

National College of Art and Design (NCAD)

Cycle 3 Outcome

Performance funding in full will be released in respect of the 2017 budget allocation.

In assessing performance, we have relied upon the self-evaluation report submitted by your institution, the reflections on performance document prepared by the HEA, and the discussion at our recent strategic dialogue meetings. Consideration was also given to any points of clarification as provided by your institution at our meetings or in related correspondence.

The self-evaluation report, and subsequent discussion at the bilateral meeting, have shown that progress can be demonstrated across all compact domains. The HEA acknowledges the progress the college has made in relation to finances and governance but considers that the college needs to continue to give due attention and concern to risk management; in addition, the college should provide evidence of implementation of governance and financial management reforms. The three-year financial plan which has been agreed with the HEA must continue to be progressed and monitored closely.

There are areas of significant progress which include the ongoing implementation of the new undergraduate degree structure and development of relationships with other institutions nationally and internationally. While noting the need for attention on the financial and governance issues above, the HEA also considers that the college should be mindful of the need to set out a strategic direction for its activities in the context of its mission. The HEA would urge the college to give more attention to the long-term aspirations and vision for the college.

In summary, the HEA expects the positive trajectory demonstrated by NCAD to continue, and looks forward to clearly articulated progress in future rounds of the strategic dialogue process. Having regard to the issues which arose in the consideration of the NCAD report in 2015, the institute is demonstrating improved performance against mission-coherent objectives through a reasonably analytical and probing self-evaluation report and use of other data sources. It will be important that NCAD sustain this progress in future cycles. The college also needs to improve its approach to and use of benchmarking as a means to set priorities and undertake self-evaluation. The college is requested to address areas of concern as a priority. NCAD should have regard to the specific institutional feedback provided in this document and in the reflections on performance document in order to continue to improve its overall performance in future cycles of strategic dialogue.

Minutes of Strategic Dialogue Cycle 3 bilateral meeting, 12 September 2016

In attendance

Members of the Senior Management Team and HEA Executive, along with two External Advisers (Dr Andrée Sursock and Dr John Hegarty), met with the institutional representatives as set out below. The meeting was chaired by HEA Interim Chief Executive, Dr Anne Looney. A process auditor was also present at the meeting.

NCAD representatives

- Mr Bernard Hanratty, Acting Director
- Mr Damian Downes, College Secretary and Registrar
- Professor Siún Hanrahan, Head of Academic Affairs
- Professor Dervil Jordan, Head of School of Education

The HEA welcomed National College of Art and Design (NCAD) to the meeting and gave an overview of the strategic dialogue process and the context in which the process operates. NCAD was commended on its progress and for a self-evaluation report that provides evidence of reflection on performance and identification of issues arising. The HEA is aware that all higher education institutions are operating in a challenging financial environment, while continuing to respond to increasing student demand. The system has demonstrated that it continues to provide high quality higher education and to respond to national priorities. The HEA also acknowledges the progress the College has made over the recent past in relation to finances and governance. While the institution's performance continues to progress and the HEA expects that it will continue to do so, some concerns remain. These concerns should be addressed by the College's leadership to ensure that it meets its full potential. In particular, the HEA notes the following issues with the College's performance:

- The HEA notes and welcomes the revisions made to the College's original compact format. The HEA understands that the College needs time to demonstrate delivery and performance on the objectives and targets set out in the revised compact.
- There still exists considerable risk to the College's financial position; and there is a need to give continuing attention to governance issues and to provide evidence of implementation of governance and financial management reforms.
- The HEA considers that, as a next step, the College should give greater consideration to its strategic direction. The HEA would urge the College to give more attention to the long-term aspirations, direction and vision for the College now that its financial position is returning to sustainability.
- The HEA also considers that the College should pay due attention to accreditation arrangements, as these may change over the coming years.
- The HEA notes the existing linkages the College has developed with the further education sector. The College should develop these linkages further, particularly through the cluster.
- Overall, the HEA considers that the College is on a positive trajectory and there is a good framework in place for the College to be considered amongst the high performing institutions

within the Irish higher education system. However, this will take time and effort for the College to achieve over the coming years.

