

Academic Strategy 2021 to 2024

Introduction

This is the first academic strategy produced since the School became The Northern School of Art. Talking to our academic teams, students and partners, the passion we have for our creative community is clear. We are proud of our academic achievements, our creative place and our creative culture. The Academic Strategy 2021 to 2024 (the Strategy) therefore reflects our confidence as a specialist arts provider embracing our heritage as Cleveland College of Art and Design and our ambitions for the future as a specialist 'arts school'. It is closely aligned to The Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

Our current academic position is strong. Students are extremely positive at both our Further Education and Higher Education campuses regarding the educational experience we provide. We are rated Outstanding by Ofsted and Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework. Our curriculum offer includes high quality and well-respected arts programmes in a broad range of creative subjects at both further and higher education level. Our introduction of postgraduate provision in 2019/20 has resulted in the School offering qualifications from Level 2 through to Level 7. Our new facilities in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool provide exciting opportunities for curriculum development to enrich the student experience and support the School's visions for growth, achieving Degree Awarding Powers and becoming a Higher Education Institution. In addition, these facilities will support the School to continue to be central to regional skills development for the creative sector and the valuable contribution it makes to social and economic development.

This Strategy aims to define more effectively 'who we are as an organisation' from an academic perspective; to simplify our strategic approach; to increase the clarity of the our academic objectives; and to refresh our approach based on our experiences of the internal and external higher & further education environments.

Our Academic priorities are to enhance the student learning experience, evidenced through:

- Maintaining our TEF GOLD rating;
- Remaining Ofsted Outstanding; and
- Achieving Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs)

The Strategy is presented in three sections that set out our academic character, a transformative curriculum and our academic objectives.

Our Academic Character

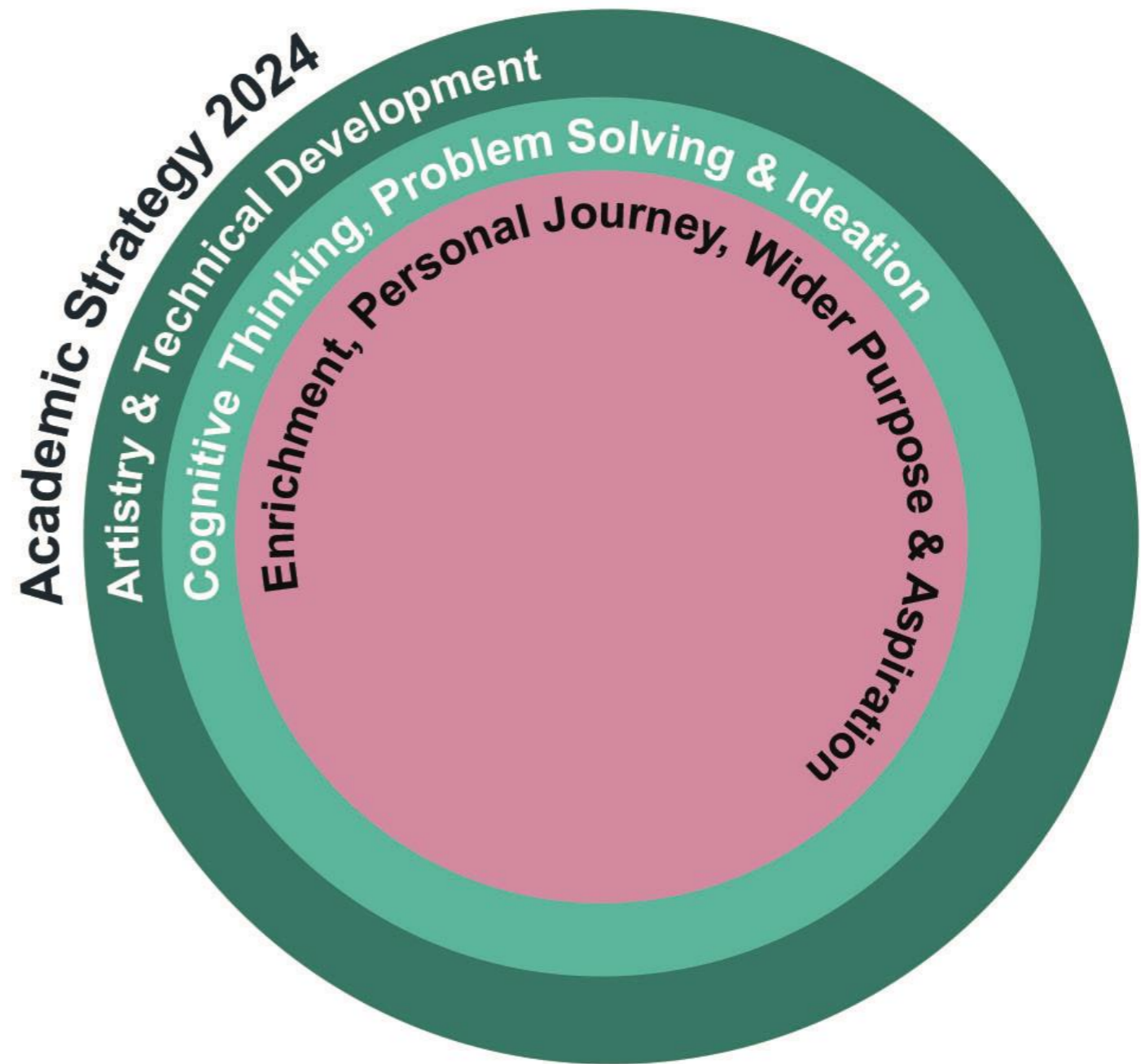
We are a specialist Art School and as such we will provide an academic experience at all levels of the School that will ready and prepare our students to excel in the creative industry and society.

