

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy 2022-2027 (LTAS)

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Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy should be available in accessible format for all students.
Further information: LTQAC & Senate considered and approved minor updates to this Strategy in February 2025, to reflect the necessary changes in the Curriculum Lead structure, and approach to external assessors for assessment panels.	

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Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2022-2027

1. Introduction

Northern School of Contemporary Dance's 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.

At all levels of the School Learning, Teaching and Assessment are at the core of NSCD's business. We have a clear and collective sense of what we want to achieve as an education, learning and training provider. We aim to equip our students (both in the vocational sense and as academics) with critical and enquiring minds, subject development, knowledge and the further life skills that enable them to reach their full potential. Central to the effective student learning experience is the teaching, learning and assessment which takes place within the academic programmes, enrichment activities and industry related knowledge transfer. Academic and vocational enhancement is a priority for our school and our academic staff, engaging with scholarship of Learning, Teaching and Assessment to shape curriculum design as well as promoting scholarship which enhances curriculum content.

2. Connection to the School Strategic Plan 2023-2027

NSCD has facilitated collegiate thinking across its faculties and NSCD shares practice with the other associated partners in the sector. NSCD is making a commitment to continuing the very best relationships and knowledge exchange potential with other schools that made up the CDD membership. As such, this Learning and Teaching Assessment Strategy relates directly to who we are as an organisation and our developing five core aims Digital (1), Advocacy for Society (2), Research and Innovation (3), Enterprise and Resilience (4), Infrastructure and Environment (5).

NSCD acknowledges that the engagement, commitment and currency of its teaching staff is a necessary condition for its success, and it promotes staffs' continuing professional development, encouraging the pursuit of practice-based or practice-led research or new work.

3. Approach

In order to meet our strategic aims and maintain our position as a leading UK dance-training environment, the School will ensure we:

- Secure time and opportunities for developing innovative approaches to curriculum content and delivery, which impact on our students' ability to engage with the sector fully and actively as professionals.
- Consistently provide high quality learning experiences and opportunities, through mentoring and research activity, that motivate and facilitate enhancement opportunities for performers, creators and makers of dance, dance teachers, producers and technical theatre practitioners of the future.
- Establish a range of relevant partnerships across the sector, recognising the importance of appropriate relationships in meeting learning, education and artist development needs
- Support local, regional, national and international collaboration through the visibility of our student and staff work through civic engagement, community and industry partnerships
- Prioritise support for emerging disciplinary best practice in the school, with the best chance of success in terms of excellence, value and impact, whilst continuing to focus on distinctive strengths in all avenues of our provision
- Developing our profile with focused support for areas of performance, pedagogy, technology, technology enhanced learning, health & well-being, increased external representation and influence working towards demonstrating our civic role, addressing societal challenges and delivering public benefit

4. Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategic overview

Aim 1: To further deliver excellence in teaching, learning and assessment, through an individual and personalised learning experience.

- Objective 1: As a school be known as a provider that delivers excellent teaching, one that actively promotes a culture of identification, dissemination and implementation of the very best practice.
- Objective 2: To have a curricula that is demonstrably linked to research practice, scholarly activity and industry practice.
- Objective 3: Reimagine the way in which we use and integrate with technology in the learning process, ensuring it is used with confidence and actively enhances the student learning experience.
- Objective 4: Commit to inclusivity and diversity, providing the necessary student support processes and procedures to underpin this

Aim 2: The creation of an inspiring and purposeful curriculum, where students are partners in the learning journey

- Objective 1: Through challenging and inspiring learning processes, students can find autonomy through the development of robust processes for self directed and independent learning
- Objective 2: The needs and identity of all our students are considered in the creation of high quality learning experiences, including learning support.
- Objective 3: Build upon fair and transparent assessment procedures
- Objective 4: Find platforms to facilitate student and staff work being visible and where there is opportunity to engage in discourse through their work

Aim 3: Develop professional teachers and managers through resources and professional development

- Objective 1: Through visionary estates management and growth, teaching and learning spaces are reimaged to create an adaptable and resource-rich environment which is responsive of student learning aspirations
- Objective 2: Academic staff, student support staff and other student facing professional service staff are committed to initial and continual professional development that connects to Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Objective 3: Academic staff and Student Support staff routinely review and share practice in order to enhance the student learning experience.

Aim 1: To further deliver excellence in teaching, learning and assessment, through an individual and personalised learning experience.

NSCD aims to support each student in finding their own pathway from the training environment into the professional world, acknowledging and celebrating the full breadth of possibility in the arts/dance sector. Through robust review processes of learning and teaching experiences within the school we maintain excellence, through strategic action planning, and aim to equip our students with both subject specific skills and transferable skills that allow them to make an impact on the dance/arts sector and the broader world around them.

