

National College of Ireland

Quality Assurance Handbook



10 Public Information
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10.1 ROLE OF THE MARKETING AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT DEPARTMENT

The Marketing and Student Recruitment Department (MSRD) works to promote National College of Ireland and to execute a communications strategy to promote the college to various stakeholders and to recruit students across all programmes. The MSRD has particular responsibility for recruiting all domestic students across all full and part-time programmes.

The Department has the following broad objectives:

- To build a strong and consistent profile for NCI.
- To develop and deliver a marketing plan in line with the strategic and operational objectives of NCI.
- To maintain a clearly defined brand identity for NCI.
- To drive the recruitment of student numbers in NCI programmes.
- To communicate clearly the mission, vision and values of NCI to key target audiences.

In order to achieve these objectives, the MSRD carries out a range of marketing and promotional activity that includes but is not limited to the following:

- Overall management of the NCI website.
- Social Media and Digital Marketing activity, to include the overall responsibility for NCI social media platforms of various types, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Advertising.
- Public relations and promotional events, including NCI events and open evenings/days.
- External publications including production of course prospectuses, course material and course promotional brochures.
- Sales activity with customers such as business organisations and professional bodies.
- Provision of a school liaison service to secondary schools.
- Design and printing of branded NCI material.
- Attendance at external education fairs and similar events.
- Dealing with queries from interested potential students.

The range of audiences and stakeholders for the work of the MSRD is varied and can change in emphasis with particular strategic priorities. The primary stakeholders for the work of the department are:

- Potential individual students, including:
 - Full-time CAO students.
 - Students from Further Education Colleges.
 - Potential part-time and full- and part-time postgraduate students.
 - Students on government funded initiatives such as Springboard+.
 - Students for apprenticeship programmes.
- Post-primary schools and guidance counsellors.
- Corporate organisations who may place staff on courses.
- Funders, supporters, government, regulatory and sectoral bodies and other influencers for NCI.
- Our local community in the Docklands area.

10.2 OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

The policies, procedures and processes of the MSRD are governed by the principles of fairness, accuracy, integrity and transparency in the dissemination of public information regarding the College and its programmes. All the information and material produced and managed by the department, and all its interactions with various stakeholders, should provide clear and accurate information to allow students and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about **the College's programmes**. The MSRD is rigorous in checking and auditing all information on an ongoing basis to ensure adherence to these overarching principles.

10.3 ROLE OF THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT IN DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLICATION OF MARKETING MATERIALS AND OTHER PUBLIC INFORMATION

The **MSRD's** role is to produce, review and verify marketing materials working with the **NCI's** Schools, Programme Directors and Student Service departments. Its responsibilities include ensuring:

- that all NCI marketing materials are clear, accurate and up to date and comply with the NCI brand guidelines and with the requirements of validating bodies;
- that all published information has been generated from the correct information source;
- any logos or images used are appropriate and that NCI has the permission to use these images;
- that Programme Directors and or Vice Deans/Deans are provided with reasonable notice to review drafts of information for publication;
- programme information on the website is correct and consistent with other marketing materials; and
- that any external agencies or other external partners involved in the marketing of the college or specific programmes comply with both brand guidelines and with the general NCI principles of accuracy, transparency and fairness in relation to programme and NCI information.

The MSRD has an in-house graphic designer, whose primary responsibility is to the marketing activities of the department. This resource is available to other departments in the college, subject to capacity and deadlines. The longer the lead-in time that can be given for a project, **the more likely it is to fit with the designer's schedule**. Lead-in times vary in proportion to the requirements of each design project, and must be decided in consultation with the designer. There is no guarantee of service.

10.4 ROLE OF PROGRAMME DIRECTORS AND VICE DEANS/DEANS

The academic faculty in each school must provide relevant information on programmes and approve final content produced by the MSRD. This will be the primary responsibility of the Dean of School who may delegate this to a Vice Dean or relevant Programme Directors. The individual responsible must:

- Provide the Marketing Department with relevant programme information to enable materials to be produced.
- Make relevant personnel available to resolve any issues with programme information.
- Review details of drafts in a timely fashion.
- Sign off on final drafts of prospectus or other brochures.

- Be available for promotional events such as open evenings, days or other events as agreed.

10.5 BRAND GUIDELINES

The MSRD produces a set of NCI brand guidelines for staff and partners. This gives user-friendly guidelines on the use of the NCI brand and provides information on logos, typography and colours. In addition, it gives overall guidelines on digital communications, website, graphic design and photography guidelines and the use of sub brands. The brand guidelines give sufficient details for most users. They are also supplemented by particular policies and procedures in particular areas.

