Performance Agreement 2024–2028 between the HEA and the National College of Art & Design

NCAD DUBLIN

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

Preamble

This Performance Agreement is established between the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the National College of Art & Design in accordance with the System Performance Framework 2023–28. The Agreement identifies the National College of Art & Design's performance objectives and the associated implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes.

This Performance Agreement will be used by the HEA to measure and assess the strategic performance of the institution via an annual cycle of reporting against the Agreement and Strategy and Performance Dialogue. The National College of Art & Design should notify the HEA in writing of any proposed modifications to the Performance Agreement with a supporting rationale when submitting the annual report. Any agreed amendments to the Performance Agreement will be recorded by the HEA with the supporting rationale. This information may inform future monitoring and review processes and inform HEA reporting at a system level.

The HEA and the National College of Art & Design acknowledge that policy underlying some or all of this Performance Agreement is subject to review from time to time by the HEA or Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The HEA and the National College of Art & Design agree that if changes need to be made to the Performance Agreement because of such a review, the HEA will notify the institution in writing.

This Performance Agreement will be published on the HEA website in line with the HEA mandate to measure and assess institutions' strategic performance with a view to strengthening the performance of the higher education and research system and of Higher Education Institutions, and to ensure institutions' accountability. It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the information presented in the Performance Agreement (including qualitative and quantitative data) is accurate.

The term of this Performance Agreement is from September 2024 to August 2028 unless terminated earlier by agreement.
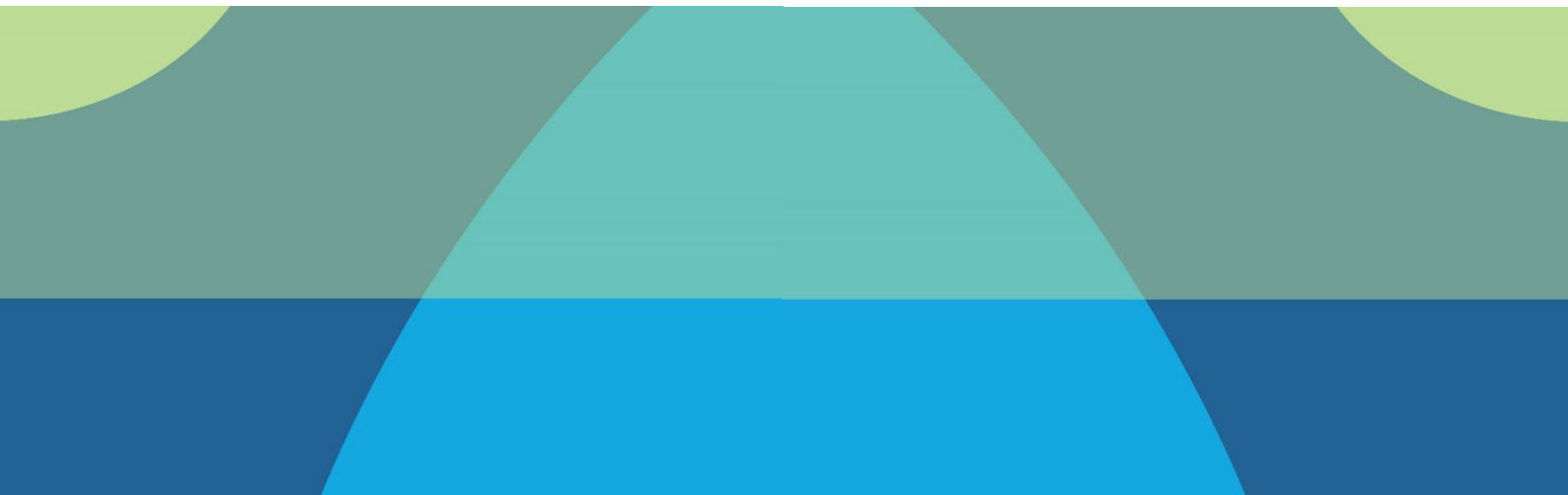
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Performance Agreement 2024–2028

Section 1: Context

Overview of the institution and its context

Vision, Mission & Strategy

Founded as the Dublin Society Drawing School in 1746, today NCAD offers the richest and most diverse education in art and design in Ireland. In the QS World Rankings, NCAD is ranked 60th in the world for art and design, 23rd in Europe and 1st in Ireland. We believe in the transformative potential of an art and design education, and our **Vision** is to change the world through bold and curious thinking, making and doing. At NCAD, we educate students to be a creative force, and to learn using imagination and action, through bold and curious thinking, through making and doing.

Bold and curious learning is agile and responsive. It recognises the power and value to our society and economy of learning through art and design, not for it. Our mission is to ensure every student has access to a learning experience that is dynamic, resourced and transformative.

The best creative practice responds to the time in which it is made. We are acutely aware of the changing nature of creative practice, the relevance of our connection to the world beyond the campus, and the importance of forging connections. We are committed to connecting with local, national and international contexts, and focusing on the needs of society and all our communities.

Three areas of focus are identified within [NCAD's Strategic Plan, 2019–2024](#):

1. Embed BOLD and CURIOUS LEARNING at our core

    ● Underpin learning by a shared academic ethos

    ● Support bold and curious teaching

    ● Support and strengthen our research culture

    ● Develop resources to support learning, making and digital literacy

    ● Develop resources to support students' NCAD Journey

2. CONNECT and be CONNECTED

    ● Place connectivity at the core of learning and research

    ● Connect students' and staff's creative practice into a full range of contexts

- Further diversify our student body to reflect the diversity of society

3. An EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION

- Work together better

- Campus facilities development

- Operational effectiveness and strength

Clear structures for implementation were articulated as part of the 2019–2024 Strategic Plan, and good progress has been made in delivering the strategy. Realisation of the strategy was supported by four Strategic Projects and two Enabling Projects, with clear leadership and reporting structures. Implementation of the strategy was mapped across two phases: Phase One, focused upon defining need and building the foundations for development, was completed across all projects between 2019 and 2022; Phase Two, focused upon initiating pilots and activation plans, is well underway and due for completion by the end of 2024. This strategy was critical in providing the College with a clear road map to move forward following a protracted period of instability, and was very much focused upon building institutional capacity. Many of the objectives from this strategy will be further developed in our next strategy. We anticipate that our next strategy will focus upon articulating and achieving our potential, nationally and internationally.

Governance

Overall governance of NCAD is led by An Bord in accordance with the National College of Art and Design Act 2022/1971. An Bord is the governing board of the College and is appointed by the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. NCAD has been a recognised college of the National University of Ireland since 1996, and in 2011 became a Recognised College of UCD. As a Recognised College of UCD, our degree programmes are validated by UCD (through their University Programmes Board).

The NCAD Learning Experience

- Year 1 Studio Programme

At NCAD, we believe that finding the right pathway is an important part of the transition into third-level art and design learning. The first year of the undergraduate studio-based programmes at NCAD is about supporting students to discover the studio pathway that is right for their individual goals and abilities.

- Work-based Learning

NCAD is committed to ensuring that its programmes are responsive to the changing nature of creative practice — supporting students to test their creative practice in real-world contexts beyond the studio space during their time at NCAD.

Studio Plus/Visual Culture Plus is an optional year of study at NCAD, taken between year 2 and final

year, offering students supported and supervised opportunities to test their creative practice in 'real-world' contexts. All undergraduate students in the College are thus offered the opportunity to undertake a work placement or work-based project as part of their undergraduate programme.

