National College of Art & Design

**Coláiste Náisiúnta Ealaíne is Deartha
A Recognised College of the National University of Ireland
Coláiste Aitheanta D'Ollscoil na hÉireann**

Quality Assurance Review in the Centre for Continuing Education in Art & Design

Peer Review Report

December 2009

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COLÁISTE NÁISÚNTA EALAÍNE IS DEARTHA
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Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance
Peer Review Group Report
Continuing Education in Art and Design (CEAD)
Academic Year 2009/2010

A Self-assessment Report was undertaken by CEAD in the academic year 2008/2009. The Peer Review site visit took place on 17th and 18th November 2009.

Location:	**Conference Room 1, Harry Clarke House, NCAD**
Peer Review Group:	**Professor Tom Collins, NUIM (Chair)**
	Allan Davies, HEA UK
	Samantha Ainsley, Glasgow School of Art
	Kevin Atherton, NCAD (Internal Advisor)

1.   Timetable of the site visit

Day	**Location**	**Time**	**Action**
Day 1			
Monday 16th November	Jury's Inn, Christchurch	5.00 p.m.	PRG meets with Nicky Saunders, QA/QI Officer to confirm schedule and roles of each member of PRG and agree format of review for next two days
Monday 16th November	The Mermaid Café 69/70 Dame Street, Dublin 2 Tel: 6708236	6.30 p.m.	PRG & QA/QI Officer - Informal dinner

*Please note that CEAD courses take place in the evenings from 6.30 p.m. and at weekends. Staff and students attending the review are doing so on a voluntary basis, may be travelling from some distance to attend and may have full-time jobs and/or family concerns. We have therefore set the times for discussion to suit their needs and should be flexible regarding late arrivals or early departures at the review itself.

Day	Location	Time	Action
			Day 2
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	9.15 – 9.30 a.m.	PRG meet with Nicky Saunders, QA/QI Officer and prepare for sessions
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	9.30 – 10.15 a.m.	PRG meet Director, Professor Declan McGonagle & Ken Langan, Registrar
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	10.15 – 10.30 a.m.	PRG – private recap of meeting
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	10.30 – 11.15 a.m.	PRG meet with Professor Gary Granville, Head of Faculty of Education.
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	11.15 – 11.30 a.m.	Coffee/tea x 7
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	11.30 – 12.15 p.m.	PRG meet with Nuala Hunt, Head of CEAD to discuss Centre and respond to any questions regarding the Self-assessment Report (SAR).
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	12.15 – 12.30 p.m.	PRG – private recap of meetings
Tuesday 17th November	NCAD Campus Tour	12.30 – 1.30 p.m.	PRG, Head of Education Faculty and Head of CEAD tour CEAD facilities and Library
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	1.30 – 2.15 p.m.	Light lunch with Head of Education Faculty, Head of CEAD, CEAD administrator & QA/QI Officer
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	2.15 – 2.30 p.m.	PRG prepare for afternoon sessions
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	2.30 – 3.00 p.m.	PRG meet with CEAD Administrator, Mary Sampson
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	3.00 – 3.30 p.m.	PRG meet with the Head of Research & Postgraduate Development, Dr. Siún Hanrahan
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	3.30 – 4.15 p.m.	PRG review information to date and develop outline report. Tea/Coffee x 5
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	4.15 – 5.15 p.m.*	PRG meet with cross-section of CEAD lecturing staff from DVI, PDI, Diploma and A/C courses: 1. Mary Avril Gillan 2. Felicity Clear 3. Anne Marie Keaveney 4. Brigitta Seck 5. Rhoda Cunningham 6. Rose Mary Cullen 7. Ken Donfield 8. Fiona Loughnane 9. Vivian Hansbury 10. Helen Killane
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	5.15 – 5.30 p.m.	PRG – private recap of meetings
Tuesday 17th November	Conference Room 1	5.30 – 6.30 p.m.*	PRG meet with cross-section of students from DVI, PDI, Diploma, A/C courses & non-credit courses: 1. Sally Graver 2. Paddy Crowley 3. Claire Wilde 4. Miroslava Jurcova 5. Aoife Goodman 6. Birgitta Horan 7. Barry Kennedy 8. Paul Pentony 9. Trevor Woods 10. Barbara Galvin 11. Frank Brennan
Tuesday 17th November	Fallon & Byrne Restaurant	7.15 p.m.	Dinner with PRG, Head of Faculty, Head of CEAD, QA/QI Officer

