



Access and Participation Plan

2022-23 to 2026-27

INTRODUCTION

Based in Chapeltown, Leeds, the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is a leading centre for contemporary dance in the UK and is currently the only institution to offer conservatoire-level professional dance training in the North of England. NSCD's programmes at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels nurture versatile and independent dance artists with highly tuned technical, creative and performance skills, ready for entry into the profession. NSCD is committed to widening access and recruits the most talented students, regardless of personal circumstance.

Until 2022-23, NSCD has been a member School of Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD). This is the first year NSCD will operate independently with full registration with the Office for Students (OfS), and its own Access and Participation Plan (APP). However, this APP builds upon the practices and experiences in delivering fair access and participation outcomes NSCD already has in place.

NSCD is a small institution, with approximately 226 undergraduate students. The learning and the student experience is highly personalised, providing rich learning experiences and a personal approach to student wellbeing.

Our Mission and Strategic Plan

NSCD's commitment to fair access and participation is at the core of the institution and is enshrined in our Mission and Strategic Plan (2017-2022)¹. Our vision is underpinned by our core values which reflect equality, diversity and inclusion along the whole student journey. NSCD aims to, 'provide an inspirational learning experience, from first contact through into the profession, enabling aspiring dance artists, and dance professionals, regardless of background, to shape the future of dance'. We are committed to a student experience that is person-centred with individual identities, cultures and backgrounds nurtured and felt through the work students undertake. NSCD aim to send well-prepared graduates into the industry who can, 'encourage the sector to embrace change and celebrate the impact and value that quality dance work and education can bring to human beings and society'. NSCD is acutely aware of the inequality of opportunity to access Higher Education and recognises the need for a focused response. In this context NSCD can be proud of the progression and success of our diverse student community, while recognising the improvements to be achieved.

NSCD fosters an inclusive, mutually respectful and generous learning culture; a safe place to take creative risks in developing as artists and individuals. With its Riley Theatre, visiting artists and community engagement, NSCD is a dynamic creative hub hosting community classes and supporting the staging and presenting of aspirational and inspiring performances. Student engagement with both professional practitioners and the community is intrinsic to the programme of learning.

NSCD treats its student body as full members of the institution's community, recognising diversity and equality of opportunity for all, treating students with respect and professionalism. We are committed to working in partnership with students as co-authors in a positive journey that will shape their higher education experience. This commitment is provided in our Student Charter².

1. Assessment of Performance

- A note on the dataset:** Analysis is drawn from OfS datasets. This dataset contains significant rounding of small data sets. This will have potential impact on our targets monitoring, and should be taken into account in subsequent monitoring returns. NSCD's data relating to access, participation and success deal with small cohorts of students, which leads to significant fluctuation in the percentage data analyses and makes it challenging to assess trends and determine targets. Where appropriate, NSCD has therefore applied multi-year aggregates and cohort groupings to mitigate the effect of small cohorts. NSCD has not been able to provide some data where data protection principles apply.

1.1 Higher education participation and socioeconomic status

¹ <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Strategic-Plan-2017-22-brochure-final.pdf>

² <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/higher-education/student-charter/>

Access by POLAR4

Analysis from the OfS Access and Participation dataset shows that Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) consistently attracts more students from POLAR4 Quintiles 4 and 5. Access for POLAR4 Quintile 1 remains relatively low over time and is subject to fluctuations in percentage data due to the small overall cohorts. This makes trends very difficult to assess and therefore aggregates have been applied to allocating targets in participation between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 groups.

Young (U21), FT UG Entrants (%)					
POLAR4 quintile	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
POLAR4Q1	10%	10%	15%	15%	5%
POLAR4Q2	20%	20%	10%	10%	15%
POLAR4Q3	10%	15%	20%	20%	15%
POLAR4Q4	25%	30%	25%	25%	30%
POLAR4Q5	35%	20%	30%	30%	35%
POLAR4 Q5-Q1 Gap	25pp	10pp	20pp	20pp	30pp
POLAR4 Q5-Q1 Gap, 5-yr Aggregate (2015-16 to 2019-20)	-	-	-	-	20pp

While NSCD attract lower numbers of POLAR4 Q1 students, in 2018-19 the gap for POLAR4 Q1 – Q5 was 20 percentage points, which was comparable to the average sector gap, at 18.2 percentage points. However, in the latest 2019-20 data, this gap increases to 30 percentage points. This significant increase is the effect of small cohorts, which we sought to mitigate by exploring the latest aggregate gap.

NSCD recognises it needs to improve its performance, and is committed to doing so, particularly in terms of contributing to the national Key Performance Measure (KPM) of eliminating the gap in participation between students from the most and least represented groups at high-tariff providers.

Access by IMD

NSCD has generally recruited higher proportions of students from IMD Quintiles 3-5. Participation of IMD Q1 in 2018-19 is however an anomaly at 30%, which significantly outperforms the sector average at 22.1%. The 5-year aggregate shows a slightly fluctuating intake of IMD Q1 students over time, although these variations are more pronounced due to the small cohort sizes.

FT UG, Indicators (%)					
English IMD quintile	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
IMDQ1	15%	10%	15%	30%	10%
IMDQ2	20%	DP	10%	10%	15%
IMDQ3	15%	25%	20%	DP	35%
IMDQ4	15%	35%	25%	15%	10%
IMDQ5	35%	20%	30%	35%	30%
IMDQ5-Q1 Gap	20pp	10pp	15pp	5pp	20pp
IMD Q5-Q1 Gap, 5-yr Aggregate (2015-16 to 2019-20)	-	-	-	-	14pp

Considering comparison to the sector average (-1.4%), the gap in the latest 5-year aggregate participation rates between IMD Q1 compared to Q5 at NSCD (14%) remains a concern under this Plan.

Continuation by POLAR4 and IMD

It is difficult to make assessment here due to the size of cohorts and data available. Even when analysed using 3-year averages and with aggregate groups of Q1+Q2 and Q3,4+5, the percentage data is still very susceptible to small base cohorts. Whilst data is too small to report here, NSCD has determined it generally performs well in continuation for POLAR4 and IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 students, and based on the very small cohorts, there are no statistically significant gaps between outcomes for these target groups.

This is in comparison to the sector, which observes a 4.6% gap between students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 areas; and an 8.1% gap between students from IMD Q1 and Q5.

Attainment by POLAR4 and IMD

Again, assessment is difficult due to very small cohort sizes. However, while data is too small to specifically report, NSCD have found no statistically significant gaps in attainment rates between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students and IMD Q1 and Q5 students; with Q1 students in both target groups often achieving 100% outcomes rates.

Progression by POLAR4 and IMD

Again, assessment is difficult due to extremely small cohort sizes. However, while data is too small to specifically report, NSCD have found no statistically significant gaps in progression rates between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students and IMD Q1 and Q5 students.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access by Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

NSCD has historically attracted good numbers of Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, with its highest intake in 2014-15, at 33% (rounded data). While this percentage intake then fell, it remains relatively high at 20% for 2018-19. However, this figure fell in 2019-20 to its lowest at 11%. Again, small cohorts mean that these percentage figures fluctuate significantly. This is lower than the average sector performance for 2018-19, at 31.3%.

Data by ethnicity is too small to report here and does not provide any ability for analysis, given the extremely small cohorts. Therefore any analysis has been made on the Black, Asian and minority ethnic grouping.

% Black, Asian & minority ethnic					
Row Labels	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Percentage Black Asian and Minority Ethnic entrants	20%	15%	20%	20%	11%

As intake has been consistently lower than sector averages since 2015-16, and given the dip in the latest 2019-20 intake, this area remains a target under this Plan.

Continuation by Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Again, assessment is difficult due to extremely small cohort sizes and the same difficulties as seen in POLAR4 and IMD analyses arise. However, while data is too small to specifically report, NSCD have found no statistically significant gaps in attainment rates between Black, Asian and minority ethnic and white students.

This is in comparison to the broader sector average, where a gaps for all ethnic groups are observed, with the gap for Black students being most prominent at 6.6% (2017-18).

Attainment by Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

In the context of strong overall performance, NSCD have determined no statistically significant gaps in attainment between White and Black, Asian and minority ethnic students. While data is too small to report, Black, Asian and minority ethnic attainment in 2017-18 and 2018-19 was 100%, with 3-year averages showing no material gaps in attainment between Black, Asian and minority ethnic and white students.

NSCD outperforms the sector, where again gaps for all ethnic groups are observed, with the sector average gap for Black students being again most concerning at 22.1% (2018-19).

Progression by Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Available data, in the context of strong overall performance, indicate no material gaps in terms of progression to employment or further study for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students. While specific data is too small to report, 5-year averages show that Black, Asian and minority ethnic and white students perform comparatively in progression outcomes.

1.3 Mature students

Access by Mature Learners

NSCD has historically recruited very small numbers of mature learners (<5 for last three years). This is a particularly difficult group for NSCD to attract, given the nature of our courses in Dance, which traditionally require students to be engaged in training continuously from a young age. Given these structural constraints, NSCD does not intend to focus on this target group as part of this Plan. However, NSCD will consider any emerging opportunities to further explore the possibility of attracting mature learners. For example, NSCD are developing new courses such as Lighting & Stage Management, which may provide opportunities for mature learners. NSCD will monitor the data from these new provisions over time and may seek to set targets in the future.

Continuation by Mature Learners

In the context of strong overall performance and the difficulties of assessment and reporting of specific data due to extremely small cohort sizes, NSCD have found no material gaps in continuation rates between Young and Mature Learners. NSCD outperforms the sector, where gaps for Mature Learner continuation are observed, with the sector average gap being 8.2% (2017-18).

Attainment by Mature Learners

Again, NSCD have determined no material gaps in attainment between Young and Mature Learners, although data is too small to report specifically. NSCD outperforms the sector, where again gaps for Mature Learner attainment are observed, with the sector average gap being 9.9% (2018-19).

Progression by Mature Learners

NSCD has a positive gap in progression outcomes for Mature Learners, with 100% progression rate for Mature learners in (2016-17) (DLHE data).

1.4 Disabled students

Access by Disabled Students

The proportion of disabled students at NSCD has remained high over the last six years. Following a dip in participation in 2015-16, the proportion of disabled students has again increased, and in 2019-20 stands at 30%. NSCD significantly and consistently outperforms sector averages for intake of disabled students, with the sector average for 2018-19 being 15.8%.

% Disabled					
Row Labels	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Percentage Disabled	20%	40%	45%	30%	30%

While fully disaggregated data is too small to report, NSCD note most disabled students (50% in 2019-20) fall into the category of Cognitive and Learning Disabilities. This analysis informs the types of support measures required and provided. Other significant support relates to mental health.

Continuation by Disabled Students

In the context of difficulties of assessment and reporting of specific data due to extremely small cohort sizes, NSCD have found no statistically significant gaps in continuation rates between Disabled and Non-disabled learners.

Attainment by Disabled Students

NSCD have identified no statistically significant gaps in attainment between Disabled and Non-disabled students. Whilst the disaggregated data is too small to include and small data has the potential to make percentages fluctuate widely over time, in 2019-20 Disabled student attainment was 100%. However, these data represent extremely small datasets.

Progression by Disabled Students

Again NSCD have identified no statistically significant gaps in progression between Disabled and Non-disabled students.