Student Numbers

NCAD Registered Students 2023/24 — Trimester 2		
Programme Type	**Full-time & Part-time**	**Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)**
Total UG – Certificates & Diplomas	174	51.42
Total UG – Degree	1,057	1,057
Total PG – Masters & PhD	138	
Total PG – Professional & CPD	85	20.64
TOTAL (excl. Erasmus)	**1,454**	
Total with Erasmus (T2)	**1,483**	

The NCAD Learning Environment

NCAD is a creative community; our Academic and Professional Support staff are dedicated to creating a rich, research-led and lively learning environment for all students; staff are strongly research active and 73% of our academic staff have a Masters or higher qualification.

Staff Type	Total	FTE
Academic	124	80.7
Professional, Managerial and Support Staff (PMSS)	126	102.4
Researcher	2	1.1
Total	**252**	**184.3**

Approach to the development of the Performance Agreement

The NCAD bodies involved in development include:

- College Management Team
- Teaching & Learning Strategic Project Team
- Research Office
- Universal Design Working Group
- Student Neurodiversity Society
- NCAD Design Labs (PIs)
- NCAD Green Team
- Performance Objective Project Teams
- An Bord (Governing Authority)
- Academic Council

The development and refinement of each performance objective was led by a member of NCAD's College Management Team and supported by an appropriate cross-College Performance Objective Project Team. Regular updates on progress were reported to the College Management Team (CMT), with feedback from the CMT communicated to the wider Project Team by the Performance Objective Lead. Progress in respect of the development of the Performance Agreement was also reported to Academic Council, with feedback from Academic Council communicated to Project Teams by the Performance Objective Lead.

To date, the following stakeholders have informed the identification of performance objectives:

- Creative Futures Academy Team
- National Tertiary Office
- National Learning Network
- Creative Futures Academy Industry Council
- ETBs (Education and Training Boards):
  - City of Dublin ETB
  - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (DDLETB)
  - Kilkenny-Carlow (KCETB)

Final approval of the Performance Agreement was confirmed by CMT on 11 September 2024 and will be confirmed by An Bord at its meeting of 5 November 2024.

Progress in respect of the implementing the Performance Agreement will be reported to An Bord and Academic Council on a quarterly basis, with feedback communicated to CMT and thence to Project Teams.

Performance Objective Leads have worked with the colleagues most closely associated with delivery of the performance objective to identify indicators of success and the kinds of internal and external data sources that could best support monitoring and evaluation of progress through specific and measurable targets. Key internal data sources are NCAD's Student Record system, annual student and staff surveys, NCAD's Research Office and NCAD's Teaching & Learning Office. The HEA's System Performance Framework Dashboard and StudentSurvey.ie are key external data sources.

Climate, environment, and sustainability

The National College of Art & Design is located on Thomas Street, in the historic Liberties area of Dublin 8. The campus is situated on the site of the Powers Whiskey distillers, from whom the College bought the site in 1980. The College has been continually trying to improve and expand the spaces in which it is located to meet the demands of students and staff over the last 40 years. The buildings that house NCAD are varied in age, with a significant proportion being 'heritage' assets dating back to the 1800s (Granary, Clock, Admin). Our most recent buildings are the Design for Industry Building (1998) and our Gallery Space + Harry Clarke (2009).

Due to the age, size and required maintenance of heritage buildings, the scope of work to ensure these spaces are kept functional and efficient is significant. The College is currently undergoing talks with the HEA in regard to significant investment in remediation and development work. In the last year, a strategic development plan was created for the College that seeks to address issues concerning space, management and retrofitting of buildings. Decarbonisation and climate impact are elements of this planning that we intend to develop in more detail as we understand what level of funding is available.

As described in NCAD's Climate Action Roadmap (2023), in response to the ongoing issues with the Granary Building's existing heating system and internal aspirations to comply with the targets set out in the government's Climate Action Plan (CAP 2030/2050) to assist in decarbonisation of campus building assets, NCAD commissioned IN2 Engineering Design Partnership to carry out a due diligence survey of the Granary Building's heating system to provide an opinion on the condition of the existing system and to provide recommendations for replacing the existing campus heating system to comply with CAP 2030/2050 targets.

We are planning for a more significant CAP 2030/50 Energy Analysis in 2024 that will form the basis of the feasibility study for larger works required. This relates to the retrofitting of our heritage buildings and replacement heating systems.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

The Head of the School of Education at NCAD is the chairperson of NCAD's EDI working group and a member of the College Management Team. This has supported early-stage consideration of EDI as a lens through which to consider emerging performance objectives by the College Management Team.

As we continue to develop and refine our performance objectives, consultation with the EDI working group will play a key role in assessing and mitigating any negative effects or impacts of our objectives.

Discussion and development of our performance objectives has been strongly informed by:

- Our experience of previous rounds of the Strategy and Performance Dialogue, particularly the challenges experienced by the College in the first round

- Our most recent Institutional Quality Reviews (2017 and 2022)

- Significant internal and external audit and benchmarking processes that were undertaken as part of the following:

  o NCAD Research Strategic Project

  o NCAD Teaching and Learning Strategic Project

  o Development of HCI-funded Creative Futures Academy initiative

  o Athena Swan Ireland self-assessment

Structures in place for evaluation

Level 1: Implementation, monitoring and assessment of Performance Objectives

- Each Performance Objective Project Team will be responsible for overseeing delivery of initiatives associated with the performance objective.

- Quarterly reports on progress will be brought by the Performance Objective Lead to the College Management Team.

- Updates on progress in respect of implementation will be reported to Academic Council and An Bord twice yearly.

Level 2: Assessment of Progress

- Each Performance Objective Team (led by a member of the College Management Team) will be responsible for devising and implementing an assessment strategy in respect of progress and impact, with a twice-yearly monitoring structure and an annual formal assessment of progress and impact.

- The College Management Team as a whole will review and evaluate the significance of the annual formal assessment of progress and impact, working with Performance Objective Teams to understand any issues arising and agree remediation strategies, and reporting on assessment of progress and impact to Academic Council and An Bord annually.

Level 3: Authorisation of Reports on Progress to the HEA

- Overall responsibility for reporting on the Performance Agreement rests with the Head of Academic Affairs, who is a member of the NCAD College Management Team and in attendance at meetings of An Bord.

- The annual formal assessment of progress and impact undertaken by the Performance Objective Project Team, including review feedback and remediation strategies where needed, will form the basis for Reports on Progress to the HEA. The Report will be assembled by the Head of Academic Affairs in collaboration with Performance Objective Leads, reviewed by the wider College Management Team and submitted to An Bord for approval.

Wherever possible, existing data collection and evaluation processes will be incorporated into the assessment of progress and impact for each performance objective. As we develop and refine our performance objectives, including devising the assessment strategy for each one, clear mechanisms and timelines for all aspects of the assessment strategy will be identified. Challenges or gaps relating to data will also be considered as part of this process.

Section 2: Performance Objectives

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.

Pillar: Teaching & Learning

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

Rationale for Performance Objective 1

Basis in Strategy

Student experience and success are at the centre of NCAD's strategy; embedding bold and curious learning is a core commitment and diversity is a core value. This performance objective forms a key part of delivering on our commitment to ensuring that every student has access to a learning experience that is dynamic, resourced and transformative. An environment that is inclusive of diverse learners both enables and challenges students to innovate and interrogate, and to take risks in their learning, and it equips them to expand the boundaries of creative practice and, as our mission states, to change the world.

