

Self-Evaluation Report 2025 Template

Template Guidance Note

- All sections of this template should be completed in full.
- The format of the template should not be altered.
- The template has been pre-populated with the agreed Performance Objectives, indicators and targets. Pre-populated elements of the template reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended. Queries relating to pre-populated information should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie.
- Where word count limits apply, these limits should not be exceeded.
- Appendices are not permitted.
- Reporting should be clear, concise, and evidence based.
- Narrative or bullet point formats may be used, and the use of plain English is encouraged.
- Reporting should be cognisant of the information provided in the [System Performance Framework 2023–2028](#) and [System Performance Framework Glossary](#).
- Where institutional strategies, policies, or other institutional documents are referenced, these should be hyperlinked where possible.
- Data presented in the report should be the most recent data available to the institution (timeframe should be specified).
- It is the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) to ensure that the information provided in the report is accurate.
- Redaction may be agreed with the HEA prior to publication, as appropriate.
- The report must be signed by the head of the institution prior to submission.
- The report should be submitted to systemperformance@hea.ie by the stated deadline.

Data Protection

The HEA as data controller will process personal data received via this form in compliance with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We will only process the data received via this form for the purposes of reviewing, evaluating, and reporting on the System Performance Framework 2023–2028 and data will be retained in line with our Records Management Policy only as long as is necessary to meet this purpose. For more information, please see the HEA's [Data Privacy Notice](#).

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National College of Art & Design Self-Evaluation Report 2025

Introduction

This Self-Evaluation Report will form the basis of the HEA's assessment of the strategic performance of the institution with respect to the objectives and targets set in the Performance Agreement established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–2028.

In line with the HEA's mandate to measure and assess institutions' strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education system and of designated institutions, and to ensure institutions' accountability, this Self-Evaluation Report will be published on the HEA website. The HEA will engage with institutions regarding any required redactions prior to publication.

It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the submitted report (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

Part A: Performance Indicators

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Text in the shaded boxes reflects entries in the Performance Agreement and should not be amended.

The most up-to-date data available should be reported in the ‘**Benchmark data**’ and ‘**2024/25 result**’ columns.

The year or range of years to which the reported data relates should be added after the data source in the ‘**Data source and timeframe**’ column.

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

Performance Objective 1

To develop an environment in support of student learning that is inclusive of diverse learners, from first contact to post-graduation, and that provides the resources and support that staff and students need to understand and reduce barriers to learning.

Transversal areas of impact: Student Success; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Institutional Leadership & Culture.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.1	Proportion (%) of staff confident in their understanding of and capacity to design learning experiences for diverse learning needs	HEI Annual Inclusive T&L staff survey 2025	N/A	No suitable benchmark data available	N/A	10%	12.4%	15%	20%	25%	25%

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
1.2	Student experience of Effective Teaching Practices	NCAD Student Survey 2025	ISSE 2023 score: 34.9 NCAD 2023/24: 58% Good + Very Good	4-year average, selection of Irish HEIs ¹ (2020–23): 33.4	Not available	35 59%	N/A 58.74%	35.3 61%	35.6 62%	35.9 64%	1 point increase from baseline ISSE score 6 p.p. increase from baseline NCAD Student Survey
1.3	Progression rate (%) of new entrants with declared disability	HEA SRS, New Entrants 2022/23	Not yet established	Match overall NCAD progression rate	91% at L8 NCAD for 2022/23	85%	91%	86%	86%	87%	2 p.p. increase
1.4	Progression rate (%) of new entrants	HEA SRS; Non-Progression Dashboard, New Entrants 2022/23	2021/22: 85%	National average (85% for 2021/22)	91% for 2022/23	85%	92%	86%	86%	87%	2 p.p. increase on baseline

Technical note on indicator data for PO 1:

1.1: A scale of 1–5 was used to describe degree of confidence & only the highest level of confidence is included for the purposes of this indicator.

1.2: StudentSurvey.ie paused its taught student survey in 2024 and 2025 to undertake a Strategic Review. Reporting on indicators that draw on StudentSurvey.ie results will recommence in 2026. Where the relevant survey questions have changed, indicators will be updated accordingly.

1.2: A change in the format for participants’ response to this question between 2024 and 2025 may be worth noting for future reference. The midpoint response available to participants changed from ‘fair’ to ‘somewhat poor’ and ‘somewhat good’.

¹ ISSE ‘Effective Teaching Practices’, 2020–2023 average based upon the following institutions: UCD, MU, TU Dublin, DCU, IADT, TCD, UL, RCSI, UG.

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Performance Objective 2

To develop focused and sustainable forms of research organisation and delivery which catalyse existing expertise and capacities, attract research funding and partnerships, and have significant social, economic and/or cultural impact.

