NCAD DUBLIN

National College of Art and Design

A Recognised College of University College Dublin

Annual Quality Enhancement Statement 2017

Approved	January 2018
Published	January 2018
Responsibility	Head of Academic Affairs
Next Review	November 2018

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Introduction

NCAD is committed to providing for the ongoing improvement of students' experience at the College.

1. Governance

1.1 Self-Assessment

NCAD has a governance framework in place for the management of academic standards, including alignment with QQI Core Statutory QA Guidelines and European Standards and Guidelines. Under the National College of Art and Design 1971, An Bord has the general function of establishing and carrying on schemes of education, providing courses and providing lectures on art, crafts and design by the College (see further Appendix 1). Academic Council has responsibility in relation to all aspects of academic governance. The Council delegates a number of formal responsibilities for quality assurance and quality enhancement to the:

- NCAD Programmes Board,
- Quality Assurance Committee,
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee
- Research Committee
- Examination Boards
- Appeals Committee.

A College-wide self-assessment process during 2016 identified a number of areas for improvement in respect of Governance, and these areas for improvement were confirmed in an Institutional Review in March 2017.

Of particular significance, however, were serious concerns raised in relation to Health and Safety. The Institutional Review Panel directed that a complete Health & Safety risk assessment – including fire risk – and compliance analysis of the institutional estate be undertaken and that all necessary actions for compliance and enhancement must be prioritised, costed and effected without delay.

1.2 Actions Taken / Actions Proposed

NCAD has revisited and is refining the College committee structures and updating all remits and memberships in order to make clear the relationship and authority of NCAD's boards and committees.

Input from, and feedback to, the student body is being enhanced through additional student representative mechanisms; in particular, through Programme Review Forums in each semester, inclusion of Departmental responses to student feedback as part of an Annual Planning statement, and through publishing this College-level Annual Quality Enhancement Statement.

A deeper understanding of Quality Assurance mechanisms has been supported by the publication of a Quality Assurance Handbook for students and staff, and a College Community Charter is being developed in partnership with students/Student Officers and staff.

In respect of Health & Safety, the appointment of a Facilities Manager is greatly assisting in improving Health & Safety on the Campus. In addition, the NCAD Health and Safety Committee was reconvened with clear terms of reference as a matter of urgency, and is reporting to the NCAD Board (An Bord) on a monthly basis. Updates will also be sent to the President of UCD, the HEA and all staff. Nine Health & Safety Audits have been completed. The actions arising from these Audits are currently being prioritized so as to generate a clear and costed plan of action to address these matters.

2. Quality Assurance

2.1 Review & Implementation of Policy and Procedures

2.1.1 Self Assessment

The processes and procedures for the management of academic standards are articulated in NCAD's QA Framework and Guidelines and the recently published QA Procedures (2016). Regular review processes include module design and approval, programme design and approval, student feedback and representation. NCAD's annual review processes include external examining, the end of year student survey and the new Programme Review Forums, annual programme review and planning. Periodic External Review processes are include Programme Review, School Review, Support/Administrative Review and, for the first time in 2017, an Institutional Review. Other external review processes include Accreditation by the Teaching Council of Ireland, the Annual Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).

The embedding of a regular system of unit quality review (academic or administrative) is not as well integrated into the College's calendar as it might be, and consequently, the effectiveness of NCAD's QA procedures could be improved.

2.1.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

More effective oversight of, and consistency within, NCAD'S QA procedures is being addressed through monthly QA reports to the College Management Team and An Bord, with a clearly articulated QA/QE workflow through the Quality Assurance Steering Committee and the College Management Team. In addition, an Enhancement Strategy will be developed during 2017/18, including a revising schedule for all planned Programme and Unit reviews, and a due diligence procedure in respect of national and international partnerships.

2.2 School, Department and Programme Level QA/QE

2.2.1 Self Assessment

A review of the Self-assessment Report, the Institutional Review, and the students' feedback in the end-of-year surveys, identified areas to be considered and improved:

- Programme information provided to students and publicised on the NCAD website should be updated.
- Clarity around scheduling, being adequately informed of changes, and having clear guidance on what was expected in assessments, would reduce students' stress and anxiety.
- Students identified those programmes delivered by more than one School to be of particular need of improvement.
- Orientation for new students should be improved.
- Feedback from lecturers to students, both formal and informal, should be more timely, and more sensitive to individual students.
- Resources in many areas should be updated.

