

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN
FACULTIES OF DESIGN, FINE ART AND VISUAL CULTURE

JULY 2012

1. Mission and College Structure

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>1.1. The PRG is cognisant of a sea change in national higher education policy including economic realities, and acknowledges that forward planning for NCAD must occur within that context.</p>	<p>The College is attentive to the significant and far-reaching changes taking place through higher education policy and the challenges presented by current economic realities and on-going uncertainties. Our strategic response aims to frame, deliver and secure an ambitious vision for NCAD as a higher education provider, and for the art and design sector nationally. Implementation considerations include: recruitment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (numbers, communication and profile, and internationalisation), programme development, academic alliances and clusters, and diversifying NCAD’s funding profile.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group Recruitment & Admissions Committee (sub-committee of Academic Council)</p>	<p>Immediate: March 2012 – September 2012 Ongoing: June 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>1.2. Given the size of NCAD (fewer than 1000 full-time students), the College has a large number of tightly defined units, which dictate and dominate the culture and determine curriculum development, content and delivery. The PRG notes that two vacancies will shortly exist for the Heads of two Faculties. This provides a unique opportunity to reconsider the historical organizational structure and resource allocation. Will the NCAD of the future need 4 faculties and 11 academic departments? Such highly compartmentalized structures are probably inappropriate for the needs of an imaginative new curriculum that should foster links and encourage collaborative work across and between disciplines.</p>	<p>The College appreciates the question raised regarding the large number of academic units relative to a small student population. The perception that this necessarily inhibits interdisciplinary and intercollegiate engagement is a source of concern at College and Faculty level. Nonetheless, there is agreement regarding the need for an agile curriculum that is responsive to rapid change, and to evolving structures appropriate to effective strategic growth.</p> <p>Issues of cross-disciplinarity, trans-disciplinarity and inter-disciplinarity in the College have been explored through the 3+2 planning process and will be explored further during implementation process, including through staff workshops that would study the intellectual, practical and pedagogical issues involved. A re-evaluation of structures in support of the new curricula and the possibilities of collaborative work across and between disciplines will emerge from and in response to the new undergraduate and postgraduate programme documents.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>Immediate: June 2012 – June 2013 Ongoing: September 2013 – June 2016</p>	<p>N/A</p>

2. Academic Matters

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>2.1. The PRG commends the college in taking the decision to introduce a 3+2(+3) structure. The College should project the 5-year programme as a defining characteristic of NCAD.</p>	<p>While there continues to be anxiety within the College regarding the decision to introduce a 3+2(+3) structure, there is agreement regarding the importance of projecting the 5-year programme as a defining characteristic of NCAD. At College and Faculty level there is recognition of the importance of postgraduate study and research for NCAD within the higher education landscape and for the art and design sector. Full engagement with the '+2' aspect of 3+2(+3) structure was delayed but is now underway.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group 3+2(+3) Review Group</p>	<p>Immediate: March 2012 – September 2012 Ongoing: March 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2.2. The adoption of 3+2(+3) will change the balance of undergraduate to postgraduate from a current ratio of 75:25 to a ratio closer to 60:40. This will need to be recognised in a revised postgraduate strategy which should include an enhancement of supports and facilities available to the postgraduate community.</p>	<p>The NCAD has seen an evolutionary growth in its Postgraduate development, which has been absorbed into existing structures. The continuing trajectory towards postgraduate study will be developed through the provision of pathways and the sharing of Postgraduate resources. There are tensions to be resolved in the length of programmes. There are opportunities to consider the placement of these programmes within the calendar year and relationships to the academic year. There are opportunities to consider course commencement (notwithstanding the complexities and timing of Local authority grant allocation). There are also opportunities for greater internationalization of the student body.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group Recruitment & Admissions Committee (sub-committee of Academic Council)</p>	<p>September 2012 – January 2013</p>	<p><i>Details of Internationalisation Strategy may require consideration by An Bord</i></p>