Fundamental to delivering NCAD's Strategic Plan 2019–2024 was a series of 'Strategic Projects', including one focused upon building a Teaching and Learning culture that drives and supports bold and curious learning, founded upon a rich and robust culture of teaching and learning practice and enhancement (T&LE). The basis for this strategic project was identifying and developing shared priorities for T&LE amongst staff who teach at NCAD. A summary of information gathered through extensive interviews with Staff Who Teach (SWT) during November and December 2021 is given below:

Summary of Audit of Ambition and Practice in Teaching and Learning (T&L)

	Focus on the mediation of learning material	Focus on Disciplinary knowledge and practice[1]
Ambitions	SWT (*with prior experience in Education, as a field*) would like a deeper understanding of T&L — what works and why. Some SWT would like appropriate CPD around challenges they face in their work with students, e.g.: ● Diverse learning needs ● More sharing across departments ● Conversations: 'Framing the crit' ● How to facilitate emergence ● More input around environmental issues ● Addressing diversity and inclusion ● Setting up the learning environment ● How to break down tasks for students ● How to increase social engagement within the learning context ● How to integrate TEL (technology-enhanced learning) and f2f (face-to-face) learning	SWT (mostly *without prior access to Education as a field*) believe that the College is doing well and are sceptical about potential top-down T&L CPD. 'When teaching and learning is effective, it's a complex thing' Many wish to attend conferences. Many SWT are interested in expert presentations of different practices.
Practices	SWT employ many student-focused practices, including: ● peer learning ● scaffolding ● giving feedback ● acknowledging the diversity of learning paths that students may be on ● silent crits ● Visible Thinking routines ● group tutorials The School of Design has some good techniques for managing large groups. Iterative approach to planning for learning	Culture of expertise situates knowledge with the 'expert.' 'Over-reliance on 1-1 tutorial,' expert lectures, presentations, etc.

[1] CPD related to new digital technologies applicable to the different disciplines, Guest presentations of a more philosophical nature (ecological thinking, Othering and Belonging, etc.), combined with opportunities for reflection on how these topics impact Teaching & Learning.

Basis in Quality Assurance Processes

In both informal and formal feedback from staff (including the EDI survey linked to the Athena Swan process), anxiety has been expressed regarding capacity to support the diversity of learning needs presented by students at NCAD. This has been articulated directly by staff at College All-Staff meetings and through staff conversations with Subject External Examiners; for example, the Subject External Examiner for the BA in Jewellery & Objects made the following observation in 2023: "…if not put in place already, availability of relevant courses/training to support staff in relation to the increasing volume and varied nature of students with PONS [Profile of Needs summary]." Levels of engagement with neurodiversity initiatives — such as completion of the AHEAD Digital Badge in UDL by staff, and participation in the NCADSU's Neurodiversity Society by students — confirm both staff interest and student need.

NCAD's Annual End-of-Year Survey has shown a decrease in student satisfaction with the effectiveness of teaching practices in 2023 and 2024, which is a source of concern. Rectifying this aspect of the student experience is a high priority for the College.

External Evidence Base

SRS Data: The experience articulated by staff in terms of managing a learning environment inclusive of an increasing diversity of students, particularly in respect of neurodiversity, is reflected in the data published in the HEA's System Performance Dashboard (based upon returns from NCAD's SRS). At 32.9%, NCAD is above the national average of 13.9% of new entrants with a disability. Of the NCAD students supported by FSD, 49% are categorised as neurodiverse.

NCAD has recently joined the National Disability Access Route to Education (DARE); the first intake through this route was in September 2023. Through joining this scheme, NCAD now has access to data indicating DARE eligibility for incoming students, as determined by the cross-sectoral DARE eligibility review managed though the CAO. Based on this initial dataset of incoming students, it is now possible to track progression rates of registered students with a disability.

The latest dataset available from the HEA (2021/22) shows a 15% non-progression rate for new entrants who started in September 2021. This compares to a 14% non-progression rate for Level 8 in all disciplines across the sector and an 18% non-progression rate for Arts & Humanities in the same year. NCAD's non-progression rate had averaged 10% in the four-year period from 2016–2019, showing a significant increase in 2019/20 and 2021/22. This pattern is also evident on a sectoral level across all Level 8 and all institutions, with a similar pattern of increase showing between the years 2019/20 and 2021/22. We believe that this change in non-progression levels may be linked to the Covid period and the effects on student behaviours and learning that became more evident as the Covid restrictions were lifted. While some patterns of student behaviour exacerbated during Covid (reported general anxiety and stress levels and patterns of attendance) will continue to impact on retention rates, we are working to enable this pattern to unwind with a gradual return to the previous pattern and levels of non-progression.

StudentSurvey.ie: NCAD's indicator score for Effective Teaching Practices has been at or slightly above average for Ireland's HE sector. Given the consistency of the average indicator score year-on-year

across the HE sector, significant change may not be achieved through our efforts. Nonetheless, we would like to improve our overall performance in this respect.

As the survey did not happen in 2024 and may change significantly, monitoring the impact of efforts to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of teaching practices over the lifetime of the Performance Agreement will include monitoring our Annual End-of-Year Survey. We do not have an 'indicator score' structure as part of that survey. Consequently, in addition to monitoring the indicator score, we will monitor the responses to questions relating to effective teaching — the combined percentage of 'quite a bit' and 'very much' from the StudentSurvey, and the combined percentage of 'Good' and 'Very Good' from NCAD's Annual End-of-Year Survey.

Basis in National Policy

The inherent value of diversity — of ideas and students, as articulated in NCAD's Strategy — is at the centre of this performance objective and aligns strongly with national policy:

- The *National Access Plan 2022–2028* includes an overarching objective that our higher education institutions are inclusive, universally designed environments which support student success and outcomes, equity and diversity.

- The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* embraces the increasing diversity of students and emphasises the need to reflect upon and 'appreciate what teaching and learning approaches work best for different students in different situations' [section 3.10].

- Inclusivity is identified as a key value in *Student Success — A Guiding Framework*, with an emphasis upon developing institution systems, processes and practices to invite and support a diverse student and staff population — particularly in respect of teaching approaches and learning design.

- The student perspective, and teacher insights, articulated through *Making a Difference: A Student View of Excellent Teaching* (2019), reinforce this emphasis upon engaging students in a variety of ways as good teaching involves a variety of approaches which reflect the diversity of the student cohort.

- As articulated in *Next Steps for Teaching and Learning* (2021), EDI is a critical lens that must be further developed within Teaching & Learning so that all staff and students can succeed and thrive.

Nature of Performance Objective

Continuing development in a priority area: As an art and design college, NCAD offers many non-conventional approaches to learning and already self-consciously accommodates diverse learning needs. However, there is work to be done in ensuring that traditional NCAD practices, even where they are non-conventional, are not the only approach offered. A learning design that is determinedly inclusive suggests that institutions should offer multiple parallel approaches and not a singular approach.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 1

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and assessment rests with the Head of Academic Affairs (lead), supported by NCAD's Teaching & Learning Development Officer and Student Experience Manager. Oversight, particularly in support of monitoring and assessment, will rest with the Teaching and Learning Strategic Project Team, and the project lead will be accountable to the College Management Team.

A number of specific strategic initiatives will play a key role in ensuring progress against this performance objective.

- Under the auspices of PATH 4, NCAD has worked with AsIAm over the last two years to achieve our Autism Friendly HEI Candidate Badge and will continue to implement our action plan, working with AsIAm and other organisations toward becoming an Autism Friendly HEI.

- Structures to encourage and support academic and professional staff across the College to achieve a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Badge through AHEAD will continue to be developed, including sharing of learning as UDL Champions (cumulative target of 8 further badges achieved).

- UDL Champions and Student Neurodiversity Society collaboration to review and enhance supports for students' learning journey into, through and beyond NCAD, including development of an 'Accessing Art/Design College' Toolkit, a shareable resource to support employers offering internship and employment opportunities for autistic and neurodiverse students, and dedicated support to support autistic and neurodiverse students to secure and retain employment.

- Enhanced technical support for students using educational technologies.

