

Annual Report 2017

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Foreword

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

In early years education, *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* continues to be implemented in settings and schools all around the country. NCCA has been assisting with its introduction, in particular contributing to the professional development of those working in early childhood settings. In 2017, we've also focused on the transition between early years and primary schooling, developing and piloting reporting templates that will allow information to be shared as children move from one setting to the other.

Twenty years have passed since the last major review of the primary curriculum. In 2017, NCCA reported on the proposals on structure and time in primary curriculum and put the groundwork in place for the broader review of the contents of the primary curriculum. Meanwhile, work continued, often working directly with schools, on the new Primary Languages Curriculum, on Primary Mathematics, on coding and computational thinking, and on intercultural, religious and ethics education.

Significant developments in the curriculum at junior cycle have been underway since 2014 and in 2017 review activity reached its highest point in terms of the development of subjects, short courses and other specifications. The development of guidelines related to different aspects of the junior cycle developments was also a feature of the work at this level in 2017, whether those guidelines related to assessment in the various subjects being developed, or reporting and certification, or the new Level 1 Learning Programmes designed for students with special educational needs. There were ten new subject specifications completed in 2017. Some of these were at Leaving Certificate level where a new specification for Computer Science was developed and the specification for Economics was extensively revised. Most significantly at senior cycle, NCCA put the process in place for an extensive review of senior cycle education introduction in schools, commissioning research on *International Developments in Upper Secondary Education* to provide a strong evidence base for the review.

The research on senior cycle education was one study among several. Indeed, the scale of the NCCA's work on research, consultation, deliberation and discussion, and networking in 2017 continues to be noteworthy – research on parental involvement in children's schooling, children's wellbeing, mathematics, coding and Gaeilge at senior cycle; upwards of 18 separate consultations conducted; upwards of 98 meetings of our committees and other structures; and each area of work being progressed through networking activity with the education partners.

Of course, we're all aware that work as extensive as this and work on this scale only happens through the commitment of the Council and its staff. The list of meetings presented later in this report shows that there were an increased number of development groups and boards active during 2017. Council members and the members of subject development groups and boards give their time and effort on a voluntary basis. Their interest and commitment to curriculum development is key to the successful delivery of NCCA's important work. We are extremely fortunate in NCCA to have a staff team whose specialist expertise, enthusiasm, and clear commitment ensured the delivery of a challenging work programme, sometimes within tight deadlines.

John Hammond was appointed Chief Executive of the NCCA in October 2017, following a period as Acting CEO. John Halbert also took up a role as Acting Deputy Chief Executive during 2017. I want wish John every success as CEO and thank him for his strong leadership and management of the NCCA in 2017. I also want to thank the management team as a whole for providing continuity and sustaining the high quality and momentum of the NCCA's work. In particular, the willingness of staff to step into 'acting' roles continues to be greatly appreciated by the Council.

As Chairperson, I want to pay tribute to the significant time given, and commitment of, Council members and their willingness to engage with a wide variety of complex and contentious areas and issues. I want to acknowledge the particular support of the Deputy Chairpersons, Michael Redmond and Declan Kelleher. It is the nature of our work that it involves significant engagement with the Minister for Education and Skills and officials of his Department and I also thank them for their support for our work.

Brigid McManus

Chairperson

Introduction

The work reported on in this Annual Report 2017 was extensive, varied and innovative across all sectors from early years to post-primary education. The approach underpinning the work, developed from working with our stakeholders and others over many years, always aims to build upon and recognise the importance of the classroom, early childhood setting and school as the site of change; of practitioners, teachers and school management as the principal agents in that change; and of the need for the drive for change to be focused 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 and others.

On the following pages of the Annual Report, you'll find a summary of our work in curriculum and assessment in 2017. These specific details of the outcomes we set for ourselves and the progress made in realising them, comprises the main body of the report. The report also includes detailed information, from a governance perspective, on the NCCA as an organisation. In addition, the Statement on Internal Control 2017 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.

In 2017, in general terms, our work in Early Childhood Education has focused on continuing to embed and enhance *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* as it is implemented in settings and schools. The review of the primary curriculum has gathered pace in 2017 as the overall shape and content of the curriculum begins to come into focus and be discussed. The junior cycle developments are under way in schools but NCCA is still involved in development work on a considerable scale to prepare subject and other specifications, assessment guidelines, examples of student work and other support material for the changes taking place in schools. At senior cycle, an extensive review of senior cycle education, involving a shared re-visioning of what senior cycle might look like in future years, is under way.

Education systems, Ireland included, have very significant strengths which parents, learners and the general public are aware of and which are regularly recognised in research and media reports. But the kinds of curriculum developments set out in the Annual Report, reflect the need, in constantly changing times, to keep the curriculum under review – to modernise it, improve it and meet emerging challenges. They're also aimed at addressing the critical

question of how the educational experience of learners can be improved for all learners and for the common good.

It goes without saying, and therefore should be said, that work on the scale set out in this Report could not be achieved without the advice and support we get from those who participate in our representative development groups and from the teachers and schools we collaborate with. Sincere thanks to all involved. I also want to thank the staff of the NCCA for their creativity, expertise, enthusiasm and boundless commitment in 2017, and the members of the Council for their wisdom, direction and support.