NCI's Brand Guidelines can be found [here](#).

10.6 PROGRAMME INFORMATION

It is NCI's policy that all programme information is current, accurate and reflective of the programme as validated by its awarding body.

10.6.1 College Prospectus

The MSRD produces two prospectuses per year: a full-time prospectus and a part-time and postgraduate prospectus. The full-time prospectus is aimed at potential full-time students and outlines our full-time undergraduate offerings. This is normally printed in August in preparation for the programme of school visits that commences with the beginning of the academic year in September. The part-time and postgraduate prospectus is printed in February of each year in preparation for the part-time and postgraduate courses due to commence in September of the following academic year.

All relevant programme information and award information should be made available to prospective and current learners in the prospectus. The prospectus should clearly indicate:

- Whether or not the programme leads to an award.
- The name of the awarding body.
- The title of the award and whether or not it is recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- Procedures for access, transfer and progression.
- Details of the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements in place.
- The fees applicable to the programme.
- The schedule and duration of the programme. If a detailed timetable is not available, the prospectus should provide, at a minimum, the days that teaching activities will be scheduled.

Only programmes that have been approved by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) should be included in the prospectus. Any programmes that are not yet approved should not be advertised in the prospectus unless the programme submission document has been sent to the awarding body. If this is the case, the prospectus and any other promotional material should state clearly and prominently, **"Subject to QQI validation"**. **If the programme is not yet approved**, only a broad indicative outline of the curriculum should be included, with detailed curricula only published once the programme has been validated.

The accuracy of all such information must be maintained and the prospectus procedures should ensure that these details are checked and audited for each publication. It is the responsibility of the relevant Dean of School or nominee to provide final sign-off on the content of the prospectus.

10.6.2 Other Brochures

From time to time, other smaller or supplementary brochures may be produced, Springboard programmes, programmes commencing in January, etc.

10.6.3 Working with Partners and Other Providers

On occasion, NCI may work with other organisations, professional bodies, corporate bodies and other providers on programmes or other projects. Chapter 3 (Section 3.6) outlines the specific guidelines for collaborative provision in NCI.

The general policy is that the same standards of fairness, accuracy, integrity and transparency in the dissemination of public information regarding NCI and its programmes must be maintained in all communications. If another body is providing information about NCI programmes, it is the responsibility of the MSRSD to ensure that the information provided adheres to the same NCI standards. It will also be the responsibility of the department or individual within NCI responsible for the particular partnership to ensure that the partner institute complies with this policy and this undertaking should be included in any agreement made with the partner.

All relevant programme information and award information should be made available to prospective and current learners in promotional material. All such material should clearly include:

- Whether or not the programme leads to an award.
- The name of the awarding body.
- The title of the award and whether or not it is recognised on the National Framework of Qualifications.
- Procedures for access, transfer and progression.
- Details of the Protection of Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements in place.
- The applicable fees for the programme.
- The schedule and duration of the programme. If a detailed timetable is not available, the prospectus should provide, at a minimum, the days that teaching activities will be scheduled.

Only programmes that have been approved by QQI should be included in any promotional material. Programmes that are not yet approved should not be advertised unless the programme submission document has been sent to the awarding body. If this is the case, any **material should prominently and clearly state “Subject to QQI validation”**. If the programme is not yet approved, only an indicative outline of the curriculum should be included, with detailed curricula only published once the programme has been validated.

As part of the general policy on collaborative provision, the MSRSD has overall responsibility for the public information produced. Programme recruitment, publicity and marketing materials for collaborative programme may be produced by NCI, the partner institute or both, subject to the conditions in the agreement. Advertising and recruitment for the programme should not, however, formally begin until the agreement has been finalised and signed by NCI and the partner Institute.

It is also important to ensure that any partner using NCI logos or images is familiar and complies with the NCI brand guidelines in full. Similarly, **if NCI is using a partner's logo, permission must be sought and its use must be in compliance with the partner's brand guidelines.** The MSRD has a responsibility to maintain oversight of the advertisement of collaborative programmes, which requires regular review of relevant websites and printed material.

10.6.4 Electronic Programme and Module Information

NCI publishes programme and module information via its website and other electronic means. It is the responsibility of the Dean of School or nominee to ensure that the information published is consistent with the programme information policy outlined in Sections 10.6.1 above and 10.6.3 above. Module information should be updated:

- Initially to reflect the programme and module as approved at validation;
- annually to reflect amendments approved through annual programme monitoring; and or
- following programme review.

10.6.5 Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed bi-annually. The effectiveness of this policy and associated process is evaluated using audit of programme information published by NCI and by collaborating partners.

