



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

Post-primary Curriculum Framework for Guidance

Final Report on Consultation

November 2007

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1. Introduction

The Education Act 1998 Section 9 (c) states that a school shall use its available resources to...*ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices.* The NCCA is currently in the process of developing a curriculum framework for guidance in post-primary education.

Developmental work in this area has been informed by the Department of Education and Science (*Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the Implications of Section 9 (c) of the Education Act 1998, relating to students' access to appropriate guidance*, DES, Stationery Office, Dublin, 2005) and the National Centre for Guidance in Education (*Planning the School Guidance Programme*, NCGE/DES, NCGE Dublin, 2004). Consequently the objective of the draft curriculum framework is to provide support for schools in planning the provision of access to appropriate guidance for students. The draft curriculum framework should be seen neither as a guidance programme nor a guidance plan.

As part of this curriculum development the NCCA wished to consult with those individuals, schools and organisations having an interest and involvement in the provision of guidance in post-primary education. This document provides an initial review of findings emerging from the responses to the consultation questionnaire, postal and online, and written submissions from individuals and organisations received to date.

Two copies of the document, *A Curriculum Framework for Guidance in Post-Primary Education: Discussion Paper* and the Consultation Questionnaire (See Appendix 1) were sent to all post-primary schools in January 2007. The documentation was also available to download from the website of the NCCA www.ncca.ie where the survey could be completed online. The documentation was also sent to a range of relevant bodies and education partner organisations. The consultation took place over a five-week period to February 23, 2007 extended to March 9 in response to requests from individuals and organisations.

The hard copy data received to date has been recorded on a web survey tool and this has been amalgamated with the data submitted by respondents who completed the online survey. A total of 129 responses have been processed in this way and the statistics included in this report reflect the combination of the hard copy and online responses to the questionnaire.

2. Responses and submissions

Table 1, below, details the numbers of responses received to date. Roughly a quarter of the submissions were made using the online facility and these included a small number of duplicated or partially completed entries.

Table 1 Number of Responses by Type

Response Format	No.
Questionnaire (postal)	100
Questionnaire (online)	29
Other written submissions	6
Total	135

Some groups and organisations, including the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI), and the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), chose to make submissions via the online facility. Others, including Combat Poverty Agency, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, the Teachers Union of Ireland, the Course Directors of Guidance Counselling programmes from the four universities (UL, NUIM, TCD, UCC), the Tipperary Branch of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, and the principal of Collinstown Park Community College, Dublin, submitted written responses which, to a greater or lesser extent, followed the pattern of the consultation questionnaire.

As can be seen in Table 2, almost two thirds of the postal and online responses to the questionnaire have come from guidance counsellors and a further quarter from school principals. There were no responses from school chaplains or from employer groups.

Table 2 Categories of questionnaire respondents

Category	Number	% of Total
Guidance Counsellor	80	62
School Principal	32	24.8
Parent	4	3.1
School Chaplain	0	0
Third Level Lecturer	1	0.8
Subject Teacher	5	3.9
Employer	0	0
Other	7	5.4
Total	129	

The consultation questionnaire (See Appendix 1) sought responses to the draft curriculum framework in six areas:

- it asked respondents to comment on the **level of importance** they would attach to guidance in post-primary education
- it sought views on guidance **as the responsibility of the whole school community**
- addressing the structure of the draft framework, it invited responses to the draft curriculum's coverage in
 - **personal guidance**
 - **educational guidance**
 - **career development (guidance)**
- the fourth section sought responses on **the important elements in a guidance programme** and on the importance of **addressing the guidance needs of all students in a developmental way**
- section five looked for views on **the resource implications of implementation of the curriculum framework in schools**
- the final section invited respondents to provide **additional comments of relevance**

The remainder of this section of the report provides an outline of the general responses to the six areas of the consultation questionnaire, even where the submissions did not follow those headings closely.

2.1 Guidance in education

In this open-ended response question, respondents were asked to comment on the level of importance they would attach to guidance in post-primary education and to offer views regarding its role and purposes.

Naturally, the **importance of guidance** was underscored very heavily in responses. It was considered to be 'a key element' helping young people to 'become independent and self-directed'. It was said to 'act as an information base and an area of support within the school'. Very many of the responses referred to the importance of guidance as a support for students in making informed life, educational, and career choices.

Guidance in post-primary education is of utmost importance. It should assist students to make informed choices and to take responsibility for themselves. Post-primary education does not lend itself to encouraging students to take responsibility...for their own education. (Guidance Counsellor)

Guidance is hugely important in post primary education... It helps students find purpose in school; it gives them a sense of control over their choices. It encourages students to set themselves goals both short term and long term. Goals in turn motivate students. Motivation leads to successful learning outcomes. (Guidance Counsellor)

It was seen also to have an important **pastoral dimension** contributing to 'the complete development of each individual student' and enabling 'young people to cut a path through the maze that growing up is today.' As a student service it was both **proactive and responsive** 'to young people under stress because of an enormous variety of problems.'

I consider guidance to be one of the most important functions of a school. It values and enhances the worth of each individual student and works with each individual in a totally non-judgemental way. There are no failures in a guidance department - there is warmth and acceptance. It is the 'hearth' and 'heart' of every school. (Deputy Principal)

More specifically, a guidance programme was seen by many respondents as a multi-faceted entity operating throughout the school, responsive to the needs of students, providing support and information for parents, and enhancing the potential of the school's pastoral team.