Transversal areas of impact: Climate & Sustainable Development; Enterprise; Society; International.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.1	Number of research funding applications to national/international funding bodies	Research Office, NCAD, 2024	2023/24: 1	Attain average, peer institutions of comparable size ²	Not available	2	4	2	3	3	10, with 2-3 funded, over 4 years 200% increase on baseline
2.2	Number of applications for funded PhD positions attached to research labs or other NCAD research structures	Research Office, NCAD, 2023/2024	2023/24: 1	Attain average of peer institutions	Not available	1	1	1	2	2	6 applications over 4 years 100% increase on baseline

² Peer institutions include the Courtauld Institute of Art, Estonian Academy of Art, and IADT.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.3	Number of applications for funded post-doc positions attached to research labs or other NCAD research structures	Research Office, NCAD, 2023/2024	2023/24: 0	Attain average of peer institutions	Not available	1	1	1	1	1	4 applications over 4 years
2.4	Number of new partnerships (other HEIs, enterprise partners etc.) underpinned by formal agreements – MoUs, contracts, etc.	Research Office, NCAD, 2023/2024	2023/24: 2	No appropriate benchmarks available ³	N/A	1	1	1	2	2	6 new partnerships over 4 years
2.5	Number of staff participating in research training workshops	Research Office, NCAD, 2024	2023/24: 20 (19%)	Not available	N/A	40 (38%)	60 (57%)	45 (43%)	45 (43%)	52 (50%)	31 p.p. increase on baseline

³ 2.4 is focused upon delivering a ‘mixed-economy’ of partnerships, from industry partnerships that secure IRC funding for doctoral research to industry partnerships that underpin significant research initiatives such as the NCAD Design Labs. Our focus is on mutual, in-kind benefits as well as funding opportunities. The KPIs that are key metrics for KTI do not typically reflect the research and innovation benefits most valued by our disciplines and researchers.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
2.6	Number of staff participating in current research projects and opportunities (DesignLabs, L'Internationale, SPACEX)	Research Office, NCAD, 2023/2024	2023/24: 18 (17%)	Attain average of peer institutions.	26 (average of peer institutions where data available)	20 (19%)	21 (20%)	20 (19%)	24 (23%)	24 (23%)	6 p.p. increase on baseline
2.7	Number of staff participating in research-focused mobility visits (Erasmus, seed funding supported visits, secondment visits through SPACEX etc)	Research Office, NCAD, 2023/2024	3-year average 2021–2023: 4	No suitable external benchmarking data available.	N/A	5	6	6	7	8	26 members of staff over 4 years 100% increase on baseline

Technical note on indicator data for PO 2:

2.1–2.3: Benchmarking data from peer institutions was originally gathered through conversations hosted with counterpart Research Offices in each institution, in which research support staff kindly shared figures on the scale of their annual support operations, particularly in the area of pre-award support for applications made for external funding. This information is not generally made publicly available (as it includes both successfully funded and unsuccessful applications), and so while it informed the original establishment of targets that would be appropriate for NCAD’s capacity and scale, it is not possible to represent on a year-on-year basis without continued sharing from external partners.

Pillar: Access & Participation

Performance Objective 3

To increase access by underrepresented groups and increase diversity within the College and in the fields of art and design by developing and sustaining pathways for entry.

Transversal areas of impact: Student Success; Society; Region; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.1	Number of CASS Summer School participants	Academic & Student Affairs, NCAD, 2025	2023: 80	No suitable benchmarking data available	N/A	60	64	60	60	60	240 over 4 years
3.2	Progression rate (%) new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas	HEA SRS; Non-Progression & Completion Dashboard, 2022/23	74% for New Entrants in 2021/22	Match system average (85% in 2020/21)	86% in 2022/23	85%	81%	86%	87%	89%	89%
3.3	Enrolments in Year 2 from co-designed, co-delivered programmes and articulation agreements with ETBs⁴	Academic Registry, NCAD, 2024/25	0	No suitable benchmarking data available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	13

⁴ This indicator is measuring the number of students entering either (a) year 2 of a tertiary programme that has been jointly developed by NCAD and an ETB partner, or (b) year 2 of an NCAD programme on the basis of an articulation agreement with an ETB partner.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
3.4	Proportion (%) of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas	HEA SRS, 2023/24	2020/21: 8%	Progress towards national average (11% in 2020/21)	10% in 2023/24	8%	11%	8%	8.5%	9%	9%
3.5	Proportion (%) of mature new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas	HEA SRS, 2023/24	2020/21: 4%	Continue to exceed system average (10% in 2020/21)	9% in 2023/24	14%	7%	14%	15%	15.5%	15.5% of all SED new entrants

Technical note on indicator data for PO 3:

3.1: The Creative Arts Summer School (CASS) is a collaborative initiative promoting access, inclusion and diversity in the creative arts in Ireland. Applications to CASS are invited from: underrepresented socio-economic groups (16+ years of age), mature applicants (first time to college), persons with a disability or significant ongoing illness, lone parents in receipt of a means-tested social welfare payment, members of the Irish Traveller or Roma Community, QQI-FET/FETAC full award holders (Level 5/6/7), members of an ethnic minority, refugees (those with leave to remain/asylum seekers), and students who have successfully completed an access programme. The result for 3.1 is calculated on the basis of the CASS register of those who successfully applied to and participated in the Creative Arts Summer School.

