

Annex B.2 - Partnership Policy Governance Framework

*Guidance for the Governance of Student-Facing Policies in Franchise and Validation
Arrangements*

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Lead contact:	Quality Office
Audience:	Partners for Northern School of Contemporary Dance Courses of higher education
Approving body:	Northern School of Contemporary Dance: Senate
Date approved:	June 2026
Policy Implementation date:	June 2026
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous approved version(s) dates:	N/A
Review cycle:	3 yearly
Next review due date:	July 2029
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	
Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance:	NSCD's Quality Code and student-facing policies
UK Quality Code reference:	
OfS Conditions reference:	Conditions: B, C & E
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy should be available in accessible format for all students.
Further information: All queries relating to this document should be referred to quality.office@nscd.ac.uk	

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This Framework sets out how NSCD (the "Lead Higher Education Provider - HEP") governs the student-facing policies that apply to all students registered as NSCD students, including those enrolled through franchise or validation partnerships with third-party delivery organisations ("Partners"). It has been developed in the context of NSCD's award of Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) and the commencement of partnership delivery arrangements from September 2026.

The Framework reflects the regulatory requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration, under which NSCD is responsible for the experience and outcomes of all students registered with it, regardless of where delivery takes place. It cannot outsource or delegate this regulatory responsibility. The Framework also supports NSCD's internal quality assurance obligations and the terms of its partnership agreements.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Establish a clear and consistent approach to the governance of student-facing policies across all partnership arrangements
- Define the categories of policy that Partners must adopt, adapt or align to
- Set out the roles and responsibilities of the Lead HEP and Partners in relation to policy governance
- Provide a framework for the ongoing approval, monitoring and review of policies
- Support Partners in understanding their obligations and the support available to them

2. Scope

This Framework applies to all franchise and validation partnership arrangements entered into by NSCD as the Lead HEP and Awarding Body. It covers all student-facing policies, those policies which govern the rights, entitlements, conduct and experience of students registered with NSCD.

It applies from the point at which a partnership agreement is signed and remains in force for the duration of that agreement. Partners are expected to familiarise themselves with this Framework as part of their induction and to comply with its requirements throughout the partnership.

This Framework does not cover:

- Internal HEP policies that are not student-facing (such as HR, procurement or organisations strategy documents)
- Policies that are solely the Partner's own operational responsibility and have no bearing on the student experience or regulatory compliance

3. Regulatory Context

NSCD's approach to partnership policy governance is informed by the following OfS Conditions of Registration:

Condition B - Student Outcomes

Partners must support NSCD's ability to meet Condition B requirements by ensuring that students have access to adequate academic and pastoral support, and by reporting outcomes data to NSCD in a timely and accurate manner. Policies relating to attendance and engagement, personal tutoring and support through studies are directly relevant to this condition.

Condition C - Management, Governance and Accountability

NSCD must demonstrate that it has effective oversight of all delivery carried out in its name. This Framework, together with the partnership agreement, forms part of the governance infrastructure that satisfies Condition C. Partners are required to operate in accordance with NSCD's governance requirements and to cooperate fully with monitoring and quality assurance activities.

Condition E - Information and Access

Students must have access to accurate, accessible information about their rights and the policies that govern their experience. This includes clear signposting to NSCD's Complaints Procedure and Academic Appeals Policy. Partners are responsible for ensuring students are informed of these rights at induction and throughout their studies.

4. The Three-Tier Policy Model

Student-facing policies are categorised into three tiers, each reflecting a different level of ownership, flexibility and oversight. The tier assigned to each policy is set out in the Policy Register (see Appendix A).

Tier 1 - Lead HEP Policies: Direct Adoption

Tier 1 policies are those which confer specific rights on students as registered members of NSCD, or which are required as part of NSCD's OfS registration. These policies apply directly and in full to all students registered with NSCD, regardless of their delivery location. Partners must adopt Tier 1 policies without substantive modification. Partners may supplement a Tier 1 policy with a short local procedure note that explains how the policy operates in their specific context, for example, identifying the first point of contact for a complaint but the substance of the policy itself remains unchanged.

Tier 2 - Template Policies: Partner Completion and HEP Approval

Tier 2 policies are those where NSCD sets the policy framework and minimum required content, but where the operational detail appropriately belongs to the Partner. NSCD provides a template with mandatory sections; the Partner completes the template with local context and submits it to NSCD for formal approval prior to the commencement of delivery, and annually thereafter.

Partners must obtain written approval from NSCD for their completed Tier 2 policies before welcoming students. Any material changes to a completed Tier 2 policy during the academic year must be notified to and approved by NSCD before coming into effect.

Tier 3 - Partner Policies: HEP Minimum Standards

Tier 3 policies are those where Partners have independent legal obligations, or where the policy governs the Partner's own organisational operation in ways that directly affect the student experience. Partners are required to hold their own policies in these areas but must demonstrate to NSCD that those policies meet the minimum standards. NSCD will review these policies as part of the annual monitoring process.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Lead HEP: NSCD

NSCD is responsible for:

- Maintaining and regularly reviewing all Tier 1 policies and Tier 2 templates
- Communicating policy updates to Partners in a timely manner and providing an appropriate implementation window
- Reviewing and formally approving completed Tier 2 policies submitted by Partners
- Setting and publishing minimum standards for Tier 3 policies in the partnership agreement
- Maintaining the central Policy Register for each partnership
- Conducting annual policy audits as part of the partnership monitoring cycle
- Providing guidance and support to Partners on policy compliance
- Consulting with partners regarding changes.

