

**Strategic Research Plan  
2003-2006**

**Nova Scotia College of Art and Design  
NSCAD UNIVERSITY**

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## **Preamble**

Research is defined as a contribution to knowledge and practice, which results from and is communicated following a period of critical inquiry. Research is vital to the mission of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD UNIVERSITY) and the institution is committed to fostering opportunities for research related to the visual arts and culture.

To date, in support of research and research training in art, craft, and design, NSCAD:

- has established a Research Committee in 1996;
- has developed and refined a set of policies and principles that support research and research training;
- provides research time to all members of Regular Full-Time and Regular Pro-Rated faculty;
- provides sabbatical leaves for faculty to further their research endeavors;
- extended the mandate of the Vice-President (Academic) to include research;
- has employed consultants to assist researchers in the preparation of research proposals;
- has established a process for recognizing Honorary Research Associates;
- has worked with its Faculty Union to recognize appointments to full-time research positions: Research Fellows;
- has employed consultants to assess and to make recommendations with respect to the current research infrastructures;
- has developed a highly trained technical support staff base to facilitate the work of researchers in the identified areas.

## **Current Objectives**

*The University recognizes that research output is crucial to all future development. In order to maintain and develop the staff base at NSCAD to allow teaching and research to be conducted at the highest level, during the next five years, NSCAD will:*

- *make research a major emphasis in the University;*
- *increase the numbers of temporary visiting researchers/teachers as a proportion of the total staff base;*
- *apply for Federal and private funds to fuel the research effort;*
- *increase significantly the size of the graduate school;*
- *increase the total amount of research time available to staff in the university and create a rationalized machinery for monitoring the effectiveness of this time;*
- *improve and redevelop academic support facilities considered central to the maintenance and development of the research ethics, including: the library, the NSCAD University Press, the art gallery, increased accommodation for visiting researchers/teachers.*

## **Major Thrusts for Research and Research Training**

NSCAD plans a unique role within the local, regional, and national university communities in that it is Canada's only free standing university of the arts offering graduate and undergraduate degrees in the practices of art, craft, and design, and in historical and theoretical studies in related academic areas. Through a variety of research activities undertaken by faculty and graduate students, the university makes a significant contribution to Canadian culture and the culture industries.

NSCAD has a long and distinguished history of education in the arts, craft, and design, which is grounded in a rigorous study of history and theory. For the last number of years, NSCAD has been undergoing a significant academic and research renewal. In 1996, NSCAD established a Research Committee to develop an institutional research plan to refine policies and procedures that support innovation and excellence in research activities related to the study and practice of the disciplines of art, craft, and design.

As a consequence of its unique national position as a university of the arts, the major thrusts for research and for research training are more easily identified. Although other non-technology-based research projects are ongoing and encouraged at NSCAD, the current priority of research and research training is a dynamic cluster of research modules dedicated to research and the study of technology-based cultural activities, products, and services. When configured comprehensively, the amalgam creates the Centre for Cultural Technology—a series of physical studios, laboratories, and virtual connections both interior and exterior to the university.

## **Research Modules**

As a university of the arts, the focus of research activities are already more clearly identified than they would be for a university with a wider range of program offerings. The strategic foci identified below will build on traditional strengths and will also develop innovative research concentrations.

### **1. Historical and Critical Studies**

Research in this module is integral to all of the College's other research activities in that historical and contemporary research related to art and culture supports and adds depth to the practice-based disciplines, but also stands alone as a research module essential to the mission of the university. NSCAD wishes to foster and advance the study of the history of, and contemporary context for, the arts including the cinematic arts, and will seek to appoint faculty members with a range of expertise as well as develop new graduate programs in this area.

### **2. Culture and Digital technologies**

#### **a. Product Design and Development**

Research activities in this module will focus on the use and development of new technologies along with the use and development of traditional and adapted materials with application of both to the design and fabrication of contemporary products. Activities will include the application of computer assisted drafting and computer assisted manufacturing technologies; the development of digital documentation, visualization, and handling technologies; and the customization of design and fabrication methodologies. Relationships to research in a number of other sectors including the bio-medical and bio-mechanical will be a focus in this module. Furthermore, graduate studies in this area will be further expanded.

#### **b. Cultural Information**

This module will focus on developing innovative solutions to making cultural information and resources digitally available to a global audience. These projects will, in part, investigate the application of emerging Web Services technologies from

the commercial sector in combination with “best-of-class” open source guidelines, protocols, and standards in the cultural sector. Research and development activities will be designed to move to the application and commercialization stages with the production of high quality commercially viable products and services for the consumer of cultural information. NSCAD is currently seeking approval for a new graduate program in this area.