There must be a specific programme which covers age appropriate material throughout the school. It also should seek to cater for students who are having personal difficulties and need some interventions to assist them. It should be a support for parents in relation in subject choice and career direction, the guidance counselling needs to connect with and drive the pastoral care team in a school. Arising from above there are issues relating to resources. (Principal)

With reference to the place of guidance within the school community **the importance of collaborative planning and implementation** was highlighted in some contributions. In this sense a school-wide approach was seen as a good way of managing resources effectively and channelling them appropriately.

I believe a good general guidance programme owned by the entire school community and willingly designed and delivered in a collaborative way is the key to developing [self] responsible, reflective and mature students. I also feel that this collaborative design allows resources to be channelled to areas of

particular need i.e. focus on individual students if necessary. (Guidance Counsellor)

A number of respondents noted **the importance of guidance in junior cycle**. It was seen as important in helping 1st year students to adapt well to post-primary school and in providing vital support in 2nd year where subject choices that have long-term implications are often made. Its contribution was seen to be most significant at points of transition when critical decisions must be made by the student. One submission expressed regret that, while guidance was important across the school, it was in reality confined too much to senior cycle.

Guidance in post-primary education is important, but is limited to Leaving Certificate students. It is not, I believe a whole school policy. Guidance is essential in the development of the student at all ages. There should be more time allocated to the role of guidance for the whole school. (Guidance Counsellor)

Notwithstanding the positive endorsements of the significance of guidance in the school, a number of caveats were entered in the responses to this opening section of the questionnaire. These might be summarised as follows:

- the guidance remit is too broad to be managed by one person, and needs whole staff support
- the need for resourcing commensurate with its importance – current resource allocation is inadequate
- *Time is a big problem when it comes to guidance provision in a secondary school (Guidance Counsellor)*
- *Formal education cannot be conceived in any way other than some kind of guided development. The key issue is the nature of that guidance. (Guidance Counsellor)*
- in a rapidly changing Ireland huge additional demands are being made on the support services in schools
- one respondent drew attention to the challenge of sustaining a school-wide approach to guidance provision through the following observation: ‘what is everybody’s responsibility is nobody’s’

Some responses to the question of the role and purpose of guidance in education drew attention to **issues of definition** that require to be addressed. For example, the submission of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors drew a distinction between two key elements of guidance; it described guidance as a **professional service** which has a **significant curricular component**. The submission envisaged shared or whole-school structures supporting both of these dimensions or components while retaining their essential difference from one another. In this sense the submission argued for a clear differentiation to be made ‘between the guidance counsellor’s **sole responsibility** which is the service area of guidance and counselling, and their **shared responsibility** with other members of staff in delivering the curricular elements of the guidance programme.’

In this context the title of the *Discussion Paper* was questioned in the submission of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors where the alternative title *A Framework for the Curricular Elements of the Whole-school Guidance Provision in Post-Primary Education* was mooted. Some individual submissions also raised this issue, as below:

Yes. Guidance aims to assist students...and this is not just the role of the guidance counsellor. All staff contribute to this daily. They should not call it guidance though. They may call it ‘support’. I am not sure if the word guidance is the best word to describe the ‘whole school activity’. (Guidance Counsellor)

2.2.1 Guidance as the responsibility of the whole school community

As indicated in Table 3, there was widespread agreement with the view that ultimately guidance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

Table 3 Guidance as the responsibility of the whole school community

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
68.9%	28.6%	0%	2.5%

Commentary in this area reflected the view that subject teachers were best placed to offer educational guidance in their specialist domains, that currently there is insufficient appreciation among school management and teaching staff of the importance of guidance, that there needs to be adequate resourcing (especially time allocation) to support this approach, and that there is a vital need for planning and coordination in

this respect. One submission argued for a collaborative approach across a wide spectrum of supports.

Combat Poverty supports a collaborative approach to developing guidance planning in schools which draws on the experiences of guidance counsellors, teachers, students and the wider community, including parents, youth workers and community organisations. (Submission of the Combat Poverty Agency)

Supporting the whole-school approach to provision, one submission sounded a note of caution in respect of the working conditions of all teachers.

While a whole-school approach is inevitably appropriate for programmes which are trans-curricular such as the Guidance programme, the ASTI is also concerned that the role of the Guidance Counsellor is acknowledged in the development and implementation of the school Guidance programme. The ASTI must also put on record its concern that whole-school approaches cannot be implemented in the absence of concomitant class-contact hours for subject teachers. Subject teachers already have high workloads and are not pre-disposed to whole-school approaches to programme delivery in the absence of provision for planning time. (Submission of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland)

A further submission situated its support for a collaborative approach in the context of the diversity of student needs.

For guidance to fulfil its role in the post primary school it needs to become systematised. Systematisation will enable the guidance counsellor to collaborate with the school community and assist the school to respond to the diversity of the student population. (Submission of the Course Directors of Guidance Counselling programmes)

2.2.2 The factors that contribute most positively to the development of a whole-school approach to guidance provision

There were many responses to this question although the range of significant factors referred to was quite narrow. The capacity of the individual to work as a member of a team was stressed as an important factor in contributing to the development of a whole-school approach to guidance. Respondents argued that all the school staff needed to be involved in the planning process, and that a guidance team needed to be in place, which should be encouraged to be active in the implementation of the guidance plan. The willingness of the guidance counsellor, the principal and deputy

principal to lead and facilitate work in this area were also highlighted as positive supports.