As a small institution we work closely with our students and tailor individualised support which allows them to not just ‘survive’ the intense physical and mental demands of dance training at this level, but to ‘thrive’. This is evidenced through our sustained high levels of academic achievement, alongside high rates of employment and further study for graduates of our courses. To ensure continued effectiveness we intend to maintain high staff/student ratios and a focus on excellence in student support processes and procedures as we continue to expand our course provision over the next 5 years. We will be regularly monitoring, reviewing and ensuring the cost effectiveness of student support as student numbers increase. The full-time Student Support Manager Role is instrumental in supporting these developments. (Objective 4)

We will retain a focus on ‘the pillars of support’ as we have found this to be an effective, integrated model which meets the wide-ranging support needs of a diverse student body with different socioeconomic backgrounds and life experiences. We will continue to consult with students, staff and relevant external stakeholders, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from module and experience surveys to ensure this approach remains relevant in meeting our students’ needs. The information collected will focus broadly on the effectiveness of support provision in relation to the curriculum and guiding students to meet the demands of the degree award, alongside the development of lifelong self-care skills to support longevity in arts/dance careers. We will develop strategic partnerships with external providers/organisations to outsource some of our provision, as appropriate. (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)

The key pillars of support to be overseen by the Student Support Manager/Student Services department are:

- **Physical Support:** The Student Support Manager role oversees and monitors students, supports provision from external providers, collates data and develops cohesive support plans for individual students. (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)
- **Learner Support:** Ensuring the full breadth of learners are supported to meet the demands of their course and ensuring that all tutors are supported to consider neurodiversity and specific learning needs in the development of their teaching practice. This includes inputting into discussion around the most effective modes of communication and the potential role of new technologies to ensure information is clear and readily accessible through Moodle, NSCDs Virtual Learning Environment. (Objective 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- **English Language Support:** This provision will continue to be on offer for students for whom English is not their first language to ensure academic rigour in relation to degree awards. (Objectives 1 & 4)
- **Well-being Support:** The Student Support Manager will oversee the provision of counselling and well-being support, working closely with the support team, relevant Head of Faculty and/or teaching team to ensure that there is a holistic approach to supporting individual students. (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Ensuring that the full breadth of our increasingly diverse student body have the physical, emotional/mental and academic support in place allows us to be experimental and progressive in our approach to curriculum development. As we expand, we will invest in our environment, increasing the number of state of the art studio spaces available to us to support students' independent study, whilst connecting with the community and also encouraging relationships with less conventional spaces. These developments will ensure students experience opportunities to work for themselves, developing their own artistic voice, allowing the school to emphasise the value it places on the individual. (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)

We will also develop our use of innovative digital technologies in supporting the learning journey, drawing on rapid enhancements experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic where technology played a vital role in allowing teaching and learning to continue during periods of lockdown, as well as allowing for individualised support plans to still be communicated to students. We acknowledge the important role technology can play in enhancing learning and will continue to invest in technologies that support a broad range of students with their specific needs, and in staff training to ensure we are maximising opportunities provided by Moodle, our VLE, and/or other relevant programmes/software such as Quercus and Asimut (student records and timetable software). Training to support effective use of technology within our daily scheduling will allow us to work efficiently and effectively in sustainable ways to ensure cost-effective delivery of provision, maximising staff and student time by shifting appropriate sessions online, freeing up

space and time for other activities and/or rest. Investment in digital technologies will also allow students to share their work more broadly. For example, continued investment in live-streaming possibilities means international students can share and celebrate their work with families and friends around the world, which supports a sense of belonging which we feel is vital to ensuring excellence in student outcomes. We also anticipate technology will play a role in dissemination of innovative research carried out within the School more, as the research culture blossoms. (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)

In relation to curriculum content and teaching practice our staff are selected for their subject specialism/s and over the period of the Strategic Plan we are looking to enhance and expand the staff team as we increase our course provision to include new subject areas which align with our 5 core aims (Digital, Advocacy for Society, Research and Innovation, Enterprise and Resilience, Infrastructure and Environment) and demonstrate our commitment to inclusivity and diversity. We already attract the highest calibre of teaching staff from the local, national and international dance community which brings with it a wealth of diverse, high-quality embodied knowledge and experience to share with the student body. Advances in our technological capacity mean we are able to maximise on international opportunities in cost-effective and ecologically sound ways. Guest tutors are actively sought out to fill any gaps in the provision offered by in-house specialists and to ensure the most current trends in the sector are represented in the student learning experience, alongside long-standing practices. These measures are highly effective in providing high quality, relevant and appropriately challenging learning experiences for NSCD students, and we will continue with this approach as we expand the course provision. (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4).

