

Northumbria University

Teaching Excellence Framework
(TEF) Report 2017



Teaching
Excellence
Framework

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Vice-Chancellor's Statement

Northumbria University's teaching excellence has been recognised in a Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The new national scheme is aimed at assessing the quality of undergraduate teaching in universities, colleges and other higher education providers.

The award recognises that Northumbria delivers high-quality teaching, learning and results for its students, and consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK Higher Education.

In making the award, the TEF panel noted that Northumbria University students 'achieve excellent outcomes'.

The panel also stated that 'its judgement reflects, in particular, evidence of:

- Commitment to providing effective support to help keep students on track, enjoy their studies, and achieve high attainment through a range of academic and personal support services, graduate start-up and careers assistance
- High quality physical and digital resources which are used effectively by staff in teaching, and by students to enhance their learning
- Well-developed student engagement activity including opportunities for students to be involved in structured enquiry and research for the purpose of enhancing the learning experiences of the wider student body.'

This award clearly demonstrates the quality and high standard of our undergraduate teaching, and I congratulate our staff on the hard work that has led to this significant and encouraging achievement.

The Silver Award reinforces Northumbria's growing reputation for academic excellence. We are already one of the most successful universities in the UK in terms of student progress, ranked 7th nationally, and for employability, where we are ranked 9th in the UK for the number of graduates in professional or managerial roles.

As part of the assessment, the University had strong performances in the quality of its assessment and feedback to students, and academic support. It also performed above average in the proportion of students who successfully completed their studies and graduated.

Northumbria University has recently achieved its highest ever position in the 2018 Guardian University League Table, 48th, a rise of 20 places in the last two years alone. The University is also in the top 50 in the UK for research power and had the fourth largest increase in quality research funding (REF 2014) and is ranked as the top university in the UK for graduate start-up businesses based on turnover. More than half of the University's courses achieved satisfaction rates of 90% or above in the 2016 National Student Survey.

Professor Andrew Wathey CBE FRHistS FSA FRSA
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive



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Northumbria ranked 48th in the 2018 Guardian University League Table

Context

Northumbria's Vision for 2025, set in 2012, is to be a research-rich, business focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. The first phase of delivery is detailed in its Corporate Strategy 2013-18, a strategy that is based on quality with the student at the heart of the University. Central to this is investment in teaching and in research active, doctorally qualified staff who can deliver research-rich learning. This was accompanied by an objective to attract the most talented and able students irrespective of background and develop them into graduates who are distinguished by their intellectual expertise, leadership capability and employability. Progress with Northumbria's academic development has made it more attractive to students as indicated by increased entry points of its students - from 310 (using comparable definitions) in 2009/10 to 370 in 2015/16. Northumbria was ranked 47th in the sector on the latest data (2014/15). To further drive quality, academic excellence and demand, an academic restructure moved Northumbria from eight schools to four faculties with a clearer academic departmental structure.

Northumbria's positive and improving TEF metrics are a result of the first phase of this journey which married continuous improvement with the implementation of transformational initiatives. The 2013-18 Student Learning and Experience (SLE) Strategic Plan provides the direction for this journey, embedding enhancements to the student experience. The SLE Plan drives excellence in the six areas of: student satisfaction; student experience; student achievement; teaching; quality assessment and enhancement; and student retention, attainment and progression. Evidence to guide current and future interventions is the result of improved analysis of data and feedback from student engagement. Success is measured through a basket of performance indicators.

The following projects are key to achievements to date and to planned future improvement:

- **Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA):** delivers a consistent approach to programme design and delivery to enable students to achieve Northumbria's distinctive graduate characteristics. Implemented for 94% of programmes by September 2016, it ensures all provision addresses: Research-Rich Learning; Employability; Assessment for Learning and Achievement; and Technology Enhanced Learning.
- **Research-Rich Learning Policy:** engages students in critical scholarship and enquiry as partners in learning. A key focus is how research can be used to benefit learning and teaching at all stages of taught programmes.
- **Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (EEE) Plan:** a roadmap to support the development of students' longer term employability and entrepreneurial attributes and support student progress into professional or managerial employment or further study.

- **Assessment for Learning and Achievement Policy:** articulates the importance of - clarifying good performance; encouraging time and effort on challenging and authentic learning tasks; providing high quality feedback; ensuring summative assessment improves learning, supported by formative assessment tasks; and adopting an inclusive approach to assessment and feedback.
- **Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL):** an initiative to embrace and embed digital approaches to delivering programmes and managing assessment.
- **Northumbria University Professional Standards Framework (NUPSF):** an overarching framework to support colleagues to achieve and be recognised for teaching excellence. A key component is professional recognition through HEA Fellowship.
- **Student Engagement Policy (SEP):** embeds the principles of engagement with students' individual learning; participation and representation; consultation; and communication.
- **Transforming the Student Experience (TSE) and Student Central:** TSE is a major project to transform how students access services throughout the student journey, making them available online or face-to-face through a single service, accredited for Customer Service Excellence. Students can interact with their support activities using the new student portal, and professional support teams can access a single shared view of the student. Student Central provides the equivalent student access to services in a new physical location, with tailored support spaces.
- **Annual NSS action planning:** provides active, targeted and robust responses to student feedback at all levels.
- **Teaching Quality and Excellence Fund (TQEF):** annual competitive scheme to reward, recognise and seed fund excellence in learning and teaching.
- **Student Charter:** jointly developed by the University and the Students' Union, it summarises aspirations for all students, including behaviours and standards. It details the way the University and Students' Union work in partnership.

Teaching Quality

- TQ1 Teaching provides effective stimulation and challenge and encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies**
- TQ2 Institutional culture recognises and rewards excellent teaching**
- TQ3 Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential**
- TQ4 Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment**

Northumbria
ranked in the
TOP 30 across
19 subject areas
in the Complete
University Guide
2018.