- Continued collaboration with National Learning Network to support staff engagement with video resources developed to support staff in meeting the learning needs of diverse student cohorts (cumulative target of 24 workshops).

- Continued collaboration between UDL Champions and Student Neurodiversity Society in respect of exploring, promoting and embedding inclusive learning, teaching and assessment strategies at a whole-of-College level through the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Action Plan (develop A&D Inclusive Learning badge).

- Promote, support and build upon local T&LE initiatives to generate succinct videos, infographics, animations, etc., that disseminate and explain staff and student learning in respect of inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices (cumulative target of 4 staff-created Inclusive T&L resources).

As a declared priority within NCAD's Strategic T&LE Action Plan, this performance objective will be supported by the T&L Development Officer. SATLE funding is playing a key role in supporting T&LE in NCAD.

PATH 4 (Phase 1) funding is supporting key actions linked to achieving accreditation as an Autism Friendly HEI. This initiative is led by NCAD's Student Engagement Manager and will be supported through the work of this Office.

These funding and reporting structures, along with the significant support and engagement with this initiative across academic and professional staff of the College, as well as from NCAD's Students' Union and the Neurodiversity Society in particular, will be vital in holding focus and maintaining momentum in delivering this performance objective.

External structures supporting the evaluation of progress include the AsIAm accreditation process, as well as the PATH 4 reporting structure.

Other evaluation mechanisms include:

- (General) NCAD's Annual Student Survey, Annual Programme Forums and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement; NCAD's Annual Staff Survey.

- Building upon the AsIAm Survey, use of a dedicated annual survey (separate to NCAD's Annual Student Survey) to track student perception and experience.

- Monitor the development of resources for students, staff and graduates, and the engagement of students, staff and graduates with those resources. Engage with students, staff and graduates through a survey and focus group structure to evaluate the effectiveness and inform refinement of resource provision.

- Monitor the provision of linked CPD opportunities for staff and engagement with linked CPD provision. Engage with staff through a survey and focus group structure to evaluate the effectiveness of and inform refinement of linked CPD provision.

The extent to which staff and students respond to opportunities, and the ways in which people respond to initiatives are not predictable — hence the emphasis upon providing supports and resources, and structures that will encourage and enable engagement with those supports and resources.

There is a degree of dependency in respect of campus development; as an historic campus with significant underinvestment over a protracted period of time, there are significant accessibility issues. In addition to constraints that are due to the historic nature of the existing physical infrastructure, overcrowding and lack of break-out spaces in many areas directly affect the student experience and particularly neurodiverse students; this undermines our work to support them and will not be addressed until we have more capacity on campus, with appropriate space ratios in the studios and more shared space for students.

The financial circumstances of the College, as a small organisation, are vulnerable to the financial impacts of external disruptions.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 1

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	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	Qualitative	n/a	No suitable benchmark data available	**10%**	**15%**	**20%**	**25%**	**25%**
1.2	**Student experience of Effective Teaching Practices**	NCAD Student Survey & Student Survey.ie	Qualitative	ISSE 2023 score: 34.9 NCAD 2023/24: 58% Good + Very Good	4-year average, selection of Irish HEIs[2] (2020–23): 33.4	**35** **59%**	**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	Quantitative	Not yet established	Match overall NCAD progression rate	**85%**	**86%**	**86%**	**87%**	**2 p.p. increase**
1.4	**Progression rate (%) of new entrants**	HEA SRS; Non-Progression Dashboard	Quantitative	2021/22: 85%	National average (85% for 2021/22)	**85%**	**86%**	**86%**	**87%**	**2 p.p. increase on baseline**

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[2] ISSE 'Effective Teaching Practices', 2020–2023 average based upon the following institutions: UCD, MU, TU Dublin, DCU, IADT, TCD, UL, RCSI, UG.

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.

Pillar: Research & Innovation

Transversals: Climate & Sustainable Development; Enterprise; Society; International.

Rationale for Performance Objective 2

The seeds for this performance objective were planted in NCAD's Five-Year Strategy, *Futures Bold and Curious* (2019–24), namely 'To support and strengthen the vibrant research culture at the heart of NCAD'. At that time, NCAD did not have a Research Office; no effective staff research support structures were in place; and there was no mechanism by which existing staff research outputs or ambitions could be audited. Research training was not offered to staff, and the College was not eligible for funding from the IRC. A *Research Action Plan* was written in 2021, following extensive staff consultation (c. 75% of academic staff and key admin functions) and an international benchmarking exercise (consultation with 11 HEIs in Ireland and the EU). Benchmarking provided considerable insight into the ways that research capacity, organisation and researcher careers have been approached in similarly sized art and design HEIs. The Research Action Plan was implemented in 2021–23. The College now has a Research Office; an internal research funding scheme; staff research training and other forms of support. In addition, a new research hub, NCAD Design Labs, was launched in Spring 2023 (details below).

This performance objective is identified as the next phase of the development of research at NCAD. This means generating institutional understanding of:

- how to coordinate complex research projects effectively

- how to collaborate effectively with external research partners

- how to apply for and be awarded significant research funding

- how to increase staff research capacity and ambition

- how to second NCAD staff to undertake research

- how to create effective opportunities for doctoral researchers and post-docs

- how to create career development opportunities for NCAD researchers

- how to disseminate and apply research effectively.

With the exception of the newly launched NCAD Design Labs (and Knowledge Transfer and commercialisation projects), hitherto almost all research activities and research funding applications have been at the initiative of individual researchers, without significant institutional direction. The Design Labs model supports teams of expert staff (academics and fixed-term post-docs) to conduct research in specific areas of concern and to work in partnership with external organisations. One 'lab' (a focused research unit) launched in 2023 in the field of *Health*. With collaborators including the Mater Hospital, Design Innovation Lab at St James's Hospital, RCSI, Beaumont Hospital and Tympany Medical, this lab seeks to design 'experiences, products and services to improve health outcomes and promote wellbeing'. Three other labs — concerning Circular Economy, the design of Learning, and Service Design — have been identified as prospects for strategic development.

This performance objective aligns with priorities identified in *Impact 2030*, specifically by advancing interdisciplinarity (under Pillar One, p. 8), and industry-academic collaboration (under Pillar Three, p. 10). It provides a framework to address other key research areas and challenges identified in *Impact 2030*, namely, 1.2.1. Climate, Environment and Sustainability (p. 19) and 1.2.4 Health and Wellbeing (p. 21), as well as strengthening connections between government, public sector agencies and higher education research systems, and embedding a culture of innovation in public service (p. 17), again through NCAD Design Labs. Our wish to develop staff capacity aligns with 4.3 Talent and Excellence, specifically in terms of transversal and research-specific skills (p. 43). This performance objective also connects with the emphasis expressed in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* on building research capacity, particularly in terms of multidisciplinary research that connects AHSS and STEM (p. 67) and supports the emphasis on knowledge flows in and out of higher education (p. 68). In strengthening collaboration with enterprises, this performance objective meets priorities set in *Enterprise 2025* (p. 22) and in the *National Development Plan 2021–2030* (p. 91). NCAD Research also seeks to align with NSO (National Strategic Objective) 7, namely 'Enhanced Amenity and Heritage' and NSO 8 'Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society' (p. 127). Regarding the *Climate Action Plan 2023*, we believe that NCAD research could contribute to key points such as promoting citizen engagement, climate literacy and behavioural change (p. 95) and also support circular economy practices in industry (p. 250).

