



Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland



# Higher Education Pathway Assessment Report: National College of Art and Design



## About this assessment

This report details the findings of the assessment conducted by an Assessment Panel on behalf of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) of National College of Art and Design's IEM Application Statement (IEMAS), which was submitted to QQI as part of the provider's application for authorisation to use the TrustEd Ireland mark. The desk assessment was conducted by the following Assessment Panel:

Name	Role	Affiliation
Prof. Phil Cardew	Chairperson	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom
Rowena Pelik	Report Writer/Secretary	International Higher Education Consultant, United Kingdom
Elizabeth Noonan	International Education Expert	University College Cork, Ireland
Chethaka Kankanam Gamage	Learner	Atlantic Technological University, Ireland

## Outcome of the assessment

This assessment evaluates the provider's compliance with the criteria set out in the Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners (HE Code). From the evidence provided by the provider in the self- assessment document, the IEM Application Statement (IEMAS), the Assessment Panel concludes that the provider should be:

Outcome	Please tick
Authorised to use TrustEd Ireland Mark	✓
Not Authorised to use TrustEd Ireland Mark	

Please see below a summary of the outcome by HE Code Principle (5.1-5.6)

## 5.1 Marketing and Recruitment:

**Principle: HE providers recruit international learners in a transparent and ethical manner. In their marketing and promotional materials, they ensure that clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date information is provided.**

5.1.1 (a) HE providers shall endeavour proactively to understand the information needs of prospective international learners.

5.1.1 (b) HE providers shall ensure that information provided to potential international learners about the institution and its provision is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date. This shall include information about the intended purpose of the provision e.g., to prepare a learner for further study or specific employment. Where necessary, it should also include information on associated immigration requirements, including requirements for learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permission.

5.1.1 (c) Where applicable, information should also be provided on the professional accreditation status of programmes.

5.1.1 (d) Where applicable, information on practice placement requirements, and how these may be fulfilled, should also be made known to prospective international learners.

5.1.1 (e) HE providers shall be compliant with information for learner requirements, as set out in Section 67 of the 2012 Act as amended. They shall confirm:

- (i) whether or not the successful completion of the programme entitles the learner to an award;
- (ii) the awarding body making the award;
- (iii) the title of the award;
- (iv) whether the award is one that is included within the NFQ;
- (v) the level at which the award is included within the NFQ;
- (vi) whether the award is a major, minor, special purpose or supplemental award, as identified within the NFQ;
- (vii) the procedures for access, transfer and progression that are in place, including the pathways for international learners for further study, employment, and residency, where applicable (see also section 4.2 above);
- (viii) details, where appropriate, of the arrangements in place for the protection of enrolled learners under Section 65 of the 2012 Act as amended (see section 4.5.2 above and Appendix Two of this code).

5.1.1 (f) HE providers shall ensure that information is provided in a way that is accessible to international learners and assists them in making informed decisions. This information should support international learners in understanding all matters related to a programme prior to enrolment. If provided in a different language, it is the responsibility of the HE provider to ensure that the information is clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date.

5.1.1 (g) HE providers shall accurately represent their organisation and facilities in all marketing and promotional materials and ensure that no false or misleading information is issued.

5.1.1 (h) HE providers shall provide appropriate contact details for an appropriate person or persons to provide assistance with queries from international learners prior to enrolment.

5.1.1 (i) HE providers shall state the commencement dates for all programmes.

5.1.2 (a) Prior to enrolment, HE providers shall ensure the availability and provision of relevant financial information pertaining to the study and average subsistence costs of their programme provision, from the period of enrolment through to graduation.

5.1.2 (b) Prior to enrolment, HE providers shall ensure that the learner is made aware of any insurance requirements, e.g., medical or travel insurance, and of the availability of accommodation, and any accommodation services provided.

5.1.2 (c) HE providers shall have a written agreement with each education agent, recruitment partner or consultant that formally represents their programme provision.