John Hammond

CEO

OVERVIEW OF NCCA WORK IN 2017

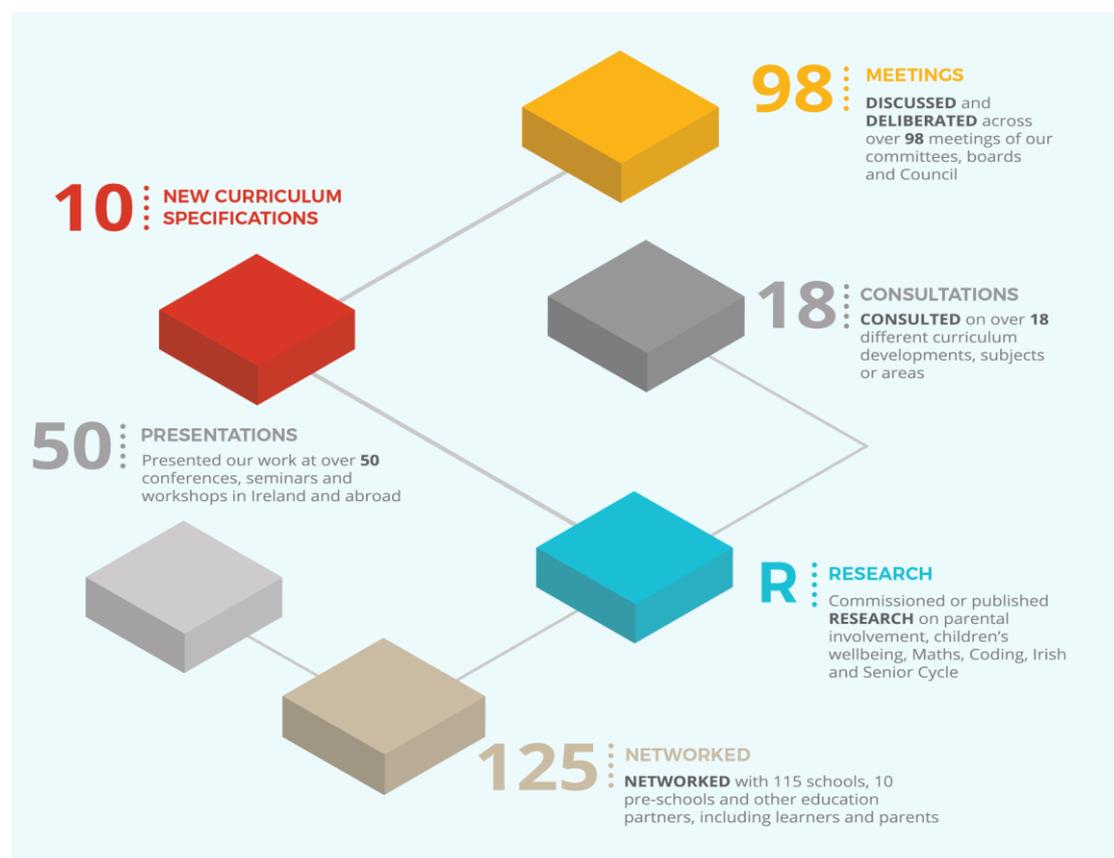
WE WORKED ON...

EC EARLY CHILDHOOD IMPLEMENTATION

P PRIMARY CURRICULUM REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

JC JUNIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

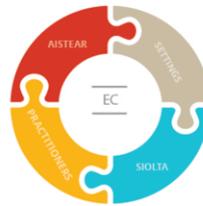
SC SENIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT



EC EARLY CHILDHOOD

Work in Early Childhood Education **IMPLEMENTATION**

As part of the **National Síolta Aistear Initiative**, we developed 10 hours of CPD for practitioners and worked with 27 Síolta Aistear Mentors to pilot these.



We worked with preschools and primary schools to pilot **draft reporting templates** to share information as children move from one setting to the other.

P PRIMARY

Work on Primary Curriculum **REVIEW**



We consulted widely on proposals on **structure and time allocation** in the primary curriculum.



We developed draft curriculum specifications for **language** and **mathematics**.



We worked **directly with schools** on language, mathematics, coding, intercultural, religious and ethics education, and transition.

JC JUNIOR CYCLE

Work on Junior Cycle **DEVELOPMENT** completed



We organised a series of four seminars around the theme of **Leadership for Learning** in collaboration with Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT).



We completed new curriculum specifications for **Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics, and Music**.



We worked directly with schools trialing **Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs)** for learners with special educational needs.



We started new curriculum specifications for **Classics, Jewish Studies, Religious Education, and the four Technology subjects**.

SC SENIOR CYCLE

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



We completed new curriculum specifications for **Leaving Certificate Economics and Computer Science**.



We commissioned **research on international developments in upper secondary education** as part of the review of senior cycle education.



We developed learning and teaching support materials for the introduction of **Leaving Certificate Politics and Society** in schools.