We value established higher and further education that places academic achievement as a central aim. However, our creative curriculum goes further by placing our students' personal development at the centre of their learning experience. This includes **enrichment** of the student experience, providing opportunities for **personal journey development**, enhancing the learning experience to contextualise the **wider purpose** of creative practice and through meeting, stretching and challenging individual **aspirations**.

We achieve this by promoting learning and teaching through a community of collaborative practice that creates confident, independent practitioners. We strive to be inclusive, differentiating our approach and providing a nurturing creative arts community where students have their own space, identity and sense of belonging. We are proud of our creative community and recognise what every individual contributes to that community in terms of their diverse background, allowing them to be truly themselves. Through development of employability and creative professional skills we enable our students to adapt to the changing economic role of creativity and innovation. We develop students' curiosity and encourage risk taking in creative practice through experimentation. We provide opportunities to build on the results.

Students learn the craft of how to be a creative, to respond to challenges that are thrown into the mix when creating work: artistry, creative charisma, resilience and identity are all essential. We develop social and emotional intelligence and teach students how to be an influential communicator. Students learn how to be a self-disciplined organiser and understand the importance of professional practice. Health and wellbeing also have an important part to play in our community including gaining resilience for life and employability.

By developing learners with a strong sense of purpose and by providing a creative environment within which to flourish, our students develop **cognitive thinking** skills, **problem solving** and **ideation**. Development of these skills combined with our proven record as a 'making' institution supports the **technical development** and **artistry** of our future creative industry practitioners.



A Transformative Curriculum

Through our academic research and engagement with our academic community, at both further and higher education, we have developed a curriculum offer that succeeds in providing a transformative creative education experience at all levels of the School.

