

Erasmus Policy Statement 2014-2020

Northern School of Contemporary Dance – International Strategy

Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) is the only conservatoire in the UK offering dedicated dance education outside of London. It has a critical role as a beacon for professional dance training across the north of England. Building on its existing international reputation, links and student population is one of three aims of the institution's Strategic Plan.

NSCD's aspiration is to be an international Centre for dance education, recognised as not only the regional and national level but internationally. In doing this, it will also help fulfil the international policy of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama of which it is one of eight affiliate schools. The Conservatoire's International Policy will be available on its website shortly (www.cdd.ac.uk).

NSCD's international policy has three elements.

- i. Maintaining learning and teaching, which is informed by developments in the international dance sector.

Where previously conservatoire dance training could concentrate on honing performance excellence alone, the international professional dance scene has changed over the last two decades, so that dancers are now required to be creative collaborators with wide-ranging performance abilities including improvisation, physical theatre, acting, singing, circus skills, as well as articulacy in a range of dance techniques.

NSCD has expertise in preparing professional dancers, and in providing the wide range of support (physical, medical, emotional and academic) that underpins excellent conservatoire-level higher education and training. Partnerships with other institutions contribute to critical thinking about training. To date, NSCD has developed a formal partnerships with institutions in Germany, Malta, Belgium, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Sweden and Hong Kong and informal relationships with institutions in Denmark, France, Italy, Spain and the USA as well as a wide range of conservatoires in dance, drama, circus arts, music and art in the UK. NSCD has been a key partner in a developing a European network of four institutions looking at the future skills that dance artists will need (“Transferable Skills of the Dance Artist”).

- ii. Providing opportunities for students to broaden their experience, knowledge and skills by ensuring a diverse student population and the opportunity for mobility.

NSCD recruits students internationally, which includes auditioning in European

Centre's. Existing relationships have enabled short and focused student exchanges, or co-teaching with visiting students. NSCD has extended relationships, enabling students to participate in longer visits, within the context of their training and to welcome students from other EU conservatoires into the school.

This will include students in the first and second cycle of higher education (undergraduate and taught postgraduate), as NSCD does not offer doctoral (third cycle) programmes at present.

- iii. Recruiting and developing the best staff, associate and artists from an international pool of talent.

NSCD recruits its staff internationally, seeking experienced teachers and artists. Participation in Erasmus+ enables the school to build staff development opportunities with partner organisations, enabling teaching staff to experience different approaches and philosophies to professional dance education. The ability to bid for and participate in European funded projects working with academics from aligned conservatoires helps to share current teaching and learning practice and address issues facing all arts conservatoires: how to support their graduates in developing their artistic practice and being entrepreneurial in using their art forms to create economic and social wealth.

Choosing partners

In the first instance, NSCD focuses its Erasmus activity through a number of existing partnerships and networks. As a specialist institution, offering conservatoire-level education and training, NSCD is particularly interested in relationships with similar institutions facing some of the same challenges. There are no specific geographical restrictions within the EU or internationally, but for students to benefit from a period of study either at NSCD or away from it, they must be engaged in vocational training, primarily in dance. This is essential for students to meet learning objectives and also to enrich their study without breaking the requisite intensity of practical training.

Location

NSCD has a specific partnership with institutions in Northern Europe, as well as institutions in the US but this will not limit opportunities elsewhere within the EU.

Objectives

NSCD is particularly interested in learning mobility and exchanging good practices to enhance its current teaching, to further the field of professional dance education and create successful dance artists for the future.

NSCD welcomes developing shared course materials. Participation in accredited joint programmes is not an immediate priority.

Strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects

NSCD is keen to participate in Erasmus + to work in co-operative programmes with other European conservatoires. The specific types of project it is interested in are described below, with the strategy for implementing such projects.

i. Partnerships to foster intense, structured and long-term co-operation.

NSCD is already part of a partnership – the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama – which brings together six UK schools offering vocational arts education and training. NSCD shares areas of expertise: learning resources, and the use of new technologies for archiving and in assessment. NSCD contributes expertise in widening participation to higher education, setting up partnerships with other arts organisations to encourage young people from low-income and other under-represented backgrounds to participate in dance.

Through this process NSCD has developed its strategy, which is driven by the leadership of the institution, to find like-minded partners and to build relationships that are mutually beneficial. NSCD's small size is an advantage because its actions are not subject to the approval process of a large bureaucracy. Future relationships can and will be built at the highest level but teaching staff will be encouraged to contribute to growing international development. This activity is actively supported by the governing body. The financial implications of partnerships are overseen by the Director of Finances and Resources as chief financial officer.

ii. Knowledge alliances

As noted above, building strategic knowledge alliances is one of NSCD's key objectives in its Strategic Plan.

Students play a central part in how NSCD devises its programmes, and are represented on all the key committees and boards throughout the institution, including the Academic Board and Governing Body. NSCD is particularly interested in enabling student exchange and the opportunity for students to contribute to programmes and projects focused on reconsidering the needs of dance artists in the 21st century.

Expected impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on the modernisation of Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Participation in Erasmus+ is important to NSCD in achieving the objectives in its Strategic Plan. Dance is a particularly international art form. Companies are composed of dancers of all nationalities, competing in a global market for the best talent. NSCD is one of a small number of conservatoires that feed this market. The impact of participation by EU priority is outlined below.

i. Increasing participation

NSCD already enjoys a strong reputation for recruiting a diverse student body,

including one of the highest participation rates of low-income students in any UK conservatoire. Financial support has been extended to EU students from low-income backgrounds. NSCD also provides clear routes into professional dance training for children from a young age. The Erasmus framework and potential financial assistance will extend the possibilities for NSCD students by providing the chance for exchange, building relationships elsewhere in Europe and enhancing European recruitment. This will help meet the EU target of 40% HE graduates by 2020.

ii. Improving quality

NSCD is particularly interested in the impact that new technology can have on dance education. Although recorded media has been used in dance education and performance for some time, the possibility of live streaming and the immediacy afforded by new technologies can support a network of experience across the world. It also makes international collaboration more accessible.

iii. Strengthening quality through mobility

NSCD already has links to a network of European conservatoires specifically to review and develop shared curriculum resources which will equip our arts graduates both for highly specialised careers but also to articulate and enhance the transferability of skills (beyond dance practice) acquired in their education. Holding an Erasmus Charter allows NSCD to participate fully in cross-border project proposals to develop curricula, the development opportunities for staff and enhance dance teaching internationally.

iv. Knowledge triangle

NSCD's research priorities focus on the particular contribution it can make to pedagogy in higher education. The capacity to act as a full partner in Erasmus+ programmes is a target for achieving this, including a specific interest in entrepreneurship within the dance community and bridging the gap between education and employment.

v. Governance and funding

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme helps NSCD to diversify its revenue streams in two ways. The school can gain access to funded elements of the programme and it helps to raise the profile of NSCD and sharpen its offer for international students.