3.5: An error in the methodology for indicator 3.5 has been identified and this indicator will be amended in the Performance Agreement to align with the methodology set out in the National Access Plan in advance of the next round of reporting in 2026.

Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 4

To articulate and connect our curriculum to real-world learning opportunities across commercial, cultural and social settings.

Transversal areas of impact: Enterprise; Society; International; Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning.

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.1	Number of postgraduate taught enrolments as % of total enrolments in NCAD	NCAD's Student Record System and HEA SRS, 2024/25	2022/23: 135 (10% of total enrolments) 2023/24: 223 (138 + 85 L9 Professional & CPD) (15% of total enrolments)	Proportion of PGT enrolments as a % of total enrolments in the field of Arts & Humanities, all HEIs (8.1% in 2022/23)	6.9%	223 15%	303 20%	240 16%	250 16.5%	260 17%	16.6% increase in total PGT enrolments 2 p.p. increase on 2023/24 baseline
4.2	Proportion (%) of postgraduate respondents who agree or strongly agree that their studies at NCAD will support them in creating and securing opportunities for professional advancement	NCAD Annual Student Survey, 2025	2024: 70% of PG respondents agreed or strongly agreed	None available	N/A	72%	84.34%	75%	78%	80%	10 p.p. increase

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.3	Proportion (%) of undergraduate (UG) students undertaking Real-World Projects with partners from Commercial, Social and Cultural sectors	School records, 2024/25	2023/24: 40% of students undertaking real world projects	None available	N/A	45%	48.46%	50%	55%	55%	15 p.p. increase
4.4	Proportion (%) of undergraduate students undertaking internships / work placements	School records, 2024/25	2023/24: 10%	None available ⁵	N/A	12%	29.7%	12%	15%	15%	5 p.p. increase
4.5	Proportion (%) of eligible BA (Art, Design and Visual Culture) Students undertaking BA Studio+ year	School records, 2024/25	2023/24: 65%	None available	N/A	70%	80.55%	75%	80%	85%	20 p.p. increase

⁵ National data in respect of graduates who undertook ‘internships/work experience’ is available: across all HEIs 42% of the class of 2022 report having had such an experience, and 38% of NCAD graduates report having had such an experience, with this data drawn from Graduate Outcomes Survey. Data for indicator 4.4 is focused on specifics type of work experience and placements and the data source is NCAD’s internal records. The figures include Education students; students who have undertaken Studio+/Visual Culture+ as an optional year between Year 2 and Final year (4.5); students who have worked with industry partners as part of their curriculum (4.3); and non-Education students who have undertaken an internship/work placement (4.4).

No.	Indicator	Data source & timeframe	Baseline	Benchmark	Benchmark data	2024/25 target	2024/25 result	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2027/28 target	Cumulative target
4.6	Proportion (%) of UG respondents who agree or strongly agree that their programme has helped them engage with ‘real world’ environments in a practical and critical way	NCAD Annual Student Survey, 2025	2023: 88% agreed or strongly agreed	None available	N/A	88%	96.4%	88%	90%	90%	2 p.p. increase

Technical note on indicator data for PO 4:

4.2: The format for participants’ response to this question changed between 2024 and 2025 – from ‘neither disagree nor agree’ as a midpoint to ‘somewhat disagree’ and ‘somewhat agree’.

4.6: The format for participants’ response to this question changed between 2024 and 2025 – from ‘neither disagree nor agree’ as a midpoint to ‘somewhat disagree’ and ‘somewhat agree’.

Part B: Performance Evaluation and Strategic Reflection

Text should be added to the white boxes in each of the tables below. Word count should be recorded as indicated. Guidance on the information required in each table is provided in the shaded boxes. Pre-populated elements of Part B reflect the Performance Agreement and these entries should not be amended.

Section 1: Context

Provide an update on the context for the implementation of the institution's Performance Agreement in academic year 2024/25. This should include information on the following, as relevant:

- Institutional strategy, including stage of development and/or implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Changes to the organisation's structure and/or senior leadership.
- Changes to the profile of the institution, i.e. significant changes to the number of staff and/or students or to programme delivery.
- Improvement or development of data collection and evaluation systems and processes, e.g. action taken to address data challenges or gaps, or any new challenges or data gaps that have been identified since the development of the Performance Agreement or submission of the previous SER.
- Any modifications (requested or approved) to the Performance Agreement.