Teaching Quality

Northumbria's full time provision shows one positive indicator for BME students and no negative indicators. Northumbria has achieved improvements in Teaching Quality between 2014 and 2016, with particularly strong performance in 2015. NSS data shows that Northumbria improved on all four teaching quality questions between 2014 and 2016. In Question 1 ("Staff are good at explaining things"), Northumbria has scored 90% or above in each of the last three years. In Northumbria's own Student Satisfaction Survey (year 1 and year 2 students) satisfaction in teaching increased by 0.2% from 2015 to 2016. The International Student Barometer (ISB) shows that Northumbria's "Overall learning" satisfaction has increased from 87% in 2012 to 93% in 2015, with scores of over 90% from 2012 to 2015 on "Quality lectures", "Good teachers" and "Expert lecturers".

TQ1

Teaching provides effective stimulation and challenge and encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies.

Stimulation, challenge and contact. Research-rich learning underpins Northumbria's Vision for academic excellence by encouraging students to be active and reflective learners. It is delivered through academic staff who are research-active, professionally connected and doctorally qualified. The increases in NSS scores in Teaching Quality referred to above demonstrate the improvement Northumbria is making. Between 2012/13 and 2015/16 significant investment increased the number of academic staff by 5%, reducing the SSR from 18.5 to 17.1. The proportion of staff who are doctorally qualified has increased from 37% in 2012/13 to 50% in 2015/16. This was achieved through a doctoral scheme for existing staff and by making doctoral qualification a criterion for recruitment. In 2015/16, 90% of academic staff were employed on teaching and research contracts. For new academic staff, probation was extended to 22 months in 2014 to support their initial development. They also undertake an introduction to learning and teaching, and are assigned teaching and research mentors (for the full period of probation).

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*DLHE 2014/15 **QS Stars 2016

Widespread creative and innovative approaches to teaching are driving the improvement in Teaching Quality. In NSS 2016, 19 out of 35 subject areas scored at or above the sector median for the “Teaching on my course” category, with five in the upper quartile. There has been a focus, across Departments, on students as active learners who relish scholarship and engagement with experiential and research rich learning, such as:

- Social Work, Education and Community making use of visual and interactive teaching, including visual artefacts, and the creation of visual maps and metaphors. Programme feedback reports indicate that this has helped students to become more engaged and has supported the understanding of abstract concepts.
- Computing and Information Sciences have recreated digital forensics cases (e.g. fraud or theft) for students to investigate from start to finish.
- Architecture and Built Environment use augmented and virtual reality to explore spatial and constructional elements of students’ designs.
- Psychology students compared food diaries of what they ate to national guidelines, requiring them to explore a range of cross-disciplinary research methods and apply this knowledge. Students had their work published in peer-reviewed academic journals and one won a British Science Festival Prize. The approach has driven high attendance and attainment, and strong progression to postgraduate study.
- In Arts, Drama and Theatre students worked with healthcare academics to bring their research on dementia to life for healthcare professionals by exploring how drama might facilitate a greater and more positive impact on how dementia is dealt with.

Scholarly engagement and enquiry based learning (a key building block for research-rich learning) is also supported by the ease of access to learning materials facilitated by electronic reading lists and eBooks (see Learning Environment section). The increased use of electronic reading lists (up by 44% between 2014/15 and 2015/16) and the growth in scholarly reading from e-books (up by 47% between 2012/13 and 2015/16) provides evidence of improved levels of engagement. Also, a 2013 CIPD report noted that students described their experiences as “challenging”, “enthusiastic”, “enjoyable”, “quality”, “supportive”, “relevant” and “interesting”.

Coordinated analysis of student feedback alongside robust student experience action planning. Since 2012/13, there has been an annual coordinated action planning process, which involves students and the Students’ Union. It is informed by sophisticated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (including NSS) at sector, University, faculty, department, service and programme levels. The analysis is used to inform specific improvements at University, department and programme levels where there appears to be under-performance. It is also used to make interventions in service improvements in IT, estates and student support. Northumbria action planning aims to improve the experience of all students, and target specific student cohorts. Engagement with students has better enabled understanding of issues, involved them in developing solutions, and helped feedback changes. For example, English Literature and Creative Writing introduced improved management support, actions to improve student engagement, and help with learning from feedback. These actions contributed to an NSS “Overall satisfaction” score rising from 75% to 93% between 2015 and 2016.

Internal and external peer review. Northumbria revised its approach to academic peer support in 2013/14, and embedded this in the introduction of the Northumbria University Professional Standards Framework (NUPSF - more detail below). All academic staff are required to annually engage in peer support to feedback on teaching quality. In addition, external examiners are used to identify best practice (as well as supporting the monitoring of standards). An external examiner report for 2015/16 stated "... Architecture at Northumbria is the UK leader in the critical pedagogy of Architecture. The staff take a student centred constructivist approach which means that each individual student is encouraged to systematically build on previous learning, in this way enhancing their learning, their sense of agency and their confidence". Architecture scored 92% on "Teaching on my Course" in the 2016 NSS.

