National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Annual Report 2018

NCCA

Contents

Foreword

At a time of continuing and extensive change in Irish education, the NCCA's work in curriculum and assessment has been extensive, diverse and central to ongoing developments from the early years to the end of post-primary education. In terms of our general approach, we continued to consult with the partners in education, engage in research and take account of developments internationally while developing and reviewing curricula aimed at promoting high standards of quality, equity and inclusion, sound educational practice and relevance to national social, cultural and economic objectives.

In general terms, in 2018, work in Early Childhood Education focused on continuing to embed and enhance *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* as it is implemented in settings and schools. The review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum gathered pace in 2018 as we consulted extensively with our Schools Forum, commenced a series of curriculum seminars and published research papers on key aspects of primary education. Meanwhile, more specific curriculum developments related to languages and mathematics were also progressed at primary level and a major longitudinal study of the experience of primary schooling commenced. At junior cycle, recently introduced developments are being embedded in the practice of schools. The NCCA reached a significant milestone in this context in 2018 with the completion of all subject and short course specifications needed for the full rollout of the curriculum at junior cycle; work continues on the development of assessment guidelines, examples of student work and other support material to support the changes taking place. At senior cycle, an extensive review of the curriculum got under way in 2018, one involving major stakeholder engagement as we begin to re-vision what senior cycle might look like in future years. Finally in 2018, NCCA commenced and led a number of cross-sectoral reviews related to areas such as Relationships and Sexuality Education and Traveller History and Culture in the Curriculum. Across all this activity, as illustrated on pages 9-11 of the Annual Report, we worked with over 200 schools, held almost 65 meetings, organised 12 public consultations and completed 10 new curriculum specifications.

Of course, we're all aware that work as extensive as this, on this scale, only happens through the commitment of the Council, its stakeholders and its staff. The list of NCCA meetings presented later in this report are evidence of this. Council members and the members of subject development groups and boards give their time and effort on a voluntary basis. Their interest and commitment to curriculum development is central to the successful delivery of the NCCA's important work. We are extremely fortunate in NCCA to have a staff team whose specialist expertise, enthusiasm, and clear

commitment ensured the completion of a challenging and far-reaching work programme in 2018, sometimes within tight deadlines.

As the new Chairperson of the NCCA in 2019, I pay tribute to the significant leadership of Brigid McManus who completed two terms as NCCA Council Chair. I thank Deputy Chairs Declan Kelleher and Michael Redmond and members of the outgoing Council for their willingness to engage constructively and productively with a variety of complex curriculum and assessment issues during their time on Council. They have provided exemplary service to the Irish education system and deserve our thanks. I welcome Michael Redmond and Deirbhile Nic Craith as Deputy Chairpersons of the incoming Council and I look forward to working with members of the new Council (two thirds of whom are new members) in supporting John Hammond (CEO) and the staff of the NCCA in moving forward the important work of the NCCA.

Prof. Mary O'Sullivan

Chairperson

Introduction

The work outlined in this Annual Report for 2018 was far-reaching, extremely varied and highly collaborative across all sectors from early years to post-primary education. The approach underpinning the work always aims to build upon and recognise the importance of the classroom, early childhood setting, individual school, and networks of schools as the key sites of educational change. The approach recognises practitioners, teachers and school management as the principal agents in that change. Furthermore, it locates the drive for change in a focus on improving the quality and range of the educational experience for *all* children and young people. The advice on curriculum and development that the NCCA generates is always arrived at through Research, Consultation, Deliberation and Collaboration with Networks of schools, the stakeholders represented on all our committees and structures, and others.

On the following pages, you'll find a graphical summary followed by a more detailed account of our work in curriculum and assessment in 2018. These details of the outcomes we set for ourselves and the progress made in realising them, comprise the main body of the report. The report also includes information, from a governance perspective, on the NCCA as an organisation. In addition, the Statement on Internal Control 2018 and other requirements of Annual Reports as set out in the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* 2016 are included as appendices.

We know that the work of those in schools and the education system in Ireland is generally held in high regard, nationally and internationally. But the kinds of developments in curriculum, assessment and the broader educational project set out in this Annual Report, reflect the need, in constantly changing times, and increasingly complex social and technological environments, to keep the curriculum under review – to modernise it, improve it and make it fit-for purpose in meeting continually emerging challenges. Ultimately, these curriculum developments aim to address the central question of how the educational experience of learners can be improved for all learners and for the collective good.

Work on the scale set out in this Report cannot be achieved without the direction, assistance and support we receive from our Council, our representative structures, and from the teachers and schools we collaborate with. Sincere thanks to all involved and to the NCCA staff who, every year, demonstrate their creativity, expertise, enthusiasm and boundless commitment to education.