Progress on NCCA work in 2017

This section of the Annual Report for 2017 describes the progress made over the year towards achieving the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan 2015-2018. These outcomes are presented under the five High-Level goals of the Strategic Plan:

- **Curriculum and Assessment:** To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors.
- **Engagement and Networks:** To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.
- **Knowledge and Research:** To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings.
- **Communications and Profile:** To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA, to improve the profile of the organisation and its capacity to engage with others in leading and supporting educational change.
- **Governance and Corporate Services:** To develop NCCA governance and organisational structures, processes, skills, and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2017
1.1	National Síolta Aistear Initiative – Aistear Strand	<p>Seminars for Síolta Aistear Mentors were facilitated.</p> <p>Piloting of the <i>Aistear</i> strand of the <i>National Síolta Aistear Initiative</i> was completed, evaluated and a report published.</p>
1.1	The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide and other support materials are increasingly used in the early childhood sector and materials are developed to support the transition from pre-school to primary.	<p>Additional resources for the <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i> were developed and published.</p> <p>Resources from the <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i> were used in 10 hours of workshops of continuing professional development for early childhood practitioners.</p>
1.2	In primary schools, new curricula are introduced for language (English and Gaeilge), mathematics, and education about religious beliefs and ethics for junior primary classes and work has begun to develop an overarching new Primary Curriculum Framework.	<p>The draft language specification (English and Gaeilge) for third to sixth class was developed.</p> <p>New resources were developed and added to the Primary Language Toolkit (Support Material for Teachers and Examples of children’s language learning).</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes

Progress in 2017

A draft mathematics specification for junior infants to 2nd class was developed and published for consultation.

A Mathematics School Network trialed the specification as part of the consultation.

A Sharing Inclusive Practice Network was established; examples of schools' work in intercultural, religious and ethical education were published.

Support material for schools implementing the GMGY curriculum for senior classes was developed and published.

Feedback on the proposals on Structure and Time Allocation in the primary curriculum were gathered across multiple consultation formats.

A consultation report on Structure and Time Allocation in the Primary Curriculum was finalised.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
<p>1.3 Post-primary schools are using the <i>Framework for Junior Cycle</i> as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes.</p>	<p>Further to publication of the revised Framework for Junior Cycle, engagement with newly-developed and introduced specifications for English, Business Studies, Science, Visual Arts and Modern Languages continued in post-primary schools, supported by the JCT professional development programme.</p> <p>The specifications for Visual Art, French, German, Italian and Spanish were published.</p> <p>The specifications for Gaeilge, one for use in Irish-medium schools, the other for English-medium schools, were completed and published.</p> <p>The specifications for Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics, and Music were consulted on and completed.</p> <p>Background papers for Classics, Jewish Studies, Religious Education and the Technology (4) subjects were published and work on specifications for these subjects commenced.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>Revised Assessment Guidelines for NCCA short courses (10) were published online.</p> <p>Trialing of Guidelines for Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) in schools and organisations working in special educational needs commenced.</p> <p>The Planning Tool for Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) was reviewed and updated.</p>
1.4 Curriculum and assessment reform at senior cycle continues with the completion of new curriculum and assessment specifications	<p>Work on support materials and an App for the curriculum framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education commenced.</p> <p>Specifications for Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science and Economics were completed.</p> <p>A new specification for Leaving Certificate Computer Science was completed and published.</p> <p>Drafting of a specification for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics continued.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>The development of a new specification for Leaving Certificate Art commenced.</p> <p>Support materials were developed for the introduction of Leaving Certificate Politics and Society in schools.</p> <p>Planning for the scope of, and process for, a review of senior cycle education was completed. Research on international developments in upper secondary education was commissioned and commenced.</p>
1.5 New approaches to assessment and reporting are being introduced and assessment capacity in schools and other settings is being supported.	<p>The Report Card Creator for primary schools was updated and further refined on the basis of feedback.</p> <p>Education Passport materials were updated in response to feedback from schools.</p> <p>Assessment guidelines for Junior Cycle Visual Arts and Modern Languages were completed and published.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>Support material for conducting Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings was updated and published.</p> <p>Development of support materials and guidelines for ongoing school reporting in junior cycle continued in collaboration with schools.</p> <p>NCCA contributed to the design and format for the first Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) awarded to junior cycle students.</p>
<p>1.6 Curriculum and assessment specifications feature examples of student work that illustrate expectations for learners.</p>	<p>At both primary and post-primary levels, a Quality Assurance Process continued and was further developed for the publication, on an ongoing basis, of annotated examples of pupil learning/student work related to relevant specifications, guidelines and support materials.</p>
<p>1.7 A strong line of continuity, and a focus on common features and elements, is evident across curriculum and assessment developments at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels.</p>	<p>Work on reporting templates to support children’s transition from preschools to primary schools continued. Draft reporting templates were piloted in settings and schools.</p> <p>Across all sectors, support materials continued to be developed for settings/schools to support engagement with students in curriculum review/planning.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes

Progress in 2017

2. Engagement and Networks

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes

Progress in 2017

2.1

NCCA networks are working on ideas, material and initiatives to support their own capacity and that of other schools and settings in curriculum development, assessment practice, and broader educational change.

