National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Annual Report 2019

NCCA

Contents

Foreword

It's only a number of months later but, as this foreword is being drafted while the impact and effects of the Coronavirus pandemic are still with us, it's challenging to look back and present an account of the relative normality that prevailed in 2019. But that was the case, with the NCCA's work in curriculum and assessment contributing significantly to the extensive, diverse and ongoing developments across all sectors from the early years to the end of post-primary education. As always, in terms of the approach we take to our work, an approach that will prevail post-pandemic, we continued to consult extensively with the stakeholders in Irish education, to engage in ground-breaking research and take account of developments internationally as an evidence base for our work, while at the same time 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 2019, work in Early Childhood Education focused for the most part on continuing to embed and enhance *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* as it is implemented, with the support of the *Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide,* in settings and schools. Substantial review of the primary curriculum took place in 2019 with the finalisation of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* for public consultation. This work was underpinned by substantial engagement with a Schools Forum and stakeholder seminars and by the publication of an extensive series of background research papers and publications on different aspects of learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment at primary level. Furthermore, other work on languages and mathematics curricula was also progressed and the major longitudinal study of the experience of primary schooling, called *Children's School Lives,* completed the first year of its work.

At senior cycle, comprehensive review of the curriculum proceeded involving 41 collaborating schools and a series of national and regional seminars. In addition, NCCA received 4,300 responses to our senior cycle survey and 277 written submissions to the review. As a result, an Advisory Report on the future shape and development of Senior Cycle will issue to the Minister for Education and Skills in 2020. Apart from major reviews at primary and senior cycle levels, NCCA continued its work assisting schools in embedding the ongoing junior cycle developments in schools and also completed work in a number of areas at the direct request of the Minister and Department of Education and Skills: a report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education; an audit of Traveller Culture and History in the Curriculum; a report of a review of the optional nature of History in the Framework for Junior Cycle; and a report on Coding in Primary Schools. Across all this activity, as illustrated on pages 10-12

of the Annual Report, we worked with over 200 schools, held almost 65 meetings, and organised almost 30 public consultation events.

Work as extensive as this, on this scale, only happens through the commitment of the Council, its stakeholders and its staff. In 2019, a new Council was appointed and inducted in its role. With the appointment of Council, I commenced my role as the new Chairperson and became immediately aware of the time, experience, expertise and effort that Council members and the members of subject development groups and boards give 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 also 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 2019. I am particularly grateful to John Hammond for his support in my role as Chair. He is a highly effective communicator and leader with a deep commitment to the work of the NCCA.

As Chairperson of the NCCA in 2019, I want to thank my Deputy Chairs Michael Redmond and Deirbhile Nic Craith and the members of our Audit and Risk Committee and Governance Committee, not alone for their commitment and support but also their willingness to engage constructively and productively with a variety of complex curriculum, assessment and corporate governance issues on an ongoing basis. I look forward to working with them and other members of the new Council in supporting John Hammond (CEO) and the staff of the NCCA in moving forward the important work of the NCCA in ever-challenging times and changing contexts.

Prof. Mary O'Sullivan

Chairperson

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2019 features a programme of work and outcomes that were far-reaching, extremely varied and highly collaborative across all sectors from early years to post-primary education. The work embodies an approach that provides for continuity in our work from year to year and is aimed at representing a good fit with the Irish education system and Irish society. Firstly, the approach aims at building upon and recognising 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. Stakeholder engagement is a crucial part of the work we do.

On the following pages, you'll find a graphical summary followed by a more detailed account of our work in curriculum and assessment in 2019. 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 2019 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. The need for, and the drive towards, progress and improvement is ever-important but especially at times like the present, when the shocks and challenges to the education system related to the Coronavirus pandemic are being encountered and addressed. At these times, taking the longer view is an important element of the response and ultimately, the curriculum developments set out in this Annual Report aim to address the central, abiding question of how the educational experience of learners can be improved for all learners and for the collective good, and how this can contribute significantly towards a narrative of human progress that our young people can relate to and subscribe to in the long-term.

Of course, 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, the teachers and schools we collaborate with, and our colleagues in the Department of Education and Skills and other Departments and agencies. Sincere thanks to all. Special thanks to my colleagues on the NCCA staff who, every year, give so generously of their time, experience, energies and personal commitment, demonstrating in the process their creativity, expertise and boundless commitment to education. Their work is valued and deeply appreciated.

John Hammond

CEO

Overview of NCCA work in 2019

Early Childhood
Primary
Junior Cycle
Senior Cycle
Corporate Services

NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Early Childhood

Primary

01
Research Paper

We published a research paper on Key elements of good practice to support the learning and development of children from birth to 3.

02
Aistear

We updated the Aistear and Play workshops as part of the National Síolta Aistear Initiative.

03
Arts and Stem

We initiated work on new resources on the Arts and STEM for the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide..