Day	Location	Time	Action
Day 3			
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	9.15 – 9.30 a.m.	PRG meet with QA/QI Officer and prepare for day
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	9.30 – 10.30 a.m.	PRG meet additionally requested stakeholders if possible
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	10.30 – 1.00 p.m.	PRG draw up draft report - QA/QI Officer in attendance
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	1.00 – 2.00 p.m.	Lunch with QA/QI Officer
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	2.00 – 4.00 p.m.	PRG complete draft report - QA/QI Officer in attendance
Wednesday 18th November	Conference Room 1	4.15 – 5.00 p.m.	PRG present recommendations of draft report to Director, Registrar, Head of Education Faculty, Head of CEAD - QA/QI Officer in attendance

While the schedule was very full, the meetings were efficient and well organized and the group kept to the allocated timetable. The order of the meetings worked well – starting with senior management and working through to staff and finally students,. The enthusiasm of the CEAD staff and students at the end of the first day re-invigorated the Review Group at the end of a busy day. The time allowed for each meeting ensured that the PRG paid equal respect to each group.

The tour of the facilities in the morning was useful.

2.   Peer Review Methodology

The Peer Review Group (PRG) had an independent Chair, Professor Tom Collins, who was appointed by the College. At the informal meeting on the evening before the review visit, the group members discussed the self-assessment report and formulated some of the main questions they wished to raise in the meetings with staff and students.

During the meetings on the two following days, all group members had an opportunity to ask questions so that all areas were adequately addressed. Staff and students were also invited to make additional comments or observations at the end of the meeting, if they felt there was something important that the Peer Review Group should know and that they had not had an opportunity to say.

All members of the group took notes during meetings. All members of the PRG contributed to the writing of the report. The group worked together on the second day of the review to note commendations and recommendations, which were recorded by the QA/QI officer in draft form. Based on this draft report, the Chair of the PRG made an exit presentation to the Director, the Registrar the Head of the Education Faculty and the Head of CEAD at the end of the second day.

During the subsequent weeks, the Chair, in collaboration with the other members of the PRG, finalized the report and sent it to the QA/QI officer, who in turn forwarded it to the Head of CEAD on 1st December 2009. The Head of CEAD had an opportunity to check the report for any factual errors before submitting it to the QA/QI Steering Group for publication on the NCAD website.

3.   Description of CEAD

3.1   <u>CEAD Philosophy and Goals:</u>

Continuing Education in Art and Design is a Centre within the Faculty of Education. The Centre has a cross college function and a multidisciplinary perspective.

Philosophy:
To encourage adults to participate in art and design higher education and provide students with challenging learning experiences.

To foster an ethos within NCAD that values adult learning needs and approaches to learning within higher education, recognise diversity and support an inclusive curriculum.

CEAD goals are to:
1) Provide flexible learning opportunities for adults/mature students, that are underpinned by quality teaching and learning, offer credit accumulation, provide for transfer, are linked to progression routes and qualifications within third level
2) Promote and encourage participation in part-time art and design education courses at third level
3) Facilitate access for disadvantaged students seeking entry to third level art and design
4) Encourage the integration of CEAD within the systems and structures at NCAD
5) Develop teaching and learning resources and promote best practice in teaching and learning within art and design / NCAD
6) Encourage and support research initiatives in art and design education with specific reference to adults, participatory/contextual practice and critical pedagogies.

3.2   <u>CEAD Programme:</u>

CEAD is addressing its goals through the expansion of accredited courses, the development of an evening programme to include varied flexible courses carrying credit as well as recognising the need to offer introductory courses in art and design

to facilitate mature students to develop their visual literacy to support learning and progression within third level.

CEAD provides a range of part-time courses in multiple disciplines during the spring, summer and autumn (evening). CEAD provision commences in late September and finishes at the end of July each year. Approximately 1,000 part-time students enrol on CEAD courses each year. CEAD offers approximately: 40 Autumn/Winter courses, 5 Easter courses and 25 Summer courses.