NCAD opening remarks

NCAD acknowledged the support of the HEA on governance matters during a period of financial difficulty. The College is moving towards stability and sees the challenge as positive.

The College is looking at priorities and strategy – these remain absent from the current compact because of the focus on the core challenges facing the institution at the moment.

Long-term vision for the college

The NCAD/UCD relationship was predicated on a merger which will not now happen, but the academic and collaborative relations between the two institutions remain strong. NCAD has the status of 'recognised college' with UCD, and that status has been extended for a further year. UCD are continuing to look at their strategic position in that regard. The formal relationship between the two institutions continues to work well.

On clusters, NCAD is involved in a number of collaborative programmes:

- With TCD and UCD in medical devices design
- With UCD on interaction design
- With UCD and IADT on a spatial design programme.

Risk management

Risk management was discussed – including, financial, managerial and academic risk. This is important essential foundation work, which will, on completion, put the college in a position to consider longer term strategic directions.

Financial position

On financial issues the Colleges 2012-2013 Financial Statements have been approved by the C&AG and are published. The 2013-2014 Financial Statements were completed in July 2016 and the field work for the 2014-2015 Financial Statements was completed in November 2016. The college is making progress on addressing its financial position.

Among the challenges the College has faced is that related to the move from a four-year to a three-year degree cycle. This has been a priority for the College and has taken substantial energy to deliver. It led to one off issues where the College had to accommodate a double cohort as it moved from the four to three-year cycle, with corresponding funding impacts and a requirement for staff restructuring. NCAD is balancing these issues, but there are also other issues such as the need to address ICT infrastructure requirements as soon as possible.

The change to the degree cycle has had the knock-on effect of requiring greater fourth-level capacity, for expansion in research support and for PhD supervision.

Teaching and learning

NCAD has seen a rise in the non-progression of students from year to year.

The degree of transition and change in the College has made some of the factors that contribute to this difficult to distinguish. Among the likely factors are modularisation of courses, the common entry first year experience, and the increase in the number of each year. Also, in the previous four-year programme there was a longer lead-in to the ultimate subject choice, and that has now been brought forward in the three-year model.

In response NCAD is moving to offer more supports to first-year students as they arrive in the College. There is also a review of the first-year programme to ensure that it clearly reflects the breadth of opportunities and study paths open to students. The access and retention position at NCAD is otherwise good, as NCAD considers that it has historically been very good in this space.

In relation to access, the College focuses on schools within the region. As an embedded part of their curriculum Education students undertake targeted projects with primary schools. NCAD also engages with second level students by helping them to prepare and exhibit portfolios, student shadowing, 12 summer portfolio school awards, and artist mentoring. There is also a portfolio preparation project – this can be a difficult challenge for students. There is also an access day where up to 250 students can experience NCAD through a structured workshop.

Community-based education is strong in the access programme too.

International relationships

NCAD has done well in QS rankings, ranking 40th in Academic Reputation and 62nd overall. Academic Reputation represents 90 per cent of the overall weighting in this ranking system. The ranking scores are provided by international colleagues in the fields of Art and Design. There is an Erasmus agenda, but NCAD recognises that it needs to be more aware of available opportunities. In particular, NCAD has a good reputation in theory, design history and contemporary art practice. NCAD has had a presence on Turner Prize juries, and through the external examining activity of its staff is represented at Goldsmith's and other institutions internationally. So NCAD has the capability and will move to leverage that again and exploit the College's good reputation.

Other business

The College raised a number of headings under other business:

- Financing – NCAD raised issues in relation to its pension scheme and funding levels more generally
- Governance – there is a new governance master plan for the College
- NCAD Act – this is a matter for review
- Capital – the College considers that it needs to take advantage of capital opportunities that are arising.