2.2.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

1. Over the summer months, each School reviewed their programme documents, including module descriptors, programme handbooks, and project briefs to ensure they were accurate and reflective of students' expectations.
2. First Year Studies revised the orientation programme for new students, incorporating more guidance and training on the library, expectations, assessment, so that new students can transition to NCAD more smoothly.
3. A Joint Programmes Committee has been set up to specifically manage and review cross-School programmes, such as the BA in Design or Fine Art and Education, and joint programmes between Fine Art or Design and Visual Culture. As a result of the work of this committee, joint programmes are already running more smoothly and students are happier with the scheduling.
4. Training sessions have been scheduled for staff members to look at different aspects of teaching and learning, commencing with sessions on The Crit in Semester 1.
5. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee is being established to specifically look at these three areas to improve students' experience at NCAD. This Committee will report to the Quality Assurance Steering Committee and to Academic Council.
6. A Quality Assurance Committee has been developed, which will meet following each Programmes Board, to focus on quality issues across the College.

2.3 Student Participation

2.3.1 Self Assessment

An analysis undertaken by NCAD, as part of its Institutional Self-Assessment, suggests that student representation at School Boards could be improved in order to ensure the effectiveness of those fora, including supporting student understanding of the role and responsibilities of the student

representative. The Institutional Review also identified major weaknesses in student engagement in quality procedures and processes.

2.3.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

A number of initiatives have been and are being taken to support student engagement in relation to their educational experience and quality assurance and enhancement processes, such as:

- Guidance for Student Reps;
- Workshops are planned for Reps and NCADSU Officers in relation to engaging effectively with NCAD's academic structures;
- A Quality Assurance Handbook has been published for students and staff;
- A College Community Charter has been developed and is being finalised in partnership with students, the Students Unions and staff;
- Bi-annual Programme Review Forums have been instituted, enabling meaningful module-level feedback;
- Feedback on changes made in response to student feedback is being included as part of the Annual End-of-Year Student Survey;
- Response to Student Feedback is included as part of a report on Annual Planning meetings;
- Student Feedback and the College's response will be addressed through publication of an Annual Quality Enhancement Statement.

2.4 Student Life-Cycle

2.4.1 Self Assessment

Recruitment and admission to NCAD programmes is a vital concern for the College and is subject to ongoing review within the College. Applications to Art and Design programmes in Ireland have fallen in the last decade, and this has affected NCAD in recent years.

Admission to NCAD's studio programmes is based upon a portfolio score to applicants who meet the minimum entry academic criteria. With respect to the role of the portfolio in NCAD's admissions processes, active consideration is given to this in respect of access. The NCAD Supplementary Admissions route gives weighting towards applicants who attend DEIS band schools and those who participate in NCAD'S access programme. Concessions on the portfolio score are given to applicants who meet socio-economic criteria.

Once students are registered with the College, NCAD provides numerous supports to enhance the learning environment of students, including: The Student Learning Support Service (delivered by the National Learning Network), The Edward Murphy Library, The National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), the NCAD Gallery, an IT Support helpdesk, Careers Guidance Support (which continues to be available to students for one year after graduation), a College Doctor, and an NCAD Student Counselling Service. There is also a Student Assistance Fund available to students, and a Childcare Support Fund supported by the Irish Government and EU Structural and Investment Funds Programme. Feedback from students, however, suggests that while staff are both accommodating

and supportive of students experiencing difficulties, the approach taken across the College is not consistent.

NCAD has historically had low non-progression rates (6% at Level 8) up to 2013–14. There was a rise in non-progression in 2014–15 and 2015–16. The increase in non-progression coincided with a period of intense challenge and change in the College. In response to this increase, the College put measures in place to monitor and address the issue. This has been successful, with a return to non-progression rates of 7% in 2016-17.

2.4.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

In order to enhance the legibility and accessibility of the educational offer at NCAD, for traditional and non-traditional applicants to art and design, a number of changes are being introduced for 2018:

- Entry routes onto studio programmes for 2018 have been expanded as follows:
  - First Year Art & Design (Common Entry)
  - Illustration and Graphic Design
  - Textiles, Jewellery & Objects
  - Design or Fine Art & Education
  - Fine Art (Common Entry)
  - Fashion Design
  - Product Design
  - Interaction Design

Overall, this represents eight points of entry onto a portfolio of 16 undergraduate programmes with common entry routes available into all areas.

