

**Driving growth,  
creating jobs and  
opportunities for the  
Tees Valley**

A statutory consultation on  
organisational change

August 2023

[northernart.ac.uk](http://northernart.ac.uk)

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## 1. Introduction

### Our ambition

The Northern School of Art has been delivering outstanding specialist education to the people of the Tees Valley for more than 150 years, and has been a central part of the cultural and creative life of the area for many decades. The School is the only specialist provider of creative industry related courses in the region. Generations of people have learned with us, and seen their families do the same. Students aged 8-16 can now join us in Saturday Club and study with us all the way through to achieving a Master's degree.

Our ambition is to become a university for the creative industries with a wholly-owned further education college subsidiary, so that we provide both degree programmes and further education courses. The organisational changes we are proposing are one essential step on this journey.

This document will set out what we hope to achieve. What follows provides details of our proposals and how we feel that they will benefit learners, employers and the community. It constitutes a key part of a necessary formal consultation exercise, where we seek your views. We urge you to respond and to support our proposed changes, and welcome any comments that you may have.

### What we want to do

Our aim is to change the designation of The School from being a Specialist FE College (FEC) to become a Higher Education Institution (HEI), which is a necessary step in order to achieve university title. To achieve this, we will split the existing institution into two parts, creating a new wholly-owned subsidiary which will undertake our existing further education work. This will operate from our existing Newport Road Campus in Middlesbrough, delivering post-16 education and Saturday Clubs just as we do now. We will seek formal designation of this new subsidiary by the Secretary of State as a further education college, whilst we will also seek designation of our current institution, which will then teach only higher education students, as a higher education institution.

We would continue to call our higher education institution The Northern School of Art; the newly separate (but linked) further education college subsidiary would be called The Northern College of Art. Whilst this may seem a complicated process, later in this document we will explain why we think that this approach is helpful.

In order to achieve this, we must make applications to the Secretary of State for Education following this formal consultation procedure. The process is ultimately achieved by the Secretary of State for Education using statutory powers, under the provisions of:

- section 28 of the Further & Higher Education Act 1992 for the designation of the new subsidiary as a further education college; and

- section 122ZA of the Education Reform Act 1988 to re-designate the current college corporation as a Higher Education Corporation (one of the legal forms of higher education institution).

We are following this process because the traditional route to HEI status depends upon full time equivalent (FTE) Higher Education students exceeding 55 per cent of the total number of FTE students; this effectively means having no more than 45 per cent of students studying for further education qualifications. This condition might mean that we would have to constrain recruitment to our successful and growing FE campus. The School will not do this, as we are committed to providing and widening opportunities for the young people of our region.

FE will continue to be delivered at our Middlesbrough Campus.

HE will continue to be delivered at our Hartlepool Campus.

### Why we need change

We have a well-established track record of delivering the highest quality teaching and learning to our higher education students, a record of outstanding provision which we expect will continue. However, our current status as a specialist further education college limits what we can do, denying us access to partnership opportunities and funding available to higher education institutions. We want to do more. More work with the creative industries, more work with our communities, creating more jobs and investment.

Following these steps, and obtaining degree awarding powers in perpetuity, we will seek university title. Presently, our higher education students study for degrees awarded by the Arts University Bournemouth. Achieving our own degree awarding powers will give us more control over the qualifications for which our students study, and much greater ability to respond to the needs of local creative industry partners by developing new degrees and technical qualifications.

We have already applied for degree awarding powers, which we hope should be awarded by late Summer 2024. By also establishing ourselves as a Higher Education Institution (HEI) we will unlock the door to subsequently applying for university title.

This consultation document sets out the structural changes that we propose will create a higher education institution (HEI), which will allow access to new funding streams and, most importantly, will allow us to achieve university status in the medium-term.

We aim to emulate the trajectory of other specialist institutions. Previous experience indicates that the heightened institutional profile which results from becoming an HEI and gaining university title will increase undergraduate student numbers. In turn this will strengthen the institution's financial position, providing additional resources to improve already excellent provision at both further and higher education levels.

As we set out throughout this document, our aim is simply to do more, and the proposed change is necessary in order to be able to do this.

## 2. Context

### National

The UK's creative industries are an engine for growth, growing at up to 5 times as fast as the economy as a whole. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has recognised them as one of five priority sectors for growth.

In June the Government and Creative Industries Council published a new vision for the creative industries. We welcome its recognition of the importance of our sector and the ambitions it sets out. The School is already a part of this future but the proposed changes will enable us to contribute more fully to developments in the region.

### Regional

The Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority has made the creative industries one of the key priorities for the region. This is an exciting time for the screen sector in the North East, with all local authorities, the education sector, the BBC and industry coming together with a £37m programme to drive growth. The Northern School of Art has been at the heart of this as a partner and a catalyst. The School created The Northern Studios commercial TV/film facility in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority and Hartlepool Council. This facility is at the heart of catalysing the screen industry in the North East. It is the lynch pin for Hartlepool Council's £16.5m Production Village, as well as the wider growth of TV/film production activity across the region and the creation of new technical related training opportunities and progression routes for our young people.