Our school has been involved in a whole school approach with the appointment of our present guidance teacher who is dynamic and a wonderful addition to the school. The factors that contribute most positively are, excellent guidance person, pastoral care team, SDP co-ordinator e.g. HSCL person and a school which has strong links with the community. (School Principal

2.2.3 Factors that hinder the development of a whole-school approach to guidance provision

There was considerable agreement that the whole-school approach was most strongly hindered by five factors:

- Lack of time for planning and subsequent implementation of the plan
- Inadequate resourcing in this area, especially in the ratio of guidance counsellors to students
- Lack of leadership by school management and/or guidance counsellor/s
- Lack of awareness of the importance of guidance in the lives of the students
- Lack of awareness of the importance of collaborative approaches

2.3.1 Structure of the draft framework

Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 5 to 1 the relative importance of the areas of Personal, Educational and Career guidance in a school's guidance provision. Table 4 shows the levels of response.

Table 4, Relative importance of the areas

	Very Important				Unimportant
	5	4	3	2	1
Personal	85%	8%	8%	0%	0%
Educational	78%	20%	1%	1%	0%
Career	79%	16%	5%	0%	0%

In commentary, many respondents drew attention to the interrelated nature of the three areas identified. In some submissions, though, prioritisation of provision for personal guidance and support was indicated.

GLEN considers the area of Personal Guidance to be the most important within these three areas of focus in terms of the elements outlined within the framework. The emphasis on the 'person' their sense of self, identity, values and abilities to communicate and interact with others are essential learning outcomes and therefore adequate space should be provided for such a focus. The other 2 areas are scored in relation to their relative importance. (Submission of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network)

This perspective is echoed in a submission from a school principal which questions implicitly an over-emphasis on career development in a guidance programme.

In truth all are extremely important. Would consider 'career development' less so than personal and educational guidance, simply because career paths change so dramatically. Thus personal guidance and development is of primary importance. Set a good foundation here. Other agencies, after second/level can easily inform career development. (School Principal)

2.3.2 Are Personal, Educational and Career Guidance needs appropriately reflected in the tables section of the framework?

The tables referred to in this question are the tables on pages 7 to 18 of the *Discussion Paper*, which describe a range of topics under each of the three main headings of Personal, Educational, and Career guidance. Each of these topics is outlined under the following headings:

- Areas of Learning
- Dispositions, Values, Attitudes, Skills Developed
- Learning Outcomes in the areas of...
- Skills Development in Related Subjects and Programmes

The question asked respondents to indicate as 'yes/no' whether they considered the guidance needs of students to have been appropriately represented in these tables. Their responses are indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5, Guidance needs appropriately reflected in the tables

	Yes	No
Personal Guidance	79%	21%
Educational Guidance	88.5%	11.5%
Career Development	87%	13%

Commentary in response to questions 3 (b), (c), and (d) in the questionnaire raised a number of issues. There was a less positive endorsement of the coverage of the guidance needs of learners under the heading of personal guidance than under either educational or career guidance. Most of the negative comment centred on the absence of specific discussion of personal, one-to-one counselling in this section of the document.

Personal guidance should be highlighted and emphasised more for the development of all students. Each student should meet the guidance counsellor at least once in their school time. (Guidance Counsellor)

Another submission expressed concern that the curriculum framework might lead to a diminution of the importance of one-to-one counselling as part of guidance provision.

Notwithstanding the fact that the draft document acknowledges counselling as an important aspect of a guidance service there is concern that the counselling component is at risk. (Submission of the Teachers' Union of Ireland)

In this context the framework was regarded by one respondent as representing a 'guidance utopia' that was not 'rooted in reality' given the current guidance allocation. A balancing view is offered by another guidance counsellor:

This is really an excellent section. I find the headings, e.g. personality, decision making, personal responsibility etc. to be very close to what our school provides. (Guidance Counsellor)

As the statistics in Table 5 reveal, there was a stronger endorsement for the material included in the tables under Educational and Career guidance.

2.4 A Supportive School Environment

The *Discussion Paper* suggests that situating guidance provision in a supportive school environment is the most effective approach to implementation. This was re-stated in the questionnaire which then asked respondents to indicate within this context what they saw as being the most important elements in a guidance programme and whether they viewed guidance as addressing the needs of learners in a developmental way.

2.4.1 The most important elements in a post-primary school guidance programme

When asked to name the most important elements in a school guidance programme, respondents included the following:

- Guidance as part of the whole-school plan
- Clarity about roles and responsibilities
- One-to-one guidance
- Involvement of parents and the wider community
- *Clár atá comhaontaithe idir phobal uile na scoile agus go bhfuil eolas acu go léir faoi agus a chuireann béim ar fhorbairt pearsanta, forbairt i leith treoir oideachasúil agus forbairt gairme. (Príomhoide Meanscoile)*
- That a guidance programme should embrace all students
- That it should have clear goals and aims that can be implemented
- That it should be a programme that sees students as individuals who are active in controlling their own identity

2.4.2 Guidance should address the needs of all students in a developmental way

As indicated in Table 6, there was universal agreement in this regard.

Table 6, Addressing the needs of all students in a developmental way

Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree
78.4%	21.6%	0%

In commentary most respondents noted attempts in their own schools to provide some graduated guidance experiences for learners from first year to Leaving Certificate. They reported a willingness to be responsive to the varying needs of students from 1st year to leaving secondary school; they drew attention to the belief that within any given year group the guidance needs of individuals differ considerably. Some respondents suggested that this was the area where the need to provide *appropriate guidance* came most into play.