- NCAD is seeking to expand its recruitment of students from different backgrounds, experiences and geographic location. It is also seeking to recruit students onto new and existing programmes who would not normally consider NCAD as a choice. NCAD's entrance portfolio requirement should support students in understanding the nature of creative thinking in an art and design context but should also be applicable in the broader context in which we wish to recruit students. NCAD has thus developed new Portfolio Guidelines that set out the purpose of an entrance portfolio, and build on the structure of the Portfolio Brief to give general guidelines on how to develop and structure a portfolio, including guidance on what to include and how to be selective in what is submitted.

In respect of Student Supports, for all concerned a clearer articulation of the supports available, and an overarching policy in relation to student support within the College would be of value and enhance the student access to the supports available to them within the College. To this end:

- College-wide induction has been extended to include all undergraduate years, ensuring greater understanding of the supports available to students.
- A series of workshops for staff in support of working with students experiencing difficulties has been developed and is being delivered on an annual basis so that all staff have opportunity to participate in the workshops over time.

- An Extenuating Circumstances policy has been developed to guide staff and students in respect of recognising and acting effectively in such circumstances.
- An overarching student support policy is being developed, and will be informed by NCAD student responses through ISSE over recent years.

Many factors affect progression and retention rates at Third Level. The College is pleased that progression rates have recovered after a brief dip, but we are paying close attention to progression rates across our undergraduate programmes to ensure that we understand the challenges faced by students and address them as effectively as we can. The introduction of Studio+ will support students in gaining industry and wider experience as they develop their individual practices, in particular those who might have taken time-out from their studies to gain such experience.

2.5 Research Quality

2.5.1 Self Assessment

The academic regulations of NCAD and UCD specifically address postgraduate and research degrees, at Masters and Doctoral level. Each student has a Principal Supervisor and a co-supervisor assigned to them who provide supervision, mentoring, guidance and advice throughout their programme of study. Supervisors also endeavour to make students aware of all regulations, policies and codes of practice relevant to their study. The progress of all students is reviewed on an annual basis by a panel that includes supervisors, Heads of School and a PhD-holder external to the School. Documentation relating to the annual progression and final examination of research students is published on the website. All postgraduate research students are examined by a panel consisting of at least one NCAD/UCD examiner and at least one external examiner. Although NCAD has been involved in the development of a structured PhD framework since 2008, initially through GradCAM and subsequently through developing its own programme, feedback from both supervisors and student suggests that a review and renewal of current provision would be of value.

Staff research, both in terms of its quality and its profile, are key to driving and enhancing postgraduate research programmes. While individual staff members at NCAD are internationally recognised practitioners, College support for its research community has been less effective than is desirable. The financial climate has greatly impacted upon the College's capacity to support its researcher community. There is also a pressing need to review and renew the College's Research Strategy in order to articulate the strengths and priorities of the College research community, enhance the internationalisation of research at the College, and attract the highest calibre research students nationally and internationally.

2.5.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

A sub-committee of NCAD's Research and Innovation Committee has been convened to review, develop and enhance current provision for Doctoral students at NCAD. Proposed changes will be both formal, in relation to structured elements within the programme, and informal, in terms of an enhanced discursive and practice-sharing context for doctoral students and the wider research community.

The Terms of Reference of NCAD's Research and Innovation Committee have been renewed with a view to enhancing the executive role of the committee. Building on the Draft NCAD Strategy, work is underway in the current year to develop the research focus of NCAD's strategy in terms of better articulating the research identity of the College and its researchers, both within and beyond the College. This will be evident in the creation of effective profiles for all research active staff on the website, as well as in more effective dissemination of those profiles and research achievements through the website and other social media platforms.

2.6 Learning and Teaching Infrastructure

2.6.1 Self Assessment

The arrangements for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are mainly located within Schools and Departments, and have been largely informal in nature. Teaching and learning matters are discussed within NCAD's Programmes Board, at Academic Council, and also at School Boards. The CEAD (Continuing Education in Art and Design), within the School of Education, has taken some ad hoc responsibility for these matters from time to time. However, there is currently no Teaching and Learning Strategy to guide developments in this area, nor is there an effective professional development system which might support such matters. While the commitment of the staff to their students ensures that these matters are taken seriously, a more systematic approach to such developments is desirable.

During the course of the College's self-assessment in preparation for the Institutional Review, many students, both undergraduates and postgraduates, expressed concerns about matters such as delay in receiving assessment feedback (for formative purposes) and about the state of the learning environment.

In terms of the learning environment, development of NCAD's facilities has clearly been impeded by the lack of resources for investment. Some workshop equipment is in urgent need of upgrading, and the IT infrastructure of the College is also in urgent need of investment.