Examples of children's learning and student work continue to be developed and gathered in collaboration with small-scale groups and networks of pre-school settings and schools to provide examples of changes to the curriculum being introduced. In 2017, work took place through networks related to:

- Preschool to primary school transition
- Primary Language
- Primary Mathematics
- Sharing Inclusive Practice (Primary)
- A range of junior cycle subjects and the areas of reporting and wellbeing
- New Leaving Certificate subjects such as Politics and Society, Computer Science and Physical Education

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>The Goodness Me Goodness You (GMGY) School Network (Community National Schools), contributed to the review of the programme for junior classes.</p> <p>A school network was established to develop examples of coding and computational thinking across the primary curriculum.</p> <p>A network established to develop and trial Level 1 Learning Programmes in junior cycle contributed to the completion of the Guidelines for L1LPs.</p>
2.2 NCCA is supporting the work of partner networks engaged in curriculum and assessment development and supporting teaching and learning.	<p>Workshops and summer course materials were updated and used by the Aistear Tutor Initiative to continue to support practice change in infant classes in primary schools.</p> <p>NCCA collaborated with Junior Cycle for Teachers in organizing a series of seminars around the theme of Leadership for Learning. Four of these seminars took place in 2017 and they continue into 2018.</p> <p>NCCA hosted, in collaboration with Kildare Education Centre, a showcase of the work of schools involved in the Algebra Project network.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	NCCA completed its participation in the current phase of the European Commission Policy Network on Key Competencies in School Education (KeyCoNet).
2.3	<p>The voice and experience of learners is built into discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.</p> <p>Across all sectors, child and student voice fora on particular aspects of curriculum and assessment development have been convened in cooperation with schools/settings and the views of children and students have fed into ongoing development work.</p> <p>NCCA participated in the EU project: <i>Student Voice - Bridge to Learning</i> and an Erasmus+ initiative to develop models of working with children/students at school level to facilitate the voice and experience of learners being included in decision making.</p>
2.4	<p>Liaison and collaborative relationships with a number of organisations are improving the understanding and quality of curriculum and assessment developments and implementation.</p> <p>NCCA continued to work on an ongoing basis with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ DES Steering and Strategy Groups▪ Early Years Education Policy Unit▪ Department of Children and Youth Affairs

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes

Progress in 2017

- State Examinations Commission
- The Teaching Council
- An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilaíochta
- Higher Education Authority

NCCA also continued to engage with:

- Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- Better Start, Quality Development Service
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- Education Research Centre (ERC)
- Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- Association of Teacher Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI)

NCCA continued engagement on the transition from second level to higher education through the DES Transitions Reform Group.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
2.5	
Curriculum and assessment developments north and south of the border have been supported by collaboration between NCCA and CCEA.	NCCA completed its participation in the Expert Group for the review of qualifications in Northern Ireland.

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
3.1 Curriculum and assessment developments are informed by evidence and research.	<p>A literature review on parental involvement in their children’s learning during primary school phase, commissioned through the National Parents Council Primary, was initiated.</p> <p>The specification for a Longitudinal Study on Children’s Experiences in Primary School was completed and the Request for Tender prepared.</p> <p>A comparative study of coding and computational thinking in primary curricula in six jurisdictions was initiated.</p> <p>A review of literature on computational thinking during the primary school phase was initiated.</p> <p>ESRI research on <i>Children’s wellbeing and their experiences beginning school (5 years)</i> was progressed.</p> <p>A report of the findings of the consultation on the proposals for a curriculum in ERB and Ethics was published.</p>

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>Short research papers on the purpose and aims of a primary curriculum, and values in a curriculum was initiated.</p> <p>NCCA published and consulted on seven background papers related to developments at junior cycle.</p> <p>A comparative study looking at developments in upper secondary education internationally was commissioned to inform senior cycle review.</p> <p>A comparative study looking at international experience of the introduction of a Computer Science subject at post-primary level was published.</p> <p>Research into the impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate Oral Irish Examination introduced in 2012 was completed and a paper on the implications of the findings for future developments was completed.</p> <p>Research into the impact of Project Maths on the performance of students in Junior Cycle was completed.</p>

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>A curriculum audit on the integration of education for sustainable development (ESD) in Line with the <i>National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014)</i> was completed.</p> <p>A comparative study looking at processes, structures and cycles of curriculum development and implementation internationally was commissioned.</p>
3.2 Curriculum and assessment developments are informed through participation in research networks	<p>In collaboration with the School of Education in Trinity, Research in Early Childhood Education Collaborative (RECEC) and Early Childhood Ireland, NCCA co-hosted a seminar on <i>Early Learning Experiences: Children, Creativity and Contexts</i></p> <p>A research report on the impact of the Collaborative Assessment Initiative, in which the NCCA participated was published.</p> <p>Work continued with the Teaching Council, the Centre for Effective Services and the Research Expertise Exchange (REX) on the theme of teachers and researchers and planned activities in this context.</p>

3. Knowledge and Research

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
3.3 The outcomes and findings of research are available, accessible and disseminated to those with an interest in education, policy making and evaluation.	The findings of commissioned research informed the deliberations of NCCA boards and development groups and ongoing networking with external organisations and agencies. Research reports were published in a variety of formats and media, using podcasts to provide access to key findings.
3.4 Research findings and new knowledge are shared and interrogated by NCCA staff as an integral part of their work.	NCCA staff attended informal sessions on a range of curriculum and assessment issues, facilitated by national/international speakers with whom pre- and post-conference sessions were organised. NCCA continues to subscribe to membership of the library of Trinity College, and a fortnightly update on all relevant national and international research developments is circulated to all staff. NCCA staff attended and/or presented papers at national and international conferences on educational research and practice. Details of these are presented in Appendix Two.

