

NELSON AND COLNE
COLLEGE



Proposal for merger between

Accrington and Rossendale College and Nelson and Colne College



Submitted by Nelson and Colne College: 27th November 2017
Commercial in Confidence

CONTENTS

1. A shared vision for the future
2. Governance and strategic leadership and management
3. Curriculum, quality and learners
4. Added value and impact

Key contacts:

Stephen Barnes

Chair of the Corporation

Amanda Melton

Principal

Email:
a.melton@nelson.ac.uk
Tel: 01282 440204

**Nelson and Colne College
Nelson Road
Scotland Road
Nelson
BB9 7YT**

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to share with you our vision for a new merged College for Pennine Lancashire, building on the strengths of our two institutions, both outstanding over a prolonged period.

The vision below describes an exciting and sustainable future for Accrington and Rossendale College, serving new and existing learners and stakeholders, in whatever way they need. The College will return to its former status as Lancashire's leader in skills and vocational training from entry to graduate levels, mirrored and supported by an outstanding academic sixth form centre at Nelson and Colne.

A merger of our two Colleges sharing the same ambition for our stakeholders and students will deliver an irresistible proposition:

- A College with the determination to deliver the highest quality of learning and skill development to all its students, transforming lives through education, Ofsted outstanding within three years
- A financially secure College with the capacity to continually invest in staff and resources to establish a position as first choice for students and employees
- An ambitious, career focussed College providing positive futures and not just qualifications, understanding and responding to the different aspirations of all young people
- A College which is highly respected and valued in its community, and which engages and contributes to strategies to deliver success for individuals and employers
- An exceptional Apprenticeship offer for individuals and employers, built on highly qualified Trainers and state of the art technical resources, co-created with employer stakeholders
- A Higher Education (HE) offer to enable local people to learn and upskill to advanced levels, with highly effective employer involvement to secure better career prospects, overcoming traditional barriers to HE
- A clearly defined adult offer, delivered in the heart of local communities with progression routes to College centres, to enable adults who are least advantaged to be part of the economic successes locally and regionally
- A learning College whose staff are encouraged to continually develop and contribute to its future ambitions, feeling well supported and valued

We look forward to working with the Corporation, leadership team and staff at Accrington and Rossendale College to make this vision a reality.



Stephen Barnes
Chairman
Nelson and Colne College



Amanda Melton
Principal
Nelson and Colne College

1. A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

1.1 Vision for a new multi-centre, multi-purpose College

There is much similarity between the districts served by our Nelson and Colne (N&CC) and Accrington and Rossendale (A&RC) Colleges in Pendle, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley.

Both Colleges serve similar young people, often leaving school with low prior attainment but untapped potential. Our communities have a high proportion of adults needing to upskill, reskill or often simply to gain the basic skills to enable them to contribute to the local economy, and lead independent lives overcoming poverty, poor education, and poor health and resilience. Our employers, often SMEs, complain of an inability to find skilled workers, or young people with the right attitude for work. In many cases, the poor transport systems across Pennine Lancashire provide travel to work challenges, particularly to remote factories and businesses.

In this shared context, our merged College needs to serve young and adult students wanting to build a prosperous future for themselves and for their families. In parallel, we need to support the regional economy, providing a pipeline of skilled, or enthusiastic and capable candidates for work. Our regional economy depends on the success of our employers, and their success depends in all cases on their ability to attract talent to enable them to become more productive and grow. The prosperity of Pennine Lancashire in turn depends on our ability to retain existing businesses and attract new ones.

Collaboration is the way to improve the effectiveness, and efficiency, of Colleges. We face the same issues, and our collective efforts can achieve greater results across Pennine Lancashire.

Our vision is to create a network of outstanding delivery centres across Pennine Lancashire. This merger will result in a partnership of three distinct centres, each with their own identity and brand.

These three delivery centres will be:

1. Accrington and Rossendale Skills and Technology Centre, based at Accrington
2. Lancashire Adult Learning, based at Northlight, Brierfield
3. Nelson and Colne Sixth Form, based in Nelson

1. Accrington and Rossendale Skills and Technology Centre will build on the existing strengths of A&RC as deliverer of Apprenticeships, HE and vocational and occupational learning for Pennine Lancashire and beyond. The existing investment in specialist facilities to support skills and technology will be central to its future role as partner to key employers and stakeholders in the construction, leisure and digital sectors. It will reaffirm its role as provider of higher level skills through Apprenticeships and commercially, supported by relocation of most Higher Level provision on offer currently at N&CC, where that provision does not rely on specialist resources. Likewise, the existing Apprenticeship team at N&CC is expected to move to Accrington to support the development of a productive and responsive multi-sectoral employer facing delivery team.

Delivery at this centre will continue to support young learners at lower levels, with investment and pro-active marketing to support this provision to grow, as we have experienced in Nelson through effective engagement with schools and with partners supporting NEET young people. Naturally, maths and English delivery to young people will be at the core of their study programmes, coupled with locally focussed work experience and enrichment.

We will assess the affordability of study programmes at level 3 at this centre, and continue with these where we can, in particular where specialist resources are available. There will be the opportunity for some resources to be shared across the centres, such as sports facilities which are fully occupied at Nelson with increasing demand.