1.5 Care leavers

NSCD has extremely low numbers of care leaver students and has had none in some years over the past 5 years. While this is a concern, NSCD does not propose to set any targets at this stage given the significant structural barriers to access here and a need to further explore this area to determine what appropriate targets may be set in the future.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

NSCD does not propose to provide further analysis here, as analysis and meaningful assessment of intersections is either prohibited or significantly compromised by the extremely small cohort sizes, rendering analysis largely meaningless.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

NSCD have a very small cohort of estranged students (as defined by student finance guide and standalone organisation) in 2019-20. Given very small cohorts, we do not propose to provide any further analysis at this stage but will monitor intake and seek to conduct further exploration where appropriate into the future.

3. Strategic Aims and Objectives

The Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is committed to widening access and to recruiting the most talented students and supporting them to succeed at the NSCD, regardless of personal circumstance. NSCD aims to ensure it supports and facilitates access and success in ways that promote equality and overcome disadvantage.

2.1 Target Groups

In the context of NSCD's exit from the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama in 2022-23, and with limited data relating to access and participation due to very small cohorts, determining targets over the longer term is difficult. In the short term, the NSCD is focusing on the key gaps identified in the Performance Assessment, and contextualising target-setting based on our context. Where specific targets are not set as part of this Plan, will continue to monitor outcomes for targeted cohorts across the lifecycle, and ensure we are aware of national priorities in relation to access and participation, testing our own data against relevant sector data. This will help to ensure that equality of opportunity is maintained, and further gaps do not emerge across the whole lifecycle.

Based on assessment of its performance, NSCD's targets will focus on Access, as the priority area for improvement. The following table provides key target groups across the lifecycle, based on the assessment of performance.

Target group	Access	Success (continuation)	Success (attainment)	Progression
POLAR4 Q1	X			
IMD Q1	X			
BLACK ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC	X			

Access Targets

NSCD's targets are:

1. **Aim:** To close the gap in the proportion of undergraduate students who are from lowest participation neighbourhoods, compared to those from the highest. **Objective:** decrease the gap in participation between POLAR4 Quintile 1 and POLAR4 Quintile 5 young (under 21) entrants, from baseline 5-year aggregate 20 percentage points (2015-16 to 2019-20) to 11.5 percentage points (2022-23 to 2026-27).

Baseline (5-year aggregate 2015-16 to 2019-20)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
20pp	20pp	18pp	16pp	14pp	11.5pp

Longer-term, NSCD's objective is to eliminate the gap between POLAR4 Q1&2 (aggregate) and Q5 by 2038-39, reflecting the OfS KPM.

2. **Aim:** To close the gap in the proportion of undergraduate students who are from the most deprived neighbourhoods, compared to those from the least. **Objective:** decrease the gap in participation between IMD Quintile 1 and IMD Quintile 5 entrants, from baseline 5-year aggregate 14 percentage points (2017-18 to 2019-20) to 4 percentage points (2022-23 to 2026-27).

Baseline (5-year aggregate 2015-16 to 2019-20)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
14pp	12.5pp	10.5pp	8.5pp	6.5pp	4pp

Longer term, the School's objective is to ensure further improvement in relation to access for students from the most deprived backgrounds (IMD Quintiles 1 and 2), eliminating the gap between IMD Q1 and Q5 by 2038-39. Further targets may be established as performance is monitored, and progress better understood as trends emerge over the life of this Plan.

In setting this target, we have considered structural challenges to participation of disadvantaged students, including the young age at which dance practice and performance needs to start and the costs associated with ongoing tuition, which is not covered in schools learning and therefore is extra-curricular activity. Given this context, and the early intervention required before impact is seen, NSCD consider these targets ambitious.

3. **Aim:** To increase the proportion of undergraduate students who are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. **Objective:** increase the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic entrants, from 3-year average 17% (2017-18 to 2019-20) to meet current sector average at 30% (rounded) (2024-25 to 2026-27).

Baseline (Average 2017-18 to 2019-20)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
17%	19%	22%	25%	27.5%	30%

Success and Progression Targets

NSCD has not identified any statistically significant gaps in performance in the areas of continuation, attainment or progression for target groups and therefore does not propose to set targets in these areas

at this time. However, data will be monitored through the life of this Plan and should gaps emerge, NSCD will seek to set additional targets in agreement with the OfS.

3. Strategic Measures

3.1 Whole-provider Strategic Approach

The Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is committed to improving access as well as maintaining excellent standards in success and progression outcomes for an increasingly diverse student body. NSCD's access and participation work will focus on increasing access for students from the most underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds (POLAR4 Quintile 1; IMD Quintile 1) and from Black, Asian and minority ethnic students. We will achieve this through continued development of school, community and other key stakeholder relationships and partnerships, and targeted, collaborative approaches to outreach. NSCD will also maintain a focus on continuation, attainment and progression outcomes, ensuring that excellent outcomes continue.

NSCD also commits to continuing its institution-wide approach to fair access and participation, and to furthering institutional capacity, awareness and engagement with the agenda through an embedded, whole-provider approach. A key objective will be to support the development of an increasingly evidence-based, data-driven approach, which will drive decision-making. We will make ongoing improvements in strategy, leadership and governance, and implement a distributed leadership model with associated training and development for our staff.

Whole Provider Theory of Change and Strategic Measures

Strategic Theme	Inputs	Change	Impact
Data and Evidence-driven Leadership & Development	Effective leadership and institutional development, driven by data, evaluation and evidence	<p>Increasingly evidence-led and data-driven practices, leading to continuous improvement.</p> <p>Staff supported & developed; active performance monitoring is in place. Staff are more aware of data/ evidence and best practices.</p> <p>Improved staff awareness and understanding regarding experiences of target students and addressing potential barriers.</p>	Increased practice standards, supporting continuous improvement in student outcomes across Access, Success & Progression.
Increasing Diversity through Growth, Coherent Outreach Practices & Embedding in our Community	Diversifying our offer for targeted growth	Broader, more diverse and inclusive course offer results in stimulation of interest and applications from more diverse communities.	Students are equipped to progress to HE. Students are more informed and aware of university life and learning. Target students successfully apply and enrol.
	Targeted, progressive and coherent outreach programme, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student journey: Outreach to Transition-in Coherence with broader recruitment practices 	<p>Stimulates confidence, awareness and interest in HE. Students more likely to consider and apply to HE and to NSCD. Student skills and experience (attainment) in relevant discipline areas is increased and nurtured. Pathways into NSCD (or HE) are better understood and supported; students can make informed, supported decisions.</p> <p>Enables target students to successfully participate in outreach and access programmes, and subsequently be successful in admission.</p>	Target students are offered places at NSCD (or other HE) and confidently enrol.

		Efficiency and broader reach into target learners is achieved through targeting and leveraging the broader recruitment agenda.	
	Embedding in Community: Partnerships and Collaboration	Improves broad engagement with diverse community. Improves activity reach & effectiveness via key stakeholders. Increases key organisation, teacher & key influencer engagement to provide ongoing support to target students.	Reach and scale of outreach work is increased and target groups are enabled through key influencers and networks.
Innovative, Inclusive and Inspiring Learning Environment	Inclusive and inspiring teaching & learning with student wellbeing embedded	An inclusive curriculum with a focus on wellbeing appeals to more diverse student groups and supports the ongoing success and participation of all students. Students are more likely to be retained, engage & achieve higher degree and satisfaction outcomes.	High proportions of student continuation, attainment and graduate level progression. Comparable rates of success in all areas across cohort & target groups.
	Inspiring and connecting students for positive employability outcomes	Ensures students are able to set career goals, make networks into professions and industry and are more likely to enter relevant employment.	

This is a strategy that will continue beyond the life of this Plan. Embedded leadership for fair access and participation, from the executive and distributed across the School, sets our expectations for the access and participation agenda as a whole-institution effort. Building capacities in data management and analysis, and in evaluation and research, is a key feature that will continue to develop into and beyond this Plan, driving our understanding and continuous improvement.

Alignment with other strategies

NSCD Strategic Plan (2017-22)

“Integral to our mission at NSCD is widening participation and creating access routes into dance at all levels.”

As NSCD has access and inclusion at the heart of our institution, this APP finds easy alignment with our Strategic Plan (2017-22). NSCD’s core mission is to, ‘provide an inspirational learning experience, from first contact through into the profession, enabling aspiring dance artists, and dance professionals, regardless of background, to shape the future of dance’. This will be achieved through our strong culture and focus on inclusivity and diversity, in which we foster ‘an inclusive, mutually respectful and generous learning culture’.

NSCD recognise the value of diversity and we are committed in our Strategic Plan, and this APP, to inclusive learning across the School with respect for difference. As detailed in our Strategic Plan, staff and students ‘value the enrichment diversity brings to the creative life of NSCD’ and value the diversity of the student voice, which is ‘embedded in the school’s ongoing development’. These core principles are embedded at the institutional heart and align with the commitments in this Plan.

NSCD’s Strategic Plan sets out a number of objectives that have been aligned in this APP and allow for fair access and participation to drive our broader institutional mission. Of particular note, NSCD have committed to:

- Targeting communities through knowledge exchange and outreach provision in order to raise aspiration, widen participation and ensure the diversity of the student body.

- By auditioning and recruiting locally, regionally, nationally and internationally seeking to bring the world to Leeds and create a student and staff cohort that reflects the rich and complex nature of society.
- Working as a Northern advocate for access to dance education and its impact in transforming lives.
- Enriching the learning environment and process through equipping graduates to engender and champion inclusion, equality and diversity within the dance industry and profession.
 - Employability continues to be at the heart of our curriculum, where its content and delivery is work-related and through opportunities for students to apply knowledge transfer through real 'lived' experiences, and placements.

The Strategic Plan and this APP both set clear expectations and priorities for access, learning and participation. As described in both Plans, NSCD 'want to ensure that we are opening the doors to dance for everyone... [and] remove barriers to participation particularly for young people who find themselves at a disadvantage due to their background, socio economic circumstances, race, sexuality or physicality'. There is a clear, embedded focus on access, with commitment to, 'identify and target underrepresented groups, to encourage engagement and the highest level of expectations in achieving potential... [and to] offering a range of excellent courses, activities and performance opportunities that provide progression routes that can lead ultimately through to the profession.'

Equality Action Plan

"The Northern School believes that diversity is critical to its future development. NSCD embrace and engenders cultural diversity in all that we do. We are committed to building an inclusive culture that encourages, supports and celebrates the distinctive voices of our student population regardless of ethnicity, gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion."

The Equality Action Plan sets commitments to ensuring equality for underrepresented cohorts. Aligning with this APP, we recognise the potential equality challenges related to support for specific groups and consider protected characteristics in relation to success and progression outcomes that may help to inform our access and participation monitoring, particularly in relation to intersections of disadvantage.