4. Communications and Profile

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
4.1 Using an effective media strategy, key messages on educational change are widely shared and NCCA responses and contributions are informed and timely.	<p>Videos on aspects of the Primary Developments and the Junior Cycle Developments were published online.</p> <p>Timely responses were made to media enquiries about various developments and a number of staff contributed to radio and television interviews. We continued our policy of responding where possible to requests from local radio.</p> <p>Consultations continued to include online (website), social media (twitter and facebook) hard copy (notice to schools) and face-to-face (bilateral meetings, focus groups) elements. Small-scale school networks were also a feature of the media used for consultation.</p> <p>Social media was used effectively to communicate important messages about curriculum developments and consultations and to allow wider engagement in NCCA events.</p>

4. Communications and Profile

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>An edition of info@ncca was published, in Irish and English, in March. It attracted over 10,000 subscribers.</p>
<p>4.2 NCCA websites are developed and improved in response to system need, customer feedback, statistics on web usage, and developments in online and social media. continue</p>	<p>New curriculum specifications and support materials were published online across all sectors. The online interface gives teachers some choices in how they access the material. www.curriculumonline.ie was maintained and is being developed on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>A completely redesigned and reorganized corporate website was developed and introduced in late 2017. It features improved functionality for users and improved connections between sectors. Feedback had been gathered from internal and external stakeholders and the launch of the new website was well received.</p> <p>Analytics related to website and social media communications are included in the CEO Report to each meeting of the Council. With the new website, the information and data analytics available to the NCCA are more detailed and sophisticated.</p>

4. Communications and Profile

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
<p>4.3 The work of the NCCA on curriculum and assessment and on practice in schools is shared with national and international audiences and feedback informs ongoing developments.</p>	<p>NCCA hosted the Annual Conference and General Assembly of the Consortium of Institutes for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) and edited/published the CIDREE Yearbook on the theme of wellbeing.</p> <p>NCCA participated in the second summit of the Atlantic Rim Collaborative, held in Dublin. The collaborative looks at educational developments across the systems of a number of participating jurisdictions including Scotland, Wales, Iceland, Sweden, Ontario, California and Ireland. Plans were advanced for a mini-summit on post-primary developments, involving Wales and the OECD, in early 2018.</p> <p>NCCA memberships were maintained for: Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) British Educational Research Association Institute of Public Administration (IPA) Public Affairs Ireland Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS).</p>

4. Communications and Profile

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	In addition, the CEO is a member of the Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies (ACESA) and the Chairperson is a member of the Association of Chairpersons of State Agencies.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2017
5.1	Organisation structures and processes are supporting innovative curriculum and assessment development and collaborative work practices.	<p>Structures and processes are in place and agreed for areas of current curriculum and assessment work.</p> <p>New subject development groups are in operation at primary and junior cycle levels.</p> <p>SharePoint was maintained and further developed to facilitate efficient and effective work practices and collaboration.</p> <p>The NCCA IT infrastructure is now fully consolidated leading to greater collaboration and flexibility across devices used by staff. Applications are now almost completely cloud-based.</p>
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.	Eight staff members are pursuing post-graduate studies, five at doctoral level, two at Masters level, and one at Diploma level in areas relevant to their work.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2017
	<p>A variety of professional development needs were identified and provided for through on-the-job training, internal professional development events, mentoring, coaching and through courses and conference attendance.</p>
<p>5.3</p>	<p>There is a strong performance culture across the organisation.</p> <p>NCCA continued to implement Performance Management Development processes with all staff members. These are linked to the achievement of strategic goals.</p> <p>The NCCA Workforce Development Plan was updated to support Public Service Reform and to inform NCCA Human Resources strategy.</p>
<p>5.4</p>	<p>There is a robust financial management system in place.</p> <p>On the basis of a review of the NCCA financial policies and procedures, revised financial management procedures have been developed, documented and implemented.</p> <p>Financial reports were monitored at regular Management Team meetings.</p> <p>Quarterly management accounts were submitted to meetings of the Council.</p>

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2017
		<p>Quarterly Income and Expenditure reports were submitted to DES.</p> <p>Financial statements were reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>Public service procurement processes were adhered to, with a particular focus on value for money.</p>
5.5	There is full compliance with the governance requirements of state bodies.	<p>The Audit of Financial Statements for 2016 was completed.</p> <p>The Review of Systems of Internal Financial Control for 2016 was completed.</p> <p>Work commenced on the revision of the Risk Policy and embedding of risk management across the organization.</p>
5.6	Customer service standards are developed and improved	All customer services guidelines and policies were adhered to.
5.7	The NCCA has complied with all relevant, public sector agreements and development plans.	The NCCA has complied with all relevant, public sector agreements and development plans.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes

Progress in 2017

The NCCA has complied with the ECF for the period.

About the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

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

Vision

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

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

Mission

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

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

Governance

The 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 tenders 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. Internal Audit operates independently of the Executive in terms of its audit work and has rights of access to the Chief Executive and the Audit and Risk Committee. It operates within the budget agreed with the Audit and Risk Committee, which in turn forms part of the budget of the NCCA. The Audit and Risk Committee sets the budget, 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 draft unaudited financial statements for 2017 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.

