|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20**  The School Annual Report sets out summaries relating to key reports on institutional performance and provides assurance information in relation to the 2019-2020 School year. |

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# Introduction & Overview

## Principal’s Introduction

This Annual Report is an internal document prepared in order to provide the Corporation Board with an assurance overview in relation to the activities of the whole School. It aims to review the previous year, 2019-20, rather than to provide a preview of the current year. Whilst it is a comprehensive document, it does not encompass all assurance areas in full detail. For instance, members wishing to be fully informed about FE or HE academic issues should refer to the School’s Self-Assessment Report (SAR) or the Academic Board’s Annual Report.

It is axiomatic that 2019-20 has been a highly unusual year. Many of the developments planned by the School have been halted, or at least significantly delayed, by the national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Considerations relating to a Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) application were put on hold as the School’s focus shifted almost entirely to supporting students at FE and HE as well as possible in the move to remote teaching and learning. The level of staff effort and commitment was significant, and although there was a degree of student dissatisfaction on some programmes at HE, learning outcomes were delivered for all students.

The School’s initial response to COVID-19 included daily meetings of key senior and middle managers, and included a student representative. Subsequently, much effort went into preparing for the start of the 2020-21 academic year for both FE and HE operations. Early work indicated good levels of student satisfaction with the measures implemented by the School.

The School’s FE campus relocation, funded by Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) was affected by the lockdown, as a construction contract had not been signed and some cost elements increased. The building design was altered significantly, moving from concrete to steel-framed construction. Whilst this reduced the overall costs to a sum that was within budget, the re-design work introduced an element of delay, only partially mitigated by the more rapid construction of the steel-framed design. Nevertheless, the project remains on target for occupation in time for the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

The School’s other significant capital project, to refurbish remaining buildings acquired from Hartlepool Borough Council at the Church Street campus, was also affected by the impact of lockdown on the construction industry. The tender process was paused for a period of months whilst the impact of the initial lockdown, and the subsequent easing of restrictions, was assessed. The project was re-started towards the end of the year, with tenders being received early in 2020-21. The project ultimately began in late November 2020, with expected completion by May 2021.

Whilst it has always been the intention of this report to review the past year, given the continuing impact of the Government’s COVID-19 response measures it is difficult at this point to conclude other than that 2020-21 will continue to be significantly affected. The School’s management will continue to have a clear focus on maintaining the best possible standard of student experience, and the highest possible level of student outcomes, in the face of ongoing operational restrictions.

Martin Raby

26 November 2020

## Strategic Plan

*Overview*

During 2019, and following wide consultation, the Corporation Board adopted a new Strategic Plan covering the period 2024. The 5-year Plan sets out the key outcomes to be achieved, and to identify the character of the institution. It is purposefully concise – more detailed action plans and targets are given in underpinning documents and operational plans that support its delivery. In 2019-20 the decision was made that some of these key documents, such as the Academic Strategy, should be reviewed and updated. That work is ongoing in 2020-21, having been delayed by the impact of COVID-19.

By 2024 we will have built on our track record and successes. We will have more students on continuously improving courses, studying in high quality, supportive, creative environments. We will develop our curriculum through increasing product differentiation from our competitors and foster innovation. Our students’ experience with us and the quality of the destinations they move on to, in the North and elsewhere, guides what we do. Our vision is to have:

* Degree Awarding Powers and become an HEI – enabling us to become ever more responsive to the needs of students and industry, making The School more visible in direct comparison to competitor universities, and opening up new funding opportunities only available to HEIs.
* Grown, out-pacing demographic growth, at least maintaining our market share in both FE and HE student numbers as demographic growth kicks in, enabling us to secure our place in the region, re-invest in and develop our curriculum offer and become more resilient.
* A new FE Campus in the heart of Middlesbrough, a location that is more accessible to our growing catchment area – adjacent to a creative industry hub.
* Established our self as a leader in thinking and practice in the creative sector in the North and beyond – allowing us to offer current and relevant teaching and industrial experience.

The Plan is structured around six outcomes which support this vision for the School in 2024.

*Key Outcomes*

**A current, relevant curriculum offer** - The institution must keep developments in the creative industries and creative education under constant review, primarily via staff scholarly activity, assessing student demand to ensure that its offer is relevant and contemporary. This will result in:

* Development of a differentiated curriculum offer – for example building on the unique opportunities offered by the development of The Northern Studios
* An FE and HE curriculum based on developing, and ever shifting, industry and market needs - responding and anticipating to these regardless of our current offer and academic reach.

**Further enhanced our teaching and learning** - The School already has a reputation for the quality of its provision, as we develop we will ensure that we do not alter our essential character. Our actions will lead to:

* + Maintaining our outstanding position in FE for creative study.
  + Held our excellent TEF Gold position (with reference to the TEF metrics).
  + Demonstrably enhanced impact of scholarly activity on pedagogy and curriculum development.
  + The School being a sought after industrial partner, leading innovation and thinking on creative education and practice, at a national level.
  + A well-qualified staff team with the necessary teaching, specialist and leadership skills.
  + A more outward facing institution as The School develops wider relationships with other HEIs and private sector organisations – supporting and enhancing scholarly activity and research, and innovation in the curriculum.
  + The introduction, development and embedding of a post-graduate study community.
  + Collaborative and cross disciplinary working in all subject areas, to remove barriers to learning and enhance the learning experience.

**Improved Student Experience** – at both FE and HE The School already has a reputation for the quality of its student services and support; broader student experience and engagement has been developing strongly. Our actions will lead to:

* + An enhanced student union and extra-curricular activities offer.
  + Further opportunities for students to access a range of information, advice, guidance on the wider student life, general life skills and personal issues.
  + A wider recognition of and support for students with additional needs.
  + A better understanding of wellbeing through promotion and the offer of practical activities to support both staff and student wellbeing.
  + A variety of welcoming social, informal and private spaces to support a range of student needs.
  + An extended portfolio of well-managed, furnished and high quality student accommodation to meet a range of budgets and student requirements.

**Grown our student numbers** - Outpacing demographic growth and in a competitive market, our actions will result in:

* + At least retaining our market share of FE students studying in our new campus. We will have expanded the reach of our recruitment to new areas and developed our curriculum offer.
  + At least held our position in the HE market, and successfully recruited to new postgraduate programmes. We will have developed the curriculum, grown the Level 4 intake, and ensured that undergraduate programmes operate with optimal group sizes.
  + The School being ready to enter new markets once DAPs in perpetuity is achieved soon after the end of this plan period.

*We will expand and grow – but not beyond a point that would threaten our distinctive specialist character where students enjoy a personalised and supportive environment.*

**Sustained employability record** – The introduction of the Graduate Outcome Survey means we will lose current and fine-grained intelligence about graduate outcomes. Set against this context we will continue to take action which results in:

* + Closer relationships with our alumni enabling us to understand their careers and engage them with the School.
  + Deeper and wider relationships with the creative sector and the development of formal Knowledge Transfer/Exchange Partnerships.
  + Formal relationships with a wider range of prominent cultural institutions in the North.
  + A thriving alumni/early career creative community at The BIS - Whitby Street Studios; and the development of a screen industry value chain cluster around The Northern Studios.
  + Deep partnerships with the screen and immersive tech sectors through The Northern Studios development.
  + Ongoing and developing support for students to effectively prepare them for: work as a creative; freelance practice; and post graduate study.

**Viable and healthy resources with fully embedded planning systems** – we will maintain our record of good financial management and health. We will be lean and effective in all we do. We will invest in the support and development of all staff. We will take action to deliver:

* + Effective resource allocation planning and modelling systems.
  + Effective asset management and utilisation planning.
  + A staff team with robust morale, which feels supported and recognised for its achievements at personal and team level.
  + Staff with the knowledge and skills to deliver effective planning and performance management (of people and delivery).

There has been initial progress in achieving some of these objectives. There will be a more structured review of progress against key Strategic Plan targets at the 2020-21 mid-year point.

# Assurance Issues

## Finance

Income

Expenditure

*Summary Accounts 2019-2020*

We recognise that College accounts are complex and that not all readers will have the time to study the level of detail that we are required to publish. Therefore, we have prepared an ‘easy-to-follow’ summary of the key numbers from our 2019-20 accounts. This should give an appreciation of the School’s financial activity in the year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019-2020** | **2018-2019** |
|  | **£000** | **£000** |
| **Income** |  |  |
| Education and Skills Funding Agency | 2,380 | 2,729 |
| Office for Students | 350 | 332 |
| Other government grants | 464 | 440 |
| Further Education Student Fees | 72 | 98 |
| Higher Education Student Fees | 5,520 | 4,995 |
| Other income | 320 | 518 |
|  | **9,106** | **9,112** |
| **Expenditure** |  |  |
| Staff costs | 6,316 | 5,904 |
| Non-staff costs | 1,585 | 1,831 |
| Premises costs | 688 | 867 |
| Depreciation | 1,607 | 682 |
| Finance costs | 173 | 151 |
|  | **10,369** | **9,435** |
|  |  |  |
| **Operating Deficit for the year** | **-1,263** | **-323** |
|  |  |  |
| **Cash balances** | **1,050** | **498** |
| (Excluding Devco) |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **ESFA Financial Health Assessment** | **Outstanding** | **Good** |
|  |  |  |
| **Banking Covenants** | **Met** | **Met** |

The depreciation charge for 2020 includes £922k in accelerated depreciation (2019: £Nil). The accelerated depreciation is in relation to the inherited Middlesbrough Campus, which will become surplus to requirements on completion of the new build campus in 2021.

The financial health assessment for the School has improved to ‘Outstanding’ for 2020; it is forecast to be at least ‘Good’ for the foreseeable future.

## Risk & Internal Controls

*Risk Appetite and Risk Management Policy*

The School monitors key risks on a regular basis in line with the Risk Management Policy. As a matter of good practice, it approves the Risk Management Policy on an annual basis. One of the main reasons behind this is to enable the Board to discuss its appetite to taking risks. Currently the Corporation Board attitude to risk is ‘Open’, which was determined at a meeting of the Corporation Board on 7th February 2020, defined as:

*OPEN – willing to consider all delivery options and choose the one most likely to result in successful delivery whilst also providing maximum reward, this represents a measured approach to risk making informed and considered choices*

*Corporation Risk Register*

The Audit Committee reviews the risk register on a regular basis in detail and the Board discuss risk at every Board meeting to determine if the risks the School faces have altered since previous meetings.

Key risks to the College over the course of the coming months include:

* COVID-19 which is impacting all areas
* Government policy including BREXIT and HE Fees
* Construction project(s)
* Cash flow and banking covenants
* HE recruitment
* FE recruitment

Key areas of risk become standing items on the Corporation Board agenda for discussion or are covered by the Principals Report at each meeting.

