

## **NCG Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25**

NCG is a £130 million organisation that brings together over 40,000 students to form one of the largest educational, training and employability organisations in the UK. It is comprised of 7 colleges (Newcastle, West Lancashire, Newcastle Sixth Form, Kidderminster, Lewisham, Southwark and Carlisle) and operates with a stated purpose to “Unlock Potential Through Learning”<sup>1</sup>.

Our vocational Higher Education (HE) curriculum is developed with the needs of students and employers at its core with both playing an integral part in the development, assessment and validation of all new programmes. Additionally, we pride ourselves on recognising local needs and delivering an HE offer that provides opportunities for people to succeed.

Across our colleges, we are committed to embedding equality and diversity. This commitment starts with our Board with their commitment being shared with and owned by all staff. We manage diversity by recognising the variety of staff, students and stakeholders and by ensuring that their ability to access learning is enhanced. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all we do
- Expecting each individual’s commitment to equality.
- Promoting the recognition and acceptance of individual differences.
- Ensuring objective and fair policies and processes are in place.
- Ensuring that policies, practices and procedures promote equality.
- Managing in a way that makes all individuals feel valued and harnesses their potential.
- Encouraging a culture of empowerment through an environment characterised by open communication, participation and consultation and an absence of prejudice and discrimination.

As an institution we have recently signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant and this is being piloted at Kidderminster College in the first instance.

### **1. Assessment of performance**

#### **1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status**

##### **Access**

More than half (51% in 2017-18) of our students are from POLAR4 quintiles 1&2. When we map our students to the ‘Index of Multiple Deprivation’ (IMD) we see strong recruitment of students (55.6% in 2017-18) from IMD quintiles 1 and 2; and average 52.8% across our cohorts for the last 5 years. The representation of students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 when compared to those students from quintiles 3,4&5 over the 5-year period from 2013-14 to 2017-18 has changed significantly on all full time programmes from a gap of 4.6% favouring students from quintiles 3,4&5 in 2013-14 to a gap of 3.1% in 2017-18 favouring students from quintiles 1&2. This is a clear indication that NCG supports access of students from the lower participation wards.

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<sup>1</sup> The Board is currently discussing a revised overarching strategy for the organisation.

An internally created data set (based on Student Finance England data) shows that 20.1% of the students for whom we hold data are from low-income households (less than £25k per annum).

As a result of the above data, and other published information, we do not propose to target 'Access' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to engage within NCG and we will intervene to address any reduction in our performance, should these statistics change.

## **Success**

### **Continuation**

Our data analysis of all full-time undergraduate programmes for the most recent year shows continuation levels for students from low participation areas are significantly worse than those recruited from higher participation areas. This is evidenced within our POLAR4 data where we have a 7.7% difference between quintiles 1&2 compared to 3,4&5. We also note that when this data is reviewed across the last 5 academic years the position is worsening year on year.

We further note, in relation to IMD categorisation, that our most recent data shows that a similar trend exists in relation to full-time students who are from areas of higher deprivation (when quintile 1 data is compared to quintile 5). Again this is a worsening trend.

As a result, and using the POLAR4 data as our measure, we have set ourselves a target of ending this year on year increase and instead we are committed to reducing it by 5% points (to 2.7%) by the end of the period covered by this plan (See 'Aim 1').

In comparison to the trends noted above for our full-time learners our data highlights positive outcomes for our part-time learners. Specifically, our POLAR4 data shows that our continuation rates for learners recruited from quintiles 1&2 are slightly better than those from 3,4&5 and that is a continuing trend across the last 5 years. However, when looking at IMD Quintile 5 compared with IMD Quintile 1 for the most recent year learners from Quintile 1 perform less well, although the gap is not significant. The trend has worsened over the past five years though the gap is not significant

### **Attainment**

Our most recent data and our trend data across the last 4 years (as year 1 data is not held) shows that full-time learners from IMD quintile 1 perform less well than those recruited from quintile 5. We have noted that the movement between 2016-17 and 2017-18 is significant and as a result we have used this as the basis for 'Aim 2'.

In comparison to the IMD data noted above, percentage variation between 2016-17 and 2017-18 POLAR4 data shows that for all of our full-time undergraduates the gap between attainment of quintiles 1&2 compared 3,4&5 has narrowed.

In terms of part-time learners our most recent IMD data shows that learners from quintiles 1&2 perform less well than those from 3,4&5. However, when trend data is considered we can see year on year improvements in relation to 2016-17 to 2017-18 as well as 2014-15 to 2017-18. No reportable data is available in relation to POLAR4.

Further to the above data Newcastle College is part of the Advance HE 'Closing the Attainment Gap' project and as such has undertaken substantial analysis of the attainment gaps within our underrepresented groups. From our analysis of learners achieving first class degrees we have identified an 11.2 percentage point variation between those

learners from POLAR4 quintiles 1&2 and quintile 5 (2017-18). This data supports our focus on attainment for disadvantaged students.

<b>NCG</b>	<b>1st</b>	<b>02:01</b>	<b>02:02</b>	<b>3rd</b>	<b>No result</b>
NCG	22.0%	42.0%	21.1%	6.1%	8.7%
Quintile 1 & 2	20.5%	39.8%	23.3%	6.8%	9.6%
Quintile 1	17.4%	44.0%	21.1%	5.5%	11.9%
Quintile 2	23.0%	36.7%	25.2%	7.9%	7.2%
Quintile 3	19.1%	46.1%	23.5%	6.1%	5.2%
Quintile 4	25.0%	43.2%	20.5%	2.3%	9.1%
Quintile 5	31.7%	36.6%	7.3%	7.3%	17.1%

*\*NCG Internally Created data from Closing the Attainment Gap Project*

When we analyse this over a longer time period, we see a varying profile with the gap in 2017-18 being the largest at 11.2% increasing from 2014-15 where the gap was 8%.

### **Progression to Employment or Further Study**

Progression data shows a worsening position for all full-time students for academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14. We have no reportable data for the other years.

Our access and participation dataset (2016/17) identifies gaps in our progression to employment or further study in relation to our full-time other undergraduate students who are in POLAR4 quintile 1 when compared to those in quintiles 2,3,4&5. This variation currently shows, between 2012-13 and 2016-17, a deterioration of 19.5% (although it should be noted that for 2 of these years the data is not reportable).

For all part-time undergraduates, we have noted a significant decline from 2015-16 to 2016-17 for those students from IMD quintiles 1&2 compared with IMD quintiles 3,4&5.

Due to the lack of reportable data and the lack of currency we do not propose to target 'Progression' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all learners to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **1.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students (BAME)**

### **Access**

Whilst NCG is an organisation with a national reach, the majority of recruitment is made from existing students progressing onto higher level qualifications or from learners within the local regions in which each of our colleges located.

It is therefore important to note that as 95% of NCG's higher education students are recruited through Newcastle College, they almost all come from the Newcastle area, and for this reason we have used regional benchmarking as the basis of our analysis.

In relation to BAME students we do not have access to disaggregated data via the dashboard for access (due to not meeting the threshold) and therefore we have shown below an analysis of the ethnicities within our 2017-18 cohort.