01
Primary Language

We published the Primary Language Curriculum/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile supported by an extended and redeveloped online Language Toolkit.

02
Framework for Consultation

We finalised the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework for consultation.

03
Schools forum

Meeting eight times, we continued to work with the Schools Forum on directions for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum.

04
Coding

Involving two phases and more than **40** schools, we concluded the Coding in Primary Schools Initiative and published a final report along with examples of classroom practice.

05
Longitudinal study

Year 1 of the Children's School Lives longitudinal study was completed and Year 2 initiated.

Junior Cycle

Senior Cycle

01 L2LPs

We reviewed and revised Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) and published a L2 short course specification for Enterprise in Animation.

02 Examples of Student work

We developed, quality assured and published annotated examples of student work across **15** subjects to support the professional development of teachers.

03 History

We published a review of the optional nature of History in the Framework for Junior Cycle.

04 Leadership for Learning

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

01 Leaving Certificate

We completed curriculum specifications for LC Classical Studies, **4** Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) module descriptors, and reviewed the curriculum specification for LC Politics and Society.

02 Senior Cycle Review

We completed an extensive consultation on the Review of Senior Cycle which included:

- Teacher, student and parent participation in **41** collaborating schools
- **5** national seminars held throughout Ireland
- **12** regional focus group meetings
- **21** bilateral meetings with stakeholders
- **4300** responses to an online survey
- **277** written submissions to the review

03 Cross sectoral

- Drawing on work with schools, research and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, we published the final report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education.
- We completed a curriculum audit to identify opportunities and future possibilities for children and young people to learn about Traveller culture and history in the curriculum.

Corporate Services

01 Structures

A new Council was appointed for a three-year term until 28th February 2022.

Structures were in place for curriculum and assessment work:

- **5** meetings of Council
- **8** meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee
- **50** meetings of Boards and Development Groups.

02 Professional Development

- An induction programme with a focus on Governance was provided for the new Council.
- Extensive professional development opportunities were availed of by staff.
- Staff training on procurement and GDPR was prioritised.
- Increased numbers of staff undertook post-graduate education studies and research.
- An internal Research Strategy Group was established.

03 Finance

- Revised budgetary and estimates processes were developed.
- Revised month-end procedures for financial management were introduced.
- Quarterly management accounts were produced and approved by Council.
- Financial statements for 2018 were approved and certified by the C&AG following an external audit.
- An online contracts register and an online asset management system was developed and introduced.
- The Risk Register was updated and approved by Council and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Audit and Risk Committee.

04 Policies

- A Treasury Policy was approved by Council.
- An updated Data Protection Policy was approved by Council.
- A Child Safety Statement was developed and approved by Council.
- An Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement was signed with the Department of Education and Skills.

05 Wellbeing

The Wellbeing staff working group continued to promote and support the general wellbeing of staff across the organisation.

2. Progress on NCCA work in 2019

This section of the Annual Report for 2019 describes the progress made over the year towards achieving the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. 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 and across educational transitions.

- **Engagement and Collaboration**: To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and 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 all educational settings.

- **Communications**: To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA effectively, to improve 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 effectively 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 and across educational transitions.