*Audit Committee Annual Report – November 2020*

Under the Joint Audit Code of Practice (JACOP), there is a requirement for the audit committee to produce an annual report, which is submitted to the corporation prior to the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control being signed. The Audit Committee is responsible for providing insight to the Corporation on “the adequacy and effectiveness of the School Corporation’s assurance framework”.

The Audit Committee annual report:

* Summarises the committee’s activities relating to the financial year under review, not only those activities undertaken in-year;
* Includes the committee’s opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the School’s assurance framework of governance, risk and control and how the School has secured value for money; and
* Underpins the board’s own opinions in the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control in the annual financial statements

In line with the requirements of the Accounts Direction 2019 to 2020, English FE Colleges are required to submit the audit committee annual report to the responsible funding body. In the case of The Northern School of Art this will be a submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Some of the key causes for concern are illustrated below, together with how, as an institution, we look to provide the Audit Committee and ultimately the Corporation Board with assurance:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area of concern** | **Sources of assurance** |
| School Strategy | Corporation Board strategy days  Corporation Board performance reporting |
| Key Performance Indicators | Management accounts and financial statements  Data book reporting  Recruitment statistics  Academic standards committee reports  Principal’s report |
| Internal Controls | Internal audit reports and opinion  External audit reports and opinion |
| Financial controls and reporting | Internal audit reports  External audit reports and opinion |
| Value for money | Procurement processes  Annual budget process and use of curriculum resource model to identify anomalies |
| External and internal risks | Risk register in place which is regularly reviewed and reported upon  Principal’s report updating on the School’s operating environment and sector developments |
| Academic delivery | Self-Evaluation Report (SAR)  Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)  ESFA monitoring  Oversight by the Academic Board, including Annual Report |
| Training of Governors | Clerk to the Corporation plans:   * Induction of new Governors * Governor development programme |

*The Audit Committee’s Formal Opinion 2019-2020*

This will be determined at the Audit Committee on 13th November 2020.

The key area for discussion at this meeting will be the lack of an internal audit service this year as dealing with COVID-19, the physical closure of the School as part of the national lockdown and subsequent reopening whilst also dealing with key strategic projects has been prioritised over obtaining internal audit reassurance. Currently the School if working with Audit One to review accounts payable and procurement during November and JISC to review the cybersecurity of the ‘outside edge’ of the School once a project to implement new firewalls is completed during the Christmas break.

## Human Resources

*Turnover Rate*

The below data shows an increase in the turnover rate from 2018-2019.

Table 1: Overall staff turnover rate

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019-2020** | **2018-2019** |
| Turnover Rate | 17.5% | 6.6% |
| National Turnover Rate | 15% | 15% |

The AoC’s College Workforce Survey – Summary of Findings 2017-2018 (Published: 2019) recorded the average turnover of all staff as 18.5%.

Table 2: Turnover per month

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Month | No of Staff | Leavers | Rate (%) |
| Aug-19 | 208 | 3 | 1.44 |
| Sep-19 | 209 | 5 | 2.39 |
| Oct-19 | 209 | 2 | 0.96 |
| Nov-19 | 206 | 3 | 1.46 |
| Dec-19 | 208 | 0 | 0 |
| Jan-20 | 212 | 0 | 0 |
| Feb-20 | 213 | 0 | 0 |
| Mar-20 | 213 | 0 | 0 |
| Apr-20 | 214 | 2 | 0.93 |
| May-20 | 214 | 0 | 0 |
| Jun-20 | 214 | 2 | 0.93 |
| Jul-20 | 213 | 20 | 9.39 |
| Turnover | 17.5 | | |

Table 3: Reasons for leaving

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reason | Number |
| Health reasons | 0 |
| Resigned – Another role | 8 |
| Resigned – Personal reasons | 3 |
| Retirement | 2 |
| Compulsory Redundancy | 5 |
| Voluntary Redundancy | 14 |
| End of fixed term contract | 4 |
| Passed away | 1 |
| Total | 37 |

The turnover rate for 2019-2020 of 17.5% has increased by 10.9% compared with the previous year. The increase in turnover rate can be attributed to 2 restructures in 2019-2020. The national average for turnover is 15%, therefore, in comparison, the School is slightly above the national turnover rate but lower than the AoC’s average turnover of 18.5%.

*Sickness*

The most recent national sickness percentage was recorded by The Office for National Statistics in 2018, which was 2%. However, research has shown that the education sector is higher than the national average, standing at 2.7%. The data also shows that the average number of days absent an employee is from work due to sickness is attributed to 4.4 days. That has increased from 4.1 days in 2017. Table 3 demonstrates the School’s sickness percentage for 2019-2020 as 5.09%. This is an increase of 1.62% from 2018-2019.

Table 4: Sickness percentage

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sickness Rates** | **2019-2020** | **2018-2019** |
| Annual Rate | **5.09%** | **3.47%** |
| Long Term | 67% | 49.56% |
| Short Term | 33% | 50.44% |

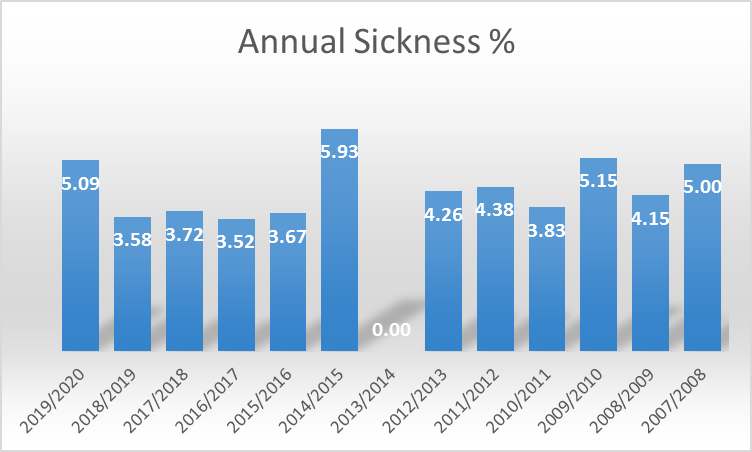
It should be noted that the increase in the School’s sickness absence percentage is broadly a consequence of the number of days’ staff were absent due to long term sickness in 2019-2020.

Table 5: Long term v. short term sickness

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Long Term v. Short Term** | **2019-2020** | **2018-2019** |
| Long Term absence | 1,349 | 732 |
| Short Term absence | 652 | 735.5 |

To put this into context, if the long term absence was roughly the same in 2019-2020 as it was in 2018-2019 the sickness absence percentage would roughly equate to 3.5%. There have been a number of staff with serious health problems, including, sadly, two members of staff losing their brave fight with cancer (in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021). All sickness is monitored and appropriate trigger meetings are organised between HR and staff if necessary.

Figure 1: Annual Sickness % for the last 12 years. [NB there is no available data for 2013-2014].



It should be noted that 34% of the School’s overall long term sickness was attributed to work related mental ill health (23% of all absence). The Health and Safety Executive (2019) states that the national average of all mental health-related illnesses is 54%. Two members of staff that contributed to this figure have now left the School through voluntary redundancy (2019-2020) and ill-health retirement (2020-2021).

The School holds mental health very strongly on the agenda with the introduction of mental health first aiders and signing the AoC’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Charter which recognises the School’s responsibility to create an environment that promotes student and staff wellbeing and proactively supports student and staff mental health.

The Wellbeing Champions (Teresa Latcham: Student Services Manager and Amy Crossland: Head of HR & Organisational Development) will continue to implement and support wellbeing within the School by raising awareness and promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health. This, in turn, will hopefully further reduce the amount of sickness attributed to mental health.

*Staff Development*

Table 6 illustrates the staff development approved for 2019-2020:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Qualification** | **Number of applications approved** |
| DBA | 1 |
| MBA | 1 |
| MFA/MSc/MA | 1 |
| PGCE/PG Cert (HE) | 4 |
| PhD | 3 |
| Misc., including conferences, et cetera | 44 |
| Online Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Prevent, Channel and Health and Safety | School-wide |
| **Total** | **54** |

In addition, 17 members of staff have achieved HEA Fellowship status with 10 staff currently working towards it.

*Mental Health First Aiders*

We currently have 13 mental health first aiders whose role is to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health issue. In the same way, as physical first aid is learnt, mental health first aid teaches volunteers how to recognise crucial warning signs of mental ill-health. Research is currently taking place with regards to mental ill-health training for all staff.

*FE Safeguarding*

In 2019-2020 all FE staff were expected to partake in the below online training.

* Safeguarding – 92% completion rate. 2-year expiry renewal.
* Prevent – 84% completion rate. 2-year expiry renewal.
* Channel – 83% completion rate. 2-year expiry renewal.
* Equality & Diversity – 92% completion rate. 3-year expiry renewal.

All FE staff are asked to attend a Safeguarding and Prevent update training session, which is delivered annually.

Selected FE academic staff are also required to complete the training noted below throughout the year:

* Genital mutilation.
* E-Safety.
* Child Sexual Exploitation.

All Safeguarding Officers are required to carry out Core Level 3 Safeguarding Children training every 2 years.

*Employee Reward and Recognition Scheme*

The employee recognition scheme was introduced in January 2016. This scheme consists of any employee having the opportunity to nominate an employee who has gone above and beyond their normal duties. The reward consists of a £15 Amazon gift voucher and a personalised ‘thank you’ letter from the nominating employee. This scheme continues to be very well utilised with 49 members of staff receiving an award in 2019-2020.

*Future Developments for 2020-2021 – HR strategy*

The 5-year HR Strategy (People First) was written in 2017-2018 and updated in September 2020. The HR strategy is focused around 8 themes. These include:

* Rewarding and Recognising Excellence
* Engagement
* Performance Management and Growth
* Talent Attraction
* Leadership and Management
* Equality and Diversity
* Safeguarding
* Health and Wellbeing

The HR department will continue to work through this strategy to motivate, grow and engage our employees.