John Hammond
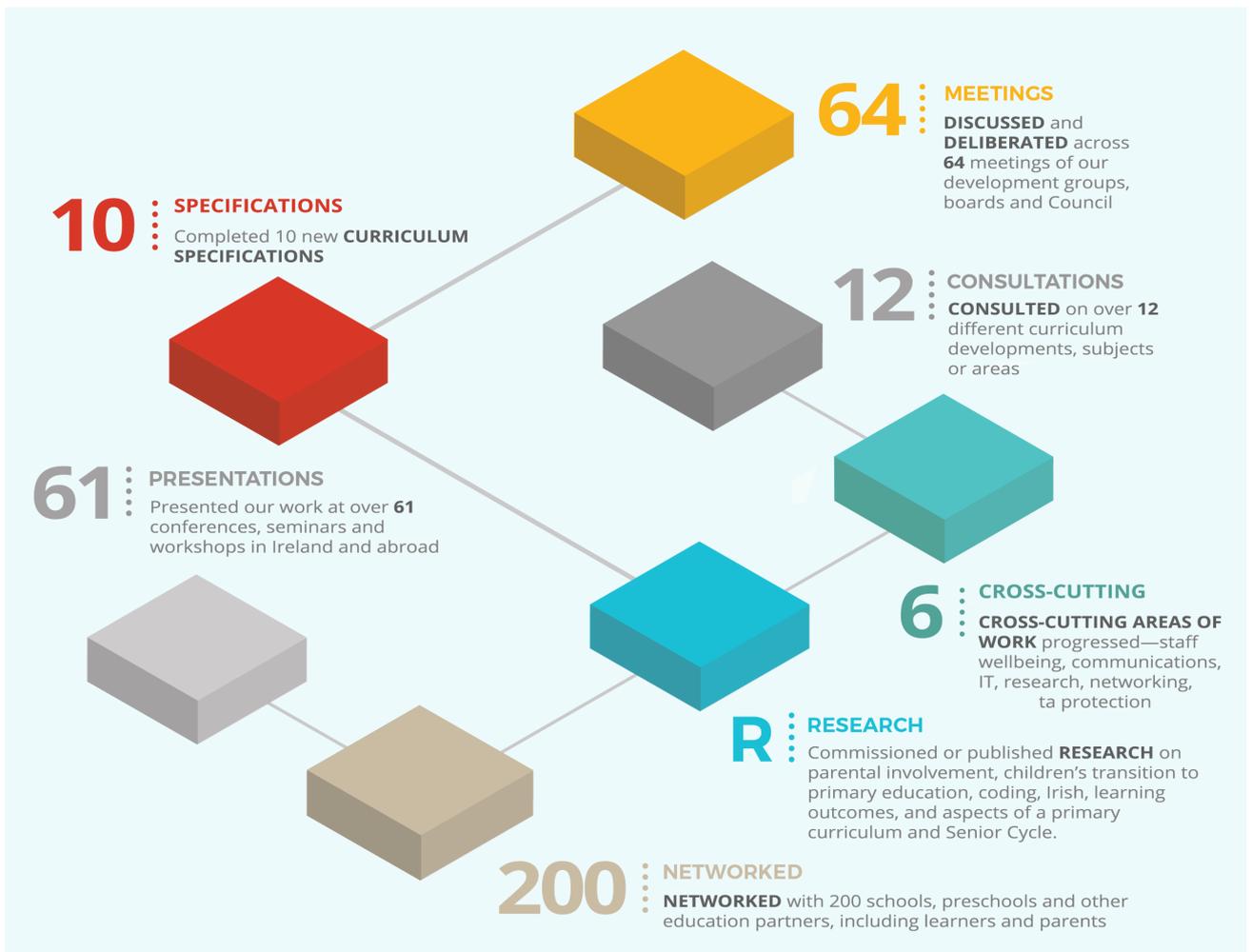
CEO

OVERVIEW OF NCCA WORK IN 2018

WE WORKED ON...

EC EARLY CHILDHOOD IMPLEMENTATION

P PRIMARY CURRICULUM REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

JC JUNIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

SC SENIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

CS CROSS-SECTORAL REVIEWS/AUDITS

RESEARCH

CONSULTATION

DELIBERATION

ADVICE

NETWORKS

ASPECTS OF NCCA WORK

64 MEETINGS
DISCUSSED and **DELIBERATED** across **64** meetings of our development groups, boards and Council

10 SPECIFICATIONS
Completed 10 new **CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS**

12 CONSULTATIONS
CONSULTED on over **12** different curriculum developments, subjects or areas

61 PRESENTATIONS
Presented our work at over **61** conferences, seminars and workshops in Ireland and abroad

6 CROSS-CUTTING
CROSS-CUTTING AREAS OF WORK progressed—staff wellbeing, communications, IT, research, networking, ta protection

R RESEARCH
Commissioned or published **RESEARCH** on parental involvement, children's transition to primary education, coding, Irish, learning outcomes, and aspects of a primary curriculum and Senior Cycle.

200 NETWORKED
NETWORKED with 200 schools, preschools and other education partners, including learners and parents
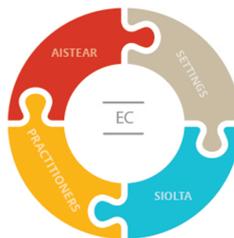
EC — EARLY CHILDHOOD

Work in Early Childhood Education **IMPLEMENTATION**

We published the **Mo Scéal reporting templates** to support children's transition from preschool to primary school, and accompanying materials to build relationships.

As part of the **National Síolta Aistear Initiative**, we contributed to the review and redevelopment of workshops.

Through an ongoing partnership with ATECI, we continued to support **pedagogical change** in infant classes through the Aistear Tutor Initiative.

P — PRIMARY

Work on Primary Curriculum **REVIEW** and **DEVELOPMENT**

We progressed the review and **redevelopment of the primary** curriculum through

Work with **44 schools** and pre-schools in the **Schools Forum**

Ongoing deliberations with stakeholders through **curriculum seminars**

Publication and use of **research papers** and companion video presentations on key aspects of a primary curriculum.

Informed by feedback from schools, we completed the **Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile** for junior infants to sixth class.

We worked with 40 schools to explore the possible integration of **coding** and **computational thinking** in the primary curriculum.

We awarded the contract for a primary longitudinal study. The study, **Children's School Lives**, began in the autumn.

JC — JUNIOR CYCLE

Work on Junior Cycle **Development** and **Review**

We completed the trial of the specification and guidelines for L1LPs and published revised **L1LP guidelines**.

We completed **new curriculum specifications** for Engineering, Wood Technology, Graphics and Applied Technology, Classics, Religious Education, and Jewish Studies.

We co-hosted a series of **3 seminars** around the theme of Leadership for Learning in **collaboration** with **Junior Cycle for Teachers** (JCT)

We published **Reporting Guidelines** and templates for schools and a review of Early Insights into Junior Cycle English.

SC SENIOR CYCLE

Work on Senior Cycle **DEVELOPMENT** and **REVIEW**

We completed **new specifications** for

LC Art

LC Applied Mathematics

Commissioned research to analyse the discussions with teachers, parents, and students in **41 schools** on the purpose of senior cycle.

We supported the introduction of **new subjects/framework**:

LC Computer Science

LC Physical Education

SC Physical Education Framework
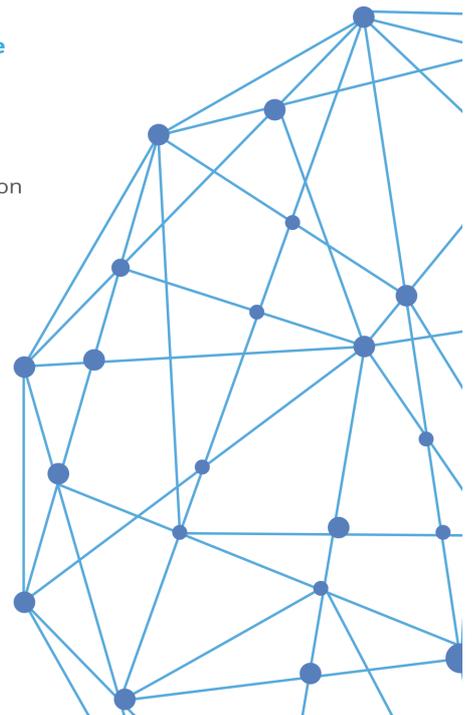
CS CROSS-SECTORAL REVIEWS/AUDITS

We progressed a review of **Relationships and Sexuality Education** (RSE) by publishing research, working directly with schools, and hosting stakeholder events.

We initiated a curriculum audit to identify current opportunities and future possibilities for children and young people to learn about **Traveller culture and history**.

We completed an audit on the integration of **education for sustainable development** (ESD) in the curriculum from early childhood to senior cycle.

2. Progress on NCCA work in 2018

This section of the Annual Report for 2018 describes the progress made over the year towards achieving the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018. These outcomes are presented under the five High-Level goals of the Strategic Plan:

- **Curriculum and Assessment**: To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors.

- **Engagement and Networks**: To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

- **Knowledge and Research**: To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings.

- **Communications and Profile**: To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA, to improve the profile of the organisation and its capacity to engage with others in leading and supporting educational change.

