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# National College of Art and Design

## Strategic Dialogue Cycle 4 Reflections on Performance

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### Self-evaluation report – institution overview

#### **Institution overview:**

In 2016, in consultation with the HEA, NCAD submitted a compact with significant revisions compared to that originally agreed in 2014. Following a difficult financial period, changes in governance and a category 3 classification in Cycle 2, the revised compact focused on a smaller number of higher level strategic objectives.

NCAD have submitted a complete self-evaluation report for Cycle 4. All sections have been completed and progress is reported as excellent (green) on 15 of the 25 objectives. Overall the college has made most progress in the domains of access, teaching and enterprise engagement. The overarching statements that preface each section of the SER are a useful by way of providing further insight and context to the reporting on more specific objectives.

As indicated last year, three objectives were suspended, the most significant of these being merger with UCD. Instead collaboration between the two colleges is being progressed through the NCAD+UCD Alliance. Another related cluster objective, the development and provision of a collaborative postgraduate Masters in Education (PME) by NCAD, UCD, TCD and MIE is on hold and there is no sense that this will be reactivated. Notwithstanding this and the unsuccessful bid for PATH funding (p.11), excellent progress (green) reported on the establishment of the Institute of Education by NCAD (as compared to amber by UCD) and this should be raised in dialogue with the college.

On a positive note, while the original 2014 objective to establish a part-time degree was deprioritised in the revised compact, NCAD report that in line with their strategic plan 2017-2022 this objective is likely to be reenergised in the next compact.

Seven objectives are reported as amber, of which four are in the research domain and of note is that two of these were reported as green in last year's report. (Support for Researchers and Income from Research). Two case studies, demonstrating good practice by NCAD in the areas of access and engagement are provided in section 8.

## Self-evaluation report - domain level reviews

### 1. Regional clusters:

#### **Initial commentary:**

NCAD is part of the Dublin I cluster with UCD, TCD and IADT. Of the four cluster objectives two focus solely on the relationship with UCD, of these, one is achieved (closer relationship) and one suspended (merger).

There is a much weaker/vaguer sense of collaboration with other cluster partners. For example, with TCD (and MIE) on the Postgraduate Masters in Education, PATH or the establishment of an Institute of Education.

#### **1. Closer relationship with UCD**

NCAD + UCD Alliance report in March 2016 highlighted areas for further collaboration. Progress is reported on UCD accreditation of NCAD degrees; the development of masters programmes; a Studio+ sandwich year for undergraduates in both HEIs; collaboration between the international offices of both HEIs; a creative technology network and work with NovaUCD via TTSI2.

This progress will inform the renewal of the MoU between NCAD and UCD in 2017

#### **2. a. UCD merger** A merger is no longer under consideration.

**b. Joint Professional Master of Education (PME)** plans are on hold and a more self-critical self-evaluation would clarify if this objective is in fact suspended. The commentary would indicate it has as the participating institutions do not see the benefit of a joint programme.

#### **3. Establish an Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) with UCD, TCD and MIE**

TCD and UCD have agreed an MOU setting out a framework to advance the ITE so it has, in name in least, been established. However, the report of progress admits that the actual operationalisation of the ITE has proved challenging, most evidently in the joint provision of teacher education. There has been collaboration on other objectives such as joint CPD programmes and an eBook of combined research. The four HEIs also reported to have deepened their engagement through the process of developing their submission for HEA PATH funding to increase access to teacher education.

NCAD states that reflecting upon the disparity in reporting against the establishment of the Institute of Education by NCAD and UCD, it would be fair to say that 'green' (excellent progress) is founded on a narrow interpretation of the 2016 target – 'consolidate learning and set out continuing network of model for joint activities'. The basis of this assessment being learning within the partnership, achievements in respect of collaborative research, work in progress and agreement on a framework for its advancement.

NCAD responded that in respect of collaboration between NCAD and IADT, significant engagement will be required to identify meaningful and mutually beneficial opportunities for partnership. It is fair to say that significant attention has not been given by either institution to achieving this.

**National Policy Context:**

NCAD acknowledge at several points in their SER the challenges within the cluster and the related collaboration by partners in the Institute of Education. They also reflect that *'the wider potential of the Dublin 1 cluster has not yet been harnessed to the extent possible in terms of maximising synergies...although some progress is being made across axes of the cluster'*. There is no specific reference to the impact of the regional skills fora.