Strategic approach to engaging with and responding to students as partners in learning. The Student Engagement Policy (SEP) articulates enhanced ways of working in partnership with students through four principles: learning; participation and representation; consultation; and communication. As the Students' Union says, "a strong culture of student engagement has continued and permeates the University's committee structures, relationships between Students' Union officers and senior faculty and institutional managers...". In 2015 Student / Staff Programme Committees replaced Programme Management Committees, which has optimised the student contribution to action planning and closing feedback loops. Electronic evaluation introduced in 2015/16 allows students to record their module and programme feedback online. University and departmental Student Engagement Forums have been introduced in 2015/16 with student chairs setting the agenda and leading the sessions. A Students' Union written submission in Autumn 2016 commented that "The Student Engagement Forum has been an important development in partnership working to enhance student feedback, and has introduced detached outreach methods in place of more traditional meetings, leading to greater levels of student involvement in feeding back directly to senior University managers." The Students' Union leads "Go out and listen" days twice a year to engage with students. These involve senior University staff, including the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and academic Faculty teams. Student reviewers ensure that programme design and development is student-facing and student led (as part of design, review and approval). Students' Union sabbatical officers are closely involved in the University's decision making processes. They are panel members for periodic review. They are also members of the Board of Governors, Academic Board and SLE Committee and they sit on transformational project boards and operational groups such the Estates Plan Steering Group and TSE. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor meets student departmental representatives every two months to further understand student needs and experiences. Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor regularly hold formal meetings with the Students' Union sabbatical officers.

TQ2

Institutional culture recognises and rewards excellent teaching.

A developing institutional culture of continuous improvement in learning and teaching, promoted and valued at all levels, has underpinned increased satisfaction with Teaching Quality. Staff are provided with development opportunities and are able to secure recognition for their contribution to the student learning experience. The impact of this was seen in the 2016 NSS, with Northumbria scoring 91% on Question 1, "Staff are good at explaining things".

Academic Career Pathway. The new Academic Career Pathway (ACP), implemented in 2015/16, recognises the importance of learning and teaching and its symbiosis with research and innovation. ACP is a single career pathway for all academic leaders at Associate Professor and Professorship level, and is externally peer assessed. The number of Professors has grown from 93 in 2012 to 114 in 2016 and the introduction of the Associate Professor position in 2015 has seen the number grow from 50 at introduction to 74 in 2016. These staff all teach and research. New learning and teaching responsibilities bring focus to the leadership of excellence (e.g. module and programme leader, Director of Learning and Teaching). These responsibilities were introduced in 2012 and further enhanced in 2016. Since 2012/13, 280 academic staff have been through Northumbria's academic leadership development programme. The programme focuses on coaching, and the development of the skills and behaviours needed for teaching and research excellence, career development, and leadership.

Northumbria's Professional Standards Framework (NUPSF). The HEA accredited framework was implemented in 2013/14. It requires academic staff to be HEA Fellows – on appointment or at the end of probation for new staff, and for existing staff by 2018. Between 2012/13 and 2015/16 the proportion of staff who are HEA Fellows has increased from 24% to 42%; the number of HEA Senior and Principal Fellows has increased from 2 to 19. All staff have access to the University's learning and teaching CPD programme which includes preparation for achieving HEA Fellowship. This focuses on core aspects of pedagogy and delivery, technology enhanced learning, assessment and feedback, employability, and research-rich learning. Faculty CPD programmes contextualise learning and teaching within disciplinary contexts. These developments supported the improvement in teaching quality, demonstrated by the higher NSS scores referenced above.

Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). Since October 2014, the University has supported staff and students to adopt new teaching and learning technologies, supporting stimulation and engagement (See Learning Environment for more detail). The introduction of a comprehensive programme of training is developing a culture that maximises the use of, and commitment to, TEL. 747 staff were trained on Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA) in 2015/16, supported by online training resources. In 2015/16 1,364 staff attended training in VLE use, lecture capture, Pebble+ (evidence based learning), and collaborative and social learning tools. All academic staff are supported to engage in at least one TEL training up-skill session per academic year, consolidated through on-going online training support. In 2014/15, the University was awarded Leadership Foundation support, for TEL, as part of the Changing the Learning Landscape project. In 2015/16, An HEA funded project to drive digital literacy among staff and students captured baseline data about the staff digital literacy profile, raised awareness of its importance, supported student prioritisation of initiatives, and led to enhanced provision of TEL support to realise its wider adoption.

Recognition and reward. Through the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Fund (TQEF), the University has budgeted £450k since 2014/15 to reward and seed fund excellence in learning and teaching. 111 projects have been funded, and an annual TQEF Conference shares good practice and builds capacity. TQEF recipients have presented their work nationally. TQEF also incentivises strong NSS performance by providing additional funding for programmes scoring 90% or above. Since 2012/13 the Students' Union Student Led Teaching Awards have promoted recognition of teaching quality through the student nomination of academic staff. The number of nominations increased from 426 in 2012/13 to 1,086 in 2015/16, and is combined with a Students' Union hosted awards evening. Northumbria has also actively encouraged external recognition. Northumbria has secured NTFS awards. Awards from Professional, Statutory and Regulating Bodies (PSRBs) include the British Sociological Association. Northumbria won a Queen's Anniversary Prize for the Student Law Office in 2013, and was Business School of the Year in 2015 (THE).

TQ3

Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.

Northumbria has embedded research-rich and professional based learning in all programmes and stages to ensure that its provision stretches students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential. As a consequence, Northumbria improved its performance in the NSS Personal Development category from 82% to 84%, between 2014 and 2016, and outperformed the sector on all three Questions (19, 20 and 21) by up to 2% points. Evidence from external examiner reports and reviews supports the direction of travel. An external examiner report for 2015/16 stated 'this is an exceptional programme that has met the increasing challenges of recruiting high quality [students], whilst obtaining high employment outcomes for them, seamlessly. This programme has . . . set the quality benchmark, for secondary PE teacher training in the whole country'. Over the last three years, a range of transformational activities have been initiated to ensure all programmes are challenging and combine contemporary content with engaging and innovative delivery methods.