- **Governance and Corporate Services**: To develop NCCA governance and organisational structures, processes, skills, and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

Strategic Plan Outcomes		**Progress in 2018**
1.1	The *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* and other support materials are increasingly used in the early childhood sector and materials are developed to support the transition from pre-school to primary.	Seminars for the *Síolta Aistear* mentors were facilitated. The *Aistear* CPD workshops were reviewed and updated.
1.2	In primary schools, new curricula are introduced for language (English and Gaeilge), mathematics, and education about religious beliefs and ethics for junior primary classes and work has begun to develop an overarching new Primary Curriculum Framework.	The draft *Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* for third to sixth class was published for consultation. A multi-stranded consultation was completed which included working with schools through the Language School Network. A consultation report was published and informed the completion of the language specification for infants to sixth class. Further classroom examples of ethical, religious and cultural education were gathered through the Sharing Inclusive Practice Network and published online. Key messages arising from the Sharing Inclusive Practice work were documented to inform the review of the primary curriculum. The draft *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* for junior infants to second class was published for consultation. A multi-stranded consultation was completed which included working with schools through the Mathematics School Network.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
		A report on the maths consultation was published and informed ongoing work on the specification.
		Four curriculum seminars were organised as part of ongoing work with stakeholders to set out directions for a redeveloped primary curriculum.
		The Schools Forum was established and met five times to work on directions for a redeveloped curriculum.
		Classroom examples of coding and computational thinking were published online.
		The *Goodness Me, Goodness You*! Curriculum for junior infants to second class was reviewed and redeveloped.
		The *Goodness Me, Goodness You*! Curriculum for junior infants to sixth class was published as one document accompanied by an initial set of Support Materials.
1.3	Post-primary schools are using the Framework for Junior Cycle as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes.	Text lists for JC English and Gaeilge were published.
		The specifications for JC Materials Technology Wood, Metalwork, Technical Graphics, and Technology were consulted on, completed, and published.
		The specifications for JC Jewish Studies and Religious Education, were consulted on and completed.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2018
		The specification for Enterprise in Animation, a short course at Level 2, was completed.
		The trialling of the specification and guidelines for Level 1 Learning Programmes was completed, and L1LP guidelines were published.
		Evaluation of Level 2 e-Planning Tool was completed.
		Early insights review of L2LPs programme was completed.
1.4	Curriculum and assessment reform at senior cycle continues with the completion of new curriculum and assessment specification	Beta version of App to support Senior Cycle PE was completed.
		Guidelines to support coursework assessment for Leaving Certificate PE were developed and published.
		Support material for Leaving Certificate PE was published.
		The development of new subject specifications for LC Irish commenced.
		Curriculum support material for LC Computer Science was developed and published to support the introduction of Computer Science in Phase 1 schools.
		Consultation on the draft specification for LC Applied Mathematics was completed.
		LC Applied Mathematics curriculum specification was completed.
		LC Economics curriculum specification was published.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2018
		LC Art curriculum specification was consulted on and completed.
		LC Agricultural Science curriculum specification was published.
		Consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) module descriptors in English and Communications, Introduction to ICT, ICT Specialism, and Mathematical Applications commenced.
		Preparation for the development of curriculum specifications for LC Portuguese, Polish, Lithuanian, and Mandarin Chinese commenced.
		A National Conference to launch the Senior Cycle Review was held.
		Group of 41 post-primary schools was established and met for an induction meeting to support the school-based review component of the Senior Cycle review.
		Support materials for the school-based review were generated and published online for all schools to access.
		Three national seminars were organised as part of ongoing work with stakeholders on the Senior Cycle Review.
1.5	New approaches to assessment and reporting are being introduced and assessment capacity in schools and other settings is being supported	Assessment guidelines for JC Gaeilge, Geography, History, Home Economics, Music, and Mathematics were developed and published.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	**Progress in 2018**
		Examples of student work were developed, quality assured and published for JC Science, Business Studies, Gaeilge, Visual Art, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.
		Sample assessment items for JC French, German, Spanish and Italian were developed.
		Reporting guidelines and templates for junior cycle were published.
		The trialling of the assessment of practical work in Leaving Certificate Biology, Chemistry and Physics was supported.
1.6	Curriculum and assessment specifications feature examples of student work that illustrate the expectations for learners	At both primary and post-primary levels, a Quality Assurance Process continued and was further developed for the publication, on an ongoing basis, of annotated examples of pupil learning/student work related to relevant specifications, guidelines and support materials.
1.7	A strong line of continuity, and a focus on common features and elements, is evident across curriculum and assessment developments at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels.	*Mo Scéal* reporting templates to support children's transition from preschool to primary were published online. A suite of Support Materials were published to support practitioners and teachers in their work with children as they move from preschool to primary.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2018
	An audit on the integration of education for sustainable development (ESD) in the curriculum from early childhood to senior cycle was completed and published.
	A review of Relationships and Sexuality Education across primary and post-primary was designed and progressed across three strands of work.
	An audit of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum for early childhood education, and for primary and post-primary schools was initiated.

2. Engagement and Networks

To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	**Progress in 2018**
2.1	NCCA networks are working on ideas, material and initiatives to support their own capacity and that of other schools and settings in curriculum development, assessment practice, and broader educational change.	In 2018, work took place through primary school networks related to the: ▪ review and redevelopment of the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* Curriculum for junior classes ▪ development of examples of inclusive practices ▪ integration of coding and computational thinking in the primary curriculum ▪ review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum ▪ review of Relationships and Sexuality Education. In 2018, work took place through post-primary school networks related to the: ▪ developments in assessment, reporting and wellbeing in junior cycle ▪ Senior Cycle Review ▪ review of Relationships and Sexuality Education. EU project on collaborative learning and assessment was completed (CoLab project) and the final report was published.

2. Engagement and Networks

To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
2.2	NCCA is supporting the work of partner networks engaged in curriculum and assessment development and supporting teaching and learning.	Summer course materials were updated and used by the Aistear Tutor Initiative to continue to support practice change in infant classes in primary schools. New workshops were developed.
		Collaborative work in preparing to support schools' engagement with the new maths curriculum, was initiated with the PDST.
		Collaborative work to explore schools' experience of working with Learning Outcomes was planned with the PDST.
		NCCA collaborated with Junior Cycle for Teachers in organizing a series of seminars around the theme of Leadership for Learning. Three of these seminars took place in 2018.
		Collaborative engagement with JCT to support the engagement of schools and teachers with junior cycle phase 1-4 subjects continued.
		Collaborative engagement to support initial group of schools as part of a phased introduction of LC PE, SC PE, and LC Computer Science, was initiated with the PDST.
2.3	The voice and experience of learners is built into discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment	Tools and processes were developed and used to consult with children as part of the consultations on the draft primary language and mathematics specifications.