The Equality Action Plan and APP reinforce mutual commitments and priorities for equality, diversity and inclusion in access and admissions procedures, and teaching, learning and support. The focus on inclusive curriculum is aligned across both documents, and includes focus on pedagogy, content and also staff training, development and increased staff diversity as a key principle of inclusive curricula. In particular, this APP reflects and aligns with following key commitments in the Equality Action Plan:

- Seek and respond to feedback from staff and students to understand where there might be unintentional prejudice or disadvantage.
- Monitor equalities information for staff during the application process and employment.
- Train staff in how to provide the best means of support [to a more diverse student body].
- Develop local policy and practice relating to disability including mental health and wellbeing to empower the learners and ensure that curricula are as accessible as possible.
- Develop the support for applicants from target groups to ensure that they are supported through the process onto a successful outcome.
- Develop better understanding of how students from under-represented backgrounds compare to their peers through monitoring of data on entry, attainment and retention and take appropriate actions where needed.
- Continue to monitor data relating to applicants and their success within the audition process.

Teaching and Learning Strategic Summary and Action Plan (2022-26)

Aligning to the Strategic Measures in this Plan, NSCD's Teaching and Learning Strategy and Action Plan (2022-26) sets out a primary Aim in respect of nurturing diversity and practicing inclusive learning and teaching. The value of a diverse community is explicit in the linkage between diversity and excellence in

teaching and learning, which embraces and represents the diversity of the student body 'through an individual and personalised learning experience.' This same approach is adopted in this APP, and accordingly access and participation measures are fully embedded in an overarching commitment to a 'student-centred approach to assessment, progression and success, and inclusive methods of learning and assessment'.

NSCD's commitment to student collaboration and elevating student voice, which is a strong feature of this Plan, is also reflected in the Teaching and Learning Strategy, which includes an Aim to create an 'inspiring and purposeful curriculum, where Students are partners in the learning journey, where [the] needs and identity of all our students are considered in the creation of high-quality learning experiences, including learning support.'

Student Charter

NSCD's Student Charter sets a series of commitments which have been agreed in consultation with key staff and student representatives. The ambition of this Charter is well aligned to fair access and participation, inclusivity and diversity in its express intention to treat all students 'as full members of the School community, recognising diversity and equality of opportunity for all'. The Charter provides expectations and commitments around the provision of exceptionally high standards of teaching and learning and to complement this with support, advice and guidance that enables students to make the right choices in a comfortable and supportive environment. These ambitions are reflected in this APP.

The Charter also aligns with the student engagement and consultation commitments in this APP, setting a commitment to 'work in partnership with students as co-authors in a positive journey that will shape their higher education experience' and providing for the support of student election representatives as well as broader consultation and preparation in academic and programme development. This resonates with the commitments to embedded student consultation in the development, delivery and monitoring of this APP.

Admissions Policy

NSCD's Admissions Policy highlights our strong commitment to fair access and participation.

Celebrating diversity and supporting and nurturing the potential of all students is at the heart of NSCD's approach, and we are committed to selecting, training, and supporting students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion. As such, applicants to NSCD are chosen solely based on their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession.

In our admissions processes, we are committed to supporting students with disabilities. Disabled students are encouraged to disclose their support requirements so that we can endeavour to meet these during the audition or interview process and subsequent training. We will also make any necessary reasonable adjustments, in accordance with the Equality Act (2010), to ensure that disabled students can train at the School.

During the admissions process, NSCD commits to identify, acknowledge, and mitigate barriers and disadvantages that applicants may not only face at the time they apply to us, and subsequently, to ensure that when studying, NSCD provides the appropriate support.

To ensure equality of opportunity NSCD will:

- Audition or interview all applicants who meet the basic entry criteria.
- Ensure that all applicants are informed of the audition or interview procedures.
- Ensure that staff involved in the audition or interview process clearly understand the entry requirements and selection criteria.
- Ensure that staff are suitably trained to make fair and sound judgements (having regard to the specified selection criteria).
- Monitor selection procedures with particular regard to equal opportunities.
- Ensure reasonable adjustments are made wherever necessary to improve accessibility and support disabled applicants.

This policy is clearly aligned with the commitments to fair access and equality of opportunity enshrined in this Plan.

Strategic Measures

In the context of our Performance Assessment in Section 1, and in alignment with our institutional priorities and context, NSCD has identified six Strategic Measures across three Key Strategic Areas to improve its performance. These are aligned to the Whole-Institution Theory of Change framework, detailed above.

Strategic Area 1: Data and Evidence-driven Leadership & Development

The first strategic measure is a whole-institution measure to support the effective leadership, delivery and monitoring of fair access and participation outcomes. It supports all targets in this Plan and sets out commitments to broader areas in respect of maintaining and monitoring success and progression outcomes. This area is one for development at NSCD given our exit from the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama in 2022-23 and the developing internal infrastructures that need to be put in place, our small datasets and our identified need to ensure an increasingly data-driven, evidence-based approach to the delivery and development of our fair access and participation agenda and activity.

Strategic Measure 1: Effective leadership and institutional development, driven by data, evaluation and evidence

NSCD recognises current limitations in its data, monitoring, and evaluation capacity across the whole lifecycle. Strengthening our data and evidence capture, collation and analysis; and increasing our ability to interpret and embed this into driving strategy and practice improvements, relates to all areas in this Plan. Approaches to evaluation need to be strengthened at activity level, but also at the strategic measure level with a coherent framework across the lifecycle. The current evaluation, research and evidence base for work in access and participation needs improving to enable NSCD to progress increasingly targeted, effective work. Developing and implementing an evaluation framework and strengthening practice across the lifecycle, supported with tools and resources, is therefore a priority. We will leverage the practices we have in place to build this area. This includes leadership expertise for quality and consistency, and mechanisms and support for disseminating and translating evaluation into practice improvements, and research projects in target areas.

Practice and outcomes

- NSCD are currently strengthening data capture and analysis systems, and have a programme of work underway to strengthen evaluation measures and implement a framework across the lifecycle (see 'Evaluation Strategy' Section 3.3, below). In relation to data strengthening, this includes:
 - Strengthening data capture and analysis relating to equality, diversity and inclusion
 - Tracking data includes retention, progression and attainment outcomes at the course and learner level, matched to student characteristics.
 - Attendance monitoring, which is already established and will be developed to be integrated into new timetabling software.
 - Development of a new Student Record System.
 - Investment into ASIMUT timetabling software, including an absence and attendance module to track and monitor student attendance.

- Using guidance from the Office for Students (OfS) and implementing a Theory of Change approach, NSCD are already exploring ways to develop evaluation processes, practice and capacity across the lifecycle. This includes processes for ensuring findings inform and direct continuous improvements in practice. Current developments in activity evaluation will be continued across the life of this Plan, to ensure evaluation practices are robust and relevant; they will also become part of a whole evaluation framework which will be developed and implemented by 2022-23. Associated tools will be created to ensure a consistent, quality approach to evaluation practices.

- NSCD are also developing a Data Strategy and Data Quality Toolkit to ensure our practices are relevant and prepare us for future requirements.
- NSCD will need to focus on qualitative data to support the quantitative data we are building. This is critical for NSCD given our very small cohorts. Qualitative data will provide richer insights into target student experiences and can be triangulated with quantitative data and external sector / partner data to validate findings or add further information.
- In 2020-21, NSCD became a member of the Specialist Evidence, Evaluation and Research (SEER) collaborative service, which supports small, specialist and newly-registering higher education providers to provide expert services in data, evaluation, monitoring and research in the area of fair access and participation. This will provide critical internal development and participation in an external network to share practice and contribute to wider sector knowledge.
- Leadership capacities in this area are being strengthened via the embedding of this practice at the core of the institution and relevant training and guidance, along with implementation of the toolkits and frameworks noted above. This will continue under this Plan.
- Outcomes under this measure include:
 - Increasingly data-driven approaches to access and participation.
 - Increasing consistency and connectivity across data, streamlining and mapping practices.
 - Improvements in targeting for outreach activity.
 - Increased understanding of the challenges and barriers to access for target groups
 - Effective monitoring and tracking of under-represented student groups in terms of outcomes across the lifecycle.
 - Implementation of a consistent and evidence-informed evaluation framework, practices and tools.
 - Exploration and delivery of research projects in targeted key areas, with findings informing practice.
 - Development of dissemination plans and processes for data and evaluation findings, to inform practice improvements.

Evaluation measures

This area will be subject to general process evaluation, which considers whether data scope and quality is being strengthened; indicators of which will be, for example, whether leadership considers it is making increasingly data- and evidence-informed decisions. The presence and effectiveness of the frameworks and toolkits will also be an indicator of whether this measure achieves its ambitions, along with the evaluation reports and any research outputs. Staff feedback on these items will also be considered.

Strategic Area 2: Increasing Diversity through Growth, Coherent Outreach Practices & Embedding in our Community.

This Strategic Area, which relates to Access, is the primary focus of this APP as our targets are concentrated here. While NSCD commit to a range of measures to broaden our recruitment pool in line with the targets set in this Plan, there are some external structural issues of note, which relate to the wider context for arts education in schools. Reductions in compulsory secondary education funding and policy which emphasises STEM subjects at the expense of the arts³ has a direct impact upon the development of a talent pool of students aspiring to arts in higher education. The English Baccalaureate curriculum, introduced in 2010, does not include creative subjects, leading to a reduction of the perceived 'value' of creative arts subjects in schools and amongst young people⁴. A BBC survey suggested 9 in 10 schools surveyed had cut back on at least one creative arts subject, with some having fewer specialist staff and a cut back on extra-curricular activities⁵. Entries to arts subjects in KS4 has declined, with 2016 entry rates the lowest of the decade⁶.

NSCD is conscious of this context and hopes to help address some of these broader issues in our approach. We will build on our effective existing work, strengthening those areas which have proved effective as well as developing new strands of activity to overcome access barriers. Our development will

³ The Education Policy Institute, Jones (2017) 'Entries to Arts Subjects at Key Stage 4' which noted that the average number of arts entries at KS4 fell from 0.8 in 2013 to 0.7 in 2016.

⁴ <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/6-12-february-2017/why-are-less-students-taking-on-art-design-at-university/>

⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-42862996>

⁶ <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/EPI-Entries-to-arts-KS4-1.pdf>

respond to our targeted performance gaps and will draw on sector and an emerging internal evidence base of 'what works', in context. This includes considering how NSCD's offer can better serve a more diverse student population; ensuring a joined-up, embedded approach to outreach; developing a strong applicant-to-learner journey; and connecting to, partnering with and embedding in our community.

In student consultations as part of developing this APP, student representatives noted that they chose NSCD because the School is, '*very inclusive and open to suggestions and innovation*'; as a place that, '*welcomes everyone the same and treats people fairly regardless of routes in or experience*'. This is a commitment both NSCD and our student body value immensely and is a continuing and core ambition under this Plan.

Strategic Measure 2: Diversifying our offer for targeted growth

This measure relates to strategic expansion of our offer to better meet the needs and ambitions of an increasingly diverse talent pool and increase access to the dance and related professions. This measure relates to all Targets in this Plan.

NSCD is planning for growth, with access and diversity as a lead driver. Our growth will be targeted to increasing access for POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 students; IMD Q1 and Q2 students; and students from different ethnic minorities. This is a targeted growth plan which considers the APP targets at its heart, committing not only to increasing the availability of places, but to expanding a course offer that is responsive to target student and market voices and which therefore better appeals to target groups.