**Critical evaluation and feedback:**

The difficulties that NCAD experienced in the early cycles of strategic dialogue led to a revised compact being submitted in which the college had to take on board very individualised feedback from the HEA arising from cycles 2.

While the excellent/adequate progress status of two of the cluster objectives should be questioned, overall there is an honesty to the report on the extent of progress. There is also a sense that collaboration in this cluster is largely reliant on the two major players. Throughout the strategic dialogue process there has been a limited sense of collaboration between IADT and NCAD. The focus on the merger with UCD may have been a distraction in this regard but in art and design education the potential for stronger collaboration and synergies in a few domains should be encouraged in the next compact.

NCAD states that in respect of the ITE partnership, the observation that the partnership is largely reliant on the two major players is a fair assessment, although the role/view of The Teaching Council is also an important factor in the effectiveness of partnership initiatives.

Based on the compact, there is limited sense of collaboration by NCAD and IADT. NCAD point to a positive development in the form of the joint MA in Spatial Arts Visualisation between UCD, IADT and NCAD, the first intake on which is scheduled for 2018-19.

NCAD does not cite evidence of national or international benchmarking of the D1 cluster or their role within this cluster.

NCAD admits that in respect of international benchmarking as both a practice and an element of reporting, and in relation to engagement with Regional Skills fora, there is room for improvement.

The target for the merger with UCD has been removed. However, the target for the first cohort of ITE students remains and should be adjusted if the PME is not proceeding.

## 2. Participation, equal access and lifelong learning:

### Initial commentary:

There is a clear commitment by NCAD to developing routes of access to the college in tandem with partnerships with the wider community in which the college is located. There have been some very interesting initiatives developed with the Digital Hub in Dublin 8. This is to be welcomed in view of the commitments in the National Access Plan to develop regional and community partnerships for increasing access.

All three objectives are making progress, noting that part of objective 1 has been suspended, but there are grounds for optimism that this will be reactivated as part of NCAD's new strategic plan and the next compact.

### **1a. Introduction of a part time degree programme**

As above, this objective was deprioritised in 2016 so that NCAD could concentrate on the core delivery of full time programmes. However, it is continuing to be an ambition in the new strategic plan and is likely to feature in the college's compact for 2017 on. In 2018-19 NCAD will add to the existing extensive flexible mature student provision through the consolidation of the existing modularised minor awards and the introduction of a major award at Level 8.

### **1b. Collaborative programmes: Community Based Learning for Young Adults**

Since 2014, NCAD has grown community-based learning partnerships from 2 to 16. Success is noted about the afterschool programme for young people, the digital pathways project and the entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation summer camps for second level students which were developed in response to a call by the HEA.

### **2. Increase in number of Access students**

NCAD has grown the number of entrants through its access programme from 16 to 31 over the course of the compact.

### **3. Accreditation for CPD in Education**

Over 500 teachers (primary and secondary) are enrolled on CPD courses in NCAD. The compact objective of accreditation for these programmes is the subject of discussions with the Teaching Council. This might be clarified in further dialogue with NCAD.

The ITE are also progressing collaboration between partners in the provision of CPD.

### National Policy Context:

NCAD's community based partnerships, access routes, pathways from further education and ambitions to develop part-time provision are supportive of objectives in the *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-2019*.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

The report would be strengthened by a more outcome based reporting on the impact of

the community partnerships, specifically on rates of access by target groups to NCAD.

HEA data indicates that while NCAD has strong participation levels by mature students and those with disabilities, participation rates by target socio-economic groups in the college is much lower than the national average.

NCAD states that from its perspective, the reservations being expressed in respect of access by target socio-economic groups are not entirely fair and provided the following information:

- NCAD has 32 linked DEIS band secondary schools and 21 primary schools with whom we actively engage. Most of these schools also link with UCD and TCD. Our sense is that for a very small College the range of schools we engage with is relatively high.
- For 2016/17 we had 96 students registered with the Access Service, with 80 in receipt of a NCAD Access Grant under socio-economic strand support.