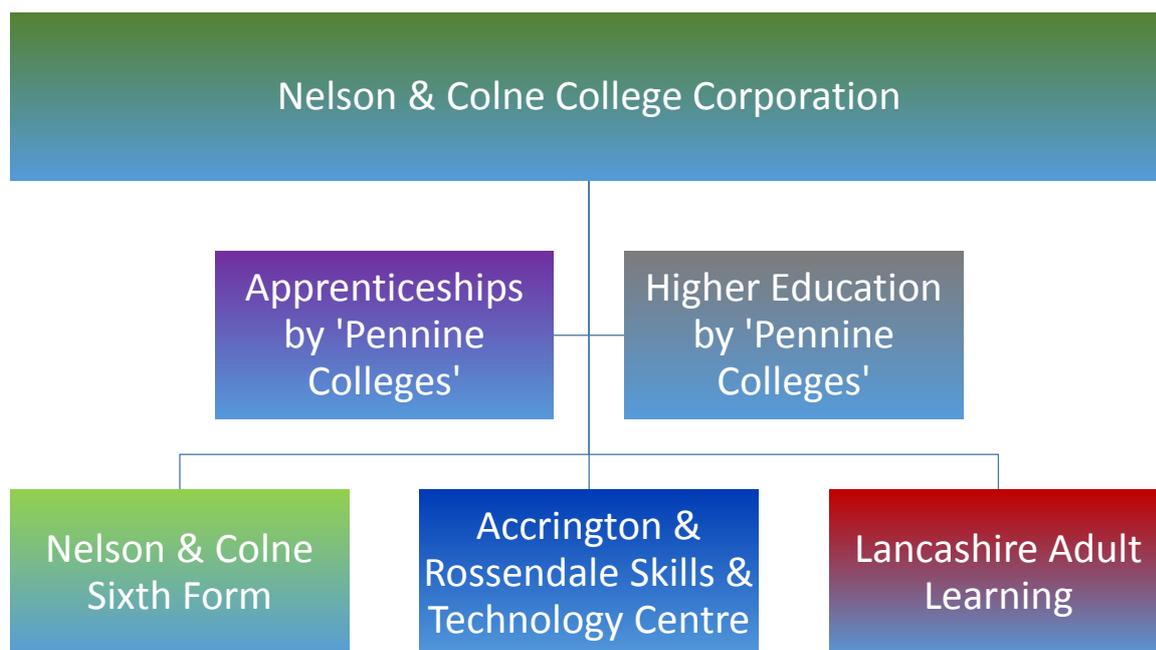
We aim to play an important part in the development of an Institute of Technology (IoT) for Lancashire. If successful, the most appropriate site to realise this ambition in Pennine Lancashire will be A&R Skills and Technology Centre, and this will lend additional kudos to our ambitions for A&R.

2. Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL) provides adult learning across the whole of Lancashire. N&CC adopted this provision from Lancashire County Council in 2016 having supported it from an inadequate Ofsted grade to good in just 15 months. The staff joined N&CC Corporation and are very much contributing to the new, wider family development. However, they have a different purpose and deliver to different customers under a unique brand. N&CC invested in new premises for LAL staff in August 2017 which reaffirms their place as Lancashire's primary adult learning provider, with LAL continuing to deliver across the whole county.

3. Nelson and Colne College has a long standing reputation as an outstanding provider of level 3 programmes, particularly A Levels. Increasingly, the main site at Nelson has been promoted as a sixth form, and has grown in 16-18 learners by 15% in the last three years, drawing on a larger catchment area including Ribble Valley and into Yorkshire. One of the challenges for N&CC has been to reinforce the sixth form College brand whilst offering a skills based curriculum at all levels, and also Apprenticeships. We have considered separation of our academic and skills offer, possibly securing a new site dedicated to skills and Apprenticeships, but the volume of students in a highly competitive setting make this inefficient.

By strengthening the skills proposition of A&RC, we will be able to strengthen the sixth form proposition in Nelson, and the adult offer through LAL delivered across the county, including in Accrington and Rossendale. The diagram below illustrates how the network might work, with a single College Corporation and governance arrangement leading the support services and performance monitoring.

Diagram 1 – A new multi-centre College



Our vision and commitment through merger is to retain the individuality of the two former institutions reflecting their heritage and communities, but provide consistency of service, quality improvement and efficiency gains through integrated support systems for both. This is the model through which LAL joined N&CC last year. LAL has retained its brand identity, unique purpose, and separate delivery centre, but it has become part of the College 'family' through shared overarching vision, leadership and support systems. The LAL people have become Nelson and Colne people despite their separate purpose and learner profile, and have contributed to the development and improvement of the combined College. They contribute actively to the College strategic developments and governance, and in our revised leadership and staffing structure have taken up leadership roles across whole College teams.

We will aim to restore the name of Accrington and Rossendale as synonymous with high quality vocational training, skills development and Apprenticeships, building on the investment in specialist resources and employer relationships. N&CC have a proven track record of building strong and positive strategic relationships with important stakeholders including employers and local government. Together, we will build a strong reputation for the A&R Skills and Technology Centre to ensure employer participation on site, and skills development appropriate to employer need in young people and adults. We will ensure that employers and individuals enjoy skills development through to higher levels in line with the gaps identified in the Lancashire LEP Employment and Skills evidence base. We will concentrate any future skills capital development at that site and host employer events there. It is likely that we will locate our combined Apprenticeship delivery functions there too.

1.2 Developing a brand family

As outlined above, we will retain the distinct names and brands at each of three sites, enabling them to retain their own identity. The Corporation will retain the Nelson and Colne College title, with use of this being restricted to Corporation business, unless it is deemed to add market value in some circumstances.

We will consult on the best way to combine the A&RC and N&CC Apprenticeship and HE offer, based on market strength of each current College brand. We will also test the suitability of a new brand to encompass the combined offer for Apprenticeships and/or HE, such as 'Pennine College Apprenticeships' or 'Higher Studies/University Centre at Pennine Colleges'.

In the early stages, we (both existing Colleges with oversight from a Merger Steering Group) will conduct a staff, stakeholder and customer consultation to establish the strength of the brands to help us determine how we can achieve the greatest growth in all our markets. We will also test the proposed names for the delivery centres to ensure they are well understood and provide maximum appeal.

We expect to invest significantly in external support to ensure that we capture the full potential of the two organisations within the new single institution.

1.3 Development of single organisational culture and valued staff team

Staff members will all be employed as one family by N&CC Corporation, with a single set of values and mission, to be developed together leading up to and after merger.

The organisational delivery model described will deliver the benefits of a group structure but with clearly defined locally responsive provision. Support services will come together to support the different College brands delivering a consistency of quality and service. The geographical proximity of each delivery centre will assure that needs can be appropriately responded to in a timely way. Each centre and group of learners/customers will be of equal importance, and share the same ambition for high quality, positive destinations and employer/community engagement.