Practice and Outcomes

- NSCD are expanding the availability of places on its programmes to approximately 300 students over and beyond the life of this Plan.
 - This is underpinned by course and portfolio development and expansion; expansion of estates and developed facilities, to enable a wider reach into a more diverse student market.
- Current development of our course and programme offer will continue into this Plan, with course development being responsive to target market demand and access opportunities. Students are increasingly collaborating and providing the driving input to inform this development, as NSCD are increasing our understanding of the ambitions and aspirations of our target pipeline in terms of their futures.
 - For example, current development is seeing the introduction of a new Certificate in HE qualification in Cultural Dance Forms. This, amongst other programme development, will provide additional access routes into our undergraduate degree programmes. In particular, this programme objective is to provide access for ethnic minority and under-represented (POLAR4) students, who are less likely to follow traditional routes.
 - Focus groups with students are being conducted to inform and drive programme development, along with external industry professionals, alumni, and community voice. This will continue over this Plan.
 - Exploration of data regarding why applicants do not accept their offer, to determine whether there are any gaps in our provision particularly for target groups, is also informing this development.
- NSCD are currently exploring the possibility to expand access to the CAT scheme places, to include expansion to 18–19-year-old entrants in the wake of Covid-19. This is a direct response to addressing educational disadvantage caused by Covid-19, which is more likely to negatively impact target under-represented and disadvantaged students. Ongoing considerations regarding the impact of Covid-19 and its longer-term effects on student outcomes across the lifecycle will continue into this Plan.
- Diversification of our offer is also taking place across our short programmes and community performances. This will help to broaden perceptions of a pathway in Dance and connect with a broader pipeline audience.
- Outcomes under this measure include:
 - Targeted course development that responds directly to target learner aspirations.
 - Course and programme expansion, including introduction of additional access routes to undergraduate study.

- An offer that appeals to, and succeeds in attracting applications and acceptances from, diverse and targeted student groups – in particular, POLAR4 Q1 and Q2; IMD Q1 and Q2 and student from different ethnic minorities.
- Stimulating interest and broadening perceptions and understanding of increasingly diverse Dance pathways in community (via programmes and performances).

Evaluation measures

Enquiries, applications and enrolments from target cohorts are the key measures of success in this area. Student feedback on the developing course offer will also be collected. We will consider the range and scope of additional courses and access routes we have developed and implemented also as evidence of meeting the objectives of this strategic measure.

Strategic Measure 3: Targeted, progressive and coherent outreach programme

NSCD has a range of outreach activity in place from which we intend to build a more targeted, coherent programme over the life of this Plan. We have identified areas for improvement that focus on strengthened targeting of activity; joined-up approaches internally; and establishing a more sustained, coherent programme that spans the progression from learner outreach activities and enquiry, through to application and transition-in. Outreach activity under this Strategic Measure therefore relates to targeted, joined-up activity to identify, reach and support access for POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 students, IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 students, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.

Practice and Outcomes

Activity under this measure has been broadly framed under two areas:

1. NSCD Outreach Programme: Outreach to Transition-in

This area encompasses a range of outreach activity undertaken by NSCD to raise awareness and understanding about higher education and particularly Dance pathways; nurture aspirations; support skills development and training and raise attainment in Dance; and support access to higher education for key target groups.

Under the umbrella of Take Part, NSCD's Learning and Participation team offer a golden thread of activities with direct progression routes through community, pre-vocational level into undergraduate programmes. Bursaries are offered to those from low-income backgrounds and /or underrepresented groups. Over the life of this Plan, we will further develop this work to ensure effective targeting of learners and join up activity to create a comprehensive programme of support along the applicant journey.

- **Weekly Classes**

Based at the studios in NSCD our weekly classes are an annual programme of activity for children, young people, and adults.

- **Children's Saturday School** provision is open to those aged 5 – 12 years old. Classes are highlighted to schools and communities local to NSCD including partner primary schools with higher percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students. There are linked student progression pathways onto our youth programme. (Average attendance per term 90 students)
- **Youth provision** is for participants aged 12 – 18 years, this includes contemporary technique classes and two youth company performance groups, one specifically focusing on boys in partnership with Phoenix Dance Theatre, Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL) and Leeds City College. Classes are marketed to schools and community settings across Leeds and are foundation pathway for students wanting to audition for the Centre for Advanced Training Scheme (CAT). A development of this programme in the future will include HE progression routes including information and guidance sessions. (Average attendance per term 40 students)
- **Adult provision** is for participants aged 18+, a number of those accessing this provision at the higher levels (Intermediate / Advanced) are dance teachers in

private, community and schools settings and are a vital link to the community for NSCD outreach activities. (Average attendance per term 80 students)

- **Intensive projects**

NSCD currently run 1 summer school for ages 12+, the course includes a specific focus for those aged 16+ of life and learning in higher education. The summer school gives participants an insight and authentic experience of learning at NSCD, as well as providing more general information about application, audition, finance and life as a university student. Participants meet current students, who provide relevant information and advice based on their own experiences and act as role models.

Summer school participants have followed onto CAT, CertHe, Undergraduate and Post Graduate programmes (average attendance per term 90 students).

Other intensive activities have included Easter Courses and weekend activities, these are open access and where appropriate are targeted at those noted within the APP. Future partnership opportunities will be a focus going forward.

- **NSCD Academies**

NSCD is currently exploring the creation of Academies; a programme of activity based outside of NSCD in hubs across Yorkshire and further North. The model currently involves three strands:

- **Schools model** – out of hours, after school activities run in partnership with primary / secondary schools as enrichment, progression pathways linked to inhouse provision of weekly classes and intensives. School workshop packages are offered on a bespoke basis and can support curriculum development.
- **Partnership model** – run in tandem with partners to deliver skills-based dance activities in contemporary and other dance forms for cohorts aged 12+. Current discussions with partners include multiple roll outs across cold spots in Yorkshire and singular links with provision in the North East. Progression pathways into CAT and HE provision
- **Pop up model** – deliverable across the North with connections to NSCD's Riley Theatre, these are a series of individual workshops from 2 hours through to intensive programmes with professional artists including a masterclass series for those closer to the age of auditioning for NSCD. A programme of activity linking NSCD Academies work to other progression routes into HE training are to be developed taking inspiration from the CAT Audition Toolkit model. Further targeting and provision of bursaries to support under-represented students will be further developed under this Plan.

The rationale for this project is to develop an open access 'business model' that can be disseminated across Yorkshire then the wider North to expand the reach of NSCD outside of its base in Leeds. The aim is for NSCD's brand to gain wider recognition in grass roots areas and develop new progression routes into our HE training.

- **Centre for Advanced Training (CAT)**

The CAT scheme is a prevocational training programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE) through the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS). NSCD have 51 grant supported places on the scheme for students aged 13 – 17 years from disadvantaged backgrounds (low income).

- **Outreach:** The initial outreach strand provides workshops with schools and community settings and is a key activity for focused, targeted outreach activity which connects NSCD with target IMD Q1 and Q2 students who have, and continue to develop, the necessary skills and training required for entry to our undergraduate Dance programmes. Specific work is delivered in Opportunity Areas noted by the Government through their social mobility programme – specific targets for NSCD include Doncaster, Bradford and Scarborough.
- **Prevocational Training:** NSCD's engagement complements this provision and connects with these target learners to offer support on-programme; build connections with learners and establish early sense of belonging and identity with

NSCD; and ultimately support learners through the application, audition and enrolment/ transition-in process. (Annual cohort number 64)

- **Audition Toolkit:** This Toolkit provides targeted support and development for the application and audition stage, currently targeting disadvantaged students who will graduate from CAT schemes.

NSCD provide multi-day events to prepare students for higher education and the process of application, audition and transition-in, covering for example:

- Interview techniques
- Skills development and practice for auditions
- CV writing
- Preparation for university
- Support for transition into NSCD

In the first year of this Plan, NSCD will explore expansion of this programme to non-CAT graduates, to promote and offer support to targeted under-represented, disadvantaged and BAME students with different access pathways. This will consider targeting of potential participants, via linking with other key stakeholder groups (see Strategic Measure 4); development of provision into broader target areas; and opening current programmes to non-CAT students. It is anticipated that support will be available to a wider audience by 2023-24.

As part of our student consultations in respect of developing this Plan, students also made a recommendation to explore extending or leverage the CAT programme to run further after-school classes in order to raise community profile further in target areas. This would allow more access to dance from diverse audiences, opening studio and community sessions whether for hobby or professional.

- **Riley Theatre**

One off workshop relating to the Riley Theatre programme, links with community projects and festivals, targeted at varying groups depending on the performance company and type / style of work, previous workshops have included Dance and Disability CPD, Boys only provision and networking events for teachers and artists.

- **NSCD Links**

Curriculum-embedded projects, which place current NSCD students into placements in target schools and community settings including Opportunity Areas as part of their taught and assessed curriculum, are also provided. Training and development modules are included in the curriculum, with students in Years 2 and 3 undertaking placements in schools and community to teach dance and support raising attainment and nurturing aspiration. NSCD has 11 partnerships with targeted schools into which students are placed. Over the first two years of this Plan, further targeting and expansion of these school partnerships will take place, with a view to increasing the number of placements that are undertaken specifically in areas of disadvantage, HE under-representation and in more ethnically diverse communities.

- **Verve Links**

Verve the post graduate dance company of NSCD will continue to work in collaboration with two organisations RJC Dance (Leeds) and ACE Dance and Music (Birmingham). Both company Directors are NSCD alumni. RJC Dance are based in the immediate vicinity to NSCD and are recognised for their connection to the local community specifically those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, fusing Reggae, Jazz and Contemporary styles along with Street and Carnival. This project looks to expand on previous partnership links and embed an annual series of activities to solidify pathways into prevocational and HE training.

Engagement with NSCD students and in particular our post-graduate company 'Verve', as advocates and role models enables participants to gain further insight into the 'NSCD

experience'. Some of Verve students have previously worked with ACE, which provides an excellent sightline into and through higher education and into post-graduate opportunities for target learners. Activity includes:

- Working with Verve on performance, training and productions to offer authentic experiences of higher-level study and performance, and to build skills.
- RJC students are supported to find a progression pathway through, onto NSCD CAT, CertHE Certificate programmes as pathways into undergraduate study.
- A series of annual summer school bursaries are given to RJC students to access our intensive programmes.

ACE Dance and Music are recognised leaders in the field of Contemporary African and Caribbean Dance, and this project targets Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, seeking to build strong development pathways for emerging dancers with a clear progression from pre-vocational, through university and to successful careers. Activity includes:

- Taster and open workshops.
- Engagement with NSCD students and in particular our post-graduate company 'Verve', as advocates and role models. Some of these students have previously worked with ACE, which provides an excellent sightline into and through higher education and into post-graduate opportunities for target learners.
- Working with Verve on performance, training and productions to offer authentic experiences of higher-level study and performance, and to build skills.
- Artistic workshops to raise attainment and skills development, required for entry to higher education.
- ACE students are supported to find a progression pathway through, onto NSCD CertHE Certificate programmes as pathways into undergraduate study.
- ACE Dance and Music's professional performance company support Verve students on their pathway into the profession.

• **Increasing Access through Audition and Admission**

To better support target learners, who are more likely to experience barriers in application and admission to higher education, NSCD are reviewing and exploring changes to the audition process, as well as strengthening and formalising contextual admissions processes.

In our student consultations in respect of developing this Plan, students noted that NSCD has a relaxed and welcoming environment in its audition process, compared to other Schools. NSCD would like to build on this to ensure this approach continues and is strengthened.