Additional activities for 2020-2021 include:

* A full complement of policies and procedures.
* Management Toolkit training and implementation.
* Change Management.
* DAPs preparation.
* Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy & Action Plan

## Health and Safety

| **Item** | **Comment** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Date H&S policy implemented:**   **Date of next review:** | May 2020  April 2021 |
| 1. **Accident Report File (e.g. trends/remedial actions etc)** | * Statistical analysis of accidents and near misses (compare to previous year(s) to show any trends); details of actions taken to reduce number and repetition of most common / most serious accidents. * A total of 13 accident book entries [No Riddor] * This is a 56% drop in accident book entries compared to last year’s figures (low figures due to COVID-19 lockdown reducing on site activity). |
| 1. **Details/outcomes from fire drills completed and extinguisher annual service check:** | * Fire drills have been carried out at both sites. All drills satisfactory with the buildings being evacuated within five minutes. * Fire detection and firefighting equipment has still been serviced in accordance with regulations during the Covid-19 lockdown period. |
| 1. **Details of First aid provision/arrangements:** | * The School currently has 18 qualified First Aiders, 10 at Hartlepool and 8 at Middlesbrough. All receive refresher training before their current certificates expire. Some training was cancelled due to lockdown. |
| 1. **Outcomes from H&S inspections:** | * No matters arising from monthly Health & safety inspections other than general housekeeping needs to improve |
| 1. **Status of Risk Assessment process:** | * Regular monitoring to ensure existing controls are relevant, fully observed and risk assessments adapted as found necessary. * Covid-19 Risk assessment available on Moodle * Room risk register produced for both sites * All risk assessments are being reviewed with regard to Covid-19 * Risk assessments carried out for vulnerable and extremely vulnerable staff. |
| 1. **Making the Northern School of Art Covid-19 secure** | Stringent measures have been put in place so that the School can be as safe as possible from Covid-19.   * Covid-19 risk assessment available on Moodle * One-way system in buildings where possible * Non-contact infrared thermometers at entrances to all buildings * Hand sanitising stations are placed at various points around the school * Social distancing * 2m social distance markings on floors throughout the buildings. * Reducing the number of persons in any work area to comply with the 2-metre (6.5 foot) gap recommended by the Public Health Agency * Where 2 metres cannot be maintained then 1 metre plus guidelines will apply. * Signing in procedure at Reception * Sneeze guards installed in all public areas (Reception, kitchens and libraries) * Extra cleaning staff throughout the day Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use such as door handles, light switches, * ULV electric sprayers (Foggers) are used on a regular basis to disinfect large areas * Each studio/workshop has its own cleaning station * Procedure in place for suspected /confirmed cases of Covid-19. * Covid-19 advice and posters are placed around the School. |





## Equality & Diversity

The following are the key Equality and Diversity updates and data for 2019-20.

1. Equality & Diversity Statement

The Northern School of Art is committed to providing an inclusive learning and working environment that recognises the value of every individual regardless of their background or personal characteristics. It aims to do this by encouraging a culture which actively welcomes, respects, promotes and embraces diversity; employs fairness in all aspects of employment and teaching and thereby creating and sustaining a positive and supportive environment for all members of its community.

1. Equality and Diversity Committee

The Committee met termly last year to raise and address issues and drive the Equality and Diversity agenda forward within the School. An Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy has been developed to demonstrate how the School will achieve its 6 objectives, which are as follows:

**Objective 1:** To identify opportunities and barriers related to recruitment, progression and management of a diverse body of staff, and achieve greater diversity at all levels but especially senior levels of the organisation;

**Objective 2:** To tackle gender inequality, addressing particular barriers faced by females, supporting the career progression of academic, research and professional female staff, and taking action to close the gender pay gap;

**Objective 3:** To ensure that in all stages of the student lifecycle there is equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students. In particular, for those students from underrepresented groups, where there are significant gaps in access, student success, and progression to employment or further study (as identified in the School’s APP);

**Objective 4:** To ensure an environment for work and study that is inter-culturally inclusive, supportive of students and staff that encourages authenticity and upholds the dignity and respect of all;

**Objective 5:** To increase engagement in Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity best practice across the School through participation in training, learning opportunities, joint working and shared objectives; and

**Objective 6:** Celebrate and promote the diversity of our students, staff and creative community at all levels.

The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy has been agreed by the Equality & Diversity (E&D) committee and was approved by Principalship on 10th November 2020. Contained within the strategy is the School’s Equality Plan which details what actions are needed, by who and when by to ensure progress can be monitored and tracked.

The way in which the E&D report will be produced going forward will be changed as agreed with the E&D committee. The report will now also reflect on:

* The Equality Plan; and
* Celebrating Diversity.

The reason for this change is to demonstrate to the Corporation Board how the School is achieving the set objectives. As the Strategy has only recently been approved there is not sufficient time to give a meaningful update on the Action Plan, therefore, a more detailed report will be produced and issued at the Corporation Board in February 2021.

1. Student Feedback

The School maintains a conscious awareness of developing a welcoming and harmonious learning experience for all learners, staff and visitors. The 2019-20 student survey indicated 97.9% of learners agree the School feels welcoming. This is echoed across various mechanisms designed to capture the student experience including learner assemblies and forums.

1. Estates / Facilities

The Estates team is represented on the Equality & Diversity Committee by the Facilities Manager. Through the various aspects of the Estates roles of providing Health & Safety, housekeeping tours, maintenance, porterage, security and also some First Aid provision to students and staff across both the HE and FE campuses, Estates and Facilities aim to support everyone at the School on their journey either in their studies and/or carrying out their staff roles.

The School provides medical rooms, disabled toilets with hoists and facilities for those in need of additional toilet changing facilities. Some toilets have had gender/ability labels removed to provide facilities to all, regardless of how they identify themselves. Induction loops and hearing alert fire alarm systems are in place for those who may have difficulty in hearing; glow strips are present on stair nosings and where floor levels differ for those who may have impaired vision. Lifts and ramps and disabled parking spaces are also made available. This year adaptations were made to the spaces used on the Acting degree programme, including the provision of a platform lift to provide access to the stage from the dressing room, so that students of any ability can participate as fully as possible on the Acting degree programme.

1. Curriculum

Learners are encouraged to participate and work collaboratively and respect each other in line with British Values. As practicing artists and designers, staff and learners have very strong views on British values and these are shared and delivered in group discussions and meetings; learners will encounter these principles and values throughout everyday School life as they are threaded throughout the learning experience. Equality and Diversity issues are embedded very effectively in the curriculum, with the majority of learners taking part in discussion, debate, research, and projects associated with a broad range of themes from culture and society. Learners are actively encouraged to feedback upon their experiences within The School through a variety of channels including discussions with course teams/tutorials, student assemblies, surveys and in confidence where necessary with support staff such as the Student Services department. Examples of feedback include quotes such as, “The course has taught me a lot about the university process and has helped me understand how to apply, and how to live at university. It has also allowed me to explore different mediums that I would not normally explore, which I have found useful. The tutors are extremely kind and helpful, and have been very accommodating for me so far.” (survey response). This is further supported by the vast majority of learners in the School (97.9%) agreeing that they are treated fairly and with respect.

At HE all of the External Examiners provided positive responses to the criteria within the summary feedback section of their reports, therefore, confirming their satisfaction with academic standards and the quality of student work, and that each of the School’s undergraduate programmes conforms to the QAA Subject Benchmark and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications [FHEQ].

1. Student Services

Students at both FE and HE are made aware of Student Services and the support that can be provided at the earliest opportunity, from Open Days, enrolment and induction. Students who declare a disability and/or a support need at interview or enrolment are offered an opportunity to discuss their requirements so that appropriate support can be arranged as quickly as possible. We have been using a revised system this year which has been effective in ensuring that information gathered is more relevant and is shared and acted on in a timelier fashion. Students with protected characteristics are appropriately supported within their programme of study, ensuring progression and excellent achievement is attained. During the lockdown period, all students with special educational needs (SEN) were carefully monitored to ensure that access to learning was not adversely affected and appropriate support was given. Student Services continued to work closely with local organisations to ensure that students requiring more specialist support are able to access this easily, for example, CAMHS for mental health issues, Hartgables for our LGBTQ students or those transitioning. Student Services also undertakes preventative and educational work around equality and diversity issues, such as delivering workshops and arranging talks on issues such as bullying and harassment and respecting equality and diversity. The School continues to collaborate with other local post 16 providers and the Local Authority’s Headstart Project to share good practice and improve awareness and support for student wellbeing, through staff development, student workshops and dedicated resources to support emotional resilience and wellbeing.

1. The Governing Body

The Corporation Board seeks to remove any barriers that might deter people from expressing an interest in joining the Board and welcomes applications from people from all backgrounds for consideration for appointment during its search to fill vacancies, with the aim of achieving a balance of membership that reflects the diversity of the School, its activities and the region. During 2019-20 the gender balance of the membership was 64% male and 36% female which makes the School relatively well-placed amongst UK Higher Education Institutions as 36% of women are filling places on UK HEI governing bodies in England, 38% in Scotland and 30% in Northern Ireland and in Wales (Advance HE).

1. Staffing Information

*Gender - including part-time working*

The overall male/female split within the School is 33% male and 67% female, (2018-2019: 35% male and 65% female). The male/female split for Senior Managers comprises of 57% male and 43% female. In addition, the split for the entire management structure within the School equals 48% male and 52% female (2018-2019: 49% male and 51% female).

81% of Senior Managers are contracted on a full-time basis compared to 82% in 2018-2019. It is relevant to note that 19% of Senior Managers work on a part-time basis, thus aiding childcare responsibilities in some cases. In comparison, 57% of non-managers work on a part-time basis, indicating that there is still a tendency for more female non-managers to work part-time (84% female and 16% male). This is partly due to a large proportion of female catering and cleaning staff falling into the non-manager category.

*Disability*

6% of all staff declared a disability or long-term health problem (2018-2019: 9%), suggesting that the School does not see disability or long-term health issues as barriers to appointment/progression. As there is usually considerable movement in hourly paid staff and exit interviews are not completed it is difficult to determine if there are any barriers to employment but monitoring will continue.

*Ethnicity*

Staff declaring their ethnicity as BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) has remained the same at 1% (2018-2019: 1%). This category will be closely monitored by adding this to the Equality and Diversity Action plan which will be reported upon in February 2021.

*Age*

The School currently employs 8 members of staff (6 in the previous year) who work beyond the age of 65. The most significant age band within the School is between 45 and 54 (36%). As expected, fewer managers (14%) than non-managers (86%) are in the age band 16-34 as a result of managers being required to have knowledge of the professional field they manage, and this knowledge is, in most cases, gained with experience.

*Pay Equality issues*

The School adheres to published pay scales to ensure all staff doing a particular role are paid within the same band, with the same opportunity for progression via annual increments (where appropriate) within the band. Some Senior Managers are paid on a spot point salary and progression is awarded via consideration of performance reviews by their line managers. All business support staff are able to apply for a higher grade should they feel that this is warranted, via the Re-grading Procedure. This takes into account issues of internal pay parity when assessing the appropriateness of pay grading.

Academic staff also have the opportunity to increase their salary via the Contribution Based Pay Procedure. This incorporates criteria for Academic staff and Creative Technicians/Technician Demonstrators to assess whether they are eligible to move up the salary scales or move to a different salary scale for appropriate work-based contribution.

*Applications for training and development*

All staff are encouraged to undertake staff development activities by individual application for external events.

*Disciplinary and Grievance cases*

There were 0 disciplinary hearings and 0 grievance hearings in this period.

## Safeguarding

A review of the Safeguarding and Prevent procedures at The Northern School of Art has been produced following evaluation through a number of activities. This includes an internal audit of our safeguarding procedures carried out by the School’s internal Safeguarding Team and based on completion of the Local Safeguarding Children Board’s School’s Safeguarding Audit documentation. In addition, evidence has been provided from minutes and actions from the Safeguarding Committee and from student and staff feedback survey’s.