Key Performance indicators (used to measure Aim 1 over the 5 years. To be updated annually)

- NSS Score for Overall Satisfaction (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- No. of students accessing Moodle site (Objective 3)
- % student attendance in line with NSCD policy (Objectives 1 & 4)
- % Good Honours Degrees achieved (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- No. of complaints to OIA upheld (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)
- Feedback from external stakeholders (Objectives 1, 2, 3, & 4)
- Number of staff with teaching related qualifications and/or HEA accreditation (Objectives 1 & 2)
- % Staff engagement with continuing professional development activities (Objectives 1 & 2)
- Faculty reports on peer review and teaching observation outcomes (Objectives 1, 2 & 4)
- External Examiners' reports (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% compliance with internal and external quality requirements (Objectives 1 & 4) • HESA equality and diversity data (Objective 4) • NSS score for Teaching on my Course (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • NSS score for Assessment & Feedback (Objectives 1, 2 & 4) • Graduate employability/destinations (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Staff/student ratios (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Increased number of relationships with external support providers (Objectives 1, 2 & 4) • % Student Retention (in School) (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • % Students meeting/remaining higher than our access agreement targets from APP (Objectives 1 & 4) • % Staff engagement with best practice sharing activity (i.e. the scholarship of LTA) (Objectives 1 & 2) • % Staff and students engaging with NSCD research journal (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Evidence of research-informed curriculum development and teaching (Objectives 1 & 2) • No. of pedagogic (HE related) conference 'papers' or presentations (Objectives 1 & 2) • No. of pedagogic (HE related) research publications (Objectives 1 & 2) • No. of staff-student scholarly enquiries (Objectives 1 & 2) • No of student conference papers/journal contributions (Objectives 1 & 2) |
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Aim 2: The creation of an Inspiring and Purposeful Curriculum, where Students are partners in the learning journey

We engage in continual review and development of what we teach, why we teach it, how we teach it, who teaches it, and who we're teaching for, in order that our students receive the best learning experiences possible, underpinned by robust support processes. We prepare NSCD graduates to meet the needs of the sector as it is now, and to re-shape it as we move towards an aspirational future of social awareness and responsibility in which we see commitment to sustainability, inclusivity, access and diversity in all aspects of our communities and culture.

Our approach to creating and developing curricula that resonate with young people from a variety of backgrounds with a broad range of dance/art experience and skill levels is to seek input from them, and balance this with staff expertise and knowledge of the sector through research-informed teaching, learning and assessment models. In response to student and external stakeholder feedback, alongside market research, we will continue to add to our portfolio of courses over the next 5-year period to attract a more diverse staff and student community, responding to industry and community need. This will facilitate knowledge exchange across staff teams and student cohorts and generate a hub of research and arts activity within the school, supporting identification and development of best practice. New courses in a broader range of subjects (for example Lighting Design, Teaching, Digital Technologies, Dance as Advocacy, Site Performance) will increase opportunities to offer inspiring and purposeful curricula which resonate with more people's needs and identities, bringing increased diversity to the school community and large numbers of NSCD graduates employed across a range of roles within the sector. We will ensure that a broader cross-section of people has access to our courses and facilities to ensure that their stories and voices are heard through the art they create and share with the world via our platforms (Objective 2 & 4).

The school has strong external relationships/partnerships and responds to needs in the sector. We have noted the need for graduates to diversify their skills, moving far beyond the historical associations of training to be a repertory company dancer and altered our BA (Hons) curriculum accordingly, creating 3 strands – Performer, Teacher, Maker. Today's graduates are most likely to embark upon even broader portfolio careers and we are reflecting this by including work in our courses to support skill development in production and curation of art works, digital technology, dance film, the creation of site work to offer just a few examples. We aim to offer exposure to numerous movement, creative and research practices, alongside supporting students to develop their personal, independent practice/artistic voice.

Over the next 5 years we will continue review which practices are relevant to the needs of students, through feedback from staff, students and external stakeholders to ensure our graduates are highly sought after within the arts/dance sector. We will also work to integrate a careers provision more fully into each course, as relevant, to more fully embed the skills needed to work independently in the current arts/dance sector. We will continue to carefully consider the balance of taught input by subject specialists, with independent study and tutoring/mentorship within the development of modules, all of which is underpinned by access for individual students to our 4 pillars of support. (Objectives 1 & 2)

As we develop curricula in new subject areas and review existing curricula, we will conduct the review of assessment processes set out in the previous section, ensuring that innovative approaches retain robustness and facilitate high levels of achievement for students. We will investigate and consider reinforcing independent learning through more fully and formally embedding assessment models such as peer and self-assessment, which are currently used only to provide formative feedback throughout process. We will review assessment tasks, level and grading descriptors, assessment criteria and modes of feedback to ensure all aspects of the assessment process across a broader range of disciplines are fit for purpose and prepare students to transition into employment and/or further study. Our strategic aim to develop a vibrant and respected research culture will support us in this endeavour. (Objective 3)