Word limit: 500

Following the implementation of NCAD's *Futures Bold and Curious Strategy*, an extensive process of consultation with staff, students and external stakeholders has taken place. While our fundamental commitment to Changing the World through Bold and Curious Thinking, Making and Doing remains, we have developed a clear articulation of our purpose, a values framework to guide our decision making, and reimagined our goals to deliver our ambition for our students, the College and Ireland's creative and cultural sector.

NCAD's Strategic Plan, *Create, Challenge, Care 2026–2031* has been approved by An Bord and will be launched in February 2026. Our Goals and the Actions identified to deliver them are strongly aligned to our commitments in our System Performance Agreement 2023–2028. Work is underway on an implementation plan, with an expectation that this will be put into action from January 2026, in parallel with the launch of the strategy.

Fully harnessing the data that we collect remains a challenge for NCAD. As a small College, our data gathering, reporting and evaluation work is delivered by an agile but *very* small team, and

with systems that are not as integrated as they need to be to support reporting and evaluation processes. It is, therefore, of great significance for NCAD to have been included in the recent Targeted Enhancement Fund – a key facet of the support being sought through this fund is to address the deficit in our systems and establish the structures that will allow us to better gather, integrate and exploit the data we hold.

The second modification that we are requesting relates to the materialisation of a risk that was identified at the outset: that indicator 3.3 is linked to new collaborative initiatives with ETBs. The source of the challenge is complex:

- Space is an intensely pressing issue for NCAD. Our success in progressing our campus development plan will create additional pressures on space and brings significant unpredictability in respect of our spatial needs over the lifetime of this Agreement.
- A further factor affecting the feasibility of delivering the articulation agreements we had envisaged emerged through consultation with ETB colleagues. The numbers of students that we anticipated are unviable from an ETB perspective.
- Priorities emerging through our new strategy – in terms of reviewing and renewing curricula in line with our values and to meet the needs of future students – affect our capacity for the co-design and co-delivery of programmes with tertiary partners over the lifetime of this Agreement.

[Word count: 499]

Section 2: Evaluation of Performance

Provide an evaluation of the institution's performance in relation to this Performance Objective, with reference to the indicator data provided in Part A. This should include:

- Analysis of the indicator data for this Performance Objective, e.g.:
 - Trend analysis and benchmarking of performance with reference to baselines, benchmarks, and targets. Graphs or charts to illustrate the analysis provided should be labelled and cross-referenced in the commentary.
- Assessment of implementation, e.g.:
 - Effectiveness of the specific actions related to the Performance Objective as demonstrated by the analysis of the indicator data.
 - Internal or external factors that have supported or impeded the achievement of targets.
 - Any additional evidence of performance, e.g. qualitative evidence of outcomes.
- Strategic reflection, e.g.:
 - Any learning from the analysis of the institution's performance.
 - How learning is being applied to maintain and/or enhance implementation and outcomes in future.
 - How learning is being used to inform decision making, strategy development, policy, and/or strategic planning.
 - New or emerging opportunities, challenges, and risks related to the Performance Objective.
 - Priority(s) in relation to this Performance Objective for the year ahead, with reference to any new actions or initiatives to support implementation.

Word limit: 1,000

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

Performance Objective 1

To develop an environment in support of student learning that is inclusive of diverse learners, from first contact to post-graduation, and that provides the resources and support that staff and students need to understand and reduce barriers to learning.

Transversal areas of impact:

Student Success; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Institutional Leadership & Culture.

1.1: This was the first survey of NCAD staff focused upon confidence in meeting students' diverse learning needs. The survey explores awareness of the impact of neurodiversity on students' learning needs, and the role played by awareness of neurodiversity in; programme design, planning lessons, projects developing learning materials and communicating with students. A scale of 1 to 5 was used to describe degree of confidence, and only the highest level of confidence is included for the purposes of this indicator.

Staff members apply UDL principles, make reasonable accommodations for students with PONs and use plain English for documents and communication with students. Many also know when to point students towards the Student Support Services.

In teaching teams and departments, there are often individual staff members with greater levels of expertise in this area. Several colleagues have completed the UDL Badge offered by AHEAD and twenty staff members recently participated in an asynchronous online course in Neurodiversity for Education. These staff members exemplify good practice and act as sources of information for their peers.

1.2: As the Irish Survey of Student Engagement did not issue in 2025, it is not possible to review progress against that indicator. The NCAD End of Year Survey is an indicator available to us and shows progress broadly in line with our target. A change in the format for participants' response to this question between 2024 and 2025 may be worth noting for future reference. The midpoint response available to participants changed from 'fair' to 'somewhat poor' and 'somewhat good'. This has affected the outcomes in that 81.53% of respondents rate their experience of the effectiveness of staff teaching skills as good. If allowance is made for an equivalent split between the two new categories within the 2024 middle cohort (fair), the outcomes from 2024 and 2025 are broadly aligned – 80.5%% in 2024 and 81.53% in 2025. While this is not a reliable manipulation of the data, it may be worth noting as a more realistic basis for future comparison.

