



National College of Art and Design  
*A Recognised College of University College Dublin*

## **BA in Textile & Surface Design**

### **Programmatic Review**

### **Quality Review Panel Report**

**Date of Review Visit:** Monday 15 April 2024

**Date of Report Submission:** Tuesday 7 May 2024

## Contents

1.	Executive Summary	3
1.1.	Key findings about the BA Textile & Surface Design	3
1.1.1.	Commendations	3
1.1.2.	Recommendations for Future Improvement	4
2.	Brief History and Context of the National College of Art and Design	4
2.1.	Relationship to UCD	5
2.2.	NCAD structure	5
3.	Introduction and Context	5
3.1.	Outline of the Programmatic Quality Review Process and Methodology	6
3.2.	Key areas of the review	7
3.3.	BA Textile & Surface Design Context and Brief	7
3.4.	Overview of Textiles and Surface Design within NCAD	8
4.	Commendations	9
5.	Recommendations	9
6.	Conclusion	10

## 1. Executive Summary

---

The BA in Textile & Surface Design is delivered and managed by the School of Design at the National College of Art and Design, NCAD.

This Quality Review of BA in Textile & Surface Design was undertaken in April 2024, as part of NCAD's Quality Review Framework and to meet the statutory requirements for Designated Awarding Bodies (UCD) and linked providers (Recognised College, the National College of Art and Design (NCAD)) as set out under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The findings are based on the self-assessment report, external examiners reports, programme documentation and module descriptors, other related documents shared with the peer review group and the interviews conducted with staff and students associated with the programme (refer to the meetings schedule below).

### 1.1. Key findings about the BA Textile & Surface Design

The review panel has identified a number of key findings in relation to areas of good practice operating within the College and the School and key areas which the review panel wish to highlight as requiring future improvement at School level. The report sets out all observations, commendations and recommendations of the review panel in detail.

#### 1.1.1. Commendations

The review panel identified a number of commendations, in particular:

- The Panel commends the quality of the self-assessment report, the thoroughness of the exploration for change identification around 'what works', highlighting areas for improvement and enhancement that will constructively align the learning journey to the module level learning outcomes.
- The Panel commends the development of statements to identify key areas of focus (as part of the consultation report) Positioning, Information and Access, Teaching and Learning, Learning and Environment, Graduation & Industry. Positive tone and evocative language throughout, such as 'bold curiosity', 'dirty learning', 'imagination and action', and 'carving new aesthetic paths' showing the sticky curriculum as evidenced in Art and Design pedagogy.
- The Panel commends the widening participatory approach, and the documenting and recording of graduate destinations. The panel would encourage the use of the graduate stories in the marketing materials with a formal mapping of the graduate destinations. The structure of the programme has a good balance between practice and research, and research informed teaching via the staff experience supporting tacit knowledge acquisition.

### 1.1.2. Recommendations for Future Improvement

Having reviewed the documentation, had meetings with students, staff, external partners and management our key recommendations follow the context set out here:

- 1.1. The Panel recommends the Studio+ year as a valuable year and one where students can develop their experience, business and industry links, and supports the move towards a mandatory year aligned to possible business engagement projects and proposals with potential specialist skills development in both CAD and practice-based design principles, whether traditional manufacturing skills or those skills relating to emerging technologies.
- 1.2. The Panel recommends that the first-year broad experience and transition to the specialist subjects in Year 2 be reviewed with additional tutorial time aligned to the subject specialists prior to their final area selection, and that students select the areas that they will be going to for years 2 and 3 in the final weeks of first year to consolidate their learning.

The Review Panel would suggest that the following recommendations:

- 1.3. The panel would suggest growing the Studio+ year within the available resources, and access to equipment for skill development and the correct studio environment for students to thrive.
- 1.4. The Panel recommends that serious consideration be given to a digital strategy and increasing student access to software such as Adobe CC (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign). This was highlighted as an industry requirement and a graduate quality.
- 1.5. The Panel recommends taking the following steps into consideration as part of this process:
  - 1.5.1. Careful timetabling and evaluation of the staff team workload aligned to student staff ratios, considering the constraints of the physical space and to maximise access to the new equipment (eg, the William Walsh Workshop).
  - 1.5.2. Continue to create opportunities for the staff team via the mentoring programme/staff development to engender an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship, knowledge exchange and research activities. Promoting collaborative approaches to learning, teaching and research and opportunities to share 'best practice'.