A new leadership structure for the merged institution will be developed through the Merger Steering Group. Where senior appointments are made internally, we naturally expect to include both N&CC and A&RC leaders within any selection pools. It is anticipated that each centre will have a senior manager who is part of the Corporation's executive leadership team. We expect that the existing Principal of N&CC will lead the merger developments with the support of senior staff from both institutions, and from the A&RC Interim Principal, and will be located at Accrington for as much time as practicable prior to merger.

It is important that all staff across the merged College have an equal opportunity to contribute to its future through their experiences and talents. Although staff may have roles which are linked to a particular brand or group of learners, they will still be encouraged to participate in cross College professional development, supporting the ambition of the College as a whole. N&CC has a strong culture of distributed leadership in which all staff are encouraged to take responsibility for performance improvement, and A&RC staff will be warmly encouraged to contribute to all our continued success.

N&CC's vision is based on our expectation that each member of staff and student can 'Be the Best Version of You', which is mirrored by A&RC's strong culture of 'Learners First'. Our combined staff will aspire to be the best teachers and supporters that we can be so that our learners get the best possible experience. In turn, we want each of our students to become the best versions of themselves that they can, through teaching and pastoral interactions which encourage them to exceed their expectations.

Merger between A&RC and N&CC will lead to staff and stakeholder engagement across all sites and markets to determine a new vision and set of values. However, we will aim to retain our expectations of high quality and ambitious results imagined, planned and delivered by all, putting learners first.

1.4 Securing long term sustainability

It is in the interests of both our Colleges to secure long term financial sustainability. The financial annexes to this proposal provide details of the financial security of N&CC.

We expect to secure financial sustainability for the merged College through a number of key steps:

- **Rationalisation of leadership and support services**

There will be a single Principal and senior team. Support services will be brought together and structured to provide support to all parts of the merged College. We will protect curriculum delivery which is cost effective and high quality, and use our combined experience to share expertise and good practice across the new College.

- **Investment planning**

Future investment will be concentrated based on the nature of the provision to be developed. This means that there will not be duplication of investment in two centres arising from curriculum reforms, technology advances or new markets to be explored. We will be able to concentrate investment in a single site where it is needed. Likewise, we will be able to determine how to best maintain multiple sites, taking into consideration space rationalisation opportunities such as a co-location of support/leadership teams.

- **Development of new income streams**

The combined new College will have a louder voice in the region, and a greater opportunity to work with small and larger employers with a larger team and geographical reach. Due to the broader curriculum offer overall, we will be able to build a universal offer for individuals and employers, to provide excellent customer service and high quality experience as an entitlement.

Together we have a strong track record of curriculum development which meets the needs of all stakeholders. We will be able to plan more effectively and secure more strategic influence to build productive partnerships.

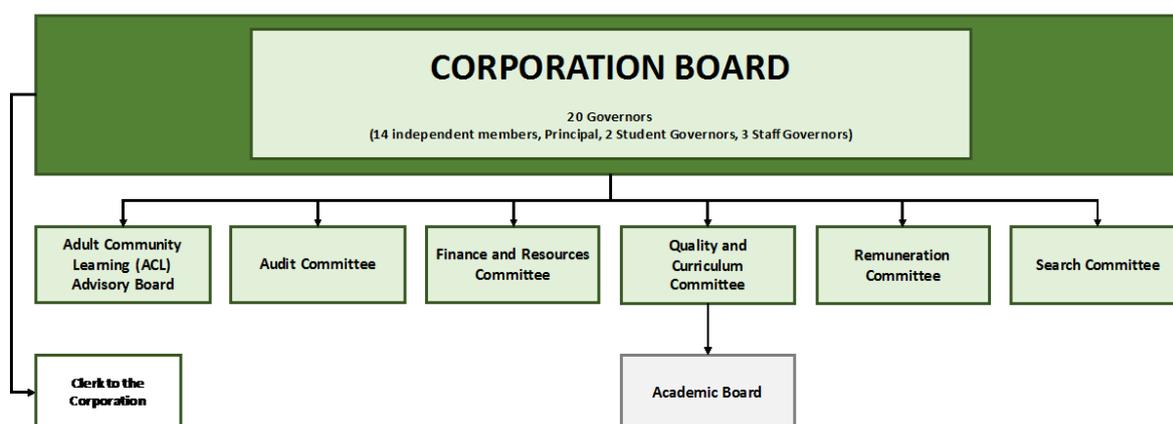
2. GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 Governance arrangements

N&CC's Corporation is committed to exhibiting best practice in all aspects of corporate governance. The Corporation operates within the high standards of the exemplary Code of Good Governance for English Colleges, which was adopted by the Board in 2016, and in accordance with the seven principles identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

Through the type B merger, the Corporation of Nelson and Colne College remains, and the Corporation of A&RC is dissolved. To ensure strong and effective governance in the newly merged College, the existing Corporation of N&CC would be changed, to be as follows from the point of merger:

Diagram 2 – Corporation structure of the merged College



This model strengthens the existing Corporation of N&CC, by:

- Inviting the Corporation of A&RC to propose 2 of their members to join the N&CC Corporation, from the point of merger onwards – giving a degree of continuity and supporting the Governing Body to understand and embrace the unique character of A&RC and its delivery to-date
- Increasing the number of Staff Governors from 2 to 3, with the new additional Staff Governor to be elected by staff at the A&R centre
- The addition of a new 'Finance and Resources Committee', strengthening scrutiny and Governor input in this key area

Recruitment to Governor vacancies, and consideration of the renewal of Governor's terms of office, will be guided by a Skills Audit of the Corporation and consideration of strategic priorities.

N&CC's established 'Governor Insight' learning and development programme will include opportunities post-merger for all Governors to have a deep understanding of the needs of learners, employers and the communities in the boroughs served by A&RC. N&CC's existing Governor Links scheme which matches Governors with key areas of College provision and/or priorities, will be reviewed and changed to reflect any new areas of delivery/curriculum. As with LAL, opportunities will be taken to hold Corporation or

Committee meetings at the Accrington and Rossendale Skills and Technology Centre as well as the Nelson and Colne 6th Form Centre in Nelson and LAL's premises, to ensure Governors and governance are visible.

