



National College of Ireland
Strategic Plan 2022-2027



National
College of
Ireland

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Strategy Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
ELI	Early Learning Initiative
GB	Governing Body
HEA	Higher Education Authority
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NCI	National College of Ireland



Introduction:



Fr Leonard Moloney SJ
Chair of NCI Governing Body

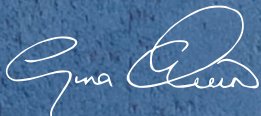


The most distinctive feature of NCI is its commitment to access. NCI's purpose will always be to offer accessible academic excellence, through third-level education that improves the lives of students, families and communities.

This strategic plan builds on NCI's distinctive position in the higher education landscape. On behalf of the Governing Body, I wholeheartedly endorse this plan and wish the President, Executive, staff, students and stakeholders, well in its implementation.

NCI continues its mission of 'changing lives through education'.

Foreword:



Gina Quin
NCI President



I am delighted to present National College of Ireland's Strategic Plan 2022-2027. I invite our students, alumni, staff, and stakeholders, to celebrate and implement this ambitious strategy.

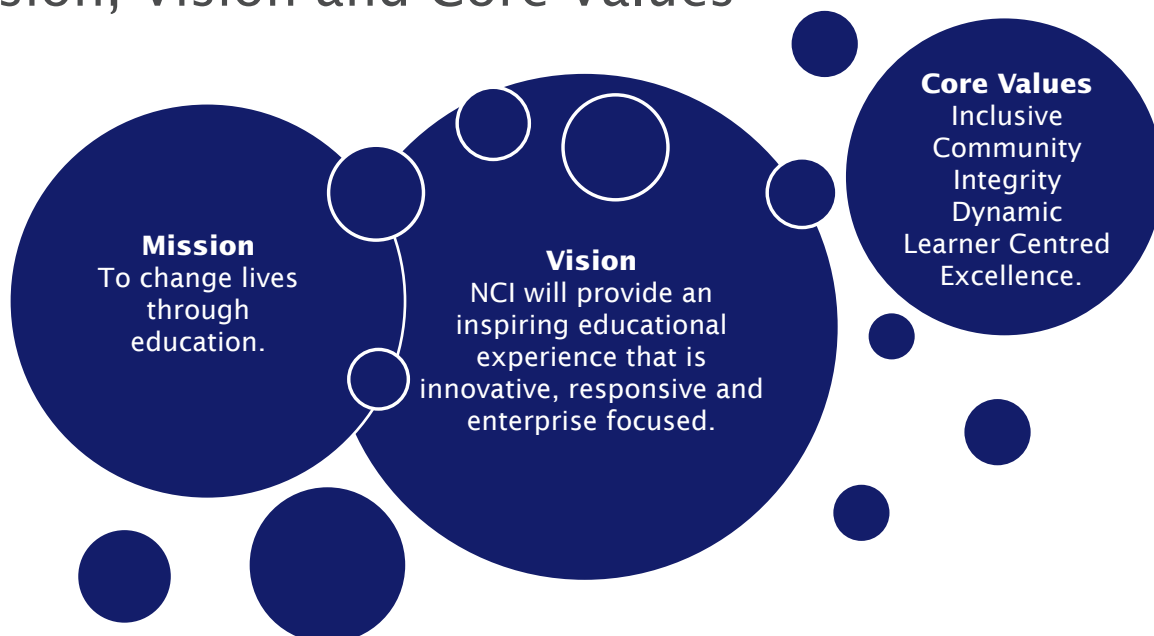
Our strategic ambitions build on NCI's mission to 'change lives through education', through brilliant students, expert staff, our collective commitment to access and social justice, academic excellence, and sustainability. Access will remain central to our higher education programmes as the College provides pathways to success through academic excellence and diverse modes of delivery, recognising many innovative routes to tertiary education and our unique commitment and expertise in Early Learning.

NCI, by 2027, aims to be a distinctive and independent HEA designated institution, with delegated awarding authority, delivering successful graduates, and a world-class model of community engagement, from an 8,500-strong student body, in a state-of-the-art campus.

This ambition will be achieved through the continuing guidance of our Governing Body, our stakeholders, government, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, the Higher Education Authority and our partners across Irish businesses and the community and voluntary sector.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Mazars Consulting in preparing this strategy, and would like to thank my colleagues, our Governing Body Chair, Fr. Leonard Moloney, and all on Governing Body, who have made this ambitious plan possible. Your insights have been invaluable. Now, let's make it happen!