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<p>2.3. The PRG commends the careful consideration and due diligence that has been given to the structure of the 3-year programme, including the proposed new innovative 10+10+10 week first year model. Equal consideration and diligence now needs to be given to the postgraduate element of the 5 year offer. There is now an opportunity to review the overall structure of taught Masters programmes, and the PRG recommends that NCAD considers a "common element plus electives" model, to facilitate both single and interdisciplinary work.</p>	<p>While some staff remain anxious about the 10+10+10 model, the College notes the commendation of the PRG, chaired by Prof. Áine Hyland, in the light of both the Hunt report and the HEA/NCCA report to the Minister for Education and Skills, 'From Transaction to Transition'.</p> <p>The College notes the recommendation that we consider a "common element plus electives" model, and will implement this as appropriate in renewing our taught Masters programmes and in the continued evolution of our postgraduate pathways, both within and across Faculties.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group</p> <p>3+2(+3) Review Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – January 2013</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2.4. The PRG recognizes and commends the considerable work that has gone into the design stage of the 3+2(+3) structure. The PRG recommends that a process should be put in place to engage all levels of the academic community (staff and students) in the implementation process to ensure successful and timely implementation.</p>	<p>There have been ongoing inputs from staff to the 3+2 structure in the development of the programme. Components that will form models in relation to the new structure are being piloted and adapted within and across Departments, and in some instances in relation to UCD.</p> <p>The College notes the suggestion of a more explicit engagement with students as part of the implementation process and will consider how best to implement this.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – March 2013</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>2.5. Given that it is proposed to enrol students in years 1 & 4 of the new 5-year framework in September 2013, there is an imperative to promote the strategy in schools, feeder institutions and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>Given the extent of the changes proposed, the roll-out of the renewed Masters provision will be staggered across 2013 and 2014.</p> <p>A strategy for the promotion of the new 3+2 curriculum in schools, feeder institutions and with other stakeholders is being developed by the Admissions Office with Departments and Faculties, and through the Recruitment and Admissions Committee, a newly formed sub-committee of Academic Council.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs</p> <p>Recruitment & Admissions Committee (a sub-committee of Academic Council)</p>	<p>June 2012 – January 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2.6. There is a need to address unevenness in timely feedback on assignments - especially in the area of visual culture. This issue was raised by a number of students.</p>	<p>The issue of unevenness in timely feedback on assignments, especially in the area of Visual Culture, is noted and will be addressed.</p>	<p>Head of Faculty of Visual Culture</p>	<p>September 2012 – June 2013</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2.7. The PRG notes the considerable potential for academic synergies with UCD, in particular at postgraduate levels, taught and research.</p>	<p>There has been considerable progress in realising the potential for academic synergies with UCD, particularly at postgraduate level. The College will continue to encourage staff to initiate further such developments, and senior management at both NCAD and UCD are actively identifying strategic priorities for new masters programmes and wider research opportunities.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs</p> <p>NCAD/UCD Strategic Management Committee</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2016</p>	<p><i>For notification as significant initiatives are developed</i></p>

3. Research and Postgraduate Studies

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>3.1. The PRG notes the growth in research activity in NCAD in recent years. We also note NCAD’s research strategy and the proposal to develop a Research Institute.</p>	<p>The growth in research activity across the College has been significant, and is founded upon a wide range of initiatives. The Research Institute has been developed; its formal launch was delayed due to budgetary uncertainties and will coincide with the launch of the new College website. Application for membership will be invited on a rolling, bi-annual basis, and the College-wide process of gathering professional research information streamlined.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs with QA Officer</p>	<p>June 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>3.2. As regards Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy, the PRG would like to draw attention to the importance of policy and systems to facilitate recording and audit of expenditure, income, impact, IP and ethics.</p>	<p>The College appreciates the importance of policy and systems as described by the PRG. Policies and systems are in place in relation to both IP and ethics, but there is work to be done in relation to issues of recording income and expenditure from the perspective of presenting an effective narrative regarding research and knowledge transfer.</p> <p>As part of the evolution of such policies and systems, it is anticipated that the recent collaboration with Nova UCD, as part of Enterprise Ireland’s TTSI 2 initiative, should be both instructive and constructive.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs and Research with Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>June 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p><i>Developments to be reported to An Bord</i></p>