Learning and teaching frameworks, policies and plans. In 2014/15 Northumbria introduced its Research-Rich Learning Policy, Employability Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Plan, and Technology Enhanced Learning transformational project. These strategic initiatives, plus an enhanced Assessment for Learning and Achievement Policy, ensure that students experience high quality Northumbria programmes, that support them to achieve distinctive graduate characteristics. They are now the four pillars of PFNA and are being used to support a radical transformation of the academic portfolio. In addition, the creation of a central Northumbria Language Centre in 2015/16 is providing pre-sessional and in-sessional English support and study skills for academic practice for international students. It focuses provision on those most requiring support. There has been significant recognition of provision and performance from the last British Council inspection (2016). It reported that, "Strengths were noted in the areas of student administration, quality assurance, premises and facilities, learning resources, course design, teaching, care of students, and leisure opportunities".

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Commitment to experiential and negotiated work based learning.

All programmes support experiential learning, incorporating engagement in professional or work-related activities where relevant, and opportunities to learn by reflecting on doing:

- The Business Clinic enables students to provide consultancy advice for clients (small and medium enterprises, multinationals, and not-for-profit organisations). Students produce a detailed report and presentation, providing a valuable learning experience and improving their employment prospects. Student feedback has been very positive, for example "...taking part in the Business Clinic has really helped me because I can provide a real-world example of working in business when I graduate". An employer commented (2016), "I've been blown away by the energy, enthusiasm and ideas the team brought to our brief. They went far beyond our expectations...The next step for us is studying their strategy in detail... with a view to implementing their recommendations..."

The Student Law Office has provided 595 students (between 2013/14 and 2015/16) with the opportunity to offer legal advice and representation to real clients under the supervision of qualified lawyers. Students conducted 906 cases and helped clients to recover over £250k between 2013/14 and 2015/16. This clinical experience has enabled the innovative MLaw programme to achieve scores above 90% for "Teaching On My Course" over the last four years (graduates have completed the academic and vocational stages of solicitor or barrister training). This experiential learning has also had a significant positive impact on outcomes. Northumbria ranked first in the sector for Law graduates in "sustained employment only" one year after graduation and third in the sector for "sustained employment, further study or both" five years after graduation (from the 2016 Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data).

- The Building Advice Centre has, since its launch, provided 900 students with valuable employability skills and over 240 clients with detailed technical advice.

Profession and industry relevant programmes. Northumbria has secured formal accreditation by 56 Professional, Statutory Regulatory and Accrediting bodies (PSRBs) covering 283 programmes. This breadth reflects a commitment to working with these organisations to improve both student experience (by exposure to real world experiences) and outcomes (by improving employment prospects and keeping curricula contemporary).

The accreditations also demonstrate the distinctiveness of Northumbria provision. In 2015, Northumbria was in the 1% of Business Schools worldwide to hold AACSB accreditation for both Business and Accounting. Initial Teacher Training has achieved an Ofsted Outstanding rating for 14 years running. The Institute of Direct and Digital Marketing commented that "The depth and quality of the teaching has always impressed...almost every year [students] make the final of the IDM national student competition and have produced several winners".

TQ4

Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment.

In the context of strong overall performance in the TEF matrix, Northumbria's full time provision shows only one negative indicator against the "Other EU" split metric. For this small cohort (191 students over the 3 years, 2% of full time provision), the NSS score has improved from 60% in 2014 to 65% in 2016. Northumbria has achieved a sustained strong performance in all four NSS Questions relating to assessment and feedback. It outperformed the sector in the Assessment and Feedback category (75% in 2016 compared to a sector average of 73%) and in three of the individual Questions in 2016. On "Feedback on my work has been prompt" Northumbria was 6% points higher than the sector in 2016, improving by 5% since 2014. External examiners regularly commend University practices. For example, a 2015/16 report said "...the feedback provided to students is very valuable and valued by the students. On review by the external examiners as a group, the University collectively felt that the feedback system works particularly well, in particular relating to module objectives and learning outcomes for the projects and student cohort". The Assessment for Learning and Achievement policy has supported improvements in progression and good honours. Northumbria's student progression has improved from 90% in 2014/15 to 91% in 2015/16 (semester 1), with particular improvement for international students. The proportion of good honours has risen from 64% in 2012/13 to 75% in 2015/16. This performance reflects the University's commitment to robust and transparent policies, effective and fair assessment, and prompt and purposeful feedback.

Assessment for Learning and Achievement Policy. Northumbria's current approach builds on its successful national Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) which focused on Assessment for Learning (2005-2010). The Assessment for Learning and Achievement Policy, introduced in 2014/15 ensures that: all modules include a formative assessment; assessment criteria are available to students; assessments are mapped and planned across the programme; there is high quality feedback and engagement with students about assessment and closing the gap between their current and desired performance. Individualised assessment and feedback also allows tailored support for students as part of personal tutoring. In addition, hand in and hand back dates are centrally monitored and reported to Faculties to ensure that we meet the commitment for timely feedback to students (20 days). This approach is fundamental in achieving the NSS performance on Assessment and Feedback referred to above.

Assessment as a core element of staff development. The NUPSF includes assessment and feedback as a core element of academic staff development, with 20% of the induction for new staff focused on it. Northumbria's staff CPD programme supports the development of excellence in assessment practice and provides opportunities to share good practice. The TQEF specifically identifies the funding of assessment and feedback projects. Two examples are 'Feed forward perspectives and practices' and 'Thank you and are we ok? Co-operative enquiry and dialogical feedback for learning, assessment and development'.

Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA). In 2014/15, Northumbria invested over £500k in EMA to enable a systematic and standard approach to online submission, plagiarism detection, marking and quality electronic feedback. This investment was, in part, a response to student requests for typed and prompt feedback. After completing pilots in 2014/15, an 'adopt and improve' roll out in 2015/16 achieved 32% (900) of modules utilising EMA. This is being followed by a roll out at levels 4 and 7 in 2016/17 (with levels 5 and 6 in 2017 and 2018). In the first 3 months of 2016/17, over 90,000 individual student assessment submissions were made using EMA. Northumbria has also invested in systems for portfolio assessment and dissertation management, with 6,725 active users since 2015/16. The successful introduction of EMA has resulted in invitations to present published papers at conferences.