5.1.2 (d) HE providers shall ensure that any contractual arrangements entered with an education agent, recruitment partner or consultant incorporate the principles of the London Statement. Existing contracts that do not incorporate these principles shall be amended appropriately within two years of the date of the HE provider's application for authorisation to use the IEM.

5.1.2 (e) The contract between the HE provider and education agent, recruitment partner or consultant shall include a termination clause in instances where the agent does not comply with the principles of the London Statement or is found to have acted in an unethical fashion to the detriment of international learners.

5.1.2 (f) HE providers shall conduct due diligence e.g., three reference checks, to verify the track record of education agents, recruitment partners or consultants, in relation to learner protection issues, prior to entering into a contractual agreement.

5.1.2 (g) HE providers shall ensure that all education agents, recruitment partners or consultants contracted to them are in possession of accurate and up to date information regarding the provider and its provision.

5.1.2 (h) HE providers shall have in place a transparent process for monitoring and reviewing the activities of education agents, recruitment partners or consultants including, where appropriate, feedback from applicants, to ensure that the education agent, recruitment partner or consultant is operating within the spirit of the HE Code and the London Statement.

5.1.2 (i) HE providers required to put in place arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners under Section 65 of the 2012 Act as amended shall do so prior to the recruitment of learners (see also section 4.5 and Appendix Two of this HE code).

## Summary

The Panel agrees with NCAD's assessment that 5.1.1 (a) to (i) and 5.1.2 (b) are fully applicable to the College and it is fully compliant with these criteria. At the time of the submission of the IEMAS, NCAD assessed itself as only partially compliant with 5.1.2 (a), which it identified as fully applicable. Following responses to the Outstanding Queries Report (OQR), it was evident to the Panel that actions had been taken and that, by that point, it had become fully compliant (further detail is provided below).

The Panel agrees with NCAD's assessment that criteria 5.1.2 (c) to (i) regarding working with agents are not applicable, noting that NCAD states that it has no plans to work with agents (i.e. no plans for this to change).

Although the original IEMAS submission from NCAD indicated that criterion 5.1.2 (a) was partially met, on the basis of additional information supplied in response to the OQR, the Panel concluded that NCAD has demonstrated effectively that it provides an appropriate level of financial information, as well as signposting to other resources, such as ICOS, about the costs of studying and living in Ireland. Therefore, the Panel considers NCAD has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate full compliance with this criterion.

Evidence examined by the Panel confirmed that NCAD recruits international learners in a transparent and ethical manner, ensures that its marketing and promotional materials are clear, accurate, transparent and accessible, and that relevant and up-to-date information is provided. Further, evidence showed that the College is actively considering and planning the ways in which it will continue to extend its practices in marketing and recruiting international students, linked to its own plans modestly to grow international student numbers. The process of preparing for the TrustEd Ireland Mark, and NCAD's considered response to the OQR, demonstrated an engaged

and reflective way of working, responsive to feedback, with clear and commendable evidence of a culture of continual improvement.

For Principle 5.1 there are no recommended conditions for authorisation, no recommendations and no commendations. The Panel concluded that NCAD's practice is sound, compliant and effective.

**Principle 5.2 Admissions and Qualifications' Recognition:  
HE providers operate fair, transparent and consistent admission policies that support the successful participation of international learners in their chosen programmes**

5.2 (a) HE providers shall clearly specify entry requirements for international learners that support the successful participation of the learners in their chosen programmes.

5.2 (b) HE providers' entry requirements shall clearly specify English language proficiency requirements for applicants whose first language is not English. These should include references to the benchmarks used in assessing proficiency requirements and, like other entry requirements, support the successful participation of international learners in their chosen programmes.

5.2 (c) HE providers shall adopt the principles, and follow the guidance, contained in the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and subsidiary texts in assessing the qualifications presented by international learners for the purpose of admission to their programmes. Qualifications should be assessed in an accessible and fair manner and within a reasonable timeframe.

5.2 (d) HE providers should recognise qualifications that are recognised for the purpose of access to programmes in an international applicant's own higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the requirements for admission in the applicant's own higher education system and those of the Irish HE provider.