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019
1.1	Aistear is providing the basis for curriculum planning and implementation in early education settings and informing the pedagogical approaches in the early years of primary schooling. Aistear's guidance for the 0-3 age group is informing developments for this age group through the National Síolta Aistear Initiative.	Seminars for the *Síolta Aistear* mentors were facilitated. Materials for *Aistear and Play CPD Workshops* were updated. Principles and pedagogical approaches of *Aistear* were embedded in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* and in the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile.* Development of new resources on the Arts and STEM was initiated for the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide*.
1.2	In primary schools, new curricula are introduced for language (English and Gaeilge) and mathematics.	The *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* (junior infants to sixth class) was published. The online Primary Language Toolkit was redeveloped with improved functionality. A new set of Examples of children's language learning and Support Materials was published as part of the online Toolkit. 'Critical Friends' groups were convened to support inclusion for every child in the Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019
1.3	An overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum has been agreed and provides the basis for an extensive programme of curriculum development.	The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* was approved for consultation. A consultation plan was finalised accompanied by a multi-stranded communications plan. The series of curriculum seminars supporting the development of the draft framework concluded. The Schools Forum met eight times to work on directions for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. The *Coding in Primary Schools Initiative* was concluded. Further examples of coding in action across the eight years of primary education were published online to support schools' work in this area.
1.4	In junior cycle, new curricula continue to be developed and introduced as part of the junior cycle developments. Post primary schools are using the Framework for Junior Cycle as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes.	A new short course specification for Enterprise in Animation (Level 2 Learning Programmes) was published. A specification for Junior Cycle Jewish Studies was published.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
		The report of a Review of the optional nature of History in the Framework for Junior Cycle was published. Specifications for Level 2 Learning Programmes were reviewed and revised.
1.5	A review of senior cycle education is underway and an extensive plan of development and reform in educational programmes, curriculum, assessment, reporting and certification is under way.	Guidelines to support coursework assessment for Leaving Certificate (LC) Physical Education, Agricultural Science, Economics and Computer Science were published. Revised Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) module descriptors in English and Communications, Introduction to ICT, ICT Specialism, and Mathematical Applications were completed. A specification for LC Classical Studies was completed. A review of LC Politics and Society and actions arising from the review were completed. Curriculum support materials for LC Politics and Society, LC Physical Education and LC Computer Science were published. Consultation on the Background Paper for the review of Leaving Certificate subject specifications for Biology, Chemistry and Physics was completed.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
		LC Spanish novel and text list revisions were completed.
		Phase 2 of the Senior Cycle Review which included teacher, student, and parent participation in 41 collaborating schools and 4 national seminars was completed.
		An extensive public consulation on Senior Cycle Review was completed.
1.6	New approaches to assessment and reporting are being introduced and capacity to introduce developments in these areas in schools and other settings is being supported.	Assessment Guidelines for Phase 5 Junior Cycle subjects (Classics, Jewish Studies, Religious Education and Technology subjects) were published.
		Assessment Tasks for Phase 1-3 Junior Cycle subjects were published.
		Sample assessment items for Phase 3 Junior Cycle subjects (Modern Foreign Languages, Mathematics and Gaeilge) were published.
		Support material to support teachers working with Learning Outcomes was published.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
1.7	Curriculum and assessment specifications continue to feature quality-assured examples of children's/student's work that illustrate the expectations for learners and contribute to shared understanding of standards across the education system.	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 children's learning/students' work related to relevant specifications, guidelines and support materials.
1.8	A strong line of continuity, a sensitivity to key stages of transition, and a focus on common features and elements, is evident across curriculum and assessment developments at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels.	A number of presentations and articles in key publications were used to build awareness of the *Mo Scéal* preschool-to-primary reporting templates. A professional networking event on the preschool-to-primary school transition was held in February in Dublin Castle for those working in Initial Teacher Education and in Early Childhood Undergraduate Programmes. The final report setting out consultation findings, recommendations and actions from the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education was published. A cross-sectoral curriculum audit examining Traveller culture and history in the curriculum was undertaken and published.

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019

2.1	NCCA is working with practitioners, groups and networks on ideas, material and initiatives to support their own capacity and that of schools and other settings in curriculum development, assessment practice, and broader educational change.	Work took place through primary school networks related to the: ▪ development of examples of children's language learning supported by the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* ▪ integration of coding and computational thinking in the redeveloped primary curriculum ▪ ongoing review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum ▪ review of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Briefings on primary curriculum review and redevelopment were organised for patrons of primary schools and those working in Initial Teacher Education. Revised guidelines for schools on developing short courses at junior cycle were published. The Beta version of Phyz App, designed to support learning and assessment in the Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework, was trialled with a network of schools in collaboration with Healthy Ireland. Work took place through post-primary school networks related to the: ▪ developments in assessment, reporting and wellbeing in junior cycle ▪ Senior Cycle Review.
2.2	NCCA is supporting the work of education partners and networks in curriculum and assessment development and in 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. A new follow-on course was developed. Collaborative work in preparing to support schools' engagement with the new maths curriculum continued with the PDST.

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019
	Collaborative work to explore schools' experience of working with Learning Outcomes was carried out with the PDST and the NCSE. Collaborative work with PDST on 'preparation for teaching and learning' was initiated. Training in VTS facilitation and coaching techniques was completed in April 2019, as part of the Erasmus Plus Project with Dublin City Council. 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 2019. NCCA continued to work with JCT to support the engagement of schools and teachers with all new junior cycle subject specifications. NCCA collaborated with PDST to support an initial group of schools as part of the phased introduction of LC PE, SC PE, and LC Computer Science.

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
2.3	The voice and experience of learners is part of discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.	An analysis of children's perspectives shared in curriculum review and development work in 2016-2019 was completed and published to support the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. Collaborative work with the ETBI-led Instructional Leadership Project, Cork ETB, ACCS, and Cork and Limerick Education Centres in embedding Student Voice practice in schools continued.
2.4	Liaison and collaborative relationships with a range of organisations and government departments are improving the understanding and quality of curriculum and assessment developments and the model for, or approach taken to, their implementation.	The NCCA initiated the *Leading Out* series of seminars working with education partners and wider stakeholders to build capacity and to plan for conducive conditions for implementing the redeveloped primary curriculum. 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

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019
	- 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) - Better Start, Quality Development Service - Colleges of Initial Teacher Education - Education Research Centre (ERC) - Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) - ETB Directors of Schools - Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) - Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) - National Council for Guidance in Education (NGCE) - National Council for Special Education (NCSE) - Ombudsman for Children's Office (OMO) - Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) - Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) - Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
		TUSLA NCCA continued engagement on the transition from second level to higher education through the DES Transitions Reform Group
2.5	Curriculum and assessment developments north and south of the border and in Europe have been supported by strategic collaboration between NCCA and other curriculum development agencies.	NCCA continued engagement with CCEA in areas of common interest. NCCA continued engagement with OECD on the review of senior cycle.