In terms of governance arrangements in the transition to merger, a Merger Steering Group (MSG) will be established immediately after the outcome of the SPA is confirmed. Chaired by Stephen Barnes, the Chair of N&CC Corporation, membership of the MSG will be drawn from both A&RC and N&CC's Corporation and leadership teams, and so therefore include, alongside the Chair:

- the Principal and Deputy Principal of N&CC, and the Interim Principal and strategic finance lead for A&RC (4 members)
- 3 Governors from each of the two current Corporations, nominated by their Boards (6 members)

The MSG will be constituted as a formal joint Committee of both Colleges and advisory in nature, reflecting that decision-making remains with the two Corporations. Terms of Reference for the MSG will be jointly developed and agreed by both Colleges, ensuring a shared and collaborative approach. MSG meetings will be minuted by N&CC's Clerk to the Corporation, and standard reports produced to support consistent communication from the MSG to the two existing Corporations where possible.

The MSG will play a key role in the pre-merger phase, developing and implementing an effective, realistic and resourced Transition Plan which is owned by both merging Colleges and outlines the MSG role in:

- developing the merger consultation document and process
- overseeing the due diligence process (financial and legal due diligence)
- developing the senior leadership structure for the merged College, scoping a new staffing structure and the approach to TUPE transfer of staff into the merged College
- scoping and progressing key workstreams in the pre-merger phase in areas such as:-
 - i) College data systems and IT (e.g. MIS)
 - ii) Curriculum and quality
 - iii) Estates and assets
 - iv) Human Resources and staffing
 - v) Marketing and communications
 - vi) Student services and support

2.2 Governor and leadership engagement with communities and through key strategic partnerships

Securing stability for the merged College is central to any leadership and management changes. In the pre-merger phase, through the MSG a new senior leadership team structure will be developed. Recognising the critical importance of maintaining the visibility and senior level relationships in place currently between A&RC and key stakeholders in the boroughs served by the College, A&RC will be the main base for a Deputy Principal/Vice Principal level post in the new senior leadership structure of the merged College. Also, NCC's Principal would be based at Accrington for a significant balance of her time, supporting close working and integration.

N&CC and A&RC both being located in Lancashire, and in neighbouring Districts, brings the benefit of there being established and existing strong relationships in place which will continue and benefit the merged College. N&CC's Principal is chair of the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Skills and Employment Board – and we have strong and

existing relationships with partners such as the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, Lancashire Growth Company, and Lancashire County Council. Plus the merged College will benefit from the strength of the relationship between both Colleges and key partners and stakeholders at a national level such as AoC.

Recognising the importance of continuing to develop and deliver to the needs of partners and partnerships in the local areas served by A&RC, stakeholder mapping and engagement plan will be completed through the MSG in the pre-merger phase to ensure absolute clarity on the key relationships which are to be maintained and strengthened further at local level during and after the merger – and by whom in the newly merged College. This will include for example stakeholder engagement and communication with local Government and the MPs in the 3 districts served by A&RC (Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley); the voluntary and community sector and of course local schools and partnerships – with clear and consistent messaging to assure partners and stakeholder of any changes.

Existing mechanisms and approaches used effectively to-date by N&CC to secure stakeholder feedback and engagement will be reviewed, extended and improved further to ensure regular feedback and that the unique character and needs of the communities, learners, employers and stakeholders in the local areas served by A&RC currently are heard and met. These include annual and established mechanisms such as the development of the College's annual and 3 year Strategic Plan and Priorities. N&CC's planned refresh of the vision and values for the College in 2017/18, will be deferred till post-merger, to ensure that all colleagues in the merged College have input and ownership of a shared vision, values and culture.

2.3 Capacity and commitment to progress merger

N&CC's leadership team's proven track record of successfully managing structural change and driving and maintaining quality improvement and excellence in teaching and learning during turnaround was demonstrated when N&CC was invited by Lancashire County Council (LCC) in January 2015 to lead the transformation of its Adult Community Learning (ACL) provision - delivered through Lancashire Adult Learning (LAL), across the whole of Lancashire. Delivery of this £5.7M contract, the second largest ACL allocation nationally, had been judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, with the most significant issues relating to leadership and management. Within 15 months, following a whole range of interventions and improvements led by N&CC's leadership team, the provision was judged 'good'.

In that time, a new and effective Board and leadership team were established, and the provision was then transferred formally to N&CC at LCC's request in August 2016. Since that time, N&CC has invested heavily in the teaching and support functions to ensure maximum impact for learners and communities through this provision.

The Corporation of N&CC are committed to progressing merger at pace and working to the agreed timescale of 1st August 2018. This pace is challenging and reliant on successful liaison and progression of an application for Transition Funds and Restructuring Facility, administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and DfE. N&CC has met ESFA and the Transaction Unit to begin discussions on potential support if agreed as A&RC's preferred merger partner. A SPA Working Group with strong representation from Governors has been established to guide development of N&CC's EOI and this Merger Proposal. The College would look to jointly appoint with A&RC dedicated project management support to work closely with the MSG and give additional capacity to move forward at pace.

An indicative timeline for pre and post-merger is in place, and available at **Appendix A**.

3. CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND LEARNERS

Both our Colleges are ambitious to deliver the highest quality provision – with outstanding achievement, progression and outcomes for learners, through an exciting and engaging learning offer that meets the needs of individuals, employers and our local community. Merger between N&CC and A&RC will achieve this vision.

In 2016/17 our Colleges delivered learning and skills support to over 20,000 young people and adults, across a broad range of occupation and skill areas and levels. Merger gives the opportunity to develop and deliver a sound, clear and ambitious curriculum that builds on the established strengths and reputation of our Colleges while securing growth, improving quality and outcomes and ensuring our delivery model maximises commercial opportunities and co-investment with employers. Importantly, merger with N&CC will strengthen progression of learners, consider opportunities to expand the offer delivered locally in the boroughs served by A&RC currently and achieve consistent strong performance through sustained quality, financial and curriculum improvements and outcomes.