The Safeguarding Annual Report 2019/20 identifies that the School’s approach to Safeguarding and Prevent is effective, but also highlights an action plan for continuous improvement and development.

There is evidence of the School’s commitment to multi-agency working and that the school has a clear understanding of its responsibility to share information relevant to safeguarding children and guidance on information sharing for staff.

Headline data from our review highlights very positive feedback on our continued progress in keeping our students safe.

In addition to the positive feedback some areas for further development have been identified and will be applied to training updates for 20/21.

## Wellbeing

*Staff*

A Wellbeing Group was established in 2018-2019 comprising of members of staff from across the School. Our current Wellbeing Representatives are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Amy Crossland * Teresa Latcham * Michelle Peart * Catherine Wilkinson * John Noble | * Anne Russell * Liam Bradley * Michelle Coleman * Louise Fitchett * Dan Tierney |  |

‘Wellbeing Wednesdays’ whereby different events were offered to staff to aid wellbeing commenced before Christmas 2019. There was reasonable take up of the events offered but more reflection is needed with regard to how this initiative is developed. Staff and student wellbeing is a high priority for the School and, therefore, will be discussed with Principalship and planned appropriately with the Wellbeing Group.

*Students*

Social media has increased to both signpost students and supply them with information and guidance around issues of mental health and how to support their own wellbeing. A complete guide for students has been created for the School website around mental health support and wellbeing. This includes guidance on a range of common mental health difficulties with links to external support, hints and tips on various aspects of wellbeing, information on suicide prevention and supporting others, as well as contact details for crisis support and internally within the School. The pandemic necessitated a change in delivery which was managed effectively with students supported over lockdown remotely by email, phone and via Teams and this continued over the summer for certain students.

Governance Issues

The Northern School of Art is committed to demonstrating best practice in corporate governance.

*Statement of Primary Responsibilities*

The Governing Body has adopted a statement of primary responsibilities, which is published on the School’s website. This statement sets out the Governing Body’s responsibilities in respect of the proper conduct of public business, strategic planning, monitoring effectiveness and performance, finance, audit, estate management, human resource management, equality and diversity, student welfare, health and safety and the appointment of the School senior post-holders.

*Conduct of Business*

The School has a duty to conduct affairs in a responsible and transparent way, and to take into account the requirements of funding bodies, the Association of Colleges’ *Code of Good Governance for English Colleges* (2015) and the Committee of University Chairs’ (CUC) *Higher Education Code of Governance* (2014, as amended 2018) – “The CUC Code”. Both of the Codes are underpinned by the standards in public life enunciated by the Nolan Committee. Consequently, the Corporation Board seeks to discharge its functions with due regard to the 'seven principles of public life' defined by the Nolan Committee:

1. ***Selflessness***: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
2. ***Integrity***: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
3. ***Objectivity***: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
4. ***Accountability***: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
5. ***Openness***: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
6. ***Honesty***: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
7. ***Leadership***: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The School complies with the AoC’s *Code of Good Governance for English Colleges* since the Code’s inception. However, as a further education corporation (FEC) prior to 2017 the School had not considered compliance with the CUC Code. Publication of the Office for Students’ (OfS) registration requirements in February 2018 hastened the School’s decision to seek to comply fully with the CUC Code.

The CUC Code in force during 2019-20 identifies seven primary elements of governance that underpin the values and beliefs outlined in the Code:

1. The governing body is unambiguously and collectively accountable for institutional activities, taking all final decisions on matters of fundamental concern within its remit.
2. The governing body protects institutional reputation by being assured that clear regulations, policies and procedures that adhere to legislative and regulatory requirements are in place, ethical in nature, and followed.
3. The governing body ensures institutional sustainability by working with the Executive to set the institutional mission and strategy. In addition, it needs to be assured that appropriate steps are being taken to deliver them and that there are effective systems of control and risk management.
4. The governing body receives assurance that academic governance is effective by working with the Senate/Academic Board or equivalent as specified in its governing instruments.
5. The governing body works with the Executive to be assured that effective control and due diligence take place in relation to institutionally significant external activities.
6. The governing body must promote equality and diversity throughout the institution, including in relation to its own operation.

The CUC Code states that the governing body must ensure that governance structures and processes are fit for purpose by referencing them against recognised standards of good practice. The Corporation Board, acting through the Governance and Search Committee, has sought to achieve CUC Code compliance. It has previously concluded that it has achieved compliance with the Code. The CUC Code was amended in September 2020, and the Corporation Board, acting through the Governance and Search Committee, will seek to ensure continuing compliance with the new Code.

*Overall Opinion*

The Annual Governance Report for 2019-20 concludes that the School is compliant with:

1. the Association of Colleges’ *Code of Good Governance for English Colleges* (2015);
2. the Committee of University Chairs’ (CUC) *Higher Education Code of Governance* (2014, as amended 2018);
3. The College Senior Staff Remuneration Code (AoC); and
4. The Higher Education Senior Staff Remuneration Code (CUC).

# Excellent Student Experience & Curricula Offer

## Student Experience Team

The Student Experience Team (SET) has met regularly during 2019/20, either in person or online, to effectively manage the Student Experience across the School. The SET have a particular focus on teaching, learning and assessment, student support, student engagement, information technology and the development of learning resources.

The impact of the work of the SET has been reviewed in the Academic Strategies Implementation Group (ASIG) that has met three times during 2019/20. The terms of reference for this sub-committee of the Academic Board identify objectives and responsibilities that include.

* To review and evaluate activities relating to the aims of the Student Support Strategy, Student Engagement Strategy, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Scholarly Activity & Research Strategy and the Learning Resource Development Strategy.
* To support the integration of activities across strategies.
* To support the development and dissemination of activities.
* To ensure that the impact of activities across the institution are captured and recorded.

Following School closure and the move to online learning in late March the ‘normal’ Student Experience Team approach was forced to change. The potential achievement of our strategic objectives was disrupted, whilst some priorities were accelerated. The Team changed its focus to supporting and working with academic and business support colleagues to ensure the School maintained a student experience that, whilst did not have parity to our usual high standards, ensured no student was disadvantaged. The following sections provide a summary in each strategic area.

*Student Engagement*

Overall the School is making good progress engaging with the student voice at both HE and FE, although there were obvious challenges throughout the lockdown period and many activities were postponed or cancelled. In the early part of 2019/20 the Students’ Union Committee further developed through a successful election period including increased and newly established roles. A regular weekly bar night along with events throughout the early part of the year resulted in successful embedding of the bar and social space. Planning permission was also in progress to reopen the former art café kitchen at Church Square to use as an SU operated coffee shop for 2020/21.

Unfortunately, due to the closure of the school buildings and the inability to meet physically with students, key areas of the student engagement strategy were put on hold in the second half of the academic year. The main activities which were affected were the running of the spring Student Assemblies, the Academic Forum and Programme / Course Boards. Early success in the development of monthly FE Representative Meetings was also put on hold. The Student Liaison Officer was meeting regularly with FE Student Representatives in the early part of the year to discuss the approach the School takes to address key issues within the education sector for example Prevent, Mental Health and Equality & Diversity. The hope is these meetings will continue in 2020/21.

‘Closing the student feedback loop effectively’ was a key objective for 2019/20 and a structure and plan of how to effectively feedback was planned. Due to changes in circumstances ‘You said, we did’ feedback was put together but has not been sent out to students and academic staff at HE or FE. These open letters from the Vice Principal (Student Experience) may be sent out in due course but due to the timing of lockdown, they were put on hold whilst other priorities were dealt with in an effort to not dilute the important messages that are being sent out in regard to the school updates on covid-19. Meetings have already taken place to discuss refinement of the student feedback procedure for 20/21 including how the student voice is reported to Principalship and Governors.

Key priorities moving forward for 2020-21 include creating an effective and engaging digital union for use during social distancing measures and beyond. Work has already started with a digital Fresher’s Week; early evaluation suggests attracting student engagement to digital activities will be challenging. The Student Experience Team consider improving student engagement in this respect will have a positive impact on students’ wellbeing especially for those working online and / or self-isolating.

*Learning Resource Development*

Significant progress has been made regarding staff’s digital literacy and capabilities during 2019/20. Staff had no other choice but to work remotely, quickly get up to speed with new software and learn about new ways of working and communicating with each other and with students. The effort, resilience and commitment of all academic staff has been recognised in Academic Board and FE Academic Board meetings. Kat McDonagh, our Learning Technologist, has been a great support to staff throughout this whole period and has worked tirelessly to help facilitate as consistent an experience as possible for students. In a short period from late February to October the School has moved from having some effective use of learning technology by a limited number of staff, to digital and blended learning opportunities embedded across the School.

In learning developer and learning technology networks, there are many conversations about the distinction between ‘emergency remote teaching’ (in response to the pandemic) and ‘authentic online learning’ (what people in learning developer/learning technology roles would normally help facilitate). The former was our approach in response to the pandemic during lockdown, although this does not mean that there has been a lack of ‘authentic online learning’ as part of this. However, for our learning, teaching and assessment strategy to be successful in the future our approach will require investment in learning technology and staff and student development opportunities. In this respect the School has made some capital investment in Learning Technology equipment at the start of 2020-21 and secured funding from the College Collaboration Fund (CCF), allowing us to employ 2 new Digital Coaches and a Digital Content Creator.

Collection and resource development to support Postgraduate provision has included a significant library investment. This investment was part of the five-year plan for the development of the library service as a whole. For Postgraduate provision there is a focus on developing the collection around arts research methodologies to ensure there are plenty of resources at an appropriate level to support Level 7 study. In addition, investing in the postgraduate programmes will also benefit most undergraduate programmes and staff scholarly activity by providing new journal databases.

The library closure during lockdown did have an impact on student engagement with physical resources. Opportunities for one to one virtual support with online resources were offered to HE students throughout April and May with no take-up, although Moodle logs do show that many students continued accessing the library’s Moodle pages and online resources during this period.

*Information Technology*

The pandemic put a significant strain on our Information Technology infrastructure. Moving our entire provision and business support services online during lockdown created challenges for all School staff. During this period the IT Team held weekly meetings, set up staff VPNs at short notice, set-up and delivered staff PCs to allow home working and ordered and set up new laptops for student use. The ability of our IT staff to respond in a flexible, co-operative and patient manner was exemplary. The ability of our IT infrastructure to be flexible and meet the demands of online learning was tested and did highlight some limitations. As we plan to move into the new build in the centre of Middlesbrough a full evaluation is required to consider how we can best utilise equipment budgets to address the future needs of a more blended learning approach and, where required, off-site access.

There has been a rise across the sector of ransomware attacks on schools and colleges. The School is currently working with JISC to arrange internal and external penetration testing work. This is expected to commence once our new firewalls are installed in the early winter period; initial discussion with JISC highlighted preliminary actions and checks to ensure effective security are first required.

