

Enquiries

Protocol and Third-Party Communications

		This policy is effective from	14 February 2024
Approval body	Academic Council	Approval date	14 February 2024
Owner	Head of Academic & Student Affairs	Next review date	February 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This protocol is for dealing with enquiries from applicants, registered students, graduates and third parties enquiring on their behalf.
- 1.2. It is to support staff in dealing with enquiries from applicants, registered students, graduates and third parties acting on their behalf. It aims to protect the security and privacy of the personal data of individuals and to ensure that personal information is not released to any unauthorised person. The protocol is applicable to all staff in the College.
- 1.3. This protocol is produced for the purposes of ensuring compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2016/17 (GDPR) and NCAD's Data Protection Policy.
[www.ncad.ie/files/download/NCAD_Data_Protection_Policy_v0.3\(1\).pdf](http://www.ncad.ie/files/download/NCAD_Data_Protection_Policy_v0.3(1).pdf)

2. Academic Registry

- 2.1. Academic Registry operates as the central registry area for the College looking after the student lifecycle from application through to graduation. As such, Academic Registry holds a wide range of personal, financial and academic information relating to each individual applicant, student and graduate. The following protocol should be followed when dealing with enquiries.

Applicants

- 2.2. At the time of application and pre-admission to the College it is necessary and appropriate for staff to respond to enquiries from applicants as well as other appropriate third parties such as a parent, guardian or guidance counsellor. Applicant enquiries could cover issues concerning an offer such as eligibility, the timing of an offer or the reason for not getting an offer. There is no issue with discussing any information with any member of the public that is freely available in the public domain such as closing dates, offer procedures, eligibility criteria, etc. In the case of an enquiry that concerns information specific to an individual the following procedures should apply.

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V1	19 June 2019	N/A	N/A
V2	14 February 2024	Head of Academic Affairs	General updates to sections 3 & 4, in line with broader sectoral policies

Enquiries from applicants

- 2.3. Before engaging in a communication (by email or phone) with an applicant, the staff member should verify that they are dealing with the applicant by asking them to confirm the following information:
 - Applicant's CAO number or NCAD application number
 - Applicant's full name
 - Applicant's date of Birth
- 2.4. In the case of an enquiry from an applicant using their verified email address they should be asked to confirm their application number.
- 2.5. **In any communication with an applicant, be careful not to disclose any information the applicant has not disclosed to you in the first place.**
- 2.6. The approach in dealing with an enquiry should be one of asking leading questions. For example, if an applicant did not get an offer because they do not have a Leaving Certificate, or have not met some other entry requirement and you can see that, you should ask the question:
 - Have you passed a Leaving Certificate?Or
 - Have you passed Irish/English?
- 2.7. Once they volunteer the information, you can then give advice on how they should proceed. Do not give out information such as Leaving Certificate or other exam results and do not reveal any knowledge of their application such as course choice or preference.
- 2.8. In the case of information that is generated by NCAD such as a conditional offer or Portfolio score, the preference is to send this information in writing to either a verified email or home address. If contacted by an applicant for this information the caller should be asked to verify their identity by confirming the following:
 - Applicant's CAO number or NCAD application number
 - Applicant's full name
 - Applicant's date of Birth

Applicant enquiries by third parties

- 2.9. In the case of an enquiry on behalf of an applicant by an appropriate third party the protocol as set out above should be followed. The enquiring party must establish that the nature of their relationship to the applicant gives reasonable grounds for acting on their behalf. The third party should also be asked to confirm the following information:
 - The applicant's CAO number or NCAD application number
 - Applicant's full name
 - Applicant's date of Birth

- 2.10. Information should not be disclosed and no information should be discussed that has not been revealed by the enquirer in the first place.
- 2.11. In the case of information that is generated by NCAD such as a conditional offer or Portfolio score, this information should not be revealed to a third party without the written permission of the applicant.

Enquiries from students and graduates

- 2.12. Once registered, staff in Academic Registry should only deal with the registered student.
- 2.13. Requests for written confirmation of attendance, registration, fee payments, exam results, etc. should only be given to the student or the graduate. Requests from third parties, including external verification agencies, will need the written permission of the student or graduate before the information is passed on.

3. Handling contact with third parties

- 3.1. Once registered, NCAD's primary relationship is with the student. Each student of NCAD has entered into a contract with the College. Third parties are not parties to this contract in any way. Even if third parties (e.g. parents) have paid fees or have had their means assessed for purposes of the Higher Education Grant, our relationship and our agreement is with the student.
- 3.2. Staff should not engage in any communication by phone, email or in person with a third party about a student. Any enquiries, requests for information, including whether or not a student is registered with the College, or requests for meetings by third parties should be responded to politely by saying it is our policy to deal with the student and that we are not in a position to discuss any specific information with anyone other than the student. If outside parties become insistent, staff should explain that they are bound by the Data Protection Acts (2018).
- 3.3. In the case of any student aged 18 or over there are no circumstances where a student's personal or academic circumstances should be disclosed to, or discussed with a parent or any other third party.
- 3.4. Although those under 18 are regarded as minors under the law, they still have the right under the Data Protection Acts for information about them not to be disclosed without their consent or as otherwise permitted by the Data Protection Acts (2018). This means that the College is not able to give information to parents or guardians regarding the student's progress, results or any other personal circumstances unless the student has given their specific consent or such disclosure would otherwise be in accordance with the Data Protection Acts.
- 3.5. In certain circumstances, a student may nominate a specific individual or organisation with which the College can liaise directly in relation to that student. This is only permitted where it is considered to be in the best interests of the student and where all parties consent to the terms.

- 3.6. In the case of students with disabilities, third parties can sometimes be involved with the student's academic progress and welfare. However, for the purposes of this policy, students with disabilities are no different to other students.
- 3.7. In the case of a registered student who is 18 or over, staff may meet the student with a third party from within the College community such as an Officer of NCADSU (President/Vice-President) or a tutor, learning support officer, or other appropriate staff member, provided the student has given consent in advance for this meeting. Written consent should be received from the student for the inclusion of the third party in any follow-on communications.
- 3.8. Any requests from students, graduates or third parties acting on their behalf for written confirmation of attendance, registration, academic results, etc. should be referred to Academic and Student Affairs, Student Information Desk: information@ncad.ie.
- 3.9. If a student is unable or unavailable to access important information relevant to their academic progress (e.g. project briefs, assessment results, timetables, etc), a third party may be included in communications provided written permission is first received from the student. Any communication with a third party should be limited to the passing on of information and should not extend to any discussion with the third party concerning the information or the consequences of the information.
- 3.10. NCAD has a duty of care to protect its staff and students and manage its resources effectively. To this end, it reserves the right to refuse to liaise with a third party, particularly if it is felt that contact may impact negatively on staff time or resources, or where the third party is behaving in an aggressive or threatening way.

4. Academic Affairs: Student Services, Access, Guidance Counselling and Student Counselling Service

- 4.1. The Access office deals with applicants to the College applying through the supplementary access route. In the case of applicants, the Access Office should apply the protocol used by Academic Registry as above.
- 4.2. In the case of registered students, all Student Services should adopt the protocol used by Academic Registry and Academic Departments by dealing only with the registered student. Where it is necessary to pass on information to another department in the College concerning a student as for example in the case of assessment for learning support, written permission should be sought from the student for any information to be disclosed to a third party.
- 4.3. Third parties who contact NCAD to express concern about the welfare of a student should be informed that we cannot initiate contact with a student on the basis of third-party intervention. The third party could be urged to advise the student to contact an appropriate person or service at NCAD, e.g. the Student Counselling Service.