Ethnicity Description	Number	%
White	2336	84.48%
Other	142	5.14%
Black	96	3.47%
Asian	137	4.95%
Mixed	41	1.48%
Not known	13	0.47%

The data shown above demonstrates the significant number of BAME students recruited (10.8% excluding Indian and Chinese nationalities which are included above within the 'Other' category) compared to 4.6% as a regional average.

When we review the Access performance for full-time students from 2013-14 to 2017-18, we note consistency between each year and the ratio of white to BAME students that is lower than the regional average. We note that there is a flag between 2016-17 and 2017-18 for Other population but again the number of Other in the Newcastle area is lower than the national population.

Whilst the above data demonstrates that we are performing strongly in relation to BAME measures, our 2017-18 data does show a negative gap between the percentages of our students compared with the national population of black 18-year olds. As previously stated it is important to note the regional variations. When compared to the Newcastle region where only 2.06% of the population are Black, our recruitment level of 3.47% is significantly above the regional level.

Further to this, NCG has conducted an analysis which included considering disaggregated comparison to the national population. On review of the internal analysis there is no reportable data available for BAME access as our disaggregated numbers are low and therefore do not meet the threshold.

As a result of the above data we do not propose to target 'Access' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to engage within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **Success**

### **Continuation**

The data shown within the 2016-17 Access and Participation data set show a negative but not significant variation for full-time undergraduate white and BAME students. In relation to our trend data whilst 2015-16 to 2016-17 shows a marginally improved position, the data from 2012-13 to 2016-17 shows a negative variation (albeit again not one that is flagged as significant).

For all part-time undergraduates there is a slightly worsening position for BAME continuation from 2016-17 to 2015-16 and from 2016-17 to 2012-13 although the gap has narrowed.

A significant variation is flagged within our trend data (from 2012-13 – 2016-17) however in relation to full-time undergraduates 'mixed' compared with 'other'. These are both small groups and in total comprise less than 7% of our student population and as a result we are not setting a target in this area.

Continuation rates of students with a mixed ethnicity compared to white students on full-time programmes show a significant change (33%) from 2012-13 to 2016-17. Whilst this figure is across all full-time programmes, it is important to note that the low number of mixed ethnicity students (equating to 1.08% of our full-time cohort and 24 students in totality in 2016-17) significantly impacts upon the validity of our data.

As a result, we have reviewed the following undergraduate data subsets in relation to continuation:

- Full-time undergraduate white compared with BAME – there is an improving position and as such no significant gap.
- Part-time undergraduate white compared with BAME – there is insufficient data to draw a conclusion.
- Full-time undergraduate white compared with black – there is an improving position, although this slightly declined from 2015-16 to 2016-17. There are no significant gaps.
- Full-time undergraduates white compared with Asian – there is an improving position with a significant improvement from 2015-16 to 2016-17.
- Full-time undergraduate black compared with Asian – there is improving position from 2015-16 to 2016-17 although from 2012-13 to 2016-17 there is a slight decline.
- For the most recent year of data there is a large gap in Mixed continuation compared with Other. Whilst this is flagged as significant from 2012-13 to 2016-17 it is important to note that the variations relate to very small cohorts.

As a result of this we do not propose to target ‘Continuation’ for specific intervention. We do have a continuation target which many of our BAME cohort will fall into. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all learners to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## Attainment

For 2017-18 there is a large and significant gap between white and BAME attainment for full-time all undergraduates which is replicated within 2016-17 to 2017-18 (although it should be noted that from 2014-15 to 2017-18 our profile is variable). For all other splits there is no reportable data.

For all part-time undergraduates there is no reportable data in the access and participation dataset.

From the Advance HE ‘Closing the attainment gap’ project, we have identified the following gaps that we will look to address:

White & BAME: Foundation Degree										
FT	Distinct		Merit		Pass		No result		No result	
Ethnicity	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME
2014-15	8.7%	5.9%	30.5%	20.6%	41.5%	57.4%	19.3%	16.2%	827	68
2015-16	12.4%	5.4%	32.0%	29.0%	38.8%	47.3%	16.8%	18.3%	582	93
2016-17	15.1%	1.6%	30.0%	15.9%	44.3%	65.1%	10.5%	17.5%	503	63
2017-18	14.8%	12.9%	37.4%	20.4%	40.3%	51.6%	7.5%	15.1%	494	93

*\*NCG Internally Created data for Closing the Attainment Gap Project*

Our data shows that in 2017-18 an 18.9 percentage point gap existed in Foundation Degree attainment levels between BAME and white students. Attainment in this instance is the percentage point difference of white students obtaining a distinction or merit compared with BAME students obtaining a distinction or merit.

When we review this data over a longer time period from 2014-15 to 2017-18, we can see somewhat of a variable profile but with significant gaps in attainment each year which is highlighted in the table below.

Academic Year	Attainment Gap
2014-15	12.7%
2015-16	9.9%
2016-17	27.7%
2017-18	18.9%

As a result, we have set ourselves the target of reducing this to 13.9% across the period of this plan. (See 'Aim 3').

White & BAME: First Degree												
FT	1st		02:01		02:02		Third		No Result		Headcount	
Ethnicity	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME
<b>2014-15</b>	13.6%	18.4%	33.8%	36.8%	28.5%	21.1%	7.2%	13.2%	16.9%	10.5%	361	38
<b>2015-16</b>	17.3%	10.1%	36.4%	31.9%	22.7%	26.1%	6.3%	14.5%	17.3%	17.4%	352	69
<b>2016-17</b>	9.9%	7.7%	37.8%	38.5%	28.5%	15.4%	9.9%	15.4%	13.9%	23.1%	323	26
<b>2017-18</b>	22.9%	5.9%	38.2%	37.3%	22.3%	31.4%	6.0%	15.7%	10.7%	9.8%	319	51

*\*NCG Internally Created data for Closing the Attainment Gap Project*

Our data shows that BAME students undertaking a first degree programme, are less likely to achieve a 1<sup>st</sup> or a 2:1 than white students (by 17.9%).

As a result, we have set ourselves the target of reducing this to 14.9% across the period of this plan. (See 'Aim 4').

### **Progression to Employment or Further Study**

Having reviewed our data, we have not noted any significant performance issues in relation to progression rates into employment or further study for BAME students.

We did, however, note that (based on data taken from the Office for Students (OfS) access and participation dashboard) a gap existed between white students and those from IMD quintiles 3,4&5 when compared to all other ethnicities from IMD quintiles 1&2 (2014-15). Whilst we acknowledge this particular gap, it should be noted that for 2 of these years the data is not robust.

As a result of this we do not propose to target 'Progression' for specific intervention. We will of course continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance will intervene to address.

## **1.3 Mature students**

### **Access**

Our review of the most recent years' data shows that for all full-time undergraduates there is a gap of 5.8% in favour of young entrants. This variation is further reinforced through our trend data where gaps noted from 2016-17 to 2017-18 and from 2013-14 to 2017-18 are flagged as 'significant'.

In relation to part-time, in the current period there are more mature undergraduate learners than young entrants. Although this has worsened slightly over the past five years, it is not flagged as significant.