Digital Poverty has been a concern for the School during 2019/20. With a major move to online and blended learning IT staff have been working with student services to ensure those students without access to good quality IT, including broadband access, are supported. Student services has accessed government bursary money to buy and provide laptops for the most underprivileged at FE. In addition, the School is in the process of increasing the broadband speed and capability to our Crown Halls accommodation. The School is also assessing the digital capabilities of our students through analysis work as part of the College Collaboration Fund project. This will identify and target potential need: for example, learners with SEND or adult learners. At HE the School has set up a laptop scheme that allows students to elect to use their bursary money to buy laptops at reduced cost. This is intended to address barriers to learning for students from areas of depravation, and supports the School in progress towards achieving our Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets.

*Student Support*

At the beginning of the year the key priorities highlighted for development were around mental health and wellbeing and learning support (mainly at FE). Subsequently 2019-20 proved to be a challenging year for the student support team. Throughout the pandemic the team responded incredibly well to the challenge of keeping our students safe.

Due to the pandemic the School had to adapt ways of supporting our student’s mental health and wellbeing, evaluate additional resources and ways of delivery and increase our online presence; this has been helpful in increasing our ‘toolkit’, moving students to being more independent and resilient. The team will consider continuing to incorporate this within future delivery. The Team was not, however, able to deliver the usual range of workshops during this time.

In terms of transition, the team developed more information and resources to issue to new students to better prepare them for living independently. A survey was also issued to capture students’ thoughts about ‘moving in’ in order to identify and evaluate improvements we could make in future. The team is also active on the ‘Starting at The Northern School of Art’ Facebook page.

The hardship application process has been reviewed to ensure a more transparent assessment and approval process. However, we have been unable to progress work around workshops/additional resources for money management.

Developments and strengths during the year have been identified as:

* Positive discussions with Insight regarding complementary mental health support
* Active social media presence
* Up to date and easier to access information for students
* Revised Counselling Policy and Procedure

In preparation for 2020-21 the Student Services staffing has been reviewed and updated. This includes appointment of a new SEND Co-ordinator and a Specialist Learning Support Advisor. In addition, some student services staff roles have been revised to simplify the staffing structure. A range of roles has been reviewed and will result in 5 Student Support Advisers being in post across the School. Whilst this does not represent an increase in staffing, it does provide opportunity for more flexible use of staff, and supports the objective of improving preventative support work around mental health wellbeing and keeping safe. Key priorities for the newly formed team include:

* Trialdeliveryof workshops
* Collate and act upon feedback from surveys – mental health, counselling and learning support
* Increase preventative and educational work around mental health
* Continue to develop alternative methods to support students

*Learning, Teaching and Assessment*

At FE all student grades in the summer reverted to the ‘teacher predicted’ grade; this included all A Levels and GCSE qualifications. There are still five adult students yet to complete a part time NCFE qualification; these students will continue their studies during 2020-21 having been transferred to this academic year.  The final achievement rates for FE are reported in the Self Assessment Report (SAR) and identify an overall achievement rate of 94.4%. This represents an outstanding achievement including a 1.4% increase on the previous year’s rate and compares very favourably to the national average of 86.7%. However, it should be noted we are not clear what contribution the move to teacher predicted grants had on this success. This was identified at the FE Academic Committee, although, the approach and attitude of academic staff was highly praised. Staff hard work ensured students stayed engaged digitally, had focus and were supported towards their future progression goals. This is evidenced in positive student feedback received at the end of the 2019-20 academic year and will be reported more fully in the School Self-Assessment Report.

The most significant change to delivery for the next academic year is the introduction of a new qualification at level 3. The UAL Extended Diploma in Art and Design is no longer a funded qualification and so the School has changed delivery to the UAL Extended Diploma in Creative Practice. The change to delivery of a new qualification, with the increased pressures of the pandemic, resulted in a challenging start to the year for academic staff. Early signs are that they are responding positively to the challenge, supported by the Head of Further Education and FE Quality Manager.

At HE staff generally adapted well to working online; given the challenges, the academic results were excellent with only a very small minority of students not achieving. The HE academic performance will be reported in the Academic Board Annual Report.

More broadly the Student Experience Team continued to support the academic standards of the School through peer observation, standardisation, contribution at programme validations and staff mentoring. They have also worked to develop the higher education curriculum to support the achievement of the School’s academic vision and to raise standards in access, participation and achievement of students with underrepresented characteristics. Through a number of forums the team has explored our current curriculum approach with academic staff. This included meetings to discuss equality & diversity within the curriculum, in particular exploring how each programme area promotes inclusivity, student mental health, wellbeing and how underrepresented students engage. Team members have researched socio-economic inequality within arts education and the School. This research identified the benefits of more central focus on the character development of our learners. This approach will form part of future discussions regarding the updating and development of the School’s academic strategy.

## Further Education Curriculum Development

*A-level update*

In 2017/18 The School made extensive investigations into the underperformance of the A Level provision, resulting in key changes. These included offering the option to study 3 AS levels as opposed to a mandatory 4 electives and revising the entry criteria to be in line with local competitors for the intake of 2018 learners. This change led to a 13% improvement of AS high grades in 2018/19. However, in that year the A2 provision continued to underperform with a number of poor grades and fails mainly in the subjects of Sociology and Psychology. In 2018/19 The School made further changes to the A Level provision for the 2019/20 intake of learners. These included, removing the Sociology and Psychology subjects from the curriculum provision, and altering the course leadership and structure of delivery to improve the learner experience. 2019/20 was the final teach out of learners completing the subjects of Sociology and Psychology subjects. All learners successfully passed these A levels with good grades. Despite the government direction on awarding grades for A levels in 2020, these learners had performed relatively well during their AS level in 2019 as outlined above.

The A level programme is now more focused upon offering a wider experience of creative disciplines through two pathways (a Design pathway, and a Visual Arts pathway), with an optional academic subject for learners to choose (English, or Art & Design History). These changes required an overhaul of how the curriculum was previously delivered and required staff to work in closer alignment to feed into the pathways with their specialist skills. Through the autumn term of 2019/20 there were teething issues which were addressed through a series of meetings with teaching staff and a bespoke workshop from an education consultant. Due to lockdown the overall review of the year is difficult to gauge accurately, though learners continuing into the second year of their studies are content. The induction period for the 2020/21 intake of learners has been much smoother.

*Future Provision*

*FE Acting*

The School has considered offering acting courses at Level 3 for some time. In 2018/19 work was completed by the Head of Further Education, Programme Leader for Acting in Hartlepool, and Recruitment Manager, focusing on local facilities such as performance space. Plans to bring an Acting course at FE level were pushed back to the 2021 intake of learners due to these constraints. Through the FE relocation project further consideration has been given to the resourcing of the Acting course and the challenges within budget constraints and space planning. These concerns were raised at the Curriculum Development Group, leading to further discussions at Principalship meetings regarding the feasibility and overall student experience. Through these discussions there were challenges and opportunities raised. The School is investigating the cost implications of including a sprung floor into the identified potential acting space in the new build plans. The space identified is adjacent to the planned TV studio, providing an opportunity for acting and rehearsal space next to recording facilities. The School identified this could be a very good opportunity for cross course collaboration. Under advice and guidance of the Faculty Leader who oversees HE Acting, it was identified performance space would not be an issue for onsite delivery, and there are opportunities within the locality which the school can explore for annual performances. The School has taken the pragmatic approach of further investigating bringing the FE Acting programme online in 2022/23, due to staffing resources, achieving a viable specification within the new build, and also allowing time to migrate into a new campus and identify how we operate.

*Consideration of Level 3 UAL Extended Diploma Creative Practice Delivery*

Overall the existing FE provision has not changed much over recent years other than the introduction of the Film & TV programme in 2019, and the reconfiguration of the A level programme which began in 2018 with the removal of underperforming subjects of Psychology and Sociology and a newly introduced ‘pathway’ programme in 2019. It should be noted, whilst the overall programmes the School offers have not changed radically, the curriculum specifications underpinning these programmes has changed significantly including the transfer from Pearsons BTEC specifications to the UAL Awarding Body specifications in 2017. Furthermore the available UAL awarding body curriculum has also changed for 2020 delivery due to funding regulations. Throughout these changes, each course across the School has reviewed the purpose and content of their curriculum by defining their own course ‘intent’ and then planning how they achieve this through learning opportunities.

As the School currently runs all UAL Level 3 Extended Diploma programmes under the same curriculum specifications with the freedom to specialise in subject areas there is versatility to the way the School can deliver the level 3 programmes. Traditionally the School has always offered specialist opportunities, however other institutions (such as Hereford College of Arts) offer all level 3 vocational first year students the opportunity to study a ‘generic’ year to gain multiple skillsets, prior to specialising a pathway in the second year. There are advantages and challenges to each method of delivery which have been discussed during the Curriculum Development Group and also the FE academic committee. There is work to be done to consider the feasibility of delivering such a level 3 model, and the advantages / challenges these changes would bring in more depth.

## FE Provision

*Self-Assessment Report (SAR)*

The School’s FE Academic Committee considered the 2019-2020 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and recommended its approval to the Corporation Board, which subsequently received and approved the SAR and Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP). Extracts from the SAR are presented in this annual report. To note, the 2019-2020 SAR utilised typical examples of performance and practice from the previous academic year due to Covid-19 and lockdown.

*Overall School Grading*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Current Year*** | ***Previous Year*** | ***Previous Years Grades*** | | | |
|  | ***2019-20***  ***Based heavily on 2018-19 performance*** | ***2018-19*** | *Previous Judgements (note, these are not direct comparisons to the revised framework but these judgements give an historic indication of previous performance)* | *2017-18* | *2016-17* | *2015-16* |
| **Overall Effectiveness:** | ***1*** | ***1*** | **Overall Effectiveness:** | *1* | *1* | *1* |
| Quality of Education | ***1*** | ***1*** | Outcomes for Learners: | *1* | *1* | *1* |
| Behaviour and Attitudes | ***1*** | ***1*** | Quality of Teaching, Learning & Assessment: | *2* | *1* | *1* |
| Personal Development | ***1*** | ***1*** | Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare: | *1* | *1* | *1* |
| Leadership and Management | ***1*** | ***1*** | Effectiveness of Leadership & Management | *1* | *1* | *1* |

*Individual Study Programme Grading*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Overall Effectiveness** | **Quality of Education** | **Behaviour and Attitudes** | **Personal Development** | **Leadership and Management** |
| A Level | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Art & Design | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Textiles | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Fine Art | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Graphics | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Photography | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Film and TV (new course) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 3D | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Interactive Design | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Fashion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Foundation | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Level 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Access to HE | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total 1’s** | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| **Total 2’s** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| **Total 3’s** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total 4’s** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Key; 1= Outstanding, 2= Good, 3 = Requires Improvement, 4 = Inadequate

Overall Effectiveness : Outstanding

The Northern School of Art provides a range of arts-based study programmes that allow learners to; learn, enjoy, and achieve their aspirations in preparation for their next steps. Learners develop new knowledge and skills that support them to develop greater independence and confidence whilst they are encouraged and challenged to take risks in a safe environment. Learner achievement has been very high for a number of years. Under usual circumstances, learners are inspired and motivated to produce exceptional examples of artwork through well planned and delivered curriculums. Historically there is a high proportion of diploma learners who achieve high grade outcomes demonstrating excellent progress. Achievement and progress are also consistently good in GCSE maths and English. Learners are acquiring the overall skills and behaviours necessary to successfully progress onto their intended destinations. The mass majority of learners progress on to study a creative discipline at a higher level of study.