The Tees Valley has faced the challenges of de-industrialisation, and social and economic deprivation. It is now in a position to push forward. The creative industries can be a key driver for this, but only if we address key challenges within the sector:

- The sector needs to see improved upward social mobility; presently some 60% of the 2.3m creative workforce in the country come from a more privileged background. Whilst we do much in this respect, we want to do more.
- In the North East the sector is young, but growing fast. It is still the smallest creative economy by value of any English region. We want to play our part in helping it to grow. The sector is dominated by small businesses and consequently faces challenges in addressing and accessing technical skills education.

### The School's Role

Supported by our teams of experienced lecturing staff, through our excellent teaching and learning we will expand and develop our current activity:

- Working with schools and young people (we already support a network of teachers and careers advisers that has some 1,500 members, and our current Saturday Club activity sees more than 250 young people on campus each week);

- Developing our partnership with North East Screen and the Northern Screen Alliance to develop training and professional development opportunities;
- Working with our regional partners to develop a binary cluster of new screen businesses in Hartlepool and Middlesbrough; and
- Working with employers to develop relevant technical education, training and access to training – filling skills gaps and creating a talent pipeline for regional jobs.

In particular, whilst The Northern Studios, our commercial TV/film studios in Hartlepool, mean that we are well-placed to support the development of the screen industries in our region, the proposed changes will enable us to do more.

Higher Education Institution (HEI) status will enable us to participate in new forms of collaboration with industry and other providers. It will open doors to funding not accessible to us in the further education sector. Subsequently university status will enable us to have parity with universities, develop our profile and attract more students. These developments will help us to play a greater role in the economic development of the region and to provide more and better opportunities for all young people, as well as becoming a university. This then is our vision – more learning opportunities and jobs in a thriving creative economy in the Tees Valley, supported by the North East’s only specialist creative university.

#### What we do now, who we serve

We have separate FE and HE campuses. Our further education provision has been judged Outstanding by Ofsted since 2009. Our higher education provision was awarded Gold in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), a record of outstanding provision which we expect will continue.

We are committed to enhancing our outstanding further education provision at our new Middlesbrough Campus with its excellent results and progression for students. We see this as fundamental to our mission to provide opportunities for the whole community. In recent years our new Middlesbrough Campus has seen significant growth in student numbers and our Saturday Clubs are also thriving and growing. Similarly, we are dedicated to providing an accessible route into higher education at our Hartlepool campus. The additional resources which will result from our proposed changes will enable us to continue to invest to improve our further education provision. Close association with a higher education institution – ultimately a university – will bring additional benefits for our further education students.

We are a ‘making’ institution, teaching students to develop their creativity applied to the needs of the creative industries. As a teaching institution working in partnership with industry our aim is to create work-ready people from a range of backgrounds and needs. Our staff research activity is, and will remain, founded upon this principle.

We teach in a collaborative way, enabling students to learn in the multidisciplinary teams they will experience in industry. This distinctive approach is echoed in our curriculum, where we offer rare and in demand courses such as costume design, production design and modelmaking & visual effects which are sought-after skills in

the screen sector. Our courses are held in high esteem by industry, a fact demonstrated by the calibre of our Visiting Fellows (who form our Industrial Liaison Groups for each course) and our partnership with Aardman Animation, the well-known Bristol-based animation studio responsible for creating *Wallace and Gromit* and *Shaun the Sheep*, as well as *Chicken Run*, the highest-grossing stop-motion film of all time. The School is one of only 6 full Aardman education partners in the UK.

The Tees Valley has long been a 'cold spot' for young people progressing into higher education. This means that fewer young people progress directly to study for a degree after finishing school or college aged 18- or 19-years-old. This is significant, as the creative industries' workforce is predominantly (71%+) qualified to degree level or equivalent. We have a strong track record in enabling progression. We serve an area facing challenges:

- Middlesbrough and Hartlepool were, respectively, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> most income-deprived of England's 316 local authority areas (ONS 2021).
- Across our six key FE feeder parliamentary constituencies, postcode areas where those least likely to participate in HE live range from 60.2% to 75.9% of all postcodes, with a mean of 68.4% (OfS). This places the area in the top 15% nationally for low likelihood of HE participation. Despite this, in 2022 and 2023 we have seen 16 and 18 percent growth in acceptances.

Against this backdrop our FE students achieve and progress well.

Our Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) students have excellent outcomes. Looking at the 5 years starting in 2017/18:

- 97.2% have positive outcomes (employment or further study); and
- 93.4% progressed to Level 3 study (A level equivalent).

For those leaving after Level 3 study over the same 5 years:

- 94.1% have a positive outcome; and
- 74% progressed to higher education.

Currently, 52% of our HE students come from areas least likely to participate in HE (the figure nationally is less than 20%). More than 70% of our students come from the North East and 80%+ choose to remain in the region after graduation, even if they then have to work outside of its boundaries. This rate is significantly higher than the norm for all creative graduates in the region. Despite a long-term fall in undergraduate applications for creative courses nationally, The School has maintained its market share. Recently, applications have seen substantial growth - there is clearly a market for what we do.

### 3. Why do this?

We are an Office for Students (OfS) registered higher education provider, and have been offering higher education since the 1970s. We know that our higher education provision is comparable with the best in the country.

Our ambition is to become a university for the creative industries.

The organisational changes we are proposing are one step on this journey. We have already applied for degree awarding powers which we expect to be granted in late Summer 2024. By establishing ourselves as a Higher Education Institution (HEI) we will unlock the door to ultimately apply for university title.

