



REVIEWS OF MASTERS AND DOCTORAL PROVISION IN NCAD

- OUTCOMES OF PhD FORUM 2014 AND MA FORUM 2013/14

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DOCTORAL FORUM: REPORT TO ACADEMIC COUNCIL MAY 2014

Member of the Forum

Prof. Des Bell (Chair), Margaret Phelan (secretary) , Prof. Alex Milton, Prof Jessica Hemmings, Dr. Kevin Atherton, Dr. Helen McAllister, Prof Gary Granville, Emma Creighton (student representative), Dr. Mick O'Kelly, Dr. Lisa Godson, Nicky Saunders (Quality Assurance)

Terms of Reference

The Forum was tasked with reviewing the delivery of the current PhD programme and with recommending how doctoral study at NCAD might be strengthened in the context of:

- (i) the introduction of the 3 + 2 undergrad and masters provision
- (ii) the decline in GradCAM and its intercollegial doctoral provision
- (iii) the current climate of student funding for doctoral research and decline in applications
- (iv) NCAD research strategy and the commitment to develop the postgraduate nature of the College.

Main Recommendations

1. **Duration of Study:** The Forum considered the possibility of offering a two year programme of practice based doctoral study to those who had successfully completed the MFA programme (in effect a 3+2+2 scheme) but concluded that there was no evidence that students would be able to meet the demands of completion of PhD study in less than three years (3+2+3). It recommends the retention of the requirement of three years of full time study for the PhD award.

2. **The Structured PhD:** The Forum recommends the phased introduction of a Structured PhD (commencing with the introduction of a core module of Research Methods). Students will follow a range of taught and assessed modules over the first two years of their PhD, in addition to pursuing their research topic under supervision, prior to proceeding to a third year of supervised research and writing up of their dissertation (see attached course diagram and list of modules). It was acknowledged that the structure proposed would work best with a cluster of students, the challenge being to keep such a group interested in a programme of core study bearing in mind the diversity of the research topics followed by individual students.

3. **The PhD by publication:** It was noted that both NUI and UCD have regulations in place permitting an established researcher to present a body of already published work together with an accompanying analytical essay contextualizing this work, for consideration of the award of D.Litt. (the published work would normally have been subject to peer review before publication). The Forum recommends that NCAD should request UCD Academic Council to extend the criteria for published work employed by UCD under its regulations for the doctorate by Published Work to include art works, design projects and their exhibition/ implementation/criticism.

4. The Professional Doctorate: The Forum reviewed a range of existing professional doctorates from other institutions and broadly endorsed the introduction of such a qualification in NCAD, subject to approval by UCD (where the award already exists). It was recognised that such an award, usually based on applied research arising out of professional practice would be highly relevant for the Design Faculty and also the Education Faculty. However, given the relatively underdeveloped nature of graduate provision in general within Design, the Forum felt that it was advisable that the introduction of this award should be staged after the introduction of the structured PhD programme and the bedding in of the new MFA in Design. Education will probably move to introduce the award (in the form of D.Ed.) in the context of NCAD involvement in the recently established Institute of Education in Dublin (this award already being offered by TCD, among others).

5. Practice Based/Led PhD: The importance of this mode of doctoral study based on studio based, research activity, to a college like NCAD was acknowledged. It was recognised that over the last few years this mode of study/research has on occasions been problematic with students experiencing a series of difficulties in terms of: delineating the focus of, and methods employed in their research, problems manifest in supervisory arrangements, problems in delivery of the written dissertation, and in the relationship of this to the body of practice undertaken. The following recommendations were made:

- (i) Clearer guidelines for practice based/led research were needed, accompanied by exemplars of good practice that students could consult. These guidelines needed to be more than a word count stipulation for the written dissertation (currently maximum of 40,000 words) but should address the requirement for the student to demonstrate the role of the studio or other practice activity as the predominant method of investigation in their enquiry. These guidelines should be hosted on the College website, together with exemplars of good practice and details of current registrations and snapshots of work in progress.
- (ii) No student should be enrolled on a PhD for which a robust and fully qualified supervisory team was not in place.
- (iii) It was essential that there was a clear and agreed understanding between the supervisory team and between the team and the PhD student on questions of methodology and on the viability of the proposed study.
- (iv) It was recognised that many practice based/led candidates need considerable tutorial support in their writing in order to achieve doctoral level scholarship. It was hoped that the Structured PhD could provide some of this support. This need was particularly acute in terms of international students whose first language is not English.