Further Education

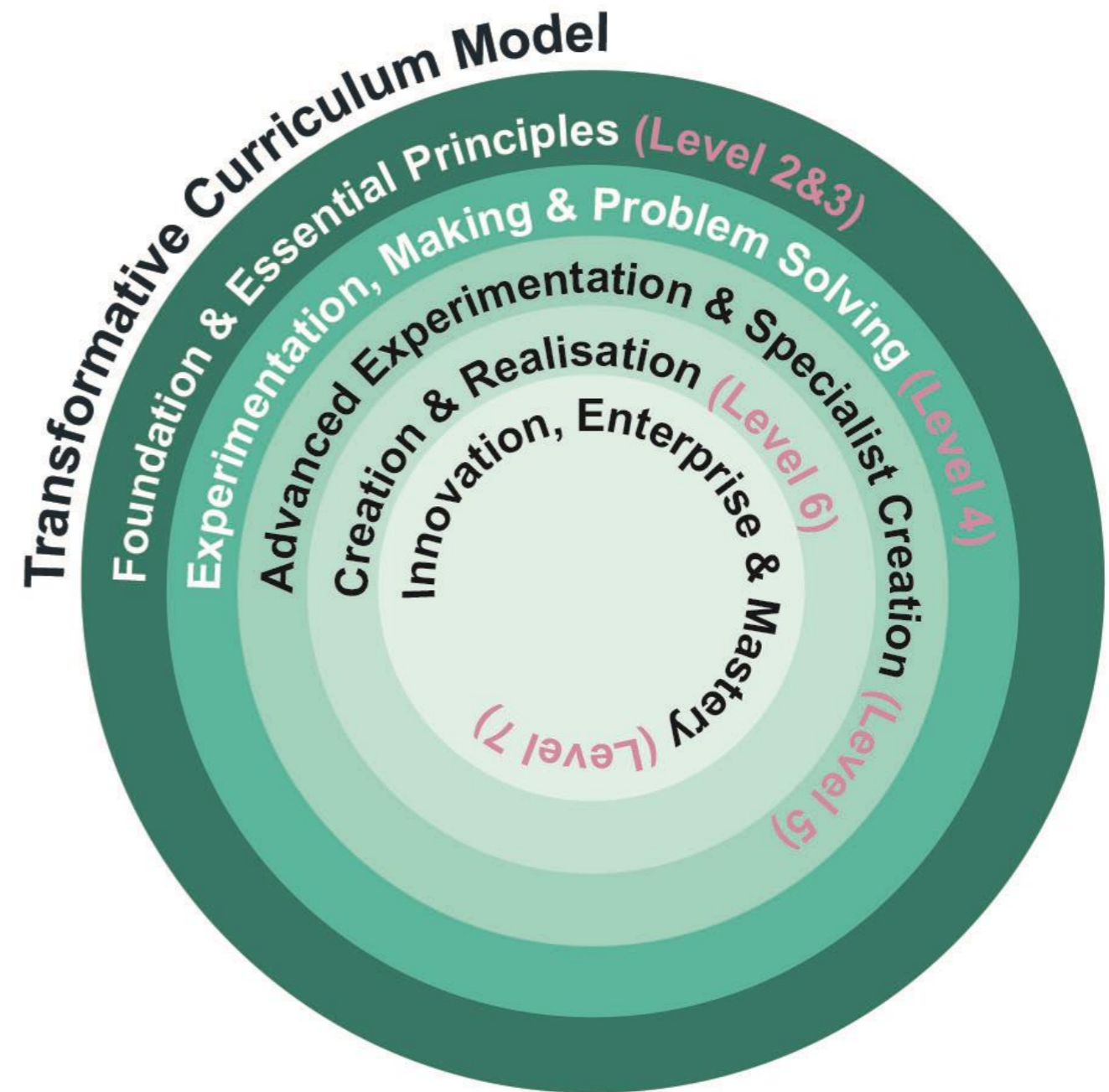
In recent years, our partnership with University Arts London Awarding Body has supported the development of a creative curriculum for our further education students that embraces our history in providing a transformative specialist arts education. We support student transformation from school leaver to higher education ready learners who have a curiosity and passion for the creative arts. Our level 2 and level 3 approach has a focus on **Foundation & Essential Principles** by introducing the creative industries, along with broad related knowledge, skills, and attributes. We further develop students' knowledge of the creative industries, allowing them to explore and select a specialist practice focus, and develop skills and knowledge central to sustaining a specialist creative career.

Taking advantage of our move to a purpose built building in 2021 curriculum developments will explore opportunities to collaborate and share resources across our creative community. By continuing to diversify our further education creative curriculum, whilst maintaining our specialist advantage, we will enhance the student experience by broadening the skill, knowledge and experience base in preparation for our students' progression to higher education or a creative career.