What is most interesting in terms of sustaining progress against this target is the effectiveness of our use of digital tools – within the considerations that inform this indicator, this is the area of greatest challenge. 2025/26 is the academic year in which the preliminary roll-out of Canvas as NCAD's VLE is being completed. Continued investment in staff training and the development of

bespoke templates to meet the needs of specific programmes/learning environments *and* inclusive learning needs of students will be important in addressing this area of challenge.

1.3: The most relevant framework of comparison for making sense of progress against this indicator is not the target identified but the progression of new entrant peers in NCAD, and the equivalent specific and general progression rates in the wider HE sector for the same period.

The overall progression rate for new entrants at Level 8 in NCAD for 2022/23 was 92%. In the wider HE sector, the progression rates for new entrants with a declared disability at Level 8 was 90%, as against an overall progression rate for new entrant peers of 91%. In this context, we are satisfied that our efforts – through our Learning Support structures and the pedagogical practices of academic staff and technical officers – are broadly effective in supporting our students with a declared disability, and meeting the breadth of learning needs of our students.

1.4: Again, the most relevant framework of comparison for making sense of progress against this indicator is not the target identified but the progression of new entrants in the wider HE sector for the same period (2022/23). In this context, we are satisfied that our efforts – through our Learning Support structures and the pedagogical practices of academic staff and technical officers – are broadly effective in supporting our students and meeting the breadth of learning needs of our students.

Looking at the fluctuation in progression rates, and indeed in proportions of any given cohort of new entrant students entering NCAD, our particular vulnerability in respect of these various targets is noteworthy – with a first year Level 8 intake of 320-odd students, 3 students constitute a whole percentage point of variance. From an NCAD perspective, therefore, trends over an extended period of time may be a key point of reference in making sense of what is happening within the College.

The domain-specific value placed on divergent thinking within the field of Art & Design creates room for differences in approach. Further, studio-based education creates conditions for one-to-one support and feedback, which supports a differentiated approach. Nonetheless, the pressure being experienced by staff in meeting the needs of a diverse student body is significant, making close attention to achievement against this performance objective vital for the well-being of the College community.

Importantly, while some students seek support from NCAD's Learning Support structures and disclose disability or neurodivergent status with selected staff members, there are staff members and students who do not disclose their status and so do not receive support through formal channels. Constraints on resources, both in terms of Learning Support and the physical campus, challenge the College's ability to accommodate all learning needs. Staff members are also always trying to balance what they understand as the demands of the discipline or practice with students' learning needs.

[Word count: 884]

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Performance Objective 2

To develop focused and sustainable forms of research organisation and delivery which catalyse existing expertise and capacities, attract research funding and partnerships, and have significant social, economic and/or cultural impact.

Transversal areas of impact:

Climate & Sustainable Development; Enterprise; Society; International.

As noted in our *Performance Agreement (2024-28)*, NCAD is on a path to build an effective research support infrastructure, with improved levels of funding application and improved staff engagement / confidence with research.

We have met, and in some cases exceeded, the targets that we set last year.

2.1-2.3: Data for these indicators represent NCAD's growing capacity to apply for external research funding. The number of applications in the data table represent applications - of varying scales - in which NCAD was the primary or lead partner. Applications in which we were a partner applicant do not feature (9). Increasingly, NCAD is developing research partnerships and a research profile that attracts requests from external organisations to partner on research applications. While not an indicator specifically included in Performance Objective, it is a positive trend which we will continue to monitor and which links to our goal to collaborate effectively with external research partners and apply for significant research funding.

Notably, in spring-summer 2025 we led a successful application to HEA's NSRP scheme. The NSRP application was an important test of our Research Office capacity and the quality of our research talent as well as our ambition to undertake art and design research with social impact. In our *Performance Agreement* narrative for research we set the following as objectives - *to significantly improve our understanding of how to coordinate complex research projects effectively; how to collaborate effectively with external research partners; and how to apply for and be awarded significant research funding*. Funding success will allow us to extend RO capacity and expertise - through new staff appointments - in the year ahead to further test and meet these objectives.

Securing funded PhD scholarships, ideally embedded in consortia research projects where expertise can be shared, remain a priority (as evidenced in their centrality to the NSRP application and in our partnership in a Marie Curie Doctoral Network application - unsuccessful but sufficiently high scoring to warrant resubmission) (2.2).