Students who are aged 21 and over at point of enrolment have a strong representation within NCG with 50.9% of NCG's 2017-18 (50.4% in 2018-19) cohort classed as mature and as such there are no gaps that need to be addressed.

Using the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard we can identify that NCG's mature cohort of students from 2013-14 to 2017-18 for all full time undergraduate is significantly higher than the national average each year starting with a 19.3% difference (44% NCG compared to 24.7% national average) in 2013-14 to also a 19.3% difference in 2017-18 (47.1% NCG compared with 27.8% national average) demonstrating a stable and positive dataset in relation to mature students access in higher education.

As a result of this we do not propose to target 'Access' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all learners to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

### **Success**

#### **Continuation**

In relation to continuation, the data shown within our 2017/18 show that results are stronger for full-time 'young' students then for 'mature' students. We have looked at the continuation comparisons for young against mature full-time all undergraduate students and for 2015-16 to 2016-17 there is a slightly improved position although from 2012-13 to 2016-17 there is a slight decline.

Similarly, we have looked at the continuation comparisons for young against mature part-time all undergraduate and have noted an improved position from the 2015-16 to 2016-17 and 2012-13 to 2016-17.

Our data review noted that in 2015-16 a 23 percentage point variation exists between mature and young students undertaking part-time other undergraduate programmes. When we review the data from 2011-12 to 2015-16 we see a variable profile which includes a 4% gap in 2011-12 and a 34% gap in 2013-14 all in favour of young students having a greater continuation rate than mature students on these programmes.

As a result, we have set ourselves the target of reducing this to 18.0% across the period of this plan. (See 'Aim 5').

#### **Attainment**

For all full-time undergraduates the most recent data shows that mature attainment is slightly better than for young entrants although in 2016-17 to 2017-18 there has been a

slight but not significant worsening (as per the Access and Participation data set). We have no reportable data for 2013-14, however the gap from 2014-15 to 2017-18 shows that there are no significant gaps.

In the dataset we have no reportable data for part-time attainment.

From our internal analysis 2014-15 to 2017-18 both our Level 6 (top-up degree awards) and Foundation Degree programmes show strong performance in terms of mature students. In 2014-15 47.1% on a foundation degree achieved a distinction or merit, rising to 54.7% in 2017-18. For both years this was above the institutional attainment figure. In 2014-15 49.2% on a degree programme achieved a first class or upper second class degree rising to 66.4% in 2017-18. Again, for both years this was above the institutional attainment figure.

As a result of this we do not propose to target 'Attainment' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the attainment of all learners within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

### **Progression to Employment or Further Study**

Similarly, from the OfS access and participation dataset we have no significant performance gaps within our data for mature students in terms of their progression to employment or further study in any of the years where data is available.

As a result of this we have not identified 'Progression' as a priority for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **1.4 Disabled students**

### **Access**

From a review of our most recent data we have noted that the number of learners undertaking full-time undergraduate study and who have declared a disability has decreased when compared to those who have declared no known disability.

For all full-time undergraduates there is a flagged gap between 2013-14 and 2017-18. The gap from 2016-17 to 2017-18 is not significant.

Students who disclose either a disability or learning difficulty are well represented across NCG. This is demonstrated within our data where over the past 5-years there has been an increased percentage of students rising from 12.12% of NCG's full-time and part-time cohort in 2014-15 to 14.39% in 2016-17.

Using the OfS Access and Participation data dashboard we can identify that NCG's cohort of disabled students from 2013-14 to 2017-18 for all full time undergraduate is higher than the national average over the five year time period starting with no difference in 2013-14 (11.8% NCG and national average) to a 2.9% difference in 2017-18 (17.5% NCG compared with 14.6% national average) demonstrating a stable and positive dataset in relation to disabled students' access to higher education.

If we inspect the data further to identify gaps in access for students with specific disability types the OfS Access data release identifies an improving picture over the 5-year time period when comparing gaps in access for students with: cognitive and learning difficulties; mental health problems; sensory medical and physical, social and communication issues;



and multiple impairments against those students who have no known disability type. For example, the gap in access for students with cognitive and learning issues when compared to those with no known disability type has decreased by 6.5% over the 5-year time period on all full-time programmes. Similarly, on the same programme type and mode of study the gap in access over the five-year time period has reduced by 9.5%. This data indicates that significant progress is being made in ensuring equality of opportunity for all students.

For all part-time disabled undergraduates there are no significant gaps.

As a result of this we do not propose to prioritise 'Access' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all learners to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **Success**

### **Continuation**

From a review of our most recent data we have identified that continuation rates of full-time students with a disability are slightly lower than equivalent students with no known disability however none of these are classed as significant.

From our analysis we have identified that our continuation rates for disabled students on full-time first-degree programmes are significantly worse (2016-17 = 11%) than those without a known disability. When we review the data further over the 5-year time period from 2012-13 to 2016-17 we see a varying profile which is mainly in favour of students with no known disabilities, starting at a 5% gap in 2012-13 and moving to 11% in 2016-17.

As a result, we have set ourselves the target of reducing this to 6.0% across the period of this plan. (See 'Aim 6').

If we review specific disability types the OfS continuation data release does not display a robust or complete dataset for many of the disability types. However, over the 5-year period for students with cognitive and learning disabilities we can see an increase in the continuation gap of 3.9% when compared to students with no known disability, however due to the small numbers of this student type the gap is not considered to be statistically significant.

We have further noted within our most recent data set that a significant deterioration is shown in relation to students with cognitive and learning disabilities on full-time first-degree programmes where previously this had been mostly positive. We have not set a target as the numbers are very small but we will keep them under close review.

## **Attainment**

From the OfS access and participation dashboard and dataset there are no significant gaps in respect of attainment for disabled students.

From the OfS dataset we do not have data relating to specific disability types that we can analyse over the 5-year time period. To ensure we have a clear understanding of this level of data we will adopt a new strategic approach to monitoring students with under-represented characteristics.

As a result of this we do not propose to target 'Attainment' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the attainment of all students within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **Progression to Employment or Further Study**

From the OfS access and participation dashboard & dataset and our own internal reporting there are no areas of significant change or gaps to address in relation to disabled students from NCG progressing to employment or further study.

We have very little reportable data. Where we have data there are no significant gaps.

From the OfS dataset we do not have data relating to specific disability types that we can analyse over the 5-year time period. To ensure we have a clear understanding of this level of data we will adopt a new strategic approach to monitoring students with under-represented characteristics.

As a result of this we do not propose to target 'Progression' for specific intervention. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all learners to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **1.5 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education**

### **Access**

From our analysis of the access and participation dataset, we have seen a reduction in the number of female students on part-time foundation degree programmes from 18.5% in 2013-14 to 2017-18 and a gap in access in 2015-16 – 2017-18 of 34.8%.

Due to the small number of female students on these programmes, we do not propose to target 'Access' for specific intervention. From our internal data in 2017-18, we had 102 female students studying on part-time foundation degrees representing only 3.74% of our entire cohort. In contrast, in 2013-14 we had 241 female students studying on part-time foundation degrees which was 7.78% of our entire cohort. We will continue to monitor our performance in this area closely, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **Success**

### **Continuation**

Continuation of female students when compared to male students is significantly worse on all part-time programmes with a change from 2011-12 to 2015-16 of 17.2% which includes a large change between 2014-15 and 2015-16 of 11.5% and a gap in continuation in 2015-16 of 12.9%. We do not propose to make female students a target as there are so few and because female students are not an under-represented group.

