

# Strategic Plan

2025-2028

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 TO 2028**

### **Introduction**

We are and will remain a creative community where students are at the centre of all we do enabling them to be a part of the future of the creative industries and civil society. We will build upon the solid foundations established during the past 5 years (2019-2024) which saw us achieve significant milestones and sustained excellence through:

- Retaining both TEF Gold and Ofsted Outstanding;
- Growth in overall student numbers;
- The opening of our new FE campus in 2021;
- Securing provisional Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs):
- Curriculum development, with alignment between our HE and FE portfolios; and
- The opening of our commercial subsidiary The Northern Studios which is now regularly the home to high profile film and TV productions and has proven to be an anchor in the recent significant growth of the screen industry in the region.

Following a successful stakeholder consultation exercise, in 2023-24 the School submitted applications to the DfE to create a new group structure with The School becoming an HEI and our FE provision delivered by a new FE college subsidiary. After considerable progress, the process was halted by the unexpected General Election. Creating the group structure will, together ultimately with successfully attaining degree awarding powers without limit of time, allow the School to adopt university title. Achieving the group structure remains a high priority for the School in 2025.

This Plan presents our high-level goals until early 2028.

### **Character and Context**

The Northern School of Art is the only specialist art school in the North East of England, with a unique character founded on the personalised development of creative skills and thinking, focussed on practical making. This is directly supported by the nature of our staff scholarly activity and educational culture that offers outstanding student support and progressive industry and community partnerships.

We stand out as an institution which welcomes, supports, and educates students from all areas and backgrounds, providing high quality personalised learning opportunities.

We value diversity, and the Office for Students and Ofsted have recognised that we offer outstanding tailored provision for all our students. We are committed to opening opportunities to the people of our home region and beyond.

The creative industries are identified as central to the growth of the whole region with both elected mayors emphasising investment in growth particularly in the screen and digital spheres. This is echoed at national level through the Creative Industries Council (an industry/government partnership) and the clear recognition by the newly elected government that creativity is central to economic growth and social inclusion.

The School continues to play a central part in developments at a regional level. The development by the School of The Northern Studios, and as part of the region-wide North East Screen Industry Partnership, has helped grow the industry from two regionally-based major TV productions annually in 2020 to eighteen in 2024.

The Studios development is also central to the successful Levelling Up Fund project in Hartlepool which, over the period of this Plan, envisages the creation of a production village serving the screen sector across the region and country, especially as the large studios planned in Sunderland come on stream. As part of this exciting future the School continues to be an active part of developments offering hope and opportunity to our students and graduates, as well as the communities we serve.

*Our recent achievements, the nature of our students, and developments in the creative industries regionally and nationally set the frame for our goals over the next 3 years.*

### **Our Vision for 2028**

By 2028 the School will be ready to become the only specialist arts university in the North East having secured Degree Awarding Powers without time limit.

We will continue to provide excellent student learning, and progression. We will further enhance student support at both FE and HE within well-resourced creative environments. We want to sustain our supportive creative community enhancing personal development, resilience and adaptability.

We will sustain realistic growth in student numbers in line with our marketing and resource planning. The School will continue to undertake scholarly activity and

research that fosters innovation and enables the growth and nurturing of external relationships with industry and academics at the forefront of their specialism.

The School will continue to enhance students' experience, enabling them to progress to aspirational destinations of their choice with additional support from our alumni network and employability services. In further developing these links with industry, deepening our ties to the creative industries, we will enhance our reputation and visibility to both industry partners and potential students, encouraging both groups to seek us out as their educational partner of choice.

As the School moves towards gaining university status, we see our strong links to our local communities and creative networks becoming increasingly important, fostering creativity and innovation by establishing and developing connections with both the public and our network of creative professionals. These create a dynamic exchange of ideas and opportunities benefitting students, creative practitioners and the wider community.

To this end, the School works well with regional councils, for example working as a key partner in the development of the Production Village in Hartlepool and as a member of Middlesbrough Creative Partnership. The School also fosters close links with art and design teachers across the region via its Northern Creative Network (formerly NESCAN), acting in part as a professional development forum whilst also providing a networking platform linking education with the creative sector.

**By 2028, we will deliver the following outcomes for our students, staff, and region:**

- Outcome 1: A future-focussed curriculum
- Outcome 2: Sector leading specialist teaching and learning
- Outcome 3: Excellent student experience and support
- Outcome 4: Sustaining growth in student numbers
- Outcome 5: Creating opportunities
- Outcome 6: Sustainable, viable and healthy resources

*This plan has been approved by our Corporation Board which will monitor its direction and delivery. It is supported by other more detailed internal strategies and delivery plans.*