By creating a group structure, consisting of an HEI and a Specialist Further Education College, mirroring our current twin campuses, we not only open the route to becoming the sixth university in the region but, critically, we protect and enhance our Further Education provision, enabling us to build on the significant growth in student numbers we have seen in recent years. To try and combine HE and FE in one institution (as we do now) is difficult and constraining when university title requires that full time equivalent (FTE) Higher Education students exceed 55 per cent of the total number of FTE students; this effectively means having no more than 45 per cent of students studying below higher education level. The existence of the new college and HEI group will also enable us to create new technical education pathways in FE with clearly defined progression pathways to a local HEI.

This document has set out what we will do to achieve our objectives. These actions will be enabled by our proposed changes, especially re-designation as an HEI, in the following ways:

- As an HEI The School will have access to additional funding for outreach work with schools and young people so we will enhance the range and scope of activities supporting teaching in schools and colleges. We will be able to further develop our work to support effective and well-informed careers advice.
- We will be able to access research and development funding enabling us to enhance our teaching and work with industry to support innovation and employment.
- We will have more freedom to develop partnerships with industry, creating new technical education programmes enabling re-skilling and upskilling of the creative workforce and those wishing to join it.
- We will be able to respond to new opportunities such as Investment Zones and Creative Clusters, developing new provision such as training for Virtual Production.

HEI (and later) university status will allow us to grow our student numbers, at least in part because we will then be visible in published HEI league tables, giving regional students the chance to be better informed about what is available to them. By making our performance directly comparable in a transparent way we can attract more students and build on our recent investments in both FE and HE, further enhancing



student experience. Experience in other art and design specialist institutions shows growth in student numbers after assumption of university title.

Following our proposed changes, our future students and partners in industry and the community will experience:

- New technical qualifications at FE and HE;
- New ways of gaining qualifications such as apprenticeships and modular higher technical qualifications developed and delivered in partnership with industry;
- More outreach work with schools and communities to improve awareness of employment and training and gain practical experience;
- A work ready workforce for the creative sector; and
- An institution able to support the development and deployment of new technologies.

## 4. Generating benefits for learners, employers and the community

### Sustainability, learner numbers and progression

The School has been a member of the United Kingdom Arts & Design Institutions' Association (UKADIA) for many years. We are part of the community of specialist art and design institutions, also being members of the Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD). We are an Office for Students (OfS) registered higher education provider, and have been offering higher education since the 1970s. Our provision was rated Gold from the inception of the Teaching Excellence Framework in 2017. We know that our higher education provision is comparable with the best in the country.

Our ambition is to become a university for the creative industries. In this we seek to emulate the journey of several fellow UKADIA members who have become established as successful universities. In each case these institutions have seen an increase in their profile, and thus their visibility to potential students, and as a result have enjoyed a marked increase in undergraduate applications and enrolments. We see no reason why our experience should differ.

HEI (and later) university status will allow us to grow our student numbers, at least in part because we will then be visible in published HEI league tables, giving regional students the chance to be better informed about what is available to them. For example, in the 2022 national student survey (NSS) we achieved a 91% overall satisfaction rating, placing us in the top 10% of all providers, better than any university in the region and better than most universities in the country. Satisfaction with individual degree courses is very high.

By making our performance directly comparable in a transparent way we can attract more students. Growth in the HE student numbers will lead to increased financial sustainability for the institution. In turn this will result in increased investment to improve both FE and HE provision.

Q1: Do you agree that the proposed changes should allow the School to emulate other specialist institutions by increasing its visibility and appeal to students, and hence to increase its learner numbers?

Q2: Do you agree that the proposed changes should result in improved financial sustainability for the institution?

Some years ago, the School established a wide-ranging (and free) support and development network for school and college lecturers and careers advisors. The offer includes regular skills masterclasses for teachers as well as careers and progression talks and resources. Branded as The Northern Creative Network, this now has a membership which exceeds 1,500, and has established a strategic partnership with the National Society for Education in Art & Design (NSEAD), with whom the School will co-host a Summer conference in 2024.

On achieving HE status the School will gain access to additional funding for outreach work, and collaboration opportunities currently closed to it (UKRI funds and the NE Creative Fuse being two examples).

As previously noted in Section 2, the School serves neighbourhoods of high deprivation and lower initial progression to undergraduate study by young people – so called ‘cold spots’. Whilst the School already achieves excellent levels of progression to HE study by its own students, the School anticipates that the creation of distinct FE and HE institutions within the same group structure will benefit levels of progression to HE study not only by its own students but by other young people in the Tees Valley. There are several reasons for this:

- access to additional funding for outreach work with schools and young people will allow enhancement of the range and scope of activities supporting creative subjects and creative industries related careers advice in schools and colleges; and
- the increased profile and status gained as a result of HE status will:
  - a. enable the School to extend the range of its creative industry contacts, thus facilitating improved advice and guidance to students, teachers and careers advisors; and
  - b. increase the perceived value and standing of the School’s provision, thus increasing it’s appeal to those liminal students whose choice might otherwise be to not study for any degree

Q3: Do you agree that the proposed changes should enable the School to undertake increased levels of more effective outreach activity, and thus support increased levels of learner progression to HE study from low participation neighbourhoods or ‘cold spots’?