Partners

Partners are responsible for:

- Adopting Tier 1 policies without substantive modification and ensuring they are accessible to all students, via the NSCD website
- Completing Tier 2 policy templates and submitting them to NSCD for approval within agreed timescales
- Holding and maintaining Tier 3 policies
- Ensuring all policies are clearly communicated to students at induction and signposted throughout their studies
- Notifying NSCD promptly of any material changes to locally-held policies
- Cooperating with NSCD's annual policy audit and monitoring processes
- Ensuring that all student-facing policy documents are co-badged with both the Partner's name and NSCD's name

6. Policy Approval and Review

6.1 Initial Approval

Prior to the commencement of a new partnership, Partners must confirm in writing to NSCD that:

- all Tier 1 policies have been adopted and are accessible to students
- all Tier 2 policies have been completed and submitted for approval
- and all Tier 3 policies are in place and meet the required minimum standards.

No students should be enrolled until this confirmation has been received and NSCD has issued formal approval, this will usually be agreed by 1st September each year.

6.2 Annual Review Cycle

All policies within the scope of this Framework are subject to annual review. NSCD will notify Partners of any updates to Tier 1 policies and Tier 2 templates within 20 working days of approval by NSCD's governing body. Partners will be given a minimum of 30 working days to implement any required changes. Tier 2 policy resubmissions following template updates must be returned to NSCD within the agreed timescale.

6.3 Mid-Cycle Updates

Where a regulatory change, serious incident or other significant development requires a policy to be updated outside the annual review cycle, NSCD will notify Partners as soon as practicable and will specify the timescale within which the change must be implemented. Partners must notify NSCD of any material changes they propose to make to locally-held policies, and must not implement those changes without prior written approval from NSCD.

6.4 Version Control

NSCD maintains version-controlled copies of all Tier 1 policies and Tier 2 templates. Partners must ensure that they are operating from the most current approved version of any policy at all times, this should usually be done via the NSCD website. The central Policy Register (see Section 7) records the current version of each policy for each partnership and the date of last approval.

7. The Policy Register

NSCD maintains a central Policy Register for each partnership. The Register records all policies within the scope of this Framework, their tier classification, the current approved version held by each Partner, and the date of next review. The Policy Register is reviewed and updated at least annually as part of the partnership monitoring cycle, and is made available to Partners on request.

Where a policy is found to be out of date, non-compliant or missing during an audit, NSCD will agree a timescale for resolution with the Partner.

8. Student Communication

Students must be clearly informed at induction of the policies that govern their experience and how to access them. Partners are required to provide each student with a written guide (the "Student Policy Summary") at the point of enrolment, this may form part of the Student Handbook and should note that:

- Identifies NSCD as the Awarding Body and the institution with which students are registered
- List the key Tier 1 policies that apply to students and provides links or references to the current versions
- Explains how to raise a complaint or appeal, including the escalation route to NSCD
- Identifies the Partner's own key contacts for academic and pastoral support
- Confirm where students can access further information about their rights

9. Conflict of Policies

In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between a Tier 2 or Tier 3 policy held by a Partner and a Tier 1 policy of NSCD, NSCD's policy shall take precedence.

Where a Partner identifies a potential conflict between its own operational requirements and the requirements of this Framework, it should raise this with its nominated contact at NSCD as soon as possible. NSCD will endeavour to work with the Partner to find a workable solution that maintains regulatory compliance and protects the student interest.

10. Monitoring and Assurance

Compliance with this Framework is monitored through:

- The annual monitoring process
- A policy audit conducted by NSCD staff, reviewing current versions of all policies held by Partners against the approved versions on record
- Student feedback and complaints data, which may indicate policy gaps or implementation issues
- Any external review or audit undertaken by the OfS

11 Key Contacts

Partners should contact the NSCD Quality Office for all queries relating to the Quality Code and Policies at quality.office@nscd.ac.uk

Appendix A: Policy Tier Reference Table

Policy	Franchise Partner: Policy Tier	Validated Partner (OfS registered): Policy Tier	Notes
Quality Code: Annex A: Curriculum Policy & Management Annex B: Collaborative Partnerships Annex C: Programme Design, Validation & Revisions Annex D: Student Support & Engagement Annex E: Annual Monitoring & Periodic Review Annex F: Academic Governance Annex G: Board of Examiners & Congregations Annex H: External Examiners & Advisers	1	1	All partners (franchise and validated) are required to adopt NSCD's full Quality Code.
Criminal Records Policy	1	n/a	
Emergency Powers of Suspension	1	n/a	
Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours	1	n/a	Partners complete Stage 1, escalate to NSCD
Non-Academic Misconduct Policy	1	n/a	Partners complete Stage 1, escalate to NSCD
Staff & Student Personal Relationships Policy	1	n/a	Disclosures managed by partners
Student Complaints Policy and Procedure	1	n/a	Partners complete Stage 1, escalate to NSCD

Student Engagement & Support Through Studies Policy and Procedures	1	n/a	Partners may need to add supplementary engagement detail (i.e. attendance requirements)
Student Privacy Notices (NSCD)	1	1	
Student Protection Plan	1	n/a	
Admissions Policy	1	n/a	
Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure	1	n/a	
Refunds and Compensation Policy	2	n/a	
Terms and Conditions (all HE courses)	2	n/a	
Fees & Course Deposit Policy	2	n/a	
Academic Freedom & Freedom of Speech	3	n/a	
Safeguarding & Prevent Policy	3	n/a	
Safe Contact Principles	3	n/a	
Student Privacy Notices (delivery partner)	3	n/a	
Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy	3	n/a	
Interruption & Withdrawal of Studies Policy	3	n/a	NSCD will provide a template form for providers to complete