The behaviour and attitudes of learners are excellent. Through fostering a welcoming, harmonious, and respectful place to learn, the School has a pleasant and positive community. Learners are encouraged to ‘be themselves’ whilst respecting the views and opinions of others through exposure to topical themes. Often such views are expressed through personal investigations and the production of artwork usually showcased at the end of year exhibition. Learners understand their responsibilities within the School and develop healthy relationships with others. Learners are developing social responsibilities through an enriched curriculum that promotes social engagement with local communities through art and design opportunities.

The School has very effective safeguarding processes. Keeping learners safe at The Northern School of Art is a priority. Staff work collaboratively to ensure learners are safe. Staff receive the necessary up to date training to ensure they understand their responsibilities in keeping young learners and vulnerable adults safe. Each study programme has a designated member of student services staff dedicated to those learners. The School is swift to identify, respond and report upon any potential safeguarding matters. Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe including online safety.

Senior leaders have developed and implemented a strategy that focuses upon continually developing the opportunities for learners to excel in creative disciplines at a specialist provider. This includes providing an ‘exceptional education for creative careers’, and also investigating future opportunities such as relocating the further education campus to a new estate due for completion in the summer of 2021. School governors have a clear and detailed overview of the quality of all aspects of FE provision. This is presented through the annual report and monthly updates at governor’s meetings. High standards are maintained through an effective performance management system which includes: target setting; in year and end of year reviews plus staff development action planning. Senior leaders are quick to identify any areas of underperformance and implement appropriate actions to make improvements. There are clear lines of communications between teaching staff, support staff and senior leaders. Leaders and managers respond to the voice of the work force to implement ideas that can improve efficiencies, motivation and morale. Overall staff morale is high which reflects upon the student experience whilst studying at The Northern School of Art.

As highlighted throughout this report, reflecting upon the successes and challenges 2019/20 with the usual level of scrutiny and comparison is not fully possible. However, The School is confident upon the steps made in recent years, and the like for like metric comparisons prior to lockdown in March 2020 that we were on track to maintain and potentially surpass our previous performance. The academic staff worked tirelessly throughout the period of lockdown, ensuring learners were supported as best as possible.

## FE Quality Strategy

The School graded itself ‘Outstanding’ in the 2019-20 Self-Assessment Report. Due to lockdown, the typical cycle of the academic year was disrupted. Therefore, the report is based heavily upon the work and efforts towards continuous quality improvements over recent years, with additional narrative to outline the progress made prior to lockdown, and also report upon how learners were supported during the period. Many of the key metrics and activities used to evaluate progress have either remained the same, or marginally improved compared with 2018-19, with the caveat that qualifications have been awarded based on a changed assessment methodology.

The School adopted a rigorous approach towards the prediction of learner assessment outcomes. Teaching teams were instructed to follow the instructions to justify grade outcomes for each individual learner using the acknowledged sources of relevant evidence for work produced during their courses, excluding anything produced from 20 March 2020 and onwards. The School’s quality team collated grades by individual courses, and scrutinised the data by learner level prior to a meeting with members of the senior team to consider the validity. Subsequently, teaching teams were challenged to justify their grade outcomes. Following this process there was minor movement from the initial grad estimates, with staff being confident in their assessments. It should be noted awarding bodies have not challenged the decisions awarded.

The School continues to monitor the quality of the FE curriculum and aims to use the following processes throughout the academic year:

* Establishing performance indicators/targets against which provision is judged, bearing in mind those used externally by Ofsted and other stakeholders. This includes:
* The FE Course Forecast (Course Level Target Book)
* Attendance targets (Overall, maths and English)
* Individual Target Setting (Performance Management)
* Collecting and monitoring data in order to measure performance:
* The FE Course Forecast
* Attendance Reporting
* Termly FE Course Quality Monitoring Review meetings.
* Centralised drive for storage and audit of documents (planning for learning et cetera)
* Identifying areas of strength and for improvement at curriculum team level, linked to the Education Inspection Framework and Matrix criteria. This includes course performance meetings with Course Leaders and the Head of FE and in-year action plans for immediate intervention in areas for improvement and tracking of ‘at risk’ learners.
* Individual Performance Management:
* Initial Target Setting
* Regular update meetings
* Mid-Year review against targets
* End of Year Review
* The student voice - key to quality improvement and includes:
* Student Assemblies (course level)
* Student Forums (School level)
* Student Perception Surveys
* Student Rep meetings to allow discussion of key School strategies and approaches
* Implementing the teaching Observation Process through ‘Deep Dives’ which can include formal teaching observations (with action planning), Learning Walks, work scrutiny and gathering learner voice feedback. Cluster leaders will also manage learning walks in their subject areas to gain a more comprehensive picture of teaching and learning.
* Encouraging continuous updating and skills development of all staff, including quality improvement strategies to drive up standards and promote outstanding teaching and learning. Opportunities include:
* Annual Staff Development Week
* Annual HE/FE Conference (if possible due to social distancing)
* External Staff Development (funded via Human Resources)
* Online staff development opportunities
* In-house sharing of best practice
* FE+ regional membership
* Internal and external verification processes.
* The Course Review process builds on the action planning and interventions from the academic year, reviewing performance and developing an action plan for next year.
* Regular quality review meetings to explore all aspects of delivery in maths and English

## Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) is part of the institution’s wider academic strategy, and has been developed to support our overarching character vision statements.

*The Themes of the Strategy*

**Theme 1 – Recruitment, Support and Recognition.** People are critical to the delivery of excellence in learning and teaching. We will continue to develop our approach to staff recruitment, support and recognition.

**Theme 2 – A Creative Curriculum**. We will regularly review and develop our curriculum to encourage critical thinking, curiosity and creative learning opportunities and approaches.

**Theme 3 – Digital Futures.** We will incorporatedigital approaches across all our provision to ensure we appropriately support students in their digital futures.

**Theme 4 – Inclusive Teaching and Learning.** We will ensure we promote inclusion and diversity within all learning, teaching and assessment activity.

**Theme 5 – Employability and Professional Practice.** On course curriculum design will develop and enhance employability skills and opportunities for further study.

*Progress*

Progress against the themes of The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been good in the majority of curriculum areas, although in some areas NSS results indicate further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are required. Unexpected occurrences have increased the focus on elements of the strategy. Areas which were not previously identified as a priority for 2019-20 have been accelerated (eg Digital Futures) due to the need for emergency remote teaching.

The following themes were originally identified as key priorities for 2019- 20:

* **Inclusive Teaching and Learning** - advances have been made regarding the tracking and staff awareness of students who are identified by the Access and Participation Plan as underrepresented. Further work is required to develop our academic strategy with this in mind. This includes consideration of implementing research findings that support the concept of centralising and embedding ‘character development’ within the curriculum to improve academic and career progression.
* **Creative Curriculum** - staff took time at the beginning of the year to redesign module delivery and rewrite assignment tasks which have successfully engaged students in all levels with fewer referrals in comparison to previous years, with evidence of student engagement, even in times of change within the pandemic.
* **Future Proofing the Curriculum** – significant work has been undertaken researching and understanding the teaching and learning approach across the arts education sector. The research supported developments in academic delivery that have been implemented in 2020/21 including the concepts of taught and facilitated learning. Further work is required and already underway to support the development of our academic strategy and educational mission. This includes consideration of the relationship between ‘skills’ and ‘creativity’ and the School as a whole reviewing and developing an understanding of the types of future graduates we want to produce.

# HE Orientation, Growth

## Scholarly Activity and Research

Largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown in March, there was little progress made this year against agreed Scholarly Activity and Research proposals. There were many abandoned conferences, seminars, events and research trips during the year. Planned activity to address Access and Participation Plan targets, as well as student based research proposals became either impossible to factor into the new way of working or less of a priority. However, in many ways, this became a trigger for reflection and action around new methods of delivery, new priorities and improved communication with students. We made rapid progress moving delivery online, as staff engaged with the process of working remotely. Teams and Zoom became the new normal, and the new focus of delivery provided real experiences of digital poverty and new curriculum challenges. We worked closely with AUB to ensure we could meet all module outcomes through digital submissions and we provided IT support, deadline extensions and increased flexibility in our approach to ensure students were not disadvantaged. We held regular Teams meeting with representation from students and all academic, management and support areas. This level of communication combined with our regular interaction with AUB enabled us to move from a reactive to a proactive position.

We completed HE delivery for 2019-20 using a range of online digital delivery and online support tracking using contact logs in line with government guidelines and in close consultation with AUB. We reviewed our final level assessment comparing the data with the last three years and student profiles for the first two modules and the two following lockdown and there were no major differences in the results. The final Progression and Awards Board were held on September 9th at AUB. The NSoA had only four students to present, three who have completed referral work and will pass and progress and one student who will be offered a repeat year. Institutionally we feel this was an excellent outcome.

## Curriculum and management changes

As part of our annual strategic review process, we also undertook a planned major restructure. Our core academic management structure focused around programme leaders managing teams of academics, technical demonstrators and technicians. This had served us well in the past, but unfortunately, over the last few years, as we responded to new initiatives and challenges within the HE sector this has introduced more bureaucracy, accompanying action plans, new data and new working methods. We also found ourselves operating within an increasingly competitive marketplace. It became increasingly difficult to balance these new demands on top of already complex academic roles. Alongside these issues, we also had additional financial pressures and while we managed as well as we could we realised our current model lacked flexibility. The silo model built around programme teams had begun to hamper whole School investment in resources, the flow of information across the School and reduced collaboration and strategic interactions. Ultimately, these challenges reduced our ability and effectiveness in moving forward with our Academic Strategy and plans to future proof the curriculum.

In 2020, senior management reviewed the academic management structure and identified areas where we were able to change roles and responsibilities, open up delivery, share resources, and enable staff to work on any programme where their skill set was required. Unfortunately, we needed to complete the restructure by the end of the financial year and this compounded the anxiety around Covid 19, and the end of a very stressful academic year with a restructure. Whilst still in early days of implementation the new model will enable staff to work alongside different staff teams on different programmes and enable students to experience delivery from a range of staff not just a small team.