### Delivery models and choice

The School offers a wide range of degree courses in creative subjects. In relation to screen industry provision, the School is notable for the breadth of its offer. Relevant courses include:

- BA (Hons) Acting for Stage & Screen;
- BA (Hons) Animation;
- BA (Hons) Costume Interpretation with Design;
- BA (Hons) Film, Television and Theatre Production;
- BA (Hons) Model Making and Visual FX; and
- BA (Hons) Production Design for Stage & Screen.

The scope of this offer is highly unusual; it is uncommon for institutions to offer so many other disciplines alongside a TV/Film degree. However, at the heart of our undergraduate experience is collaboration, enabling students from different subject

areas to work together, as they will in real life teams – just like a film or TV crew and cast. The exceptional range of our provision allows undergraduates to develop key creative collaboration skills which are essential for success in the screen industries. This is a model of delivery which is unavailable elsewhere in the region.

The School is almost unique amongst higher education providers in that it operates a commercial TV/film studio – The Northern Studios – on its higher education campus. The development of The Northern Studios is considered in more detail later. However, it should be noted that the proximity of commercial productions offers undergraduates additional opportunities for work experience.

Achieving the School's objectives – HEI status and then university title – will deliver benefits in relation to delivery models and choice. Increased profile will lead to growth in student numbers and additional resourcing. This will allow the School to further extend the range of its screen industry provision, increasing the choice of provision that is available regionally.

Q4: Do you agree that the School offers a range of provision, and a collaborative model of delivery, that is otherwise not available regionally, and that this offer will be supported and enhanced if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?

### Meeting local priorities, bringing benefits to the local economy

The UK's creative industries are an engine for growth. The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) was the first in the country to identify the creative and cultural sector as a priority in its Strategic Economic Plan, and has dedicated £20.5m to a sector growth plan.

The School has been actively engaged with regional partners to develop the creative industries. The creation of The Northern Studios commercial TV/film facility, in partnership with Tees Valley Combined Authority and Hartlepool Council, is at the heart of catalysing the screen industry in the North East. It is the lynch pin for Hartlepool Council's £16.5m Production Village and the wider growth of TV/film production activity across the region, and as discussed later, it is key to the School's ability to work with employers on the creation of new technical related training opportunities and progression routes for our young people.

This is an exciting time for the screen sector in the north east, with all local authorities, the education sector, the BBC and industry coming together with a £37m programme to drive growth to 2027. As part of this, TVCA and all local authorities in the North East have come together to recognize the strategic importance of the screen sector through an £11.4m investment through the North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP). The School sits on the TVCA Creative Place Advisory Group and on the Board and Skills Group of NESIP.

The objective of this partnership working is to support the development of screen industry specialist support businesses, based around The Northern Studios as a hub. The development of the Bottle Yard Studios in Bristol provides an analogous model; as well as screen industry specific businesses (eg costumiers, camera hire, lighting) other businesses (eg plant hire, transportation, health and safety) have located nearby to service screen sector needs as part of an integrated supply chain network. The aspiration underpinning The Northern Studios is to create a similar supply chain network to bring wider benefits to the local and regional economy.

Again, achieving the School's objectives – HEI status and then university title – will help it to deliver benefits in these areas.

Increased profile will help the School to enhance the reputation of its already well-regarded screen industry provision, also acting to boost the profile of The Northern Studios and hence to improve the prospects of successfully delivering supply chain development which will bring wider benefits to the local economy.

As noted throughout this document, the School's ultimate ambition – facilitated by initially achieving transfer to the higher education sector – is to gain university title. Also as noted, the increased institutional profile that this will bring will see an increase to student numbers. As well as the direct economic benefit of increasing local employment, there is much evidence which sets out the wider benefits of having a university in a town. As well as a clear reputational benefit, which helps to shift perceptions of a place, and in addition to the influx of students, parents and visitors, and the more permanent presence of staff, universities often attract and encourage the growth of businesses and create additional social benefits in the local area.

The School has already worked to attract screen industry businesses to Hartlepool. It is clear that this task would be easier were the institution to have the enhanced status associated with university title.

Q5: Do you agree that the School's work already supports a key TVCA priority, and that this and the School's ability to bring wider benefits to the local economy will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?

### Contributions to the enhancement of higher education

The School sets out in its Academic Strategy how it provides an academic experience at all levels of study that prepares students to excel in the creative industries and society. The objectives are to constantly strive to provide the best creative programmes possible through a current, relevant curriculum offer, enhanced teaching and learning, improved student experience, growing student numbers, a sustained employability record and viable and healthy resources through the mission statement characterised as simply, 'Exceptional education for creative careers'.

Across its further and higher education provision the School's teaching and learning has been assessed to be of the highest quality. The School was graded 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2009 and 2022, and 'Gold' in the first Teaching Excellence Framework assessment in 2017. The School expects these unimpeachable quality gradings to continue in the foreseeable future.

The School revised its HE delivery model some years ago to enable a more collaborative approach to delivery, mirroring more effectively the interaction between creative specialisms seen in the creative industries. Course content is developed in partnership with creative industry representatives, ensuring students develop their knowledge and skills to the fullest expectations of employers. Course content ensures that students learn traditional techniques, whilst also placing them at the forefront of modern industrial practice.