2.4: We achieved our target, signing an MoU with the Belfast School of Art, Ulster University, that underpinned our successful application to the North South Research Programme Call 2. For 25/26 we are currently drafting research agreements with HSE Spark and the Department of Public

Expenditure and Reform (DPER), tied to future research collaborations with NCAD Design Labs.

2.5: This indicator represents an outlier, with a 200% increase in the number of staff participating in research training workshops. The inaugural NCAD Research Development Week was introduced in September 2024, with 11 training sessions offered for staff in a consolidated programme held over the course of 5 days. Enthusiasm amongst staff led to high-turnout for this pilot programme, which has now been mainstreamed as part of the annual calendar of the Research Office. Our future challenge will be to maintain high levels of staff engagement as the Research Training Week and other supports become a regular event.

2.6 & 2.7: We have exceeded our targets, reflecting a combination of staff participating in ongoing research projects (SPACEX, Museum of the Commons, DesignLabs) and participating in new research projects (Understanding Durability in Circular Business Models (DURBUS), coordinated by Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences). This showcases the significant impact individual international projects can have on supporting growth in staff engagement with research considering the scale of our staff pool.

The Research Office at NCAD has formally been in operation for 2 years. Within this time frame, the indicator data reflects that there has been growth in staff engagement with research, in NCAD's activity in developing research partnerships, as well as an increasing capacity to apply for external research funding. At the current scale of operation (two part-time staff members, 0.9FTE total), there is a risk in not being able to maintain the level of growth seen in 2024/25, or to continue to scale.

Our highest priority is to maintain the pattern of improvement and development outlined here. Their pace will depend to a significant extent on whether we secure HEA TEF funds to develop our research infrastructure. We have not encountered or identified significant new risks or challenges to our research performance. Key objectives remain the delivery of an expanded, blended research training programme for staff; developing cross-institutional Research Labs; and improving the visibility of NCAD internally and externally, achieved through the launch of a research repository and research public events programme.

[Word count: 731]

Pillar: Access & Participation

Performance Objective 3

To increase access by underrepresented groups and increase diversity within the College and in the fields of art and design by developing and sustaining pathways for entry.

Transversal areas of impact:

Student Success; Society; Region; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging; Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion.

3.1: NCAD's ambition to sustain and develop the Creative Arts Summer School (CASS) is going well; there were 64 Dublin-based participants in 2025 and 26 participants in MTU. The HEI partnership model at the heart of CASS is also working well, with 6 Dublin-based partners and 3 national partners in 2025 (Marino Institute, IADT, TU Dublin, UCD, RCSI, TCD, ATU Sligo, ATU Donegal, MTU Cork). The breadth of experience of and visibility onto the possibilities of creative higher education that this model affords is critical for creating access to creative HE *and* creative careers; 97.3% of participants who responded to the survey saw CASS as having clearly communicated opportunities for pursuing an education in creative arts (11% margin of error). Critical factors that have supported success include: continued investment in NCAD's Access and Outreach Office, and strong links with Schools and Art teachers (56.76% of participants heard of initiative from an art teacher, 24.32% from a career or guidance counsellor).

3.2: In regard to Progression rates for New Entrants in 2022/23, which saw an overall progression rate at NCAD of 91%, compared to an SED progression rate at NCAD of 81%, and an all-HEI SED progression rate of 86%, a difference of 10% in progression rates between new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas relative to the wider NCAD progression rate is concerning (2022/23 cohort). The difference in respect of new entrants (L8) from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas across the wider HE sector (5%) is also significant.

Two factors are worth considering in seeking to make sense of the clear progression challenge being faced by socioeconomically disadvantaged students at NCAD: the high costs associated with Art & Design education, and the time requirements of studio-based programme delivery in Art & Design, making external work difficult.

As evident from a consultation with students and academic units within the college to understand the costs that are essential for NCAD students (materials, tools & software), art & design programmes are expensive. The costs for first year students are modest (€65 - €120), thereafter the average cost per student per year is €950, with students on some programmes incurring costs of up to €3000 in their final year. This *may* go some way to accounting for the 5%

difference in progression rates between disadvantaged students in NCAD and in the wider HE sector.

If we assume that the costs associated with an art and design education are a significant factor in non-progression for disadvantaged students within NCAD, the relative affluence of NCAD students may be a factor in the scale of the difference in progression rates within NCAD; focusing upon L8 new entrants, NCAD's average disadvantage index is 2.7 relative to an average of 1.8 for the HE sector as a whole.

3.4: We are pleased that 11% of the students admitted to our BA programmes in 2023/24 were new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas; continuing an upward trajectory across preceding years. The ongoing work of NCAD's Access and Outreach Office, and the range of government funded PATH initiatives are key factors in this regard. The Access and Outreach Office continue to build and sustain strong relationships with DEIS schools and local communities, and the Creative Arts Summer School (CASS) plays a key role in making tangible the nature and possibilities of a creative education, with the 1916 Bursaries providing vital support to sustain financially vulnerable students. The need for and value of such initiatives is evident in the CASS participant feedback, with absence of financial means identified as *the* key barrier to entering higher education, with lack of family support and understanding of further education and of a career in the arts also identified as major barriers.