6. Recruitment of PhD candidates: It was acknowledged that students would continue to be recruited both from those completing masters level study in NCAD and in cognate institutions and from a range of mature candidates wishing to return to advance graduate study and research. It was hoped that our new MFA programmes would provide some orientation toward doctoral study for those interested in pursuing this option. It was also recognised that the drafting of an adequate research proposal was a core element of the selection procedure and that applicants needed greater level of advice and support in how to draft an adequate proposal at the time of application.

Some of this could be provided via our website in a FAQ section and by hosting more information on PhD work in progress (including exemplars of good practice) so that applicants could form an accurate impression of what PhD study at NCAD entailed and how best to draft their initial proposals.

7. PhD student numbers: it was noted with concern that these were now in decline with few applications being received in the current academic year. The drastic decline in the number of doctoral awards available to students and the impact of accumulated student debt in the current period were undoubtedly impacting on graduates' willingness to commit themselves to a further period of full time study, particularly with the decline in academic employment in the state and elsewhere. In this context the Forum recommended that:

- (i) Every attempt be made to accommodate part time students and flexible modes of study including blended and distance learning support.
- (ii) NCAD consider making a number of PhD scholarships available exploring a range of options to attract doctoral candidates of the highest calibre - from fee waiver awards, through partnership awards with external sponsors, to doctoral appointments embedded in externally funded research projects and commissions.
- (iii) That the introduction of the structured PhD become the occasion for a drive to recruit international PhD applicants with our web publicity likely to be the primary vehicle for achieving this.

8. Support Services and the PhD student experience: The Forum acknowledge that doctoral students often get over looked as a community within NCAD and that the removal of GradCAM facilities had impacted on the quality of what was on offer to our students. Peer learning, sharing and support was a vital element of doctoral study and building such a research culture would require various support mechanisms. The Forum recommended:

- a. That a Postgraduate Centre be established in the Diageo building with every PhD student guaranteed access to a desk and IT support facilities and with effort made to facilitate the sort of peer interaction and support that is integral to successful doctoral study.
- b. Where appropriate, studio space be offered in this Centre to full time practice based students requiring this (with sharing arrangements in place for part time students).
- c. Every doctoral student be offered the possibility of undertaking undergraduate teaching, partly to provide an income stream, and also to assist their professional development as pedagogues.
- d. PhD students be encouraged to access Erasmus and other student and early researcher exchange programmes.
- e. PhD students be offered a meaningful role within the NCAD Research Institute including the establishment of a doctoral fund to which they could apply to on a competitive basis for small grants to support conference attendance, field work, etc.

9. NCAD staff undertaking PhDs as a staff development priority: While it was recognised that possession of a PhD was not a prerequisite for undertaking PhD supervision in NCAD (though the supervisory teams should normally have at least one academic who has a doctorate), it was also acknowledged that the development of a structured doctoral programme and effective promotion of this internationally will rest on the research record of the academic staff including their formal qualifications. Accordingly every effort should be made to encourage staff to gain a doctorate and to support them in their studies with the limited resources available. The Forum recommends:

- (i) That the current commitment to enable staff (both full time and part time, regularly employed) register for PhD study in NCAD on a fee waiver basis be continued.
- (ii) Recognising the value of staff pursuing their doctoral studies in another institution, and the problems that can arise in providing suitable supervision to internal candidates within NCAD departments, financial support from staff development funds should be provided for fees to those registered in another institution.
- (iii) That an allowance for doctoral study and research should be made in the work load allocation of members of staff undertaking a PhD, internally or externally.