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<p>3.3. The PRG notes and commends the support available to staff in completing doctoral programmes and maintaining currency in their disciplines. All staff must work towards developing and enhancing a research culture in their disciplinary areas and towards identifying opportunities for interdisciplinary research</p>	<p>The College notes the PRG’s commendation in this regard, and would like to express its appreciation of the significant contribution of staff across the Faculties in developing and securing funding for both discipline specific and interdisciplinary research opportunities.</p> <p>Recognition of the importance of developing and enhancing a research culture is evident at College-level in the recent appointment of a Development Manager, and on the part of staff through high levels of positive engagement with her across the Faculties.</p> <p>The importance of, and opportunities presented through interdisciplinary research are also fundamental to the academic alliance with UCD.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group, including the Development Manager</p>	<p>June 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>3.4. As the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate shifts, the specific requirements of postgraduate students need to be recognised and met in order to develop an engaged research culture.</p>	<p>The experience of the College to date would support the suggestion that the growth of a substantial postgraduate student body enhances the vitality of both the wider research culture and undergraduate study.</p> <p>The College recognises and accepts the PRG recommendation regarding recognising and meeting the specific requirements of postgraduate students, and will address this within both the planning and implementation processes for 3+2, and through the renewal of the College’s learning and teaching strategy.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs with Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>June 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>3.5. The PRG notes that currently there are no formal structures for postgraduate research students to engage in teaching assistantships or suchlike. Such opportunities for research students are a key contributor to the development of postgraduate culture as well as being a significant additional dimension to learning and teaching at undergraduate level. This is an academic matter, being an important aspect of the general expectation of all research programmes in the university sector. It should not be regarded only as an issue pertaining to staff working conditions.</p>	<p>There is strong support for this recommendation from each of the Faculties and at College level. There is also strong support for this perspective on the part of staff, as reflected in discussions at both the Higher Awards Committee and at Academic Council. Suggestions regarding models for engaging postgraduate research students in learning and teaching activities as part of a vibrant educational experience and environment at both postgraduate and undergraduate level will be revisited, discussed with the Union, with a view to agreeing and implementing a College-wide approach.</p>	<p>Director and Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – March 2013</p>	<p><i>Proposals to be Agreed by An Bord</i></p>
<p>3.6 The PRG note the impressive work of GradCAM to date and its potential as an on-going support for graduate students. The funding under PRTL I IV will end shortly and GradCAM will now be entering a new phase. How the alliance with UCD will impact on that is not yet clear.</p>	<p>The College shares the PRG’s evaluation of the impressive work of GradCAM to date. The College is committed to the continuance of GradCAM as a fundamental support for structured PhD education in NCAD, and as a key articulation of and basis for the development of an Art & Design HE cluster in Dublin. It is anticipated that consolidation of NCAD’s Academic Alliance with UCD will enhance the range of supports available to doctoral researchers at NCAD, <i>and</i> that GradCAM will enhance the doctoral supports available to doctoral researchers at UCD, practice-based and ‘traditional’.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs and Research NCAD/UCD Strategic Management Committee</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>3.7. While many students were very positive about the support they have had to date from GradCAM, this enthusiasm was not shared by all students. Some students had difficulty with the timetabling of sessions while others were not convinced of their relevance to their area of research. The PRG would have some concern about the apparent proposal to make specific modules compulsory and credit-bearing for PhD students, and notes that a recent recommendation from the European University Association (EUA) following a 5-year study reads as follows: <i>“Applying the credit system developed for cohorts of students in the first and second cycles is not a necessary precondition for establishing successful doctoral programmes. Some universities consider credits useful for the taught components of doctoral education, especially in cross-institutional (joint) doctoral programmes. Credits, however, do not make sense when measuring the research component or its associated dissemination outputs. Applied wrongly, rigid credit requirements can be detrimental to the development of independent research professionals. High quality doctoral education needs a stimulating research environment driven by research enthusiasm, curiosity and creativity, not motivated by the collection of credits.”</i> EUA Salzburg II Recommendations October 2010</p>	<p>The College notes the caution expressed by PRG in relation to making specific modules compulsory and credit-bearing for PhD students, and the recommendation by the EUA that provides the context for this.</p> <p>The College recognises the issues raised by the students and anticipates that these will be addressed in a number of ways: firstly, by the greater involvement of PhD supervisors within the academic programme of GradCAM; and secondly, by the greater involvement of masters-level students providing critical mass in disciplines under-represented at doctoral level.</p> <p>The College is committed to the value of the structured PhD, and will give further consideration to the issues raised here by the PRG as part of the validation process for the GradCAM Programme Document.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs and Research with Heads of Faculty Group</p> <p>Academic Council</p>	<p>June 2012 – September 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>