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
3.1	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed by evidence and research.	Research paper: '*Key elements of good practice to support the learning and development of children from birth to 3*' was published on the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide. Short research papers on assessment and curriculum audits were published to support the development of the draft Primary Curriculum Framework. Resources were published to encourage engagement with these papers. '*Learning and Teaching in Primary Mathematics; an Addendum to Research Reports 17 and 18*' was published to support the development of the mathematics curriculum for senior classes. A final report on the *Coding in Primary Schools Initiative* was developed setting out directions for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. A background paper on Modern Foreign Languages in a redeveloped primary curriculum was developed. The first wave of data-gathering and analysis as part of the *Children's School Lives* study was completed and a draft report prepared.

		A research paper on *Learning Outcomes: An International Perspective* was published.
		A background paper for the review of Leaving Certificate subject specifications for Biology, Chemistry and Physics and a consultation report on the paper were published.
		Research on *Coursework and practical assessment in senior secondary science: the perspective from international jurisdictions* was published.
		ESRI research on *Student, teacher and parent perspectives on senior cycle education* was published.
		An *Interim report on the Senior Cycle Review*, and a *Consultation Report on the Senior Cycle Review* were published.
3.2	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed through engagement with and participation in research networks.	A symposium entitled '*Making it work for our children: Opportunities, solution and action in the current early childhood education policy context*' was held in partnership with the Researching Early Childhood Education Collaborative [RECEC].
		The Research Alive consortium, a partnership between NCCA, the Teaching Council and the Centre for Effective Services, supported the T-REX (Teacher Research Exchange) through the T-REX Steering Group.
		NCCA has participated on the committee and the Research Sub-group of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS).

		Developments in assessment have been advanced through NCCA's work with the International Education Assessment Network (IEAN), with NCCA hosting a summit meeting in Dublin City University in September 2019. NCCA continued its involvement in the Atlantic Rim Collaboratory (ARC). Through membership of EuroACS (European Association of Curriculum Studies), NCCA contributed to the 4th European Conference on Curriculum Studies in Maynooth University. NCCA has been an active member of the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) attending multiple CIDREE Expert Meetings and contributing to the CIDREE Yearbook on 'Student Voice in Education'.
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 an update on all relevant national and international research developments is regularly circulated to all staff.

The internal Research Group developed the organisation's Research Strategy.

NCCA staff attended the annual Staff Research Day in March, 2019.

NCCA staff attended and/or presented papers at national and international conferences on educational research and practice. Details of these are presented in Appendix 2. |
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4. Communications

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

	Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2019
4.1	Using an effective media strategy and process, key messages on educational change are shared internally and externally. NCCA responses and contributions are informed and timely. Communications awareness is built into all areas of the NCCA's work.	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 encourage wider engagement in NCCA events. Timely responses were made to media queries 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. Copies of an information booklet on the review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum were disseminated to all primary schools. An information bulletin series on *Senior Cycle Review* was developed, published and disseminated to schools.

| 4.2 | NCCA websites are updated and maintained 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 materials. Analytics related to website and social media communications were included in the CEO Report for each meeting of the Council. |

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
5.1	Organisation structures and processes are supporting innovative curriculum and assessment development and collaborative work practices.	The findings of the internal Review of NCCA structures and curriculum development processes, 2018 have begun to be implemented. 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. Staff involvement in professional, post-graduate and research studies increased. An internal Research Strategy Group was established, and work commenced on the development of a Research Strategy.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
5.3	There is a performance culture focused on positive values, cooperation, support, empowerment and wellbeing of staff across the organisation.	The Wellbeing Staff Working Group continued to promote and support the general wellbeing of staff across the organisation. The NCCA workforce plan was further developed.
5.4	There is a robust financial management system in place.	Revised month-end procedures were introduced including a reconciliation report reviewed by senior management and the Audit and Risk Committee. Quarterly management accounts were produced and approved by Council. All necessary support for internal and external audit was provided. Financial statements for the year ended 31 December, 2018 were approved and certified by the C&AG following an external audit. Revised budgetary and estimates processes were developed for introduction in 2020 including variance analysis in the quarterly management accounts. An online contracts register and an online asset management system was developed and introduced. A review of the NCCA's tax liabilities took place and its findings were implemented. A Treasury Policy was approved by Council.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
5.5	There is full compliance with the governance requirements of, and code of practice for, state bodies.	An induction programme with a focus on Governance was provided for the new Council appointed on 10 April, 2019.
		A review of internal controls took place and its findings were implemented.
		Procurement processes were conducted in line with Office of Government Procurement guidelines and the NCCA Corporate Procurement Plan 2018-2021.
		The Annual Report for 2018 was published.
		The Risk Register was updated and approved by Council and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Audit and Risk Committee.
		An updated Data Protection Policy was approved by Council.
		A Child Safety Statement was developed and approved by Council.
		An Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement was signed with the Department of Education and Skills.
5.6	Customer service standards are developed and improved.	The Customer Service Charter was reviewed, updated and published. The Communications and IT Teams continued to work on improving the NCCA's interface with the public via its communication strategy, websites and social media.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2019
5.7	The NCCA has complied with all relevant public sector agreements and development plans.	Necessary measures were implemented to comply with the Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016 and the Civil Service Renewal Plan. HR and other relevant civil service and policies were implemented and adhered to.