2. Engagement and Networks

To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
		Children's experiences of Goodness Me, Goodness You! were incorporated into the review process for the redeveloped curriculum.
		Tools and processes were developed, published online, and used to consult with students in 41 schools as part of the Senior Cycle Review.
		Models of working with students were generated in collaboration with national and international partners as part of an EU project: *Student Voice - Bridge to Learning*
2.4	Liaison and collaborative relationships with a number of organisations are improving the understanding and quality of curriculum and assessment developments and implementation.	NCCA continued to work on an ongoing basis with: ▪ An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilaíochta ▪ Arts Council ▪ Department of Children and Youth Affairs ▪ DES Steering and Strategy Groups ▪ Early Years Education Policy Unit, DES ▪ Foras na Gaeilge ▪ Higher Education Authority ▪ State Examinations Commission ▪ Teaching Council ▪ Teacher Education Section, DES NCCA also continued to engage with: ▪ Association of Teacher Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI)

2. Engagement and Networks

To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
		▪ Better Start, Quality Development Service
		▪ Colleges of Initial Teacher Education
		▪ Education Research Centre (ERC)
		▪ Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
		▪ ETB Directors of Schools
		▪ Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
		▪ National Council for Guidance in Education (NGCE)
		▪ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
		▪ Ombudsman for Children's Office (OMO)
		▪ Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
		▪ Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
		▪ TUSLA
		▪ Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI)
		NCCA continued engagement on the transition from second level to higher education through the DES Transitions Reform Group.
2.5	Engage with CCEA on areas of common interest and collaborate with educational agencies as relevant to the NCCA's work	NCCA continued engagement with CCEA in areas of common interest.

3. Knowledge and Research

To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
3.1	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed by evidence and research .	*The Transition to Primary Education: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study* was published jointly by the ESRI and NCCA. A series of short research papers exploring key aspects of a primary curriculum were developed and published online. Resources were published to encourage engagement with these papers. The second phase of research on parental involvement, engagement and partnership in their children's learning during the primary school years was funded. The contract for a primary longitudinal study, *Children's School Lives,* was awarded, and the study was initiated. Report on monitoring/review of initial impact of Junior Cycle English specification was published. Research report on *International Developments in Upper Secondary Education* was published. Short research reports to support the Senior Cycle Review, including research on existing senior cycle programmes, were published. Further research on international perspectives on Learning Outcomes was commissioned.

		Working Paper on Senior Cycle Review: Analysis of discussions in schools on the purpose of senior cycle education in Ireland was published jointly by ESRI and NCCA.
		Research on impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate Grading System in schools was commissioned, completed and published by the ESRI.
		Research on the impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate Oral Irish Examination introduced in 2012 was published along with a paper on implications of the research for future developments.
		A comparative study looking at processes, structures and cycles of curriculum development and implementation internationally was completed.
3.2	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed through participation in research networks	Research symposium held in collaboration with RECEC and the School of Education, Trinity. Podcasts from the symposium were published on www.ecalignment.ie.
		Through membership of EuroACS (European Association of Curriculum Studies), contributed to planning of the 4th European Conference on Curriculum Studies.
		Through membership of Research Alive (a partnership of NCCA/Teaching Council/Centre for Effective Services), contributed to future planning and funding of the Teachers' Research Exchange www.t-rex.ie.
3.3	The outcomes and findings of research are available, accessible and disseminated to those with an interest in education, policy making and evaluation.	Findings from research (outlined in 3.1) were published in easily accessible formats including full reports, executive summaries, presentations and podcasts.
		The findings from commissioned research informed the deliberations of NCCA Development Groups, Boards and Council, and ongoing work with external organisations and agencies.

3.4	Research findings and new knowledge are shared and interrogated by NCCA staff as an integral part of their work.	NCCA staff attended informal sessions on a range of curriculum and assessment issues, facilitated by national/international speakers with whom pre- and post-conference sessions were organised.
		NCCA continues to subscribe to membership of the library of Trinity College, and a fortnightly update on all relevant national and international research developments is circulated to all staff.
		An internal Research Group was established to develop and lead the further development of the organisation's Research Policy and Strategy.
		NCCA staff attended and/or presented papers at national and international conferences on educational research and practice. Details of these are presented in Appendix Two

4. Communications and Profile

To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA to improve the profile of the organisation and its capacity to engage with others in leading and supporting educational change

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2018
4.1	Using an effective media strategy, key messages on educational change are widely shared and NCCA responses and contributions are informed and timely.	Consultations continued to include online (website), social media (twitter and facebook) hard copy and face-to-face (bilateral meetings, focus groups) elements. Small-scale school networks were also a feature of the media used for consultation.
		Social media was used effectively to communicate important messages about curriculum developments and consultations and to allow wider engagement in NCCA events.
		Timely responses were made to media enquiries about various developments and a number of staff contributed to radio and television interviews. We continued our policy of responding where possible to requests from local radio.
4.2	NCCA websites are developed and improved in response to system need, customer feedback, statistics on web usage, and developments in online and social media.	New curriculum specifications and support materials were published online across all sectors. The online interface gives website users some choices in how they access the material.
		The newly-launched corporate website www.ncca.ie was further developed during 2018 with improved functionality for users and improved connections between sectors.

		www.curriculumonline.ie was maintained and is being developed on an ongoing basis. Analytics related to website and social media communications were included in the CEO Report to each meeting of the Council.
4.3	The work of the NCCA on curriculum and assessment and on practice in schools is shared with national and international audiences and feedback informs ongoing developments.	NCCA hosted or attended CIDREE Expert Meetings on Values in Primary Curricula, The new Digital Learning space, Arts, and Digital Learning and Computer Science practices. The findings informed ongoing work in these areas. NCCA continued to collaborate with JCT and colleagues from Scotland, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Hungary in an Erasmus project, *A Bridge to Learning*, focused on how student voice can be invoked to support student learning. Learning from the project has informed a number of collaborative initiatives in Ireland, including projects led by ACCS, Cork and Limerick Education Centres, the ETBI, the Instructional Leadership Programme and Cork ETB Deputy Principals' Forum. NCCA continued to participate in the work of the Atlantic Rim Collaborative. The collaborative looks at educational developments across the systems of a number of participating jurisdictions including Scotland, Wales, Iceland, Sweden, Ontario, California and Ireland. NCCA memberships were maintained for: ▪ Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) ▪ British Educational Research Association(BERA) ▪ Institute of Public Administration (IPA) ▪ Public Affairs Ireland (PAI) ▪ Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS).

| | | NCCA staff attended and/or presented papers at national and international conferences on educational research and practice. Details of a selection of these are presented in Appendix Two. |
| | | The CEO is a member of the Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies (ACESA) and the Chairperson is a member of the Association of Chairpersons of State Agencies. |

5. Governance and Corporate Services

To develop the NCCA governance and organisation structures, processes, skills and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		**Progress in 2018**
5.1	Organisation structures and processes are supporting innovative curriculum and assessment development and collaborative work practices.	Self-evaluation completed by Council, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governance Committee to review and improve their own operational effectiveness. Structures and processes, including new Development Groups, were in place for curriculum and assessment work. SharePoint was maintained and further developed using online meeting spaces and collaborative tools to facilitate efficient and effective work practices.
5.2	NCCA staff has developed the knowledge and competences required to develop innovative Curriculum and assessment advice and to support its introduction in schools and other settings.	Continued to provide professional development to staff related to competences identified in the performance management process. Increased involvement by staff in higher education studies and research.
5.3	There is a strong performance culture across the organisation.	Continued to implement the Civil Service Performance Management and Development System. A Workforce Plan was in place to support Public Service Reform and to inform NCCA Human Resources Strategy

