



Draft Strategic Plan 2019 – 2021

For consultation

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1. Introduction

This Strategic Plan builds on the increased alignment of curriculum developments across sectors in Council's work to date and supports the further development and articulation of a shared vision for learning and development from birth through the period of post-primary education. This alignment is important in how we work to prepare curriculum and assessment advice, but it is also important in how we work with other stakeholders in the education system.

Reaching towards our vision of *Leading innovation in education for learning, living and working in a changing world* involves many layers of innovation, engagement, challenge and learning. These are reflected in the themes identified, which cut across the five strategic goals and the four sectors of the Council's remit: early childhood, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle. The themes are described as cross-cutting because they reflect a shift from 'sectoral' to more 'systemic' ideas in Council's work, and in education developments generally. In and of themselves, the six themes overlap and intersect. They are not exhaustive, but they are particularly significant in the context of the actions outlined for each strategic goal.

While great care has been taken to develop a strategy that combines creativity and realism, any strategy agreed upon must be flexible and allow for change over time. The Strategic Plan is therefore a live document and may change as developments are progressed, new opportunities to innovate arise or new national policy priorities are set. Its implementation is premised on the availability of sufficient resources, and significant new areas of work such as the developments at primary and senior cycle will require extensive resourcing.

Key to implementing our strategy is the expertise, dedicated work and commitment of the staff of the NCCA and the members of our boards and development groups. I appreciate their contribution to the work of the Council over the lifetime of the previous plan and NCCA looks forward to working with them in implementing this plan and in innovating for an exciting future for all learners in our schools and settings.

The current Council was appointed and commenced its work in early 2019 and will continue until December 2021 and this strategic plan sets out the work of the Council within that timeframe. Ongoing progress will be monitored and reported through general updates to the Council, through published annual reports and through an annual output statement.

To be signed by Chairperson

2. Context

The Organisation

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was established in November 1987 as a successor to the Curriculum and Examinations Board and was reconstituted as a statutory body in July 2001.

The brief of the statutory Council as outlined in the Education Act (1998), is to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on matters relating to:

...the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. (41.1 a, b)

The Council is responsible for the development and determination of its advice on matters relating to curriculum and assessment. The Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills. It has 25 members, all of whom are appointed for a three-year term. The members represent teachers, school managers, parents, business interests, trade unions, and other educational interests. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Skills, the State Examinations Commission, a nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills and of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Minister appoints the Chairperson.

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff, led by a Chief Executive. Funding for the NCCA is by way of a grant from the Department of Education and Skills. The current Council was appointed and commenced its work in early 2019 and will continue until December 31st 2021. This strategic plan sets out the work of the Council over that timeframe.

External and Internal Environment

Over the period of its last strategic plan 2015-2018, the NCCA conducted its work in a social and economic environment where Ireland was emerging from a previous period of austerity. At its broadest, the aim of the NCCA's work, along with its stakeholders and partners, continued to be – to contribute to children and young people living a full life, creating potential for their future lives and employment chances, and in the process supporting social cohesion and advancing Ireland's global competitiveness through the quality of its education system. Now, as Ireland fully emerges from austerity, the challenge is to continue to lead developments in curriculum and assessment that can contribute meaningfully to addressing the challenges faced by Ireland's society and economy, particularly the challenges faced by families, young people and children.

Some of the main environmental factors, external and internal, that will influence the work of the NCCA over the period of its Strategic Plan and beyond are set out on the following page in graphical form.



External Environment



CONSTANT CHANGE AFFECTING EDUCATION



COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES



CONCERN FOR THE WELLBEING

OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITY



THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

IN A MORE CULTURALLY DIVERSE, SECULAR AND CHANGING SOCIETY



BUILDING CAPACITY

FOR ADDRESSING NATIONAL PRIORITIES INTO WORK PLANS



BUILDING IN FUTURES THINKING

BUILDING IN FUTURES THINKING AND LONG-TERM PLANNING



PUBLIC AND CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

AND INCREASING REQUIREMENTS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE





Internal Environment



MAINTAINING STABILITY
AND CONTINUITY WHILE
DEVELOPING THE NCCA



BUILDING
THE CAPACITY, KNOWLEDGE AND
EXPERTISE OF STAFF



SYSTEMS
PUTTING IN PLACE SYSTEMS THAT
SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT,
COLLABORATION AND WELLBEING



FORWARD PLANNING
AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AS THE
SIZE AND WORK OF THE NCCA GROWS



STRUCTURES
RENEWING AND IMPROVING
NCCA STRUCTURES



INCREASING REQUIREMENTS
MANAGING THE INCREASING REQUIREMENTS
OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN A SMALL
ORGANISATION



3. Strategic planning 2019 - 2021

Vision

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

Mission

The Mission of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is to:

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

Strategic goals

The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan sets out important actions in Council's work across five strategic goals:

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

2. Engagement and Collaboration

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

3. Knowledge and Research

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

4. Communications

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

5. Governance and Corporate Affairs

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

Cross-cutting themes in the work of the NCCA

In the NCCA's work in recent years, a number of themes have been identified which cut across the five goals of the organisation and the four sectors within the Council's remit - early childhood, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle. The themes are described as cross-cutting because they reflect a shift from 'sectoral' to more 'systemic' ideas in Council's work, and in education developments generally. This Strategic Plan builds on the increased alignment of curriculum developments across sectors in Council's work to-date and supports further developing and articulating a shared vision for learning and development from birth through post-primary education. The six cross-cutting themes are evident in Council's programme of work for learners from birth through to the end of second-level:

1. Focusing on **dispositions, competencies** and **skills** when developing curricula
2. Including the **voice of learners** in the process of curriculum development
3. Contributing to greater **autonomy** and **support** for practitioners and teachers
4. Establishing the focus on **the impact of teaching on learning** as the focal point of educational change
5. Designing and developing curricula to include **ALL Learners**
6. Paying attention to questions of **continuity/progression** across sectors and times of **transition**.

These six themes overlap and intersect. They are not exhaustive, but they are particularly significant in the context of the actions outlined for each strategic goal.