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 2

There are two closely related areas of implementation activity:

1. Research Supports and Infrastructure

To meet this performance objective, three NCAD Design Labs will be operationalised and act as testing models for the organisation of research activity at the College (including Fine Art, Visual Culture and Education/Pedagogy in the Creative Arts). Specifically, we seek to develop the Design Labs as an operational model for organising research activity across NCAD (in fields such as Fine Art, Visual Culture, Education/Pedagogy, etc.) to support development of staff research careers, actively partner with the public sector and enterprise, and have the potential to recruit PhDs and postdocs.

Milestones of progress will include:

- the roll-out and operationalisation of two NCAD Design Labs (including Health, already launched)

- the creation and operation of a further research 'lab' in one of the other areas of significant research activity at NCAD, OR the creation of a thematic cross-College research lab in a key priority field (such as climate/sustainability, social justice)

- growth in engagement with external research partners — other HEIs, industry, cultural organisations, etc. — through MoUs that enable staff exchanges for research and other activities such as curriculum development, joint-funding applications, etc.

- publication / dissemination activities such as the organisation of conferences and exhibitions.

2. *Staff engagement*

NCAD seeks to improve staff understanding of research as a core part of their activities, increasing their capacity to successfully engage with independent, partner-based and consortium-level research projects. The markers below are informed by benchmarking undertaken in the development of the *Research Action Plan* — which suggests that capacity building and embedding understanding of research possibilities is an essential stage before we set fixed targets for research outputs/income generation etc.

Markers of progress will be:

- staff participating in research support measures offered by the Research Office (including training & development workshops, engaging with research support panels, applying for research seed funding)

- staff participating in current research projects and opportunities (Design Labs, L'Internationale, SPACEX (Spatial Practices in Art and Architecture for Empathetic Exchange))

- staff participating in research-focused mobility visits (Erasmus, seed funding supported visits, secondment visits through SPACEX etc).

A key instrument in the implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting of this performance objective will be the tri-annual meetings of the Research Committee (est. December 2023). All the markers and initiatives identified above will be subject to regular monitoring by it.

The Research Committee will also be the key channel by which new proposals such as the development of future cross-College research hub(s) are shaped for approval by the College. It will also make recommendations concerning NCAD's next Five-Year Strategy (2024–29).

To support the activities which are described in this performance objective, NCAD has committed resources to the following:

- Research Officer (0.5 FTE) and Head of Research (0.2) roles

- annual research seed funding budget to support individual research and the preparation of funding applications to national and international research bodies

- CPD supports for staff research (external training and 4 'internal' training workshops p.a.)

- Design Labs operational costs (including Lab leads, targeted Research Office and administrative support)

- funding for internal and external research dissemination activities such as staff research fora and biannual research exhibition

Opportunities include our extensive networks. NCAD became a research partner of *CONNECT — the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Future Networks and Communications* in summer 2023 and has a MoU with the National Museum of Ireland concerning research and doctoral studies. We also belong to research networks such as L'Internationale, a confederation of 14 museum and academic institutions across Europe which secured significant Creative Europe funding for the 4-year 'Museum of the Commons' project in spring 2023, and SPACEX, a transdisciplinary RISE research action (13 European partners).

National and international research funding applications are reviewed by the Research Office and supported with RO staff time/expertise if they meet broad criteria ('fit' with NCAD research priorities, timing of submission, etc). This is to ensure that we use resources effectively (RO staff time). Once submitted, applications are noted by the Research Committee and their subsequent success or failure is recorded and analysed to better understand how to make future improvements. Given our scale and the newness of the RO, we need to build this understanding over time.

The competitive nature of funding, combined with the small scale of NCAD, makes sustaining successful forms of research organisation (and individual careers) challenging. Presently, research time is allocated on the basis of a 'research day' — or the part-time equivalent — in academic staff contracts. We have a very small number of academic staff (c. 2%) who have contracts which specify more substantial research activity. A new standard contract for academic staff, which articulates research time and activities more precisely, has been drafted by HR and an approval process is underway. It is important that research labs can be sustained in an unpredictable and competitive funding environment. As such, the significant Knowledge Transfer work led by the College's Head of Department of Innovation & Engagement to date will inform their operations. Similarly, the small size of the Research Office team presents another challenge, not least in terms of evaluation of learnings from the Performance Objective. To mitigate against this, growth in this function has been anticipated in relation to growth in research activity. The Research Officer position (presently 50% FTE contract) is expected to grow to 100% FTE contract in 2026. This is dependent on a growth in successful funding applications to external bodies.

Other challenges include the relatively uneven distribution of opportunities for high level research and research partnership in different fields of practice at NCAD. While some fields of Design offer considerable opportunities for enterprise and public sector engagement, other key research areas in art and design do not. This, in part, is why this phase of the development of research at NCAD commences with NCAD Design Labs. We will be testing the applicability of this model for strategic and

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focused research activity and exploring alternative funding models, particularly in relation to partnership with cultural/grassroots organisations.

Measuring the impact of art and design research is a challenge as some conventional scholarly metrics do not apply (such as citations). To mitigate against this, NCAD is committed to advocating for and demonstrating the impact of art and design research. With the publication of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment by the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), wider scale adoption of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), and uptake of use of formats such as narrative CVs by the European Research Council, which privilege qualitative, peer-based measures of research impact, there are new opportunities for research assessment frameworks which do not rely on limited quantitative metrics. At an institutional level, through participation in the All-Ireland Research Culture Network and Ireland CoARA National Chapter, NCAD will contribute to conversations on how the reform of research assessment frameworks can support the development of responsible, inclusive metrics that are appropriate for effectively representing art and design research, outputs and impacts.

NCAD staff will be supported in understanding how their research outputs, such as exhibitions, design prototypes, artworks, etc., can be expressed within these developing frameworks. During the life of this agreement, we will support staff to record other measures of impact including peer esteem (e.g., invitations to speak, exhibit, design); media reports (e.g., interviews, reviews, etc); public engagement (e.g., audience figures at exhibitions); and commercial applications (e.g., patents and other commercial licences). It is likely, given work underway in the sector to consider how research might be assessed effectively in Ireland, that NCAD will develop a public research repository in which these impact measures are recorded. Investigating the design and operation of a research repository has been set as a task for the Research Office. We will also engage with initiatives such as the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment in light of its declared aim of encouraging recognition of 'diverse outputs, practices and activities.'

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 2

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.1	**Number of research funding applications to national/ international funding bodies.**	Research Office, NCAD	Quantitative	2023/24: 1	Attain average, peer institutions of comparable size[3]	**2**	**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	Quantitative	2023/24: 1	Attain average of peer institutions	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**6 applications over 4 years** **100% increase on baseline**
2.3	**Number of applications for funded post-doc positions attached to research labs or other NCAD research structures**	Research Office, NCAD	Quantitative	2023/24: 0	Attain average of peer institutions	**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	Quantitative	2023/24: 2	No appropriate benchmarks available[4]	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**6 new partnerships over 4 years**

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[3] Peer institutions include the Courtauld Institute of Art, Estonian Academy of Art, and IADT.

[4] 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	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
2.5	**Number of staff participating in research training workshops**	Research Office, NCAD	Quantitative	2023/24: 20 (19%)	Not available.	**40 (38%)**	**45 (43%)**	**45 (43%)**	**52 (50%)**	**31 p.p. increase on baseline**
2.6	**Number of staff participating in current research projects and opportunities (DesignLabs, L'Internationale, SPACEX)**	Research Office, NCAD	Quantitative	2023/24: 18 (17%)	Attain average of peer institutions.	**20 (19%)**	**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	Quantitative	3-year average 2021-2023: 4	No suitable external benchmarking data available.	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**26 members of staff over 4 years** **100% increase on baseline**

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.