3.5: Attracting, admitting and supporting mature new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas is important for NCAD and for the Art & Design sector more widely. While we have achieved a modest increase (3p.p.) in the proportion of SED mature new entrants as a % of all SED new entrants from our 2020/21 baseline, we are mindful that very modest fluctuations in the actual number of students entering the college from a particular cohort can have a significant statistical impact (3 students is approximately 1%).

In working toward alignment with the wider sector, the factors identified as posing a challenge for progression in art & design (high costs associated with the programmes and the intense mode of education) are likely to be a significant factor for mature new entrants who may have significant financial and caring commitments to meet. There are a number of areas for consideration that may support us in identifying specific actions to help us make progress against this indicator:

- Our part-time L8 provision enables progress to Higher Diploma level; there may be ways to encourage and build access for mature new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.
- Our Creative Arts Summer School model reaches and opens possibilities for young learners; there may be a model relevant to potential mature new entrants.
- NCAD's old Access route (replaced by joining HEAR/DARE) may be a vehicle to enable more targeted access.

Across the PO3 indicators, the small scale of NCAD means that modest fluctuations in actual numbers have significant statistical impact; a good performance against a given indicator can be undone by a relatively small change in actual numbers of students (for better or worse).

Overall, NCAD is succeeding in engaging with communities and partners, and in encouraging socioeconomically disadvantaged young people to consider the possibility of higher education and a future in art and design. However, the cost of an art and design education is a real challenge, perhaps most particularly for mature new entrants. We recognise the challenges facing all of our students, and weighing most heavily on those experiencing disadvantage. NCAD is actively testing ways to address areas of significant cost for students in 2025/26, and adapting our provision to better meet the needs of current and future students is at the heart of our 2026-31 strategy. Beyond NCAD, the 1916 Bursaries are game-changing for individual students and their provision warrants being sustained and expanded.

NCAD's potential to enhance coherent provision within the tertiary sector will require careful consideration as part of the implementation of our new strategy; to frame and develop the partnerships and offer that can deliver meaningful impact.

[Word count: 991]

Pillar: Engagement

Performance Objective 4

To articulate and connect our curriculum to real-world learning opportunities across commercial, cultural and social settings.

Transversal areas of impact:

Enterprise; Society; International; Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning.

4.1: The growth in postgraduate provision and enrolments at NCAD is significantly driven by the Creative Futures Academy (CFA), which offers short, part and full-time Level 9 accredited courses, developed in partnership with industry and sectoral partners, in flexible, hybrid formats (online and in person) for practising artists, designers and creative professionals looking to upskill. These new, accessible programmes reflect a dynamic and rapidly-advancing industry, and draw from a deep understanding of the creative sector, while HCI micro-cred funding supports have been critical in driving growth.

Our CFA at NCAD micro-credentialed provision has been designed to help students articulate into existing or new MA provision, and is also enabling students to access Skillnet Funding through CCI Skillnet and Design Skillnet. The new L9 provision created in response to sectoral needs includes Design for AI, Art and Social Action, Service Design, Fashion Communication, Art and Ecology, Art and Health, Sustainable Exhibitions, Creative Hospitality and Creative Diversity.

4.2: The format for participants' response to this question changed between 2024 and 2025 – from 'neither disagree nor agree' as a midpoint to 'somewhat disagree' and 'somewhat agree'. This has affected the outcomes in that 84.34% of respondents agree that their studies will support them in creating and securing opportunities for professional advancement. If allowance is made for an equivalent split between the two new categories within the 2024 middle cohort (neither disagree nor agree), the outcomes from 2024 and 2025 are broadly aligned – 83% in 2024 and 84% in 2025. While this is not a reliable manipulation of the data, it may offer a more realistic basis for comparison.

Overall, students' sense of the value of their postgraduate studies is consistently positive and may be showing some improvement. Interestingly, the effectiveness of the Professional Certificates and Diplomas developed through the CFA is evident in the response of students from these programmes, with 90.6% of students agreeing that their postgraduate experience will support them in creating and securing opportunities for professional development.

4.3: While many Final Year students at NCAD develop major projects involve creating with and for industry, communities and stakeholders, Studio+ is the primary space for real-world learning, with our BA provision creating a 'learning ladder' that moves from Year 1 Foundational

Competencies, Year 2 Advanced Competencies, Studio+ as Real-World Learning, to Final Year as Personal Development.