5.2 (e) HE providers shall provide a timely written response to international applicants who are refused admission.

5.2 (f) Where a HE provider decides to withhold recognition of a qualification from an international learner for the purpose of admission, the reasons for the refusal to grant recognition shall be stated, and information provided concerning possible measures the applicant may take to obtain recognition at a later stage. If a HE provider decides to withhold recognition of a qualification for the purpose of admission, or if no decision is taken, the applicant shall be able to make an appeal within a reasonable time limit.

5.2 (g) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state, including the home countries of their international learners.

**Summary**

The Panel confirmed NCAD's assessment that all criteria in this principle are fully applicable. Having examined the initial IEMAS, and further information provided in response to the OQR, the Panel assessed NCAD as compliant with all the criteria 5.2 (a) to 5.2 (g); this includes criterion 5.2 (c) where NCAD had assessed itself as partially compliant (see below). The evidence demonstrates that NCAD has fair, transparent and consistent admission policies which support the successful participation of international learners in their chosen programmes.

In its IEMAS, NCAD indicated it only partially met criterion 5.2 (c). This was, however, a very cautious view and it has since explored the matter with University College Dublin (UCD), as its

awarding body, and provided further information and reflection in response to the OQR.

### **Commendation 1**

**5.2 (c):** The Panel is satisfied that NCAD is fully compliant, noting the care with which it sought to understand its role in relation to the LRC and to assure itself of its alignment with the LRC. The Panel found that this careful and self-reflective approach underpinned its engagement with the IEMAS and TrustEd process, giving the Panel considerable confidence in NCAD's capacity for self-evaluation and close, effective working with its awarding body. The Panel **commends** NCAD for this, which is well illustrated in its responses to 5.2 (c).

Against Principle 5.2, there are no recommended conditions for authorisation and no recommendations. The Panel concluded that the evidence clearly demonstrated NCAD's practice is sound, compliant and effective.

### **Principle 5.3 Fees, Refunds and Subsistence:**

**HE providers provide all learners with clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up to date information on all study costs, including subsistence and accommodation. HE providers shall inform learners about fees and other costs associated with undertaking a programme of study in Ireland**

5.3.1 (a) HE providers shall provide information on compulsory fees for the full duration of the programme from registration and admission to graduation or exit from the programme. Where fees may change, this shall be clear to applicants in the information provided.

5.3.1 (b) HE providers shall provide information on the collection or payment of fees, including sanctions for late payment and debt collection for moneys owed.

5.3.1 (c) HE providers shall establish a fees structure that supports the mission of the organisation and reflects the costs associated with quality provision.

5.3.1 (d) HE providers shall ensure that there are no additional fees or unexpected charges that international learners have not been made aware of.

5.3.1 (e) HE providers shall issue a receipt to international learners upon receipt of payment of fees which will include a breakdown of fees paid.

5.3.1 (f) HE providers shall establish and publish a procedure on full and partial refunds. This procedure shall outline the conditions under which a refund will be granted e.g., a refused entry visa application, in the case of a non-EU/EEA Swiss learner.

5.3.1 (g) HE providers shall provide information on any financial supports or resources that exist within the organisation, or nationally, for international learners.

5.3.2 (a) HE providers shall provide information on the indicative costs of studying on their programmes e.g., the costs of textbooks, electronic resources, computer requirements, protective equipment.

5.3.2 (b) HE providers shall furnish prospective learners with general advice regarding the average cost of living e.g., accommodation, food, transport and medical care, for the programme duration.

5.3.2 (c) HE providers shall provide information on:

- (i) fees for accommodation services, if offered by the HE provider or other accommodation service providers;
- (ii) fees for complaints and appeals procedures as relevant e.g., rechecking of exam results.

5.3.2 (d) HE providers shall provide information on any other costs related to the provision of student services as considered relevant by the provider.