NSCD have identified a range of practices for improving the audition experience for target learners in terms of making it less intimidating and more accessible. These are being explored with a view to making changes to processes over 2021-22 and into this Plan. For example:

- Changing the focus and 'shape' of the Audition day to become a learning /skill development process and less like an assessment.
- Further opening student choice on how they wish to demonstrate skills and capabilities, based on their own diverse experiences.
- Considering language used to reflect a 'learning and skills development and performance' and 'learner potential' focus rather than 'assessment' and 'excellence' language.
- Ensuring context is considered, e.g. level of prior experience and opportunities to train/ disrupted training and education.

- NSCD will also further efforts to employ representative Audition demonstrators to work with learners and to provide role modelling, support and advice.
- Similarly, it is intended that the Audition panel will continue to be diverse and reflect the characteristics and backgrounds of a diverse applicant pool, with diverse dance practices and experiences to bring and showcase in audition.

Student consultations also noted suggestions for improvement, which are adopted as part of this Plan:

- To continue to develop strategies in relation to NSCD's commitment to making students feel comfortable.
- Accepting auditions via film/ online where applicable.
- Continue to ensure that auditions remain a positive experience and aren't felt like an additional challenge but are positive, learning experiences.
- Prepare and provide great audition material.
- Open up discussion and decision making around flexibility in terms of music students can choose (e.g. style / genre).
- Ensure students feel very relaxed and supportive, and that teachers' expectation that they want students to do well is communicated.

NSCD also provide Audition Fee Waivers to target students, to support their participation in auditions. This is an established practice and will continue over the life of this Plan. Core eligibility criteria are: UK residency; Application to an undergraduate course (Foundation and BA Hons); New to higher education (no previous degree-level qualifications); and, Annual household income of £25,000 or less before tax. In addition to core eligibility above, priority will be given to students from target backgrounds, including State school or college educated; Black and Minority Ethnic Background; Declared Disability; Care leaver; and Estranged students.

The Admissions process currently uses pre-existing data to look at contextual admissions based on target groups, for example in considering pre-existing training, where scores can be increased due to demonstrated potential where pre-existing training is low. Prior to the first year of this Plan, NSCD will further consider its approach to contextual admissions processes with a view to strengthening and formalising contextual admissions considerations. This will draw on the current Admissions Policy currently in place via the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama in respect of ensuring equality of opportunity; and on developing understanding about the barriers for our target groups under this Plan.

Further, it is intended that this work may be extended to contextual audition processes or policy, which will also be explored as part of this commitment. It is anticipated that new processes /policies will be developed and implemented as this Plan is launched in 2022-23.

Development opportunities

The following specific development areas have been identified and will be progressed over the first two years of this Plan:

- Creation of a more strategic, coherent and visualised journey framework for outreach, with key targeted activities at identified transition and support points and the development of any additional targeted support where gaps are found.
- Development and implementation of activities that span a longer lead-in process (from May) of targeted activity leading up to the October Open Days, which may include master-classes, tasters and student ambassador engagement.
- Continuing the above, a scaffolded programme of activity post-Open Day, which focuses further and broader support for audition preparation and continues to engage and build capacity and belonging with identified target students.

- Identification of any particular pressure or barrier points, which require more intensive or targeted support and activity.
- Increasing research and data analysis to understand student characteristics and profiles by course, to increase knowledge about which courses appeal to students with different characteristics.
 - In student consultations regarding the development of this Plan, students noted that NSCD can use its small, non-London-centric attributes to promote itself to target learners who want a more supported, away-from-London experience that is not as overwhelming as moving to London. They felt that financial considerations should be highlighted in terms of elevated costs associated with living in London, as well as the more 'intimate' place factor of NSCD where they felt it is easier to make connections and experience community, which is really valuable.
- Linking access data into student success and outcomes data, to better understand the whole learner journey and the experiences of target learners at NSCD.

2. Coherence with broader recruitment practices

This strand of activity seeks to better align the outreach and recruitment areas, and leverage current recruitment activity for access and participation outcomes in particular to support the Targets under this Plan. NSCD have identified a range of work being undertaken in broader recruitment, into which further targeting and development work will be undertaken to align and embed access practices. This will be undertaken from 2021-22 and continually developed over the life of this Plan.

Activity includes:

- Targeted promotion for general events (Open days, workshops, on-campus tours) to ensure opportunities to access and participate are provided to target under-represented, disadvantaged and Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners. This will draw from development and lessons learned from the Audition Toolkit activity with CAT (as described above).
- Review and development of information on the website with a view to ensuring relevant, targeted information is provided, current student case studies and images are representative of target learners, etc. Development of extended information to address specific barriers that are more common for target learners; and extending information to key stakeholders such as parents/carers and teachers.
- Leveraging current email support from application to transition-in, mapping any specific barrier areas for target learners and ensuring ongoing communications and support is provided at key points.
- Exploring access and participation metrics for NSCD's current database of contacts who receive information and event invitations, and developing a targeted group for further outreach, information and support; and/or extending this database in respect of additional identified target contacts.
- Further targeting of specific social media campaigns, which will be considered for better targeting to priority disadvantaged and under-represented communities over 2021-22 and over the life of this Plan.
- Demonstrations and tours, including at "Move It" and the Verve UK Tour, where additional outreach work complements the tour. Further consideration of targeting for these additional activities, and regarding better data capture and follow-up activity with target students from events like "Move It" will be undertaken during 2021-22 and will continue to be developed over this Plan, to drive continuous improvement and specific activity for target groups under this Plan.
- In 2020-21, driven by Covid, NSCD have increased the amount of digital content, such as videos and supplementary information, with specific focus on demystifying and familiarising learners with higher education and NSCD life and learning. We have identified opportunities to continue this work, and develop it further, to ensure we address informational and advice needs of target learners and help to remove any potential barriers / misconceptions.
- Targeting delivery of prospectuses based on target communities, which will happen from 2021-22.

- NSCD are exploring the implementation of a CRM to better manage this work and provide capacity for data and analysis in respect of APP targets. Such infrastructure would help to identify and track target students, and explore any patterns in engagement along the applicant journey. This is intended to significantly strengthen monitoring across all reporting elements.
- Finally, NSCD are considering how its performances can be made more accessible and reflect a more diverse audience. Considerations regarding ticket deals, access for targeted schools groups and a focus on diverse dance form performances, e.g. street dance, are envisaged to help broaden and stimulate interest from more diverse audiences and potential learners.

Evaluation measures

Enquiries, applications and enrolments from target cohorts from NSCD schemes and programmes are the key measures of success in this area. Evaluation measures also include activity-level engagement levels, evaluations with students, teachers/ dance leaders and organisations and parents/carers, where appropriate. Evaluation will be conducted through surveys and focus groups. Tracking of individual students may also be implemented where possible and mechanisms for this will be explored in the first two years of this Plan. Some deeper dive research and case studies, to help further our understanding of target learners and their experiences, ambitions and potential barriers are also envisaged. In relation to digital outreach, web and social media, output measures will also be collected.

Strategic Measure 4: Embedding in Community: Partnerships and Collaboration

Over the life of this Plan, NSCD will seek to strengthen and create new targeted partnerships and relationships with target schools, colleges and community organisations. These partnerships are critical in establishing early, sustained outreach programmes, which are particularly necessary for effective outreach in our context, where dance training and skills development starts early (OfS, 2018; Bowes, 2013; Moore, 2013). This work will build from existing relationships that currently hold with various schools, colleges and organisations.

Our approach is to celebrate leveraging our place in the North of England, particularly linking to the Northern Powerhouse and Leeds communities. This is different to most other comparative providers who are centred in London. Our place in Chapeltown, Leeds is at the gateway to the cultural learning quarter, which offers excellent opportunity to build our community engagement and participate in community life in broad ways that will increase target learner awareness, interest and access to our offer. Connecting broadly with community also allows us to engage with key influencers and stakeholders in young people's decision-making, for example parents/carers, community leaders and teachers, creating a network of support, awareness and belonging. NSCD will become increasingly part of a more holistic community offer, linking health and wellbeing, education and training, culture and recreation. Our footprint here will be built over the life of this Plan, with development considering and addressing specific targets under this Plan.

NSCD also recognise its recent partnerships with other dance and drama Schools (HE providers) via the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD). The partnership has provided opportunities to identify in a positive way, potential structural issues and resourcing constraints as a smaller, specialist provider and recognise how these can be particularly challenging individually. Therefore, NSCD and the Central School of Ballet (CSB) have agreed a continued operational partnership to effect common outcomes in the Access area of this Plan.

NSCD has identified three key areas in this work:

1. Strengthen existing target school/college, dance company and community organisation relationships.
2. Explore, target and develop relationships with additional identified school/college, dance company and community organisations and the higher education sector.
3. Collaborate beyond the local and current partners to broaden impact and increase diversity.

Practice and Outcomes

Increasingly targeted and relevant relationships will be formed, resulting in a range of outcomes:

- Meaningful participation of target learners in outreach activity.
- Co-creation of relevant, strategically aligned and targeted programmes of activity.
- Engagement, knowledge enrichment and exchange between NSCD and partners, driving continuous improvement and positive community relationships.
- Continuous development in awareness and understanding of target learner and partner challenges and barriers in relation to participation in higher education, and the opportunities to redress these issues.

Current activity and development include:

- **Partnership with CAT scheme**, with students on current programmes, and also working with the national group to explore curriculum with specific reference to decolonising and increasing diversity of dance forms. This will support access for more diverse learner groups.
- **Children and Young Peoples Dance Network North (CYPDNN)**
CYPDNN aims to offer networking opportunities, co-ordinate training and professional development sessions and share dance activity across the north. By working together to ensure children and young people have the same opportunities wherever they live. The Network is part of the core funding of NSCD through its National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England (ACE) and has a Network co-ordinator. CYPDNN is led by a consortium of Children and Young People's Dance stakeholders from across the North forming the Strategic Action Group. The aims of the network are to:
 - Strengthen the voice of the sector to advocate and promote dance.
 - Broaden the offer to children and young people through collaboration.

The network links across NSCD provision and supports progression routes for CYP and training for artists. The network increases NSCD's reach into the wider North and supports the development and funding of specific CYP programmes, for example the Engage and Inspire arm of Yorkshire Schools Dance Festival ([Engage & Inspire: Extending the experience for young dancers at YSDF19 \(yorkshireschoolsdancefestival.co.uk\)](https://www.yorkshireschoolsdancefestival.co.uk)), Collide Boys Dance Takeover and Northern Exchange. All projects that bring together CYP from across Yorkshire and the wider North.

- The **Leeds Cultural Education Partnership (LeedsCEP)** was established in September 2017 in response to Arts Council England's Cultural Education Challenge. The group has a wide and growing membership of organisations from both the cultural and education sectors which cover all geographical areas of Leeds. As the Arts Council Bridge Organisation for Yorkshire and Humber, the LeedsCEP work with education, arts, cultural and youth sectors to make sure all children and young people have access to great arts and cultural opportunities. LeedsCEP offer information, advice and professional development, develop networks and partnerships, and provide specialist support around Artsmark, Arts Award and the Arts Council's quality principles.