Fairness to students. Responding to student feedback and partnership working with the Students' Union have resulted in the refinement of anonymous marking protocols and the management of extenuating circumstances and extension requests. University assessment regulations and practices are actively managed and subject to continuous improvement. A particular focus of the current review is to make them more student friendly. To enable the earlier release of results to students, single tier assessment boards are being introduced. Student feedback and close partnership with the Students' Union have been used to inform new policies on group work, penalties for late submission, and word count.

Learning Environment

- LE1 Investment in teaching and learning infrastructure, environment and resources.**
- LE2 Enriching the learning environment by student exposure to provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice**
- LE3 Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression**

In the past 10 years Northumbria have invested more than **£200 million** in our estate and is committed to spending another **£52 million** to further enhance our students' and staff experience

Learning Environment

TEF metrics demonstrate strong performance in both Academic Support and Non-continuation. For full time provision, Northumbria scores above the benchmark on all split metrics and has six positive indicators for Academic Support and four positive indicators for Non-continuation. Northumbria has prioritised investment in the learning environment. This ensures that the most effective resources are used to support learning and teaching, that students are exposed to provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and professional practice, and that students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual in order to support progression, completion and achievement. In the 2016 NSS, the scores for Question 10 ("I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies") and Question 12 ("Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices") were both 2% higher than the sector average.

LE1

Investment in teaching and learning infrastructure, environment and resources.

Learning estate. In order to optimise effective learning Northumbria has continued to invest in its estate as demonstrated in its investment of £220m since 2006, with an additional £52m committed for the period 2015 – 2018. Since 2012/13, a rolling programme has refurbished 30-40% of teaching rooms every year. In response to student feedback campus buildings are now open from Monday to Saturday 6am to 10pm. Facilities such as the Library and student IT hubs are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (equating to around 10% of the campus). The University has created spaces to support a range of approaches to learning and teaching including collaborative spaces for group work, specialist software in hubs, specialist labs, studios and facilities to deliver more practice-based elements of programmes. As a consequence, student satisfaction with access to specialised equipment, facilities or rooms (NSS Question 18) has risen from 81% in 2014 to 85% in 2016 against a sector average of 83% in 2016.

Library. Improvements to the Library's scholarly collections, learning spaces, and skills support, since 2012, have further contributed to teaching quality and have supported directed and independent scholarly study. The Library User Satisfaction Survey reports that overall student satisfaction rose from 88% in 2014 to 92% in 2016. Question 16 of the NSS demonstrates consistent growth in satisfaction from 87% in 2012 to 92% in 2016. Annual NSS action planning has resulted in the library focusing on collection development to enable directed scholarly reading through the University Library's online reading list service. The impact of such interventions is demonstrated by an average 8-10% improvement across targeted programmes for NSS Question 16 in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The Library has achieved, since 2010, the UK Government's Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation and has adopted a learning partnerships approach to engagement with students and academic staff. The 2015 assessor report stated 'It is clear you adopt a 'no stone' unturned mentality and do not rest on your laurels as you constantly revisit services to identify ongoing improvement'.

There has been significant capital investment in the Library building. An extension to increase the amount of IT and collaborative learning spaces was developed partly in response to the Students' Union '#BiggerBetterLibrary' campaign. The Library is supported by a professionally staffed frontline 'Ask4Help' Service. Library occupancy rates have risen by 5% from 2012/13 to 2015/16, and the average duration of visits has increased by 4% over the same period. There has been an 84% increase in the e-book collection since 2012 (while maintaining the volume of physical resources) accompanied by a growth of 47% in scholarly reading from e-books between 2012/13 and 2015/16. The use of electronic reading lists by students has increased by 44% from its launch in 2014/15. The number of library learning spaces has grown by 350 (20%) since 2012, with half of spaces equipped with a PC. In 2016, a new library management system was introduced to provide 'Library Search' and library account upgrades. These changes have been accompanied by comprehensive skills support embedded in academic programme delivery - through a 'Northumbria Skills Programme' and through the online 'SkillsPlus' service comprising over 200 learning objects. The focus is on skills for research-rich learning such as literature searching, academic integrity and academic writing. In addition, librarians have achieved Fellowship and Associate Fellowship of the HEA.

IT resources. Investment of over £2.8m from 2012 to 2016 in IT has seen satisfaction with Access to General IT resources (NSS Question 17) increase from 86% in 2014 to 89% in 2015 and 90% in 2016. This has been achieved by providing new desktop systems, upgraded and extended WiFi that covers the entire campus, and upgraded AV technology in all learning spaces (which continues as a rolling programme).

Technology Enabled Learning (TEL). Northumbria has made a strategic investment in TEL to support the learning experience, responding to student demand and sector developments - including:

- The introduction of lecture capture and web casting to capture audio, video and applications simultaneously, across all academic departments, enabling students to study learning content at a time and place that suits their individual needs. This has delivered a year on year increase in lecture capture recordings and viewings since 2013/14; there are now approximately 15,700 active viewers with a total of 12,200 recordings.
- New online Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) standards for learning materials and their delivery. VLE usage has continued to grow: 1,400 academic staff and over 25,000 students make use of the e-Learning Platform, with an average of 9,100 users per day.
- Driving active use of TurnItIn for plagiarism checking – this now has 30,000 users.
- The adoption of Electronic Management of Assessment, as described in the section on Teaching Quality.

Improving resources in response to student feedback. Student Central and the Transforming the Student Experience (TSE) project are major developments for the University. Student engagement over the last two years has been key to the development of the service model. Students were specifically employed to work as part of the TSE team; they conducted research on students' experiences and identified student volunteers for future engagement. It confirmed the desire for all services to be available any time, online and face-to-face in one location.