We will also continue and formalise our initiative to open assessments up to internal and public audiences as relevant and appropriate to support students in honing their performance skills. Opening assessments to external stakeholders also provides platforms for sharing student work in the broader community, which aligns with our commitment to offering public benefit. (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4)

Key Performance indicators (used to measure Aim 2 over the 5	• HESA equality and diversity data (Objective 2) • % Student Retention (in School) (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • % Students meeting/remaining higher than our access agreement targets from APP (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • % student attendance in line with NSCD policy (Objectives 1 & 2) • % of student submission of assessment items (Objectives 1, 2 & 3)
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years. To be updated annually)	• NSCD Student Experience Survey and module evaluations (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Student feedback through Student Voice Forum (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • % tutorial attendance (Objectives 1 & 2) • Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • % Good Honours Degrees achieved (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • No. of complaints to OIA upheld (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Feedback from external stakeholders (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Faculty reports on peer review and teaching observation outcomes (Objectives 1, 2 & 3) • External Examiners' reports (Objectives 1 & 3) • 100% compliance with internal and external quality requirements (Objective 3) • NSS Score for Overall Satisfaction (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • NSS Score for Academic Support (Objectives 1, 2, & 3) • NSS Score for Learning Resources (Objectives 2 & 4) • NSS Score for Organisation & Management (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • NSS score for Assessment & Feedback (Objectives 1 & 3) • Assessment outcomes (Objectives 1, 2, & 3) • External organisation involvement with assessments e.g. professional panel feedback (Objectives 2, 3 & 4) • Graduate employability/destinations (Objectives 1, 2 & 4) • % Staff and students engaging with NSCD research journal (Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4) • Evidence of research-informed curriculum development and teaching (Objectives 1, 2, & 3)
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Aim 3: Develop Professional Teachers and Managers through resources and professional development

As noted previously, we attract the highest quality arts/dance practitioners to work with our students at NSCD. We have identified over the years that often those who have been working professionally in the arts/dance sector for a long time are not as aware of their tremendous level of embodied knowledge and skill base, as we are, and they are unable to see their work in relation to academic frameworks. We are therefore working to develop artist/practitioner confidence by offering the opportunity for staff to evidence their skills through the completion of postgraduate teaching qualifications specific to this type of high-level vocational training. We have expanded our own provision to offer one of the only dance specific teaching qualifications of its kind in the UK and we aspire to develop this further to include research degrees over the course of the next 10 years. These steps ensure that current staff are working at the highest level and engaging in current, topical debates and research, developing a culture that in turn attracts new staff and guest lecturers to NSCD as a hub for excellence in relation to the teaching of dance. Staff training offered by in-house support staff and external providers will ensure that all teaching staff are aware of the ways in which they can offer currency in their practice in the most effective, inclusive way, conscious of current discourse in the sector. (Objective 2)

A keen, strategic focus on staff development means that alongside access to postgraduate teaching qualifications within the School, NSCD also focus on supporting teaching and support staff to engage in external development opportunities such as Clore Leadership programmes, International exchanges and/or a whole host of professional engagements that allow staff to 'bring something back' to enhance our offer to the students and extend our network in the arts/dance sector and wider community. We will create opportunities for staff to share new learning and we will prioritise knowledge exchange and relationship-building with organisations and partners that can support us in sharing best practice across the sector. (Objectives 2 & 3)

Regular teaching staff meetings and working groups will allow for focus on key priorities over the next 5-year period with current emphasis on how we can develop even more inclusive and innovative courses and curricula. Through a series of external practitioners offering staff development workshops, in-house discussion and student consultation we will look to continually shape and re-shape our current work to ensure its relevance to the young people and professional artists and practitioners that come through our doors. We hope to see feedback from students and external stakeholders which reflects this currency and see evidence of this work in graduate outcomes, destinations and the future recruitment of an increasingly diverse student and staff community (Objectives 2 & 3)

We will respond to staff feedback through appraisal and regular meetings and ensure that we develop our resources in line with any new lines of research or personal development within their practice, that support excellence for our students. As we expand, we will develop appropriate corporate and community partnerships to support our vision of a resource-rich state of the art environment in which staff, students and anyone who comes through the doors of NSCD feels inspired and supported. We will continue to seek external and internal feedback to ensure NSCD stays firmly at the centre of innovations in dance training and that our graduates play a key role in shaping a fairer and more equitable society, underpinned by their learning experience at the School. (Objectives 1, 2 & 3)	
Key Performance indicators (linked to actions taken)	• % of staff with a teaching role reporting L&T related CPD at annual appraisal • % of staff with a teaching role enrolled upon a formal teaching qualification or completing fellowship of HEA applications • Faculty reports on peer review and teaching observation outcomes • Evidence of successful introduction of innovative practice in curricula content and/or delivery, e.g. case studies of impact • Feedback from external stakeholders • APMR Reports