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. The members of the current Council were appointed for a period of three years, six months and they usually meet

seven times per annum (eight meetings in 2017). The table below details the appointment period for current members:

Members of Council 2017

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date Appointed
Ms Brigid McManus Chairperson		2 July 2015
Mr Declan Kelleher Vice Chairperson	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	2 July 2015
Dr Michael Redmond Vice Chairperson	Joint Managerial Body	2 July 2015
Ms Áine O Sullivan	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	2 July 2015
Mr Philip Irwin	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	2 July 2015
Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	2 July 2015
Ms Maria Spring	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	2 July 2015
Ms Rosemary Eager	Church of Ireland Board of Education	2 July 2015
Ms Suzanne Dillon	Department of Education and Skills	21 September 2016

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

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date Appointed
Mr David Duffy	Teachers' Union of Ireland	2 July 2015
Ms Joanne Irwin	Teachers' Union of Ireland	2 July 2015

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

Audit and Risk Committee

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

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

There were five meetings of the ARC in 2017.

Governance Committee

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

The Governance Committee met on three occasions in 2017.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Board and Committee meetings for 2017 is set out below including the expenses received by each member. Council and Committee members do not receive fees for their involvement in the Council:

Name	No. of Council Meetings (7 ordinary meetings and 1 special meeting in 2017)	No. of Audit and Risk Ctte Meetings (5)	No. of Governance Ctte meetings (3)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members) ¹
Brigid McManus	8			
Declan Kelleher	7			€2,995.27
Michael Redmond	7		3	
Áine O Sullivan	5			
Philip Irwin	7			
Máire Ní Chiarba	4			€2,320.02
Maria Spring	5	3		
Rosemary Eager	5			€236.98
Suzanne Dillon	8			
David Leahy	5	3		€1,582.40
Pádraig Ó Duibhir	7			
Kevin Marshall	4			
Rose Malone	5			
Michael Delargey	1		2	€438.65
Deirbhile Nic Craith	8		3	
Emma Dineen	6			

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

Name	No. of Council Meetings (7 ordinary meetings and 1 special meeting in 2017)	No. of Audit and Risk Ctte Meetings (5)	No. of Governance Ctte meetings (3)	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members) ¹
Marie-Thérèse Kilmartin	7			
Patricia Harrington	7			€1,925.23
Áine Lynch	6	4		
Don Myers	7	3		€5,018.20
Clive Byrne	8			
Avril McMonagle	1			
Tim Desmond	6			
David Duffy	8			
Joanne Irwin	5			
Etain Doyle Chair ARC		5		

Key Personnel Changes

Dr. Tim Desmond joined Council as representative of the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for the meeting on 9th February, 2017.

Changes to the Executive included the appointment of a CEO, John Hammond on 31st October 2017 and a Director (Curriculum and Assessment), Jacqueline Fallon on 24th April, 2017. Majella O'Shea, an Acting Deputy Chief Executive, retired on 28th July, 2017. Other changes in seconded/contracted staff included the addition of eight Education Officers and one temporary Clerical Officer and the departure of five Education Officers.

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

Council has made substantial progress during 2017 and 2018 in reviewing its various policies and practices in the context of the new and revised requirements in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and has put revised or new policies and procedures in place in priority areas to comply with the Code. Work will continue on aspects of the Code of Practice with the continued development, review and renewal of policies in over the coming period. Work is underway but not complete on IT and Cyber security controls and on bedding down new and expanded policies and processes for internal control. A Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the Department of Education and Skills and the NCCA covering governance, operational, funding and reporting relationships. A new Performance Delivery Agreement, replacing the existing Memorandum of Understanding, will be put in place for 2018. In relation to the Code's provision of a two-term limitation for Council members, it is not a requirement in the statute applying to the NCCA and it has not been the policy of the Department to apply this to NCCA given its work and specific composition. Council is completing a self-assessment of its effectiveness, including a survey facilitated by an independent organisation. Council has also commenced a wider review of the appropriate structures for developing curriculum and assessment advice in light of international experience, and a review of the revised NCCA structures introduced in 2012.

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. As the figures included in the tables provided are from unaudited accounts, they are not final figures at this point and are rounded off to the nearest 50. Updated figures will be provided in light of the final, audited accounts.

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 (in the case of NCCA, this refers to salary figures only) are categorised into the following bands:

Salary within range	Number of employees	
	2017	2016
From – To		
€60,000 - €69,999	3	4
€70,000 - €79,999	15	5
€80,000 - €89,999	4	6
€90,000 - €99,999	1	4
€100,000 - €109,999	0	2
€110,000 - €119,999	1	1

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions in 2017.

	2017 €	2016 €
Professional Fees and consultancy:		
Accountancy and other professional fees	37,850	42,250
Audit fee	13,500	13,500
Consultancy (Including commissioned research for curriculum and assessment development work)	114,850	209,050
Total	166,200	264,800

Legal Costs and Settlements

In 2017, 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.

Travel and Subsistence Expenditure

Travel and subsistence expenditure by staff/Council members is categorised as follows:

	2017 €	2016 €
Domestic		
Council	14,500	11,950
Employees	13,100	24,100
International		
Council	0	0
Employees	19,400	20,250
Total	47,000	56,300

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.):

	2017 €	2016 €
Internal	1,700	800
External	5,300	1,500
Total	7,000	2,300

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff led by the Chief Executive John Hammond.

The staff in 2017 was as follows:

Chief Executive: John Hammond (Acting to 30 October)

Deputy Chief Executives: Arlene Forster

Acting Deputy Chief Executive: Majella O'Shea (to 31 July), John Halbert (from 1 August)

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:

Norman Emerson

Jacqueline Fallon (from 24 April)

John Halbert (to 31 July)

Barry Slattery

Patrick Sullivan

Corporate Services:

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal

Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Higher Executive Officer

Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer

Ann Young, Executive Officer

Ursula Corcoran, Clerical Officer

Deirdre Dunne, Clerical Officer

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer

John Connors, Clerical Officer

Ger Heffernan Temporary Clerical Officer (from 6 February).