LE2

Enriching the learning environment by student exposure to provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice

The use of experts through research rich learning. As articulated in the section on Teaching Quality, the University is committed to the development of a research active academic workforce who use their expertise to stimulate student learning and engagement. The 342.7 FTE staff submitted to REF 2014 was more than double that submitted to RAE 2008. At the end of 2015/16, Northumbria considers that 50% of its REF eligible staff would meet, or are on course to meet, the criteria required for REF 2014. An important outcome from the increase in teaching by research active staff is the growth in co-produced published research outputs. In History, students have collaborated with staff on research projects about the experience of the First World War in Newcastle; work that will feed into the Great Exhibition of the North in 2018. In the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences students participated in an EU funded research project, designing a robotic walking companion for older adults, contributing to the literature review, ethics submission, data gathering, analysis and write up. It resulted in a student co-authoring a paper which was accepted at an international conference.

Programme teams ensure that students benefit from interaction with companies, experts, key stakeholders and participants. For example, in Architecture and Built Environment, the former president of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors is a Visiting Professor who delivers guest lectures. The Faculty of Business and Law ensures that its students benefit from interaction with companies, experts and senior lawyers and judiciary. For example, in Law, students have held discussions with a former Lord Chancellor and a former Director of Public Prosecutions.

Interaction with professional practice. There is a strong relationship with professional practice, beyond the embedding of experiential activities in programmes. As well as the 283 programmes with accreditation from 56 PSRBs (see section on Teaching Quality), 37% of academic staff hold professional registrations and memberships (excluding HEA Fellowships) as at January 2017. Registrations enhance teaching quality and learning opportunities. Employers contribute to aspects of programme design, review and approval to ensure the outcomes for students and external stakeholders are appropriate. This is particularly demonstrated by the Employer Advisory Panels that have been established in the STEM, Health, Education and Business subjects. These inform curricula content and skills development, and facilitate placement opportunities, research projects and professional accreditations with external bodies. A 2013 CIPD report noted that students benefitted from "...staff professional experiences, not just the development of their understanding of theory"

LE3

Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression

Northumbria is committed to building on its strong TEF performance on non-continuation. It provides effective support to help keep students on track, enjoy their studies, and achieve the highest possible attainment. Improvement is demonstrated by the upward trend for full time provision over the three-year period, with significant improvement for students starting in 2013/14. Analysis of the undergraduate population identified those students not progressing to their next stage of study (looking at variables such as age, ethnicity and gender). It informed understanding of which students are most at risk, when and why. This understanding informed bespoke, targeted and timely support in the student journey. Northumbria is currently scoping how it can build on this approach to develop a full learning / learner analytics system.

Pre-entry support. Through its NU Entry scheme, Northumbria provides support for Year 12 students who meet specific academic and background criteria, to develop the confidence and skills necessary for successful undergraduate study. The students are guided step by step as they consider and apply for university, by contact with dedicated staff and tailored activity in schools. As NU Entry students progress into Year 13, they can participate in online mentoring by current undergraduate students who offer support, information and signposting (for example on UCAS deadlines, revision techniques, and stress management). By 2015/16 the scheme covered 106 partner schools in the North East and Yorkshire regions and is now available to any eligible students at school or college in England.

Effective use of academic induction. Given the diversity of students at Northumbria and the size of the student cohorts, it has been particularly important to work in partnership with the SU to support students into higher education. This led to the introduction of a Welcome, Orientation and Induction Policy in 2014/15. There is a focus on the pre-arrival period and 'week 1' of the academic year, with an induction package covering support for social, personal and academic transition to higher education study. Since 2014/15, face-to-face activity has been complemented by an online welcome portal. There are high levels of engagement with induction. In 2014/15 and 2015/16, an average of 90% of new students used the online portal, 84% attended three quarters or more of their academic induction events across the two years, 76% agreed induction made them feel more prepared for academic life in Northumbria and 81% agreed they had been given clear expectations on what they need to do to succeed on their course. Students are involved in designing induction - second year students have been interviewing first year students to address social integration and attrition/retention; the findings of these surveys are used to make improvements to induction.

Academic and Personal Tutoring. Northumbria's approach is to enable students to get advice on academic and personal aspects of learning, tailored to their needs. The Personal Tutor Policy and Guidance, introduced in 2015, provides students with one-to-one support to be academically successful and employable. For continuity, the same personal tutor supports a student throughout their programme of study. Personal tutoring is supported by an online portal which enables personal tutors to record and share notes from their meetings with each student. To complement Northumbria's Personal Tutor Policy and Guidance, the Students' Union developed guidance for students on how to get the most out of personal tutoring. The University has clear and promoted policies (developed with the Students' Union) relating to weekly availability of academic staff. The University has also developed with the Students' Union a clear protocol on email communication and response times.

Financial support. Data from 2014 and 2015 shows that 18% of students who requested to leave their course early or interrupt their studies did so for financial hardship reasons. To address this, Northumbria developed a package of financial support (around £23m in 2015/16) for undergraduates. This includes means-tested bursaries and academic scholarships, and postgraduate scholarships to support further study. Northumbria also invests in student hardship and disability support, tailored to enhance retention, achievement and progression. The total spend rose from £449k in 2014/15 to £470k in 2015/16 and is projected to rise further in 2016/17. Non-repayable grants are made to students able to demonstrate they are in financial hardship.

Northumbria also provides support for disabled students so that they are able to access, and succeed in, their academic programmes. Annual expenditure on one-to-one disability support services increased from £80k in 2014/15 to £103k in 2015/16, with a further increase projected in 2016/17. Internal analysis (in 2014) showed that those disabled students at Northumbria who receive this support are 30% more likely to be retained between year 1 and year 2 than those disabled students who do not take up the offer of this support.