Pillar: Access & Participation

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

Rationale for Performance Objective 3

At NCAD, we recognise the power and value to our society and economy of learning *through* art and design, not *for* art and design, and we work to ensure every student has access to a learning experience that is dynamic, resourced and transformative.

Our commitment to developing partnerships and targeted initiatives to increase access by underrepresented groups to an art and design education at NCAD has benefited enormously from our participation in the PATH Leinster Pillar 1 Cluster, comprising six higher education institutions. The Cluster's mission is to promote access to higher education for underrepresented groups by building a clearer 'picture of possibilities' and pathways. This mission is delivered through four strands of activity, one of which is led by NCAD.

NCAD's proposal in respect of this performance objective is to sustain and expand our partnerships and range of initiatives to promote access to HE for underrepresented groups and expand the base of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged studying art and design at NCAD. Deepening engagement FET partners has a key role to play in this ambition: not in terms of increased entry to NCAD by FET graduates (as this is already strong); our ambition is to increase entry to NCAD by FET graduates from priority groups (socioeconomically disadvantaged students in particular).

Alignment with NCAD strategy

The development of partnerships and targeted initiatives to expand the base of students studying art and design strongly aligns with the fundamental belief in the transformative potential of a creative education underpinning NCAD's Strategy, and it aligns with our commitment to diversity as a core value and objective — diversity of ideas and students. For NCAD and for the wider cultural sector, a diversity of ideas, experiences and perspectives is vital to a culture of new thinking and genuine discovery. As the National College of Art & Design, we educate by far the highest proportion of art and design students and art and design educators nationally (fine art 40%, design 25%, education 80%).

At NCAD, we are proud of the diversity of our students in respect of disability (32.9%), and the contribution that this makes to the National Access Plan 2022–2028 (13.9% in 2022/23 in HEIs overall). As reflected in Performance Objective 1 of this agreement, ensuring an inclusive learning environment

that supports students of all abilities is a key focus for the College.

Our challenge is to make progress in respect of remaining overarching priority groups — those from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas and members of the Irish Traveller and Roma communities are underrepresented within the NCAD student body. NCAD's student body includes only 8% from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, as against 11% nationally, and has no statistically relevant representation from the Irish Traveller community, although this is also a significant issue nationally with only 0.1% of new entrants coming from the Traveller community.

Alignment with national strategy and policy

Developing partnerships and targeted initiatives to expand the base of students studying art and design is vital to enhancing the creative vitality of NCAD, and it is vital to enhancing the creative vitality of the cultural and creative industries. This ambition — for NCAD and for our creative sectors — is strongly aligned with Ireland's *National Strategy for HE to 2030.*

In its focus upon responding to sectoral strategies regarding the collaboration between HE and FE, this performance objective is clearly aligned with the National Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy, *Future FET: Transforming Learning 2020–24* (SOLAS, 2020) and with the *National Access Plan 2022–28* (HEA, 2022). With our existing partners in the Government's PATH initiative, and through new partnerships being developed in dialogue with the Tertiary Office, we will look to enhance FET-HE transitions, develop FET-HE talent pipelines and continue our work towards supporting a more diverse teacher workforce in both Higher and Further Education.

In respect of sustaining and developing PATH initiatives, a key focus for NCAD will be mainstreaming the PATH 3-funded Creative Arts Summer School (CASS) as a vital pre-entry access initiative. The CASS is a programme of explorative creative arts workshops, campus tours, admission pathways, creative course options, academic, financial, disability and learning supports, and guidance on creative career opportunities. As such, it speaks to:

- Developing a student population that is reflective of the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population by cultivating in potential students' imaginations the possible opportunities open to them, and by helping HEIs to support these students' transition into a HE environment in which they belong (*Embedding Student Success).*

- Explicitly inviting (and seeking) access, participation and success within the creative arts by students from priority groups (*National Access Plan*).

Sustaining our focus upon directly engaging with disadvantaged communities and building understanding of the 'picture of possibilities' offered by an art and design education is vitally important for NCAD. Building on and deepening existing informal relationships with FET institutions is also important to our efforts to enhance representation of socioeconomically disadvantaged communities within the College.

Progression of students from FET to NCAD is good: on average, 27% of NCAD's first-year intake was offered based on a QQI/FETAC award in 2023/24; furthermore, while 27% of places were offered based

on a QQI award, in total 40% of successful applicants indicated that they had completed a QQI/FETAC award. Nonetheless, deepening this engagement with FET has the potential to make a significant contribution to our efforts to diversify representation within the College. KPI 2 of the NAP — progression from further education to higher education — emphasises the importance of FET routes into HE as a means to enhance equity of access to NCAD.

A recent Arts Council report on lack of diversity amongst the people they are funding shows that the pipeline into the sector is not as diverse as it needs to be — a finding echoed by the Creative Futures Industry Council (Screen Ireland, RTÉ, Arts Council, IDI), who have identified this as a major sectoral concern. Thus, from a wider art and design sector perspective, developing partnerships with FET institutions, based upon a strong engagement with art and design, creates opportunities to amplify the place of craft within the creative sector, and the potential of design to support individual and communal development (National Strategy for HE to 2030, Future FET). The sharpness of our shared focus upon art and design will also support the evolution of structures whereby students who withdraw from their HE course can be steered toward an alternative FET route immediately (Future FET).

Nature of Performance Objective

Continuing development in a priority area: Being a partner within the PATH initiatives has been enormously beneficial to NCAD. We have learned from our partners and made significant progress with them in building a clearer 'picture of possibilities' and pathways to Higher Education. This performance objective proposes to expand that potential for collaboration and co-creation toward greater inclusion and diversity in tertiary education and to promote access to HE for underrepresented groups.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 3

There are two main areas of focus for implementation of this performance objective:

> *1) Sustaining and developing the PATH 3-funded Creative Arts Summer School (CASS)* as a vital pre-entry access initiative, led by experienced creative arts tutors from across participating Colleges, that is FREE and intended for people from an underrepresented economic or cultural group.

Our ambition is to do this in partnership with Leinster Pillar HEIs and HEI partners across Ireland. CASS has been successful in attracting student participation and in reaching beyond Leinster. As the funding period draws to a close, we will work closely with partners within and beyond the Leinster Pillar to sustain CASS as an initiative and to continue to extend the opportunities it offers in collaboration with new HEI partners across Ireland.

> *2) Building on existing informal relationships with Further Education and Training (FET) institutions* to explore possibilities for co-developed, co-resourced and co-delivered programmes to further strengthen transitions from further education to higher education in

art and design through the DDLETB, the City of Dublin ETB and the KCETB.

Our ambition in seeking to establish new partnerships with ETBs and FET institutions is to:

- Explore their potential in respect of building pathways into Product Design, Fine Art and areas of Craft and Applied Art.

- Explore the potential for shared resource (FET-HE), encompassing studios, staff, library facilities.

- Explore areas of potential collaboration focused upon creating a blended learning environment (FET-HE) for students with learning disabilities.

- Explore the possibility of co-creating an Art and Design Foundation Access Programme, drawing on the experience of partners in the PATH Leinster Pillar (HEIs) and emerging ETB/FET partnerships.

Resource provision

Significant support — collaborative and financial — will be sought through both the PATH Leinster Pillar 1 Cluster collaboration and through working directly with the Tertiary Office in collaboration with DDLETB, City of Dublin ETB and KCETB.

The intention of the PATH funding underpinning the Sustaining the Creative Arts Summer School is that the initiative would be mainstreamed. NCAD is hopeful that partners will share our commitment and continue to engage with and resource this initiative as part of the pre-entry Access initiatives. If this is not possible, NCAD intends to continue to engage with and resource CASS as a fundamental plank within our pre-entry Access and Outreach engagement with local communities.