Mission, Vision and Core Values



Inclusive

We strive to break down barriers in third-level education; we value diversity and inclusiveness in all that we do; we provide the support that people need to participate fully in life at NCI.

Community

We are an interdependent learning community that shares a common set of principles where individuality and freedom of thought and expression are valued; each of us is encouraged to fulfil our ambition and realise our potential.

Integrity

In our individual and collective roles, we take responsibility and are accountable for our actions; we demonstrate respect and mutual regard for each other.

Dynamic

We are responsive to the needs of our students, colleagues and partners and an ever-changing society; we act in an innovative and flexible manner.

Learner Centred

We place the learner at the heart of everything we do; our combined energies are focused on their individual and collective, lifelong needs.

Excellence

As an institution, we aspire to professional excellence in everything we do; we foster excellence in our learners through their learning experiences.

NCI: A distinctive higher education institute providing unique access pathways

NCI is a distinctive higher education institution in the HE landscape. Guided by our mission, vision and values, NCI has a clear focus and record of delivering access to higher education. NCI's distinctive access is provided through our track record of:

- flexibility in programme delivery modes, part-time, full-time, accelerated degrees, microcredentials etc.
- agility and innovation in programme development with specific focus on skills and student employability, and closeness to industry
- our collaboration with further education colleges, secondary schools, industry and government
- our unique programme of early education 'from cradle to college' through the Early Learning Initiative
- our physical positioning in the heartland of Dublin's North Inner City, an area of extreme economic, social and educational disadvantage which is also home to Ireland's International Financial Services Centre and Silicon Docks multinational companies
- and our maintenance of a research-informed, student-centred approach to learning and teaching that is sustainable, relevant and progressive for students, staff and the wider community.

