Review of BA Visual Culture January 2023

Quality Improvement Plan 2023

Structuring Our Enhancement Work

The Board and staff have a shared belief in the transformative potential of an NCAD education to equip our graduates with the bold curiosity and the new thinking which society critically needs. Our commitment to realising this potential is articulated through *Futures, Bold and Curious 2019-2024*, NCAD's Strategic Plan, and the three areas of strategic focus it identifies for the enhancement of the enhancement of the learning environment at NCAD in the coming years:

Embed BOLD and CURIOUS LEARNING at our core
CONNECT and BE CONNECTED
An EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION.

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1   Embed Bold and Curious Learning at our Core

OUR AMBITION: 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. We are committed to ensuring every student has access to a learning experience that is dynamic, resourced and transformative. Embedding bold and curious thinking challenges students to innovate and interrogate, and to take risks in their learning.

IMPLEMENTATION: A number of 'strategic' and 'enabling' projects are underway to support delivery of this ambition for the learning environment at NCAD: a Teaching and Learning Strategic Project, a Supporting Research Strategic Project, a Digital Environment Enabling Project and a Built Environment Enabling Project. Where these initiatives provide the key vehicle through which an enhancement opportunity will be delivered, this is identified.

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation - 5. Programme's relationship with the College	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
1.1		**Topic or area Programmes' relationship with the College**					
1.1.1	2.3	The electives could be used more strategically as sites of (mixed) group work and even social opportunities for engagement. Possibly, this could lead to greater visibility of Visual Culture within NCAD and further opportunity for artists and designers to be equipped with a better understanding of other roles within the cultural ecosystem, for mutual benefit.	We welcome this recommendation, but with a note of caution: the elective programme is offered to mixed groups of students from different schools and so serves diverse learning needs. Changes to this content will impact students on other programmes. Moreover, the Learning Outcomes (concerning research, analysis and communication) in these classes are particularly important for the studio-based students as they constitute important opportunities for learning / skills acquisition that may not be experienced elsewhere in their studies. That said, the use of our electives for more group work and *in situ* learning are matters that we already wish to encourage and staff are increasingly developing alternative assignments and innovative class formats based on break-out discussions and workshops which meet the published Learning Outcomes.	T&L	Staff meetings in 23-24 to encourage invention and innovation in electives, as well as the impact on significant developments such as widespread and easily accessible generative AI tools.	First phase - Sept 23 and then on going	David Crowley with Sarah Pierce lead for Critical Cultures in 2023-24

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
1.2		**Topic or area Programme Assignments and Assessment**					
1.2.1	8.1	The panel recommends further exploration of varied modes of assignment, presentation and assessment such as podcasting, social media content, visual essays, etc.	We concur. This has been our practice in recent years (specifically we have encouraged podcasting, social media content, visual essays as assessment tasks, blogging tools) and we wish to continue in this direction. In the future we would like our students to become skilful and critical users of Generative AI. Staff have been / will be supported to innovate by the appointment of Teaching & Learning Development Officer (2021) and an Educational Technologist (2023). The emphasis on research of / into pedagogy promoted by the College's new Research Office will be of value to us.	T&L	Continued practice in this area will be supported by making innovation a regular theme of staff meetings, see below.	From Sept 23 and ongoing	Head of BA programme
1.2.2	8.2	The panel recommends that these varied modes of assignment could be explored to help to address the issue of converging deadlines/log-jams.	This is in accord with the direction in which the BA programme has travelled in recent years. We have introduced different modes of assessment and will continue to do so. In particular, we will experiment with more mid-phase tasks which allow for a number of smaller assignments within a module particularly for first year students. This, we believe, will help with the acclimatisation required at the start of degree. We are also mindful of the benefits and risks of generative AI and so wish to expand the communication skills of our students (written and non-written) in ways that will serve future careers / cultural and social needs in relation to these developments. One area which we have not experimented with has been peer assessment. This will be a feature of our programme development in the next phase of the BA.	T&L	Introduction of mid-phase assessment tasks; continued expansion of communication tasks (and learning), peer assessment.	During the course of 2023-24 and thereafter	Head of BA programme and staff team

| 1.2.3 | 8.3 | The panel recommends that further exploration is undertaken of current debates in practice-informed/artistic research as a bridge between Visual Culture and studio. The possibility of an elective addressing this approach could be investigated. | We feel that we are actively engaged in these debates. Some of our staff team are particularly concerned with / expert in the field of artistic research (Loeffler and Pierce). We fully intend to continue to explore these areas of practice. When it comes to the bridge between Visual Culture and studio see comment below.