Mechanisms for evaluating progress

The Access & Participation Performance Objective Team (led by the Head of the School of Education, a member of the College Management Team) will be responsible for overseeing delivery of initiatives associated with the Performance Objective. Leadership from within the School of Education will be supported by strong representation from NCAD's Student Experience Team and the Schools of Fine Art and Design. As such, the Team will provide an important resource in terms of making sense of learnings, identifying improvements and adaptations, and implementing same.

Quarterly reports on progress will be brought by the Performance Objective Lead to the College Management Team. The College Management Team will review and evaluate the significance of the annual formal assessment of progress and impact, working with Performance Objective Teams to understand any issues arising and agree remediation strategies, and reporting on assessment of progress and impact to Academic Council and An Bord annually.

Updates on progress in respect of implementation will be reported to Academic Council and An Bord twice yearly.

Opportunities, challenges, and risks

There are significant risks associated with this performance objective as significant aspects of the Objective are linked to ongoing and new collaborative initiatives. However, engagement with potential partners to date has been very positive, with a strong commitment on the part of all concerned.

Reasons for confidence in the success of this performance objective include the fact that key aspects of it are anchored in existing strong and collegiate partnerships, while the new collaborative initiatives proposed emerge from longstanding informal relationships and strongly shared disciplinary commitments.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 3

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
3.1	**Number of CASS Summer School participants**	Academic & Student Affairs, NCAD	Quantitative	2023: 80	No suitable benchmarking data available	**60**	**60**	**60**	**60**	**240 over 4 years**
3.2	**Progression rate (%) new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	HEA SRS; Non-Progression & Completion Dashboard	Quantitative	Not yet established[5]	Match system average (85% in 2020/21)	**85%**	**86%**	**87%**	**89%**	**89%**
3.3	**Enrolments in Year 2 from co-designed, co-delivered programmes and articulation agreements with ETBs[6]**	Academic Registry, NCAD	Quantitative	0	No suitable benchmarking data available	**N/a**	**N/a**	**N/a**	**13**	**13**
3.4	**Proportion (%) of new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	HEA, SRS	Quantitative	2020/21: 8%	Progress towards national average (11% in 2020/21)	**8%**	**8%**	**8.5%**	**9%**	**9%**
3.5	**Proportion (%) of mature new entrants from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas**	HEA, SRS	Quantitative	2020/21: 4%	Continue to exceed system average (10% in 2020/21)	**14%**	**14%**	**15%**	**15.5%**	**15.5% of all SED new entrants**

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[5] Historically, NCAD has not tracked the progression of specific cohorts of students. We will address in 2024/25 and hereafter.

[6] 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.

Performance Objective 4

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

Pillar: Engagement

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

Rationale for Performance Objective 4

Institutional strategy

This performance objective builds upon NCAD's Five-Year Strategy, *Futures Bold and Curious (2019–24)* and, in particular, our CONNECT and be CONNECTED strategic focus.

The best creative practice responds to the time in which it is made. We are acutely aware of the changing nature of creative practice, the relevance of our connection to the world beyond the campus, and the importance of forging connections. We are committed to connecting with local, national and international contexts, and focusing on the needs of society and all our communities. NCAD learners will engage creatively with industry and civic society, developing and sustaining creative careers by developing core attributes of thinking, connecting, exploring, and doing.

The Performance Objective, outlined above, is identified as the next phase of our engagement strategy at NCAD and seeks to *place connectivity at the centre of learning and research in NCAD, ensuring the core of learning considers the place and potential of creative practice.* We will build on NCAD's strong history of creating opportunities for embedded learning beyond the campus across all pathways. Partnerships in Ireland and abroad will enrich the learning environment and connect NCAD to contexts beyond the worlds of art, design and education. We will embed direct experience of contemporary practice across the curriculum through an annual College-wide programme of visiting fellows, lecturers and embedded projects with makers in all disciplines.

We have sought to ensure NCAD *actively engages with the world* through:

- Partnerships: the establishment, development and enhancement of a network of strategic partnerships.

- Contextual learning: ongoing development of opportunities for students to learn in a variety of professional, social and cultural contexts.

We are also seeking to *demonstrate innovation in teaching practice, flexibility, and trans-disciplinary learning* through creating a distinctive and transformative learning experience for a diverse body of learners and delivering a learning experience framed by a shared academic ethos that reflects the contemporary world and ensures graduates are equipped to make an impact in society. This is being achieved through completion of the Teaching and Learning Action Plan, delivering an annual

programme of teaching supports, and cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary projects.

National strategy & policy and evidence base

This performance objective connects with the emphasis expressed in the _National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030_ for engagement with the wider society (p.74 on), and with NCAD's ongoing work with communities, regional and national stakeholders and enterprise.

This objective is also framed by a number of key priorities identified for the creative sector in national strategy and policy documents including Ireland's _National Skills Strategy 2025_ (2016), _Future Jobs Ireland_ (2019), _Survive, Adapt, Renew: Report of the Expert Advisory Group June 2020 to the Arts Council_ (2020), _Together for Design_ (2020) and _Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework to 2025_ (2020). Collectively, these documents emphasise the value the creative sector brings to ideas generation, inventive problem-solving and to the production of culture, and the importance of cross/interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in times of rapid social and technological change, with an increased emphasis on the need for soft/transferable/transversal skills. The Creative Sector is a core contributor to Ireland's economy and has considerable further potential to grow towards the EU average of c. 5% (European Investment Fund; Market Fiches 2018). A major font of innovation and enterprise, the Creative Sector must play a significant role in meeting Project Ireland 2040's strategic goal of a 'strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills'.

There is increasing demand for CPD training to help Irish Creative Industry practitioners and companies to grow their business, up-skill their team, and attract and service clients. This is evidenced in recent reports and strategic plans from our industry partners, including the Arts Council, Design and Crafts Council of Ireland and the Institute of Designers in Ireland. The _Survive, Adapt, Renew: Report of the Expert Advisory Group June 2020 to the Arts Council_ (2020) Arts Council of Ireland document referenced the need for "training opportunities for arts workers who are temporarily underemployed. A higher skills base will allow the arts sector to plan and adapt more flexibly and underpin the sustainability of the sector into the future".

The Design Sector has been identified as a key area for development, and the EGFSN's _Together by Design (2020)_ report acknowledged the significant skills gap and the need to increase training capacity and the number of graduates with design training. The report forecasts that whilst there will be over 6,000 new openings annually in design occupations, evidence suggests that only 1,300 students graduate annually from higher and further education with the relevant design skills for these roles. The report also states that Design jobs in Ireland are to double in the next 5 years, growth in design jobs is treble the national average and Design leaders are a driving force but are in short supply. The report goes on to suggest 'more flexible pathways' with 'short courses and boot camps' to incentivise people in work to 'upskill and utilise education within an applied industry context'.

The _Action Plan for Designing Better Public Services_ (2023) provides a tangible, practical and comprehensive pathway for how Government will integrate design principles across the Public Service, leading to more people-centred, inclusive, user-friendly and effective public services. NCAD is well placed to help address a key objective of the Action Plan: the establishment of formal learning pathways to upskill and reskill current public service staff.

The *Digital Creative Industries Roadmap* (2023) seeks to define the creative industries in Ireland as industries and occupations which utilise creativity as a means to deliver commercial success and employment. The roadmap focuses on the Commercial design sectors — including industrial design, product design, visual communications, Ui/Ux and interaction design, service design and strategic design. NCAD is the only third-level institution that teaches all of these disciplines, providing skills and competencies learning pathways from undergraduate (UG) to postgraduate (PG), and for school leavers to mid-career practitioners (our new CFA (Creative Futures Academy) CPD programmes). NCAD is ideally placed to support the 'Design in Other Sectors' cohort of enterprises (€17.79 billion in GVA)), the Design Intensive Sector (€2.68 billion in GVA) and the Craft sector (€250 million of GVA) to maximise commercial and economic impact.