4. Facilities and Resources

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>4.1. The PRG noted the current relatively generous student-staff ratios and regarded these as an advantage to achieving an optimal balance in teaching, research, curriculum development, administrative and engagement activities.</p>	<p>While increases in the student-staff ratios are experienced as difficult within the College, we do recognise that these have been relatively generous. In the current economic and higher educational landscape, these ratios are not sustainable and will be increased incrementally over the next few years. The challenge will be to manage this process in a way that achieves the optimal balance as described by the PRG.</p> <p>A key aspect of the move to a 3+2(+3) structure, and a requirement within the implementation process, is the opportunity to reconsider our learning and teaching strategies in support of achieving just such an optimal balance.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs & Registrar</p>	<p>April 2012 – September 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>4.2. It was noted that the working space available for NCAD students was generous by the standards experienced by members of the PRG.</p>	<p>The College appreciates the reality of the experiences informing the observations of the PRG. Nonetheless, as the PRG realise, considerations of space and resources involve complex negotiations of academic judgment, subject imperatives and academic narration that are inadequately reflected in a discussion of square footage.</p> <p>In light of the increased pressures on space that face the College in the coming years, and the desire for a more agile and responsive curriculum articulated through the move to 3+2, greater sharing of workshop facilities will be an important consideration.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2015</p>	<p><i>Significant changes may require approval of An Bord</i></p>

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4.3. It was also noted that workshops, including equipment, compared well with similar institutions in the U.K.	The College is pleased to note this observation, and to work toward projecting this as a valuable part of its academic offer.	Heads of Faculty Group Recruitment & Admissions Committee	September 2012 – September 2017	N/A
4.4. The PRG suggested that student concerns about a lack of clarity and visibility regarding timetables be addressed.	In response to previous QA/QI processes, a greater effort has been invested in developing greater coherence across student handbooks. The wholesale revision of programme documents as part of the 3+2 process will include developing and implementing a shared template at the level of both programme documents and student handbooks. The concerns expressed by the students will inform this process.	Head of Academic Affairs & Heads of Faculty Group 3+2(+3) Review Group	June 2012 – September 2013	N/A
4.5. IT infrastructure and the effectiveness of the Virtual Learning Environment in NCAD do not compare well with IT facilities in other university institutions. This should be significantly enhanced as a matter of priority and should be compatible with UCD facilities.	The College is aware of the relative paucity of resources in this regard. Discussions are under way with Registry in UCD regarding the feasibility of including NCAD within their IT infrastructure, including: Banner (on-line registration, etc.), Blackboard, on-line databases, etc.	Head of Academic Affairs & Registrar NCAD/UCD Strategic Management Committee	September 2012 – September 2014	<i>Significant proposals in relation to UCD Banner may need approval by An Bord</i>
4.6. The PRG notes that the Medical Devices Design course is delivered jointly with TCD and UCD. Students on this course pointed out that access to relevant reading material and online resources in those institutions is restricted for NCAD students. This issue needs to be addressed.	The College notes and appreciates the concerns expressed by students. We are hopeful that it will be possible to address these through participation in the IT infrastructure at UCD as part of the academic alliance.	Head of Academic Affairs & Registrar NCAD/UCD Strategic Management Committee	September 2012 – September 2014	N/A
4.7. Access to online journals is relatively recent in NCAD Library and is limited. In the burgeoning postgraduate culture of NCAD, the alliance with UCD needs to be exploited to ensure that NCAD will have access to the full range of online resources available.	The College shares the perspective of the PRG in this regard. We are hopeful that it will be possible to address these through participation in the IT infrastructure at UCD as part of the academic alliance.	Head of Academic Affairs & Registrar NCAD/UCD Strategic Management Committee	September 2012 – September 2014	N/A

5. External Relations and Communication

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>5.1. There is need for a coherent institutional strategy in relation to the College’s interface with external stakeholders including those in academia, local authority and state agencies, business, enterprise, social community and cultural sectors.</p>	<p>The College recognises and appreciates the PRG’s observations in this regard. This is reflected in the Development Strategy being formulated by the newly appointed Development Manager in consultation with the Director, the Registrar and the Head of Academic Affairs.</p>	<p>Director, Registrar & Head of Academic Affairs, with Development Manager</p>	<p>March 2012 – January 2013</p>	<p><i>For approval by An Bord</i></p>
<p>5.2. The PRG notes the need for NCAD to be more proactive in promoting the college through the website media and other means.</p>	<p>The College recognises the importance of becoming more proactive in promoting the College. A number of initiatives are underway: a new website will be launched for the new academic year 2012/13; a communication strategy is being considered as part of the wider College Development Strategy; greater internationalization is part of the agenda for the newly formed Recruitment and Admissions Committee.</p>	<p>Head of Academic Affairs Recruitment and Admissions Committee</p>	<p>Immediate: June 2012 – September 2013 Ongoing: September 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>5.3. In the context of the alliance with UCD new opportunities will arise to develop further international links and attract international students. Such opportunities should be fully exploited.</p>	<p>The College has a well developed programme of international cooperation through Erasmus study (incoming and outgoing) and placement opportunities (undergraduate and graduate).</p> <p>The move to 3+2 offers opportunities to enhance our participation in Erasmus through the development of a year-long exchange at undergraduate level, and continued semester-long exchanges at postgraduate level.</p> <p>The College shares the PRG’s assessment of the opportunity provided through the alliance, and hopes to develop this in relation to both North America and China.</p>	<p>Director & Heads of Faculty Group Recruitment & Admissions Committee</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p><i>Significant initiatives may require the approval of An Bord</i></p>