LeedsCEP has delivered a range of activity across its strategic priorities including conferences, marketplaces and CPD. During the summer of 2020 LeedsCEP and partners across the city delivered 1300 Bags of Creativity to children and young people aged 2-16. In 2020 LeedsCEP and Leeds 2023 formed a partnership to ensure that children and young people are at the heart of the city's landmark year of culture. LeedsCEP was awarded partnership investment in 2020, which funds a full-time Children and Young People's Partnership Manager, who joined Leeds 2023 in January 2021. This role takes a strategic lead on developing LeedsCEP alongside growing Leeds 2023's partnerships with schools and other organisations working with children and young people in Leeds, and exploring current development of project work to support 'Catch Up' summer schools.

Within the LeedsCEP NSCD is part of a collective of organisations who supports the strategic lead in the development and promotion of dance activity (alongside other art forms) to facilitate access to the arts, for underrepresented groups of young people. In its early stages we are developing strategies to look at how the work of the LeedsCEP can partner with a higher education provider to support progression routes for children and young people. The strategic lead will meet

with the school's access and participation committee to develop future partnership and vision for this area of access and participation.

- **Partnership with the Central School of Ballet (CSB)**

This is a collaborative statement between NSCD and CSB as part of both Access and Participation Plans. Ongoing collaboration with CSB will provide opportunities for continued sharing of outreach practice between our practitioners, and collaboration in outreach delivery where this makes sense. This collaboration is expected to include the development of appropriate shared resources; sharing good practice and knowledge exchange; signposting to opportunities for outreach to target learners where competition allows for it; sharing relevant contacts and making appropriate introductions to networks and stakeholders; and collaborative delivery of a range of appropriate outreach activity. Planning and development of these shared initiatives will start in 2021-22 and will continue over the life of this Plan.

NSCD are focusing our education modules to partner with schools and community providers to develop further relationships in the local area, and from 2020-21 we are reaching out to local smaller communities. This is an area NSCD wants to develop in relation to teaching placements for the teaching curriculum strand. This will extend exposure to possible progression routes within dance for local young people and offer, hopefully diverse, role models in the form of students from the school. The schools NSCD is partnering with are prioritised around POLAR4 and IMD postcodes. Amongst some of the schools we are making connections with, schools with a higher percentage of black and Asian minority pupils are those that we are particularly reaching out to extend our outreach provision. When considering partnership organisations NSCD and partners has needed to factor their obligations to support travel and time as resource to making these commitments work.

In student consultations regarding this Plan, students also recommended inclusion of such activity in this Plan, noting more connections with the different arts schools around Leeds would be beneficial, to garner the arts community together – including music college, arts college, etc. This may facilitate integrated projects and broader collaboration, which in turn supports ongoing connections and community and therefore larger potential networks for students when they go into industry.

- NSCD's development work also includes exploration, targeting and development of further **industry and professional partnerships**, which can be leveraged to support the outreach agenda. Linking with ACE Dance & Music & Zonation to develop their workforces in Yorkshire to support developing a wider range of inspirational role models from varying backgrounds.
- In the aftermath of Covid-19, advances to the School's technology allows us to reach further afield and increase our reach of partnerships and collaborations. We now have increased opportunity to extend beyond the local in the creation of relevant partnerships, which can help to foster collaborations on a global scale that support aspiration, interest and progression routes for target students who otherwise may not have access to such networks and role models.

Evaluation

Evaluation measures include partnership evaluation with key stakeholders, including assessment of outcomes and indicators of effective partnerships. Stakeholder surveys and focus groups or interviews will be used to collect data. Output measures relating to scale and reach of partnerships will also be collected.

Strategic Area 3: Innovative, Inclusive and Inspiring Learning Environment

While the Targets in this Plan relate only to Access measures, NSCD are cognisant of the need to ensure the continuation of performance in respect of target student outcomes in success and progression, as we diversify our intake. This Strategic Measure continues our focus on the whole learner journey, providing commitments to ensuring that our teaching, learning, and student experience continue to effectively support and empower target learners to achieve comparable outcomes to their peers. This includes inclusive and supportive curriculum, where student wellbeing is embedded; and an inspirational,

informative careers and employability agenda that provides and facilitates access to industry and professions. Monitoring outcomes for target groups in respect of continuation, attainment and progression is an ongoing cycle to ensure gaps do not arise. Inclusive curriculum measures in help to ensure ongoing outcomes for target Black, Asian and minority ethnic cohorts, Disabled students, and students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Integrated support and wellbeing measures have proved an effective approach to support all learners but particularly our target under-represented and disadvantaged cohorts who often experienced more barriers to participation in higher education. Employability measures provide a strong focus on, and inspiration for the development of, professional goals as well as access and connection to key employers. These networks and role models are less likely to have previously been available to target disadvantaged students.

Strategic Measure 5: Inclusive and inspiring teaching & learning with student wellbeing embedded

NSCD's approach is one of holistic and inclusive teaching, learning and wellbeing where the whole learner is supported through curriculum as well as being able to access additional support measures. Student consultations regarding this Plan highlighted the critical importance of this approach, which should continue as part of this Plan. Students noted NSCD practice in '*seeing everyone as a person and [providing] help to meet specific needs, not just a whole-class [approach]*'. Due to small class sizes and cohorts, NSCD are able to offer a very personalised experience to all students, and make strong relationships and sense of community, as among the student body and as between students and staff. Students fed back that, '*we are encouraged to develop own practice and find very personal ways to access movement. We can make very personal, experience through own body [which is] another level of learning.*'

Practice and Outcomes

- NSCD are on a developmental journey to increase accessibility of the curriculum and further inclusivity in curriculum. Development has commenced in 2020-21 and will continue into the first year of this Plan, whereafter review will be periodic. Currently we are in 'transition' between older and new curriculum and pedagogy to facilitate the above outcomes and also increase coherence across the curriculum in terms of its different strands of modules. This development also allows further exploration and embedding of student wellbeing and support directly into teaching and learning, given the integral nature of these areas.

Ensuring inclusive curriculum practices and broadening content in terms of its diverse perspectives and dance practices ensures that the curriculum is reflective of our ethnically, cognitively and culturally diverse student body and facilitates outcomes for all students, who can better identify with content.

Students are and will continue to be involved in development of new Modules, curriculum and assessment design. This was an area discussed in student consultations in the development of this Plan. Students agreed that this is an important aspect of their experience, and that NSCD, '*makes it really clear that they are happy to work with students to find alternative assessments to tailor to individual needs and preferences.*'

NSCD also note that students are likely to use personal experiences and identity in final assessment pieces, to synthesise their personal experiences and past trauma. The curriculum and assessment support this very personal, diverse expression (e.g. of mental health issues) using Dance as the form.

New modules and curriculum content are being considered and developed as part of this initiative. New programmes currently in launch are, for example:

- 1-yr cultural dance forms (from 2021-22)
- Lighting 2-yr Diploma (from 2022-23)

These offer foundations for further expanding the curriculum, along with the Periodic Review of Curriculum (scheduled for 2023-24), which further drives our opportunity to explore programmes. As this point, NSCD envisage being able to progress even further into improved programme structure and choice in respect of student career outcomes, and to integrate this into curriculum learning. This will include, for example, additional modules in different areas other than the more

obvious dance performance related progression pathways. A more expanded curriculum may include teaching, fitness and body conditioning, or therapy related disciplines. This will again open up choice and help to attract a more diverse student pipeline; as well as offer expanded choice and inspiration to current students to positively impact success and progression outcomes.

During student consultations, curriculum relevance was discussed and students noted a range of aspects that should be considered under this Plan:

- NSCD are good at bringing external professionals in to deliver extra and specialised content. This is useful as it gives broader industry experience, and it's different and exciting. This should continue as possible.
- NSCD staff are keen on keeping up-to-date and giving practical learning students can use outside the classroom. Improvements may include fusion of styles rather than focus on individual specific techniques, as this will further enhance work to prepare students for industry.
- As definitions of dance tend to blur, can enrichment lessons of additional styles from across the world and blended dance techniques, be considered. This would complement an inclusive curriculum and student choice.
- NSCD always do surveys with students at the end of every module. NSCD take responses into account and adapt practices. This should continue as part of ongoing student consultations on curriculum development.
- Consider opportunities to extend the range of studies, e.g. dance therapy, which would provide opportunity to give more scope to specify different areas beyond performance or teaching.
 - NSCD is presently writing an MA Movement psychotherapy degree in response to student feedback in a previous year.
- Broader curricula also support access where a more diverse programme appeals to a broader range of target students, providing a coherent journey from access to progression. In the development of Modules, NSCD are considering and aligning topics and performances increasingly with areas that may better appeal to target learners.

As some students work on outreach projects as part of their curriculum, NSCD are exploring how these relevant performances may loop back into outreach community work to support the Access agenda. There is further development to undertake here, including embedding this element into undergraduate programmes, and this will be undertaken in the first two years of this Plan.

- Staff training is a key element which is being continually developed to support the commitments and objectives in this Plan. Workshops and training regarding inclusive curriculum development are being explored and developed, with a view to rolling out training on an ongoing basis from 2021-22. This development work will continue into the first few years of this Plan.

Training in unconscious bias is already underway, with additional topics that allow staff to engage in broader issues that can inform their interactions with students being considered. For example, communications with diverse student body (gender pronouns, etc.); body dysmorphia; and inclusive curriculum training. Where relevant, training will be expanded to non-teaching staff. It is envisaged that a training framework will be developed, built from a needs audit in the first instance (from 2021-22).

Linked to this, an issue raised in student consultations was that of the diversity of the staff base, which is predominantly white. Including external speakers helps to diversify teaching and professional role models, however, as part of development of inclusive curriculum, this is an area NSCD and students wish to explore and develop in the life of this Plan.

- Embedding student wellbeing and support into curriculum is already underway and will continue to be developed and strengthened over the life of this Plan. There are four areas of integrated support:
 - Injury support 'body work', which is also a teaching role into curriculum
 - Learner support

- Wellbeing support
- English Language Support

This embedded and integrated model is a natural positioning given the integral link between curriculum and health and wellbeing for our students – mental, physical and cognitive. NSCD estimate that approximately 35% of our student body will require wellbeing support, with high demands on body work (injury prevention and management) that is linked to the physical nature of the dance programmes. This linkage to curriculum and practice reflects how wellbeing needs to be continually managed and considered in the dance profession and career outcomes. Physical and mental wellbeing is thus taught and practiced as part of the curriculum, with a focus on students understanding their own bodies and managing their wellbeing, so they can continue to manage this when they go into employment.

This was discussed in student consultations, where students raised the issue of mental health and anxiety when transferring to the workplace. As part of this Plan, it was agreed that more knowledge and support in terms of accessing the workplace and understanding expectations and how MH is addressed and cared for in the workplace. NSCD will continue to be part of on-going discussions with the Health Conservatoires Network and with One Dance UK around this.

- A cross-disciplinary team across academic and wellbeing support operates to ensure that whole student needs are considered and looked after. Programme Leaders oversee pastoral support and staff have good capacities to recognise support needs, given very small cohorts and the personal and community nature of our programmes. The level of support students require in terms of mental health and pastoral support has increased recently, and NSCD is exploring the resourcing and activity required to deliver and match provision to student need. Target student support is being explored as part of this development, which will be a cycle of review and improvement year-on-year as data is monitored and new findings and knowledge emerge.
 - For example, NSCD are considering a buddy /mentor system to better support students in a peer-to-peer model, as an effective and good practice approach.