And regarding electives see comment above - response to 2.3. | T&L | Ongoing engagement with practice-informed/artistic research as a course team | Ongoing | Head of Programme / all staff teaching on the programme |

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
1.3	**Topic or area Programmes Aims and Objectives**						
1.3.1	8.3	The School of Visual Culture has a "finger in every piece of the pie" for undergraduate courses at NCAD. This can be harnessed in terms of increasing integration and visibility for the BA Visual Culture programme, for example by directing critical output in collaboration with the studio-based programme for the end of year exhibition and at other key points in the journey of the BA Visual Culture students in the undertaking of their studies through Stage 1 to completion of the programme.	We have explored the possibility of the BA VC students producing critical outputs at the time of the degree show in previous years e.g. by hosting events with guest critics before the Covid pandemic. These events were only partially successful partly because of structural and timetable issues. Activities which fall outside credit-bearing modules or are timed outside modules are difficult to sustain. Small numbers of students benefited from them. The introduction of a new module for all students as outlined in the Self-Assessment documentation for the periodic review - called Making Visual Culture Public - is an important step to allow this to happen successfully. See comments below about integration with studio based students.	T&L	Introduction of new final year module and ongoing monitoring of its success / otherwise	Spring 24	Head of programme of BA VC and module coordinator (Sarah Pierce)

2   Connect and Be Connected

OUR AMBITION: 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.

IMPLEMENTATION: A number of 'strategic' and 'enabling' projects are underway to support delivery of this ambition for the learning environment at NCAD: a Beyond NCAD Strategic Project, a Teaching and Learning Strategic Project, a Supporting Research Strategic Project, a Resourcing Enabling Project. Where these initiatives provide the key vehicle through which an enhancement opportunity will be delivered this is identified.

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
2.1		**Topic or area** Key findings about the BA in Visual Culture					
2.1.1	1.2 and 9.1	Threat to the sector is identified in the industry feedback sessions (written and in-person) with regard to internships/placements. The College has an opportunity to advocate for the value of course accreditation through the programme of learning, and thereby align their voices with industry/sectoral concerns.	We welcome this recommendation as it points to a serious matter which impacts negatively on our desire to provide significant professional work placement opportunities for our students. We are confident that the College will support us making the case for the importance of accredited placements which are supported by learning agreements.	Beyond NCAD	In the first instance, we propose gathering support from our stakeholder/partners and communicating the value of properly accredited internships to the HEA and other branches of government. In the mid-term, the College's close partnership with key organisations such as the Arts Council (via the Creative Futures Academy) will allow us to press the case in other conversations with other national agencies.	Completion of first phase in December 23	Head of School / Head of Programme

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
2.2		**Topic or area** Programmes Aims and Objectives					
2.2.1	9.3	The BA Visual Culture programme is an "unacknowledged" leader/flagship in the educational provision at NCAD. The value of this leadership role could be further harnessed to foreground Visual Culture as integral to the educational fabric and culture at NCAD. Spotlighting the BA Visual Culture programme in terms of external communications and marketing could be a way of acknowledging how integral this programme is to the identity of NCAD and to the Irish cultural sector at large.	We welcome this recommendation and will communicate it to the team responsible for external communications and marketing. It is important to note that the communications team recognise the value of the programme in the terms set out in this recommendation and until recently have had limited resources (staff time) to promote the programme. The BA VC staff team also needs to be more proactive in gathering / recommending material to promote the programme - graduate stories, etc. Furthermore (and perhaps extending beyond this recommendation) we would like to diversify our recruitment - in terms of ethnicity, age. The College's strategy project concerning internationalisation is important	Beyond NCAD	Recommendation to external communication and marketing team.	Recommendation to be made Autumn 23	Recruitment and communications team.

| | | | in this regard. Recruitment of PT students is also a priority. | | | | |

3   An Effective Organisation

OUR AMBITION: Every objective in this Strategic Plan has to be underpinned both by solid foundations and by rigorous and efficient application. We are committed to being a cohesive and effective organisation, in which good management and decision making ensure all resources are fully maximised to support NCAD's strategic objectives, and our position as a public-funded organisation is understood and valued.

IMPLEMENTATION: A number of 'strategic' and 'enabling' projects are underway to support delivery of this ambition for the learning environment at NCAD: a Working Together Better Strategic Project, a Resourcing Enabling Project. Where these initiatives provide the key vehicle through which an enhancement opportunity will be delivered this is identified.