5. Governance and Corporate Services

To develop the NCCA governance and organisation structures, processes, skills and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2018
		A Workforce Plan for 2019-2021 was in development to support the new 2019-2021 Strategic Plan.
		The Wellbeing Working Group continued to promote and support the general wellbeing of staff across the organisation.
5.4	There is a robust financial system in place.	Financial procedures were revised and documented.
		Draft financial and cash flow statements were produced in line with new financial reporting standards.
		All necessary support for internal and external audit was provided.
5.5	There is full compliance with the governance requirements of state bodies.	Further policies associated with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Boards were approved and implemented.
		Programme of work for internal audit was completed including review of internal controls.
		Revised procurement policy published and implemented.
		Corporate Procurement Plan 2018-2021 was approved by Council.
		Annual Report for 2017 was published.
		Quarterly management accounts produced and submitted to Council
		Risk Register was updated and approved by Council and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Audit and Risk Committee.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

To develop the NCCA governance and organisation structures, processes, skills and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation

Strategic Plan Outcomes		**Progress in 2018**
5.6	Customer service standards are developed and improved.	Customer Service Charter was reviewed, updated and published.
5.7	The NCCA has complied with all relevant public sector agreements and development plan.	Necessary measures were implemented to comply with the Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016 and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.
		All operational costs were met and accounted for.
		NCCA ICT environment and infrastructure was maintained and improved.
		Data protection policies and practices were reviewed and updated to support the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3. About the NCCA

The NCCA is a statutory Council and its brief is to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education and for primary and post-primary schools. This section of the Annual Report provides some background information on the Council, its current membership, organisational structures and financing.

Vision

Our Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 sets out the vision for the NCCA:

Leading innovation in education for learning, living and working in a changing world.

Mission

The Council's approach to its work is summarised in its mission:

- *to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to the end of second level*
- *to engage with learners, teachers, practitioners, parents and others to support innovation in schools and other educational settings*
- *to undertake, use and share research as a basis for advice and debate on education.*

Governance

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established under the Education Act 1998. The functions of the Council are set out in Part VII of the Act. The Council is accountable to the Minister for Education and Skills and is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic goals and actions and taking strategic decisions on all key areas of work. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the NCCA are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team must follow the broad strategic direction set by the Council and must ensure that all Council members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to Council and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Council and management of the NCCA.

Council Responsibilities

The work and responsibilities of the Council are set out in the Education Act 1998 (Part VII) and its accompanying schedule. The matters specifically reserved for decision by Council are:

- approval of all curriculum and assessment specifications and curriculum frameworks
- approval of policy directions and strategies
- approval of strategic plans and annual plans of work
- approval of annual reports and financial statements
- approval of consultative documents
- approval of the award of contracts to the value of €50,000 or more
- approval of risk management policies
- approval of Standing Orders

Standing items considered by the Council include:

- declaration of interests
- reports from the CEO
- reports from sub-committees of Council.

Financial reports and management accounts are generated and considered by Council on a quarterly basis. The Plan of Work and the review of the performance of the plan of work is considered on an annual basis. Reserved matters are considered as and when they arise.

Part VII (46) of the Education Act, 1998 requires the Council to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Education and Skills, with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, the NCCA is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that it will continue in operation
- and state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Council is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enables it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Part VII (46) of the Education Act, 1998. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the NCCA's website is the responsibility of the Council. The Council ensures that internal audit is provided for and overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). Internal Audit operates independently of the Executive in terms of its audit work and has rights of access to the Chief Executive and the ARC. It operates within the budget agreed with the ARC, which in turn forms part of the budget of the NCCA. The ARC sets the budget for Internal Audit, having regard to the scale and resources of the NCCA.

The Council is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. An evaluation of the performance of the NCCA by reference to the annual plan and budget has been undertaken.

The Council is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Council has considered the financial statements for 2018 and notes that they have been prepared in accordance with the required financial policies set out above. They give assurance of appropriate financial management and internal control in the NCCA. The Council considers that the financial statements of the NCCA give a fair and true view of the financial performance and the financial position of the NCCA at 31 December 2018.

Council Structure

The Council consists of a Chairperson, two Deputy Chairpersons and 22 ordinary members, all of whom are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the basis of nominations received from teachers' unions, management bodies, parents, industry and other organisations. The members of the current Council were appointed for a period of three years, six months and have usually met seven times per annum (seven meetings in 2018). The table below details the appointment period for current members:

Members of Council 2018

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date Appointed
Ms Brigid McManus, Chairperson		2 July 2015
Mr Declan Kelleher, Deputy Chairperson	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2 July 2015
Dr Michael Redmond Deputy Chairperson	Joint Managerial Body	2 July 2015
Ms Áine O Sullivan	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	2 July 2015
Mr Philip Irwin	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	2 July 2015
Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	2 July 2015
Ms Maria Spring	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	2 July 2015
Ms Rosemary Eager	Church of Ireland Board of Education	2 July 2015
Ms Suzanne Dillon	Department of Education and Skills	21 September 2016
Mr David Leahy	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	2 July 2015
Dr Pádraig Ó Duibhir	Foras na Gaeilge	2 July 2015
Dr Kevin Marshall	Irish Business and Employers Confederation	2 July 2015

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date Appointed
Dr Rose Malone	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	2 July 2015
Mr Michael Delargey	Irish Federation of University Teachers	2 July 2015
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2 July 2015
Ms Emma Dineen	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2 July 2015
Ms Marie-Thérèse Kilmartin	Joint Managerial Body – Ordinary member	2 July 2015
Ms Patricia Harrington	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	21 September 2016
Ms Áine Lynch	National Parents Council, Primary	2 July 2015
Mr Don Myers	National Parents Council, Post-Primary	2 July 2015
Mr Clive Byrne	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	2 July 2015
Ms Avril McMonagle	Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	2 July 2015
Dr Tim Desmond	State Examinations Commission	9 February 2017
Mr David Duffy	Teachers' Union of Ireland	2 July 2015
Ms Joanne Irwin	Teachers' Union of Ireland	2 July 2015

The Council has established two committees, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Governance Committee. The responsibilities delegated to these sub-committees by Council are set out in their Terms of Reference.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

The ARC comprises four Council members and one independent member, with financial and audit expertise, who is the Chair. The role of the ARC is to support Council in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. The Committee ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC reports to Council after each meeting, and formally in writing annually.

The members of the Audit and Risk Committee are: Etain Doyle, Chairperson, Áine Lynch, Don Myers, Maria Spring and David Leahy.

There were seven meetings of the ARC in 2018.

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee comprises three Council members. The role of the Governance Committee is to support Council in meeting legal and statutory requirements, as well as adopting good practice in governance. The members of this committee are: Deirbhile Nic Craith (Chairperson), Michael Redmond and Michael Delargey.