NSCD also operate a 'Student Review Board' on a half-termly basis, which provides space for staff to consider students and explore needs, progress, attendance, support requirements, etc. Any issues are flagged and proactive support can be provided. Intended development into the life of this Plan includes furthering of the processes and mechanisms underpinning this model as NSCD grows; exploration of an integrated data capture and monitoring system; and further training and support for staff to effectively respond to student concerns and particularly barriers that are more likely to arise for target disadvantaged and under-represented students.

- Key activities supporting student wellbeing are:
 - On enrolment, students have a learning assessment for learning styles and difficulties, with support plans implemented as required.
 - NSCD have 2 counsellors and 3 volunteer counsellors through links with other universities, providing support to students.
 - NSCD contribute payments towards student treatments (e.g. physiotherapy, etc.)
 - The Learning Support Tutor offers ongoing support and learning assessment, particularly targeting disabled students and providing support for the disability support allowance (DSA) provision where appropriate.
 - Bookable appointments with tutors for a range of support. NSCD has stopped assigning specific tutors in favour of student self-selection of tutors they feel most comfortable speaking with. Management of staff workload has been considered in this model, and there is additional support available for staff with higher demand. Students are able to book anonymously via Moodle and support can be provided online. This practice, which was driven out of Covid, has been very effective and will continue into the future.
 - A central role supports students with general wellbeing and signposts to relevant services as required.
 - Over the life of this Plan, and as our intake grows and diversifies, we will strengthen targeted wellbeing support and ensure we continue to identify students who may become 'at risk' for support. A strengthened evaluation process will allow analysis of trends in wellbeing issues, informing and driving future practice improvements.

Student consultations highlighted key practice that should continue such as ability to have 1-2-1 tutorials with staff, 'about anything!'; and the pro-active reach-outs from staff (email) that have increased during Covid and have been extremely valuable.

- Study skills activities are also provided and are accessible to all students and specific 1-2-1 sessions are arranged for any student identified as needing additional support either via early screening or tutor assessment. NSCD have also introduced group study support sessions, which include for example assignment writing, time management, organisation, etc. These are now embedded in the curriculum, in the first year and first Module.
- Financial Support
NSCD's financial support package is critical to our target learners and addresses a concern regarding the affordability of higher education. This supports our access aims to reduce the gap in participation for students particularly from IMD Q1 v. Q5, with likely overlap to the gap target for POLAR4 Q1 v. Q5. For students from these target backgrounds, the availability of financial support at transition-in is essential for access and initial transition-in, ensuring a higher likelihood of continuation in the first few months of programme. In consultations with students as part of this Plan, students noted the importance of financial support and its availability, which allows full participation in their study and training.

Current evaluation, undertaken as part of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, also showed that financial support is key support to retention and success for students from low family incomes. Given the intensive and immersive nature of our training, entailing long hours throughout the academic year, our students are unable to take advantage of the full range of opportunities to support themselves financially through part-time paid employment that are open to students in other institutions. This is therefore critical to our broader aims in this Plan, to ensure no gaps arise in our success measures.

NSCD will evaluate the provision of financial support over the life of this Plan, which will provide further insights into the impact on target student outcomes.

Scholarship	Eligibility	Amount	Bursary or fee discount?
Northern School Scholarship	UK undergraduate students with household income £0-25,000	£1,000 per year of course	Student choice of fee discount or cash bursary
	UK undergraduate students with household income £25,001-35,000	£750 per year of course	Student choice of fee discount or cash bursary
	UK undergraduate students with household income £35,001-42,875	£500 per year of course	Student choice of fee discount or cash bursary

A Care Leaver and Estranged Student bursary is also provided in addition to the above. This provides additional support of up to £1,000 bursary per year of study to care leavers and students estranged from their parents.

NSCD undertake fundraising activities to specifically provide further support for target disadvantaged learners, for example through our Nadine Senior Legacy Fund. Currently we have approximately £70k per year available to support hardship. This round of funding ends in 2023, we have four further funding applications in process which provide such targeted support, including a further application to our current funding organisation and over the life of this Plan we will seek to develop and expand this provision with additional funders.

Evaluation measures

Continuation and attainment outcomes will be key measures in this area, along with end-of-module surveys from students and feedback from module leaders. NSCD will also draw on NSS results and our annual 'mock' NSS student satisfaction survey. Development will include increased data capture and increased use of qualitative data to increase and broaden our understanding of experiences of target groups.

Financial support measures will be evaluated using relevant parts of the OfS *Impact of Financial Support* toolkit. It is envisaged that the survey and focus group elements can be used, but our small cohorts will prohibit the use of the statistical tool.

Strategic Measure 6: Inspiring and connecting students for positive employability outcomes

This Strategic Measure focuses on graduate employability and career development which starts early and supports students into successful post-graduate opportunities. Employability development and support addresses key concerns for target students regarding the value of a degree⁷ and strengthens engagement with learning via the identification and pursuit of career ambitions⁸. NSCD is conscious of the barriers that target students are more likely to experience due to less access to professional networks and role models; subsequently connectivity to industry and professionals are key components of our approach. Students as part of consultations commended NSCD for its ability to embrace changes and be responsive to industry; not set in old-fashioned ways. They felt that this responsiveness, adaptability and relevance was an important aspect to include and develop under this Plan. They also noted that in the industry it sometimes feels to students that progression is linked to 'who you know', which affords levels of access and success. It was agreed that this is an important consideration in NSCD's approach to providing support and should be particularly considered for target groups under this Plan, for the reasons noted above.

Practice and Outcomes

- Employability will increasingly be embedded in curriculum. NSCD is shifting its approach to student career development aligned with curriculum outcomes. For example, students will increasingly learn and build their understanding about what it means to be a professional in the industry, and what the realities of being a professional dancer are like. They will build their self-awareness and capacities in the understanding of the employment context, becoming through their study programme a more rounded, employable graduate with a broader awareness of the industry. Students will increasingly understand that everything they do is aimed and driving towards positive careers and employability outcomes.
- Professionals and companies support this agenda by providing a range of talks and sessions into the curriculum, to enhance teaching and learning and provide authentic insights into the profession. This engagement provides students (particularly target students who may not have existing networks) with opportunities to network and make connections with key industry players.
- Introduced in 2020-21, students are provided with 1-2-1 careers and review sessions, which they are able to request and book. Discussions include grade profile, aspirations and ambitions post-graduation and pathways into desired careers. These sessions provide personalised support for students, who can draw on the professional connections and networks of tutors to support their engagement with industry. This will continue over the life of this Plan, and will help to drive continuous improvement in our offer through developing understanding of students' aspirations, perceptions, barriers and concerns.
- Level 5 and Level 6 students have access to regular workshops and seminars on careers with supported guest speakers and alumni speakers, and workshops with One Dance UK and Equity performers union.
- Increasingly, and across the life of this Plan, NSCD will draw on its alumni network to provide broader links to employers and offer role modelling and mentorship to students. It is noted that students generally enter NSCD with relatively narrow conceptions of future careers, which if they don't succeed in carries a sense of failure. The broad and diverse range of available careers and pathways, evidenced and modelled by our alumni, will help to address these concerns.

⁷ Andrewartha, L., & Harvey, A. (2017). Employability & student equity in higher education: Role of university careers services. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 26(2), 71-80.

⁸ Turner, N. (2014). Development of self-belief for employability in higher education: Ability, efficacy and control in context. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(6), 1-11.

- The digital offer, driven by Covid, has been a catalyst for broadening engagement beyond local horizons, and this will continue into the future. Professionals link in via Zoom to give talks and build students' awareness and understanding of different pathways and roles.
- In 2020-21, NSCD has recruited a graduate professional artist into the role of SU President Manager. This is a pilot initiative, which is envisaged to strengthen student engagement and also (because the role holder is a practicing artist) provide further advice and insights into the profession and support students to make connections via their industry networks.
 - The introduction of a 'Friday Night Improvisation Class' has been extremely successful and provides space for students to connect with staff for discussion and skills building related to employability outcomes. It has also helped maintain a sense of community during the lockdown period.

Evaluation Measures

Evaluation will include feedback from students and industry professionals and Companies, including satisfaction measures. Data analysis relating to engagement with support, and continuation, attainment and progression for target groups will be conducted. Students provide feedback on and input into the development of these activities.

3.2 Student Consultation

NSCD has a range of mechanisms for consulting with students. All courses elect two student representatives at the beginning of the academic year. Each half term there is a course meeting with the student representatives and items for discussion and items for consultation are brought to the Student Voice Forum. Decisions and feedback are provided back to the student body by the student representatives, and this can be supported by the heads of Faculty or Vice Principal to close feedback loop. Actions and rolling actions are recorded and made available to all staff and students through Moodle (our VLE). Student representatives also sit on the following committees:

- Learning, Teaching and Quality Assurance Committee (meets termly)
- Academic Board (meets termly)
- Board of governors

NSCD are also trying to broaden student societies and increase engagement and student voice through these mechanisms. Recent developments include societies set up to represent; People of Global Majority, LGBTQ+, Eco and Feminist Society In 2020-21, a full Student Union is being established with additional representative roles being considered which is envisaged to help drive meaningful student consultation and engagement. Students are also significantly involved in the delivery of access strategies in this Plan, as well as providing input into the development of outreach and community programmes and feedback on what works. The Student Union (SU) and student representatives will be partners in the ongoing development of activity, delivery and monitoring of this Plan. Discussions will include exploration of collaborative measures between activities in this Plan and the Student Union's objectives.

Student representatives have been part of the development of this Plan, and their input has been explicitly reflected throughout. Generally, students in the consultation reflected that relationships and collaboration between staff and students is professional, casual, open and inclusive. They noted that NSCD makes students feel that their voice is welcomed and that NSCD want to hear what students have to say and contribute.

Students noted their excitement about the new set up of the SU, and want to see this further developed. They would hope that the intention is to give space to students as a body and community. They noted a range of mechanisms where student collaboration and voice is enabled, including student experience surveys, student reps sessions, the Student Voice Forum; where students highlighted that they felt in partnership with NSCD and that solutions were built together.

In summary, student consultations led to the following range of outcomes referenced through the Plan:

- Ensuring continuation of the School's inclusive, open approach and community, which is open to students suggestions and embraces innovation.

- In respect of CAT, explore opportunities to extend or leverage the scheme to after-school and community classes in target areas, to raise community profile and increase community accessibility to dance.
- In respect of Auditions process:
 - Ensure students are comfortable and feel like a learning experience rather than an added challenge/ stress point.
 - Consider accepting auditions via film / online.
 - Ensure further development and provision of preparation material.
 - Allow flexibility in student choice of style/ genre.
- In relation to outreach:
 - NSCD should make more of its non-London location and related attributes that can facilitate more comfort and belonging for target groups.
 - Increase connections with different arts schools around Leeds, promoting broader arts collaborations (dance, music, art, etc.) that in turn create good student networks across the Arts industry.
- In respect of curriculum, teaching, learning and support:
 - Continue an individualised, personal approach to teaching and learning.
 - Continue and build student choice in respect of assessment, etc.
 - Continue to bring in external professionals to enhance the curriculum and diversify teacher role models.
 - Ensure industry relevance in curriculum, remain responsive and adaptable.
 - Increased application of blended dance styles and world dance.
 - Continue to consult and involve students in curriculum development.
 - Consider alternative programmes beyond performance and teaching, e.g. dance therapy, etc.
- Expand knowledge and support in terms of accessing the workplace and understanding expectations and how mental health is addressed and cared for in the workplace.
- Continue proactive 'reach outs' to students to offer support / check ok.
- Continue to ensure students are linked to professionals and industry networks and can find their own networks, particularly as in the industry success is linked to 'who you know'.