## Summary

NCAD identified all the criteria as fully applicable to it in the IEMAS, other than 5.3.2 (a), which it identified as partially applicable. It assessed itself as fully compliant with 5.3.1 (a) to (c), with 5.3.1 (e) to (g) and 5.3.2 (b) to (d). The Panel concurred with the assessments of full compliance and comments on those of partial compliance below. In terms of 5.3.2 (c) (i) does not apply but 5.3.2 (c) (ii) does apply. Therefore, while the criterion is only partially applicable, NCAD is fully compliant with the part that is applicable.

At the time of submitting the IEMAS, NCAD noted that it was not fully compliant with respect to course costs (5.3.2 (a)). In responding to the OQR, it was evident that sufficient progress has been made for the Panel to class this as full compliance (information will be available for the next recruitment cycle with website etc. updated for its summer semester 2025). This, therefore, means that it also becomes fully compliant with 5.3.1 (d).

The evidence provided demonstrated that all the actions in relation to course costs are well in hand and that, for the 2025-26 academic session, NCAD will provide all international learners with clear, accurate, transparent, accessible, relevant and up-to-date information on all study costs, including subsistence and accommodation. The Panel confirmed that NCAD informs learners about fees and other costs associated with undertaking a programme of study in Ireland.

Against Principle 5.3, there are no recommended conditions for authorization, no recommendations and no commendations. The Panel confirms that the evidence shows that NCAD's practice is sound, compliant and effective.

## Principle 5.4 Supports and Services for International Learners

**HE providers shall foster a supportive environment which supports the wellbeing and integration of all learners into the student body and ensures a positive learning experience for all learners**

5.4.1 (a) HE providers shall designate appropriate personnel to be responsible for inquiries about learner support issues from international learners e.g., course coordinator, counsellor, or international officer.

5.4.1 (b) HE providers shall offer information to international learners prior to their arrival to help them adjust to their new surroundings e.g., information on transport, banking, availability of accommodation and accommodation services.

5.4.1 (c) HE providers shall ensure that inductions offered to learners also meet the needs of international learners, including intercultural awareness. They should direct learners to services, supports and facilities relevant or appropriate to their programme of study. They should also remind international learners requiring entry visas and/or immigration permissions of their responsibilities under the Department of Justice's student immigration regime.

5.4.1 (d) The induction programme shall be provided to all cohorts of international learners who register or enrol at various times of the year, including learners who access programmes through advanced entry.

5.4.1 (e) HE providers shall provide information on appropriate learner supports and services to facilitate learner integration into the wider HE community.

5.4.1 (f) HE providers shall ensure that international learners are aware of opportunities to participate in, and be represented at, engagements between the provider and the learner body. Where possible, they should provide, in collaboration with learner representative bodies, information on national learner engagement initiatives and opportunities for international learners to avail of training opportunities.

5.4.1 (g) HE providers shall have mechanisms in place to support international learners financially in instances of personal or other emergency or hardship.

5.4.1 (h) HE providers shall facilitate and encourage feedback from international learners on the delivery of any supports and services. This includes informing learners about complaints processes for these services.

5.4.1 (i) Institutional approaches to quality assuring learner services and supports will include all learners, including international learners.

5.4.2 (a) HE providers shall offer induction that is accessible to all learners and, where appropriate, tailored to the needs of international learners. They shall provide full information and advice on all relevant institutional and academic policies.

5.4.2 (b) Induction shall be provided to learners and cohorts who enrol at different points during the year, including those accessing programmes through advanced entry.

5.4.2 (c) HE providers shall ensure the information provided at induction is easily accessible throughout the academic year and shall offer reminders of this information at key points during the year e.g., in the lead-up to examinations or submission of assignments.

5.4.2 (d) HE providers will include academic integrity as a core component of induction for all learners, including international learners. Recognition will be given in inductions to the different education cultures of international learners, and the content, advice and support they impart will be relevant and specific to the Irish higher education context. Formal and informal conversations about academic integrity should be held on an ongoing basis throughout the period of enrolment of all learners, including international learners.

5.4.2 (e) HE providers shall endeavour to integrate their international learners, through their inductions and through their policies, procedures, and services, into the wider learner community.