## Reflections on the year

As part of our strategic review process, we had planned to revisit a number of strategies and activities around our alignment towards our Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) application. Our new academic structure provides us with the tools and impetus to drive forward a number of changes around the focus of Scholarly Activity & Research (SAR) our internal reporting and ensuring our data and measures provide a more in-depth picture of our direction of travel. We are now in the process of working with Faculty Leaders to address concerns around the Annual Programme Reviews, changes to the curriculum model and a revisiting of a number of School strategies, including Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Academic Strategy and the SAR.

The School successfully validated our first Level 7 programmes in April; these were MA Creative Enterprise Practice, and MA Design History. The validation events were held through Teams and there was intensive scrutiny of the documentation, philosophy and rational of the provision. This represents another step-change for the School in working towards autonomy and the growing confidence from AUB that the School has the capacity and capability to manage and govern the development of postgraduate academic provision. Both programmes demonstrated clear teaching and learning strategies, student experience and alignment to vocational and industry expectations.

## FE/HE Progression

The total amount of L3 completers entering higher education remains high at c.70%. This is a small reduction of c.4% compared to last year that can be attributed to an increased number of completers progressing onto our foundation diploma or other alternative route.

Although applications to our own HE dropped, the rate of applications to firms increased from 58% to 66%, resulting in an enrolment rate of 26%. This has been unchanged for 3 years.

Table 7: Internal FE to HE progression

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Internal Progression to NSoA HE** | | | | | **Progression to HE Overall** | |
| Academic Year of Completers | L3 Completers | HE Apps | HE Firm | HE Enrol | Conv of Apps to Firm | Conv of L3 to Enrols | L3 Placed into HE | Conv of L3 to HE |
|
| 15/16 | 258 | 119 | 56 | 59 | 47% | 23% | 188 | 74.30% |
| 16/17 | 258 | 154 | 78 | 80 | 51% | 31% | 209 | 81.30% |
| 17/18 | 239 | 127 | 62 | 63 | 49% | 26% | 183 | 77.20% |
| 18/19 | 233 | 113 | 65 | 61 | 58% | 26% | 175 | 74.20% |
| 19/20 | 222 | 90 | 59 | 58 | 66% | 26% | 156 | 70.27% |

The 2019-20 progression plan was developed aiming to capture, build and retain student interest much earlier in the cycle. The HE experience event included interaction with HE students, which received positive feedback. Although the event was a success in parts, we concluded that smaller-scale activities would have better impact.

Additionally, a new week-long progression event was held in March encompassing talks from Hartlepool staff, student finance and a dedicated HE progression fair, represented by HE students. Engagement was good despite some sessions being cut short due to the anxieties of covid-19.

The lockdown resulted in all planned events being cancelled in the last term, including visits to the HE show. However, a revised plan was put in place focusing on personalised tutorials via teams and phone. Students were encouraged to participate in the virtual open day, industry speaker event and the online degree show.

**Plans for 2021**

The 2020-21 internal progression plan has been developed with FE and HE colleagues to apply appropriately-timed interventions with *personalisation* in mind.

We understand that FECs are making an increasing use of the *direct application route* (otherwise known as the RPA route) to maximise their internal progression rates. We also think this may account for a proportion of the drop we suffered in external HE applications. The school currently offers the RPA route to a discreet cohort of students i.e. Access to HE and very late applicants. This will now become available to selected students in the wider student body.

*National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP)*

The School continued its membership of NECOP, a partnership of the 5 universities and 15 colleges in the region working together to support targeted students to progress to HE. This activity attracts a small funding amount to support progression activity to HE. In 19/20 this related to 43 target students at our FE site. NECOP has quoted the North East region has having consistently the lowest progression rate to HE in England at age 18 and it is their ambition to instigate a step change. Therefore, the School’s involvement in this project is pertinent and has the added benefit in supporting objectives outlined in the Access & Participation Plan.

## Recruitment

Recruitment efforts in **the last term** were severely affected by the pandemic, in particular the impact on face-to-face engagement and physical outreach work. Since March 2020, 34 HE events were cancelled, of which 18 were national UCAS events. At FE, 49 events were cancelled (39 were targeted to Y10 and Y11). However, since the start of lockdown we have strived to mitigate opportunity cost via virtual means, including online events and heightened targeted comms to potential students and key influencers. This seems to have helped our retention and conversion of applicants in the latter part of the recruitment cycle.

Feedback on the applicant journey continues to be very positive in terms of applicants’ experience at events, open days and interview stages. Feedback on comms and publicity material is also rated highly.

*Higher Education*

In HE we exceeded the budget target for Level 4 starters (160) as well as the recruitment target of 182 as revised in January 2020.

Table 8: HE applications and enrolments, Level 4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level 4 | Final 2020 apps actual | Target applications | Target Enrol | Actual Enrol | Final Firm Actual |
| Total | 530 | 513 | 182 | 188 | 188 |

It is clear that we have done well in continuing to attract students after the January deadline and that this continued through lockdown at a rate equalling our best performance – we have not seen downside as a result of the student number cap, or Covid and student uncertainty (as predicted nationally during lockdown). Despite dire national forecasts we have not seen a rush to defer places to 2021 – we can attribute just 3 deferrals to Covid.

10 students have enrolled on our two new MA programmes – meeting our target

The UCAS main scheme application data shows a tough market in which we have seen English applications in creative arts and design subjects fall by 12-13% since 2017, equating to over 20,000 applications.

Table 9: Pre-clearing national applications for art & design

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| June-30 deadline apps by subject group (JACS) and applicant domicile | | | | |
| **JACS W** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** |
| England | 189,030 | 177,530 | 166,990 | 168,160 |
| (www.ucas.com) | |  |  |  |

We understand that a significant loss of our own applications in 2020 occurred in the period up to the January deadline. Previous analysis shows this to be a result of:

* Regional colleges adopting the RPA route for their internal progression activity
* Brexit
* Demographic changes (3% fall each year)
* Long-term trend in later applications
* FE internal progression
* Issues around perception and awareness (youthsight report)
* Impact of changes to the GCSE curriculum

We know that national demographic growth starts in 2021 (for age 18) and continues strongly until 2027. It is a more mixed picture across the English regions.

Demographic analysis will support our future recruitment and marketing activity aiding targeting at both FE and HE. 18 year-old growth is very strong in the East and South West – traditionally participation cold-spots – this may offer opportunities for targeted recruitment and relationship development. Similarly home region growth offers an opportunity for both FE and HE however it is weaker than growth elsewhere and UCAS data tells us that art and design applications in the region are the lowest of any English region – so we should not depend upon ‘local growth’.

*Further Education*

Table 10: FE application and enrolment data, 2019 & 2020 cycles

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Firm Applications (17/08/2020) | 1st Years 2020 | 2nd Years | Total Enrolled 2020 |  | Total 2019 | Yr1 2019 |
| Total | 292 | 284 | 177 | 461 |  | 461 | 285 |

This table shows that our FE Numbers have held steady compared to last year.

During lockdown we saw an almost complete pause in applications, which did cause some anxiety. However, we continued to communicate with schools and provide reassurance to potential students throughout and, once lockdown eased, we saw a recovery of supressed demand.

We are now out of the demographic trough for 16-year olds so we expect to see some limited growth over the coming years.

The curriculum changes in schools will still pose a significant challenge to us. We are exploring ways to mitigate the changes. We are working with the newly re-constituted Tees Valley Cultural Education Partnership (TVCEP) to bid for significant funds for work with children in and out of schools, offering opportunities to engage in a meaningful way with art and design. Secondly we are exploring offering the Arts Award qualification to young people up to the age of 18 as an adjunct to our Saturday Clubs.

Our target for FE next year is to at least equal this year’s recruitment – we should not underestimate the impact of Covid on this cohort. We feel that there is the potential for upside here based upon:

* The new campus and its location
* Free (to student) travel deals that have been reached with Arriva and Northern Railways allowing us to expand our realistic catchment north and west (areas where our analysis shows strong numbers of students studying GCSE art and design subjects)

Recruitment approach for 2021

The recruitment effort will respond to the ‘new normal’ – no large-scale recruitment events, extremely limited physical contact with schools. Recruitment have developed a new, hybrid, offer to schools and colleges some small group activity and visits supplemented by an online offer.

* Targeting of specific schools and colleges (or the areas in which they operate)
* Boost our online chat facility (Recruitment staff normally working in the field will dedicate more time to this)
* Offer virtual interviews and facilities tours

## Marketing

Marketing continues to focus on securing growth in awareness and engagement with current and new audiences and support recruitment to both further education and higher education campuses across the management of the School’s online presence, media and campaign materials.

**Northernart.ac.uk**

The website northernart.ac.uk is a key tool in measuring the levels of interest around different courses and events at the School and received 255,921 unique (new) browsers to the website throughout the annual report period (this does not include internal ‘portal’ visitors or views of Covid information).

Table 11: website data

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019-20** | |
|  | **Target** | **Actual** |
| Number of unique (new) browsers  *(does not include portal or Covid browsers)* | 165,000 | 255,921 |
| New browsers finding website through organic search (SEO)\* | - | 51,215 |

*\*acquisition rates only show a proportion of all browsers (approx., 33%)*

A major improvement has been the upgrade to the website’s server capability; this followed the challenges faced during the lockdown of providing the ‘degree show’. The website server capacity has been increased by x40 and this has greatly improved the reliability of the delivery of information across a range of devices as well as allowed new information and content to be uploaded. This includes new student galleries for the majority of further education and higher education courses, a review of SEO throughout the current website, a virtual open day area, new postgraduate degree area, a new creative careers area and a student home page ‘glass cabinet’ highlighting the awards and accolades presented to our students.

Importantly, work has been undertaken to audit and review the accessibility of the website in relation to meeting the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 which also draws on the WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards. This has resulted in a number of updates to the website content, a full audit and the publication of accessibility statement on the School’s website. In addition, new accessibility software, UserWay, has been applied to the website allowing all browsers to utilise a range of accessibility tools when viewing web-based content.

**Social Media Channels @TheNorthernArt**

Our strategy for social media channels is to grow followers, increase visitor website acquisition, engage followers and continue to build brand familiarity.

Our social media presence goes from strength to strength with daily activity across five channels: Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, Twitter and YouTube. Other channels also active include Reddit and Pinterest.

Table 12: Social media data

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019-20** | |
|  | **Target** | **Actual** |
| New browsers to website from social media channels\* | - | 9,243 |
| Social Media Followers  *(Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter)* | 17,500 | 19,168 |

*\*acquisition rates only show a proportion of all browsers (approx., 33%)*

**Campaigns for 2021 Starters: ‘Discover’ & ‘Start Your Creative Journey’**

Extensive work has been undertaken to develop and launch two new recruitment campaigns for further education and higher education: ‘Start Your Creative Journey’; and, ‘Discover’. Each campaign comprises new prospectuses, online films, advertising, student audience input, evaluation dashboards and additional materials to support all recruitment and marketing activities. Other publications, installations and materials include a new outreach brochure, the new Strategic Plan, ‘Create Your Future’ UCAS events, UK University Search and UCAS virtual events.