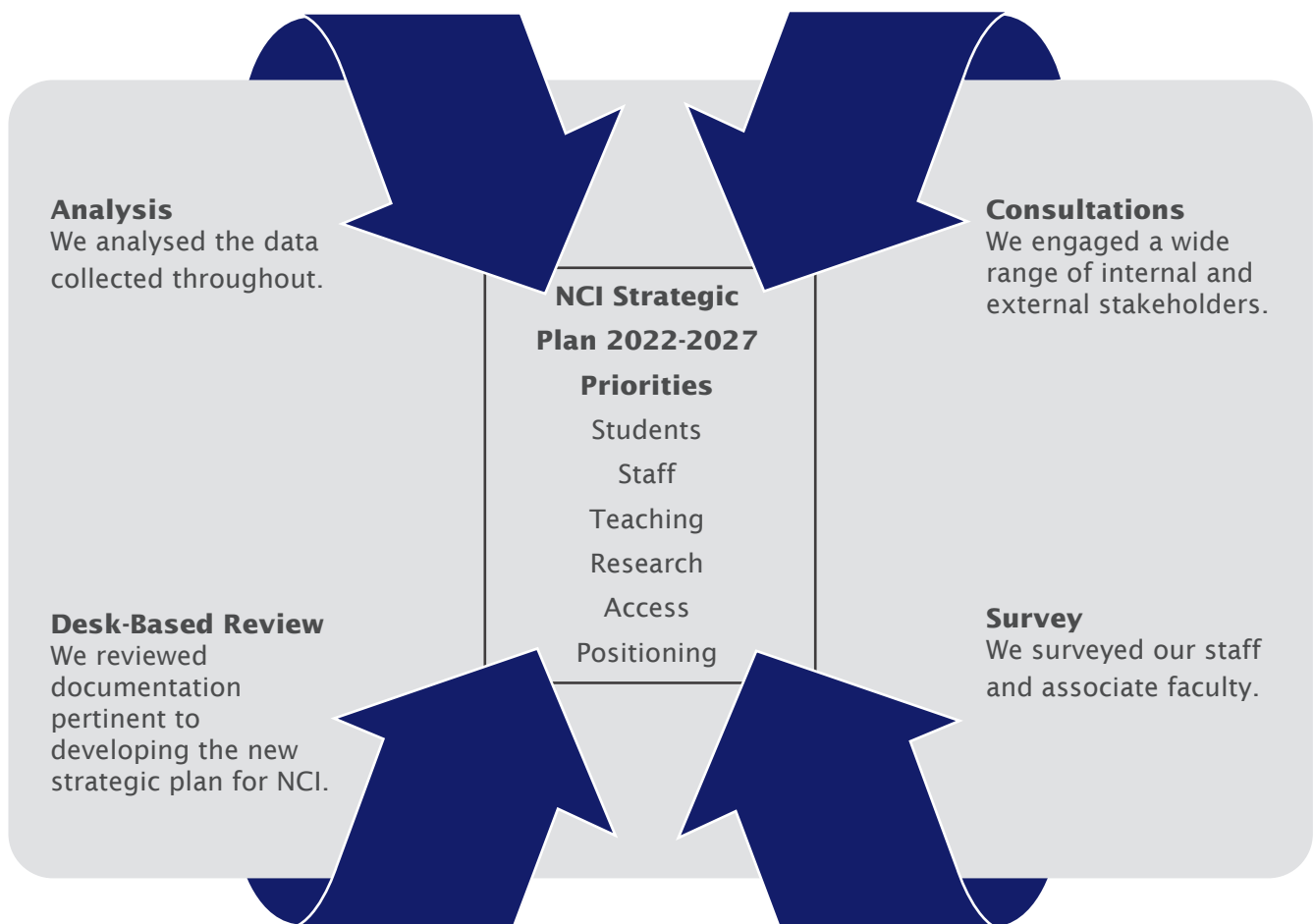




Strategic Plan Development Process

Methodology Overview

To facilitate the development of our strategic plan, we adopted the methodology as illustrated below.





What We Found

Higher Education Landscape Analysis

Our analysis of the higher education landscape in Ireland tells us the sector is continuing to grow in terms of student numbers. The 20-25% growth in domestic demand observed over the last decade is likely to be seen again over the next 10 years. In contrast, the number of institutions appears to be decreasing with a smaller number of larger institutions, driven by national policy, particularly around technological universities. Internationalisation of the student body continues apace, although there is evidence of some institutions/systems taking steps to reduce/manage reliance on international fee income. Higher education has become more accessible to all sectors of society, and more adaptable to meeting the State's social, economic, and labour market needs. National policy is also clearly flagging a stronger linkage and structured collaboration between further and higher education, and it is also likely that we will see more interventions to address the skills needs in the economy. Finally, from a system governance perspective, there is a clear move to a stronger regulatory environment as evidenced by the proposed legislative changes in the HEA Bill.

What Our Stakeholders Told Us

When we talked to our key stakeholders, internal and external, a number of key messages emerged regarding our development over the past decade:

- Providing access to quality education in our chosen areas is our most distinctive attribute and should remain central to all that we do.
- Our student body has changed substantially in recent years. We should build on its diversity – ranging from part- to full-time, from domestic to international, from Central Applications Office students to in-work students, to support our distinctive mission.
- Our approach to staffing, ranging from associate faculty from relevant employers to community representatives in the ELI, is strongly rooted in the communities we serve. This is a distinctive feature of NCI and should be fostered.
- Our excellence and innovation in design, delivery, supports and assessment of programmes underpins our ability to offer unique access to education. Our approach to teaching and learning (at a pace and in a way that suits the learner) is a distinguishing feature of NCI that we should build upon.
- We should build our research and innovation capacity in a manner that is tightly coupled to our distinctive mission.
- We occupy a distinctive position within the Irish higher education landscape. We should focus on nurturing and developing that distinctive position.

Our Priorities for 2022-2027

Based on the above we have decided to focus on six key priorities for 2022-2027:

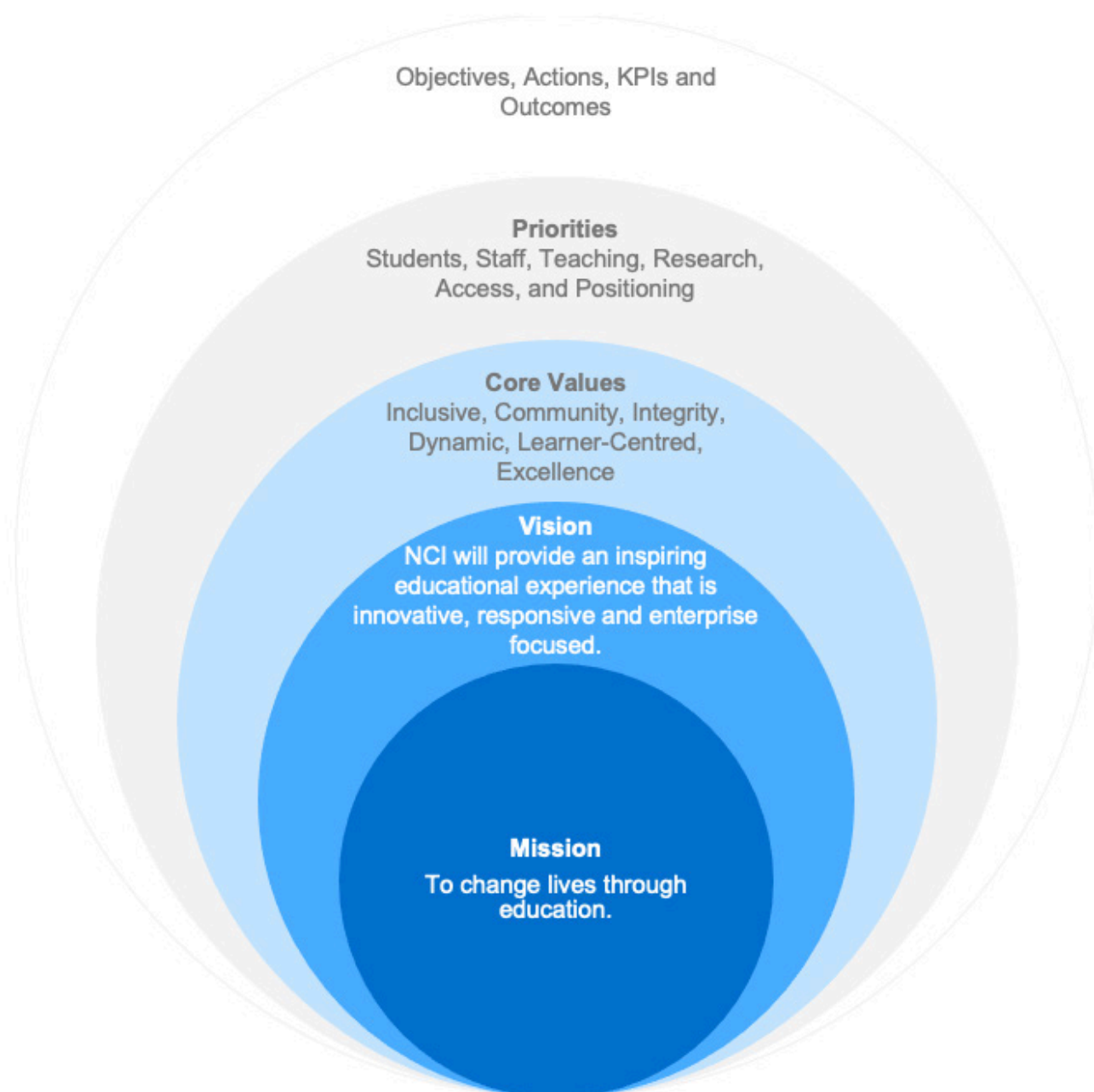
Students; Staff; Teaching; Research; Access; and Positioning.



Strategic Plan Overview

One connected plan – from mission to outcome

Driven by our mission, vision and values, the NCI Strategic Plan 2022-2027 identifies six priorities: Students, Staff, Teaching, Research, Access, and Positioning. Each priority is associated with a range of objectives, actions, key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcomes, illustrated as follows:





Strategic Priorities

Priorities

Based on our analysis of the stakeholder consultations, staff survey and our assessment of the higher education environment, we have decided to focus on six key priorities for 2022-2027:





5

Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

1. Students

We will foster a distinctive NCI graduate (see A1) and a well-balanced graduate body that aligns to our mission in terms of distinctive and flexible modes of learning (access) and internationalisation.

Outcome: A balanced student/graduate body that is reflective of our mission (to change lives through education), relevant in a modern, international world and sustainable in the context of global education.



Objectives:

1.1

To deliver a distinctive higher education student experience aligned with mission to change lives through education that is built on access, academic excellence, enterprise focus, community engagement and social justice

1.2

To develop successful graduates that have a lifelong love of learning, who are valued contributors to the workforce and society, and who are committed to sustainability

1.3

To retain existing balance in the student body across domestic and international students, increasing integration and interactions of both student bodies and to develop the internationalisation of domestic students through the Erasmus+ charter

1.4

To work in partnership with our student body to ensure that the student voice is integral to our planning, resourcing, innovations and sustainability

1.5

To drive excellence and accessibility in our student supports across our physical and digital campuses

Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

2. Staff

We will support and train all of our staff to be agile and responsive in meeting the needs of students, employers and other key education partners.