### **c. Film and New Media**

New image and sound tools provided by digital technologies have and will continue to revolutionize the vocabulary and methodology of the screen arts, the way screen arts are viewed and experiences, and ultimately, the society that has made the cinema a primary artistic expression for the last 100 years. Research activities in the module will utilize and develop these new media technologies in co-evolution with their creative application. NSCAD is currently developing a large new graduate program in Film.

### **3. Material Practices and Criticality**

Research activities in this module will focus on the advancement of forms of artistic expression for artist-researchers. Research in the module will support and develop excellence in practice-based disciplines to advance knowledge, encourage innovation, foster collaboration where appropriate, and significantly enhance the quality of production and end product. The results of research in this module will be exhibited, published, produced or otherwise disseminated and will help to ensure the overall standard of cultural production in Canada is significantly advanced.

### **Research Chairs**

NSCAD will seek support from the Canada Research Chair program and other public and private sources for Research Chair positions within the university’s identified research modules. These funded Chair positions will drive recruitment of research faculty and attract graduate students to a variety of program areas.

### **Measuring Success**

Success of NSCAD’s research activities will be assessed through:

- the continual development of effective systems that will ensure project completion according to defined milestones and deliverables while ensuring that assessments are appropriate to the project;
- the maintenance of a monitoring system by which the dissemination of research results may be reviewed;
- the development of mechanisms by which the success of the application of research results may be measured;
- the development of mechanisms by which “value added” may be considered;
- the participation in systems of peer review which consider both research methodologies and research outcomes;

- the development and maintenance of quantitative systems which will provide an account of research variables including: numbers of researches, numbers of technicians, numbers of graduate students, amount of research funding, etc.;
- the development of a regularized system of self-assessment;
- the participation in any assessment review required by a funding agency or partner;
- the development of a long-term research assessment strategy that supports the shorter-term research assessment protocols.

### **Long-term Research Objectives**

In the future, in support of research and training in the identified areas, NSCAD will:

- foster the development of collaborative research across the university;
- foster the development of inter-institution and inter-sector collaborations which may lead to the establishment of new research concentrations or focal points consistent with the university's mission statement and mandate;
- employ a Director to oversee the research activities of the university;
- consistently update the Strategic Research Plan to ensure the management of a coherent research strategy
- act to support research as a major emphasis across the university;
- continue to support the development of dedicated research space;
- act to ensure the employment of dedicated researchers and technical personnel;
- act to ensure the availability of appropriate equipment;
- act to ensure the improved recruitment and retention strategies to both attract and retain top research talent;
- continue to develop applications for research funding from private and public sectors;
- continue to assure that the results of research are appropriately disseminated and that applications, where appropriate and possible, are implemented to facilitate understanding, licensing, job creation, economic development, and quality of life;
- continue to develop support for research through furthering provisions for technicians and student assistant/trainees;
- provide leadership in the development of new flexible research methodologies to address the need for a well-defined research heritage related to art, craft, and design;
- continue to engage university-wide hiring strategies which give attention to the potential for contributions to research;
- significantly expand the School of graduate Studies

### **Fostering a Culture of Research Excellence**

In support of these efforts, NSCAD will develop a research culture which:

- recognizes the relationship of research to professional practice and to post graduate training and education;
- recognizes the importance of both research process and research outcome;
- acknowledges the interaction between the research setting and the wider community of users;
- encourages involvement of beginning and senior researchers of the highest quality'
- uses and/or adopts methodologies of the social sciences, the humanities, and the physical sciences and which is open to the development of new methodologies appropriate to the research project and the institutional context;

- includes appropriate assessment mechanisms so that the significance of research outcome(s) is monitored;
- consistently assesses and adopts appropriate mechanisms of dissemination of research results;
- accommodates and encourages interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary projects;
- maintains a mechanism for appointing Research Associates;
- establishes a system of support for the development of new research proposals;
- impacts on cultural experience and understanding but also on cultural industries at regional, national, and international levels.

### **Planning and Approval**

The planning at approval process related to research at NSCAD involves the individual researchers, the University's Research Committee, the College's system of academic governances, where appropriate and necessary, the Office of the Vice-President (Academic and research), the Office of the President, and the Board of Governors.