Table 1 – 2016/17 Total learner volumes of the two Colleges

	2016/17	
	A&RC	N&CC
16-18	700	1,809
Adults	3,800	12,405
Apprentices	770	1,003
Higher Education	350	155
Sub-total	5,620	15,372

Note:
A&RC learner volumes as set out in their Vision document
N&CC volumes are unique learners

Table 2 – 2016/17 Delivery by levels (starts)

	A&RC				N&CC			
	16-18	19+	Total	% by level	16-18	19+	Total	% by level
Level 1 (including entry level)	293	1,121	1,414	40%	885	1,800	2,685	40%
Level 2	206	1,172	1,378	39%	1,371	792	2,163	33%
Level 3	255	446	701	20%	1,671	112	1,783	33%
Level 4 and above	0	14	14	N/A	1	5	6	N/A

Note:
A&RC learner volumes above, as confirmed to N&CC

3.1 Quality

N&CC and A&RC each have a long standing tradition of excellence. A&RC is clearly progressing addressing its more recent quality decline, indicated by Ofsted's support and challenge feedback and Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) data shared for 2016/17.

The quality of teaching and learning, outcomes and progression at N&CC is outstanding. This established and sustained quality, combined with N&CC's proven track record of rapid quality improvement and turnaround, means we would expect Ofsted to confirm 'outstanding' quality of the merged College within 3 years of its beginning operating.

As your agreed merger partner, N&CC would welcome a joint approach to quality improvement at the earliest opportunity, so that the Colleges and merger can benefit from closer working through for example peer support and sharing of best practice to support delivery of A&RC's quality improvement plan and learners experience. Shared or joint activities to support teaching, learning and assessment will be considered in the run up to merger, along with joint approaches to CPD and opportunities for the Colleges to work together in areas of improvement before the end of the 2017/18 academic year.

An Ofsted 'outstanding' provider since 2005, N&CC has earned a strong reputation as a result of consistently high grades and success rates, and excellent relationships with employers.

- In 2016, N&CC were one of only 10 Colleges in the country selected by Ofsted as highlighting best practice in study programmes
- In Autumn 2017, N&CC welcomed a DfE team researching models of best practice to develop the proposed 'transition year' for level 1 and level 2 16-18 year olds, and subsequently the College's Vice Principal was invited to share the model at the recent AoC Annual Conference
- N&CC were part of Hudcett's ITE inspection in 2016; feedback from the visiting inspectors during both phases of the inspection commented on the exceptional teaching and learning experience

In the 2015-16 national achievement rate tables (NaRT) published in June 2017, of 212 GFE&T Colleges, N&CC is:

- 1st in the country for all age, all level achievement with 93% achievement
- 1st in the country for 16-18 all levels with 91.7% achievement
- 2nd in the country for all age, all levels 19+ with 96% achievement
- 2nd in the country for Apprenticeships all age, all levels with 87% timely achievement
- 5th in the country for Apprenticeships all age, all levels with 81.6% timely achievement

In relation to 2016-17, the achievement of learners across all provision types continues to be 'outstanding'. In 2016, N&CC's results delivered a four-year improving trend, with headlines as below (tables show published performance for 2015-16, and predicted position for 2016-17):

Table 3 – Classroom Based Achievement 2016/17

Age/Level	2015/16	2016/17	Nat. Ave (2015/16)	National rank
Overall Achievement All Ages, All Level	93.2%	93.9%	81.6%	1st
16-18 all level	91.7%	93.1%	83.4%	
19+ all level	95.8%	95.1%	79.1%	

Table 4 – Results A Level

		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
A2 level	A* – E	100%	99.9%	99.7%
	A* - C	81%	79%	87%
	A* – B (high grades)	52%	52%	57%

Table 5 – Study Programmes 16-18 Vocational

	Achievement 2015/16	Achievement 2016/17
Entry	98%	99%
Level 1	100%	96%
Level 2	90%	88%
Level 3	95%	94%

Table 6 – Adult Provision 19+ Accredited

Level	19+ Achievement Rate 2015/16	19+ Achievement Rate 2016/17
Entry Level	97.5%	99.6%
Level 1	95%	97.5%
Level 2	93%	89.0%
Level 3	84%	79.5%

Table 7 – Community Learning 19+ Non Accredited

Level	Achievement Rate 2015/16	Achievement Rate 2016/17
All Levels	99.7%	99.8%
Entry Level	100%	100%
No level assigned	99.3%	99.7%

Table 8 - Apprenticeships – Timely Achievement

Age/Level	Timely Achievement 2015/16	Timely Achievement 2016/17	Nat. Ave (2015/16)
Achievement All Ages, All Level	81.6%	82%	60.0%
Achievement 16-18 All Levels	87.0%	89%	65.0%
Achievement 19-23 All Levels	79.1%	89%	65.0%
Achievement 24+ All Levels	77.2%	74%	65.0%

Table 9 - Value Added Level 3

Qualification Level	Overall Value Added Score 2015/16	Overall Value Added Score 2016/17
A level	2	2
Advanced Vocational	4	3

Table 10 –English and Maths Progress

Qualification	Progress 2015/16	National Rank
English	0.41	3 rd
Mathematics	0.96	1 st

Table 11a –English and Maths Re-sits 16-18 (students with a D grade)

Qualification	High Grade Achievement A*-C
English	51%
Mathematics	26%

Table 11b –English and Maths Re-sits All Age

Qualification	High Grade Achievement A*-C
English	53%
Mathematics	27%

In terms of the quality of teaching and learning, 93% of lesson observations in 2016/17 were grade 2 or better first time.

N&CC achieves outstanding outcome and progression for learners. There are no significant gaps in the achievement of learners from the most deprived wards in Pendle, between care leavers and looked after children and their peers, or between male and female learners. Like A&RC, N&CC's students are representative of the ethnic diversity of our local area, and there are no significant gaps in achievement between learners from different ethnic groups¹.

Learners who are under-represented or under-achieving

Both Colleges offer established and tailored provision and support for learners who are under-represented or under-achieving, and a single cohesive offer will be developed to maximise quality, support progression and ensure the best outcomes for learners. N&CC has developed and successfully delivers a 'Career College' approach, with tailored programmes and support available to ensure students develop 'skills to work' rather than simply a qualification. A re-shaped curriculum offer is in place, ensuring all learners benefit from an individualised offer which prepares them for their next steps into further and higher learning or their chosen career. This has led to dramatic improvements in our College's maths and English resit outcomes, building on our already outstanding functional skills outcomes. This provision is also delivered already in A&RC and will be further supported and continue to be delivered from both the Nelson and Accrington centres to secure positive career and higher study destinations for local learners leaving school without the essential maths and English skills to ensure success.