5.4.2 (f) HE providers shall continue to provide staff with training and support to facilitate an appropriate and effective delivery of programmes and services to international learners. This should include, where appropriate, training in intercultural competence and support for the development of English language education competence.

## Summary

The Panel concurs with NCAD's indication that all criteria under Principle 5.4 are fully applicable. In its IEMAS, the College identified itself as fully compliant with all except three criteria; those, it assessed as partially compliant being 5.4.1 (c), 5.4.2 (a) and 5.4.2 (d). These are addressed in the commentary below.

From the IEMAS, the evidence provided and the response to the OQR, the Panel concluded that NCAD fosters a supportive and student-centred environment which supports the wellbeing and integration of all learners, including international learners, into the student body and ensures a positive learning experience for all learners. This supportive environment is aided by its small size and the nature of studio-based activity.

### Recommendation 1

**Section 5.4:** As the Panel considers that this is important, it recommends that NCAD continue to question and test the assumptions that underlie its culture and check that its approach remains effective for all learners as, while small-size, and based on studio practice, will often mean that a

positive supportive environment is present, this is not inevitably the case.

NCAD's response to the OQR illustrated that its approach to supports for international learners had tended to be reactive rather than anticipatory or proactive. The plans it outlines for 2025-26 indicate a shift to a more proactive approach. This shift is important and is welcomed; it illustrates not only clear plans, with dates, but also, again, shows how NCAD responds thoughtfully to feedback and in enhancing its approaches. The planned progressive expansion of supports for international learners as numbers increase (e.g., the addition of a specific induction moving it from partial to full compliance against 5.4.1 (c) and 5.4.2 (a) is seen by the Panel as a sound and constructive approach, well matched to NCAD's plans.

### **Condition 1**

**5.4.2 (d):** Regarding 5.4.2 (d), the Panel confirms the assessment as currently partially compliant, if only marginally, noting that the Academic Integrity Working Group is more checking, refining and strengthening practice for its context than addressing gaps. Nevertheless, the Panel sets a condition that the outcome of this work be approved within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Across the criteria in HE Code 5.4, NCAD repeatedly states that its approach is 'inclusive of international learners.' This raised concern for the Panel, given that a single approach for all does not mean that it is correct for all, and can mask important differences in both needs and views. NCAD describes its approach to a long list of items as being "inclusive of all EU/EEA/Swiss and non-EU/EEA/Swiss learners" or "inclusive of international learners." In fact those phrases are reiterated over 20 times in this section, including with regard to encouraging students to contact staff regarding queries (5.4.1 (a)), its learner supports and services in general (5.4.1 (e)), processes by which learners can raise concerns and systems for feedback (5.4.1 (h)), its admissions processes, those for communication and the induction programme (5.4.1 (c) and 5.4.2 (a) to (c)), opportunities for learner engagement (5.4.1 (f)), formal and informal routes for dialogue and the ability to stand as a class rep (5.4.1 (f)), approaches to academic integrity (5.4.2 (d)), and approaches to learner integration (5.4.2 (e)).

### **Recommendation 2**

**Section 5.4:** NCAD is recommended to build on the actions it has planned and, in addition, across the 2025-26 academic session, to test and explore whether an approach that is the same for all is actually providing it with sufficient insight into providing effectively for the needs of different groups of students. Whilst this recommendation, as part of the TrustEd Ireland assessment, only concerns international students, the Panel advises NCAD to consider if it applies more widely to its student body, the diversity of needs and views within it. The Panel recommends that this work be

completed within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

Against Principle 5.4, there are no commendations.