DB
27th May 2014

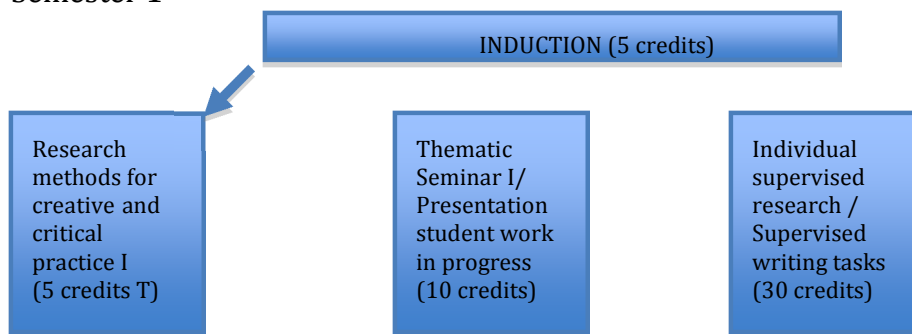
The Structured PhD at NCAD

Overview

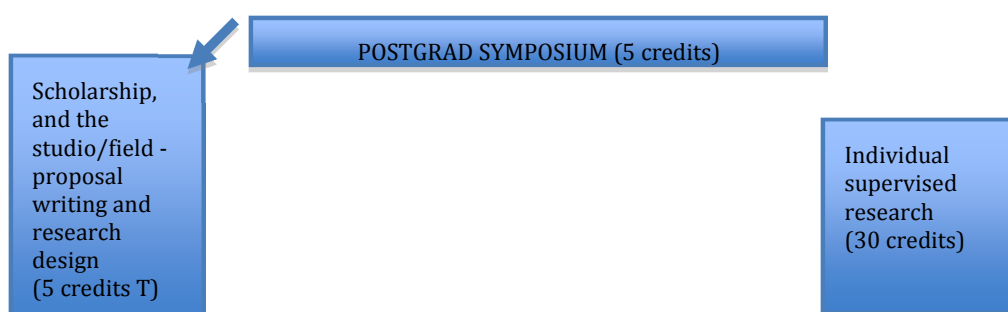
This aims to provide a two year foundation to PhD study, in addition to supervised doctoral research on a nominated topic. Completion of the doctoral modules of study will be part of the annual review of academic progress and students will have to have successfully completed all these modules (have achieved “all but dissertation” (ABD) status) and gained the requisite credits before proceeding to the final year of full time, research based study (or part time equivalence).

Year 1

Semester 1



Semester 2



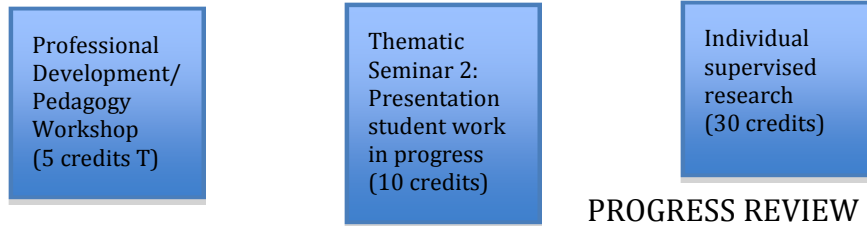
PROGRESS REVIEW

Year 2

Semester 1



Semester 2



YEAR 3. SUPERVISED RESEARCH AND WRITING UP (90 credits)

T=Education & Training modules

Year 1 = 90 credits (10 credits – education & training modules)

Year 2 = 90 credits (10 credits – education & training modules)

Year 3 = 90 credits

Following years = 90 credits

UCD Regulations state that “the entire PhD programme requires a nominal minimum of 270 credits total effort, including a nominal 240 credits original doctoral research, and that the total awardable credit for education and training modules cannot exceed 90 credits”.