In agreeing that addressing the needs of students in a developmental way was essential to the success of a guidance programme, others drew attention to the difficulty of providing support across the year groups due to lack of targeted resources, both human and financial. It was argued that in order for a Guidance programme to 'make a difference' to students' educational experiences, it must be provided to them at the earliest stages of their second level education.

2.5.1 What school resources would be required to support the implementation of the draft curriculum framework?

Responses to this section were dominated by the view that additional time was needed if schools were to provide a comprehensive service. The concerns may be summarised as follows:

- Additional time
- Allocation of more guidance counsellors to schools, restoration of the 250:1 ratio
- Suitable school infrastructure – office/room, technology
- Time for planning meetings
- Training in planning techniques, team work, self-evaluation
- The provision of an Assistant Principal post for a school guidance coordinator
- The re-structuring of the junior cycle curriculum with time for planning built in
- A dedicated in-service team to facilitate the whole-school approach

2.5.2 What are the professional development needs of guidance counsellors to enable them to participate in a whole school approach to guidance?

One respondent saw it as a vital requirement that guidance counsellors be trained in the skills necessary to 'entice/convince other staff members to involve themselves in a whole school approach to guidance'. The submission of the Course Directors of Guidance Counselling programmes offers further support for this perspective when it states:

Key to this role [of the guidance counsellor] are assertiveness and relationship skills and an awareness by guidance counsellors of how they profile themselves within the school context. Training for guidance counsellors needs to help them to reflect on these issues and their implications for practice.

Respondents recommend a range of further skills that require to be developed, including:

- Additional training in psychometric testing
- Leadership and management skills
- More in-service support in all areas of guidance
- Greater level of access to outside professional agencies

Some respondents noted that the required input was already available through the planning programmes of the National Centre for Guidance in Education and argued for greater levels of access to training in this area.

2.5.3 What are the professional development needs of teachers to enable them to participate in a whole school approach to guidance?

The range of responses to this question focussed on professional development opportunities for individuals and also for school staffs in areas ranging from understanding of the roles and responsibilities of others within the school community, to training in specific topics.

- training in an understanding of the role of guidance in school
- further whole-school in-service in planning

- training in specific topics such as bullying, bereavement, child protection, suicide, behaviour management, drug awareness
- collaborative approaches to teaching
- cross-curricular approaches

2.6 Additional comments of relevance to the provision of access to appropriate guidance in post-primary education

One response viewed the openness of the framework, and especially the manner in which the tables set out a broad range of learning areas or experiences, as an attempt to adopt a ‘value neutral’ stance in relation to guidance provision. Therefore, the respondent argues, it unduly encourages planning for ‘schemes of work or instruction’ rather than simply inviting guidance counsellors into engagement with ‘general objectives and principles to inform, guide and allow schools the freedom to undertake subsequent guidance planning and practice.’

Some submissions engaged with the definition of curriculum, reading it to mean ‘a course of study’ and curricular experience to mean that which is part of a pre-planned instructional programme that does not include actions that are part of ‘a front line response to presenting student needs, where students self-refer, or are referred by others.’ The latter, these submissions would argue, belong in the realm of vital one-to-one counselling that is the most important work that guidance counsellors do.

The draft framework was seen by some as reflecting an ‘ideal guidance plan’. In a separate submission one school principal lamented the failure, in his view, ‘to define the non-teaching duties of a teacher’ and to provide adequate time and resources to make implementation of the framework possible.

3. Consulting with schools

3.1 Principals' focus group

As part of the consultation process, a meeting with school principals from seven schools in the Kilkenny and Carlow area was held in the Kilkenny Education Centre on 15th May 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to record the initial responses of the school principals to the draft framework and to explore the possibility for further, more detailed consultation with schools. Discussion focused on issues relating to current provision for guidance in the schools, the varying degrees to which it was managed on a whole-school basis and the benefits and challenges of a whole-school approach, the challenges for schools in implementing a broad framework such as that being developed by the NCCA, and (reflecting the time of year at which the meeting was held, as was readily admitted by the principals!) the challenges faced by all schools in adopting new programmes and new approaches in traditional areas of provision.

The principals readily acknowledged the personal qualities of the guidance counsellors in their schools, their flexibility and commitment to their work especially. There was considerable variation from school to school in the manner in which provision for guidance was organised and although one of these schools develops its guidance plan through a working committee comprising the guidance counsellor, principal and deputy principal, a year head and the home school liaison officer, in general the burden of implementation of the school's guidance programme was seen to fall largely to the guidance counsellor/s. Consequently some principals viewed the position of the guidance counsellor in the school to be somewhat solitary in nature and felt that this might militate against whole-school provision.

Guidance equals the guidance counsellor in my school.

Guidance counsellors are less used to talking to others and more used to operating on their own.

Equally, they were of the view that developing a collaborative approach to guidance has merit but would involve something of a culture change for all.

Younger teachers might be more in favour of being involved in a holistic sense...it's a long slow process

In general they were of the view that, for effective guidance planning and the implementation of a plan, greater attention needed to be given to defining roles and responsibilities. One principal felt that the school staff would not know who exactly had a responsibility in this regard:

Does it mean every staff member has a responsibility or is it only particular staff who are involved in the caring part of the school – year heads, tutors, guidance counsellors, home school people, special needs teachers, and so on?