### Principle 5.5 English Language Policy Statement and International Foundation Year Programmes

**The English language supports provided by HE providers to international learners, including through the provision of international foundation year programmes, are underpinned by a coherent and transparent institutional policy approach.**

5.5 (a) HE providers shall have an English language policy statement for international learners that shall:

- (i) document the policy approach and process to the assessment of English language proficiency entry requirements;
- (ii) document, as appropriate, the institution's policy approach to the provision, support, and development of English for Academic Purposes;
- (iii) set out the institution's policy approach to the provision of English language supports to non-native English speakers prior to commencement and throughout the duration of their higher education programmes;
- (iv) document the arrangements, including, as appropriate, the quality assurance, credit and/or awarding arrangements, for different types of EAP programmes, such as:
  - pre-sessional programmes/modules,
  - in-sessional programmes/modules

5.5 (b) HE providers offering international foundation year programmes shall set out in their English language policy statement for international learners

- (i) the quality assurance, credit and/or awarding arrangements for these programmes,
- (ii) the corporate and academic governance arrangements in place where such programmes are provided in partnership with other entities e.g., a private English language education provider, other independent/private education provider or campus company.

5.5 (c) For compliance with this HE Code, an international foundation programme shall lead to one of the following awards included within the NFQ:

- (i) QQI preparation for undergraduate programmes, leading to NFQ Level 5 Special Purpose Award (foundation qualification)
- (ii) QQI preparation for postgraduate programme, leading to NFQ Level 8 Special Purpose Award (foundation qualification)
- (iii) equivalent programmes leading to awards that are included within the NFQ and validated by an Irish awarding body.

5.5 (d) Where HE providers currently offer international foundation year programmes that do not lead to awards that are included within the NFQ, they must secure programme validation/course approval for such programmes through an Irish awarding body within two years of the date on which they are authorised to use the IEM.

### Summary

NCAD is compliant with 5.5 (a) with appropriate English language supports provided for international learners; this is underpinned by a coherent and transparent institutional policy approach which meets the relevant expectations. Its approach is appropriately matched to student needs, the scale of the College and the size of its international student population.

### Recommendations 3 and 4

**5.5 (a) (iv):** Nevertheless, the Panel makes two, non-timebound recommendations. The Panel **recommends** that NCAD provide further information on the in-session English language supports available, monitor student engagement and language development, to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study. The Panel further **recommends** that NCAD consider developing further focused in-session English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study.

5.5 (b) to 5.5 (d) are not applicable. However, its global strategy indicates that the College could move into delivery outside the State, in which case it will need to have appropriate conversations with UCD and review how effectively its policies, procedures and practices meet the relevant criteria in advance of any such move.

There are no recommended conditions for authorisation against Principle 5.5 and no commendations.

#### Principle 5.6 International Learners outside the State

**HE providers ensure that learners outside the state who are enrolled on their programmes receive quality learning experiences, where these programmes lead to awards that are included within the NFQ, and whether they are offered in transnational education settings and/or through remote, fully online modes of learning.**

5.6.1 (a) HE providers, having regard to their statutory quality assurance obligations, shall ensure that the academic quality, standard and recognition of their transnational education programmes are equivalent to the academic quality, standard and recognition of the programmes they provide within the state.

5.6.1 (b) HE providers shall apply the principles and criteria set out in this HE Code in an equivalent manner in transnational education settings, including in relation to the provision of learner support services.

5.6.1 (c) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state. This facilitatory function extends to awards included within the NFQ, where the programmes leading to these awards are provided outside the state.

5.6.1 (d) Linked providers who intend to offer transnational education programmes that lead to awards within the NFQ shall only do so with the agreement of the designated awarding body or bodies making the awards.

5.6.2 (a) HE providers, having regard to their statutory quality assurance obligations, shall ensure that the academic quality, standard and recognition of their remote online programmes are equivalent to the academic quality, standard and recognition of the programmes they provide through other teaching and learning modes.

5.6.2 (b) HE providers shall apply the principles and criteria set out in this HE Code in an equivalent manner in relation to learners outside the state enrolled on remote online programmes that lead to awards included within the NFQ, including in relation to the provision of learner support services.

5.6.2 (c) HE providers shall support QQI, as appropriate, in implementing its statutory function to facilitate the recognition outside the state of awards made in the state. This facilitatory function extends to awards included within the NFQ, where the programmes leading to these awards are offered as remote online programmes.