MODULES OF STUDY

Research Methods for Creative and Critical Practice 1: An introduction to the methodological demands of doctoral research in the creative arts with the emphasis on paradigms and exemplars of practice rather than abstract epistemological argument. This is delivered to all students on an interdisciplinary basis and is concerned with the integrated field of art and design studies.

Assessed by each student producing a literature review/ review of cognate creative work related to their planned dissertation.

Thematic Seminar 1. This provides both a staff and visiting lecture programme around a designated theme, and an opportunity for students to make brief presentations of work in progress. The emphasis is on sharing research perspectives and field experience and also facilitating the development of skills of explication and presentation.

Not Assessed

Scholarship and the field, proposal writing and initial research design. This workshop provides support for students in refining their research proposals, adequately identifying their research questions, on the basis of reviews of the relevant literature and bodies of cognate art work, developing and implementing their research design, considering the project management of this. The emphasis is on the concrete discussion of exemplars of good research practice in the field of the creative arts and on analytic comment on live projects.

Assessed by submission of a research dossier containing: research proposal, research design document, fieldwork/studio project planning document, critical contextualization of the research plan

Research Methods for Creative and Critical Practice 2: conducting and reporting field research. This module assists students in the implementation of their research plans and dealing with the challenges of the field, including negotiating fieldwork, ethical considerations, challenges of documentation, issues of reflexivity, reporting, analysis and critical contextualization.

Assessed by outline fieldwork/studio report with identified timelines.

Subject seminar/presentation of work in progress. This provides both a platform in a subject specialism with presentations from key subject staff in: fine art, visual culture, design and education, and an opportunity for candidates to present work in progress and to elaborate the critical context of their work, including bodies of practice.

Not assessed.

Professional Development and Pedagogy Workshop. This addresses the professional development of the doctoral student as artist and pedagogue and supports the aspiration that PhD candidates should have the opportunity to engage in undergraduate or other teaching and/ or other forms of structured social engagement/ commercial practice.

Assessed by placement/activity report on supervised activity.

Thematic Seminar 2. This provides both a visiting lecture programme and an opportunity for students to present work in progress, including studio work, with peer critique of this. Attention will be given to publication/exhibition outcomes. Not assessed.

MA Forum Interim Report 17/02/2014

Terms of reference of the Forum

The forum was set up to review existing master provision in NCAD and in the light of the introduction of the 3+2 degree structures to bring forward proposals for the rationalization of Masters provision.

Review of existing provision

This revealed a patchwork of provision taught and studio based, of one year and two year duration with a lack of clarity with regards the appropriate credit rating of programmes and final award. It was also clear that apart from the newly UCD validated + 2 masters, that modularization of programmes was patchy and inconsistent with UCD academic regulations (existing programmes had been validated by NUI).