### **Attainment**

We did not identify any issues with any particular groups in the area of attainment. We will continue to monitor our performance, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

### **Progression**

We did not identify any issues with any particular groups in the area of progression. We will continue to monitor our performance, ensuring we maximise the opportunity of all students to succeed within NCG and should we note any reduction in our performance we will intervene to address.

## **1.6 Care leavers**

### **Access**

We do not have a robust dataset that includes care leavers and as such we will be looking to set a target that will include care leavers within the 5-year lifetime of this access and participation plan. This will require us to develop processes to accurately capture and monitor care leaver data which we will have in place by September 2019.

Our internal data for 2018-19 indicates that we had 13 care leavers enrolled on Newcastle College higher education programmes. This is 0.6% of the higher education head count for Newcastle College. The 2017 “Moving on up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced student into and through higher education”, published by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers estimated that in any given year there would be around 2,500 care leavers across the various undergraduate years (not including FE colleges). Using the HESA figures of 1.77 million undergraduate student numbers in 2017-18 this would mean that 0.14% of university undergraduate population were care leavers. This is four times lower than the data for Newcastle College. This is not unexpected given the mission of the institution. On the face of it access would not seem to be an issue but as we develop our dataset this is something we will continue to monitor.

In 2018-19 there were 119 care leavers and 64 students in care on Newcastle College further education programmes.

## **Success**

### **Continuation**

The “Moving on up” report identifies that even after demographic factors and entry qualifications were controlled for, care leavers were still significantly more likely to withdraw than other students and 38% more likely than their peers. As we develop our

dataset around care leavers, we will be better placed to set targets and monitor the performance of this group.

### **Attainment**

The “Moving on up” report identifies care leavers who completed a full degree were less likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree, but when entry qualifications were taken into account, care leavers performed as well as other students. As we develop our dataset around care leavers, we will be better placed to set targets and monitor the performance of this group.

### **Progression to Employment or Further Study**

We have not been able to identify any national data for progression to employment or further study for care leavers. As we have very small numbers, we believe we can track these students ourselves and compare outcomes with other under-represented groups within NCG’s higher education graduates.

### **1.7 Intersections of Disadvantage**

We have analysed two intersections of disadvantage within our analysis of performance, these are data in relation to gender & POLAR4 ward and ethnicity & IMD ward. When compiling our analysis, we reviewed many different intersections to ensure we set appropriate targets for our institution. This analysis did not identify any significant gaps that we need to address either because no gap exists, or because the size of cohort makes the data unreliable.

We have also reviewed intersections for all of our underrepresented groups and mode of study as well as male and female splits against mode of study.

### **PG Taught Masters**

As part of our OfS registration we are required to monitor and improve student outcomes in relation to continuation rates of full-time students on PG Taught Masters programmes.

## **2. Strategic aims and objectives**

NCG has an institutional commitment to inclusivity and equality of opportunity that is embedded into our strategy and communicated effectively to all stakeholders.

NCG has spent the last year developing a new strategic plan the key aims of which are:

- Exceptional teaching, learner experience and outcomes.
- Innovative, relevant courses and qualifications.
- Ambitious and responsible educators and leaders.
- Outstanding digital and physical learning environments.
- Financial sustainability powering reinvestment.
- Impactful external engagement and civic commitment.

The aim of NCG's strategy is to provide an inclusive HE experience in which all students have the opportunity to succeed in their study and to fulfil their career aspirations. Improving equality of opportunity for under-represented groups has always been at the core of NCG's HE strategy.

The NCG Colleges bring together Higher and Further Education opportunities and progression pathways in a unique way. The NCG offer is a vocational Higher Education curriculum that articulates well with the Further Education curriculum enabling progression from programmes of study. As a multi divisional organisation NCG values diversity, promotes equality and seeks to eliminate bias and discrimination through the way it operates.

Access and participation has been an important strategic focus for NCG. As an HE provider, we have a very strong track record of attracting students from under-represented groups to our Higher Education programmes.

## **2.1 Target groups**

Based on our self-assessment the target groups we will focus on over the period 2020-21 to 2024-25 are:

### **Access**

Our self-assessment did not identify any significant gaps in the access phase of the student lifecycle so we have no targets under this heading. We plan to continue with outreach work and maintain our current level of performance.

### **Success**

1. Continuation: POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2 on all full-time undergraduate degree programmes.
2. Attainment: IMD Quintile 1 on all full-time first-degree programmes
3. Attainment: BAME students on other undergraduate programmes
4. Attainment: BAME students on first-degree programmes
5. Continuation: mature students on part-time other undergraduate programmes
6. Continuation: disabled students on full-time first degree programmes

### **Progression**

Although we are not setting any targets for progression we will continue to monitor to ensure there is no deterioration of the current position.

## **2.2 Aims and objectives**

We commit to these aims and objectives to improve equality of outcomes at the success phase of the student lifecycle for these target groups.

- Aim 1: To close the gap in continuation between POLAR4 Quintiles 1&2 and POLAR 4 Quintiles 3,4&5 on all full-time undergraduate degree programmes.

Objective 1: To close the gap in continuation between POLAR4 Quintiles 1 & 2 and POLAR4 Quintiles 3-5 on full-time all undergraduate degree programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 2.2% percentage points in 2024-25.

- Aim 2: To close the percentage gap in attainment of first class or upper second class degrees between IMD Quintile 5 and Quintile 1 on all full-time first degree programmes.

Objective 2: To close the gap in attainment of first class or upper second class degrees between IMD Quintile 5 and Quintiles 1 on all full-time first-degree programmes by ten percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 17.8 percentage points in 2024-25.

- Aim 3: To close the gap in the attainment of merit or distinction between BAME students and white students on other undergraduate programmes.

Objective 3: To close the gap in the attainment of merit or distinction between BAME students and white students by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 13.9 percentage points by 2024-25.

- Aim 4: To close the gap in the attainment of a first class degree or upper second between BAME and white students on first degree programmes.

Objective 4: To close the gap in the attainment of a first class degree or upper second between BAME and white students on first degree programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 12.9 percentage points by 2024-25.

- Aim 5: To close the gap in continuation between mature and young students on part-time other undergraduate programmes.

Objective 5: To close the gap in continuation between mature and young students on part-time other undergraduate programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 18.0 percentage points by 2024-25.

- Aim 6: To close the gap in continuation between disabled and non-disabled students on full-time first degree programmes.

Objective 6: To close the gap in continuation between disabled and non-disabled students on full-time first degree programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 6.0 percentage points by 2024-25.

## **Aspirations beyond 2025**

Our ambition is to eventually eliminate all of the identified gaps but we acknowledge that this will take us beyond the life of this plan. However, we remain committed to progressing this agenda throughout the period of this plan and beyond to 2030.

## **3. Strategic measures**

### **3.1 Whole provider strategic approach**

#### **Overview**

We aim to deliver a full student lifecycle approach to learning and beyond.