The merged College will have a strong offer and support available to young people who are already NEET, and for students at College at risk of becoming NEET. Our mainstream offer is enhanced by European Social Fund (ESF), and delivered closely with key partners such as the Princes Trust, Calico and Burnley Football Club in the Community.

We will work with A&RC to ensure an integrated programme and offer is in place to LDD learners in the newly merged College, which brings the best from both College's delivery and offer. N&CC's range of specialist support for LDD students currently includes programmes

¹ Full supporting evidence is available in N&CC Self Assessment Report (SAR) 2017

such as Choices, Bridge and SKIL provision. Our 2017/18 programme is delivered from our new LAL premises at Northlight, where we invested in a new dedicated LDD area which includes a flat specifically designed to provide maximum opportunity for the delivery of independent life skills.

To secure continuity for existing learners of A&RC, our College makes the commitment that students entering year 2 in the first year of merger will not be expected to travel further or to an alternative site to complete their studies. In the event that consideration is given to the relocation of learners or provision, where provision is viable and high quality this will continue to be delivered out of the Accrington centre.

3.2 Curriculum

The curriculum offer in the merged College will be developed and delivered to meet the needs and aspirations of the learners, employers and communities we will deliver to, and closely aligned to the priorities of the Lancashire Employment and Skills Framework 2016-21.

Merger will support delivery of skills and education across a wider geography, with greater impact, better quality and more efficiency. The merged College will deliver a broad range of academic, vocational and Apprenticeship provision to 16-19 year olds and adults – with a reach across Lancashire through delivery of our adult community learning (ACL) offer, and throughout the North West and Yorkshire region for our Apprenticeship offer.

N&CC will work in partnership with A&RC through the Merger Steering Group (MSG) to undertake a full strategic review of provision to develop the offer of a newly merged College and the allocation of functions and delivery over existing sites and estates. The review will build on the Colleges existing Unique Selling Points (USPs), to improve growth and engagement with employers and communities whilst removing duplication and increasing efficiency. The principles of quality and sustainability will underpin the review and our approach, identifying any additional resources required to deliver the vision and strategic plan of the newly merged College.

Through this approach, opportunities to align curriculum planning for 2018/19 in the two individual Colleges will be considered before formal merger, supporting synergies and efficiencies for the 2018/19 academic year to be realised where possible. A high level review of the curriculum offer at both Colleges at this early stage clearly shows there is great synergy and complementarity – as well as added value through the delivery of specialisms in one College, not available at the other currently.

The headline offer and delivery by A&RC and N&CC, and through LAL, was described in section 1, with delivery out of the centres in Nelson and Accrington covering from entry level, up to and including level 3.

Additional priorities and areas of delivery in our offer for the merged College will be:

- **Apprenticeships and Training**

Apprenticeships are a real strength of both Colleges, and an opportunity for growth.

N&CC offers Apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher Apprenticeship level across 18 different areas ranging from accountancy, beauty therapy to manufacturing, marketing and leadership and management. Our success rates are amongst the best in the UK and we work with many top employers from across Pennine Lancashire. As a merged institution, our ambition will be to rapidly increase our Apprenticeship offer in terms of

Apprenticeship numbers, standards offered, and geographical reach. We will prioritise stabilising the employer engagement activity at both Colleges during the transition period, taking advantage of the wider range of specialisms overall.

The combined expertise from both Colleges will be extremely supportive of this growth strategy at a time when talented trainers, assessors and leaders are in great demand. N&CC commits to maintaining our significant levels of investment to promote and market Apprenticeships moving forward.

- **Higher Education (HE)**

N&CC has recently invested to increase the breadth and take up of HE, particularly for employer facing academic and technical programmes. Further expansion will be supported through merger, reflecting A&RC's considerable experience and success in HE delivery. We would expect delivery of HE to continue at both the Nelson and Accrington centres, with delivery at Nelson concentrating on HE for work (e.g. employer facing and PGCE), and Access and A&RC's current HE offer being delivered and strengthened at the Accrington centre.

4. ADDED VALUE AND IMPACT

A single larger College will be able to serve Pennine Lancashire more effectively and efficiently. Furthermore, a single strategy to support each stakeholder group will help us clarify our purpose and offer both internally and externally, and take advantage of a greater staff talent base, and market in which to operate.

Our shared support services will ensure consistency of quality and performance for the benefit of all learners, also delivering greater efficiency resulting from scale. In turn our reputation as a high quality, innovative and collaborative College will lead to more active relationships with all stakeholders and a role as go-to trainer/partner of choice.

4.1 Community

Colleges are in many cases the glue which holds their community together. In the local areas served by N&CC and A&RC, the Colleges are also one of the largest employers. They are the significant participant in many district and county-wide strategies to support learners and the local economy, and their building often hosts many community groups and events.

We will aspire to re-affirm the status of A&RC as a pivotal partner in the story of the boroughs it serves. We will make it a priority to engage with local government at both district and county level, employers, third sector organisations and members of the public to ensure that they all understand the contribution we can make to their own ambitions. We will also make sure that the new College is nationally recognised as a successful, innovative College with ideas to contribute to UK skills and education policy developments.

N&CC has a reputation for productive partnership working as evidenced by the LCC arrangement for LAL, the establishment of the Multi Academy Trust, and the rich and diverse partnership with Burnley Football Club in the Community. These opportunities have arisen through an externally facing, customer focussed strategic aim, led at senior level. The leadership of the College has balanced the need to engage externally to present commercial opportunities which secure financial security, with the need to assure quality in all College products and services.

As Chair of the Lancashire LEP Employment and Skills Board, N&CC's Principal drove the creation of an evidence base to support market intelligence enabling key stakeholders to understand the skills gaps and shortages across the region. The new merged College will have an important part to play locally and regionally in supporting the county's ambition, and will make it a priority to highlight the latent potential.