We are a 'making' institution, teaching students to develop their creativity applied to the needs of creative industries. Our approach to teaching and learning is distinctive, being personalised, developing not just craft and making skills but key attributes like creativity, problem solving and communication. At the heart of our undergraduate experience is collaboration, enabling students from different subject areas to work together.

The School's creative curriculum goes further in ensuring that students' personal development and educational gains are at the centre of their learning experience, tailored to their individual learning needs and starting points. This curriculum includes enrichment of the student experience to provide tailored opportunities for personal journey development, enhancing the learning experience to contextualise the wider purpose of creative practice, and meeting, stretching, and challenging individual aspirations.

As noted elsewhere, 52% of our HE students come from areas least likely to participate in HE (the figure nationally is less than 20%). Following the changes to the School's Access and Participation Plan some years ago, the School reconsidered segmented areas of activity to meet individual needs, and made wholesale changes to the curriculum model of delivery and student support. The School's transformative curriculum enables students from largely underrepresented backgrounds to achieve outstanding student outcomes. A high number of these students also present with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – 39.6% of the undergraduate student body in 2022-2023. Internal analysis shows that the majority of the School's HE population in 2022-2023 is categorised as underrepresented, of whom 79.6% have two or more intersections of disadvantage – due to their economic background, identifying as disabled, or their age et cetera.

The School has consistently demonstrated its outstanding academic experience for all students in its National Student Survey (NSS) scores over the last five years, despite the challenges of being located in an area of economic deprivation and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022-2023, 31.5% of undergraduate students came from

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile 1 areas – that is from the country’s most deprived postcodes. For 2021-2022, the most recently available full data set at the time of writing, the School achieved a score of 91.1% in the National Student Survey (NSS) ‘Overall Satisfaction’ category, compared with an HE sector average of 76.3%. In all aspects of the academic experience, the School vastly outperformed the NSS sector averages in 2021-2022. For example, in relation to ‘the teaching on my course’ the School achieved 93.1% satisfaction, compared with a sector average of 80.1%.

The School’s three-year undergraduate programmes involve high contact time, providing exceptional support to the School’s students. Throughout their studies, students are taught by the same academic teams, allowing staff to build relationships with their students, helping them to tailor their taught material to the needs of the cohort. In this way the School develops learners with a strong sense of purpose and provides a creative environment enabling them to flourish, and in which all students develop cognitive thinking skills, problem-solving, and ideation. This is achieved through a teaching and learning experience that is tailored to meet the individual needs, characteristics and starting points of our students, and the requirements of the creative industries.

The School’s pedagogical approach provides ‘open ended’ opportunities for individual learners, an essential component to creative production, whilst maintaining a rigorous academic structure that supports student learning, progression and attainment. A broad range of national and international exhibitions, live projects and performances have been established as part of professional practice-based modules across the School. The focus on industrial practice ensures that all students experience a professional learning environment that allows for real-world learning and prepares them for either further study or employment in their chosen creative industry or related fields. In their Institutional Review of the School, the Arts University Bournemouth commented that:

*“[Students] confirmed the institution’s approach to student centred learning. They appreciated the smaller study groups, access to extensive resources and the creative and supportive atmosphere. [...] They confirmed that industry engagement formed an important part of their study and they appreciated the “live” projects, on-line and face to face speakers and exposure to exhibitions and galleries and opportunities to display their work. They were extremely glad that they had chosen [the School] as their place of study [...]”.*

The School continues to achieve outstanding completion rates, despite the challenges proposed in an area of economic deprivation. The School also demonstrates outstanding rates of progression for its students.

In line with the School’s ambitions to achieve degree awarding powers, staff have been involved in focused scholarly activity and research for several years. In this period some staff have completed doctorates and several more are studying for doctoral qualifications. In recent years, the School has sought to develop a theme for strands of staff research and scholarly activity related to the School’s distinctive approach to

creative pedagogy. This seeks to progress research activity exploring the undoubted success of the School's approach in achieving excellent outcomes for students from areas least likely to participate in HE, those with learning difficulties, those from areas of high deprivation and those with two or more intersections of disadvantage. The School publishes a regular research publication – Perspectives in Art & Design – and staff are also disseminating their work by making conference presentations and writing book chapters.

As noted throughout this document, the School's ultimate ambition – facilitated by initially becoming a higher education institution – is to gain university title. The increased institutional profile that this will bring will drive an increase in student numbers and institutional resourcing. This will enable expansions in the research activity of staff, aimed at supporting the School's distinctive approach to creative pedagogy, which will also allow for greater dissemination of the School's successful approach, benefitting the HE sector as a whole.

Q6: Do you agree that the School's existing contributions to the enhancement of higher education will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?

### Supporting the delivery of priority programmes

Our approach to teaching and learning is personalised. Building upon our long history of supporting students with different life experience and needs, we know that many more can be given access to these opportunities. With our community and industry partners we can create new routes into education – especially when we receive degree awarding powers, which we anticipate will be in 2024.

The School recognises the contribution technical education pathways can make to widening participation in education and training. We have already worked with industry to offer Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) – Foundation Degrees (FdAs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) – following a survey of industry skills needs. However, these courses failed to attract applicants due to poor understanding amongst potential students of the career opportunities open to them after qualification.