10.7 SCHOOL LIAISON

10.7.1 Policy

The School Liaison Officer (SLO) has the primary responsibility for conducting school visits on behalf of NCI. It is a primary part of this role to maintain relationships with post-primary schools, in particular principals and school guidance counsellors, and with Further Education (FE) colleges and other related providers.

The SLO visits schools and institutes to present information on NCI programmes to prospective students. This information is normally in the form of the full-time prospectus and a presentation. On rare occasions, another member of NCI staff may be asked to visit prospective students. In such instances, they should contact the SLO to ensure a consistent message is delivered.

The SLO must have Garda clearance as this is a requirement in post-primary schools for working with their students.

10.7.2 Procedure

- 1 The SLO keeps an updated database of post-primary schools, FE institutions and guidance counsellors. These are contacted to offer a class visit to 5th/6th Year or FE students.
- 2 This database is reviewed and changed on an ongoing basis and a full audit completed at the start of each new academic year.

- 3 Email and postal campaigns are conducted, providing students with programme information from the approved prospectus.
- 4 Two open days are scheduled for full-time students, generally in November and January, to coincide with CAO course selection in January each year.
- 5 The SLO also answers ongoing queries from guidance counsellors and individual students, in addition to attending education fairs and CAO events.

10.7.3 Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed bi-annually. The effectiveness of this policy and process is evaluated using review of application numbers from identified feeder schools and feedback from guidance counsellors and other stakeholders.

10.8 PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

10.8.1 Policy

The MSRD, as part of its role in promoting NCI, gathers photographs and videos for promotional purposes. This is only done where the photos or videos have a promotional purpose for NCI. For example, if taking the photograph can lead to PR coverage in the media or can be used in online or other promotion of the college.

The MSRD does not provide a generalised photography or video service for events or other departments due to resource constraints. Other departments may from time to time have a requirement for photos or videos that are not part of the marketing activity of the College. The department will be happy to provide advice and assistance where possible but will not be able to provide a generalised photo service.

In the event that there is a marketing rationale for the photo, i.e. where the photo or video requirement arises from a marketing opportunity as identified above, a case must be discussed with the PR Executive or the Social Media Executive within the MSRD. In these cases, the department will exercise its judgement and may organise either an external press or other photographer. This will only happen when there is justification, such as an opportunity that external media will use the photographs, that it supplements the existing social media strategy, etc.

All videos/photographs taken by the MSRD may be used by the department outside the initial purpose/context for creating and originally disseminating them, i.e. social media and blog posts, prospectus illustrations, etc. Therefore, those agreeing to be part of a promotional shoot must give permission to the College to use their image/quote/comment in future marketing material.

If a School/Office has a need for photographs or videos falling outside of the normal marketing reasons, the following options are available:

- A camera can be borrowed from the MSRD. Training has already been provided to Departments/Offices so that someone from that team should be able to cover basic photography needs.
- If Departments/Offices merely want to record an event for their own purposes and cannot do this from within their own team, they can book and pay for an external photographer. The MSRD can offer advice when booking an external photographer.

10.8.2 Lead Times and Booking

Please be aware that the shooting of photographs and videos is time consuming. Preparing good quality images takes a period of time after the photograph is taken for processing. Videos can be very complex and editing is a labour-intensive process, with a minute of video often taking many hours to produce. For this reason, we ask you to bear in mind the following lead times:

- **At least 10 working days' notice should be given** where you think you require the MSRD to provide a photo or video. It is also good practice to give this amount of notice as if there is an opportunity of external PR arising from the photo we will need this time to contact media and organise information to press about the event.
- Once the photo or video has been taken it can take up to 3 working days to process a photo and up to 10 working days to process and edit a video depending on its complexity.
- As the College does not employ a photographer or videographer, resources are limited and subject to availability, depending on scheduling demands and annual leave, etc. Therefore, these minimum lead times do not guarantee service.

10.8.3 Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy and associated process will be actively monitored and reviewed using an audit of the number and type of photography and videography requests received by MSRD on an annual basis.

10.9 PUBLIC RELATIONS & EVENTS

10.9.1 Public Relations Policy

The MSRD, as part of its role in promoting NCI, seeks to build the profile of the College by sharing positive stories and news internally and externally. These include but are not limited to:

- publication of a paper in a prestigious journal/a prize-winning paper
- presenting at a conference
- organising a conference or event
- a relevant VIP guest/alumnus visiting/lecturing at the college
- a student success story
- other worthwhile activities that reflect well on NCI

Public relations (PR) content in NCI has three areas of circulation:

- internal communications (NCI Inbox, website)
- earned/retained audiences (primarily via digital)
- external press (local/regional/national/international/sectoral online and off).