6. Individual Faculty Issues

PRG Recommendations	Response and actions to recommendation	Responsibility	Time-frame/Status (From - to)	Issues for consideration by An Bord
<p>6.1. While the Design Faculty self-assessment report is very thorough in documenting the achievements of the Faculty to date, it does not exploit the potential of its constituent disciplines to contribute to a dynamic national statement for design education.</p>	<p>One of the challenges facing NCAD, and Ireland, is the lack of a policy at national level in relation to Design (and, indeed, in relation to Art & Design Higher Education). Nonetheless, the College and the Faculty are seeking to be strategic in identifying and cultivating the specific research drivers of the Faculty to both reflect expertise within the College <i>and</i> develop the capacities of the sector nationally.</p>	<p>Head of Design with Director and Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2017</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>6.2. Fine Art staff and students operate with a coherent and collective sense of identity as members of a faculty. This was evident in the porosity of the various disciplines within Fine Art and their engagement with the Faculty of Visual Culture. There is nevertheless an evident commitment to individual discipline and to the relevant specific skills. The same sense of overall coherence was not as strong in the Faculty of Design. The PRG recognises the prominence given to skill acquisition and development in that faculty, but notes the importance of student engagement with the other components of a holistic design education, in a university environment.</p>	<p>The College endorses the importance of a holistic education in a university environment.</p> <p>The Fine Art Faculty seeks to organise itself on the basis of reciprocal exchange, cooperation and a culture of known and alternative models of practice. The coherence and collective sense of identity that this undoubtedly fosters is facilitated by collaboration in the delivery of a single degree programme within which there are specialisms.</p> <p>Traditionally, Design is multi-disciplinary and this is reflected in the range of discrete degree programmes offered by the Faculty. Trends in design suggest a more interdisciplinary future, and it is anticipated that the move to 3+2 will provide NCAD with the opportunity to develop new programmes, particularly at postgraduate level, and to address the need for and opportunities provided by more cohesion across disciplines at Faculty level.</p> <p>From a Faculty perspective, Design students enrol at NCAD to learn skills that are prerequisites for entry into the design profession. Systemic course development has provided students the opportunity to achieve deeper learning through a wide range of in-house, client, and social engagement modules in each of the design departments.</p>	<p>Head of Design with Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>April 2012 – September 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>6.3. The PRG notes that Visual Culture is central and integral to the education of all students in NCAD. This must be clearly reflected in any curriculum or institutional structure revision. It is recommended that NCAD attends to any tensions, current or emergent on this issue.</p>	<p>The College endorses the PRG’s observation that Visual Culture is central and integral to the education of all students in NCAD. Visual Culture is and always has been a cornerstone of all our degree programmes, and we anticipate that this will continue within and across the new 3+2 programmes.</p> <p>In particular: it is proposed that the role of Visual Culture will be enhanced within taught masters programmes across the College (building upon and extending existing collaborations); that the importance of Visual Culture currently reflected in the Joint Honours degree programme will be continued through a new Joint Honours structure at undergraduate level; and that Visual Culture will develop a new 3 year undergraduate programme as part of NCAD’s 3+2 offer.</p> <p>Further possibilities include consideration of the potential of forms of visual practice submission and greater levels of shared teaching.</p>	<p>Head of Visual Culture & Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>6.4. In the teaching of Visual Culture, the PRG recommends that a wider range of teaching and assessment strategies are used, congruent with the learning outcomes in this area. In particular ways should be explored to set up seminar situations which will allow all students to contribute and present.</p>	<p>The Visual Culture Faculty endorses the use of a wider range of teaching and assessment strategies within Visual Culture. Seminar situations that would allow students to contribute and present are of particular interest to Visual Culture, and shared learning and teaching situations in studio and beyond are of interest to Fine Art.</p>	<p>Head of Visual culture with Heads of Faculty Group</p>	<p>September 2012 – September 2014</p>	<p>N/A</p>