The School has worked with employers to support upskilling, reskilling and opportunities for those furthest from the labour market for example:

- Offering support for a rapidly growing video content producer to train new staff in the craft aspects of camera, sound and lighting; and
- Working with an international VFX company to develop a series of interventions to create entry routes to the screen sector and upskill/reskill individuals to meet current industry skills shortages.

We have been actively monitoring the development of technical education pathways nationally through our Curriculum Development Group for the past 5 years. When we



achieve degree awarding powers we will develop L4+ qualifications (post 18, such as foundation degrees) founded in our strong relationships with industry and building upon the examples cited above.

This leads us to the key issues we would like to address. There is market failure at several levels:

- Poor information, advice and guidance (IAG) surrounding jobs and pathways in the creative industries leading to lack of awareness in potential students, parents and schools. In his 2023 President's Lecture to the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) Sir Peter Bazalgette (Co-Chair of the Creative Industries Council, a DfE Board member and former Chair of ITV) stated that 'to derive full economic and cultural benefit from the creative industries the sector must do more to define career pathways and skills gaps for young people' he added that we need to do the 'grunt work on career pathways' if T levels and apprenticeships are to work.
- The workforce of the creative industries lacks diversity with c.60% being from more privileged backgrounds - significantly higher than the average across the economy. Women and those with a global majority heritage are also underrepresented.
- The industry in the north east is predominantly comprised of freelance, micro and small employers. These employers struggle to have the ability and capacity to fully engage with apprenticeships, T levels and Bootcamps. This mirrors the position in engineering and manufacturing technology, where apprenticeship levels have fallen by 34% since 2015. Research for the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) published in March 2023 reveals that there are problems with recognition and uptake of such routes – only 30% of employers had heard of all four technical education pathways, with only 2% reporting good knowledge. Less than half of employers reported understanding the current system of vocational education.

In addition to the above, the North East creative industry sector is the smallest of any English region (though pre-pandemic it was also the fastest growing outside of London). These issues are not simply ones we have identified, they are recognised in the Good Work Review (February 2023) by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (supported by the Westminster and devolved governments).

Given these conditions the School embraces the government's skills agenda, and will actively address these market failures and then, with mature well-informed demand and supply sides, develop appropriate technical education offers. We have already taken a major step forward with the opening of The Northern Studios. This commercial project aimed to be the seed for a value chain cluster. Already, it has attracted start-up production companies and was a significant factor in securing BBC investment in the region. The following 'case study' demonstrates how we will do this.

### ***What will the future look like?***

#### ***A 'future case study'***

Our new group structure with the additional resources and opportunities provided by HEI status will create new routes to employment, upskilling and productivity. The Northern Studios (our subsidiary commercial film and TV production space) will be a part of this story. We will:

- Enhance our information, advice and guidance (IAG) and outreach to young people, opening up the studios for awareness of industry sessions and open days.
- Create industry induction bootcamps for young people furthest from the labour market with guaranteed access to FE learning on completion.
- Develop our FE provision including T levels for the screen sector where, working with partners, we will offer placements with production companies using the studios.
- Work with industry and partners including North East Screen and the screen alliance to develop apprenticeship pathways at the studio.
- Work with TVCA and regional industry partners such as North East Screen to develop and deliver Bootcamps, enabling re-skilling, up-skilling and progression for individuals seeking employment in areas with skills shortages and high vacancies nationally.
- Work with industry to develop modular Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) specific to industry skills needs - as we have already started exploring with VFX - enabling up-skilling and re-skilling for those in, or close to, employment and training. This may include higher and degree apprenticeships.

These offers span the FE and HE institutions and create clear local progression pathways all the way to postgraduate level.

The characteristics of local students and communities, together with the pressures of the cost of living and traditional higher education, mean that lower cost options for study, close to home and with assurance about future employment are needed. Our new structure provides an aspirational response to this.

Our Objectives are to:

- Improve upward social mobility.
- Increase access to the creative industries for young people from a disadvantaged background.
- Increase the scale of the creative industries in the region, creating jobs.

We will work towards these objectives through:

- Our excellent teaching and learning, and student experience.
- Outreach and the creation of opportunities for school age young people (including expansion of our Saturday Clubs, and Arts Award Bronze, Silver and Gold).
- Support for and provision of high-quality careers advice and information – in part through the development of The Northern Creative Network which already has 1,500 engaged teachers and advisers, and collaboration with Schools North East and National Society for Education in Art and Design.
- Continue to develop The Northern Studios and create credited work experience opportunities.
- Working with partners (NE Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP), North East Screen and the Northern Screen Alliance) to develop upskilling, skills transfer and entry to employment interventions (such as the Bootcamps we already deliver).
- Work with NESIP to attract more long form screen productions to the region.
- Work with partners (TVCA, Hartlepool Council) to make the most of opportunities presented by Levelling Up Funding, the Mayoral Development Corporation and Tees Valley Investment Zone to develop a binary screen industry cluster on Teesside (Middlesbrough and Hartlepool), attracting start up and relocating companies, creating jobs.
- Work directly with employers and TVCA to develop novel, bespoke training solutions that can be scaled.

We feel that these actions, often shared with key strategic partners, will create the conditions in which we can push ahead with the expansion of our technical skills offer. The presence of The Northern Studios in our group will be a particular advantage both in generating links to engage with screen industry businesses, and – as a screen industry commercial business – creating additional opportunities to work with students as an employer as part of the delivery of some qualifications.