## 2. Brief History and Context of the National College of Art and Design

---

The National College of Art & Design (NCAD) is Ireland's leading provider of art and design education. The NCAD campus on Thomas Street in Dublin's historic city centre is home to a

community of about 1,500 undergraduate, graduate and part-time students engaged in a wide range of study and research across the disciplines of Design, Education, Fine Art and Visual Culture. NCAD has been the most significant provider of Art & Design education in Ireland for over 250 years and is a Recognised College of University College Dublin (UCD).

## 2.1. Relationship to UCD

In 1996, the College became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland. In 2011, the College established a strategic Academic Alliance with UCD and is now a Recognised College of UCD under a Memorandum of Agreement. As a recognised college of UCD, UCD is the designated awarding body, the accrediting university for NCAD programmes. All NCAD programmes are subject to the UCD Academic Regulations.

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012, UCD must ensure that NCAD's ongoing quality enhancement of its activities meets the requirements of the Act. NCAD's Quality Assurance Procedures were approved by UCD's Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ) in October 2016. In March 2017, UCD carried out an Institutional Review of NCAD. A second Institutional Review was carried out in October 2021.

## 2.2. NCAD structure

NCAD has four schools: Design, Education, Fine Art and Visual Culture, offering a range of educational opportunities from part-time classes to doctoral studies. The Eddie Murphy Library and the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) are part of NCAD and it is important to note that NIVAL is dedicated to the documentation of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish visual art and design.

## 3. Introduction and Context

---

This Programmatic Quality Review was undertaken as part of NCAD's Quality Review Framework and to meet the statutory requirements for Designated Awarding Body, University College Dublin (UCD) and linked provider (Recognised College, the National College of Art and Design (NCAD)), as set out under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, namely to review the effectiveness of the linked provider's programmes.

This report presents the findings of the programmatic review of the BA Textiles & Surface Design. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how NCAD discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students by evaluating the effectiveness of its programmes or units.

The members of the Review Panel (RP), appointed by NCAD, were:

- **Alison Gault, Senior Lecturer in Fashion and Knit, Belfast School of Art, Ulster University: Chair of the panel**
- Jimmy Stephen-Cran, Head of Department of Fashion and Textiles, Glasgow School of Art
- Mario Sierra, Creative Director/ Owner, Mourne Textiles

### 3.1. Outline of the Programmatic Quality Review Process and Methodology

The constitution of the review panel (RP) was well structured to sustain the full range of appropriate expertise. At the preliminary meeting of the RP, it was decided that the group will work together as a group during the review visit and not assign any specific areas of responsibility to any individual member of the review panel. All members of the RP had opportunities to ask questions during the visit. The Quality and Academic Support Officer was in attendance during the review visit and took notes.

All members of the RP contributed to the writing of the report.

The key stages of the review process consist of the following elements:

1. Programme self-assessment, which includes the preparation of an analytical and reflective Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which involves an internal and external consultation process within NCAD.
2. Review visit by the review panel on Monday 15 April 2024 - see the schedule below.
3. Production of this report by the review panel, in which recommendations are clearly set out and distinguished from the general findings.
4. Production by NCAD of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) which addresses all recommendations and includes a timeline in respect of their implementation.
5. Publication of the review panel's report, NCAD's response to the report, and the QIP.
6. Establishment and implementation of a clear and timely follow-up process in respect of any quality improvement recommendations, which may include publication of updates on progress.

The review panel visit schedule for 15 April 2024 visit:

BA in Textile & Surface Design  
 Quality Review

2023-24

**Review Panel Visit Schedule: Monday 15 April 2024**

Time	Subject of session	Participants
MEETING ROOM - GRACE GIFFORD HOUSE		
9.00-9.15	Welcome, Review Team	Professor Alex Milton, Head of School Angela O'Kelly, Head of Department Professor Sarah Glennie, Director, NCAD Professor Siún Hanrahan, Head of Academic Affairs
9.15-10.00	Head of School, Head of Programme	Professor Alex Milton, Head of School Angela O'Kelly, Head of Department
10.00-10.15	Break and Panel Discussion	Panel
10.15-11.15	Current students	Current students of BA TSD
11.15-11.30	Break and Panel Discussion	Panel
11.30-12.30	Staff	Teaching staff, technicians, administrators for BA TSD
12.30-12.45	Break and Panel Discussion	Panel
12.45-1.30	External Stakeholders	Employers, placement facilitators, project supervisors
1.30-2.30	Lunch break and campus tour	Panel and Head of School and/or Programme
2.30-2.45	Panel discussion	Panel only
2.45-3.30	Graduates	Graduates of BA TSD
3.30-4.00	Break and panel discussion	Panel
4.00-4.30	Head of School Head of Programme	Professor Alex Milton, Head of School Angela O'Kelly, Head of Department
4.30-5.30	Panel Discussion, summary of findings	Panel
5.30-6.00	Present findings to Programme Team	Professor Siún Hanrahan, Head of Academic Affairs Professor Sarah Glennie, Director, NCAD Professor Alex Milton, Head of School Angela O'Kelly, Head of Department Members of Programme Staff
6.00	Finish	

### 3.2. Key areas of the review

This report written by the review panel on completion of their visit on 15 April 2024 covers their review of the main aspects addressed in the self-assessment report:

### 3.3. BA Textile & Surface Design Context and Brief

Prior to the visit the team were supplied with an overview of the course outline, modules and appendices for further investigation and review. This gave the team to have a good understanding of the course structure and the level learning outcomes through the modules in each year group. This information gave a clear indication of the rigorous approach to the review of the course with a 360 viewpoint from all stakeholders, including students, graduates, alumni, staff delivering the modules on the course, colleagues from other course

teams and the management team. The thoroughness of the review evidences the desire to move towards a course that has currency and relevance while providing the necessary technical and creative challenges required for the student learning journey and beyond. It was also clear that the changes to the course were in line with the wider creative economy and ensuring that students would be able to contribute with confidence in the creative industries on the successful completion of their modules and degree. The main themes emerging throughout the day were the programme title (discussed in 3.4 below) The first year experience and transition, the Studio+ year content and engagement, skills acquisition, technology and access to software. The course team discussed the broad-based first year and the perceived loss of skills, with some of the specific skills valued in the previous iteration of the course now being unachievable within the time frame.

Students clearly valued their learning experience across the 3-4 year programme; the dedication and expertise of the staff team, both technical and academic, was expressed by the current students across the cohorts. The graduates and alumni highlighted that the key CAD skills including Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign were necessary for future career progression and into the employability landscape. While it is recognised that to provide these for each individual student would be financially incumbent for NCAD, it would be prudent to discuss a digital strategy that might address this further and have some access to this software and analogous textile software.

It was noted by the review team that the course had a healthy student application with good quality incoming students. It was also noted that the current students (and staff) have been through turbulent times, the polycrisis of Brexit, Covid, Cost of Living crisis have all impacted this current cohort and potentially future cohorts. The localised issue for NCAD around student accommodation is further exacerbating this impact financially with a resultant commuting cohort, with the majority of students travelling to study, and not enhancing a 'community of practice' a 'sense of belonging', impacting their student experience with travel time reducing both the ability to focus on their studies and engage in part-time employment opportunities to financially support themselves. It is important to recognise and to reflect on the changing student profile, and to adapt the course content and approach to support the students and staff in light of the extraneous forces in the current climate, this could be addressed by reorganising the timetable and realigning the trimester (number of contact teaching weeks) to that of other institutions to support staff development and maximise research opportunities.

### **3.4. Overview of Textiles and Surface Design within NCAD**

There was an in depth discussion around the programme title with all the stakeholders throughout the day and also reflecting on the information in the course handbook, modules and the overarching themes delivered via teaching and learning. All stakeholders were



invited to give their valued opinion on the programme title and while some of the stakeholders suggested that the name remain, it was the opinion of the majority that there was some ambiguity regarding the 'Surface Design' part of the title, and more clarity would be welcomed. As a result of this probing it was widely thought that the term 'textiles' was a more focussed title assuming that multifaceted and boundary-breaking approaches to fabric creation continue to be encouraged and appropriately reflected the activities of the course.

The themes of sustainability and responsible use of fibre, yarns and fabric could be further embedded in the course and allow for leadership by staff and students in the green transition ecosystem. Students should also be encouraged to explore the challenges around social responsibility as global citizens, addressing issues pertaining to health and well-being, and ethical considerations clearly mapping to the UN SDGs.