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
3.1	**Topic or area Programme Staffing and Resourcing**						
3.1.1	6.1	The panel notes that the role of Course Leader has been identified as in need of consolidation for the BA Visual Culture programme. The panel also suggest that the role of Head of Visual Culture (as a supporting role to the Head of School of Visual Culture), might be explored to further consolidate provision of Visual Culture to students across all undergraduate degree programmes at NCAD as well as to progress ambitions for postgraduate provision within the School and College environment, more broadly considered.	If accepted, this recommendation has implications for the overall activities of the School - the BA VC is only a small part of our activities (c. 20% of FTE students). The specific suggestion concerning the head of BA course would not, we believe, necessarily improve the operations of the School or the programme. That said, the underlying logic of this suggestion is a good one - better connection between the different curricula / programmes in the School and in the College. The matter of roles - programme leader, module coordinator, head of department, etc., is a matter of considerable College attention and new role descriptors with clear parameters will be published in autumn 24.	N/A	Design and publication of new role definitions by HR;

Application of new role definitions in relation to key roles in the School such as head of BA VC. | Autumn 23;

Summer 24. | Senior Management / HR

Head of School of VC |
| 3.1.2 | 6.2 | The panel recommend that the role of Course Leader is reviewed and consideration is given to making this a rotating role between core academic staff in the School of Visual Culture. | As above. One further note to be made is that the programme coordination roles are likely to be fixed term (typically three years) going ahead and thereby allow the possibility of rotation without requiring it. The Head of BA VC role was advertised internally in summer 2023 on this basis and Dr Mahony was appointed. | N/A | As above. Design and publication of new role definitions. | Autumn 23. | Senior Management / HR |

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
3.1.3	6.3	The panel note that hourly-paid staff make a significant contribution to the programme, especially with reference to the delivery of electives. The panel recommend that consideration is given to paying such hourly-paid staff (as well as part-time staff, who are currently paid to attend some meetings) to contribute to BA Visual Culture programme meetings so that the learner journey through all elements of the programme can be considered in the round.	PT staff are paid to attend BA Visual Culture programme meetings. The level of this payment needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is fair.	N/A	Recommendation - review of level of payment for attendance of meetings.	To be confirmed by HR	HR
3.1.4	6.4	The panel suggest that a review is undertaken of weighting between student/staff ratios which is unbalanced for the BA Visual Culture programme when compared to student/staff ratios on some undergraduate studio-based programmes.	We welcome this recommendation and in 2022 undertook full and detailed audits of the SSR in the School. Cross-College reviews of SSRs (calculated on the basis of the modules) were undertaken in June 23 to provide the grounds for the comparison being requested here.	N/A	Full audit of SSR of all UG modules across the College - already underway.	Summer 23	HR and Head of Corporate Services
3.1.5	6.5	The panel note that current practice is to weight a larger proportion of preparation, assessment and co-ordination time for teaching against level 9 in the School of Visual Culture. However, significant time is required for undergraduate teaching, especially on a programme with such a specified focus as the BA Visual Culture which has significant focus on complex written outcomes. The panel recommends re-consideration of current weighting of lecturer's time on the BA Visual Culture to take account of the time needed for assessment and written feedback, which usually falls to individual lecturers (as opposed to	We welcome any recommendation which reconsiders the weighting of a lecturer's time. Presently all teaching arrangements are subject to an agreement which is known as the *Visual Culture Timetabling agreement to provide equitable allocation of hours in the context of academic exchange* (2008). All preparation, assessment and co-ordination time is weighted according to this agreement which gives greater credit to PG and final year UG modules and less credit to first and second year UG modules. It is our understanding that this agreement was put in place to take into account the time needed for assessment and written feedback. And, importantly, it differentiates between VC practice and studio practice.	N/A	==We will review the current weighting of lecturer's time toward fuller understanding of the current approach.==	To be confirmed by HR	HR

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
		modes of joint assessment that are usual in studio practice).	We would welcome an opportunity to reflect on whether the *Visual Culture Timetabling agreement* remains effective and fair.				
3.1.6	6.6	The panel suggest that further consideration is given to cross-pollination with regard to staff resourcing between Visual Culture studies and studio-based programmes in NCAD.	The precise detail of this recommendation is difficult to achieve (i.e. 'staff resourcing'). Presently resources are organised at NCAD by school and so resourced activities which bring together students and staff from different schools are largely limited to those which occur under the aegis of the plus year. The cross-pollination point seems to refer to 7.2 discussed below.	T&L	This precise request seems, in our view, beyond the remit of a BA programme Review. But again, the underlying logic is reasonable and is addressed in 7.2.	Refer to 7.2	Refer to 7.2
3.1.7	7.1	The panel recommends that further insight into the student journey through the BA Visual Culture programme could be achieved by regular, mandatory meetings between all core academic staff contributing to the programme. Regular meetings could consider future planning, co-ordination and an open forum for course development. Such meetings could enhance a sense of shared ownership of the BA Visual Culture programme rather than, in a worst-case scenario, staff merely contributing modules. In addition, it would be a progressive move to include non-core academic staff in these discussions. Non-core academic staff contribution would need to be resourced by the College.	We welcome this recommendation and will institute regular staff meetings solely for the programme and not for all-School business. They will be organised four times in a year and will combine discussion of curriculum, as well as student progression. They will be organised to ensure greater team awareness of class content. Non-core academic staff will be paid to attend these meetings, as is College practice.	T&L	Scheduling and running BA staff team meetings	From Sept 23 ongoing	Head of programme of BA VC
3.1.8	7.2	The panel recommends that consideration be given to concerns regarding integration between the BA Visual Culture programme and studio-based teaching through trialling co-	This is an important but challenging matter. Attempts to offer learning opportunities in which BA VC students work with their peers in the studio have been requested by students but the take up is poor largely, we believe, because of the time pressures on	T&L	Discussion with studio programmes in Visual Comm; Module design; Module validation. Run new module	23-24 24-25	Head of BA VC programme