Interim Recommendations

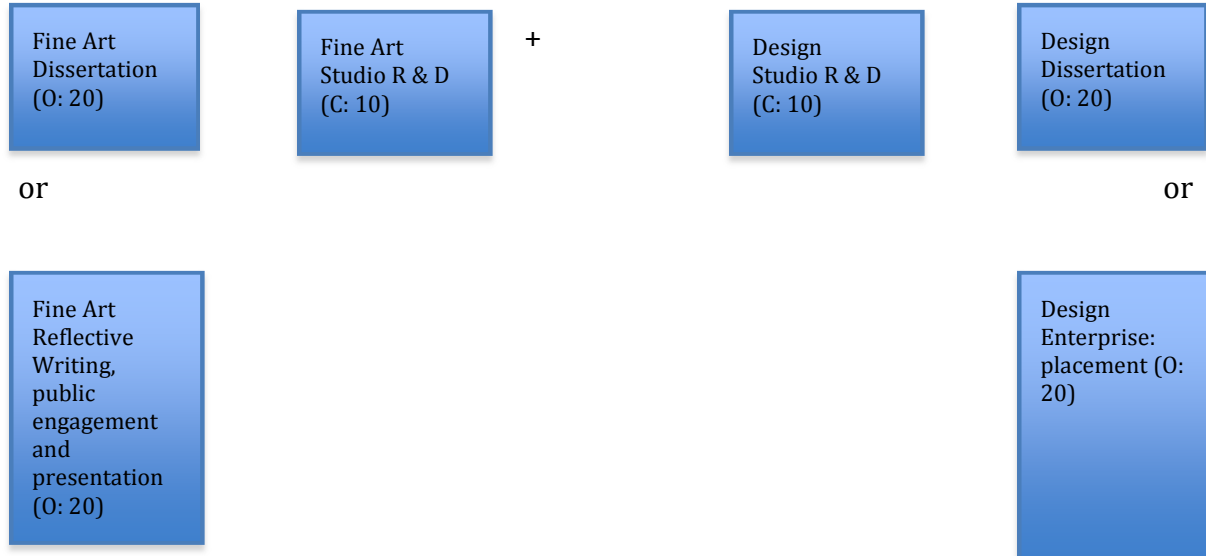
1. All programmes both new and existing should seek, where possible, to relate to the core modular platform developed in the new approved masters provision in order to achieve economies of scale and interdisciplinary encounter. All courses should both draw elements of study from the modular platform and where possible contribute to this in order to extend the range of choice for Masters students.
2. All masters programmes should expect to recruit at least 12 students (or equivalent in terms of student modular choice within the new platforms).
3. Within these constraints full attention needs to be paid to the distinctive character of our existing masters (Medical Device Design, Design history and Material Culture, Art in the Contemporary World, Art in the Digital World, MA Visual Arts Education) and to the professional concerns of the new master's in Education (Socially Engaged Art, Professional Masters Education).
4. The + 2 provision should have the final award of MFA to distinguish these two year studio modules of 120 credits from one year intensive, taught MAs of 90 credits. (These change of designations are now approved by UCD, together with opportunity for those completing fourth year bachelors to proceed to second year of the MFA on a RPL basis).
5. The existing MA, Art in the Digital World should be redesigned as an MFA programme and integrated into the new Masters platform with a close relation to the MFA in Fine Art.
6. The MA, Art in the Contemporary World should be reconfigured on a modular basis consistent with the new modular platform and with a view to contributing to and benefitting from this platform.
7. The existing creative practice route of the MA, Art in the Contemporary World should be discontinued with students interested in a combined programme offered the opportunity to exit this programme after semester2, with 60 credits of study in order to enter the second year of the MFA in Fine Art (subject to portfolio approval).
8. The existing MA Design History and Material Culture should be reviewed in order:
 - i) to facilitate its congruence with the masters' modular platform
 - ii) to facilitate collaboration and modular choice between this programme and the MFA in Design.
9. A core Research Methods module be offered to all masters students, front loaded to generic teaching and with specialist teaching addressing needs of specialist programmes at back end of the module. (attention will have to be given to the timetabling of this if Education students are to participate in this)

MFA FINE ART

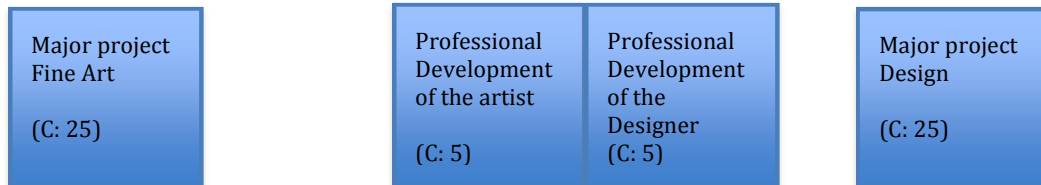
MFA DESIGN

YEAR 2

Semester 1



Semester 2



Key: O: option C: core