5.6.2 (d) Linked providers who intend to offer remote online programmes to learners outside the state that lead to awards within the NFQ shall only do so with the agreement of the designated awarding body or bodies making the awards.

### Summary

NCAD identified this section as not applicable to it at the present time, therefore, there are no commendations or conditions.

However, the Panel noted that, in its global strategy, the College indicates that it could move into delivery outside the State. The IEMAS clearly states that NCAD will engage with the TrustEd requirements should it develop programmes for delivery outside the state, be they in-person or online.

## Summary of assessment outcomes

### This section provides for the Assessment Panel findings and outcomes by principle and criterion

#### Overview of the provider's international profile and activities

NCAD is a small, specialist HE institution, with a strong reputation in its field, national and globally. It provides undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on the NFQ, as well as conducting research and supervising PhD students. It is a recognised linked provider of UCD and therefore, alongside its own procedures, has to comply with those of UCD for the validation of programmes. In 2022/23, NCAD recorded 1,346 students and of these, 38 (4.23%) were EU/EEA/Swiss students, and 31 (3.51%) non-EU/EEA/Swiss (numbers have been broadly similar between 2020 and 2025).

NCAD formalised its international ambitions relatively recently with a global strategy 2022-2027. It has an ambition to grow its international student numbers to 10-14% of its student population by about 2032. It states that it intends to focus on building systems and policies to sustain the target over the first five years, while recruiting within current capacity and building the basis for growth. The overall global strategy is not only about recruitment, it also embraces international mobility; the development of partnerships and collaborations; and profile raising. The strategy includes detailed plans for its first two years and is now at its mid-point.

While it is developing MoUs with international partners, the IEMAS indicates NCAD has no ambitions to deliver outside Ireland/through TNE. Similarly, it states in the IEMAS that it does not intend to offer online programmes. However, the global strategy does include the ambition for "transnational education models that are sited and virtual" and makes reference to a potential named partner for TNE [Ref1, p.4-5]. NCAD does not currently use recruitment agents as part of its approach to international recruitment. However, it has partnered with an organisation to help raise

its visibility in wider markets (the effectiveness of this will be reviewed in 2025).

NCAD's profile means that international is a clear, but relatively small, element of the College's overall activity and that Principle 5.6 is not currently applicable. Overall, NCAD has a full range of relevant policies, procedures and systems to provide for the needs and interests of international students and to comply with the applicable parts of Principles 5.1 to 5.5; it has outlined plans to develop suitable responses to the small number of areas where, at the time of submission of the IEMAS, it identified compliance as currently partial or could be fuller. The response to the OQR demonstrated that actions had already been progressed and plans furthered.

The IEMAS was comprehensive, considered and supported by relevant evidence. Across the IEMAS, NCAD stressed that processes were inclusive of international learners. It did not, however, comment on how the institution assures itself of the effectiveness of its approaches nor draw out how its systems ensure that the needs of particular groups of students are met. Specific attention is needed to ensure that the overall approach of having policies/ procedures/ mechanisms that include all students also allows NCAD to differentiate the particular needs or outcomes for international learners and enables the necessary distinctions between the needs of EU/EEA/Swiss and non-EU/EEA/Swiss learners to be identified. While the response provided to outstanding queries provided some reassurance on this point, the assessment Panel remained of the view that further understanding of different needs and views would benefit NCAD and its international learners.

NCAD's considered response to the OQR demonstrated an engaged and reflective way of working, responsive to feedback with clear evidence of a culture of continual improvement, for which it is commended.

### **Recommended condition(s) for authorisation:**

#### **Condition 1**

**5.4.2 (d):** The Panel sets a **condition** that the outcome of the Academic Integrity Working Group work be approved within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation.

### **Commendations:**

#### **Commendation 1**

**5.2 (c):** The Panel noted the care with which NCAD sought to understand its role in relation to the LRC and to assure itself on its alignment with the LRC. The Panel found that this careful and self-reflective approach underpinned its engagement with the IEMAS and TrustEd process, giving the Panel considerable confidence in NCAD's capacity for self-evaluation and close, effective working

with its awarding body. The Panel **commends** NCAD for this, which is well illustrated in its responses to 5.2 (c).

