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# National College of Ireland

## Annual Report 2020-2021

### A Message from the NCI President

Progressing into the new academic year 2020-2021, I am delighted to report that the College met this challenge with energy and commitment to academic excellence, and with our students needs at the centre of our activities. For this, I am grateful to all at NCI: our academic staff, our administrative, IT, student support and facilities teams, the expertise and commitment of our voluntary Governing Body members, and the good counsel of our Chair, Fr Leonard Moloney S.J.

While considerable investment was required to ensure both the smooth transition of our teaching and functions online, and the preparation of our campus for the safe return of staff and students, we maintained a strong student recruitment drive. In addition, we successfully validated new programmes and revalidated existing programmes to meet contemporary learning and learner needs. NCI remains in a secure position both academically and financially.

COVID-19 did not distract us from our mission to change lives through education and, in this report, you will see many achievements: Education Awards success, funding secured, award winning papers published, thousands of students happily pursuing their studies, completing assignments, and participating in work placements, fully supported by NCI. NCI also continued to deliver its full programme of Early Learning Initiatives (ELI) with considerable innovation, adapting and modifying to meet ever-increasing and new needs among children and families living in disadvantage.

National College of Ireland became only the second HEI in Ireland to receive the ASIAM designation of an Autism Friendly HEI. This is a matter of some pride to the whole NCI Team and adds to our QStars and Athena SWAN awards of the previous period. Our HR Teams succeeded in placing NCI in the Business & Finance Top 100 Companies leading in Wellbeing, a most remarkable attainment in a very challenging time. NCI remains committed to operate at the highest HEI standards, delivering academic excellence in a learner-centric environment with a truly valued staff.

The last 12 months brought expertise and experience for us all in online communications, as we taught, learned, strategized, planned, chatted, laughed, and quizzed together online. In particular, our celebrations moved online, most importantly our Graduation ceremonies, which demonstrated the deep respect and admiration the College has for our graduates and our commitment to their continuing success in career and life.

COVID-19 restrictions undoubtedly increased the speed at which we embraced NCI's digital transformation, and this will continue to be a unique and progressive feature of our future pedagogy and student services.

Preparing for a return to campus life has very much been the focus in the latter half of this academic year, while continuing to meet HSE guidance and the strategy of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS).

The academic year 2020-21 has been a time of solidarity, adjustment and productivity, giving us much to build on for the year ahead.

Be certain of one thing: we will not fail in our mission to change lives through education.

**Gina Quinn**  
President, NCI

### Forward by the Chairman of the Governing Body

National College of Ireland's governing body, Executive and staff of the College, led by our President, Gina Quinn, have continued to respond with excellence to the needs of our students during the challenge of a global pandemic. The College adapted quickly and professionally, with academic and support teams going out of their way to ensure that no student was left behind, and HR providing guidance and back-up for employees.

The last 12 months have been a time of global uncertainty with the continuing COVID-19 situation. For NCI, this has meant remaining highly flexible and innovative, preparing and implementing plans in response to a changing external environment. To be in this state for so long and continue to deliver on the College's mission to change lives through education is admirable. I want to once again, compliment the NCI Graduate for its resilience, and the President and Executive team for their leadership and guidance.

Looking back on the past 12 months, the determination not to lose focus on our main mission, to change lives through education, will be rewarded by external validation, with NCI becoming only the second HEI in Ireland to receive ASIAM's Autism Friendly HEI Award.

This award reflects the core ethos of NCI as an access- and student-centric College. It also reflects the immense effort of more people on a College-wide committee, all working together to prioritise the inclusion of autistic students and staff in college life. Also, of course, to ensure that every last student is suitably prepared to meet the challenges of the workplace.

What is most gratifying about this award, I believe, is that it demonstrates that NCI has successfully developed a culture of paying close attention to everyone who comes under its roof. According to the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch, who was born in Phibsboro, not very far from the College, attention of this kind serves to clear our minds of "selfish care", of those "self-centred aims and images" that blind us.

"The direction of attention," she wrote "is, outward, away from self" and "the ability so to direct attention is love." It is loving attention of this kind, it seems to me, that the ASIAM award is honouring.

NCI ELI has maintained and extended its remarkable services to children and families living in disadvantage, developing literacy and numeracy and life skills in children, by adapting and innovating its services to deal with all the challenges of the pandemic. ELI continues to be one of the most impactful community outreach services in the field of education.

Approaching the end of the Academic Year, the NCI Team turned their attention to reopening the campus under constrained COVID-19 conditions. This followed a year that saw the revivification of many of our Education programmes, and programmes in the School of Business and School of Computing, when also new programmes were developed and validated, and when several new services for students were introduced.

In a year when the delivery of education and support to students presented significant demands, it is very gratifying to see so much success. We are thankful to be able to positively look forward to College life after COVID-19.

It has continued to be a pleasure to work with my fellow Directors on Governing Body and I thank them for their dedication and support.