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 2019-2021 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 2019 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 draft unaudited 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 2019.

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 and industry and other organisations.

On 10th April, 2019 The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. announced the appointment of a new Council for a three year term until 28th February 2022. The term of the previous Council ended on 31 December, 2018. The Council usually meets seven times per annum. Five meetings were

held in 2019, as no meetings were held in the early months of 2019 pending the appointment of the new Council.   The table below details the appointment period for current members:

Members of Council 2019

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date First Appointed	Date(s) Re-appointed
Prof. Mary O'Sullivan, Chairperson		1 May, 2019	
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith, Deputy Chairperson	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	13 June, 2010	25 June, 2015 1 March, 2019 (as Deputy Chairperson)
Dr Michael Redmond, Deputy Chairperson	Joint Managerial Body	1 April, 2015	1 March, 2019
Ms Áine O Sullivan	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	25 June, 2015	1 March, 2019
Mr Ed Byrne	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	18 April, 2019	
Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	25 June, 2015	1 March, 2019
Mr Fergal Kelly	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	1 March, 2019	
Ms Joyce Perdue	Church of Ireland Board of Education	1 March, 2019	
Ms Suzanne Dillon	Department of Education and Skills	25 September 2016	1 March, 2019 (Resigned 8 September, 2019)
Ms Orlaith O'Connor	Department of Education and Skills	9 September, 2019	
Ms Anne McHugh	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	1 March, 2019	
Edel Ní Chorráin, Uas.	Foras na Gaeilge	1 March, 2019	
Ms Claire McGee	Ibec	1 March, 2019	
Mr Brian Tubbert	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	1 March, 2019	
Mr Michael Delargey	Irish Federation of University Teachers	1 April, 2010	25 June 2015 1 March, 2019
Ms Carmel Browne	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	1 March, 2019	
Mr. Joe McKeown	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	1 March, 2019	
Ms Patricia Gordon	Joint Managerial Body	1 March, 2019	

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date First Appointed	Date(s) Re-appointed
Dr. Finn Ó Murchú	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	1 March, 2019	
Ms Áine Lynch	National Parents Council, Primary	25 June, 2015	1 March, 2019
Mr Geoff Browne	National Parents Council, Post-Primary	1 March, 2019	
Dr Teresa Hagan	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	1 March, 2019	
Ms Phil Lynch	Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	1 March, 2019	
Dr Tim Desmond	State Examinations Commission	6 November, 2017	1 March, 2019
Mr David Duffy	Teachers' Union of Ireland	25 June 2015	1 March, 2019
Ms Liz Farrell	Teachers' Union of Ireland	1 March, 2019	

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. The external member was chairperson of the ARC in 2019. 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.

There were eight meetings of the ARC in 2019.

The members of the ARC to 7 April, 2019 were Etain Doyle, Chairperson, Áine Lynch, Don Myers, Maria Spring and David Leahy. This group met five times in 2019.

A new ARC was appointed on 20 June, 2019 comprising Etain Doyle, Chairperson, Geoff Browne, Teresa Hagan, Anne McHugh and Joe McKeown. This group met three times in 2019.

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 to 20 June, 2019 were Deirbhile Nic Craith (Chairperson), Michael Redmond and Michael Delargey.

A new Governance Committee was appointed on 20 June, 2019 comprising Deirbhile Nic Craith (Chairperson), Michael Delargey, Áine Lynch and Áine O'Sullivan.