As identified in the previous section it is the student success phase of the lifecycle where we will be making the most efforts to close the gaps in continuation and attainment

identified. We will, however, continue with activities in all phases of the student lifecycle to ensure that we continue with the good performance in those areas.

The strategic measures outlined in this plan are designed to address our identified gaps in performance have been informed by the Higher Education Academy resource 'Compendium of effective practice in higher education retention and success' edited by Jane Andrews, Robin Clark and Liz Thomas and published in 2012.

Within NCG, only Newcastle College and Kidderminster College are charging a higher fee and as such, they are the only two colleges included in the table below.

Target Group and Aim	Objective and timescale	Measures	Input Newcastle College	Input Kidderminster College
Improve continuation rates for POLAR4 1 & 2 students on all full-time undergraduate programmes.	Gap reduced by 1% per year from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This would lead to a gap of 2.2% in 2024-5.	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.
		Financial incentives to study and to engage.	Investment in student bursary package, travel scheme and scholarships.	Investment in student bursary.
		Academic support and enhancement.	Investment in HE Learning Enhancement Team. This includes staffing for five learning enhancement coaches, an achievement co-ordinator and a learning resource assistant.	
		Technology-supported monitoring.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.
Reduce the difference in non-continuation rates between mature and young students on	Gap reduced by 1% per year from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This would lead to a gap of	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.



<b>Target Group and Aim</b>	<b>Objective and timescale</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Input Newcastle College</b>	<b>Input Kidderminster College</b>
part-time other undergraduate programmes	18.0 % in 2024-25.	Academic support and enhancement	Investment in Learning resources to support off-site delivery. Extended library-opening hours to provide better access for those with additional commitments.	
		Technology-supported monitoring	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.
Reduce the difference in non-continuation of disabled and non-disabled students on full-time first degree programmes	Gap reduced by 1% per year from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This would lead to a gap of 6.0 % in 2024-25	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.
		Academic support and enhancement	Investment in Learning resources to support off-site delivery. Investment in Higher Education Support Team.	
		Technology-supported monitoring	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.

Target Group and Aim	Objective and timescale	Measures	Input Newcastle College	Input Kidderminster College
To close the percentage gap in attainment of first class or upper second class degrees between IMD Quintile 5 and Quintiles 1 on full-time first-degree programmes.	To close the gap in attainment of first class degrees between IMD Quintile 5 and Quintile 1 on full-time on first-degree programmes by ten percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 17.8 percentage points in 2024-25.	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.
		Academic support and enhancement	Investment in Learning resources to support off-site delivery. Extended library-opening hours to provide better access for those with additional commitments.	
		Technology-supported monitoring	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.
To close the gap in the attainment of merit or distinction between BAME students and	To close the gap in the attainment of a first class degree or upper second	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.

Target Group and Aim	Objective and timescale	Measures	Input Newcastle College	Input Kidderminster College
white students on other undergraduate programmes.	between BAME and white students on first degree programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 12.9 percentage points by 2024-25.	Academic support and enhancement	Investment in Learning resources to support off-site delivery. Extended library-opening hours to provide better access for those with additional commitments.	
		Technology-supported monitoring	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.
To close the gap in the attainment of a first class degree or upper second between BAME and	To close the gap in the attainment of a first class degree or upper second	Through the institution wide Great Place to Teach initiative provide staff development to support inclusivity.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.	Investment in staff to develop and enhance inclusive practice. Programme to include 1:1 training for teaching staff in student centred teaching and student engagement initiatives.

Target Group and Aim	Objective and timescale	Measures	Input Newcastle College	Input Kidderminster College
white students on first degree programmes.	between BAME and white students on first degree programmes by five percentage points by 2024-25. The residual gap would be 12.9 percentage points by 2024-25.	Academic support and enhancement	Investment in Learning resources to support off-site delivery. Extended library-opening hours to provide better access for part-time students and those with additional commitments.	
		Technology-supported monitoring	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.	Investment in the development of an NCG learner tracking system to better target and monitor areas of underperformance.

## **Alignment with other strategies**

Following our 2018 Ofsted inspection NCG launched the “Great Place to Teach” strategy. This strategy was aimed at improving teaching and outcomes across all of the NCG Colleges and introduced a new NCG Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, the 12 Key Principles of Great Teaching, and a new Skill Scanner Tool that enables teachers to assess their practice. The policy is aligned to the UK Professional Standards for teaching and supporting HE. The principles enable staff to embed and foster creative and innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, the strategy provides consistency across NCG, in both the design of continuous professional development, the integration of our values, and the underpinning focus for evaluation of teaching and learning, mentorship, support and coaching. A related initiative has been to introduce incremental pay scales for lecturing staff who were previously on fixed-point salaries. The increments are to be linked to excellent teaching, which in turn should improve outcomes for both our FE and HE students.

## **Membership of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)**

Newcastle College is a member of the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP), which itself is a partnership of the 5 universities and 15 colleges in the northeast region who are working together to support NCOP target students to progress to higher education. Phase 2 of the project will enable the Partnership to capitalise on our existing collaborative infrastructure in support of a coherent framework to join up and transform HE outreach provision in the region to enable more students to benefit.

In 2019-2020 NECOP will actively support the development of an Outreach Hub to signpost outreach provision provided through Access and Participation Plans and provide additional support and strategic engagement to join up and transform HE outreach provision in the region. The North East region has consistently had the lowest progression rate to higher education in England at age 18. It is our ambition as part of the new Outreach Hub strategic relationship to instigate a step change in attitude and expectation of young people to apply and progress to HE in all its forms. We will therefore explore setting regional HE progression targets in order to measure the effectiveness of our collective efforts in achieving this goal as part of the NCOP.

## **Continuation and Attainment of underrepresented groups.**

Following a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) visit in 2017, NCG implemented across its colleges a number of improvement initiatives. These initiatives, which are listed below, are now adding real benefit for students and stand us in good stead as we work towards our APP continuation targets.

- Strengthened oversight arrangements ensuring the development of comprehensive action plans with clear targets.
- Increased analysis of metrics to enable effective support for students.
- Strengthened student engagement mechanisms to ensure more direct involvement of students in the development and evaluation of action plans.
- Embedded management and governance structures.

In addition to the above, we are also developing mechanisms to embed student analytics. This will allow us to identify students who would benefit from further support.

In developing our Access and Participation Plan, we have made reference to multiple data and reference streams. These have included:

- Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from the What Works? Student Retention and Success programme.
- 'Closing the Attainment Gap'.

## **Strategic Measures**

In the next section, we have outlined our strategic measures. These are described for academic year 2020-21 and will be reviewed (and where necessary refreshed) annually thereafter.