LAL is the one-stop-shop across the county to support disadvantaged adults. The provision supports adults across a series of key themes, and learners served by A&RC who already benefit from the provision will see an increase in opportunities to access education and skills training as a result of greater strategic connections to LAL, in delivery areas such as:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Maths, English and ESOL
- Employability
- Family Learning
- Arts and Languages
- Community Volunteering

Each of these themes is closely linked to the skill priorities and needs in the boroughs and communities served by A&RC. LAL also provides services to primary and secondary

schools, building the capacity of parents to support their children's education and development, including family health. This leads to productive partnerships with all schools. In Pendle, this has led to the creation of a collaboration of schools to drive improvements in progress of pupils, chaired by N&CC. This partnership establishes the College as centre of excellence locally and regionally. The merged College should extend this model of hub and spoke support for schools once the quality of delivery at A&RC is assured.

N&CC relationship with schools is further supported through a variety of events and shared delivery schemes. The College's multi-academy trust also enables useful engagement with the peer to peer strategies for support of the feeder schools. We have a number of teachers who deliver in local schools, particularly to support technical pathways, securing established routes into College post year 11. An annual careers event, supported by the LEP and District Council invites every year 9 pupil in Pendle to participate in interactive employer led activities, showcasing career choices. We will extend this across Pennine Lancashire given the great resources at A&RC and exciting activities which can be offered.

The school relationship further extends to support young people who have not performed well academically or who are at risk of becoming NEET. Support for NEET young people and those with low GCSE results is a key strength of N&CC. We have developed premises in Nelson and in Colne to enable access to education for those not ready for College, and work closely with LCC to identify and provide support for the hardest to reach. We also have a number of good partnerships to co-deliver re-engagement programmes for the hardest to reach with partners such as Burnley Football Club in the Community, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, and Calico Housing Group.

Once progressed to College, the flexibility of the study programme has been harnessed to provide rapid progression both academically and into higher levels study or work. Last year, N&CC were placed 1st nationally for progress in maths, and 4th nationally for English. We will apply the same strategies to support learners in A&RC as part of a merged institution.

At the higher end of the academic ladder, N&CC has recently invested in capacity to deliver HE. Using our usual collaborative approach, we have sought to create partnerships which allow us the flexibility to build HE programmes suited to our learners rather than simply franchising what is already available. We have secured an associate partnership with University of Cumbria which provides us the freedom to develop our own programmes, validated by them, and we have a roll-out plan for these. We also deliver PGCEs with University of Huddersfield, and HNCs accredited by Pearson. However, we see great potential in developing a new HE offer as a merged College, addressing the needs of local learners and employers.

4.2 Employers

Working together in our merged College, our approach to the expansion of Apprenticeships will be to place key employers at the heart of our provision, and to celebrate the increased breadth of specialist resources and talented staff we can offer. The N&CC approach to increasing Apprenticeship delivery is multi-faceted, and we will be able to learn more from the methods employed at A&RC. Immediate opportunities include:

- Identifying employers who can support delivery and generate volumes of Apprentices, such as our approach to-date with Seafood Pub Company explained below
- Successful bids to levy-paying employers with high volume Apprenticeship demand, such as N&CC's successful appointment to LCC to deliver Levy provision across the county to their employees
- Targeting employers in sectors with greatest opportunities for our College based learners to progress, such as our relationship with East Lancs. Hospitals' Trust (ELHT) which is one of the area's largest employers with multi-sector opportunities

for young and adult learners to progress into, and a requirement to upskill their existing workforce

- Targeting employers most able to support our disadvantaged learners or LDD learners, such as our approach with Calico Housing Group, explained below
- Supporting SMEs across the region to overcome the hurdles to recruiting Apprenticeships. SME's represent 75% of our employers engaged in Apprenticeships, but only 66% of the Apprenticeships in learning

N&CC Principal leads the College's sales and marketing activity for employers. She sits on a number of regional boards which provide openings to key employers and the opportunity to use partner communication strategies to promote College products and services. These include East Lancs Chamber of Commerce and Growth Lancashire. As chair of the Lancashire Employment and Skills Board, she also has a direct line into the county wide plan to support Apprenticeships and can ensure that the College's plans line up with the regional need, and with strategies to increase take up from employers and individuals.

An example of the success of employer engagement has been the development of the sport curriculum at N&CC which has grown by 300% in two years as a result of a partnership with Burnley Football Club in the Community. This partnership is expected to become even more fruitful as the Club considers the opportunities to use its Apprenticeship Levy to support its supply chain.

The existing shared Apprenticeship delivery scheme which N&CC has built with Calico Housing Group has been held back by the lack of specialist construction facilities. To date the scheme has only provided professional services opportunities to Apprentices in Calico and their supply chain. Calico will, with other key employers, help to establish the construction centre at A&RC as first choice for off the job delivery of Apprenticeships, and also for young people wanting to develop skills links to local job vacancies.

Similarly, the Seafood Pub Company prepares a high proportion of dishes to serve in its chain of gastro pubs using N&CC facilities and students. This has meant that despite a downturn in full-time learners wanting to study catering at lower levels, we have increased the number of Apprenticeships, been able to provide excellent work experience to other students, and cut our food costs for the training kitchen. The wonderful new facility at A&RC should present a great opportunity to expand this kind of work, and to establish the new College as leader in food preparation at all levels, linked to other specialist Colleges such as Kendal College.

N&CC's partnership with Seafood Pub Company led to their being awarded Regional Employer of the Year in October 2017's National Apprenticeship Awards. They have now been put forward for the national award.

N&CC has a track record of building meaningful relationships with employers as described, despite competitor Colleges being more closely situated to those employers, and in some cases having better resources. This is because our culture of collaboration appeals to employers who want to co-create the experience for their staff, and not be restricted in either qualification aim or method of delivery. This bespoke approach has become the key selling point at N&CC and will be valuable as we build a new relationship with employers as a merged College.

The A&RC campus is the natural home for any employer facing events and marketing activities, and we will invest in the presentation of the campus as home to regional employers, career development and higher level professional and technical studies.