The Governance Committee met on three occasions in 2018.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Board and Committee meetings for 2018 is set out below including the expenses received by each member. Council and Committee members do not receive fees for their involvement in the Council:

Name	No. of Council Meetings (7)	No. of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings (6)	No. of Governance Committee meetings (3)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members)[1]
Brigid McManus	7			
Declan Kelleher	7			€4,344.45
Michael Redmond	6		3	
Áine O Sullivan	7			
Philip Irwin	7			
Máire Ní Chiarba	7			€8,096.65
Maria Spring	4	5		
Rosemary Eager	4			
Suzanne Dillon	6			
David Leahy	6	4		€2,035.81
Pádraig Ó Duibhir	6			
Kevin Marshall	4			
Rose Malone	6			
Michael Delargey	4		2	€759.16
Deirbhile Nic Craith	7		3	
Emma Dineen	5			€670.55
Marie-Thérèse Kilmartin	4			
Patricia Harrington	7			€1,578.04
Áine Lynch	5	4		
Don Myers	5	4		€3,535.36
Clive Byrne	6			
Avril McMonagle	1			€363.38
Tim Desmond	5			
David Duffy	7			

[1] The expenses indicated do not solely relate to attendance at Council meetings. Council members also participate in other structures of Council such as the overarching Boards for Early Childhood and Primary, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. They may also participate on NCCA Interview Boards for new staff. Expenses refer to the totality of these involvements.

Name	No. of Council Meetings (7)	No. of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings (6)	No. of Governance Committee meetings (3)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members)[1]
Joanne Irwin	6			
Etain Doyle (Chair ARC)		7		
Total				€21,383.40

Key Personnel Changes

Changes to the Executive included the appointment of Barry Slattery to the post of Deputy Chief Executive on 22 November, 2018, the appointments of two Directors (Curriculum and Assessment), Ben Murray (from 1 February, 2018) and Elaine Ní Neachtain (from 10 January, 2018). John Halbert, an Acting Deputy Chief Executive, retired on 1 August, 2018. Other changes in seconded/contracted staff included the addition of five Education Officers and the retirements of two Education Officers. Appointments were made to an additional post of Higher Executive Officer and to a vacant Clerical Officer post.

Disclosures Required by Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Council is responsible for ensuring that the NCCA has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code. As the figures included in the tables provided are from unaudited accounts, they are not final figures at this point and are rounded off to the nearest 50. Updated figures will be provided in light of the final, audited accounts.

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 (in the case of NCCA, this refers to salary figures only) are set out below.

Range of total employee benefits

Number of Employees			2018 No.	2017 No.
From		**To**		
€60,000	−	€69,999	7	3
€70,000	−	€79,999	6	15
€80,000	−	€89,999	8	4
€90,000	−	€99,999	7	1
€100,000	−	€109,999	0	0
€110,000	−	€119,999	1	1
€120,000	−	€129,999	0	0
€130,000	−	€139,000	1	0

Legal Costs and Settlements

In 2018, NCCA did not incur any legal costs or settlements under the terms set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Legal fees of €15,545.63 (2017: €0) were incurred for general advice.

Hospitality Expenditure

The Income and Expenditure Account includes the following hospitality expenditure. Hospitality costs are classified as Internal (staff events, retirements etc.) and External (visiting conference speakers, meetings with equivalent international agencies etc.):

	2018 €	2017 €
Internal	2,709.25	1,700
External	3,936.71	5,300
Total	**6,645.96**	**7,000**

Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

Council has made substantial progress during 2018 in reviewing its various policies and practices in the context of the new and revised requirements in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and has put revised or new policies and procedures in place in priority areas to comply with the Code. Work will continue on aspects of the Code of Practice with the continued development, review and renewal of policies over the coming period. Work is underway but not complete on IT and Cyber security controls and on bedding down new and expanded policies and processes for internal control. A Performance Delivery Agreement is in place between the Department of Education and Skills and the NCCA covering governance, operational, funding and reporting relationships. In relation to the Code's provisions that no member of a State Board should serve more than two full terms of appointment on that Board, or should hold appointments to more than two State Boards at the same time, there is a long-standing practice of these provisions not applying to NCCA where organisations nominate a staff member who has direct responsibilities in the areas of curriculum development and curriculum policy in their organisation and, consequently, whose expertise is likely to be of benefit to all concerned in this context.

Council has completed a self-assessment of its effectiveness, including a survey facilitated by an independent organisation. Council has also progressed a wider review of the appropriate processes and structures for developing curriculum and assessment advice in light of international experience, and a review of the revised NCCA structures introduced in 2012.

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff led by the Chief Executive John Hammond. The staff in 2018 was as follows:

Chief Executive: John Hammond

Deputy Chief Executives: Arlene Forster, Barry Slattery (from 22 November)
Acting Deputy Chief Executive: John Halbert (to 1 August)

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:

Norman Emerson

Jacqueline Fallon

Ben Murray (from 1 February)

Elaine Ní Neachrain (from 10 January)

Barry Slattery (to 21 November)

Patrick Sullivan

Corporate Services:

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal

Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Higher Executive Officer

Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer

Ann Young, Higher Executive Officer (from 2 November)

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer

Ann Young, Higher Executive Officer (to 1 November)

Ursula Corcoran, Clerical Officer (to 26 June)

Deirdre Dunne, Clerical Officer

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer

John Connors, Clerical Officer

Rosaleen Daly (from 1 October)

Ger Heffernan Temporary Clerical Officer.

Education Officers:

John Behan

Paul Behan

Fred Boss

Lorraine Crean

Tracy Curran

Lara Dabbagh

Mary Daly

Margaret Flood

Derek Grant

Ger Halbert (to 15 August)

Annette Honan (from 1 September)

Paul Knox (from 1 September)

Rachel Linney

Diarmuid Mooney

John Moriarty

Elaine Ní Neachtain (to 9 January)

Susan Nic Réamoinn (from 1 September)

Dónal Ó Buachalla (from 1 September)

Colm O Cadhain

Evelyn O'Connor

Louise O'Reilly

Ger O'Sullivan

Jacinta Regan

Claire Reidy

Tony Reilly

Aoife Rush

Mary Elaine Tynan (from 1 September)

Anna Walshe (to 30 November)

Project Officers:

Dr Jones Irwin

Aistear Co-ordinator:

Lorraine Farrell

Boards and Development Groups

The Council progresses its work through a range of Boards and Development Groups drawn from the organisations represented on the Council and other agencies as appropriate. In 2018, the Council convened over 64 meetings of these groups. A list of the meetings held in 2018 is in Appendix One.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2018 was €6,219,667. Core funding of €5,946,651 was received from the exchequer, through the Department of Education and Skills.