Every story has value internally. Most stories provide high-value content for digital. Not every story will capture external press – but may sit with a sectoral publication. The better the briefing document, the better the targeting; the earlier the MSRD is told about something, the better the department can shape and place it as a piece of news, and the further reach it will achieve.

Please Note: the MSRD does not offer administrative support in managing the event itself.

10.9.2 Events Policy

The MSRD offers support in realising publicity and promotional opportunities arising from events taking place in the College. The PR and Events Executive will:

- Help you to work out your audience and come up with a promotional plan.
- Draft a press release based on your briefing information.
- Develop a target media list to issue the release to.
- Follow up with phone call to specific journalists.
- Organise a creative photo call to help promote your initiative.
- Book a photographer to specifically cover a photo call (this may be at your **department's cost, depending on the nature of the event and the** amount of exposure anticipated).
- Promote you as a spokesperson on your topics of expertise.
- Respond to media enquiries: please forward any media queries in relation to general College business to the PRO, who will either answer it directly or determine the most relevant person to address the query.

Any individual wishing to put themselves forward to provide an expert reaction or academic insight on a current news topic should contact the MSRD, who will then manage media communications. Should anyone in the college become aware of a potentially negative story, it should be brought to the attention of the department in order to anticipate and manage coverage.

10.9.3 Monitoring & Review

The effectiveness of this policy and associated process will be actively monitored and reviewed using an audit of the number and type of requests received by MSRD regarding PR opportunities and public events on an annual basis.

10.10 MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR NCI EMPLOYEES

Media has expanded beyond the traditional forms of print, TV and radio to include a wide array of social media channels. Employees engaging in any form of media communication need to be familiar with the contents of this policy. The extended policy can be accessed by employees on the [NCI Staff Portal](#).

This policy applies to all individuals working in the college, including employees and other personnel including contractors (collectively referred to as employees in this policy). Third parties who may have access to the Company's electronic communication systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy. It also deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Wikipedia, all other social networking sites and applications, and all other internet postings, including blogs and **Google+ ("Social Media")**. It applies to the use of Social Media to the extent such use impacts upon, or relates to, the Company, regardless of whether such use occurs during office hours or otherwise or whether the Social Media is accessed using Company IT facilities and equipment.

Coverage in all forms of media and engagement with our stakeholders can be very beneficial for NCI. It helps us to raise our profile and communicate effectively with our various audiences. Interaction on newer forms of media and social platforms can bring real benefits for the college and for individual staff members. Whilst such engagement is generally welcomed some notes of caution are necessary.

Employees are personally responsible for what they post or publish in any media. They are prohibited from using or publishing information in any form of media where it has the potential to negatively affect the College or its staff. Examples include but are not limited to publishing material that:

- might reasonably be expected to have the effect of damaging the reputation or professional standing of the college;
- is abusive, offensive or defamatory; or
- is confidential or contains business-sensitive information about the College.

Employees should not comment on workplace financial, legal or other official business unless they are a designated spokesperson of NCI and have been approved and authorised to do so.

Should employees receive a request from the media regarding a college-related matter, they should contact the MSRD to ensure adherence to policy and consistency with the views of the College on the particular issue, and also to verify whether or not it is appropriate to provide comment.

10.10.1 Compliance with NCI Policies

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the college's rules or other policies. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- (a) breach our information security policy;
- (b) breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- (c) breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;
- (d) defame or disparage the college or its partners, suppliers, other employees, or other stakeholders;
- (e) harass or bully employees in any way;
- (f) unlawfully discriminate against other employees or third parties;
- (g) breach data protection and privacy obligations; or
- (h) breach any other laws or ethical standards.

10.10.2 Consequence of a Breach of Policy

Employees who breach this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. By adhering to these guidelines, you should avoid any pitfalls or dangers that can arise when using any form of media.

However, you need to be aware that bringing the College's name into disrepute, excessive personal blogging or social networking that impacts negatively on the responsibilities of your role; serious abuse or misuse of college property/equipment; or another serious breach of any aspect of this policy could result in disciplinary action.

The consequences of misuse of the Internet, the College's IT equipment or Social Media in relation to the College, can be so serious that disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours. Any employee suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to cooperate with any investigation of a suspected breach, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Employees may be required to remove internet positions which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. A failure to comply with a request to remove and/or retract material may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Further information regarding disciplinary procedures at NCI can be found [here](#).

10.10.3 Monitoring and Review

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment, therefore, it may be amended from time to time. The Director of MSRD is responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements, reflects best practice and takes into account technological developments. All employees are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they are familiar with it and how it might affect them discharging the duties of their role.