The College is justly proud of its library resources, although here too there is a shortage of space and of up-to-date computing facilities. The National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) collection is well respected within the artistic community of Ireland and is frequently visited by international scholars.

At present the College does not make use of a virtual learning environment (VLE). Some use is made of the website as a repository for teaching resources, podcasts and such like, but it is worth exploring whether the learning experience of students could be enhanced by the use of a VLE.

2.6.2 Actions taken / Actions Proposed

A number of initiatives are underway to enhance the learning and teaching infrastructure of NCAD:

- A series of Learning and Teaching Workshops for staff will take place across the 2017/18 academic year.

- A Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee is being established with a remit that encompasses:
  - Reviewing assessment and feedback practices across the College and working with colleagues to ensure consistency in the provision of student feedback.
  - Advising on the development and implementation of procedures for dealing with extenuating circumstances.
  - Developing and recommending a Learning and Teaching Strategy.
  - Developing the programme of learning and teaching seminars.
  - Working with the Learning Resources Committee to explore the possibilities for developing an effective VLE.
- A Learning Resources Committee has been established with a remit that encompasses:
  - Developing a strategy for the development of the College's Academic IT Infrastructure, including a costed listing of investment NCAD will need to make over a planned period of time in order to ensure that it continues with its current course provision.
  - Developing a strategy for the development of the College's workshop infrastructure, including a costed listing of investments NCAD will need to make over a planned period of time in order to ensure that it continues with its current provision.
  - Reviewing and developing a strategy in support of the College's administrative IT infrastructure.

2.7 Staff Development

A number of initiatives are underway to develop more effective systems for staff support and development. These include:

- Staff development workshops (focused upon learning and teaching strategies, including the 'Crit', and working with students experiencing difficulties) have been scheduled for 2017/18.
- A range of policies in support of staff development have been agreed by the College Management Team.
- A staff development committee is being convened and a staff development strategy will be developed in 2017/18.
- A staff handbook and a programme of Induction and orientation will be developed in 2017/18.

Appendix 1: National College of Art and Design Act, 1971 [extracts]

[Functions of An Bord Generally]

5. (1) On and from the establishment day, An Bord shall carry out the management of the College and the organisation and administration of its affairs, and shall have all such powers as are necessary for or incidental to those purposes.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, An Bord shall have the general functions of –

a. establishing and carrying on schemes of education of such scope and extent as it may determine in art, crafts and design,

b. providing courses for the training of persons as teachers of art,

c. providing courses and lectures for the further training of teachers of art as such teachers,

d. providing, if it so thinks fit, lectures on art, crafts and design for the public by members of tis academic staff and other persons whom it considers suitably qualified for the purpose,

e. establishing and carrying on schemes (on which the amount of the expenditure by An Bord shall have been approved by the Minister) for the giving of scholarships, bursaries, pries and other awards in relation to art, crafts and design,

f. holding exhibitions of art and crafts of students of the College, exhibitions of art and crafts and exhibitions devoted to any other subject matter relevant to the activities of the College,

g. defraying the reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by members of its academic staff in attending, with the consent of An Bord, courses of instruction, seminars, lectures, conferences and exhibitions relevant to their duties as such members,

h. defraying the reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by members of An Bord in attending conferences and exhibitions relevant to their duties as such members and in visiting other colleges and institutions of or concerned with art, crafts or design,

i. providing courses of study in art, crafts and design –

   i. that are approved by any boy established by the Minister or by Act of the Oireachtas after the passing of this Act for the purpose of granting degrees, diplomas and other similar educational awards, and

   ii. that lead to the grant of such degrees, diplomas or similar educational awards by that body,

j. subscribing to associations and institutions of or concerned with art, crafts or design.

[Committees of An Bord]

21. (1) An Bord may from time to time establish such and so many committees as it thinks proper to perform such (if any) of the functions of An Bord as, in the opinion of An Bord, may be better or more conveniently performed by a committee and are assigned to a committee by An Bord.

(2) An Bord may regulate the procedure of committees established under this section, but subject to any regulation, committees established under this section may regulate their own procedure.

(3) A committee of An Bord shall consist of such number of members appointed by An Bord as it thinks proper and the members shall consist of or inclue members of An Bord.

(4) The appointment of a person to act as a member of a committee established under this section shall be subject to such conditions (including conditions in relation to the term and tenure of office of the member) as An Bord may think fit to impose when making the appointment.

(5) A member of a committee established under this section may be removed from office at any time by An Bord.

(6) An Bord may at any time dissolve a committee established under this section.

(7) The acts of a committee established under this section shall be subject to confirmation by An Bord.