The funds allocated to the NCCA cover:

- Staff salaries

- Costs related to commissioning specialist staff to support the work of the Council

- Professional development

- Publications and digital media including proofing, design, photography, printing and translation

- Research

- Costs of the meetings of Council, its Boards and Development Groups including hire of conference facilities and travel and subsistence costs

- Administration costs such as office maintenance and equipment, stationery, postage, telephone, rent, lighting and heating

- Costs related to NCCA conferences and events

- IT maintenance and development

- International interaction including membership fees of international organisations such as CIDREE (Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe) and AEA (Association for Educational Assessment, Europe)

- Advertising.

Financial statements for the year ended 31st December, 2018 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Appendix 1: NCCA Meetings 2018

Early Childhood and Primary	
Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	7
Primary Language 3rd to 6th class Development Group	5
Primary Mathematics Development Group	5
Post Primary	
Art Development Group	4
Board for Junior Cycle	4
Board for Senior Cycle	4
Classical Studies Development Group	2
Classics Development Group	2
Jewish Studies Development Group	1
LCA Development Group	3
Materials Technology Wood Development Group	3
Mathematics Development Group	3
Metalwork Development Group	4
Religious Education Development Group	4
Senior Cycle Gaeilge Development Group	5
Technical Graphics Development Group	5
Technology Development Group	3
Total number of meetings in 2018	**64**
Total number of boards/groups	**17**

Appendix 2: NCCA Presentations (selection) 2018

A selection of the presentations, papers or workshops delivered by NCCA in 2018 organised broadly by strategic goals

1. Curriculum and Assessment Development

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
DES Literacy and Numeracy Conference	Literacy and Numeracy: Directions in Curriculum Development
Early Childhood Ireland and INTO seminar	Panel discussion on children's transition from preschool to primary school
OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education) Conference	Presentation on Children's transition from preschool to primary school
ESRI and Transitions Event	Children's transition from preschool to primary school
Siolta mentors	Children's transition from preschool to primary school
Marino College	Aistear
Primary Curriculum Seminars	Nature and Purpose of a primary school curriculum Powerful synergies New horizons Charting the journey

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Institute of Education, Dublin City University – B.Ed. and ECCE students	Transitions and *Mo Scéal* reporting templates
Irish Learning Support Association	Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs)
CIDREE	Learning outcomes and inclusive education
National Parents Council-Special Education	L1LPs and L2LPs
St. Angela's College- PGSEN students & staff	Curriculum changes to support students with SEN
JCT Home Economics Symposium	Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
Irish National Organisation for Teachers of English	Early Insights –Junior Cycle English
Minister's Stakeholder Event, St. Flannan's College, Ennis.	Action Plan for Education Panel (Early Childhood and Primary)
PDA Conference	The development of Junior Cycle Technological Education
Relationships and Sexuality Education Symposium, Collins Barracks, Dublin	Review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools
JMB Education Conference, Croke Park.	Junior Cycle Religious Education - what's different?
Senior Cycle Review Seminars	Cycle 1: The purpose of senior cycle and thinking about the future

2. Engagement and networks for innovation

To work with schools, practitioners and learners to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development.

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
JMB Conference	Overview of Senior Cycle Review
LCANA (Leaving Certificate Applied National Association conference)	Overview of LCA module review
National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	L1LPs
NEPS (Clare Region)	Exploring curriculum changes to support students with SEN from the PLC to senior cycle review
Kilkenny Education Centre Seminar	Support for Formative Assessment
Cork ETB	Erasmus Student Voice
Cavan Monaghan ETB	Erasmus Student Voice
NCCA/RECEC seminar: TCD **www.ecalignment.ie**	Making it work for our children: Opportunities, solutions and actions in the current early childhood education policy context
NAPD Symposium	Overview of Senior Cycle Review
HAS Choose Safety Seminar	Overview of Senior Cycle Review
SEC Annual Conference	Overview of Senior Cycle Review
ATAI Conference	Visual Thinking Strategies in Junior Cycle Visual Art and Leaving Certificate Art
Creative Schools Ireland	Presentation and Q&A on Junior Cycle Visual Art for new Associates

3. Knowledge and research

To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings.

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
NCCA/JCT Leadership for Learning	Introduction to Universal Design for Learning
JCT MFL team	Universal Design for Learning
NCCA/JCT Leadership for Learning	Collaborative Practice
NCCA/ JCT Leadership for Learning	Policy into Practice – Learning Outcomes
Education Journal of Education	Student Voice
Erasmus Seminar - Budapest	Erasmus Student Voice
Erasmus Seminar – Piran	Erasmus Student Voice
Erasmus Seminar – Edinburgh	Erasmus Student Voice
CIDREE - Luxembourg	Digital Literacy and Computer Science practices
CIDREE - Lyons	The new digital learning space
CIDREE - Dublin	CIDREE Arts Expert Group Meeting
European Early Childhood Education Research Association Annual Conference, Budapest.	NCCA Symposium: ▪ NCCA Preschool to primary transitions initiative ▪ Voices of parents and children in the NCCA Transitions Initiative ▪ Reconceptualising Curriculum Structure in the Early Years - A Consultation.
Revolutionising Play: Perspectives; Possibilities and Promise, International Conference, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	'Play and Curriculum: The dance goes on' in Early Childhood Education - presentation

Conference marking the 20th anniversary of the National Forum for Early Childhood Education, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	Keynote: OUR journey: From there to here and where to next?

4. Strategic relationships

To build on existing strategic relationships and develop new ones to support and connect curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Irish Educational Publishers' Association Meetings	Updates on curriculum and assessment change at early childhood, primary and post-primary
Irish Primary Principals' Network	Briefing on *Aistear* in primary schools and the NCCA Transition from preschool to primary school initiative
International Education Assessment Network	Capacity building in National Assessment Systems
Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Language Symposium: Envisioning the Language Classroom	Keynote: Play and Playfulness in the Primary Classroom – Big ideas for learning.
OECD International Round Table on ECEC Curriculum Frameworks for the 21st Century, Luxembourg	*Aistear* and Curriculum Development in Ireland: transition in policy and practice
Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)	Develop partnership with CCEA to share practice on curriculum design, practice, procedures and policy
Montessori Early Childhood Professionals in Ireland (MECPI) 10th anniversary blog series	Reflections on developments in the early childhood sector in the light of *Aistear*
Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) whole team	Embedding Wellbeing into CPD design

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
NCCA, Dublin City Council, DES, JCT, PDST, Marino Institute of Education	Visual Thinking Strategies across the Curriculum

5. Profile and communications

To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA to improve the profile of the organisation and engagement with its work

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Launch of LC Computer Science - Dublin	First day of LC CS for Phase 1 schools

Appendix 3: Report on Protected Disclosures

The NCCA has put in place procedures for the making of protected disclosures, which have been developed in line with the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 and agreed by Council. This sets out in detail the process by which protected disclosures can be made and what will happen when a disclosure is made.

The NCCA has a strong commitment to ensuring that its culture and working environment encourage, facilitate and support any employee or anyone associated with the work of the NCCA to 'speak up' on any issue that could impinge on the Council's ability to carry out its roles and responsibilities to the high standard expected.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 22 OF THE PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT 2014

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 each public body is required to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

Report of NCCA in respect of the Year 2018

Relevant year for Disclosures	Disclosures or Nil Disclosures
2018	Nil Disclosures

Appendix 4: Statement on Internal Control

Scope of Responsibility

On behalf of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) I acknowledge the Council's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed, embedded and implemented to assist in managing the work of the organisation and its corporate governance to an appropriate standard. It is also designed to manage risk to a tolerable level but cannot fully eliminate it. In other words, the system can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way and corrected/ managed.