There are also discipline-specific challenges in respect of participation by groups experiencing economic disadvantage. Wider social anxiety and poor understanding of art and design is an obstacle to taking up Art and Design opportunities (what job will I/my child get from this major investment of resources?). Also, there are real obstacles beyond college such as the degree to which the cultural industry relies on unpaid labour due to low levels of state funding and philanthropy.)

In view of the 2016 PATH submission by NCAD it would be useful if this objective had built in further reference to how CPD provided by NCAD and ITE partners supports the raising of expectations among students in primary and second level education in relation to their higher education potential, including their potential to access teacher training. (National Access Plan objectives 1.7 and 1.8). There is always more that one can do; indeed, following up on the observation that more might be done in respect of formal benchmarking against practice elsewhere may prove productive.

There is no national or international benchmarking of NCAD's performance in the access domain. Nor is there reference to collaboration by NCAD with cluster partners around access. For example, as entry to art college is portfolio based NCAD is not part of the HEAR access route, however IADT have just joined this scheme. NCAD responds that: they operate a supplementary admissions scheme that mirrors both the HEAR and DARE schemes.

There may scope for both colleges to consider how their respective admission systems support increased access to art and design education by students from target socio-economic groups. Participation from these groups is below average in both NCAD and IADT. The operation of strict portfolio entry may also be acting as a barrier and NCAD should consider this issue.

NCAD states that, 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 school and those who participate in NCAD'S access programme. Concessions on the portfolio score are given to applicants who meet socio-economic criteria.

- The College will be undertaking an examination of the relationship between portfolio score upon entry to NCAD and subsequent achievement in examinations in art and design within the College. However, portfolio submission is ‘the industry standard’ for art and design colleges internationally in terms of assessing eligibility for third level study.

While NCAD have developed a range of collaborations with UCD, there is no reference to a shared service in the area of access and how this might support targeting of disadvantaged communities in the Dublin region.

NCAD states that it is fair to say that there has only been limited collaboration between partners in respect of access. These include a joint conference/event at UCD for “a sharing of practice” and NCAD has also met with TCD regarding the CFES (College for Every Student) potential within its programme but it did not have the resources to follow through on this. In this context, the HEA PATH initiative is valuable and will support the cluster in working more closely in relation to access and participation. NCAD is open to collaboration with all partners within the D1 cluster in respect of Access and Participation.

### 3. Excellent teaching and learning and quality of student experience:

#### Initial commentary:

There are five objectives under this heading, four are reported to have been fully achieved and one has been suspended.

#### **1. Establish NCAD as a college of engaged learning**

There have been two cycles of the MA in Socially Engaged Art & Further Education. The current group of eight students will complete in June 2017 with a further intake for September 2018. The second cohort of students on the BA Visual Culture have completed their degree in June 2017 and this programme is now established as an undergraduate degree within NCAD.

#### **2. Identify and reward excellence in teaching**

This objective was deprioritised however it is signalled that the college will re-engage with this objective in the next HEA compact.

#### **3. Centre of Excellence in Teaching Practice**

The objective is to increase recognition and student numbers from EU and non-EU countries. The number of fee-paying non-EU students has increased from 8 in 2013 to 12 in 2016. There is a formal arrangement with the International Office in UCD. NCAD has launched a BA (International) as approved by UCD in April 2016.

#### **4. Leading/responding to the Transitions Agenda within the Art and Design Sector**

NCAD does not operate points- based entry in that places are offered on a portfolio score. An internal review of admission/recruitment practices has been completed and a proposal for change has been agreed by NCADs academic community.

#### **5. Retention rates**

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 and in response to this a working group has been established to make recommendations to address areas of concern. The college has put measures in place to monitor and address any issues.

#### National Policy Context:

NCAD comments that while they were not a member of the DES Transitions Group they have nonetheless progressed with their own review to support implementation of the *Transitions agenda*.

NCAD is mindful of addressing a dip in retention rates. There is reference to how the HEA progression reports have supported the development of policy and practice by the college.

There is no reference to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) results and how this supports improvements in the student experience.

NCAD adds that their students have participated in the national Irish Survey of Student Engagement since 2014. The ISSE, alongside the annual end-of-year surveys conducted by

NCAD, is a source of valuable information on students' experiences of education within NCAD. The outcomes of the survey are used inform NCAD of which areas require further investigation and analysis. Survey results are sent to NCAD in Excel; a comparison report and summary report are drawn up by the Quality Office for Senior Management discussion and the report is also discussed at NCAD Programmes Board with recommendations suggested to Academic Council and is available to all staff on Google Drive.