The Government (DCMS) and Creative Industries Council have now published a policy paper ‘Creative Industries Sector Vision’ (June 2023) which sets out (alongside the Cultural Education Plan due later this year) a vision for investing in and developing technical skills as well as improving diversity. We want to be a part of this.

As noted throughout this document, the School’s ultimate ambition – facilitated by initially becoming a higher education institution – is to gain university title. The increased institutional profile that this will bring will drive an increase in student numbers and institutional resourcing. This enhanced profile will also enable the School to work more effectively with creative industry partners on the development of higher-level technical qualifications (HTQs) which meet the particular skills needs and issues within the creative industries.

Q7: Do you agree that the effectiveness of the School’s work in developing priority programmes (such as HTQs) will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?

## Enhancement of further education provision

Most of this document has focussed on the benefits that our proposed changes will bring in relation to the School's higher education activity. This is unsurprising, as the changes proposed effectively concern entering the higher education sector and, ultimately, gaining university title. However, we must also consider the impact of the proposed changes on the School's further education provision.

A key initial point is that there will be no negative impact on the School's further education provision; there will be no reduction in emphasis on the strategic importance of the School's FE activity. More than this, there will be positive benefits for our FE provision.

First, the retention of our Middlesbrough campus solely for further education activity will be protected by commitments that we will give to the DfE. This is a protection for FE activity which would not exist if we simply transferred the whole School to the HE sector.

In addition, we anticipate that student numbers will increase as a result of the proposed changes. This will enhance the School's financial effectiveness, enabling us to make increased levels of investment in FE, improving the experience of our FE learners.

We also expect benefits to arise for our FE learners as a result of the close association with a higher education provider – ultimately a new creative university. There is a close alignment of our FE offer to our HE provision. In itself, this aids progression to undergraduate study. Our HE programmes are updated annually to reflect the needs and wants of the creative industries, following annual review by our Curriculum Development Group, informed by each programme's Industrial Liaison Group – leading practitioners in relevant fields. This work will be enhanced by university status. As noted elsewhere, this will open up access to additional funding for outreach work. FE learners at the School – and learners in post-16 education, in schools and colleges across the Tees Valley - will benefit from increased levels of careers information and workshops provided by our staff and our creative industry partners. We expect that this will lead to increased progression to undergraduate-level creative study.

The presence of the School already has a very positive impact in terms of progression to higher education in a 'cold spot' area, as a result of our excellent levels of progression to undergraduate study. However, we would expect increased progression to our creative university. We expect that our FE learners would appreciate the enhanced status and reputational benefits that university title will bring, and that this would also be a factor for learners at schools and colleges in the area, increasing levels of progression for more liminal students from non-traditional backgrounds and areas of deprivation.

Q8: Do you agree that our proposals will both safeguard our existing FE provision and, being part of a group which includes a creative university, will bring additional benefits to our FE students?

## 5. Governance, staff and assets

### Governance

In our new group we will create two distinct governing bodies with some commonality of membership. Each will have a Chair, with neither sitting on the other body. There will be a single Principal and Chief Executive for the twin institutions. Each institution will have distinct committee structures and meetings. The governance structure will ensure that the subsidiary company (the FEI) has significant independence from the parent company (the HEI). The Chairs of Governors for each institution would be independent and there will be majority numbers of independent non-executive governors on each body, to ensure independence and un-conflicted quorums.

Further assurance on the governance of the subsidiary institution by the HEI is provided by:

- The appointment of the governors of the FEI by the FEI board;
- There will be a common Principal across both the HEI and FEI, who will be appointed by the parent company (HEI). The process of appointment will be informed by a joint committee including membership from both boards;
- The educational policy for the FEI will be set by the Board of the FEI;
- The Principal will be accountable to that board for the actions of the FEI;
- The HEI will not have control over the decision making of the FEI and would not have the ability to veto academic or student-related decisions. Because of the two-campus model, the aim will be to ensure neither the HEI or the FEI can make decisions that conflict with the provision of a specialist education at both levels. The broad strategic direction will have to be signed off by both parties through annual and longer-term business plan approval; and
- Where there are Governors common to both the HEI and the FEI, the number of common members will be in the minority membership of a committee. This approach will ensure that the HEI cannot control such decisions.

It should be noted that the existing institution complies with both the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) governance code for HEIs and the Association of Colleges (AoC) governance code for FE institutions.

### Assets and staff

Arrangements will seek to protect the continuity of FE provision without creating unnecessarily complex financial and legal structures. With this in mind it is proposed that the assets should remain with the HEI. This is the most pragmatic solution. Splitting the assets between the two institutions would be complex and unnecessary, and might well create unnecessary complications regarding warranties relating to the recently-built FE campus.

It is expected that the FEI will include within it:

- All FE students (i.e. all educational provision at level 3 and below).

- All FE specific staff (for example, the Vice Principal FE, and all academic staff below this level).
- The funding agreement with the ESFA.

All shared services (including relevant staff - for example admissions) and the estate will remain within the HEI. We will ensure that the FEI is not compromised by this arrangement through:

- An independent Chair.
- Common Principal / Vice Chancellor, who represents the interests of both the FEI and HEI, and is answerable to both Boards.
- A joint business plan with a shared strategic vision, ensuring that major strategic decisions support both institutions.
- A 125-year lease of the FE campus to the FEI.
- A Governance Agreement between the HEI and FEI.
- Service level agreements to ensure the proposed model continues to operate in the future in the way it is currently intended.
- Employment, including pay and conditions of staff, will be determined by the relevant Board, in line with a mutually agreed business plan.

