



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Peer Review Report

Northern College of the Arts and
Technology

North West Region

School number:	7300
Principal:	Reffaela Galati-Brown
School Council President:	David Redfearn
Date of Review Meeting:	2 nd September 2014

Executive Summary and Context

Context

The Northern College of the Arts and Technology (NCAT) is located in an established residential and retail area, approximately 10 kilometres north of the central business district of Melbourne. The school adjoins the Northland shopping centre, which is a major transport hub.

NCAT was established as a result of the Heidelberg Regeneration project to be a Years 10-13 College catering for students seeking a specialised education in the Visual Arts, Design, Media, Performing Arts or Trades & Technologies. Over the first two years of the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan, the college continued with progressively ceasing Year 8 and then Year 9 enrolments. The college offers a mix of AusVELS, VCE, VET and VCAL programs within its specialist areas.

Subjects, course and qualifications in the specialist areas are selected in consultation with industry and further education providers in order to ensure an appropriate balance between specific needs, prerequisites, and educational breadth. There is an overall structure at each educational level that begins with exploration at Year 10, moves to a pathways focus at Years 11 & 12, and an increased specialisation at post Year 12 courses.

Over the past four years, the college has seen a massive transformation - in its name, reputation, structure and culture. In 2012 a \$12 million NCAT Trade Training Centre was opened which along with the change of name from Northland SC to the Northern College of the Arts & Technology later that year was important in the community perceiving the college as a new entity.

2013 was the first full year both as the Northern College of the Arts & Technology and as a Years 10-13 college. At Year 10 the college introduced an Arts and a Technology stream, with students also being able to choose a VET from either streams. From there, Year 11-12 students could go on to VCE or VCAL programs in their areas of specialisation or interest. Post Year 12 students could choose from a range of VCAL Senior Extensions with a Certificate IV in Visual Arts, Design, Music or Sound Production. Post Year 12 students could also choose the Certificate IV in Musical Instrument Making & Repair for which NCAT is the sole trainer in Australia.

Over the past four years, the college continued to introduce new VET and VCE programs in Arts & Technologies. In 2013 NCAT introduced VCE Visual Communication and Design, Product Design (Textiles/Fashion) and a second VET scored subject in Technology- the Certificate II in Integrated Technologies - to strengthen its offerings in its areas of specialisation. It also reorganised its VCAL Pre-apprenticeship programs so students had the opportunity to complete four VET programs over two years making them more employable. By 2013 NCAT it also ran every VCE and VET subject in Music with the exception of Music Style and Composition which is due to be introduced in 2015.

In August 2013, after negotiations with North Eastern Region, Hawthorn College and NCAT, the DEECD moved the Photo Imaging College (PIC) which was based at Hawthorn SC to NCAT as Hawthorn was restructuring to become Auburn College and the move was a perfect addition and fit for NCAT. NCAT received a \$350,000 loan from the DEECD and raised the rest of the funds required for the \$530,000 transformation of its former library to a photo-imaging centre with 3 studios, photographic labs and facilities for colour and black and white processing and having it ready for the 2014 school year.

The addition of PIC to NCAT meant that from 2014 NCAT could offer the VCAL Senior Extension (Folio Enhancement) programs in Photo Imaging and run both a Certificate IV and Diploma of Photo Imaging. This was an area which the college had previously refrained from offering so as not to compete with PIC with whom NCAT had a long standing relationship. Being able to inform the community that NCAT went to diploma level also enhanced its profile and aided in the transformation of the reputation of the college.

To ensure that the college was seen as a new entity with a new culture, from 2013 NCAT only enrolled students fitting the new profile. Further, to ensure quality delivery, the college decided to begin with only one Year 10 Arts and one Year 10 Technology class. This led to the college having a waiting list which made the college more desirable. Whilst this decision meant that student enrolments dropped to

213, it ensured that the college was seen as a new entity and no longer as Northland SC. The decision to limit enrolments was vindicated when numbers increased to 356 in 2014.

The College has adopted the Powerful Learning model of teaching and learning as developed by NMR and Professor David Hopkins. This has been and continues to be implemented across all levels and qualifications, within the structures of the respective qualifications.

NCAT has a learning teams structure in place at all year levels, and curriculum areas, which enables the sharing and development of best practices in regular meetings, and maintains a clear schedule of content and delivery, to provide a unified, consistent approach and scaffolding through the Year levels.

The College also regards student wellbeing as an integral part of learning. It has adopted a restorative practices model, which is regularly reinforced. This is implemented by a structural system of College management that devotes equal weight to student learning, curriculum review and development, and individual student outcomes and wellbeing.

NCAT has a significant intake of new students at each year level on an annual basis. As a consequence it has devoted significant attention to induction and orientation processes in order to assess student needs, prior learning, literacy and numeracy levels, pathways and study advice, and new student wellbeing.

Achievements

The Panel was impressed with the achievements of NCAT. In the past, the school was often perceived as the place to send students who do not have high aspirations and motivation to learn. A cultural shift has been achieved and NCAT has now established itself as an Arts and Technology specialist state-wide provider that sets high expectations and offers a broad range of quality courses.

Enrolments have increased by over 140 from 2013 to 2014. Students are selecting the College because of the quality of its courses and the achievements of its students. It is rapidly becoming a school of first choice where enrolment acceptance depends upon a student's attitude and desire to achieve.

As a regional VET training provider, the college continues to have up to 450 external students from over 40 state and private schools each year coming to NCAT to do VET programs.

Opinion data from students and parents reveals that both parties strongly endorse the directions that NCAT is taking and the programs that it is providing for students.

Future focus

The College will consolidate the work it has done in documenting its curriculum and complement this by documenting an agreed Teaching and Learning Charter as a means for gaining greater consistency in the use of evidence-based teaching school-wide. Teacher capacity building will be supported by maintaining and sharpening the focus on and use of student achievement data in PLTs; supporting VCE teachers to network with teachers in their discipline and attend VCE Chief Examiner reports run by the VCAA; and establishing a College-wide adoption of common 'generic' instructional techniques that have a strong evidence base.

A particular focus will be on adopting strategies for improving the outcomes of VCE students. As well as the professional development previously mentioned, this will include reviewing the delivery of Year 12 VCE English to ensure that appropriate scaffolding and support is provided for students; implementing a study skills program for students to assist them in organising themselves effectively; increase English session times from 4 to 5 sessions if possible and explore options for increasing all VCE studies from 4 to 5 sessions; and establishing a PLT team focused on improving VCE results and supporting students to achieve better outcomes.

NCAT will also seek to further expand the courses available for students. In particular it will seek to introduce a VCE stream in the Technology area comprising STEM [Physics, Systems Engineering, Product Design (Materials) and Maths Methods] and enhance subject offerings in the Arts and Technology (e.g. Screen & Media, Broadcasting). It will also investigate the feasibility of introducing leisure and sports options for students at lunchtime.