Due to difficulties in achieving a quorum, the Governance Committee did not meet in 2019 but transacted necessary business by email.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Council and Committee meetings for 2019 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 (5)	No. of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings (8)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members)[1]
Prof. Mary O'Sullivan	4	1	€1,563.13
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	5		€97.46
Dr Michael Redmond	3		
Ms Áine O Sullivan	3		
Mr Ed Byrne	5		€223.13
Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.	5		€3,932.40

[1]The expenses indicated all relate to domestic travel and 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 (5)	No. of Audit and Risk Committee Meetings (8)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members)[1]
Mr Fergal Kelly	4		€67.19
Ms Joyce Perdue	5		€92.91
Ms Suzanne Dillon	2		
Ms Orlaith O'Connor	3		
Ms Anne McHugh	4	2	€590.85[2]
Edel Ní Chorráin, Uas.	4		
Ms Claire McGee	4		
Mr Brian Tubbert	5		€91.72
Mr Michael Delargey	3		€370.01
Ms Carmel Browne	4		€865.57
Mr. Joe McKeown	5	2	€129.28
Ms Patricia Gordon	5		
Dr. Finn Ó Murchú	3		€393.44
Ms Áine Lynch	4	5	
Mr Geoff Browne	3	1	€1,385.53
Dr Teresa Hagan	4	3	
Ms Phil Lynch	4		€75.34
Dr Tim Desmond	2		
Mr David Duffy	5		
Ms Liz Farrell	5		
Ms. Etain Doyle (Chair ARC)		8	
Mr. Don Myers (ARC)			€1,014.33[3]
Ms. Maria Spring (ARC)		5	
Mr. David Leahy (ARC)		2	€708.65[2]
Total			€11,600.94

Key Personnel Changes

Changes to the Executive included the appointment on 1 June, 2019 of Derek Grant to the post of Director, Curriculum and Assessment with responsibilities in early childhood and primary education. Norman Emerson resigned from his post of Director, Curriculum and Assessment with responsibilities

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[2] Paid on their behalf to relevant Education and Training Board.
[3] Paid in respect of meetings attended in 2018

for post-primary assessment on 8 November, 2019. Other changes to seconded/contracted staff included the addition of three Education Officers and the retirement and replacement of a Clerical Officer.

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 August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code.

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

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

Range of total employee benefits

Number of Employees

From		**To**	**2019**	**2018**
			No.	**No.**
€60,000	-	€69,999	5	7
€70,000	-	€79,999	10	6
€80,000	-	€89,999	8	8
€90,000	-	€99,999	5	7
€100,000	-	€109,999	2	0
€110,000	-	€119,999	0	1
€120,000	-	€129,999	0	0
€130,000	-	€139,000	0	1
€140,000	-	€149,000	1	0

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

The Council has policies and procedures in place in priority areas to comply with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Work will continue on aspects of the Code of Practice with the continued development, review and renewal of policies over the coming period. In 2019, work was completed on IT and Cyber security controls and on bedding down new and expanded policies and processes for internal control. The Data Protection Policy, approved in June 2018, was reviewed and updated particularly in light of ongoing work on data sharing agreements with third parties and work on cyber security for online personal data. Staff training on procurement and GDPR was also prioritised in 2019. An Oversight and 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 will complete a self-assessment of its effectiveness, including a survey facilitated by an independent organisation in 2020. Council has also completed 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.

Legal Costs and Settlements

In 2019, 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 €2,750.86 (2018: €15,545.63) were incurred for general advice.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions in 2019.

Professional fees and consultancy:	2019 €	2018 €
Accountancy and other professional fees	46,637	52,842
Audit fee	13,000	13,000
Consultancy (commissioned research for curriculum and assessment work)	807,873	470,096
Total	867,510	535,938

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.).

	2019 €	2018 €
Internal	1,657	2,709
External	3,511	3,937
Total	**5,168**	**6,646**

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff led by the Chief Executive, John Hammond. The staff in 2019 was as follows:

Chief Executive: John Hammond

Deputy Chief Executives: Arlene Forster, Barry Slattery

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:
Norman Emerson (to 8 November)

Jacqueline Fallon

Derek Grant (from 1 June)

Ben Murray

Elaine Ní Neachtain

Evelyn O'Connor (Acting from 1 June)

Aoife Rush (from 4 February)

Patrick Sullivan

Corporate Services:

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal

Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Higher Executive Officer

Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer

Ann Young, Higher Executive Officer

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer

Deirdre Dunne, Executive Officer (from 3 July, Clerical Officer to 2 July)

John Connors, Clerical Officer (to 21 August)

Alan Cooling, Clerical Officer (from 21 October)

Rosaleen Daly, Clerical Officer

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer

Ger Heffernan, Clerical Officer

Education Officers:

John Behan

Paul Behan

Fred Boss

Lorraine Crean

Tracy Curran

Lara Dabbagh

Mary Daly

Margaret Flood

Derek Grant (to 31 May)

Annette Honan

David King (from 1 September)

Paul Knox

Rachel Linney

Diarmuid Mooney

John Moriarty

Susan Nic Réamoinn

Dónal Ó Buachalla

Colm Ó Cadhain

Evelyn O'Connor (to 31 May)

Louise O'Reilly

Ger O'Sullivan

Jacinta Regan

Claire Reidy

Tony Riley

Sinéad Ruane (from 1 September)

Sinéad Tuohy (from 1 September)

Mary Elaine Tynan

Project Officers:

Jones Irwin (to 31 August)

National Aistear Development Officer:

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 2019, the Council convened over 50 meetings of these groups. A list of the meetings held in 2019 is in Appendix One.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2019 was €7,064,278. Core funding of €6,892,363 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, 2019 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Appendix One: NCCA Meetings 2019

Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	7
Primary Language 3rd to 6th class	2
Primary Mathematics Development Group	4
Post Primary	
Board for Junior Cycle	2
Board for Senior Cycle	6
Biology Development Group	3
Physics Development Group	3
Chemistry Development Group	3
Traveller Advisory Group	4
Senior Cycle Gaeilge Development Group	9
Leaving Certificate Foreign Languages Development Group	7
Total number of meetings in 2019	**50**
Total number of boards/groups	**11**

Appendix Two: NCCA Presentations (selection) 2019

A selection of the presentations, papers or workshops delivered by NCCA in 2019 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 and across educational transitions.

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Conference on Research in Mathematics Education in Ireland (MEI)	The development of the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum – from research to reality
Primary Curriculum Seminar	Charting the Journey Forward – learning from an audit of primary curricula internationally and exploring assessment in a redeveloped curriculum
Presentation on the Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment	Meath and Sligo Childcare Committees
Symposium on the review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)	Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools
Presentation to Stakeholders at the launch of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB)	Presentation to stakeholders on the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile
Presentation to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) on the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB)	The Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Presentation to 4th year students in Froebel, Maynooth University on the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB)	The Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile
Presentation to school placement tutors in Marino Institute of Education on the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB)	The Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile
CEA Erasmus + multiplier event	Educational stages and evaluation levels to be considered for common level short course
Input at national conference of Home School Community Liaison Teachers, City West	Mo Sceal moving from preschool to primary school to HSCL teachers
Presentation to DES Early Years Inspectors	Presentation to DES Early Years inspectors on the NCCA's work on the transition from preschool to primary school
Three regional seminars for Better Start Quality Specialists	Inputs on the transition to primary school and on the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide
Keynote at OMEP Ireland's Conference, Cork	Well-being of Children from birth-three years
Research day on the transition from Preschool to Primary School, Dublin Castle	Full day on the transition to primary school for those ECCE lecturers and ITE lecturers focusing on the NCCA's Mo Sceal materials
Presentation to PME students in UL	Senior Cycle Review
Input at Ibec education committee	Senior Cycle Review
Input at National Parents Council regional meetings in Dublin, Limerick, Donegal, Kerry and Carlow	Senior Cycle Review
Revolutionising Play Conference, MIC, Limerick	*Aistear*: supporting continuity from through play

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Presentation to DES Inspectorate	Effective Pedagogy in Infant classes in Primary School, with reference to the PLC/CTB

2. Engagement and Collaboration

To work with and support all teachers, practitioners, learners and our partners in education to build capacity for change, model ways of working, and inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
INTO Education Conference	The Review of the Primary Curriculum
Initial Teacher Education – Curriculum Developments Seminar	The Review and Redevelopment of the Primary Curriculum
Initial Teacher Education – Curriculum Developments Seminar	The *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*
Coding in Primary Schools Initiative Seminar	Celebrating and marking schools' work in the initiative
PDST Cross-sectoral Professional Development Day	Learning Outcomes - The building blocks for teaching, learning and assessment
Migrant Teachers Bridging Programme, Marino Institute of Education	The work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) – structures, processes and current developments
Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment: Leading Out Seminar Series – Seminar 1	Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment System Conditions and Enablers
NCCA/JCT Leadership for Learning Series	Supporting sustainable change

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Irish Educational Publisher's Association	Updates on curriculum and assessment change at early childhood, primary and post primary
St. Angela's College, Sligo	Introduction to L1LPs and L2LPs
Embrace Equality Conference – Tackling Gender-Based Violence	The Review of RSE
Positive Sexual Health Conference	The Review of RSE
Computer Science for ALL International Summit – NUI Galway	Computer Science at senior cycle – methodologies, curriculum and assessment (NCCA and PDST)
PDST webinar	LC Computer Science – from inception to implementation
Senior Cycle Review National Forum in Croke Park	Senior Cycle Review: Purpose and emerging themes
Senior Cycle Review regional consultation events (10)	Senior Cycle Review: consultation on the emerging themes from the review
ACCS school seminar series and project	'Promoting a culture of student voice in our schools'
ETBI/ Instructional Leadership Programme collaboration with NCCA	National seminar input on rationale for student voice in the junior cycle classroom and on key themes in the Erasmus Plus project 'A Bridge to Learning'
Cork Education Support Centre and Limerick Education Centre joint project	Input to the Learning School Project on integrating student voice with learning, teaching and assessment in the junior cycle classroom
Cork ETB deputy principal forum	Presentation to forum of deputy principals on key themes from the Erasmus Plus project 'A Bridge to Learning'