Ensuring that students' work is located within real world contexts helps our students to maximise the impact of their work, as well as its relevance in preparation for future careers. When they reach a solution, our students gain an understanding not only that what they are doing works, but why. Co-creation with external partners from industry and civic society, working in groups and teams, brings the ability to articulate ideas and make change. Exceeding our target has been enabled by increasing levels of student participation in NCAD's optional Studio+ year.

4.4: The level of student interest in undertaking internships / work placements increased significantly in 2024/25, and this was supported through additional investment in building relationships with industry partners and supporting students in pursuing such relationships. Within the Studio+ structure 60 students undertook one or more Creative Internships with national and international industry or cultural organisations. While Ireland was the location for the majority of internships, 25 were international (with organisations in the UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Sweden and the USA).

We are delighted with the increase in internship uptake, and to ensure we continue to meet and exceed our targets we have recruited a 0.5 FTE Internship Officer to help identify, secure and evaluate internships with industry and cultural partners.

4.5: Studio+ is an optional additional year of study open to undergraduate students (excluding Education students). The value of Studio+ is strongly recognized by Design students (87% uptake) and Fine Art students (75% uptake), and is increasingly recognized by Visual Culture students (63% uptake).

Studio+ offers students an opportunity to immerse themselves in **real-world** environments, to learn from the skills & expertise of students and staff from other disciplines and to engage creatively with industry, community and civic society. We continue to see significant growth in Studio+ uptake, and we are considering making the year mandatory following a review of our BA provision. The college has continued to use the Studio+ to innovate, using the agile programme and modular architecture to develop new curriculum and elective opportunities such as facilitating intra- and inter-institutional mobility (through the CFA - UCD and IADT options were piloted this year, with TCD elective options being introduced for 2025-26).

4.6: The format for participants' response to this question changed between 2024 and 2025 – from 'neither disagree nor agree' as a midpoint to 'somewhat disagree' and 'somewhat agree'. This has affected the outcomes in that 96.4% of respondents agree that their programme has helped them engage with 'real world' environments in a practical and critical way. If allowance is made for an equivalent split between the two new categories within the 2024 middle cohort (neither disagree nor agree), the outcomes from 2024 and 2025 are broadly aligned – 95% in 2024

and 96.4% in 2025. While this is not a reliable manipulation of the data, it may offer a more realistic basis for comparison.

Key aspects of ‘real world learning’ at NCAD include industry engagement and a focus upon global challenges. Our students develop the confidence to tackle local, national and global problems through experimental learning: a learning-by-doing model, as well as learning from staff. It’s a method that embeds confidence, creating deep disciplinary knowledge through trial, error and experimentation.

From a strategic perspective, NCAD works with partners in business and industry to ensure our provision and research have practical applications and global impact. Our curriculum is increasingly focused on working with and for stakeholders to address contemporary issues such as climate change, circular economy and social cohesion. NCAD encourages collaboration across disciplines, integrating art and design with fields such as science, engineering, technology, and medicine to tackle complex real-world problems.

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Section 3: System Learning and Policy Development

Comment on any learning or insights arising from the institution's self-evaluation of performance in relation to the Performance Agreement that may contribute to system learning and/or national policy development and implementation.

Word limit: 300

NCAD has, with limited means, made significant progress in developing our capacity in research. The methodology of developing a clear staged action plan based on deep internal audit of interest and international benchmarking of Art & Design research practice, ensured that limited investment resulted in impact. Creating open spaces for staff to engage and share interests has supported a clear institutional focus for research that brings art and design practice into collaboration with a range of partners across industry and society.

The CFA is recognised as a significant national partnership between three of Ireland's leading creative education providers. Mainstream funding has been secured to transition this important project from the HCI Fund to an embedded position within the three institutions and within Ireland's creative landscape. Close collaboration and consultation with industry partners has supported an agile provision of life-long learning that reflects the changing landscape of creative practice and which has been credited by learners as providing a flexible scaffold to support career development and skills acquisition.

Socioeconomic disadvantage is a very real barrier to studying creative practice. This barrier is reflected in the representation of Ireland's society in our creative and cultural sectors. NCAD has established many community and educational partnerships and established national initiatives such as the Creative Arts Summer School to encourage a wider engagement with creative arts education. The 1916 Bursaries have been one of the most significant drivers of change in terms of widening access to NCAD and creative education nationally. Financial support that directly addresses the cost of studying art and design (materials, specialist software, production) enables students to enter this field and succeed. Loss of these bursaries would have a detrimental impact on the work that needs to be done to build a diverse pipeline of creative talent for Ireland.

[Word count: 298]

Section 4: Signature of the Head of the Institution

The SER should be signed by the Head of the Institution prior to submission.

On behalf of the National College of Art & Design , I declare that the particulars supplied in this report are true and correct.	
Signature:	
Print Name:	Prof Sarah Glennie
Date:	26 September 2025