### **Commendation 2**

**General:** Across the IEMAS process, including in response to the OQR, NCAD is **commended** for the clear evidence of a quality culture based on self-evaluation and commitment to continual improvement and its constructive, response to requirements and feedback; this is further supported by the evident progress on actions between the submission of the IEMAS application and the response to the OQR.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Recommendation 1**

**Section 5.4:** The Panel notes that the supportive environment provided is aided by NCAD's small size and the nature of studio-based activity. It, however, **recommends** that NCAD continues to question and test the assumptions that underlie its culture and checks that its approach remains effective for all learners as, while small-size, and studio practice, will often mean that a positive supportive environment is present, this is not inevitably the case.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Section 5.4:** NCAD is **recommended** to test and explore whether its approaches that are the same for all do actually provide it with sufficient insight into providing effectively for the needs of different groups of students, within 24 weeks of TrustEd Ireland authorisation. Whilst this recommendation, as part of the TrustEd process, only concerns international students, NCAD would be advised to consider if it applies more widely to its student body, the diversity of needs and views within it.

### **Recommendation 3**

**5.5 (a) (iv):** The Panel **recommends** that NCAD provide further information on the in-session English language supports available, monitor student engagement and language development, to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study.

### **Recommendation 4**

**5.5 (a) (iv):** The Panel **recommends** that NCAD consider developing further focused in-session English language supports to help ensure international learners progress on their programme of study.

### **Declarations of Assessment Panel**

This report has been agreed by the Assessment Panel and is signed on their behalf by the Chairperson.

Assessment Panel Chairperson: Prof. Phil Cardew

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Cardew', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Attention QQI and Trust Ed Reviews Committee

*Delivered via email*

Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Re. Response to NCAD's Trust Ed International Education Mark (IEM) Assessment Report

Dear QQI & Reviews Committee members,

We wish to formally thank the QQI, Trust Ed International Education Mark team, and the Assessment Committee for your time, efforts and support of NCAD as we moved through our first IEM assessment process.

At NCAD, we greatly appreciate the launch of the Trust Ed International Education Mark and the assurance it will give to prospective international learners in the quality of educational experience offered across HEIs and ELE providers in the State.

We benefitted greatly from the weekly information sessions throughout the IEMAS process with the QQI IEMAS team. These were informative and really helpful to us, we wish to express our gratitude to the team for these supports and resources.

We acknowledge a great benefit of the new Trust Ed IEMAS is that HIEs and other providers in Ireland now have a thorough roadmap through which we can -with confidence- develop and continue to refine and grow our supports and information provision to current and prospective future international learners.

Phone: + 353 1 636 4200  
Email: [information@ncad.ie](mailto:information@ncad.ie)  
Address: 100 Thomas Street, Dublin 8, D08 K521, Ireland.

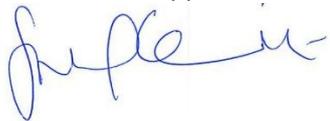
[ncad.ie](http://ncad.ie)

We appreciate the report on our IEMAS assessment and the included commendations, as well as recommendations. Work has already begun on the recommendations provided and we will submit to QQI all recommended and requested information by each deadline. NCAD is a small, highly specialised HEI within Ireland and we are grateful to the panel for the time they took to understand our College, our provision and our supports with respect to international learners.

There is one request we could make of QQI and this is to look at the fee model currently in place for NCAD. We are small in scale, and we have a very lean budget and financial model. The €10,000 fee to submit our IEMAS is considered -internal to NCAD- to be extremely high, especially given that we do pay an annual to our governing body, UCD. We respectfully request that you consider waiving our fees on an ongoing basis in recognition of these facts.

We are thrilled and honoured to receive the Trust Ed International Education Mark. We are proud to be among the HEIs and providers to successfully receive this significant mark and we will share the news widely and with recognition of the benefits of this new mark.

With sincere appreciation,



Prof. Sarah Glennie  
Director