**Covid Response**

As the country went into lockdown, marketing played a major role in the initial response to the emerging pandemic and sought to ensure that staff and student communications were fully supported providing reassurance and remaining compliant with Competition and Markets Authority guidelines. Marketing also strove to ensure the online presence and event offer remained vibrant and engaging to prospective students. Working with senior management and colleagues, marketing coordinated daily updates to website and social media channels, as well as some early staff and student communication. A new open day film was compiled, an online ‘artwork’ #WFH was launched and the team supported colleagues in producing the new online open days, a live applicant day and acting applicant day. In addition, marketing also secured Tom Marshall, film director and alumni, for a live Q&A and delivered the Jeannie Findlay, filmmaker live online event as just some of this work. Work continues as we adapt our marketing and recruitment campaigns to the new ‘normal’ of the challenging and changing environment.

Table 13: COVID-19 information on website

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **2019-20** |
|  | **Actual** |
| Page views of COVID-19 information on School’s website | 5,524 |

**Media Relations & Sponsorships**

The marketing service continues to support a range of sponsorships to further foster relationships within its position as a provider of creative education in the region and raise brand awareness, these have included: #LoveHartlepool, Pride Middlesbrough and the Best of Hartlepool Awards and The Festival of Thrift. Paid media and advertising also continue to raise awareness and drive visitors to the School’s website including advertising in printed and online publications ‘Crack’, ‘The Crack’, ‘NARC’, ‘The Evening Gazette’, ‘Hartlepool Mail’, ‘Hartlepool Life’ as well as a radio broadcast campaign which used the voices of the BA (Hons) Acting students. The School has also received references in the ‘Observer’, the ‘Guardian’ and ‘Creative Review’. Media relations highlighting the achievements of staff and students continues throughout the year with regular coverage in regional media titles including ‘The Evening Gazette’, ‘The Northern Echo’ and BBC local radio, as well as broadcast coverage for the Middlesbrough relocation project.

**Middlesbrough Relocation**

The relocation of the Green Lane campus to the central Middlesbrough location has provided a number of opportunities for strengthening partnership working as well as raising awareness of the School. Working with the Tees Valley Mayor and the Tees Valley Combined Authority and other partners, marketing has successfully complied a partner communications plan, coordinated the ‘launch’ of work at the new site, provided just over 200 square metres of eye-catching artwork for installation on site and secured print and broadcast coverage of the new development on broadcast ITV and BBC channels.

**Digital Marketing**

Table 14: digital marketing data

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **2019-20** |
|  | **Actual** |
| Impressions (adverts delivered) | 4,785,524\* |
| Conversions (directly related to paid advertising) | 533\* |
| Paid Search/Adverts - new browsers to website \*\* | 14,671 |
| Views on YouTube of remarketing x5 short film adverts | Approx 74,000 views\* |

*\*March to September MediaWorks contract period*

*\*\*acquisition rates only show a proportion of all browsers (approx., 33%)*

MediaWorks were appointed to provide digital marketing services for the School managed by marketing. Their service provides online advertising, paid Search Engine Optimisation and remarketing to targeted audiences and specific geographical areas. The contract achieved a minimum of 533 trackable conversions which included open day bookings, request for information, downloads and direct telephone calls.

# Employability, External Relations, Creative Industry Links

## Employability & Creative Industry Links

As predicted in the last Annual report the new national Graduate Outcomes survey (GO) did not achieve good response rates – our response rate was significantly higher than the national average but the survey still failed to replicate the rich data source provided by the former DLHE survey. The national response rate for GO was 52.3%, The School had a 66% response rate. This compares to a DLHE response rate of 80%+.

The GO overall headline employability rate is 89% - this comprises those graduates identifying their most important activity to be further study, employment or self-employment/business start-up. This is a significant fall from our previous stable rate of 96%+, however it reflects:

* Inconsistencies in definitions of employment between to two surveys
* Systemic faults with GO
* The timing of GO.

It is worth saying more about timing – the census date coincides exactly with the point at which post graduates have finished either teacher training or MAs, but is before they might reasonably expect to start work. The 15-18 month gap between graduation and the survey will inevitably lead to convergence or results across multiple HE providers.

Covid 19 has impacted upon externality. Nonetheless before lockdown we had welcomed some 40 Visiting Professionals onto campus to deliver talks, workshops and critique sessions. During lockdown we maintained and external face running live sessions open to students:

* Jeanie Finlay – documentary film maker
* Tom Marshall – director of a recent Netflix series
* Soweto Kinch - Jazz musician (in collaboration with Hartlepool Creatives)
* Director of the Edinburgh Fringe and other festivals.

Our employability service Folio supported students through:

* Mock interviews/business pitches – 35 students
* Business start-up advice – 15 students
* Progression to post graduate learning – 12 students

Our enterprise support seminar series was pivoted this year to create the Creative Socials which were delivered at The BIS offering sessions on:

* Life as a graduate artist – getting started
* Socially engaged arts practice – how to develop or win work
* Creating & Taking Opportunities
* Showing your work outside of a traditional space

Across all of these sessions ran the threads of business planning, marketing and finance. Approximately 30 graduates and students took part.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Inevitably Covid-19 has impacted on our engagement with the wider creative sector however the period between August 2019 and March 2020 saw us further develop our central place within the Tees Valley cultural and creative ecosystem:

* We built upon the Church Street empty shop activity – creating the Hartlepool Creatives network which has been active through lockdown offering live on-line events. This collaborative work was recently highlighted in a national research project for Arts Council England
* Taking a leading role in the development of a partnership to submit a Hartlepool bid to the Creative People & Places scheme – an Arts Council initiative aimed at locally led and generated community engagement through the arts. Sadly, Covid has delayed the national timetable on this work.
* Similarly, we had commenced work with the Auxilliary to support the Middlesbrough Art Weekender and create opportunities for graduates and undergraduates to participate.
* Signed off a formal memorandum of understanding with The ARC, Stockton – which formalises and extends the collaboration with them around curriculum, live projects, performance, and opportunities to engage in community arts projects.
* We have taken an active role in the Leadership group of the #LoveHartlepool campaign. This has enabled us to extend relationships with civil society and local businesses.

October 2019 saw the cumulation of a collaboration with Oxford University Black History with a live theatre performance and panel discussion exploring black identity. This also provided paid opportunities for one undergraduate and one graduate to support the project in its national run in London and Bristol.

We have continued to develop our Alumni support and engagement (reflected in our much better than average response rate to the Graduate Outcome survey) in the year to come we will further refine our offer and communications.

In advance of the commencement of work on The Northern Film Studios we have maintained and deepened our links with the wider screen industry and Tees Valley Screen.

The Vice Principal (Employability & External Relations) has continued to represent The School at regional and national events (often in combination with his Arts Council role) perhaps most notably in:

* opening the first ever British Textiles Biennial in October 2019
* representing the school in round table discussions with senior DCMS officials
* and through continued work with the Creative Industries Federation.

The coming year will see continued engagement with these areas of activity, a relaunch of our alumni offer and The School playing a central role in recovery support for the creative sector in the Tees Valley.

## Public Value Statement

The Northern School of Art is a statutory corporation by virtue of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. It is also an exempt charity under the terms of Schedule 3 of the Charities Act 2011. Consequently, the School has a commitment to deliver a significant public benefit to the wider community that it serves by developing the skills and knowledge of its students and thus providing benefit to society and individuals.

In considering its vision, mission and values and in setting its objectives The Northern School of Art Corporation has had due regard to the Charity Commission’s guidance on the advancement of education.

**School’s Wider Community**

As a specialist provider the School is committed to making a major contribution to the communities and stakeholders that it serves locally, regionally and nationally. The School’s wider community includes:

* + - Learners;
    - Parents/guardians/carers and families of learners;
    - Alumni;
    - Staff;
    - Educational partners including schools, colleges and higher education institutions;
    - Creative sector employers regionally and nationally;
    - Sector bodies such as the Creative Industries Federation, Guild HE and AoC;
    - Local residents and community groups, and business;
    - Local authorities;
    - The Tees Valley Combined Authority; and
    - Funding bodies and relevant Government departments and agencies.

We are dedicated to providing the highest quality teaching and learning experience for all our students, enabling people to progress from FE to undergraduate study and on in to careers in a set of industries dominated by people qualified to at least degree level.

We proudly serve our local communities in the Tees Valley and through our mission to enable people to receive ***‘exceptional education for creative careers’*** we not only supply the talent needed by the rapidly growing creative economy but support the wider economic and social development of our region and its people.

**School Vision**

By 2024 we will have built on our track record and successes. In essence we want to have more students on continuously improving courses, studying in high quality, supportive, creative environments. We will develop our curriculum through increasing product differentiation from our competitors and foster innovation. Our students’ experience with us and the quality of the destinations they move on to, in the North and elsewhere, guides what we do and aspire to.

We will continue to deliver excellent standards of teaching and learning, sustaining our:

* + Teaching Excellence Framework Gold for Higher Education
  + Ofsted Outstanding rating for Further Education.

At the same time, we will ensure our future by maintaining a good financial health rating.

**Values**

We aim to ensure that students, staff, and community are focal points for what we do. Everything we do is guided by our values and behaviours.

*Creativity and Excellence*

We aim to place creative practice by students and staff at the centre of what we do, with excellent outcomes as our goal.

*Professional Practice, Employability and Enterprise*

We aim to develop students’ skills for employment and enterprise through curricula informed by staff and student engagement with creative industries. We value the encouragement of professional practice in students and the continuing professional development of staff, improving their performance and contribution to the education sector and creative industries.

*Student Engagement, Collaboration and Community*

We aim to promote student engagement within their learning environment as a partnership with staff, to aid delivery of a high quality student experience and to promote understanding and appreciation of art and design. We aim to develop complementary areas of study that support interdisciplinary collaboration and learning and engagement with external partners.

**Our Behaviours**

* + Concern for the quality of a holistic student experience
  + A positive, collegiate approach
  + Professionalism
  + Always seeking improvement; appropriately self-critical
  + Equality and diversity

**Measuring our Contribution**

The School is confident that through the implementation of its Strategic Plan it will continue to operate as a dynamic and creative specialist School within the region. Members of the public may assess the value added to the School’s wider community through:

* + Performance Tables published nationally (showing value added and student performance);
  + Published financial statements;
  + The public records of School Corporation meetings;
  + Equality and Diversity reports;
  + School Self-Assessment Report;
  + Ofsted reports;
  + QAA reports; and
  + Student surveys (including the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) surveys).

The School Corporation reviews and updates its public value statement periodically as part of its regular review of the School’s performance.