4.3 Competition

There is significant competition for learners in Pennine Lancashire and at best a flat line of learners entering the Colleges system at 16 for the next few years, rising slowly into the mid 2020s. Notwithstanding that in some cases supply exceeds demand, students require choice both in terms of specialist areas of study and quality of experience. Our approach at N&CC has been to satisfy ourselves that any student who joins the College would not have a better experience or academic outcome by studying elsewhere. Our student satisfaction rates and value added scores confirm this. We now want to create the conditions in which students choose the wider offer from the larger merged institution based on reputation, experience and outcomes.

The benefits of merger will be that we will be able to offer students from a broader catchment area a wider range of study programmes, at all levels, in specialist facilities across a broader range of sectors. These study programmes will provide the same entitlement to high quality teaching and learning experiences, access to employers and careers, enrichment, personal development and a positive, friendly but purposeful College experience.

We will continue to collaborate with other Colleges in the local area, recognising that we compete for the same students. There are areas where we will attempt to deliver shared strategies to ensure that learners and stakeholders understand what is available to them to support skills and education. These will include careers advice and guidance and the development of skills competitions, employer events to highlight skills policy changes and funding opportunities, staff CPD for teachers and support staff, e.g. maths and English GCSE teaching teams, and programmes for adults to engage, gain essential work skills and upskill or gain access to higher level study. We are already collaborating to build a regional Care Academy, and in an ETF funded project to prepare for technical qualifications in Creative and Digital. We would also like to collaborate to address the travel to work and learn challenges in Pennine Lancashire, perhaps through simple actions such as joint procurement of bus services.

It is not our expectation that we will reduce access to study for any groups in their local area where it is viable to continue to offer it. We hope to be able to work as a group of Colleges in Pennine Lancashire to secure inward investment for capital developments, or to secure contracts to deliver training to benefit individual and employers across the region.

4.4 A new talent base, adapting to change

The greatest opportunity from the merger of our 2 Colleges is the combinations of skills, experiences and talent of the staff in each. Our future success depends on unlocking potential from both and encouraging it to be mutually nourishing, in line with our growth mindset. With that in mind, the structure for the new College will endeavour to provide leadership and management opportunities for all staff to ensure their talents are employed and developed. Similarly, we will engage with staff, and particularly middle management teams, from across both organisations in developing a staffing structure which will maximise operational effectiveness and efficiency, whilst maintaining outstanding quality. We believe that encouraging a collaborative approach and beginning this as early in the process as is practicable will ensure the best possible outcomes. Any arising vacancies will be offered across the whole organisation, as is the case currently with LAL. A number of former LCC employees now occupy College wide leadership roles in curriculum and curriculum support areas, as they were the most suitable and experienced people in the selection process. We expect that A&RC will likewise have talented staff ready to transfer or be promoted to leadership positions in the new organisation. The selection processes will be open and transparent and made available to both groups of staff.

Section 1 explains the development of a combined culture for the new, merged institution,

and starts to describe how important our people are to us. We are often visited by other Colleges wanting to learn from N&CC about how to improve outcomes for students, retain students, and support students into work. The most important message which we convey is that a clearly understood, shared, well embedded culture drives everything, and that whilst they are important, processes, plans and performance monitoring are secondary. There are no quick ways to improve the learner experience, and unless everyone feels encouraged to contribute at all levels in every small way, then we cannot succeed. Everyone needs to understand and share the same goals for the organisation, and want to be a part of it. Underpinning this culture is a strong shared growth mind-set. We may well already be among the best Colleges in England, but we don't hold all the answers, and we need to stay focussed on what matters now for our students and communities. This mind-set is what will help ensure that as a larger College, we continue our journey and will succeed.

The College has a very well embedded health and well-being ambition for both staff and students. There are many opportunities across the year for staff to participate in team and individual activities to support their well-being. An example is our health and well-being day in July each year when all staff sign up for workshops including mindfulness, yoga and stress management. That day also provides a whole team sport activity catering for the most competitive and athletic colleagues as well as the most sedentary. This is underpinned by a well-established package of wellbeing support for staff, including but not limited to, informal advice and guidance to both staff and managers, stress risk assessments, support from Occupational Health services and an employee advice line. Services such as these are particularly crucial in ensuring staff receive comprehensive support during a merger process.

The Principal of the College is personally committed to improving the experience of work of her staff. She holds a half termly meeting of a 'You Matter' group whose purpose is to share and resolve the most wasteful and irritating processes and to encourage all staff to make the College a better place to work. It is expected that during the coming months/years, staff at A&RC will feel anxious and upset at the changes they have already endured and will anticipate. It is our committed aim to provide open and transparent, regular communication directly to staff in order to go some way to allay their concerns, even though in some cases the messages may not be positive. This approach was proven to be successful during the transfer of LAL, which is demonstrated in the maintenance of the general level of staff satisfaction from pre to post transfer (as measured by the College's staff survey).

It is also worth noting that the College's HR team is experienced and well-established, leaving it well placed to manage and respond to the practical demands of a merger process, specifically the implications for staff, including the TUPE process.

Explore Vision Align

N&CC has several previous experiences of understanding significant change management. Most recently we adopted LAL, but prior to that, we established a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which over two years sponsored 4 schools to become academies. N&CC Principal drew upon her experience of the merger of South and North Trafford Colleges to ensure the effective engagement of all stakeholders in creating a new vision. There are many theories and methods, but they are all based on three essential steps which we will take:

Explore – We need to ensure we understand the truths of both our existing organisations. If we don't start from the right place, we can't expect to get where we want to go. This exploring phase will engage learners, parents, employers, community stakeholders, and of course our staff and Board members. We need to test our initial proposition to enable it to be refined. For example, we may have a view on what influences learner choice, or how employers perceive our offer, or how approachable we are to potential partners.

Vision – The findings from our exploration will set the scene to support the co-creation of our shared vision. We will engage external support to facilitate a shared new vision, mission and

values to be adopted across the whole College.

Align – Our communication, systems and processes will be adapted so our values can be lived daily by all staff through the organisation, and modelled by leaders. We expect our culture to be palpable in our interactions with customers including students, colleagues and stakeholders, and to be visible through our estates and communications.

NELSON AND COLNE COLLEGE



Nelson and Colne College, Scotland Road, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 7YT

 01282 440 200  www.nelson.ac.uk