### **1. Comprehensive programme of staff development, linked to the 'Great Place to Teach' initiative, underpinned by research evidence and sector best practice.**

- Develop and deliver training for teaching staff on 'the inclusive curriculum' through the GPTT initiative. Establish a programme to include workshops and 1:1 training for teaching staff on student-centred teaching and student engagement initiatives. This will include a focus on care leavers and will utilise resources developed by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNCEL)
- Establish a Curriculum Leaders Network to provide a regular opportunity for sharing good practice, upskilling, and training with a focus on TLA, Attainment and Retention.
- Establish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity community of practice directly linked to the Advance HE Closing the Attainment Gap project

### **2. Invest in and develop student support activity**

- A learning analytics system will be used by staff to identify students in the target groups who need additional support.
- Establishment of an evidence-based approach to ensure that resources and activities are focused on the areas required.
- Retention and progress of students will be monitored at quarterly Quality Review meetings. Non-continuation, attainment, employment and student satisfaction measures of the target groups will be reviewed annually.
- We deliver provision that sits within an inclusive curriculum and inclusive pedagogic practice context.
- Our activity attempts to build and blend student autonomy, supported learning enhancement, and inclusive measures.

In addition to the above, NCG's student support activity covers three areas: financial incentives, academic support, and technology-supported student monitoring.

Financial Incentives – We will provide a financial package to support students on programme. This package will include subsidised travel scheme, scholarships for funded study, and student bursaries. These will include scholarships for care leavers and care givers. All of these recognise our low participation demographic and aim to provide our non-

traditional students with a financial incentive to study and to stay engaged once on programme.

Analysis and evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of this offer we have used the OfS financial evaluation toolkit, both the student survey and the focus group activity, alongside internally created data that links bursary amount to continuation and attainment.

When we analyse our internally created data relating to student continuation we see that students who were awarded the £1000 bursary at Level 4 had a continuation rate of 90.2% compared to a continuation rate for all Level 4 students of 76.8%. This equates to a 13.4% positive difference for those who took the £1000.

At Level 5, students who took the £1000 bursary had an attainment rate of 91%, which mirrors the average attainment rate of 91%.

Similarly, Level 6 students who took the £1000 bursary had an attainment rate of 91%, which was marginally higher than the average attainment rate of 90.2%.

Using the OfS financial support toolkit, when surveying Level 5 students 77.8% indicated that the bursary they received was either important or very important in enabling them to continue with their studies. Meanwhile, at Level 6 this figure rises to 85.7% of students indicating that the bursary was either important or very important in enabling them to continue with studies.

This analysis indicates that the bursary level within NCG is currently appropriate and a valid tool which supports students to continue between levels and achieves a positive outcome. However, this is something we will evaluate on an annual basis using both the OfS financial toolkit as well as internally created datasets.

College	Financial Support available
Newcastle College	<p>New students (Full-time ONLY):</p> <p>£1000 for students with household income under £25,000 assessed via SLC means tested process only.</p> <p>This will be for all years the students' study at Newcastle College.</p>
Kidderminster College	<p>New students (Full-time ONLY):</p> <p>£1000 for students for students with household income under £25,000 assessed via SLC means tested process only.</p> <p>from POLAR4 1&amp;2 postcodes</p> <p>This will be for all years the students' study at Kidderminster College.</p>

Academic Support – Investments in academic student support and teaching resources are listed below. These investments are supported by the HE Learning Enhancement and the Research and Scholarship teams.

- (i) Study Ready Guarantee (SRG) – academic and financial support promise for our Level 4 students that offers orientation, induction and skills development and resources. The SRG includes books bundles, the digital literacies platform, and student fellowships for first year students.
- (ii) Work Ready Guarantee (WRG) – academic and financial support promise for our Level 5 students that offers practice-based learning, work-based skills development and resources, and professional membership.
- (iii) Graduate Ready Guarantee (GRG) – Level 6 student support centred on financial support to study at Level 6 and dedicated final year project academic support.
- (iv) Student Leaders Programme (SLP) – cross-college and cross-level engagement programme offering paid and volunteering roles, HE community social and enhancement activity (in partnership with the Students' Union) and workshops, events, support, and training for students.

Specific details:

- Investment in and establishment of a Learning Enhancement Team consisting of five learning enhancement coaches, an achievement coordinator, and a learning resource assistant. The team will provide workshops, 1-1 support, and monitoring of at-risk students. This team is available throughout year including over summer break in order to contact students with re-assessments, general workshop activity, and preparation for the next level.
- Extended library hours to allow access to resources for those with off-campus responsibilities and/or those on part-time programmes.
- Continuation of Student Fellowship offer leading to a further 150 fellowships available to students, enabling student input into college-wide HE community projects, providing opportunities for peer socialising irrespective of discipline, and motivating students to stay on programme.
- Establishment of a peer-mentoring programme that runs across the academic year involving student fellows, the Learning Enhancement coaches, and students. The purpose is to enable existing students to mentor new students in order to provide support. Students are likely to be paired with a mentor who is from the same programme.
- Investment in two careers and employability coaches who are specifically tasked with supporting students into meaningful placement, internships, careers, or further study.
- Investment in a cross-college digital literacies online platform. This space will provide digital orientation and induction resources for new students, and a pathway of continued digital competency support that aligns with HE Student Support Services, our International Office, generic academic and professional skills modules, and the work of the HE Learning Enhancement team. We aim to tie this to an FE version of the platform, to aid (internal) student transition to Level 4 study. The digital literacies platform will hold non-credit bearing content but will align with credit-bearing modules. Students will be encouraged to engage with the platform throughout the length of their study and to undertake optional skills enhancement programmes housed within the platform, as suited to their own skills development pathway. The



need to address the digital literacy gap is not simply an economic one but a social one: much research “demonstrates the ways in which digital exclusion intersects with social and economic exclusion, and points to the ways in which social and economic exclusion are further exacerbated by digital exclusion” (Bach, Shaffer & Wolfson, 2013: 251). A lack of digital literacy “increasingly implicates one’s full potential of being a competent student, an empowered employee or an engaged citizen (Meyersa, Erickson, Small, 2013: 1). Hence, the need for higher education providers to foster digital literacy in order to increase the likelihood of student success, both within and beyond the institution.

- Investment in book bundles for every new Level 4 student (full-time and part-time), which will contain hard copies of core texts. Included in this book bundle is a student well-being/support text. This book is positioned to highlight support mechanisms and self-help for students on programme to encourage well-being, motivation and continuation.
- Dedicated support to students who declare a disability. This happens through the Higher Education Support Team in partnership with academic staff. Students who choose to declare a disability are given the opportunity to meet with a specialist adviser who establishes a tailored support plan that is shared appropriately with academic staff to enable implementation. In addition, the group understands that interventions make a positive difference to student attainment. Observing strict confidentiality, staff will refer students to the Higher Education Support Team when students fail to engage in-group work, when written work does not reflect a student’s ability, if assignments are routinely submitted late, and when there is any indication of deteriorating health.
- We will draw upon intelligence within the sector in relation to BAME attainment levels, particularly from those institutions with a high population of BAME students who have identified, tested and subsequently disseminated good practice. In addition, we recognise that students must be at the centre of any initiatives developed to bridge the attainment gap.

Technology-Supported Student Monitoring – this will allow support teams within NCG to identify and target appropriate support to students in need of support, including care leavers. This will be done via:

- Implementation of new data dashboard that will enable more accurate monitoring and targeting of resources on under-represented groups.
- Investment in technology to better support students’ learning and assessment targeted at those requiring additional support relating to medical conditions, including mental health, dyslexia, and autism.
- Programmes with poor metrics (in the previous year) are included in the Programme Improvement Process, which scrutinises programme data including student satisfaction, withdrawal, non-continuation, progression and attainment. Resulting action plans that are owned by the programme team are monitored throughout the academic year to manage improvement. The action plan is a central focus for regular programme team meetings to track students at risk and to provide fluid approaches to (re)engaging target students.