#### 4. Commendations

---

1. The Panel commends the quality of the self-assessment report, the thoroughness of the exploration for change identification of 'what works' and areas for improvement and enhancement that will constructively align the learning journey via tacit learning and the module level learning outcomes.
2. The Panel commends the development of statements to identify key areas of focus (as part of the consultation report) Positioning, Information and Access, Teaching and Learning, Learning and Environment, Graduation & Industry. Positive tone and evocative language throughout such as 'bold curiosity', 'dirty learning', 'imagination and action', and 'carving new aesthetic paths'. This reflects current teaching practice in Art and Design with the 'sticky curriculum' as evidenced in Art and Design pedagogy.
3. The Panel commends the widening participatory approach, and the documenting and recording of graduate destinations. The panel would encourage the use of the graduate stories in the marketing materials with a formal mapping of the graduate destinations. The structure of the programme has a good balance between practice and research, and research informed teaching via the staff experience supporting tacit knowledge acquisition.

#### 5. Recommendations

---

1. The Panel recommends the Studio+ year as a valuable year and one where students are able to develop their experience, business and industry links, and supports the move towards a mandatory year aligned to possible business engagement projects and proposals with potential specialist skills development in both CAD and practice.
2. The Panel recommends that the first year broad experience and transition to the specialist subjects in Year 2 be reviewed with additional tutorial time aligned to the

subject specialists prior to their final area selection, and that students select the areas that they will be going to for years 2 and 3 in the final weeks of first year.

## 6. Conclusion

---

The review team would like to thank the administrators and management team for the quality of the documentation delivered to us prior to our visit. The documentation was clear in articulation and showed that the internal review had been both a transparent and inclusive process. The procedural arrangements were well organised and the event was informative provisioning time for the review team to ask the necessary questions around the key theme's identified prior to the face to face meetings at the event. There was good opportunity to ask pertinent questions to justify and commend good practice and to identify and recommend any changes from both the self-assessment document and through the stakeholder conversations.

## Initial Response to Review Panel Report

Programme being reviewed	BA in Textile & Surface Design
Date of Review Panel visit	15 April 2024
Date Review Panel Report submitted	07 May 2024

### Background/Introduction

The task of developing the Self-Assessment Report for the Quality Review of the BA in Textile & Surface Design was a valuable reflective exercise, which facilitated the staff of the Department to review the position of our undergraduate programme from a number of perspectives, highlight and confirm our strengths and opportunities, identify areas of good practice and evaluate our weaknesses and challenges in a systematic way. Engaging with the Review Panel was a positive and constructive experience. We welcome the endorsement of the Review Panel for our activities through commendations and will carefully consider the recommendations in the context of developing the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the area.

There was a high level of engagement in the Quality Review process from staff in the Department, industry, graduate and the student community, both in compiling the Self-Assessment Report and in interacting with the Review Panel during the site visit. The institution wishes to thank the Review Panel for their time, expertise and constructive comments, both during the site visit and in their helpful Report. Their generosity in undertaking this work is greatly appreciated.

The TSD staff also greatly appreciate the commendations offered by the Review Panel. In particular we were heartened by the recognition offered in relation to: the quality of the self-assessment report and the thoroughness of the exploration for change, the development of statements to identify key areas of focus, and the widening participatory approach.

We will formulate the QIP to address the recommendations in the Review Panel Report, and many actions are already underway. These include: prioritising the redesign and implementation of the DBE Studio+ provision for 2024-2025 to include new modules focusing on access to equipment for skills; redesign and implementation of the 1st year TSD consolidation module with increased TSD tutorial time to allow for equitable time in Print and Constructed strands; start of staff timetabling to allow staff development. These changes will significantly benefit the area and department.

With specific reference to the prioritised recommendations identified by the Review Panel, the Department's initial proposals/comments are outlined below:

## Recommendation 1.1: Studio+ development

The Panel recommends the Studio+ year as a valuable year and one where students can develop their experience, business and industry links, and supports the move towards a mandatory year aligned to possible business engagement projects and proposals with potential specialist skills development in both CAD and practice-based design principles, whether traditional manufacturing skills or those skills relating to emerging technologies.