Education Officers:

John Behan (from 1 September)

Paul Behan (from 1 September)

Fred Boss

Iain Burns (to 31 August)

Lorraine Crean (from 1 September)

Tracy Curran

Lara Dabbagh

Mary Daly

Derek Grant

Ger Halbert

Denise Kelly (to 19 June)

Rachel Linney

Diarmuid Mooney (from 19 June)

John Moriarty

Deirdre Murphy (to 1 March)

Ben Murray
Neasa Ní Chuaig (to 31 August)
Elaine Ní Neachtain
Colm O Cadhain
Evelyn O'Connor
Louise O'Reilly (from 16 January)
Ger O'Sullivan
Jacinta Regan (from 1 September)
Claire Reidy (from 1 September)
Tony Reilly (from 1 September)
Aoife Rush
Anna Walshe

Project Officers:

Dr Jones Irwin
Jacinta Regan (to 31 August)

Aistear Co-ordinator:

Sandra O'Neill (to 24 October)

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 2017, the Council convened over 98 meetings of these groups. A list of the meetings held in 2017 is in Appendix One.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2017 was €5,203,761. Core funding of €4,970,543 was received from the exchequer, through the DES.

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, 2017 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Appendix One: NCCA Meetings 2017

	Total
Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	4
Primary Mathematics Development Group	2
Post Primary	
An Mheitheal Forbartha don Ghaeilge ag an tSraith Shóisearach	1
Applied Mathematics Development Group	5
Art Development Group	7
Board for Junior Cycle	6
Board for Senior Cycle	5
Classical Studies Development Group	7
Classics Development Group	5
Computer Science Development Group	7
Economics Development Group	3
Geography Development Group	4
History Development Group	7
Home Economics Development Group	3
LCA Development Group	3
Materials Technology Wood Development Group	4
Maths Development Group	6
Metalwork Development Group	3
Music Development Group	2
Religious Education Development Group	5
Technical Graphics Development Group	4
Technology Development Group	4
Cross Sectoral	
Special Education Needs Steering Group	1

Total number of meetings in 2017	98
Total number of boards/groups	23

Appendix Two: NCCA Presentations (selection) 2017

A selection of the presentations, papers or workshops delivered by NCCA in 2017 organised broadly by strategic goals

1. Curriculum and Assessment Development

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
CIDREE (Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe) – Meeting of Expert Art Group	AERT: Art Education Resources for Teachers
CIDREE Physical Education Expert Group	Developments in Irish Physical Education
PLÉ (Pedagogy, Learning and Education)	Proposals for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum
Initial Teacher Education Seminar	Wellbeing in Junior Cycle
Education and Training Boards: Directors' Meeting	Developments in Junior Cycle – Wellbeing, Student Voice and Reporting
Joint Managerial Body DEIS Schools (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)	Wellbeing in DEIS Schools
Life Long Learning Seminar: Cork City Council	Junior Cycle Developments
DES North Inner City Cluster	Play pedagogy in practice
Green Foundation Ireland	A new climate for education
LCANA (Leaving Certificate Applied National Association) Conference	Overview of LCA module descriptor review
Irish Primary Principals' Network	Professional briefing day for school leaders – developments in the primary school curriculum
Waterford Childcare Committee	Wellbeing
DES Early Years Inspectors	Transition from pre-school to primary school
Síolta Co-Ordinators	Transitions
Marino College – Early Years 2 nd year students	Aistear

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
OMEP (an international, non-governmental and non-profit organisation concerned with all aspects of Early Childhood Education and Care)	Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
Better Start (two events)	Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
3 rd European Conference on Curriculum Studies, Stirling University	Teacher professional communities as a collaborative learning experience
European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) Conference, Copenhagen	Digital and online assessment as experienced through the Collaborative Assessment Alliance project
Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) Project	Incorporating VTS in Junior Cycle Visual Art

2. Engagement and networks for innovation

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Erasmus Plus Student Voice Project: Budapest	Models of Partnership for Student Voice
Erasmus Plus Student Voice Conference – Dublin Castle	Student Voice
JCT (Junior Cycle for Teachers) Assessment Forum	Student Voice at the heart of assessment
Leadership for Learning Seminar	Inclusion
Leadership for Learning Seminar	<i>Professional Learning- Collaborative Practice</i>
Co-Lab Partner workshop at EUN Schoolnet, Brussels	Sharing with European network on Irish experiences of Co-Lab project
Erasmus Plus Project in collaboration with Dublin City Council Arts Office	Permission to Wonder Project
Dublin City Council Arts Office and UCD Parity Studios	Image Bank selection to support use of VTS imagery in schools
Dublin City Council Arts Office and UCD Parity Studios	FutureProof, Art Exhibition

3. Knowledge and research

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
EU Peer Learning Activity	Continuity in Learner Development
Bringing Research Alive Group (NCCA, Teaching Council, Centre for Effective Services)	Teachers and Research Shared Learning Day
We Are Open	Digital Badges in Education