One of the schools currently timetables a guidance session for each class group on a fortnightly basis, but the principals were generally of the view that it would not be possible to fit classes in guidance onto an already crowded timetable, even if it were desirable to do so. Two principals expressed the view that there was insufficient reference to the role of parents in the document, to the contribution they make in providing guidance of a personal, educational and career nature for their children. This perspective resonates with the ESRI research findings¹ that indicate that, in making subject choices for senior cycle for example, students can be strongly reliant on informal sources of advice, particularly their parents. Consequently, the research concludes, that 'it is crucial therefore that user-friendly information on the different options open to students be targeted at students themselves and their parents from an early stage in the junior cycle.' (p 218)

There was some agreement that the framework in its current format does not acknowledge the personal dimension of guidance adequately, but a question remains about how this might be done. There was broad agreement that personal counselling was an important function of the role of the guidance counsellor and most of the principals were of the view that it was one of the most important aspects of the guidance programme in their schools.

¹ *Gearing Up for the Exam? The Experiences of Junior Certificate Students*, 2007, Smyth et al

One-to-one guidance happens quite a lot in schools and this needs to be reflected in the document

A balance to this view, indicating a strong likelihood of considerable variation from school to school, is reflected in the recent report of the DES inspectorate², which indicates that ‘students perceived the guidance counsellor’s role mainly in terms of providing educational and career guidance support.’ (p 133)

The principals were in agreement that at present there is a need for greater resourcing levels for guidance provision and that that need would intensify were a new model of guidance in schools to be implemented. This raised the question of the scope of the framework:

It is over ambitious if we have to do it all, but if it is a menu, yes, it is very useful and can be of particular help to a school trying to set some type of broad curriculum for guidance... This is the first document to give us an overall view as to what guidance should be and we shouldn't lose sight of this.

The attractiveness of a menu from which schools might choose the elements of provision was countered by a fear that some vital aspects of provision might be missed were schools to pick elements too loosely from the framework.

Is there a danger that some things are being left behind if we just pick a la carte out of the guidance menu, that some of the more important issues could be ignored by the school or by the guidance team?

Finally, the principals strongly shared the view that as the environment in which schools operated became ever more complex, they had now to deal with a greater number of social problems. It was felt that an overall approach to addressing this was needed and that the guidance framework had a contribution to make in this regard. But, they reiterated their view that it would not realise its potential without an adequate injection of resources. One principal noted that the framework had not been designed as ‘an exercise in problem solving’ and that its intention was much broader, to provide

² *Review of Guidance in Second Level Schools*, Department of Education and Science, 2006

a framework for access to appropriate guidance and support for all the students in the school, and that this must be done in the context of an evermore diverse intake of students. This again raised the question of the title of the framework and whether in fact the framework was addressing issues that were beyond the remit of guidance per se. In addition, the complexity of the task of teasing out questions of demarcation of roles and responsibilities in this regard indicates that, for some respondents at least, this consultation process has raised questions about the culture of the school and about the complex set of relationships between the members of the school community. The recently commissioned NCCA research report on wellbeing and post-primary schooling³ suggests that there is evidence to support the view that schooling should be concerned with a broad conception of the well-being of a young person. This research offers the view that

...the interests of young people and their particular strengths and talents should be central to educational programmes that aim at fostering well-being, and that tightly prescribed curricula do not meet the well-being and educational needs of many students. (p140)

and concludes that:

Taking this issue seriously means that the climate and cultures of schools, what they teach, and how they organise and assess, and the sets of relations between students and staff need to be problematised... The issue for scrutiny is how this can be put into practice, and the kind of policies that need to be developed to ensure the realisation of student well-being.

It is not inappropriate here to note that discussions that have taken place during meetings of the committee for post-primary guidance might well be characterised as focusing on issues of just such breadth and scope. Indeed, material in the framework tables, especially under the heading of Personal Guidance, lays particular stress on the development of a positive self-image and a sense of well-being in learners.

³ *Well-being and Post-Primary Schooling: A Review of the Literature and Research*, NCCA, 2007

3.2 Exemplifying the framework

It was agreed at the meeting with the principals that, with the continuing support of Kilkenny Education Centre, the NCCA would consult with a small number of schools in a more detailed exploration of how the framework might be implemented. Each school would set up a working group, comprising the principal and/or deputy, the guidance counsellor/s, and members of the pastoral team and/or general teaching staff, to examine the potential that the framework offers for planning and implementation of a school guidance programme. Exploration would focus on the following areas:

1. The whole-school dimension – the structures they would need to ensure that guidance provision could:
 - reach all the students – junior cycle and senior cycle
 - cover the three areas of personal, educational and career guidance
 - involve a team from the school community
 - allow parents to contribute, to support guidance for their children
 - help students to manage their own learning in this area
2. How to include the voices and views of students in the consultation process
3. How implementing the framework would represent a change to their current model of provision
 - a brief description of their current model
 - how they see the framework asking them to build on or change that
4. How the service role and curriculum elements of guidance might be integrated
 - the role/significance of one-to-one counselling – the balance between it and other modes of provision
 - the particular areas of responsibility they would see as being reserved to the guidance counsellor
 - tension/s that might arise from the relationship between the service and curriculum dimensions of guidance

Four schools from the catchment area of the Kilkenny Education Centre have agreed to participate in this part of the consultation and work will begin in mid-November. As guidance provision is related initially at least to school size, schools with enrolments ranging from 250 students to over 800 have been chosen. The inclusion of views from a school whose access to guidance is through a peripatetic service is also planned. Following an input on the curriculum framework each school will hold two internal meetings with a report of the outcomes being completed in January 2008.

