and Mins.pdf  
051 College Policy Management Procedure.pdf  
052 Policy Monitoring and Control.pdf  
053 Academic Regulations 21 -22.pdf  
054 HE Admissions Policy.pdf  
055 HE Assessment Policy.pdf  
056 HE Academic Appeals Policy 2020.pdf  
057 Complaints Policy.pdf  
058 Examinations and Assessment Policy.pdf  
059 Academic Registry Policy.pdf  
06. FdA Film and Media Production L5 Specialist Practical Application 2 Module Guide and Student Samples.pdf  
060 Records Management Policy.pdf  
061 Sample of Student Transcripts.pdf  
062 HEIG ToR - July 2022.pdf  
063 HE Academic Standards and Quality Board.pdf  
064 Management of Assessment Boards.pdf  
065 Roles and Responsibilities at Assessment Boards.pdf  
066 NCD Assessment Board Schedule 2021-22.pdf  
067 FdA Film and Media Production - FDD - Revalidation Documentation - JUNE 2022.pdf  
068 FdA Film and Media Production - Internal Approval Event Report (17.02.2022)[25].pdf  
069 FdA Film and Media Production Principal Sign off.pdf  
070 Process for Validating or Revalidating Awards.pdf  
071 Periodic Review Procedure for an NCD Award.pdf  
072 HE Withdrawal Procedure.pdf  
073 HE Withdrawal Policy.pdf  
074 HE Fees Sanctions Policy.pdf  
075 Extenuating Circumstances - Procedure for the Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances\_Mitigation.pdf  
076 NCD HE Academic Calendar 2021-22 V3.pdf  
077 Major and Minor Modifications - Procedure.pdf  
078 Suspension of Studies - Procedure for the Consideration of an Application.pdf  
079 Academic Integrity Policy FINAL 1.0.pdf  
080 Academic Malpractice Procedure.pdf  
081 Academic Malpractice Procedure (old).pdf  
082 Partner IQA.EQA template.pdf  
083 OfS Evaluation Spreadsheet\_NCD\_LSC\_05 Aug 2021.pdf  
084 Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Mapping to OfS expectations.pdf  
085 External Examiner Handbook.pdf  
086 External Examiner 6.pdf  
087 EE Introduction Email.pdf  
088 External Examiner Process.pdf  
089 EE Tenure Tracker 2021-2022.pdf  
090 NCD Fd Film and Media Programme Handbook 22-24.pdf  
091 Type of questions - lines of enquiry.pdf  
092 Guidance notes for Chairs - Draft March 2021v2.pdf  
093 Example of Email to the Panel members after the event.pdf  
094 Single Equality Scheme Annual Report.pdf  
095 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy January 2022.pdf  
096 Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Form (Jan 2019).pdf  
097 HE Admissions Appeals Policy.pdf

098 HE Admissions Appeals Procedure.pdf  
 099 Assessment and Moderation Procedure.pdf  
 100 Student Feedback Overview.pdf  
 101 NCD Validation and Periodic Review Programme Schedule 2021-22.pdf  
 102 Example Staff Contracts.pdf  
 103 Staff CV - 1.pdf  
 104 Staff CV - 2.pdf  
 105 HE Approvals Committee.pdf  
 106 Staff Induction New.pdf  
 107 Virtual induction July 2021.pdf  
 108 TEL Strategy 2021-26 Final 8-7-21.pdf  
 109 TLA Development Plan.pdf  
 110 Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy.pdf  
 111 Learner Support NCD Induction Presentation.pdf  
 112 NCD Scholarship Framework June 2022.pdf  
 113 Library Induction PowerPoint 2022.pdf  
 114 QAA HE Staff Census - Sept 2022.pdf  
 115 Enhanced Learning Activity Cycle 22-23 Issue 1.pdf  
 116 HE Academic and Pastoral Support Policy.pdf  
 117 HE Student Support Introduction 2021.pdf  
 118 HEAST Booking example.pdf  
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**Additional evidence 5 -14 October**

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### **Additional Evidence submitted during the visit**

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532 Overall NCD responses to clarification questions

ASW: Assessed Student Work  
Demonstration: NCD's demonstration of IT platforms

### **Meetings**

Meeting 1: Students from NCD  
Meeting 2: Student from LSC  
Meeting 3: Academic and professional staff from NCD  
Meeting 4: Academic and professional staff from LSC  
Meeting 5: Senior staff from NCD

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