**Fr. Leonard Moloney, SJ**  
Chairman of the Governing Body

### NCI AT A GLANCE

2020/21

# 6354 Students

- School of Business: 3829
- School of Computing: 2180
- Education: 345

- 88 Programmes
- 81 Nationalities

- 46% Female
- 54% Male

- 53% Undergraduate
- 37% Postgraduate
- 10% Professional
- 44% Full-Time
- 54% Part-Time

- 56 FT Academic Staff
- 143 Admin and Support Staff
- 175 Associate Faculty

### Enrolment by NFQ Level

Level	2020/21	2019/20
Level 9	13%	27%
Level 8 Higher Dip.	17%	12%
Level 6-8	61%	52%
Prof. Awards	8%	10%
Level 6-8	30%	10%
Prof. Awards	9%	10%

### Enrolment by School 2020/21

School	Enrolment
Business	60%
Computing	34%
Education	5%

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- July 2020**: NCI launches a world first, first honours degree level qualification in recruitment, developed in partnership with the National Recruitment Federation (NRF).
- August 2020**: NCI's IFSA Apprentices take first prize in the consortium category of the 2020 Generation Apprenticeship Competition, announced by MFHERIS Simon Harris, TD.
- September 2020**: National College of Ireland is thrilled to have earned a Athena SWAN Award, with specific acknowledgement of the College's intersectional approach to EDI.
- October 2020**: NCI proudly takes part in the First Annual National Academic Integrity Week.
- November 2020**: Responding to the Government's increase in Covid restrictions, NCI ensures that student experience is protected in the actions the College takes.
- December 2020**: The College holds an inclusive, multi-denominational service to commemorate family and friends of NCI staff and students, who passed away in the previous year.
- February 2021**: Not for the first time, a collaboration between Dr Corina Sheerin (Lecturer and Programme Director for the MSc in Finance) and Dr Callitina Hughes (lecturer and Programme Director for the MA in HRM) earns plaques from their peers, this time winning the Monica M. Lee Award for Research Excellence.
- January 2021**: NCI's IFSA Apprentices graduates are presented with High Achievement Awards.
- March 2021**: NCI enters the prestigious Rotman International Trading Competition, with a team from the final year BA(H) in Accounting & Finance class. This is an annual international event attracting teams from all the top universities around the globe. Our team, under the guidance of Dr Gail Barone, performs exceptionally well, placing 28 out of 45 teams, beating University of California, Trinity College Dublin, and Harvard along the way!
- April 2021**: NCI is accredited in the consortium category of the 2021 Autism Friendly HEI, only the second HEI in Ireland to receive this designation.
- May 2021**: NCI wins in two categories at the Education Awards (Best International and Careers Teams) and places second for its Flash Mentoring Outreach initiative.
- June 2021**: Launch of NCI's Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning's first annual Festival.

## FESTIVAL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

### COLLEGE NEWS

- Developed and secured validation for 9 micro-credential programmes. These are new short programmes validated by QQI for online delivery to meet identified needs in our colleges, including online programmes for industry, including online programmes for our students in ELI.
- Revalidated 2 new programmes in the School of Computing – Data Analytics
- Major new programme validated in the Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning – the Level 6 P-TECH Programme (Pathways in Technology), a unique programme nationally that provides a Level 6 HE award within the secondary school environment for students participating in the P-TECH Pilot initiative within the Northeast Dublin Inner-City (NEIC) Area from September 2021 onwards.
- World first – validation of a level 8 honours degree apprenticeship in recruitment, with first intake commencing September 2020.

- In August, NCI submitted its first Institutional Annual Quality Report (AQIR) to QQI – our awarding body, published on the QQI website as well as on NCI's website. The AQIR includes detailed case studies demonstrating the college's institutional commitment to embrace the challenges of the COVID pandemic to strengthen our digitisation agenda, by building on our expertise in blended and online delivery for teaching, learning, assessment and support services for staff and students.
- President's Awards 2020 – to acknowledge the effort made across the board by all staff at NCI, during a time of global pandemic that demanded so much recalibration and adjustment, in 2020, rather than rewarding a small number of specific projects, President Gina Quinn sent a letter or commendation and a gift token to every member of faculty, associate faculty, administrative, support and facilities staff.
- April saw NCI recognised as one of the Top 100 Leaders in Wellness by Business & Finance Magazine in association with Ibc. This honour stands testament to the hard work of our HR Team, under the leadership of HR Director, Mary Connelly.
- 13 NCI faculty and staff were recognised as "Teaching Heroes" in 2021.
- Dr Colette Darcy, Dean of the School of Business, and lecturer Jonathan Brittain were awarded Honorary Fellowship of the National Recruitment Federation in light of their work on the recently launched BA(H) in Recruitment Practice. This is the first time a fellowship has been awarded to anyone from outside of the recruitment industry.
- Dr Pramod Pathak, Dean of the School of Computing, was invited to join the Global Engineering Deans Council, making
- Dr Horacio Gonzalez-Vélez, Head of NCI's Cloud Competency Centre, was appointed a Senior Member of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), joining an illustrious body of fellow academics and professionals from the world's leading universities, research institutions and corporations.