3. Conclusion

The importance of guidance in post-primary education was universally supported through the responses to the consultation. It was viewed as a key element in helping young people to become independent and self-directed.

Guidance was seen to have a strongly pastoral orientation and to provide much-needed support that was both proactive and responsive in meeting the needs of students. The importance of this responsiveness was stressed also in relation to the manner in which guidance provision was felt to embrace the needs of students from first year to leaving school.

Many submissions supported the view that guidance provision is the responsibility of the whole school community and underlined the critical importance of leadership in this respect. Importance was accorded to collaborative planning at school level, thereby ensuring that guidance resources were channelled appropriately and effectively.

There was support for the relevance of guidance to all year groups, but most especially, perhaps, at key moments of transition in young people's lives.

While submissions acknowledged the interrelatedness of the three areas of personal, educational and career guidance, there was a greater level of support for the centrality of the personal domain, perhaps reflecting the importance of the pastoral dimension referred to above.

The tables included in the *Discussion Paper* were generally felt to reflect the elements of a curriculum for guidance in a comprehensive and appropriate manner.

Shared understanding of roles among the members of a collaborating school staff was seen as being of considerable importance to the success of planning for and sustainable implementation of a school's guidance programme.

Respondents saw considerable implications for resourcing arising from the detail in the *Discussion Paper*, especially in the provision of adequate or additional time for guidance, time for planning, time for related professional development, and time for subject teachers to engage in the wider pastoral context.

Submissions warned of the danger of being 'idealistic', 'aspirational' or 'over-ambitious'. In this context perhaps, the draft framework has been read by some as a blueprint for implementation in its entirety rather than as a document offering support for planning the school guidance programme.

Further challenges were identified as arising from a diminution of the central place of one-to-one counselling in the work of the guidance counsellor which some submissions saw as implicit in the *Discussion Paper*.

Some respondents saw the guidance remit as being defined too broadly in the document; others were doubtful of the capacity of a collaborative approach to take root in the post-primary school context.

On the broadest level some submissions questioned the title of the document, seeing it as going far beyond the guidance remit towards the education project of the school as a whole.

Although the *Guidelines for Second Level Schools on the implications of Section 9 (c)* defines Guidance in Second Level Schools and Counselling in Second Level Schools separately, it articulates the aims of guidance and counselling as a single process that 'aims to help students to develop an awareness and acceptance of their talents and abilities; to explore possibilities and opportunities; to grow in independence and to take responsibility for themselves; to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on those choices.' (pp 4 and 5) It concludes that the word 'guidance' is used
...to describe the activities provided by the **guidance and counselling services** identified under **support services** in paragraph 2 of the Education Act 1998.

In doing so, it conveys something of the specialist nature of guidance in schools and links the areas of guidance and counselling. Furthermore, it states that counselling in schools may include personal, educational, career counselling, or combinations of these. However, it also stresses that the 'development and implementation of the school's guidance plan is a whole-school responsibility.' (p 8) The NCCA *Discussion Document* has mirrored this pattern in providing an outline of the curricular elements that a school might draw upon in formulating and implementing its guidance plan. In this sense it recognises the fact that the school context and the available resources will determine to a great degree the nature and extent of provision. Many responses in the consultation process have drawn attention to the role of counselling as a key feature of a school's guidance programme and have recommended that greater attention be given in the draft framework to this aspect of guidance, in particular to how schools might manage the balance between one-to-one counselling and other modes of delivery. This remains the most significant issue yet to be addressed.

Some submissions have sought to clarify this question further by drawing a distinction between the curricular and the service elements of guidance provision. Striking an appropriate balance between these two elements is related to each school's context. Schools differ. Therefore, the research initiative with schools will pay particular attention to exemplifying how schools of varying size seek to strike this balance.

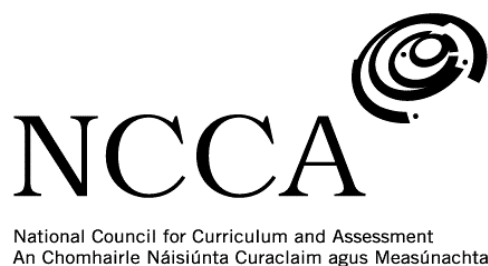
Next steps

Two significant issues remain to be addressed:

- how the draft curriculum framework can be used as a whole-school endeavour, as a support for drawing up and implementing a school's guidance plan
- how the relationship between the draft curriculum framework and a guidance and counselling service can be exemplified in a range of school contexts and settings

To these ends the more detailed consultation process with schools, described on pages 25 and 26, is being established with the support of the Kilkenny Education Centre. A report from this work will be available in January 2008. The draft curriculum framework will then be amended to take account of the outcomes of the initiative.

Appendix 1: The Consultation Questionnaire



National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

A Curriculum Framework for Guidance in Post-Primary Education

Consultation Questionnaire

The NCCA is now undertaking a consultation on the Draft Curriculum Framework for Guidance which has been prepared at the request of the Department of Education and Science. You are invited to participate in the consultation by responding to this questionnaire, which summarises the relevant issues. Copies of the draft framework and questionnaire have been sent to all post-primary schools and to other interested organisations and groups. The draft framework and this questionnaire are also available to download or can be completed online through the NCCA website, www.ncca.ie

Feel free to use additional sheets where the space provided is not enough.