The NCCA and the System of Internal Control

The Council undertakes its work by setting strategic goals and actions and taking strategic decisions on all key areas of work. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the NCCA are the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team follow the broad strategic direction set by the Council and ensure that all Council members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to Council and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Council and management of the NCCA. The management team, in turn, work with a team of Directors (Curriculum and Assessment) and sectoral teams of Education Officers to implement the Strategic Plan and the annual Plan of Work of Council, working within the controls set to manage the work of the organisation and assure the quality of the Council's work.

The NCCA advises the Minister for Education and Skills on the curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. This advice is developed through Research, Deliberation, Consultation and Networks. There are quality control systems in place for the development of this advice:

- Research evidence, good practice and international experience informs this advice
- The advice is based on discussions and deliberations by Council and its Boards and Development Groups
- The advice is shaped by feedback from consultations with the public, schools and early childhood settings, education interests and others
- Networks of schools and early childhood settings provide feedback on ideas and approaches under development and provide practical examples of learning, teaching and pupil/student work.

All of these contribute to ensuring that there are effective controls in place in relation to the quality of the advice on curriculum and assessment that is at the core of the Council's work.

The NCCA has policies and procedures in place and disseminated to staff. These include policies on finance, HR, procurement and risk management. A system of Performance Management Development, linked to line management arrangements, is in place for staff which includes provision for continuous professional development.

The NCCA is mainly funded by the Department of Education and Skills. The Council is responsible for approving the annual Plan of Work and budget, and funds are allocated and spent in accordance with the priorities of the Council. The Council's financial statements are prepared by the accountancy firm Mazars and are subject to external audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Council undertakes an effectiveness review on a regular basis.

The Council aims to achieve value for money in its purchases, to ensure probity in its procurement planning and procedures, and to operate in accordance with government procurement policy.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2018 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements.

Internal Control and Risk

NCCA has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising four Council members and one independent member, with financial and audit expertise, who is the Chair. The ARC is independent from the management of the organisation. In particular, the Committee seeks to ensure that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC met seven times in 2018.

The NCCA has also established an internal audit function which conducts a programme of work agreed with the ARC. The work on internal audit is outsourced and conducted by Crowleys DFK, who conducted a review of internal controls in 2018 and reported to the ARC.

The *Review of the System of Internal Controls* by Crowley's DFK drew attention to many positive features of NCCA's internal control environment. The review reported no high-risk findings that may result in a material financial loss or operational disruption to the NCCA. The report found that most of the controls tested were operating effectively and that reasonable assurance can be placed on the sufficiency and operation of internal controls to effectively mitigate and/or manage key inherent risks. It recommended a number of aspects of control for attention in 2019 including: improved procedures for month-end closing of accounts; review of NCCA's tax exposure and compliance; timely arrangements and production of financial statements; and improvements in assets inventory and disposal.

The recommendations of the review are currently being addressed and the matters involved will be resolved by the end of Q2 in 2019.

NCCA will also resolve issues identified by the C&AG and ensure they do not re-occur. NCCA management will closely monitor this and oversight of the follow-up on internal and external audit items will be carried out by the Audit and Risk Committee which will keep progress to resolution under review.

The resourcing of internal audit is likely to be increased in the coming years, as needed, in light of the growth in the activity and overall size of the organisation.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy which includes a risk appetite statement, the risk management processes in place, and details of the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk.

A risk register is in place which identifies the nature of the risks and the key risks facing the NCCA and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed, and risk management monitored, by management and the ARC at each meeting and on a quarterly basis at minimum. Risk management also features on the agenda of Council meetings. The outcomes of review are used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

In the risk management policy and process responsibilities are shared across all staff, including the Risk Co-ordinator, the Senior Management Team, the Director Team, the Corporate Services Team and Education Officers. The policy has been issued to all staff who are expected to work within the NCCA's risk management policies, to alert management on emerging risks and control weaknesses and to assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

The Audit and Risk Committee will be asked to include an external review of the effectiveness of the Council's risk management policy and processes as part of its Audit Plan for 2019.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff. I confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- procedures for all key business processes have been documented
- financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability
- there is an operating budgeting system with an annual budget, set out in the NCCA's annual Plan of Work, which is kept under review by senior management, with improvements made as appropriate.
- there are systems in place and under development aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems
- the systems to safeguard the assets will be updated with a new searchable asset and contracts register, and specific responsibilities have been assigned
- control procedures over grant funding to outside agencies, through the use of Service Level Agreements, ensure adequate control over approval of grants and monitoring and review of grantees to ensure grant funding has been applied for the purpose intended.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Council, where relevant, in a timely way. I confirm that the following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies
- reporting arrangements have been established at all levels among sectoral teams, specific project teams and the corporate services team where responsibility for financial management has been assigned
- there are regular reviews at meetings of the management team of periodic and annual performance and financial reports which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts
- senior management oversees the implementation of recommendations arising from the reports of the internal and external auditors.

Procurement

I confirm that the NCCA has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines. A Corporate Procurement Plan was put in place for 2018-2021.

Procurement guidelines allow for non-competitive procurement in justifiably exceptional circumstances. During 2018 there were two instances of non-competitive procurement and one instance of non-compliant procurement as follows:

- Expenditure of €73,903 was incurred in relation to a translation management system which needed to be kept in place to meet ongoing, continuing translation requirements on an effective, efficient and linguistically competent basis.
- Expenditure of €56,610 was incurred in relation to work on the NCCA website. The original contract had been tendered and was rolled over due to the need to maintain proprietary software, the functionality of that software and associated services to avoid educational materials not being available to schools.
- Expenditure of €36,430 was incurred in relation to a cleaning contract that was rolled over. The original contract had been tendered and will be retendered in 2019.

The Council will conduct tendering processes in relation to the above contracts by the end of Q3, 2019. In addition, in 2019, procurement has been nominated as a key competence area for all staff in their PMDS process, which will enable their full engagement with policies, procedures and operational controls in this area.

Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the NCCA has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. NCCA's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the Audit and Risk Committee which oversee their work, and the senior management team within the NCCA, which is responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

I confirm that the Audit and Risk Committee conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2017. The ARC noted the conclusions of internal audit and reported the results of its review to the Council for consideration. It considered that, overall, there are adequate controls in place, particularly in areas such as risk management, internal audit arrangements, HR, Cyber-security, GDPR and quality control of research and development activity. It reported that further improvements needed to be expedited in the specific areas identified by internal and external audit outlined earlier and that these should be effected as early as feasible in 2019. New financial/accounting controls already introduced need to be bedded down in 2019.

Prof. Mary O'Sullivan
Chairperson
NCCA