As part of QA developments initiated in 2016/17, Department and School response to external examiners reports and annual student surveys are being recorded as part of annual planning meetings, and reported to NCAD Programmes Board. NCAD Programmes Board then discusses the reports and responses, and will be working with Schools to generate and publish an annual quality enhancement statement with a strong focus upon student experience and the learning environment.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

NCAD indicates that it has taken on board HEA feedback from earlier cycles.

Overall this section is comprehensive if lengthy and input based in some parts. There are many examples of good practice provided.



## 4. High quality, internationally competitive research and innovation:

### Initial commentary:

NCAD reflect that progress on this objective has been mixed. Six objectives were identified, two are reported to be fully achieved, and four have not progressed as much as was hoped. Staffing, capacity, space/buildings and finance (institutional and student) recur as reasons why this was so and a way forward is presented in most instances.

#### **1.To grow the number of PhD students**

NCAD had a target of 40 PhD students by 2016 – the outcome was 26. The College note that several considerations require further reflection including clarity regarding the basis for targets (e.g. supervisory capacity); the funding landscape for postgraduates (e.g. few IRC scholarships for art and design scholars). For the next compact a Doctoral Research Group will be set up to support the development of doctoral pathways.

#### **2.To scope and develop a structured doctorate route**

NCAD has launched a structured PhD programme on which there are nine students.

#### **3.To establish the Research Institute in Art and Design**

The aim is to be an international centre of research through a visiting fellow programme and other measures to enhance the international profile of the college. The target for 2016 was for 38 Fellows – the outcome was 31 and 11 visiting fellows over a 36-month period. The target has been achieved; however, a dedicated space has not yet been allocated.

#### **4.Researcher Support via Research Institute**

A €25k seed fund has been established to implement a small grant and research leave scheme to be introduced on a phased basis.

#### **5.Income from Research Development**

This objective is to quantify growth in research income. An income of €330,500 was generated in 2016. This fell short of the €450k target. 62% of the NCAD innovation and engagement portfolio generated income and the remaining percentages is undertaken for the high value teaching and learning partnership. There is need for a more balanced portfolio.

#### **6.Establish international design research project (with UCD and IADT)**

While good progress has been made on this objective, there is further work needed subject to availability of funding. Prof. Alex Milton was appointed to Director of Design Research within UCD last year and is currently Head of School of Design in NCAD. NCAD is taking the opportunity to work on a number of developing projects through this initiative.

National Policy Context:

NCAD is a partner in two international bids submitted in 2017 under Horizon 2020.

There is no reference to the National Skills Strategy or Innovation 2020. There is reference to application for Enterprise Ireland funding and good success in this regard.

Critical evaluation and feedback:

This section is quite process oriented and it is not easy to determine what is the ultimate impact locally or nationally of some of the objectives for research and innovation. For example, is the aim of increasing the number of PhD students or visiting fellows an increase in numbers and good outcome in its own right? What is the benefit and impact of this increase? Perhaps a smaller number of objectives tailored to NCAD's resources and staff capacity would be more strategic at this point, as would a clearer link with how more researchers and research income are needed to advance the frontiers of knowledge and innovation in a few well-chosen areas where NCAD wants to play to its strengths.

NCAD agrees with this assessment and will take it into consideration when considering its objectives for the next compact. Despite the challenges in trying to reach its ambitions for supporting the research culture of NCAD, it still remains a vital facet of the College and it believes that that it has many benefits for the college.

- Supporting research and a vibrant research culture has to do with the richness and depth of student experience, as well as enhancing student recruitment. It also has a bearing upon both staff recruitment and retention.
- Research is vital for the international profile of the College (student recruitment), and the calibre of international collaboration and partnership initiatives that are possible.
- It is also important in terms of the role of the College in enriching and enhancing the vibrancy and standing of art and design in Ireland. The cluster based collaboration with UCD and IADT on the international design project and the link back to undergraduate education is positive.

## 5. Enhanced engagement with enterprise and the community and embedded knowledge exchange:

### Initial commentary:

There are two objectives under this domain and both are reported to have fully progressed.