### 3.2 Student consultation

The institution has a strongly collaborative approach to working with students to enhance and improve their learning experience and this strength was acknowledged by QAA in their TDAP report in 2016:

*“There are clear and well organised processes for obtaining feedback from students, staff and employers, all of which contribute to course design, approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. Internal student satisfaction and module surveys are benchmarked with the Group's sectoral competitor base, so better informing subsequent internal evaluation. NCG's Higher Education Partnership Strategy (Student Charter) captures the vision to position students at the heart of their own learning and to ensure that the student voice is always heard.” (QAA TDAP report 2016)*

Students from a range of backgrounds, including those from the target groups, have been involved in the development of this APP. Specifically, this included a focus group that contained sixteen students, with representation from all of the under-represented target groups.

From the meetings of the focus group it was noted that students were clearly in favour of the support packages that are currently in place and spoke very positively about them. It was clear, however, that there were as many different preferences in the room as there were students.

With regard to bursaries, there was some discussion around fairness with some students saying that all students should be entitled to bursaries – irrespective of their circumstances. As an institution, we reached the conclusion that our financial support package would represent better value for money if it were directed towards our most disadvantaged students.

Once the APP was worked up into a draft, students were given a further opportunity to comment on the contents. Whilst this worked well it was noted that due to the timing (it was close to the end of the academic year) going forwards we need to work at delivering a more strategic year-round interaction with the students.

Further to this our student fellows are members of all of our HE reporting committees, received papers, and had the opportunity to be part of the discussions as the plan was developed.

### 3.3 Evaluation strategy

#### Background

The assessment of performance clearly demonstrates that it is the student success phase of the student lifecycle where we need to direct our efforts and this is made clear in the strategic approach we have taken and the targets that have been set.

Ultimately, the evidence that the approach has been successful will be improved student continuation and attainment for the under-represented target groups identified earlier in this plan.

We will be regularly monitoring progress against these targets with these results being reported through to management and our HE Governance Committee. Our evaluation strategy will seek to investigate the effectiveness of the interventions we are making to close the gaps in our performance. In developing our approach, we have referred to the OfS self-assessment tool.

Reflecting on our current position, we conclude that following the 2017 QAA UQI recommendations we have made significant progress in our use of data to monitor student progression. Where we have greater opportunities to enhance our approach is in relation to the evaluation and impact of our activities.

Having completed the OfS self-assessment evaluation tool we have identified the following areas for development in terms of our approach to evaluation. In summary, we need to:

- Develop a data strategy to support APP evaluation. This will be developed in consultation with stakeholders across the organisation and should be in place for the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year.
- Make 'evaluation of our APP' a standing item on our Quality Review meetings, Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, HE Academic Board, and HE Governance Committee. Our calendar of reporting has been updated to reflect this and will come into operation during the course of the 2019-20 academic year.
- Identify existing staff with well-developed evaluation expertise who we can engage in the evaluation process. This will take place during the 2019-20 academic year.
- Implement a programme of staff development so that there is a shared knowledge and understanding of our approach to evaluation. This will happen in the 2020-21 academic year along with the launch of the data strategy and utilising the identified in house expertise.
- Engage more widely with sector best practice and gather more evidence on improving student success and attainment. This will take place from the 2019-20 academic year and form part of our continuous improvement as we work through the measures contained in this plan.

### **NCG APP Evaluation strategy**

The purpose of our evaluation strategy is to:

- Promote and share our vision.
- Promote the development of reflective practitioners.
- Provide early indication of where the APP may not be having the intended outcomes and allow interactions to be taken to address.
- Identify successful practice and if necessary re-direct resources to the more successful practice.
- Support improvement.
- Inform resource allocation.
- Ensure accountability across our Colleges.
- Ensure that expectations are being met.
- Contribute to a broader evidence base and to inform future policy and practice by others outside the organisation.

### **Evaluation methodology**

For each of the measures identified earlier within this document we have a clear expectation of what we aim to achieve. The evaluation methodology will be a mixed methods approach that will challenge and assess our successfulness in terms of achieving

the established targets and will consider both qualitative and quantitative data. Funding for a post to support the evaluation strategy is included within the resource plan. Evaluation intensity will be conducted in proportion to the level of resource investment of each of the measures.

The following data is to be collected and used:

- Key internal data on continuation and achievement will be monitored and reported on for all the under-represented groups.
- Admissions data, including internal progression from Level 3 students, will be monitored.
- The data from the annual National Student Survey (NSS) and internal student surveys will be analysed by under-represented groups to identify any changes over time.
- The NSS comments will be analysed to identify change over time along with the identification of any new issues.
- Focus sessions with students from under-represented groups will be held at the beginning and end of each academic year to assess and evaluate the support and any impact it has provided.
- HE Staff surveys will be undertaken at the outset of the APP and then annually throughout.
- In 2019, we used the OfS evaluation toolkit to evaluate the Student support packages. This will continue over the lifespan of the project.
- Data on staff and student participation in activities will be maintained and analysed.
- The OfS APP dataset will be reviewed and used to inform decision-making.
- The OfS financial evaluation toolkit will be used to assess the effectiveness of the financial support packages to support students on programme.

As the plan APP is implemented further data will be gathered on all of the activities and support measures, for example:

- Bursary uptake.
- Frequency of participation in support activities.
- Staff participation in development activities.
- Engagement in student fellows' scheme.

Data will be triangulated to test the theory of change that improved teaching engagement and support improves continuation and attainment for the identified target groups.

For example, we will analyse end of year attainment for all under-represented groups and compare that with previous years. In addition, we will analyse the participation of target groups in support activities and test whether or not there is any correlation between inputs on outcomes for student success.

We will undertake a similar analysis of staff participation and compare against the outcomes for students in those areas.

### **Evaluation of Financial support**

In 2020 we will strengthen the mechanisms we will use to evaluate the effectiveness of the student bursary using methodologies recommended by the OfS.

We will be investigating the following:

- How is our financial support working and the impact it has on student outcomes?
- Is it having the intended impact?
- How we can share and understand the findings with others at your institution who have a stake in effective financial support?
- How do these findings confirm, develop or challenge our understanding from previous evaluations or research?
- What possible changes could you make that are likely to improve impact?
- Is your financial support an effective use of money to achieve the desired impact?
- What new questions are raised to drive future evaluation or research?

In line with the OfS guidance we will gather information using the Bristol Online Survey. As part of the analysis we will refer to examples of analysis performed by one of the pilot institutions.

We will also use the statistical tool recommended by the OfS for financial support information.

This framework will help us to evaluate the relationship between financial support and four specific academic student outcomes:

- Retention into second year (continuation).
- Degree completion within five years.
- Degree attainment level or grade.
- Graduate outcome.

The data will be interpreted alongside findings from the survey tool.

Compared with universities we have a small number of higher education students and a proportionately smaller unit of resource to support evaluation of the benefits of financial support. We note that other much larger institutions offering financial support packages have plans in place to evaluate the value of these and we will be monitoring these outcomes to further inform our own practice.