3.3   CEAD History:

In 2002 a full-time head of CEAD was appointed. Between 2002 - 2004 the focus in CEAD was to:
- develop a framework for progression
- reconfigure the provision both accredited and non-accredited
- introduce new part-time courses
- develop initiatives that encouraged links to community arts
- improve the profile, credibility and integration of continuing education within NCAD.

The Head of Continuing Education in conjunction with tutors, set out to construct a programme of courses that were related to undergraduate provision and contemporary developments in art and design practice. New accredited and non-accredited certificate courses were developed, the application process was changed and non-accredited courses were offered at different levels i.e. *Introductory, intermediate, and on-going workshops*.

Since 2005, CEAD has increased the number of accredited part-time courses. The bulk of the work in CEAD during this time focused on curriculum development, establishing progression routes, introducing appropriate academic procedures, linking the provision to under graduate courses, external qualifications frameworks, maintaining the profile and building quality and confidence within the provision.

4.   Preliminary Comments of the Peer Review Group

The PRG commends the quality of the work and growth of CEAD in recent years both in terms of numbers of participants and the development of accredited programmes. In particular the Group noted the substantial achievements of the Centre since the appointment of the current Head.

In appraising and commenting on the work of CEAD, the PRG took particular note of the rapidly changing context in which the NCAD finds itself and the implications of this change for CEAD; specifically, the group noted the references in the Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes to the proposed amalgamation of the NCAD with other institutions and also the forthcoming higher education strategy review and the differential mechanisms for funding for part-time provision.   The PRG noted the proactive response of the College leadership to this changing context and the central role which CEAD might play within this context, particularly in the "new vocational space", one of the areas that it is envisaged in which NCAD will operate.

Recognising the rapid growth in provision on the one hand, and the increasing uncertainty arising from such a rapidly changing context, it is inevitable that some tensions and stresses arise which need to be resolved in any future development strategy for CEAD. The group in particular noted the following:

- The fact that CEAD is largely isolated from the formal structures of the College with remarkably few linkages between it and the mainstream Faculty and the academic support services of the College. This isolation underpins the sense of vulnerability and lack of recognition that the Group encountered in CEAD itself. It also makes it more difficult for CEAD to deliver on the Directors reference to the key strategic role which it is expected to play within the overall mission of the NCAD as the College engages with the three domains of culture, society and the economy.

- The heavy reliance on the small full-time staff core at the centre of CEAD dealing, not only with administrative and managerial needs of the Centre, but also providing the curriculum development and strategic thinking input to the Centre. This is both onerous on staff and carries risks for the College in terms of succession planning.

- The multiple goals and projected roles of CEAD and the fact that it has been more successful in achieving some goals than others. It was noted, for instance that while many full-time Faculty are actively involved in off-campus activity - specifically in research thematic fields such as participatory public cultures – this involvement is not mediated through CEAD despite the stated goal of CEAD to encourage and support such research initiatives.

- The overwhelmingly positive feedback received from staff and students who participate on CEAD programmes.

- The perception by the students that the development of the accredited courses has significantly enhanced the quality of the student experience.

- The fact that courses are fee-bearing means that people from disadvantaged backgrounds have little opportunity to participate.

- While CEAD is self-financing on a recurring cost basis, nevertheless it is perceived to be a drain on some resources of the College such as space and facilities.

- The documentation available to the PRG relating to quality mechanisms such as assessment criteria, external examiner reports, retention and achievement rates was limited.

- There is no reference within the SAR to virtual learning environments and the possibilities inherent in their use.

- The lack of opportunity of part-time staff to be involved in staff development initiatives available to full-time staff or for sharing best practice amongst themselves.

- There are potential learning gains for the mainstream college community in terms of the benefits a cohort of non-traditional students can bring from a great variety of background and experiences.

- Part-time staff teaching on audit-credit courses would welcome greater input to selection processes for audit-credit courses.

The PRG considers that the SWOT analysis carried out as part of the report accurately captures and conveys the opportunities and challenges facing CEAD. It notes however, that this process was undertaken prior to some major policy changes outside of the NCAD which were mooted subsequent to the drafting of the report.