Outcome: A skilled and motivated staff that are supported to have a clear understanding of mission and strategy and the needs of stakeholders, sustainability and the environment.

Objectives:



2.1

To support all staff to excel in role and be student-centred, agile and responsive to our strategy

2.2

To optimise the permanent/associate faculty model to deliver excellence in teaching and graduate outcomes, incorporating both academic excellence and up-to-date enterprise knowledge

2.3

To actively engage all staff to support the College's ambition for delegated authority and HEA designation

2.4

To recognise the complementary roles of research-active and teaching staff in delivering our programmes and student outcomes

2.5

To provide staff development in line with institutional strategy to ensure effective training, career paths, and both professional and academic development

Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

3. Teaching

We will develop and maintain successful programmes, distinctive in our design, delivery and assessment and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Outcome: Successful, innovative, sustainable programmes aligned to our unique position in the higher education landscape.

Objectives:



3.1

To drive pedagogical innovation and excellence that support our student body and respond to national need

3.2

To provide industry-relevant programmes and graduates that excel in the workplace

3.3

To continue to lead in digital transformation and innovation across our academic programmes

3.4

To develop the processes and data sets that drive the relevance and effectiveness of NCI's programme design, assessments and graduate outcomes

3.5

To align teaching, innovation and research with our academic and institutional strategies, our mission to change lives through education, and UN Sustainable Development Goals

Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

4. Research

We will invest in a step change in research and innovation capability, in a manner that is closely connected to our distinctive offering.

Outcome: A research environment that supports our distinctive provider status, attracts and retains good staff, and enables productive employer relationships.



Objectives:

4.1

To drive research and innovation that is specific to the purpose and nature of NCI and fully aligned with mission

4.2

To engage employers, external partners and community in research and innovation partnerships

4.3

Research will prioritise the informing of pedagogy and student learning within the classroom, the programmes and impact of the Early Learning Initiative and collaboration with employers and partners

4.4

To develop a research infrastructure to support research alignment, to identify funding opportunities, research collaborators and partners, and to provide research administration

4.5

To increase research funding and commercialisation opportunities in line with these research objectives and NCI's mission to change lives through education



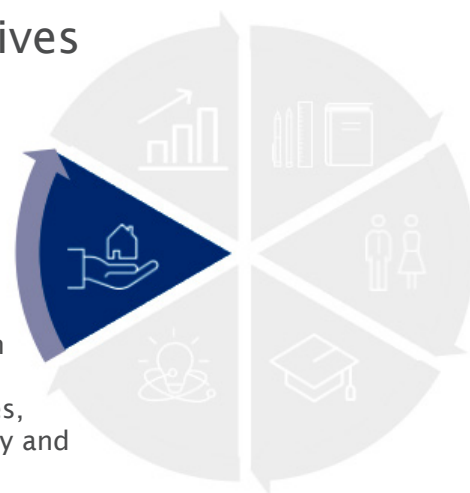
Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

5. Access

Guided by our mission, vision and values, NCI will continue and develop its focus on delivering accessible higher education.

Outcome: NCI is a distinctive and leading higher education institution in the HE landscape delivering diverse access to higher education through programme agility and innovation, flexibility in delivery modes, collaboration across the HE landscape, mission-centric research activity and 'cradle to college' programmes, from our North Inner City Campus.



Objectives:

5.1

To continue to enhance NCI's leadership in access to education, broadening participation, educational pathways and diverse delivery modes

5.2

To embed access in our programme design, delivery, assessment and in all student services

5.3

To continue to be a thought leader in access and innovation in third-level education

5.4

To measure, celebrate and support equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability

5.5

To continue to provide transformative 'cradle to college' education services through our Early Learning Initiative, both locally to inner city, disadvantaged families and children, and nationally, through our ELI Centre of Excellence

Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

Priorities, Outcomes and Objectives

6. Positioning

We will build on our foundation of distinctive education provision in our chosen fields and will become increasingly recognised as a valued, distinctive provider.

Outcome: A recognised regionally-focused, nationally impactful and sustainable higher education institute, committed to access and innovation, in function of successful and employable graduates and flexible lifelong learning.