The Performance Objective also responds to *Project Ireland 2040* (Strategic Outcome 5), which envisages a 'Strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills'. One of the areas earmarked for strategic growth is the 'creative sector'. Employment growth in this sector will be critically dependent on the availability of a talented, well-educated and agile workforce. NCAD's evolving provision seeks to provide a pipeline of artists, designers, educators, writers and other creative practitioners to support the creative and cultural industries, from analogue through to digital, and start-up to SME and Multinational.

The objective directly addresses a number of the current Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan priorities, including Strategic Objective 2: Increase enterprise engagement in innovation, research and development to ensure Dublin's continued competitiveness and productivity. NCAD has developed a significant volume of partnerships within Dublin 8, Dublin, Leinster and beyond, ranging from research projects to knowledge transfer innovation vouchers, and student real-world industry projects to internships.

Implementation, monitoring, assessment, and reporting on Performance Objective 4

Oversight

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and assessment rests with NCAD's Institutional Lead for the CFA, supported by the other Heads of School and the Studio+ Coordinators. Oversight, particularly in support of monitoring and assessment, as well as accountability, will rest with the College Management Team.

Achieving the performance objective

A key vehicle for delivering our strategic goals is the Creative Futures Academy (CFA), a €10 million government-funded consortium led by NCAD, in partnership with IADT, UCD and the creative sector. The academy aims to empower creative practitioners from a range of disciplines, and at different stages of their learning, with the sustainable and adaptable skills and attributes that they will require to shape the future of Ireland's creative sector.

We are developing a range of new and enhanced provision with the direct engagement of, and

partnership with, [national representative bodies and industry stakeholders](#). Through this partnership, NCAD is addressing key skills gaps; preparing graduates for work in a major sector of the national economy; and supporting the early- and mid-career needs of creative professionals in fast-changing social, economic and technological contexts. Above all, the CFA is helping NCAD anticipate and help shape future trends in ways that serve the commercial, social and cultural needs of Ireland.

The [CFA CPD programmes](#) being developed and delivered by NCAD seek to bridge industry, academic research and creative practice within the creative sector. They seek to engage a learner cohort not currently accommodated within NCAD's current provision — mid-career practitioners from a range of creative backgrounds who are looking for flexible opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, critically reconnect, creatively recharge/upskill/refocus a career within the creative and cultural sector, within the framework of a trans-disciplinary community of practice. Four new Professional and Continuous Profession Development (CPD) programmes were launched in 2023/24; our cumulative 4-year target (2024/25 to 2027/28) is to launch a further 6 new Professional & CPD programmes.

Resourcing

To support the activities which are described in this performance objective, NCAD has committed resources to the following:

HCI Pillar 3-funded:

- Creative Futures Academy Director

- Creative Futures Academy Academic Lead

- Creative Futures Academy Administrator

- Creative Futures Academic Development Group

- Backfill of Academics developing new CFA provision

NCAD-funded:

- Studio+ Academic Coordinators (Fine Art, Product Design, Design for Body and Environment, Communication Design)

- Internship Coordinator (Institutional working across Fine Art and Design)

- Creative Infrastructure (William Walsh Workshop)

- Origin8, NCAD's industry gateway and innovation hub

Evaluating progress, learning & adapting

The Engagement Performance Objective Team (led by a member of the College Management Team) will be responsible for devising and implementing an assessment strategy in respect of progress and impact, with a twice-yearly monitoring structure and an annual formal assessment of progress and impact point.

Markers of improvement will be:

- Roll-out of new CFA CPD and Masters programmes developed in consultation with Industry

- Number of Real-World Projects with partners from Commercial, Social and Cultural sectors

- Number of Internships undertaken by Students

- Number of Students undertaking BA Studio+

- Growth in engagement with partners. Measured in terms of formal agreements — MoU's and Contracts

- Student Survey results

The proposed targets have been informed by our current growth and the volume of partnership opportunities available to us. However, it should be noted that our ambitions have been restricted due to the constraints imposed on the institution by a lack of capacity-building support to help facilitate the costs of maintaining activities and initiating new activities that are an important next strategic step for NCAD, including data and systems, and engagement.

The College Management Team will review and evaluate the significance of the annual formal assessment of progress and impact, working with Performance Objective Teams to understand any issues arising and agree remediation strategies, and reporting on assessment of progress and impact to Academic Council and An Bord annually.

Opportunities, challenges and risks

The HCI Pillar 3 funding received for the Creative Futures Academy has enabled a significant roll-out of new provision. Moving forwards, we need to maintain and build upon this momentum, and ensure sufficient funding for the ongoing enhancement of existing provision and development of new provision, as well as funding to support staff to connect and work with industry partners to foster real-world learning and knowledge transfer, and to build our engagement capacity through access to sectoral supports.

In relation to the achievement of the targeted increases in internships and work placements for students, we are aware that our current resources do not enable us to take full advantage of the considerable impact and success of our graduates at a regional, national and international level, through the strategic activation of our alumni.

NCAD has not been able to undertake a detailed analysis of our short-, medium- and long-term graduate outcomes beyond tracking high profile alumni, and we are currently unable to systematically and longitudinally map where our graduates go after finishing their degrees to let this quantitative data inform future programme and institutional development.

We would therefore welcome additional targeted HEA support to bolster our alumni activation and wider engagement capacity.

Indicators and targets for Performance Objective 4

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.1	**Number of postgraduate taught enrolments as % of total enrolments in NCAD**	NCAD's Student Record System and HEA SRS	Quantitative	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)	**223** **15%**	**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	Qualitative	2024: 70% of PG respondents agreed or strongly agreed	None available	**72%**	**75%**	**78%**	**80%**	**10 p.p. increase**
4.3	**Proportion (%) of undergraduate (UG) students undertaking Real-World Projects with partners from Commercial, Social and Cultural sectors**	School records	Quantitative	2023/24: 40% of students undertaking real world projects	None available	**45%**	**50%**	**55%**	**55%**	**15 p.p. increase**

No.	Indicator	Data source	Data type	Baseline	Benchmark	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Cumulative target
4.4	**Proportion (%) of undergraduate students undertaking internships / work placements**	School records	Quantitative	2023/24: 10%	Not available[7]	**12%**	**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	Quantitative	2023/24: 65%	None available	**70%**	**75%**	**80%**	**85%**	**20 p.p. increase**
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	Qualitative	2023: 88% agreed or strongly agreed	None available	**88%**	**88%**	**90%**	**90%**	**2 p.p. increase**

[7] 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).

Section 3: Matrix and Signatures

Framework Matrix

Transversal areas of impact	Pillars			
	Teaching & Learning	Research & Innovation	Access & Participation	Engagement
Flexibility, Upskilling & Lifelong Learning				PO 4
Climate & Sustainable Development		PO 2		
Student Success	PO 1		PO 3	
Enterprise		PO 2		PO 4
Society		PO 2	PO 3	PO 4
Region			PO 3	
International		PO 2		PO 4
Digital Transformation				
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging	PO 1		PO 3	
Institutional Leadership & Culture	PO 1			
Sectoral & Tertiary Cohesion			PO 3	

Signatures

On behalf of the National College of Art & Design

Professor Sarah Glennie
Director

Wednesday, 11 December 2024

Carole Pollard
Interim Chair of An Bord

Wednesday, 11 December 2024

On behalf of the Higher Education Authority

Dr Alan Wall
Chief Executive Officer

Wednesday, 11 December 2024