

NCAD Quality Assurance Policy

		This policy is effective from	<u>June 2025</u>
Approval body	<u>Academic Council</u>	Approval date	<u>24 June 2025</u>
Owner	<u>Academic Affairs</u>	Next review date	<u>May 2028</u>

NCAD aims to be a College that supports and enables radical and creative innovation through excellence in research-led art and design education. Our ambition is to empower our students to shape the contemporary world through critical practice, teaching and learning, studio-based learning, research and engagement.

Developing and sustaining a *quality culture* is fundamental to achieving these ambitions (ESG, 2015: 7). To this end, NCAD implements a quality assurance system to assure the College and the public of the quality of our learning, teaching, research and support services (accountability), as well as to provide insight and recommendations on how we might improve what we are doing (enhancement).

NCAD is committed to embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across all of its activities. This ensures that the entire College community can work and learn in an environment that is inclusive and is defined by dignity and respect. The College recognises that integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into policies and decision-making structures will help achieve a positive teaching and learning experience for staff and students.

1. Key Concepts¹

The concept of quality applies to all the activities and human and physical resources that combine to underpin NCAD's academic programmes.

Academic standards are the standards set and maintained by the College for the award of academic credit or qualifications, in alignment with Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications. They include the standards of performance that a student needs to demonstrate to achieve a particular classification of a qualification.

Academic quality refers to how and how well the College supports students to enable them to achieve their award. It covers learning, teaching and assessment, and all the different resources and processes a provider puts in place to help students progress and fulfil their potential.

Quality assurance is the process for checking that the academic standards and quality of higher education provision meet agreed expectations, and live up to our ambitions as articulated in the NCAD Strategy.

¹ QAA Quality Code, 2015

2. NCAD Quality Assurance Values

- Every student and staff member is treated fairly and with dignity, courtesy and respect.
- Every student has the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience.
- Every student is properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study.
- All staff are supported, enabling them in turn to support students' learning experiences.

3. Overview of Quality Assurance at NCAD

NCAD is responsible for the academic standards of the learning environment and programmes that it offers, and for ensuring the quality of the learning experience offered enables students to achieve these standards. In order to discharge these responsibilities, NCAD has a range of systems and procedures for assuring and enhancing the standards of our programmes and the quality of our learning environment, including:

1. Robust programme approval and curriculum review processes
2. Student engagement and evaluation processes
3. External examiner reports
4. Regular peer review of academic and support units
5. Established procedures for the appointment of staff and opportunities for ongoing professional development
6. Student representation at all levels of the College (at programme level, and on School Boards, NCAD Programmes Board, Academic Council and An Bórd)
7. Systematic student participation and feedback in QA/QE processes
8. Regular review of QA/QE processes
9. Compliance with national quality standards to ensure the quality of education provision for all learners, including the TrustEd Ireland Mark (IEM) for international learners.

The College's implementation of these quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures also enables NCAD to demonstrate how we discharge our responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of our programmes and learning environment, as required by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012.

4. Principles²

There is always scope for further enhancing the experience of students. To this end:

1. Quality teaching, learning, research and support services, and continuous improvement are core values. Quality assurance and continuous improvement are understood to be the joint responsibility of staff, management, and the collegial and governance bodies of NCAD.

² Informed by: UCD QA and Enhancement Policy, 2016; DIT QE Handbook, 2015; QAA Quality Code, 2015.

2. Benchmarking and an evidence-based approach is taken in assuring quality. The College evaluates its achievements against appropriate national and international benchmarks. Its quality assurance processes are evidence-based, where outcomes and feedback from stakeholders (including students, staff, employers and the community, as appropriate) will provide the basis for analyses and conclusions on which improvements are planned.
3. The College's processes reflect the principles of rigorous peer review, as we aim to identify areas for improvement, to foster collaboration and exchanges of best practice and to encourage an ethos of critical self-evaluation.
4. Strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is held at the highest level of academic governance, and all policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed and improved.

5. Features³

1. A commitment to widespread involvement of staff, students and stakeholders in the quality assurance process.
 - Critical self-evaluation and rigorous peer review of academic and service areas by review groups whose membership will include both internal UCD staff and external members, all of whom will be independent of the unit under review;
 - Methodical collection of evidence relating to quality assurance activities, including, as appropriate: service satisfaction and student experience, benchmarking against external reference points;
 - External assessment of professional programmes as appropriate, through accreditation and international review;
 - Multiple avenues for student and staff input to quality assurance and quality enhancement such as: periodic School quality review; module-level evaluation and programme review.
 - Publication of impartial and objective reports from quality reviews of academic and service units;
 - Support for the continuing professional development of staff.
2. Robust and accountable College governance, management and decision-making relating to the quality assurance and quality enhancement policy framework.
 - Effective organisational structures to oversee quality assurance processes and the development and implementation of quality improvement plans;
 - A regular cycle of reviews of academic and service providers;
 - A process for monitoring the progress of implementing recommendations arising from Quality Review Reports;

³ Informed by UCD's QA and Enhancement Policy, 2016.

- A commitment to identify, share and implement examples of good practice, across the College;
 - The College will periodically monitor the effectiveness of its quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms to ensure that they are operating in accordance with best practice;
 - Submission of an Annual Quality Assurance Statement to An Bórd from Academic Council, enabling clear identification of and high-level response to intractable quality improvement issues;
 - Publication of an Annual Quality Enhancement Statement on the College website.
3. A commitment to assessing outcomes and processes against the highest external standards.
- National and international benchmarking of academic standards and service provision;
 - National and international benchmarking of quality assurance processes with comparable research-led Art and Design universities;
 - The College will work with its accrediting body, University College Dublin, and external agencies, in particular Quality and Qualifications Ireland and professional bodies.
4. Monitoring and review of this policy.
- The College regularly reviews its approach to quality, to ensure that it remains appropriate and fit-for-purpose. The effectiveness of the College's approach to quality is benchmarked and evaluated through ongoing reflection on, for example:
- Mapping NCAD practice to relevant external references, such as the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (2015) and the *QQI Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners* (2015);
 - Outcomes of external Institutional Review;
 - Outcomes of external reviews by professional and statutory bodies;
 - Feedback from external and internal quality reviewers;
 - Reports from External Examiners;
 - Student feedback, including through the ISSE⁴;
 - Key performance indicators agreed with the Higher Education Authority.

⁴ Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).

Roles and responsibilities contributing to quality assurance and quality enhancement