**1. To be actively engaged in knowledge exchange partnerships with a wide range of organisations to share NCAD's knowledge and expertise to benefit the culture, society and the economy.**

The number of live projects with external partners is 60 (target was 25), the number of events held in partnerships with other organisation is 19 and the % of students engaged in real-world learning projects was 75%.

### **2. Commercialisation with NovaUCD and EI**

NCAD continues to develop its commercialisation pipeline. In 2016, NCAD innovation and engagement met 7 of its 9 agreed KPIs. The NCAD- Nova-UCD consortium maintained high standards with Knowledge Transfer Ireland. Capacity issues are reported to be impeding further growth and should be discussed further with NCAD. NCAD states that in respect of the capacity issues it experiences, the NCAD Act of 1972 is an obstacle and its efforts to progress an amendment of the legislation have not yet been successful.

### National Policy Context:

There is no reference to how these objectives link to those in the *Action Plan(s) for Jobs*; the *National Skills Strategy 2025*; the *National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship* or, in the case of community engagement, the *National Access Plan*.

NCAD agrees that this was an oversight on its part and reflects a wider need to be more attentive to articulating the relationship between our practices and wider national and international policy.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

The reporting on the two objectives is very focused on processes and quantitative outcome. The collaboration with UCD is to be commended and there is clear progress within the rubrics of this area of policy. The wider impact on NCAD and nationally is less clear or the join up with other policy and compact domains. The overarching statement is helpful in providing a sense of the institutional context for this work.

## 6. Enhanced internationalisation:

### Initial commentary:

There is one objective in this domain. The College reports that the target for 2015 – to develop an internationalisation strategy – has progressed. This is to be delivered with support from UCD's International Office.

NCAD aims to have a world presence in art and design education through a diversification of student recruitment, internationally recognised research and knowledge exchange partnerships

### National Policy Context:

There is no reference to Irish *Educated, Globally Connected: An international education strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020*. There is reference to the Erasmus programme.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

There is no evidence provided of national or international benchmarking of NCAD's performance on internationalisation. The report is focused on numerical outcomes.

## 7. Institutional consolidation:

### Initial commentary:

There are three objectives under this domain. Two are indicated to have been achieved and the third, in relation to systems and workload management has progressed.

#### **1. Deepen relationship with UCD up to a merger**

This objective has already been discussed in relation to regional clusters, objective 1. An alliance is progressing; a merger will not proceed.

#### **2. Trilateral cluster NCAD/UCD/IADT**

There is a comprehensive report of academic and other collaborations with UCD. There is one reference to work between the three HEIs, on the MA in Spatial Arts.

#### **3. Systems and Workload management**

There has been good progress on this objective regarding NCAD's previous difficulties, there has been an overhaul of governance and HR procedures. Some ongoing challenges are identified, to do with changing the degree structure. Progress on addressing these and other ongoing challenges will be raised in dialogue with the college.

### National Policy Context:

The HEA *Review of Workload Management Models in Irish HEIs* in 2014 is referenced.

### Critical evaluation and feedback:

As in section 1 above, collaboration in this cluster is largely reliant on the major players. There has been a limited sense since cycle 1 of collaboration between IADT and NCAD and this has been confirmed in dialogue with each college. However, the exploration of the potential for stronger collaboration and synergies between these two colleges should be encouraged in the next compact.

NCAD accepts the feedback offered and sees the value in exploring the potential for stronger collaboration and synergies between IADT and NCAD but believes significant engagement will be required to identify meaningful and mutually beneficial opportunities for partnership.

The very last objective on systems and workload management is more significant. There has been satisfactory progress on addressing governance and organisational issues but ongoing challenges are identified.

NCAD offers the following further information in respect of systems and workload management. Wider governance and financial challenges facing the College mean that they have not given questions of systems and workload management the attention they might wish. Nonetheless, achievements include:

- An upgrade to the Student Records system that is allowing on-line registration and fee payment for the entire student body. This will increase productivity and enhance the accuracy of the College's records.
- A new Resource Allocation Model from which the entire human and spatial resources of the College can be mapped.
- A new Academic Demand model for the integration of student numbers, teaching associated with each module, the projection of required staffing and the availability of contract staff.

In terms of Workload Management in particular, work is underway on gathering information on, understanding and learning from practice elsewhere (NUIG, as per the case study included in the HEA's most recent update on the Compact).