The consultation period will close on Friday 23 February 2007

Name:

Address:

Responding on behalf of:
(if applicable)

Date

I am a:
(Please tick ✓ one)

Guidance Counsellor School Principal Parent

Teacher
(subject(Subject/s)_____)

School Chaplain Third-Level Lecturer Employer

Other (please specify)_____

Please submit responses to: Guidance Consultation, NCCA, 24 Merrion Square, Dublin, 2.
E-mail response to: info@ncca.ie

Enquiries should be addressed to: Hal O'Neill, Education Officer, Tel. (01) 6617177 or
info@ncca.ie

A Curriculum Framework for Guidance in Post-Primary Education

Introduction

The draft curriculum framework offers an outline of curricular experiences (both individual and group experiences) in the areas of Personal, Educational and Career Guidance. In following this threefold division the framework recognises that in practice these areas are frequently interlinked and interdependent. Although it does not assume a linear sequence of development from topic to topic or from curriculum focus to curriculum focus, the framework offers some broad indications as to year groups for which each topic might be considered appropriate.

- The main aim of the curriculum framework is to provide support for schools in planning the provision of access to appropriate guidance for students. The school guidance plan is the vehicle through which the school, in a systematic way, defines the guidance programme it offers, and states how resources are organised to deliver it.
- The Draft Curriculum Framework is not a guidance programme or plan. Its purpose is to assist schools in guidance planning.

The framework has been disseminated to all post-primary schools and to a wide range of bodies (statutory and non-statutory) with an interest in this area.

The consultative period will close on Friday 23 February 2007.

Following any necessary revisions on the basis of the consultation, the framework will be presented to the Council of the NCCA. On approval, it will be forwarded to the Department of Education and Science with recommendations for implementation, including resource implications and professional development requirements.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Implementing a Guidance Programme in Post-Primary schools

The guidance and counselling service in a school addresses the personal, educational and career needs of all its students. The Guidance Counsellor participates in and co-ordinates the school guidance and counselling service. This participation can be categorized under three integrated areas of activity:

- Personal Guidance and Counselling
- Educational Guidance and Counselling
- Career Guidance and Counselling.

1. Guidance in Education

Guidance aims to assist students to grow in independence, to take responsibility for themselves, to make informed choices about their lives and to follow through on those choices.

Please comment on the level of importance you would attach to guidance in post-primary education and your views regarding its role and purpose(s).

2. Guidance as the responsibility of the whole school community

While the guidance counsellor/s will have primary responsibility for the delivery of the school's guidance and counselling programme, the provision of access to appropriate guidance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement by ticking ✓ the relevant box:

a. *A whole-school approach is the most effective way to address the guidance needs of all students*

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Comment:

b. In your view what factors contribute most positively to the development of a whole-school approach to guidance provision?

c. In your view what factors hinder most strongly the development of a whole-school approach to guidance provision?

3. The curriculum tables section of the Draft Framework for Guidance is divided into three areas of focus: Personal Guidance, Educational Guidance, and Career Development.

3 a) Using a scale of 5 to 1 (where 5 is very important and 1 is unimportant), please indicate the relative importance of the areas of Personal, Educational and Career guidance in a school's guidance provision by circling one of the numbers in each scale.

	Very important			Unimportant	
Personal Guidance	5	4	3	2	1
Educational Guidance	5	4	3	2	1
Career Development	5	4	3	2	1
Comment:					

3 b) Personal Guidance

In your view are the guidance needs of post-primary students appropriately reflected in the tables in this section? Please tick ✓

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please comment:			

3 c) Educational Guidance

In your view are the guidance needs of post-primary students appropriately reflected in the tables in this section? Please tick ✓

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please comment:			

3 d) Career Development

In your view are the guidance needs of post-primary students appropriately reflected in the tables in this section? Please tick ✓

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please comment:			

4. A Supportive School Environment

Situating the Draft Curriculum Framework in a supportive school environment is considered to be the most effective approach for its implementation. The Draft Curriculum promotes:

- A cross-curricular approach to Guidance
- Guidance situated in the whole school plan
- The involvement of the whole school community – Board of Management, Principal, Guidance Counsellor/s, Staff, Parents & Students

4 a) What in your view are the most important elements in a post-primary school guidance programme?

4 b) The Draft Curriculum Framework states that Guidance should address the needs of all students in a developmental way. Please indicate your level of agreement:

Agree strongly

Agree

Disagree

Comment:

5. Planning the implementation of the curriculum framework in post-primary education

5 a) In your view what school resources would be required to support the implementation of the draft curriculum framework?

5 b) What, in your opinion, are the professional development needs of guidance counsellors to enable them to participate in a whole school approach to guidance?

5 c) What, in your opinion, are the professional development needs of teachers of subjects/programmes to enable them to participate in a whole school approach to guidance?