## 6. Statutory consultation

### Section 122ZA Education Reform Act 1988 and section 28 Further and Higher Education Act 1992

Notice is hereby given that The Northern College of Art (a company limited by guarantee registered in England whose registered office is at Newport Road Middlesbrough (being a wholly owned subsidiary of the current The Northern School of Art FEC) intends to apply to the Secretary of State for Education for the making of an Order by the Secretary of State for Education under section 28 Further and Higher Education Act 1992 that The Northern College of Art become a designated institution under that section so as to be eligible to receive public sector funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency as a further education institution.

Notice is further given that consequent on The Northern College of Art becoming a designated institution under the said section 28 that the Corporation of The Northern School of Art FEC intends to transfer the registration of its further education students to The Northern College of Art with any appropriate consequential changes to property, rights, assets and liabilities, to be discussed and agreed with the DfE.

Notice is further given by the Corporation of The Northern School of Art FEC of in accordance with section 122ZA Education Reform Act 1988 of the proposal to convert from a further education corporation to a higher education corporation by Order of the Secretary of State for Education under the said section 122ZA.

The intention is to achieve all the above steps by 1st August 2024.

The consultation period runs from 29 August 2023 to 29 September 2023.

All responses and representations must be made as set out in section 7 below.

A summary of the responses received to the consultation will be published on the website of The Northern School of Art by 31 December 2023.

## 7. Let us know what you think

This consultation starts on 29 August 2023 and will last until 29 September 2023. All responses to the consultation will be collated and will form part of our formal application to the Secretary of State for Education. This application will be published on our website. You can use this document to let us know what you think, or you can write to us or complete the online form using this QR code:



Responses should be made to:

Dr Martin Raby  
Principal & Chief Executive  
The Northern School of Art  
1 Church Street  
Hartlepool  
TS24 7DR  
[consultation@northernart.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@northernart.ac.uk)

Please mark any email responses as **Consultation Response, The Northern Creative Future**.

We will be holding an on-line and two in-person consultation events where you can hear about our proposals in person and ask us questions. These will be:

<b>On-line Event</b>	<b>Middlesbrough (Newport Road)</b>	<b>Hartlepool (Church Square Hub)</b>
Wednesday 6 September 12:30 to 1:30pm	Thursday 7 September 12:30 to 1:30pm	Friday 8 September 12:30 to 1:30pm

If you wish to attend one of these events please RSVP by 9:00am on Tuesday 5 September using [consultation@northernart.ac.uk](mailto:consultation@northernart.ac.uk) so that we can send you further details. We will need to send you an invitation to participate in the on-line event.

Thinking about learners, the community and business, let us know what you think. The questions on the following page may be helpful. Tell us if you support what we propose and let us know if you have any concerns - we value your thoughts. We would greatly appreciate your support for our proposed organisational changes. In particular, we'd like to know if you agree that our proposals should help us to:



- Support growth in participation in higher education, especially young people from disadvantaged areas.
- Offer a relevant and diverse range of specialist educational provision.
- Support economic growth especially in the creative industries.
- Work with employers and other partners to open up new technical education routes, further widening access to and diversity in employment in the creative industries.

Do you support our proposals?

Yes  No

**In respect of the detailed questions:**

Q	Page(s)		Yes	No
1	9	Do you agree that the proposed changes should allow the School to emulate other specialist institutions by increasing its visibility and appeal to students, and hence to increase its learner numbers?		
2	9	Do you agree that the proposed changes should result in improved financial sustainability for the institution?		
3	9-10	Do you agree that the proposed changes should enable the School to undertake increased levels of more effective outreach activity, and thus support increased levels of learner progression to HE study from low participation neighbourhoods or “cold spots”?		
4	10-11	Do you agree that the School offers a range of provision, and a collaborative model of delivery, that is otherwise not available regionally, and that this offer will be supported and enhanced if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?		
5	11-12	Do you agree that the School’s work already supports a key TVCA priority, and that this and the School’s ability to bring wider benefits to the local economy will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?		
6	12-15	Do you agree that the School’s existing contributions to the enhancement of higher education will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?		
7	15-18	Do you agree that the effectiveness of the School’s work in developing priority programmes (such as HTQs) will be increased if the School is successful in transferring to the higher education sector and in gaining university title?		
8	19	Do you agree that our proposals will both safeguard our existing FE provision and, being part of a group which includes a creative university, will bring additional benefits to our FE students?		

Please tell us about you: \*

Name:
Position:
Organisation:
Address:
Email:

Are you:

Current Student		School	
Staff Member		College	
Parent		Higher Education Institution	
Creative Industry Employer		Blue Light Service	
Local Business or Employer		Other (specify below please)	
Community Organisation		Specify:	
Local or Regional Government			

We ask this question so that we can understand your perspective on our proposals.

In your own words feel free to add any thoughts you have about our proposals and let us know if you would like to work with us to achieve our ambitions

\*Personal details are only collected as part of the statutory consultation process and will only be used for the purpose of our application to change status. Personal details will not be published and will be destroyed once the process of change has ended.