Higher Education

Our partnerships with Arts University Bournemouth and the creative industry sector have allowed the School to develop a high quality specialist undergraduate and postgraduate programme offer. Our creative curriculum embraces our heritage and reputation in designing and making. We aim to build on our traditions by further increasing our focus on creative thinking, innovation and problem solving, building confidence and expertise in these skills. At Level 4 this includes activities and learning opportunities that support **Experimentation, Making & Problem Solving**. Further enhancement of this at level 5 will comprise **Advanced Experimentation & Specialist Creation** culminating with **Creation & Realisation** at Level 6. Our Level 7 programmes will continue to promote opportunities for **Innovation, Enterprise & Mastery**.

We develop our curriculum through scholarly activity and research-led pedagogical enhancements. We expand adaptable learning opportunities through sharing resources and facilities to promote cross-curricula working and new ways of thinking. We will maximise the opportunities of a successful Degree Awarding Powers application and creative industry engagement to develop degree level programmes that are adaptable and flexible to ensure they maintain currency in a fast-changing creative industry.



Our Academic Objectives

By 2024 we will have:

1. *Established creative thinking, problem solving and ideation as core components to our learning and teaching approach.* Through scholarly activity, research and staff development opportunities academic teams will have an advanced understanding of contemporary thinking in creative pedagogy and taken advantage of opportunities to develop our creative curriculum.
2. *Strengthened the Schools proven record as a 'making' institution.* Engagement in creative industry practice will be fundamental to personal and professional development of academic teams. Technical developments and advancements will be central to informing curriculum developments and resourcing.
3. *Reinvigorated and strengthened our approach to industrial liaison.* Increased externality aligned to careers development and employability skills for learners at every level of the School.
4. *Achieved Degree Awarding Powers, allowing the School to respond more adeptly to a rapidly developing creative industry in achieving our vision to deliver a transformative curriculum with consistency of experience across all our Higher Education undergraduate programmes.* Utilising our specialist expertise and knowledge of the creative industries, we will have more effectively aligned the module structures and student experience across programmes whilst ensuring we maintain the individual character of all our creative programmes.
5. *An inclusive curriculum where all students are supported to access, participate and achieve.* This will include playing an integral part, regionally and nationally, as a specialist arts school that supports individual needs and promotes access and participation for students from all cultures and backgrounds.
6. *Established a culture of 'Creative Excellence' in every aspect of our academic work.* This will extend through every member of the School and be evident in our written and verbal communications, our personal presentation, creative spaces and environments. Values of freedom of speech will be promoted and respected.
7. *Reviewed and developed our curriculum offer to ensure personal development is at the centre of every students learning experience.* This will include (but not be limited to) programme and enrichment opportunities that explore resilience, identity, sense of purpose, social influence, community, the wider purposes of creativity and personal aspiration.
8. *An established culture of cross-School collaboration.* Through expanding opportunities within our creative curriculum all students will have the chance to collaborate across subject specialisms to foster partnerships, broaden their knowledge and interests and develop as confident creative practitioners.
9. *Reviewed and developed our Further Education provision to provide a broad foundation in the creative industries.* This will include maximising opportunities provided by our move to UAL qualifications by offering a creative education that supports delivery of a broad range of related knowledge, skills and attributes associated with the creative industries and progression to higher education.
10. *Progressed our successful relationship with Arts University Bournemouth.* This will include continuing to further develop our portfolio of externally validated Postgraduate provision.
11. *Established and further progressed the collaborative use of our learning resources, both physical and virtual, to support the transformative curriculum model.* Taking advantage of our new facilities at both Further and Higher Education, and increased investment in Learning Technology, we will have enriched and broadened the student experience, at every level, through curriculum development that prioritises the sharing of resources, knowledge, values and ideologies.
12. *Continued to invest in the development and externality of our academic workforce and promoted and celebrated staff profiles.* Closely aligned to our strategic objectives this will include supporting scholarly activity in the form of industry practice and research associated with creative pedagogical theory. Where appropriate, academic staff will also be supported to achieve postgraduate qualifications, to attend external conferences, to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy and encouraged to engage in External Examiner roles.