6) Please use the space below to make any additional comments on current issues of relevance to the provision of access to appropriate guidance in post-primary education.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation questionnaire. Please return to NCCA by Friday 23 February 2007

Appendix 2: List of Respondents

A Lillis, M Graham, F Garrity	Guidance Counsellors
Aileen Doherty	Guidance Counsellor & School Principal
Aine Feely	Guidance Counsellor
Angela Flynn	Guidance Counsellor
Anna Marie O’Keeffe	Guidance Counsellor
Annette Kieran	Guidance Counsellor
AnnMarie Quinn	Guidance Counsellor
Anonymous	Guidance Counsellor
Antoin O Dugáin	Deputy Principal
Aoibheann Byrt	Guidance Counsellor
Ardscoil La Salle	School Principal
Arthur Dunne	Guidance Counsellor
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	
Bernadette Bowen	School Guidance Team
Bernie Kinsella	Guidance Counsellor
Blathnaid Colhoun	School Principal
Breid Carberry	Teacher (Maths, French, LCA)
Brendan O’Brien	Guidance Counsellor
Bridget Condon	Guidance Counsellor
Caitlin Leyne	Guidance Counsellor
Caitriona McNamara	Guidance Counsellor
Cathal ODonovan	School Principal
Catherine Leahy	Guidance Counsellor
Christine Yates	Guidance Counsellor
Collinstown Community College	School Principal
Combat Poverty Agency	
Course Directors of Guidance and Counselling Programmes (UL, NUIM, TCD, UCC)	
David McBride	Guidance Counsellor
Deirdre Boyle	Guidance Counsellor
Denis Burke	Guidance Counsellor
Derek Lowry	School Principal
Derek Lowry	School Principal

Derry Long	School Principal
Donald O'Byrne	School Principal
Dympna Clancy	Guidance Counsellor
Edith Byrne	School Principal
Eileen Delaney	School Principal
Elizabeth English McLaughlin	Guidance Counsellor
Elizabeth Tynon	Guidance Counsellor
Ella Healy	Guidance Counsellor
Evelyn McLoughlin	Guidance Counsellor
Fiona Murphy	Guidance Counsellor
Fr. L. Heaney	Guidance Counsellor
Frank McKenna	School Principal
G O'Sullivan	Parent
Gay and Lesbian Equality Network	
Gaye Buckley	Guidance Counsellor
Gerardine Lonergan	Guidance Counsellor & School Principal
Gerry Flynn	Guidance Counsellor
Gerry Malone	Guidance Counsellor
Gerry Watchorn	Other
Gillian Gubbins	Guidance Counsellor
Grainne Brehony	Guidance Counsellor
Helen Kelly	Teacher (IT and Business)
Helen McCarthy	Teacher (Business)
Helen Renehan	School Principal
Honor McAndres	Guidance Counsellor
Institute of Guidance Counsellors	
Institute of Guidance Counsellors	
Institute of Guidance Counsellors, Tipperary Branch	
Jacqueline Dillon	Guidance Counsellor
Janet Leo Rita Moriarty	Teacher (LCVP, French, RE)
Jerry Cronin	Guidance Counsellor
Jim O'Connor	Guidance Counsellor
Jimmy Flanagan	School Principal

John Cunningham	Guidance Counsellor
John Davin	School Principal
John O'Sullivan	School Principal
Julie McDermott	Guidance Counsellor
Kate Whalley	Guidance Counsellor
Kathryn Daly	Guidance Counsellor
Keira O'Mahoney	Guidance Counsellor
Liam Harkin & Guidance Team	Guidance Counsellors
Liam McNiffe	School Principal
Linda Dunne	School Principal
Lorraine Murphy	Parent
Lucy Ryan	Guidance Counsellor
M. Cregan & M. Hickey	Guidance Counsellors
M. McDowell & L. Porter	Guidance Counsellors
Maggie Quain	Guidance Counsellor
Maire A. Shannon	School Principal
Mairead McGurran	Guidance Counsellor
Margaret Hession	Guidance Counsellor
Margaret Marren	Guidance Counsellor
Margaret O'Donoghue	Guidance Counsellor
Marian McGrath	Parent
Marie Fitzpatrick	School Principal
Mary Egan	Guidance Counsellor
Mary Lally	Guidance Counsellor
Mary McCarthy	Guidance Counsellor
Mary O'Doherty	School Principal
Mary Ryan	School Principal
Michael Lyons	Deputy Principal
Michael O'Scanaill	Guidance Counsellor
Milo Walsh	Parent
Ms. M. Ryan	School Principal
Niall Mac Dermott	School Principal
Niamh Daly	Guidance Counsellor

Niav Gallagher	Guidance Counsellor
Norma Morrison	Guidance Counsellor
North Presentation Secondary School Guidance Team	
Nuala Lupton	Guidance Counsellor
O'Fiaich College	Guidance Counsellor
Olive O'Brien	Guidance Counsellor
Padraic O'Dowd	Guidance Counsellor
Padraig Firtéar	Príomh Oide
Pamela Carroll	Guidance Counsellor
Patricia Mc Donagh	Deputy Principal
Patricia Sirr	Teacher (French)
Paul Tyrell	School Principal
Peter Cassells	Guidance Counsellor
PJ McGowan	Guidance Counsellor
Roisin McDonnell	Guidance Counsellor
Roisin Neylon	Guidance Counsellor
Rose O'Brien	Guidance Counsellor
Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	School Principal
Seamus Casey	Guidance Counsellor
Sean Nolan	Deputy Principal
Shane Eivers	School Principal
Siobhan Clifford	Guidance Counsellor
Sr. Anne Cuffe	Guidance Counsellor
Teachers Union of Ireland	
Therese Hegarty	Third Level Lecturer
Tommy Lanigan	School Principal
Tracy Blake	Guidance Counsellor
TS Hardy	School Principal
Una Duffy	School Principal
Una Flynn	Guidance Counsellor
Ursula Finnegan	Guidance Counsellor
Ursuline Sec. School	School Principal
Willie Ruane	School Principal