### *Response to 1.1*

The department acknowledges this recommendation. Progress has been made in respect to this recommendation through a redesign of the DBE Studio+ provision for 2024-2025. There is also an increased staffing budget to apportion the larger numbers of students undertaking Studio+. Further opportunities for deepening knowledge and experience in business will be facilitated through the Creative Futures Academy (a HCI initiative, in collaboration with IADT and UCD) in the form of a creative entrepreneurship elective and the opportunity to undertake electives at UCD, IADT and TCD. This will continue to be reviewed and developed through our annual programme review and planning.

## Recommendation 1.2: Transition from Year 1 to Year 2

The Panel recommends that the first-year broad experience and transition to the specialist subjects in Year 2 be reviewed with additional tutorial time aligned to the subject specialists prior to their final area selection, and that students select the areas that they will be going to for years 2 and 3 in the final weeks of first year to consolidate their learning.

### *Response to 1.2*

Progress has been made in relation to this recommendation through a redesign of the TSD 1st year 6-week consolidation project, with additional TSD core staff input and increased TSD tutorial time to allow for equitable time in Print and Constructed. However, the department acknowledges that 1st year students require further time aligned to the subject specialisms earlier in 1st year to allow for informed choice making and welcomes engagement with the Department of 1st year. It should be noted that 1st year is in the process of undertaking its own periodic review, and that this provides an ideal opportunity to review and enhance provision.

## Recommendation 1.3: Studio + resources and access

The panel would suggest growing the Studio+ year within the available resources, and access to equipment for skill development and the correct studio environment for students to thrive.

### *Response to 1.3*

Progress has been made in relation to this recommendation. The Design School has introduced a new modular structure for 2024-2025. DBE has redesigned briefs to include 1 day per week in DBE studios for hands-on skills acquisition. Additional staffing will be in place to support the growth of Studio+ numbers and enhance delivery and skills development. It is difficult to create a comparable DBE studio environment for the Studio+ students as they currently share a studio space, however the College is investing in additional furniture and equipment to enhance the environment.

### **Recommendation 1.4: A digital strategy**

The Panel recommends that serious consideration be given to a digital strategy and increasing student access to software such as Adobe CC (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign). This was highlighted as an industry requirement and a graduate quality.

### *Response to 1.4*

This is an ongoing College, and indeed sectoral issue, that needs to be addressed and developed. At a local level, increased support is planned for student CAD delivery for 2024-2025, in particular in 2nd year and Studio+. At a College level, work is being undertaken to develop a Digital Learning Strategy through a Teaching & Learning Strategic Project.

### **Recommendation 1.5.1: Timetabling: staff workload and student staff ratios**

Careful timetabling and evaluation of the staff team workload aligned to student staff ratios, considering the constraints of the physical space and to maximise access to the new equipment (eg, the William Walsh Workshop).

### *Response to 1.5.1*

Progress has been made in relation to this recommendation. Staffing has increased for Studio+ for 2024-2025. As per recommendation of the Review Panel to teach fewer weeks, the Design School has introduced a reading week mid-way through trimester 1 which will allow staff to review student work and also give opportunities for research and Erasmus+ staff travel. Careful timetabling has commenced, we are restricted with our studio space and equipment that puts a limit on the student numbers in the area. The Department has timetabled additional time in the Willie Walsh workshop for 2024-2025 and will carefully monitor the need going forward.

### Recommendation 1.5.2: Opportunities for staff

Continue to create opportunities for the staff team via the mentoring programme/staff development to engender an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship, knowledge exchange and research activities. Promoting collaborative approaches to learning, teaching and research and opportunities to share 'best practice'.

#### *Response to 1.5.2*

Progress has been made College-wide in relation to this recommendation. A Teaching and Learning Symposium was held in June which promoted collaborative approaches to learning, teaching and research and opportunities to share best practice. The Research Office has a Research and Development week planned for September.

### Conclusion

Within three months of writing the initial responses to the Review Panel Report, the Department will prepare the QIP outlining how it proposes to implement the Review Panel Report recommendations. The QIP will be agreed within the School and signed-off by the Chair of the Review Panel and the Head of Academic Affairs. The QIP will be considered by the NCAD Quality Assurance Steering Committee and then published alongside the Review Panel Report.