Proactive and individual management of students at risk of leaving their programme. Since 2013/14, the University made significant changes to its processes to better support students at risk of disengaging from their programmes and leaving the University early. A dedicated Student Transition Team (STT) was established to manage each case on an individual basis, signposting to support services or Faculties for advice. A new online portal allows students to self-initiate a 'change of circumstances' request anywhere and at any time. For these innovations and the improvements to the support for students facing mental health issues (see below), Northumbria received the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award for "Outstanding Student Services Team 2015". The STT managed over 2200 cases per annum in its first two years (2014/15 and 2015/16) resulting in 29% of students cancelling their request to transfer, interrupt or withdraw, and continuing with their current programme. The new approach generated improved data about the reasons why students request course transfers, interruptions and withdrawals and has informed targeted support. In March 2015, the support was augmented by "When to Refer", a guide given to all staff detailing how they should respond to given situations, and especially when to refer students into specialist support services.

Meeting increased demand for mental health support. Reflecting a sector trend, the number of Northumbria students requesting mental health support increased by 160% between 2010 and 2016 (from 654 students to over 1,700). To address this, Northumbria remodelled its counselling and mental health service. A broader range of support services was introduced, including guided self-help and workshops, in addition to one-to-one counselling and mental health practitioner support. Despite a 10% increase in registrations for mental health support the new model delivered a 9% reduction in waiting times. Access to counselling experienced the largest reduction, from 16 days to under 9 days. 74% (2014/15) and 75% (2015/16) of student users of these services reported that the support they received enabled them to improve their academic performance. 21% said that, without this support, they would either probably or definitely have left the University without completing their programme.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

- S01 Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment**
- S02 Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives**
- S03 Positive outcomes are achieved by its students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.**

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Northumbria's performance on the two Employment and Further Study metrics show that this is an area where improvement has been achieved within a challenging regional context. For full time provision, the underlying data for the Employment or Further Study metric shows improvement from 2012/13 to 2014/15 across all but one split metric. For the Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study metric, Northumbria has improved across all split metrics between 2012/13 and 2014/15. This improvement is reflected in both Highly Skilled Employment and Further Study with increases of 4.7% and 2.6% across this period. Northumbria's approach is to build on this further and through the initiatives referred to later in this section, prepare its graduates for the challenges that lie ahead in the competitive labour market.

The TEF Year 2 data maps confirm that the Northumbria student domicile prior to entry is largely the North East and neighbouring regions in the North of England, and that the majority of graduates remain in those regions for graduate employment. The North East labour market has well-recognised challenges with historic lower rates of employment and higher rates of unemployment compared with the UK, and lower numbers of higher skilled occupations compared with the national averages. The impact of the recession after 2008/09 and austerity measures in the public sector, particularly in health and education, which are traditionally key sectors recruiting graduates in the North East, has had a significant impact on employment outcomes.

Within this context, an aim of Northumbria University's Corporate Strategy 2013-18 is that its graduates are distinguished by their intellectual expertise and prowess, their leadership capability and their employability. Northumbria recognised improvements were needed in how it supported students into highly skilled employment and graduate further study. The proportion of Northumbria leavers who were in professional or managerial employment or graduate further study, six months after graduating, increased from 62% for 2012/13 leavers to 72% for 2014/15 leavers.

Northumbria University is ranked **1st** in the UK for graduate start-ups based on estimated turnover (HEBCIS 2015/16).

SO1

Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment

Improved outcomes. There has been significant improvement in most subject areas across the University from 2012/13 to 2014/15. The 2014/15 DLHE data saw Northumbria ranked in the top 10 in the UK for the number of graduates in professional or managerial roles. The 2016 Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data confirms the strong performance of graduates from Northumbria. The University is in the top third in the sector rankings in terms of the percentages of graduates in sustained employment – at one, three and five years after graduation (for the 2008/09 cohort). In addition, the proportion of Northumbria graduates in employment reporting (in the DLHE survey) that they felt well prepared for employment has increased from 67% in 2012/13 to 80% in 2014/15.

Improvements to Careers and Employment Service (CES). In 2013/14, there was a 52% (£300k) increase in the staffing budget for the award-winning Careers and Employment Service (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Excellence Award (2011-13) for Employability and for Innovation). This improved the ratio of staff to students, and provided capacity to develop strategic improvements. The Service was also relocated to a prominent on-campus location that was more convenient for student access. These changes laid the groundwork for a step change in service development and expectations, implemented through the Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (EEE) Plan. The number of students attending group sessions delivered by careers advisers more than doubled between 2013/14 and 2015/16, from 5,060 to 11,029. Similarly, there has been a 55% rise in the numbers of students receiving one-to-one face-to-face careers support between 2013/14 and 2015/16 – from 2,577 to 4,002. This increased activity and engagement with students has contributed to the improved destination outcomes – particularly in relation to highly skilled employment. This support includes career guidance, CV advice, portfolio development, effective use of LinkedIn, assessment centres and interview preparation.

Supporting sustainable start-up graduate businesses. This is an important part of Northumbria's approach to employability, particularly given the North East economic context. The University provides one-to-one mentoring, with professional mentors, specialist industry advice, enterprise skills workshops, enterprise space on campus, and placement opportunities. The aim is to support graduate businesses that remain active in good numbers, employ significant numbers of staff and generate high turnover. In 2013/14 and 2014/15 Northumbria was placed third in the UK based upon turnover of graduate businesses. The number of sustainable start-ups supported by the University increased from 68 in 2013/14 to 83 in 2015/16. Two businesses created by Northumbria graduates include a mobile application development agency specialising in healthcare, and one of the UK's leading property auction companies.