4. Strategic relationships

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Irish Educational Publishers' Association Meetings	Overview of Curriculum Change at Early Childhood and Primary Education and other sectoral briefings
Early Childhood Ireland Annual Research Conference	Proposals for Structure and Time Allocation in a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum and Supporting Competent Young Learners Through a Shared Pre-school and Infant Curriculum Framework
Professional Development Service for Teachers	Pedagogy of Play
Professional Development Service for Teachers	Exploring the draft Primary Mathematics Specification for junior infants to second class
Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough Patron's Day	Proposals for Structure and Time Allocation in a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum
Irish Primary Principals' Network Conference	Proposals for Structure and Time Allocation in a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum
Irish Primary Principals' Network Briefing Day	Briefing on early childhood and primary curriculum developments

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
	Findings from the consultation on Structure and Time Allocation in a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum
National Parents Council Primary	Overview of the draft Primary Mathematics Specification for junior infants to second class
Professional Development Service for Teachers	Exploring the draft Primary Language Curriculum for third to sixth class
Experts meeting in Education Networking (Eminent) Conference, Brussels	As part of the annual EUN Schoolnet conference, the findings from the Co-Lab project were presented.
Webwise	Safer Internet Day
Dublin City University	Lego Education Innovation Studio

5. Profile and communications

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Consortium for School Networking, Chicago Conference	Presentation on aspects of policy and practice regarding technology in education in Irish schools
Ark workshop on Arts and Children	Panel discussion on the place of the Arts in post-primary education and the work of the NCCA in this area

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. (See below table for the relevant year).

Report of NCCA in respect of the Year 2017

Relevant year for Disclosures	Disclosures or Nil Disclosures
2017	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)²

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

The NCCA advises the Minister for Education and Skills on the curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. This advice is developed

² As amplified by the Guide to the Implications for the Annual Financial Statements and the Annual Report of November 2017 developed by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

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.

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

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

The NCCA is funded by the Department of Education and Skills. The Council is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget, and funds are allocated and spent in accordance with the priorities of the Council. The Council's draft 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 NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2017 and up to the date of approval of the unaudited financial statements, with the exception of any items noted below.

Internal Control and Risk

NCCA has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising four Council members and one independent member, with financial and audit expertise, who is the Chair. The ARC met five times in 2017.

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 2017 and reported to the ARC.

The *Review of the System of Internal Control* by Crowley's DFK drew attention to many positive features of NCCA's internal control environment. It found the management responses to the Internal Control Questionnaire quite comprehensive. It noted that it was clear from the level of detail in the responses received during the internal audit that internal controls are considered on an ongoing basis at the NCCA; and that accountability and oversight have been assigned and established. Their assessment indicated "an overall positive result and that reasonable assurance can be placed on the sufficiency and operation of internal controls to effectively mitigate and/or manage key inherent risks".

In general, the review found no material exceptions to the operation of the controls tested; the results of the sample testing undertaken confirmed their accuracy. The review did note opportunities for improvement in controls across a couple of areas. In this context, the review did not identify any weaknesses classified as 'high' level but did identify some weaknesses at 'medium' and 'low' level relating to, for example, payments for T&S and some aspects of risk management. The recommendations of the review in this context are currently being addressed and the matters involved will be resolved in 2018.

NCCA continues to receive clean audit certificates from the C&AG. It will be resolving issues identified by the C&AG and ensuring they do not re-occur. Oversight of the follow-up on internal and external audit items will be carried out by the Audit and Risk Committee which will keep progress to resolution under review.

The resourcing of internal audit is likely to be increased in coming years, as needed, in light of the growth in the activity and overall size of the organisation. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. In particular, the Committee ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently.

The ARC has developed a risk management policy which includes a risk appetite statement, the risk management processes in place, and details the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk. This updated risk management policy and process was under development on foot of a review and brought into operation partly in 2017, and in early 2018. 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 assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

The *Review of the System of Internal Control for 2017*, conducted by Crowleys DFK, identified the need to perform an external review of the effectiveness of the Council's risk management framework. In the latter context, the Audit and Risk Committee will be asked to include an external review of the effectiveness of the Council's risk management framework as part of its Audit Plan for late 2018.

Risk and Control Framework

NCCA has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

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

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 appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget, set out in the NCCA's annual Plan of Work, which is kept under review by senior management,
- there are systems in place and under development aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems,
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets and specific responsibilities are currently being 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 Procurement Plan was not in place for 2017 but is currently under development.

Procurement guidelines allow for non-competitive procurement in justifiably exceptional circumstances. Two areas of non-competitive procurement, an Irish Translation Management System and ongoing NCCA website maintenance and development, will be examined and considered for tender in 2018. In the first area, a translation management system needed to be put in place as a matter of urgency to meet pressing translation requirements on an effective, efficient and linguistically and technically competent basis. In the second area, work on the NCCA website by three providers, who had won original tenders, were rolled over due to the need to maintain proprietary software, the functionality of that software, and associated services to avoid educational materials being unavailable to schools and teachers.

Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the NCCA has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. NCCA's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the Audit and Risk Committee which 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 Audit and Risk Committee on behalf of Council conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2017.

Internal Control Issues

A matter that could give rise to issues of internal control is set out below.

In October 2017, the NCCA was informed by the Department of Education and Skills that a complaint relating to NCCA had been made to the Minister and that the complainants have invoked the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. This matter is being examined by the Department.

Brigid McManus

Chairperson

NCCA

Date _____