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
JCT History Team annual summer seminar for teachers	Presentation on rationale for the Junior Cycle History specification

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
CIDREE Expert Group Meeting, Edinburgh	CIDREE Early Years Expert Meeting: The importance of *Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in children's learning journey
CIDREE Expert Group Meeting, Edinburgh	Career Guidance Education
CIDREE Expert Group Meeting, Sarajevo	CIDREE Arts Expert Group Meeting: Effective Resources to Support Arts Education
EuroACS and ResearchED	A proposed methodology for the use of Open Digital Badges as a support for learning within junior cycle education in Ireland
EuroACS	Consensus making, brokerage and compromise – the process of curriculum design in Ireland as evidenced in the development of a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics.
EuroACS	Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment
DES Inspectorate	Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) methodology
SCoTENS	Collaborative whole-school CPD for L2LP enactment

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
NSPI Conference	Universal Design for Learning
European Commission	Supporting key competency development through formative feedback and student reflection
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference	CPD for inclusive practices/ Universal Design for Learning
Six Nations conference – Queens University	Relationship & Sexuality Education (RSE) in the context of National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategies
CIDREE Expert Group Meeting – Utrecht	Erasmus+ project to research computational thinking in mathematical thinking (CTMT) in upper secondary schools
New Brunswick Delegates visit	Talk to NCCA EOs on New Brunswick journey to a model of full inclusion
EuroACS	An exploration of the early stages of the senior cycle review
Teaching Council joint webinar	Curriculum Reform: Research, Policy and Practice
UCD School of Education	Presentation to PME students and focus groups with 1st year PP students as part of ongoing development of 'Big pictures of the past' – a collaborative Junior Cycle History research project
Stair, annual journal of the History Teachers' Association of Ireland (HTAI)	Two articles published: 'Big pictures of the past' and 'Local history in the Junior Cycle History specification'

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
DES inspectorate	Presentation on key themes and finding in NCCA audit of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Curriculum

4. Communications

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Irish Educational Publishers' Association Meetings	Updates on curriculum and assessment change at early childhood, primary and post-primary
Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)	Develop partnership with CCEA to share practice on curriculum design, practice, procedures and policy
Education Centres of Ireland (ESCI) directors' meeting (Cork)	Presentation on aspects of Senior Cycle Review, focused on School-Based Review format and findings.

Appendix three: 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 2019

Relevant year for Disclosures	Disclosures or Nil Disclosures
2019	Nil Disclosures

Appendix four: 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 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 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 and Corporate Services staff 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 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 and 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 which are 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 annual 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 and to ensure probity in its procurement planning and procedures, which 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 the NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2019 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 external member, with financial and audit expertise. The external member was chairperson of the ARC in 2019. The ARC is independent of 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 eight times in 2019.

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 2019 and reported to the ARC.

The *Review of the System of Internal Control, 2019* 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 2020 including improved procedures for monitoring suppliers with annual payments over €5,000 for compliance with public procurement guidelines, improved procedures for monitoring fixed assets and improved procedures for monitoring payroll reports and travel and subsistence payments. Crowley's DFK acknowledged that additional resources, mainly in respect of HR, would be required to ensure that the controls in place were being fully implemented.

The recommendations of the review in this context are currently being addressed and the matters involved will be resolved in 2020.

NCCA will also resolve any issues identified by the external audit and ensure that 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 ARC which will keep progress to resolution under review.

Internal audit is resourced, 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 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 2020.

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 have been 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 and,
- 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 is in place for 2018-2021.

Procurement guidelines allow for non-competitive procurement in justifiably exceptional circumstances. In 2019 there were three instances of non-competitive procurement as follows:

- Expenditure of €61,664 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. This work was put out to tender in 2019 and the process was delayed due to a challenge by an unsuccessful bidder. Following receipt of legal advice, the process was completed and a contract was awarded in February, 2020.

- Expenditure of €7,380 was incurred in relation to the maintenance of a Report Card Creator (RCC) for primary schools. The expenditure relates to annual charges for the cloud storage of customised school report cards, routine maintenance for the RCC, software updates, hosting and technical support to the NCCA. The original contract had been tendered and was rolled over due to the need to maintain the proprietary software, the functionality of that software and associated services to avoid educational materials not being available to schools.

- Expenditure of €32,981 was incurred in relation to a cleaning contract that was rolled over. This work was re-tendered in December, 2019 and a contract was awarded in March, 2020.

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 control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the ARC which oversees 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 ARC conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2019. The ARC noted the conclusions of internal audit and reported the results of its review to the Council for consideration.

I confirm that the Council conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2019. This review was informed by the review undertaken by the ARC.

Internal Control issues

Other than the procurement issues disclosed, no weaknesses in internal control were identified in relation to 2019 that require disclosure in the financial statements.

Prof. Mary O'Sullivan
Chairperson
NCCA