Further study. Earlier engagement with undergraduate students about postgraduate study options, accompanied by significant investment in marketing the benefits, has helped Northumbria graduates to see further study as an attractive option. Dissertations on undergraduate programmes and the further development of a research-rich learning environment have better prepared undergraduate students for further study. The proportion in further study who felt well prepared increased from 86% in 2012/13 to 95% in 2014/15. Access to finance was a significant barrier to postgraduate study and Northumbria put in place a financial package, including alumni discounts, HEFCE part-funded scholarships and innovative Credit Union loan funding for 2015 postgraduate entry. As a consequence of the above, the proportion of full-time leavers in further study increased each year from 2012/13 to 2014/15 (from 12% to 15%). The proportion of Northumbria graduates who went on to further study at Northumbria rose from 45% in 2012/13 to 58% in 2014/15.

SO2

Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives

Northumbria graduates are supported to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for them to gain professional employment or undertake further study. Programmes combine research-rich and work-related learning through engagement with professional practice and/or the wider business community. Opportunities include work placements, internships, study / working abroad, live employer briefs and projects, simulations and volunteering. Implementation of the EEE Plan instigated the step change in uptake of opportunities and support, and PFNA will help realise the development of graduates with the attributes wanted by employers.

Work-related learning and volunteering. In 2015/16 the number of sandwich placements, practice and clinical placements, and work and study abroad opportunities provided to students totalled 9,978. Analysis of DLHE data confirms that sandwich course students enjoy far greater prospects for professional employment, have significantly lower unemployment rates and command higher starting salaries. HESA data shows that the proportion of Northumbria graduates from full-time sandwich courses has increased over each of the last three years from 10% in 2012/13, to 12% in 2013/14 and 14% in 2014/15 (placing Northumbria 17th in the sector). The University invests in excellent relationships with the employers who provide student placements and receives praise from providers. One employer working with the Faculty of Business and Law commented, "The student that we had on placement was a credit to your university. They were hardworking, willing to learn and had a thirst for knowledge. We would welcome future students from Northumbria here.". Students benefit hugely from their placement experience. A Quantity Surveying student commented in 2014/15, "This placement helped me to grow and improve the technical skills and knowledge gained from university... I was able to put what I had learned into practice and become confident applying them in real world applications".

The University has also partnered with the Students' Union to increase the number of volunteering opportunities. The number of volunteering hours delivered by Northumbria's students increased by 59% between 2013/14 and 2015/16 (from 17,727 to 28,192).

Relationships with graduate recruiters. Through proactive targeting of regional, national and international employers, Northumbria has increased the number of employers on campus to recruit students, by 50% between 2013/14 and 2015/16. Careers fairs and presentations receive positive feedback and comments from employers, e.g. A large multinational corporation said "this is a must attend event to identify our leaders of tomorrow". In addition, the University's service offer has driven more unique vacancies being published on Northumbria's online jobs board. These have increased from 4,818 in 2013/14 to 5,774 in 2015/16 and originate from a larger number of unique employers - 2002 employers in 2015/16, up from 1759 in 2013/14. The vacancies include c.37% regional, 55% national and 8% international opportunities.

SO3

Positive outcomes are achieved by its students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.

The EEE Plan focuses on activities designed to improve the outcomes of all Northumbria graduates. Northumbria actively analyses DLHE data to focus change and resources where they are most needed, including to particular cohorts. This prioritisation also takes account of feedback from students, staff and employers. Nine programmes or subject areas have been identified, based on variance to sector data and cohort size, in 2015/16 and 2016/17. These programmes and subject areas received additional and more targeted support sessions and resources. Analysis takes account of previous destination outcomes, an understanding of the recognised difficulties faced by some students from disadvantaged backgrounds and awareness of the challenging regional graduate labour market context. This approach was used to improve performance for the full-time disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged cohorts, both of which are below the benchmark (on both TEF employment metrics). The introduction of sessions on disclosing disability and dealing with recruitment processes is an example of a change made in response to recognised need.

Earlier engagement with employability. There has been an increase in the number of support sessions (and student attendance) targeted at Level 4 students. In 2014/15 1,094 Level 4 students attended 23 sessions. In 2015/16 this had risen to 2,487 students attending 41 sessions. These sessions focus on first year work experience schemes and using LinkedIn as a networking tool to develop 'social capital'. Earlier engagement with students has also been facilitated by the introduction of a First Year Careers Guide in September 2015, accessible electronically from September 2016 and included in the Welcome Portal for all newly registering students. 208 students accessed the guide in September/October 2015, increasing to 923 in the equivalent period in 2016. These interventions are designed to raise aspirations, boost confidence and promote resilience in Northumbria students in a competitive graduate labour market. The impact of these activities will be seen in future DLHE survey returns.

Leaving cohorts of students. Northumbria has also introduced 'Class of 2014/15/16' events after the final assessments, and before graduation. These capture students who, for whatever reason, have not engaged with the support available during their studies. Students receive focussed sessions and one-to-one coaching to maximise their chances of progressing to highly skilled employment or graduate further study. The attendance at the event in May 2016 doubled from the previous year. The session with the highest attendance, reflecting the context highlighted in the TEF Data maps, was on finding graduate jobs in the North East.

Future initiatives. Implementing the EEE Plan will see action to continue the positive direction of travel, particularly on highly skilled employment and further study outcomes. The Interim Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), introduced for current students in 2016, is embedded in the Personal Tutoring Policy. This encourages students to review their progress and their personal development planning, particularly in relation to learning and employability development through extra-curricular activities. Over 11,600 students and recent graduates had activated their HEAR accounts by November 2016; the HEAR is now available throughout a student's academic study. Northumbria is introducing the Career Registration methodology from 2017. This will support individual students and cohorts with particular characteristics. Analysis will identify issues in relation to career readiness, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Further co-location of student support teams in Student Central in 2017 will mean student support is more joined-up and of consistent quality. A new centralised placement team will continue to develop the work-related learning opportunities provided to our students.