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		design and co-teaching of modules in the School of Visual Culture.	students. For this reason, it seems necessary to generate opportunities within credited modules. Our current modules are not very flexible in this regard. To innovate in a significant way, we need to write new modules in partnership with the studios. Initial discussions in spring 23 pointed to the possibility of collaborative projects involving Visual Communication students where an interest in communication, word / image relations, archives, etc., is shared.				

QIP No.	RPR ref no	Recommendation	Response	Strategy Project	High Level Actions	Timeline	Responsible
3.2	**Topic or area Key findings about the BA in Visual Culture**						
3.2.1	1.1	The panel recommends a review of how the programme documentation is presented to future Programmatic Review panels. Given the volume of documentation provided (often with multiple hyperlinks in soft copy documents), the panel recommends that the option of hard copy versions of documentation is considered going forward or that a more manageable format for digital copies is considered. At present, the documentation is not presented as a proposed programme document and changes and rationale for such are presented in the SAR. Such a programme document is standard in other HE providers. It could sit alongside the SAR and provide a way for streamlining the volume of documentation for external reviewers.	We welcome and support this recommendation. It relates to the guidance given to programmes undergoing review by the Head of Academic Affairs and Quality and Academic Support Officer.'#	N/A	Guidance in respect of documentation has been updated. (Revised approach complemented by BA Graphic Design Peer Review Group).	Complete	Head of Academic Affairs and Quality and Academic Support Officer.

QIP No.	High Level Action	Timeline	Responsible	RAG status
1	**BOLD AND CURIOUS LEARNING AT OUR CORE**			
1.1	**Topic Programmes' relationship with the College**			
1.1.1	Strategic use of electives	First phase - Sept 23 and then on going	Head of School / CC coordinator	
1.1.1	further exploration of varied modes of assignment, presentation and assessment	From Sept 23 and ongoing	Head of BA programme	
1.2	**Topic Programme Assignments and Assessment**			
1.2.1	Varied modes of assignment, presentation and assessment	Sept 23 and ongoing	Head of BA programme	
1.2.2	Mitigate against converging deadlines/log-jams	During 2023-24 and thereafter	Head of BA programme and staff team	
1.2.3	exploring practice-informed/artistic research	Ongoing	Head of BA programme / all BA staff	
1.3	**Topic Programmes Aims and Objectives**			
1.3.1	Increase integration and visibility for the BA Visual Culture programme	Spring 24	Head ofBA programme and module coordinator	
2	**CONNECT AND BE CONNECTED**			
2.1	**Topic Key findings about the BA in Visual Culture**			
2.1.1	internships/placements	Completion of first phase in December 23	Head of School / Head of Programme	
2.2	**Topic Programmes Aims and Objectives**			
2.2.1	to foreground Visual Culture as integral to the educational fabric and culture at NCAD	Recommendation to be made Autumn 23	Recruitment and communications team	
3	**AN EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION**			
3.1	**Topic Programme Staffing and Resourcing**			
3.1.1	Head of Visual Culture in supporting role to the Head of School of Visual Culture	Autumn 23;	Senior Management / HR	
3.1.2	Review of Course Leader Role	Autumn 23;	Senior Management / HR	
3.1.3	Hourly-paid staff attendance at meetings	To be confirmed by HR	HR	
3.1.4	Review of weighting between student/staff ratios	Summer 23	HR and Head of Corporate Services	
3.1.5	Re-consideration of current weighting of lecturer's time	TBC confirmed by HR	HR	
3.1.6	Cross-pollination with regard to staff resourcing	See comment		
3.1.7	Regular, mandatory meetings	From Sept 23 ongoing	Head of programme of BA VC	
3.1.8	Integration of BA Visual Culture programme and studio-based teaching through trialling co-design and co-teaching	Phase 1 23-24 Phase 2 24-25	Head of BA VC programme	
3.2	**Topic Key findings about the BA in Visual Culture**			
3.2.1	Review of how the programme documentation is presented	TBC	Head of Academic Affairs and Quality and Academic Support Officer.	