More broadly, as previously noted, students are co-creators and feedback into curriculum and assessment design, and a range of services and new course development. This will continue over the life of this Plan.

3.3 Evaluation Strategy

Strategic context

NSCD are building our capacity for effective evaluation and application of findings into driving practice improvements. This is a journey that will continue over the life of this Plan. Our previous membership in the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) provided some training and central evaluation practices from which NSCD will now develop and tailor its own models and capacity. We will strengthen our evaluation practices, processes, understanding and quality over and beyond the life of this Plan. This will include the (re)development of evaluation tools to align with our renewed Strategic Measures. We will consider activity level theory of change models to drive the creation of evaluation tools that measure the intended objectives and the relationships between interventions and outcomes. Evaluation tools will consider and be appropriate to the context and scale of the work, while development and implementation of an evaluation framework will provide a whole-lifecycle model for our evaluation practices.

We have used the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to assess our current context for evaluation and we are 'emerging' across all areas. We have foundations in place, but have several areas for continued development, including the need to establish a regular feedback cycle and to fully integrate our evaluation into our activity delivery and design. Given the developmental stage of our evaluation practice, the majority of our evaluations are type 1 (narrative), with some type 2 (empirical enquiry) of the OfS 'Standards of Evidence'.

Programme design

In our self-assessment, rationale for programmes, indicators and measures, and research strategy were found to be emerging or in development. We have a broad theory of change or rationale for our activities and use a pre- post- design to measure developmental outcomes across some of our access activity. We still, however, have work to do in further developing and refining our theories of change for our renewed activities and Strategic Measures. This work is ongoing between 2020-21 and 2021-22, in preparation for the commencement of this Plan in 2022-23, by which time all activity will have appropriate evaluation mechanisms in place. As our evaluation practices grow, a continuous feedback cycle will be established to inform and drive continuous improvements to programme design. We are also investing in staff training to develop our knowledge about effective evaluation and theory of change development. This has started in 2020-21 and will continue as required over the life of this Plan.

Evaluation design and implementation

In our self-assessment, evaluation design and implementation were found to be emerging or in development. Evaluation design and implementation is currently limited and NSCD is therefore engaging with external experts and with sector guidance and best practice to develop our approaches. NSCD is drawing on the Specialist Evidence, Evaluation and Research (SEER) collaborative service to support evaluation and research development, design, implementation and analysis. Approaches draw on the OfS Standards of Evidence¹⁷, NESTA Guidance on developing theories of change¹⁸. Evaluation design will be proportional to a small and specialist provider and the scale and scope of specific activities. We will continue to ask ourselves: what questions (in respect of access and participation) are we asking; what data do we want/ need; what do we want to understand from it; and to whom and how will it be disseminated to improve practices.

Performance assessments (following the model in section 1) in respect of target groups under this Plan will be conducted annually to monitor progress and to inform our approach and ensure a continually data-driven strategy. This will increasingly be coupled with qualitative evaluation and deeper dive research, which are particularly critical given our small cohorts and the challenges that therefore arise with quantitative methodologies. Qualitative data triangulates with and adds understanding to the limited quantitative data. Qualitative evaluation will be undertaken using surveys, discussions, interviews and focus groups with students, and may in the longer term include action learning research and evaluation.

In the Access area, evaluation development will largely consist of pre-/post-activity questionnaire designs, qualitative data collection via participant interviews and focus groups and stakeholder interviews (e.g. teachers, parents) and practitioner / student ambassador reflections. It will also include partnership evaluation to assess the outcomes of the strategic partnerships.

In the Success and Progression areas, monitoring student outcomes at Module level will continue. Given our small size, personalised monitoring of students is available and is conducted regularly particularly through the Student Review Boards (noted previously). Annual course monitoring reports lead to action plans to address areas of concern. Similarly, student reviews enable us to proactively address any specific issues. Student evaluation data will also be considered, particularly flagging areas that have implications for disparities in outcomes for target groups under this Plan. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation will be undertaken through surveys, discussions, interviews and focus groups with students, and will draw on existing mechanisms such as NSS data. NSCD will ensure that data identifies actions as something locatable, measurable, quantifiable and justifiable, with a balanced approach combining narrative through data and spoken word, to ensure that the complete picture around happening and experience is documented.

Development under this Plan will also include further engagement of the voices and feedback from tutors, via Moodle and other survey/ focus group measures; and, evaluation of relevant training and workshops provided to staff designed to build capacity in affecting the outcomes under this Plan.

Learning to shape improvements

Again, our self-assessment showed that use of evaluation findings and results was emerging or in development. Ongoing monitoring of access and participation Targets and commitments, and a developing community of practice will facilitate improvements to sharing of findings from evaluation and implementation of findings into improving practice. A renewed focus on cross-institutional, embedded

leadership, monitoring and activity will help to develop and drive this community of practice. Evaluation findings related to access and participation work may inform other agendas, such as programme review and revalidation, communications and recruitment strategies and community partnership development.

Externally, staff are involved in a range of roles in industry and at other organisations within and beyond the higher education sector, which provide channels for sharing findings more broadly. Other external partners will be considered and communications developed over the first two years of this Plan, for example via TASO, SEER and GuildHE. These will support national understanding and progress, particularly for similar institutions. NSCD is also a member of Advance HE, Dance HE, Leeds Dance Partnership and One Dance UK. It is NSCD's aim to make an application to become a member of Conservatoires UK from 2023.

3.4 Monitoring Progress against delivery of the Plan

A new Access and Participation Committee (APC) is being established in 2020-21. The APC will monitor progress against the targets in this Plan and track and evaluate progress, and ensure findings are implemented to drive continuous practice improvements.

The APC will report into the Academic Board and will work alongside the newly established Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Committee (EDI) who subsequently report to the Board of Governors. The APC will provide regular updates to these groups, including progress on the Plan and its key projects, and any emerging challenges or risks. The Board of Governors will receive these updates twice per annum, alongside reporting of the student dashboard and risk register.

This group will coordinate, review and monitor institutional data, to ensure continuous monitoring of outcomes for target groups to ensure further gaps do not arise and targets and milestones are progressed. As data capacities are strengthened over time, our insights and understanding of outcomes, barriers and experiences of target groups will grow and develop.

Over the life of the Plan, the APC will meet at least once every quarter, to monitor and input into practice and outcomes. If it is discovered that progress is worsening in any area, the APC can determine whether to redeploy its resources to targeted improvement in specific areas, accelerating action as per the strategic measures in this Plan. Additional expertise or resource may be deployed if required. The APC will also monitor expenditure and risk in relation to the plan.

4. Provision of information to students

NSCD will ensure that all material is presented in a clear and unambiguous way that is accessible to all.

Prospective and current students are provided with information about the fees they will be charged for the duration of their course. Fees and information on financial support is published on our website: <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/fees-finance/>

Information on fees for the duration of a student's course are set out in advance on the NSCD website for applicants <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/fees-finance/> and in students' offer letter. A set of summary terms and conditions and the relevant school fees policy, containing information relevant to the payment of fees, are provided as attachments to the offer letter.

The website and admissions policies set out information about application fees, scholarships, and the audition fee waiver scheme. A range of information about NSCD, academic programmes, entry requirements, fees, financial support, student support, teaching and learning, and total costs are set out in the annually updated prospectus and course fact files on a devoted area of the website <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/>. This information is supplemented by a well-attended annual open day and a variety of online applicant course information question and answer sessions run by academic departments, admissions and the marketing and communications teams. Applicants at all stages of the application process have opportunities to pose question to NSCD's admissions team and these are published in our frequently asked questions section of the website. Information around the school as a higher education provider can be found in a specific area of the website

<https://www.nscd.ac.uk/higher-education/> where applicants and students can find information around our student charter, our ethos and policies which support our operation.

As identified in the School's Terms and Conditions, Fees Policy, and management of pre-contract documentation (agreed at Academic Board, October 2020), the following five principles remain in place for how NSCD manages its obligations to provide information to prospective and current students under Consumer Law:

- **Principle 1:** NSCD has a set of templates for Offer Letters, Terms and Conditions, Fees Policies, and course summaries as far as is practicable, and agree any changes to the contents of these documents in advance of publication of any changes with Academic Registry and the Quality Team.
- **Principle 2:** NSCD continues to adhere to the guidance on the provision of 'information and guidance for perspective students' provided in 2020 by the Office for Students (OfS) and discuss plans to change the content of this information on its school website with Academic Registry and Admissions Manager in advance of publication of any changes for information on this list.
- **Principle 3:** Academic Registry, Admissions and Marketing continue to review all information provided on the School's website and in other formats, in consultation with students to discuss and support compliance in this area regarding implications for consumer law.
- **Principle 4:** Where, after offers have been made to students, the Admissions Manager and a Head of Faculty determines that there needs to be an amendment to the course as set out in the offer letter, terms and conditions, fees policy, course summary, or 'material information' provided on school websites or other sources, will be raised with the Vice Principal and Head of Academic Registry for agreement before the change is made or before students are advised about the change;
- **Principle 5:** Building on the internal consumer law guidance first circulated in 2016, Academic Registry and Quality Team produce and maintain an expanded 'Consumer Law Compliance' handbook <https://www.nscd.ac.uk/higher-education/consumer-rights/> that covers this approach, contains relevant guidance, up to date model documents, and provides a single point of reference to assist with the continuity and future management of these areas.

The full Access and Participation Plan and any alternative versions will be clearly accessible through our website and paper copies will be made available upon request.

5. Appendix

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)

Summary of 2022-23 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2022-23 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	BA Dance (Contemporary)	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	CertHE Contemporary Dance Cultural Dance Forms	£8,000
CertHE/DipHE	DipHE Lighting Design and Stage Management	£9,000
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2022-23

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 2022-23 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 2022-23

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 2022-23 to 2026-27

Provider name: Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Provider UKPRN: 10008816

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 figures in Table 4a relate to all expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education. The figures in Table 4b only relate to the expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education which is funded by higher fee income. 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				
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Total access activity investment (£)	£63,000.00	£66,000.00	£68,000.00	£68,000.00	£68,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£43,000.00	£46,000.00	£48,000.00	£48,000.00	£48,000.00
Access (post-16)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Access (other)	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Financial support (£)	£132,000.00	£84,500.00	£85,000.00	£85,500.00	£86,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£17,000.00	£17,500.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£567,000.00	£590,000.00	£596,000.00	£596,000.00	£596,000.00
Access investment	11.1%	11.2%	11.4%	11.4%	11.4%
Financial support	10.9%	10.9%	10.9%	11.0%	11.1%
Research and evaluation	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Total investment (as %HFI)	25.0%	25.1%	25.3%	25.4%	25.5%