### **Intended audience**

The evaluation strategy will be considered at all levels of the institution. Students, Governors and the Executive will receive regular reports through the established institutional reporting structures. NCG HE Registry staff will work with College HE Managers to evaluate the management of the APP. In turn, College HE Managers will work with programme teams to evaluate activities at curriculum and programme level.

## Reporting

Learning from quantitative and qualitative evaluation will feed in to HE Committee structures and lead to proposals to influence practice and strategic planning. These will be shared at all levels and approved by HE Academic Board and be monitored by the HE Governance Committee. Where interventions are not showing a positive impact these will be highlighted and actions to refocus resources on interventions that are having a positive impact will inform business planning and budget setting. We will also keep a watching brief on national research on the evaluation of interventions that have a positive impact on continuation and attainment and use that knowledge to inform business planning and budget setting.

We will use both published evidence and draw upon our own evaluation to inform our approach to programme design. For example, our approach to address BAME gaps in attainment will draw on the evidence-based UUK has created which includes a collection of case studies. We will also draw on the HEPI report “The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequalities in higher education”.

Our learning from this evidence will feed into our robust institutional reporting infrastructure have a direct impact on our future approach to programme design in the following ways:

- Challenge teams to consider inclusive assessment methods at the strategic planning phase of programme design
- Make analysis of BAME data a routine part of periodic reviews
- Provide staff with training and resources on inclusive learning so they are better equipped to design and deliver an inclusive curriculum
- Challenge module leaders to review their reading lists to include more BAME authors

The findings of the evaluation will be drawn together at the end of each academic year and recommendations will be made that will be used to inform the next cycle of activity in the APP. In addition, in year reporting will be undertaken on a quarterly basis. Annual results will be shared with the OfS as part of their requirements.

### 3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

NCG has a well-established and effective academic infrastructure and governance system.

A detailed APP action plan outlining the milestones, targets and activities has been drawn up. This will be a live document that will be updated on a quarterly basis by those responsible for each section. The action plan will be an agenda item for discussion at the quarterly HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, HE Academic Board (Chaired by the Accountable Officer,) and HE Governance Committee (Chaired by a Governor who was previously a university Deputy Vice Chancellor). There is student representation on all of these committee/boards and students will have the opportunity to input into the development, implementation, and evaluation of the plan. The Director of HE will include monthly updates on progress against targets in the HE report to the Executive, which in turn is reported to NCG.

If progress against targets is not being made the plan will be reviewed and the reasons behind the lack of progress will be investigated. If necessary, the plan will be revised and re-focussed.

The staff development strand of the plan will ensure that staff, governors and students are aware of the institutional commitment and their own role in meeting the targets in the APP.

#### **4. Provision of information to students**

Students will be provided with information about their course with their offer letter. Details of the fees and any associated costs will be displayed on the relevant college websites. Links to a copy of this Access and Participation Plan will also be published on the college websites.

Students will be provided with information about the financial support that they are entitled to during application and at enrolment. This will include the eligibility criteria and set out the level of financial support for students offered in each year of their studies. The information will be provided in the offer letters students receive and will also be available on the relevant college website.

#### **5. Appendix 1**

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

#### **6. Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms**

**POLAR4** – The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification group areas across the UK based on the proportion of the young population that participates in higher education. It looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area.

POLAR classifies local areas into five groups - or quintiles - based on the proportion of 18-year olds who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old.

Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

**IMD** - The Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD, is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. It is the most widely used of the Indices of Deprivation (described in question 2). The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

**BAME** – Relates to students who are from Black, Asian and minority ethnicities.

#### **Main datasets used:**

Office for Students Access and Participation Dashboard

Office for Students Access and Participation Dataset release

Internally created NCG analysis

## **Office for Students Access and Participation Dashboard**

The OfS APP dashboard was used to analyse NCG performance against the OfS Key Performance Measures only. It is important to note that these KPMs do not match identically the APP Assessment of Performance section of the template. Also, within the Dashboard the OfS use “Continuation” as a term, however, within the templates non-continuation is the term used.

## **Office for Students Access and Participation Dataset release**

The OfS released a dataset to all providers in March 2019 and again in May 2019 that contained their statistical analysis of each provider’s performance for Access, Continuation, Attainment and Progression. These are four different workbooks. Along with these workbooks, we also received the corresponding data for the sector as a whole. This data was not split by provider and does not have any institutions within it, simply national average statistics.

We used this dataset as the primary source of information when analysing NCG performance, however, we experienced the following issues:

Access – No issues with the data provided to NCG. Robust and consistent data for all years within scope.

Non-continuation – No issues with the data provided to NCG. Robust and consistent data for all years within scope.

Attainment – The dataset provided to NCG does not consist of robust data for two reasons. Grade data has not been returned for all years within scope meaning years of null return. Secondly, attainment analysis by the OfS is solely on Level 6 programmes (Top- up and UG) and performs no analysis on Foundation Degrees, which is our largest cohort.

Progression – The dataset provided to NCG is not a consistently robust set of data as we have had years of unreportable data and therefore does not identify any areas of significant concern.

## **Internally created NCG analysis**

We have used internally created data to assess our students Attainment for two reasons. Firstly, the issues with the OfS statistical release (unreportable data and no focus on Level 5) and as Newcastle College are part of the Advance HE Closing the Attainment Gap we have generated a substantial amount of analysis on all students and underrepresented groups. We have only used NCG created data for Attainment in our APP.



**Access and participation plan  
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: NCG

Provider UKPRN: 10004599

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Newcastle College University Centre	£9,000
First degree	Programmes at Carlisle College	£6,165
First degree	Programmes at Kidderminster College	£8,150
First degree	Programmes at Southwark College	£6,165
Foundation degree	Newcastle College University Centre	£9,000
Foundation degree	Programmes at Carlisle College	£6,165
Foundation degree	Programmes at Southwark College	£6,165
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Programmes at Kidderminster College	£8,150
CertHE/DipHE	Newcastle College University Centre	£9,000
Postgraduate ITT	Newcastle College University Centre	£9,000
Postgraduate ITT	Programmes at Carlisle College	£6,165
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: NCG

Provider UKPRN: 10004599

## Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£266,623.85	£266,623.85	£266,623.85	£266,623.85	£266,623.85
Access (pre-16)	£113,388.71	£113,388.71	£113,388.71	£113,388.71	£113,388.71
Access (post-16)	£112,459.14	£112,459.14	£112,459.14	£112,459.14	£112,459.14
Access (adults and the community)	£40,776.00	£40,776.00	£40,776.00	£40,776.00	£40,776.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£1,423,000.00	£1,444,499.00	£1,467,218.00	£1,491,685.00	£1,514,848.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£91,041.00	£91,041.00	£91,041.00	£91,041.00	£91,041.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HF1)</b>	£5,290,135.00	£5,378,020.00	£5,525,440.00	£5,766,415.00	£5,902,495.00
<b>Access investment</b>	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
<b>Financial support</b>	26.9%	26.9%	26.6%	25.9%	25.7%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%
<b>Total investment (as %HF1)</b>	32.6%	32.6%	32.2%	31.4%	31.2%