### Our students too, performed with excellence this year, including:

- Leanne Kelly, who was awarded the Regional Winner from the island of Ireland in the Psychology category of the first annual Undergraduate Awards.
- On the first occasion ever that NCI entered the competition (Dublin City LEQ Team At It Again (Celine Moran, Shweta Srikrishna, Debrajna Dhali, Vánuu Vallu), placed second, winning prizes for themselves and the business that benefited from their application of Data Analytics.
- This year the School of Business recognised the academic achievement of 525 students through the Dean's Honours List.
- Project Showcase Winners 2021, can be viewed [here](#).

### All research work is to be applauded, and all NCI staff research and publications for 2020/21 is available through NORMA.

This year, we would like to highlight Dr Gerard Loughnane and colleagues published in Nature, a top-ranking journal with an impact factor in excess of 12. Dr Gerard Loughnane and his colleagues on a wonderful publication.

- Brosnan, M.B., Sabaraoledin, K., Silk, T., Gene, S., Newman, D.P., Loughnane, G.M., Fornito, A., O'Connell, R.G., Bellgrove, M.A. (2020) Evidence accumulation during perceptual decisions in humans varies as a function of dorsal frontoparietal organization. *Nature Human Behaviour* (in press), pp. 844-855.

### EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

#### ELI in Numbers:

- 14,139 people
- 96% satisfaction rates across all programmes
- 5,914 children and young people
- 1,356 professionals
- 6,702 parents and extended family
- 167 corporate volunteers

#### Centre of Expertise, Research, and Innovation (CERI) supporting 500 professionals in 20+ organisations and communities to deliver high quality Home Visiting programme to 2,587 families across Ireland.

#### Commitment to Dublin's Inner City.

#### Strategic Innovation

2020-21 was the year of innovation when we developed hybrid home learning models to support children and parents in an ever-changing Covid-impacted world.

- Student Graduate Programme – follow on support for former ParentChild+ families
- SFI STEM Family Learning Project in collaboration with NCI's School of Computing
- Listening Circles for Young People – input into ELI's programme
- First QCI accredited process of online, as did clubs and socs and a variety of social activities
- Centre for Education and Lifelong Learning

### INTERNATIONAL

The International Support Team won an award at the Education Awards 2021 for International Engagement. At the ceremony, the judges specifically mentioned how impressed they were with our Welcome Programme and the testimonials from our students on their experience of joining NCI. Moving thousands of miles away from the comforts of home is a daunting task in normal times and even more overwhelming during the uncertainty of a global pandemic. NCI rose to the challenge and has gone above and beyond to welcome and support students virtually, since March 2020.

### Overview of NCI International Student Engagement 2020/21

#### Strategic initiatives to help students feel part of the NCI community

- Pre-arrival Communications**
  - Weekly newsletter up to 12 weeks before starting at NCI
  - 87% Engagement
  - Weekly follow-up webinars and Facebook Live
- Virtual Welcome Programme**
  - 84% increase in number of welcome events
  - 64 online welcome meetings differentiated by:
    - Student travelled to Dublin to start classes
    - Student started classes from home country
    - Student was already resident and established in Ireland
  - 91% of students attended online welcome meetings in small groups
  - Virtual events to help students transition into life at NCI and Ireland
  - Doubled number of peer mentors to 25 to support students and events
  - 0.8% dropout rate for the year 20/21

September '20	September '21
120 Events 6 Weeks	62 Events 4 Weeks
11 Students per event	43 Students per event
54% Attendance per event	80% Attendance per event

#### 3. Social Media

NCI International Instagram Page

NCI_Int	Instagram Average
Followers	
Growth Rate	
Engagement per post	

Facebook Group: NCI International Office, Members: 1.6K  
Instagram: @nciintl, Followers: 2,137

#### What the International Students have to say:

- "I received full support ranging from welcome to NCI to arranging my accommodation, which was very helpful to say the least."
- "Covid has pretty much spoiled everything! But I'm so glad you guys are making sure the new students are involved as much as possible."
- "I think the school does an incredible effort on keeping their Instagram account updated with new content almost every day."

To see full International Student Engagement application for the Education Awards click [here](#).

### STUDENT EXPERIENCE

2020-2021 saw NCI become only the second HEI in Ireland to be designated an ASIAM Autism Friendly HEI. This was a significant fall in international student income was offset by strong performance from domestic student recruitment. In March 2020, all teaching and learning moved online. This resulted in additional costs in technology provision, staff training and building modifications. However, the continued closure of the college campus for the full year, and consequent reduction in on-campus activity resulted in some operational cost savings. The net result has been an operating surplus of €3.9m (compared to last year's €2.1m).

A full financial statements is available on our [website](#).

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