The themes of integration and parity emerged strongly, both in the SAR and in the review process as the principal challenges facing CEAD. It should be recognized that while developments on these two fronts would substantially strengthen CEAD, they would also involve changes in culture, pedagogical practices and resourcing which might limit the autonomy and capacity for self-direction which CEAD currently enjoys.

In arriving at the recommendations contained below, the Group distinguished between higher order priorities and those it felt were more of an operational and immediately achievable nature.

5. Report of the Peer Review Group

5.1.	**Higher Order Objectives**
5.1.1.	Review and agree the mission of CEAD in the context of the broader developmental ambitions of NCAD. It is particularly important that this is done at the current juncture in view of the changing context for higher education as a whole and in relation to any new strategic alignments that NCAD may enter into.
5.1.2.	Determine a structure and location for CEAD within the institution which reflects the strategic importance of life-long learning within the institution as a whole which could be underpinned by the following principles and objectives: • An institutional commitment to life-long learning and to removing all barriers to participation. • All students should be regarded and treated equally. • A common framework of access and progression which will apply to the College as a whole thereby ensuring that there is a negotiated integration at organisational and operational levels between the continuing education provision and full-time provision of the institution. • Utilise the research dimension of the Centre to underpin the development of all academic courses, recognising that the outcomes of the research may be deduced from multiple sources and be qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. • That CEAD continues to play a curriculum development and curriculum leadership role as well as an academic support role. • That CEAD supports the institution-wide reorientation towards lifelong learning by building upon and disseminating the expertise it currently holds regarding the particular issues which arise surrounding part-time and adult learners. • That NCAD in committing itself to life-long learning should work to change the funding models which disadvantage part-time students, inhibit course development and progression and negatively impacts learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.2.	**Operational priorities**
5.2.1.	It is important that the issue of the integration of the Centre with the rest of the College be rapidly advanced. This should happen by a process of internal dialogue and debate in a spirit of collegiality such that the entire college community shares a sense of ownership and active engagement with life-long learning.
5.2.2.	Integration can be facilitated by evolving the current role of full-time staff as external examiners to one of direct engagement in the teaching and support of some of the CEAD courses.
5.2.3.	While the procedures whereby external examiner functions of CEAD programmes by full-time staff of the College enables a degree of integration, the imperatives of quality assurance suggest that the function should be external to the College so as best to ensure comparability and benchmarking of standards.
5.2.4.	Part-time staff teaching on audit-credit courses could assist in developing selection criteria for the courses e.g. evidence of commitment, statement of interest
5.2.5.	While the PRG understands that generic assessment criteria are used, the group recommends that the Centre and the College further develop opportunities for staff to share common standards across the programmes (full and part-time); to develop agreed and appropriate assessment methodologies, feedback systems and mechanisms for benchmarking.
5.2.6.	Within a dedicated student-induction handbook, student supports, assessment criteria and processes should be fully explained to students.
5.2.7.	Communication problems must be addressed in order to better facilitate integration and parity. There is scope for CEAD to be more proactive within the institution as whole in communicating its mission and goals. This will require an active engagement by senior management.
5.2.8.	Whilst the Group concur with student feedback on the advantages of the relocation of CEAD courses to the main campus, there are outstanding issues regarding the adequacy and availability of some accommodation which need resolving.
5.2.9.	The PRG recommends that CEAD continues its work towards the development of a part-time degree option in that it provides the best vehicle for the articulation of existing programmes with one another, for progression between programmes and for the operation of an integrated approach between full and part-time provision. The stated intention of the HEA to move towards a credit-based funding model lends added urgency and credibility to this proposal. Bearing in mind the particular needs and attributes of the potential student cohort on the part-time degree, while participating departments in this degree could retain the responsibility for the course content and delivery, marks and standards and assessment of learning, CEAD should play the lead role in managing the overall development and delivery of the part-time degree.

6. Conclusions of PRG

The PRG recognises the important contribution that CEAD makes to the organization as a whole. It notes the ambassadorial role generated by CEAD students externally which enhances the already well-established reputation of NCAD.

The PRG commends the work CEAD has done in relation to the audit/credit module offering.

The PRG commends the quality and commitment of the teaching staff of CEAD.

The PRG commends the quality of provision of the library and its inclusive approach to the support of life-long learners.