Objectives:

6.1

To strengthen our position as a distinctive provider of accessible higher education within the sector, with a clear commitment to social justice

6.2

To continue to develop partnerships with employers, community, students and the further education sector, in programme design, pathways, work placements and student employability

6.3

To secure NCI's distinctive position within higher education as a designated HEA institution with delegated authority to award qualifications

6.4

To celebrate, develop and achieve institutional accreditations aligned with strategy for both academic and operational activities

6.5

To continue our commitment to social justice and sustainability across all NCI strategic objectives ensuring that NCI and our students contribute to society

High-Level Implementation Framework

Executive Management and Governing Body Tracking

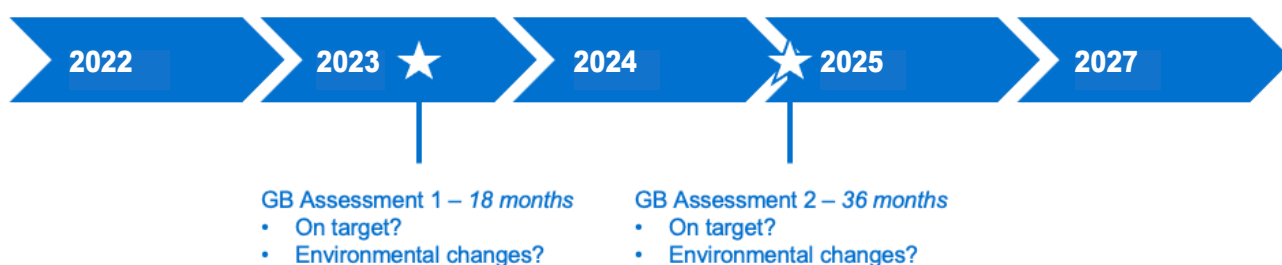
Creating a clear, easily understood implementation framework that visualises the priorities, objectives, actions, KPIs, accountability and timelines makes everyone part of the strategic journey. In order to realise our priorities and objectives, KPIs will be tracked and monitored over the life of the strategic plan to ensure we remain on track and deliver results.

To ensure the successful delivery of any strategic plan it is important to put in place the appropriate structures to provide accountability, flexibility and ongoing risk management and mitigation throughout the strategy lifetime and also to oversee its implementation. We will adopt a committed, flexible, agile and responsive approach to delivering this strategic plan, where initiatives are defined and redefined where necessary to ensure we stay ahead.



The strategic plan will be tracked quarterly at Executive-level, monitoring of implementation at GB-level is also required. Two standalone GB assessments of the implementation of the strategic plan will take place during the strategy lifetime. The first of these reviews will take place after 18 months and the second to take place after 36 months. These assessments will consider:

- To what extent is the implementation of this strategic plan on target?
- To what extent has the environment changed and how has NCI responded?



Successful implementation of this plan will require significant collaboration and engagement between a number of NCI stakeholders in order to ensure that the potential of NCI is realised, and the solid foundations put in place to date are built upon to achieve the ambitious priorities set out in this strategic plan.

What Success Looks Like for NCI in 5 Years' Time:



Distinctive Provider

We are recognised as a distinctive provider in higher education, providing access and broadening participation through innovative teaching, student supports, diverse delivery modes and a focus on lifelong learning, with clear community and enterprise engagement.



Employer-Focused

We have strong relationships with employers who provide input to programme design, accreditation, placements, graduate employment and research partnerships.



Community-Engaged

We are recognised as a model of community engagement, and a national leader in early education interventions for both early learning and student access.



NCI Students

We have 8,500 students (full-time and part-time) who are proud to be distinctive NCI graduates.



NCI Staff

Our staff are supported and motivated to excel in their role as educators and professionals, aligned to NCI's mission and strategy and our position in the HE landscape and wider community.



Space

We meet best practice in contemporary learning environments and have appropriate space for students, community and activities in our city-centre campus.



Learner Experience

We provide academic excellence and enterprise experience through innovative teaching, learning, assessments and research from full-time and industry expert academics.



Positioning

We are an independent, HEA-designated institution with relevant funding, awarding NCI qualifications; a collaborative thought leader in higher education and access.



Sustainability

NCI and NCI students demonstrate commitment to furthering the UN Sustainable Development Goals across all activities.



Distinctive Characteristics of NCI Graduates





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