NCCA

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

Strategic Plan
2022–2025

March 2022

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Foreword

As I write this foreword to the Council's new four-year Strategic Plan, I do so at a time when the optimism of emerging from a global pandemic which dominated every aspect of our lives since early 2020, is overshadowed by events unfolding 3,000km away. This brings another stark reminder of the broad national and international context in which education takes place and which impacts so acutely on the work of early childhood settings and primary and post-primary schools. Yet within these developments, we find welcome confirmation and affirmation of the importance of holding firm to a clear vision of what we aspire to and hope for in the education of young people from early childhood through to the end of senior cycle.

This new Strategic Plan builds on the Council's curriculum and assessment work over the past three years and sets out actions in pursuit of a vision whereby all children and students can experience and benefit from enjoyable, engaging, relevant and appropriately challenging experiences to support learning, living in, contributing to, caring for, and working in a changing world. The eight guiding principles and four values at the heart of the strategy, characterise the highly collaborative and evidence-informed processes through which the Council develops its advice for the Minister for Education. Through these processes, the strategy strives for ambitious and responsive curriculum redevelopment and enactment. Nested within and shaped by sectoral identities, such work also supports systemic priorities, including transitions, inclusive and engaging pedagogies, digital technologies, wellbeing, and a commitment to global issues such as sustainability and social justice.

While the strategy is pitched at a level enabling flexibility, agility and responsiveness alongside creativity and innovation, it also provides concrete direction for curriculum and assessment developments in early childhood, primary and post-primary education. It's no coincidence that 'People and culture' is the first enabler presented in the strategy. Key to implementing the strategy is the expertise, professionalism and commitment of NCCA staff and members of the Development Groups, Boards and Council. Their contribution and commitment to realising the strategy's vision will be significant. Good governance will continue to be central to the efficient and transparent running of the Council. This, together with ongoing investment in digital technologies and effective communications, will provide critical support for achieving the Council's strategic goals and fulfilling the vision and mission.

Through all of this, the Council will remain observant and sensitive to the ever-changing landscape in which early childhood settings and schools work, and in which teaching and learning happens. The experiences and voices of young people, their teachers and setting/school leaders, and their parents will remain central to curriculum and assessment developments as we move forward with optimism, commitment, and ambition to do our collective best for the education of our young people.

Prof Mary O'Sullivan, Chairperson

Introduction

'Education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world' are some of the most frequently referenced words from the late Nelson Mandela. For him, the purpose of education was manifold and, importantly, had the power to be liberating and transformative. Throughout the 2019-2021 period, the focus of NCCA's last strategic plan, a clear purpose of education guided the Council's high-level review of senior cycle education and of the primary curriculum, the preparatory work to update *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, and the ongoing support for the enactment of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* 2015. This purpose to

- enable all young people[1] to learn for and enjoy the 'here and now',
- support holistic development and help all young people to live in, contribute to, care for and work in a changing world,
- nurture respect and dignity for all, and
- create lovers of learning,

underpins this new Strategic Plan which, in turn, sets out ambitious goals for curriculum and assessment. The collective aim of these goals is that the experiences and opportunities presented across the educational continuum can enable every young person to thrive and fulfil their potential, to have choice and flexibility in their experiences, and be respected, supported and empowered as young citizens.

The Strategic Plan has been developed during a global pandemic, a pandemic that has upended every aspect of life, including education. Much is already written and debated about key learnings from COVID-19. While we can reflect on our experience to date, much is yet unknown about the true impact on and for young people, their practitioners/teachers and school leaders, and their parents, families and communities. One key message which the pandemic boldly and directly reminded us of is the central importance of schools and early childhood settings in the lives of children and students, and the crucial role these play in the education and holistic development of a young person. We saw, first-hand, how schools and settings sit at the heart of the social fabric of communities. We also saw the centrality of relationships in education, between child/student and practitioner/teacher, between practitioners/teachers and parents, and between practitioners/teachers and school leaders. While there is much yet to be learned, including from research underway by NCCA and other organisations and individuals, the pandemic has already alerted us to important questions about curriculum and assessment:

- What are the key values that we hold in education?
- Does our curriculum do enough to take account of the uniqueness of each young person and support their learning from early childhood to senior cycle?

[1] This strategy uses 'children' when referring to early childhood settings and primary schools, and 'students' when referring to post-primary schools. The term 'young people' is used to include all young learners across the education continuum from early childhood to the end of senior cycle.

- What learning might we take, as a system, about how we can better support home-school/-setting partnerships?
- How might assessment practices, including formative assessment, be developed further to provide more comprehensive evidence of each young person's learning across the curriculum and at each stage of education?

This Strategic Plan brings unique opportunities, alongside challenges, for what can be achieved through curriculum and assessment for all young people in our education system. Building on the recent extensive consultation and engagement with schools, education partners and wider stakeholders, and ongoing research with schools and settings, the next four years will see the redevelopment of curriculum and assessment for 11 years of a young person's education—the curriculum for primary and senior cycle. Reflections on the need for the development of alternative arrangements during the pandemic for state certification enabling progression beyond senior cycle, have contributed to an increased expectation and desire, amongst the general public, for revisiting how we conceptualise the senior cycle stage of education. Together with the findings from NCCA's extensive review between 2016 and 2019, this creates a significant opportunity to redevelop senior cycle so that it provides appropriate support to every young person during this important stage of education. These once-in-a-generation developments at both primary and senior cycle bring significant opportunity to be creative, imaginative and bold while building on current strengths and realities of the system as we design curriculum and assessment arrangements for young people in Irish society. The next four years will also involve NCCA in completing the first review and updating of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* ensuring that the framework reflects advances in research, changing societal priorities such as climate action and sustainability, and the experience of implementing the framework across settings. Responding to implementation experiences as captured in the NCCA-funded multi-dimensional research study underway, will be central to shaping ongoing work to support the *Framework for Junior Cycle* 2015.

Our work to date has shown us that curriculum and assessment development needs to go hand in hand with close attention to prevailing circumstances in schools and settings, including governance structures and demands, and to the conditions necessary for effective enactment of those curriculum and assessment changes in and by schools and settings, as well as building system-wide capacity to manage and support change. By working closely with educational settings, the education partners and wider stakeholders, we will continue to take account of, advocate for and support the realisation of the many conditions needed, such as professional development; resources; sequencing, pacing and timing of change; communications; policy alignment; and evaluation and research.

The next four years will bring curriculum and assessment milestones, including the 15th anniversary of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (2024); the 25th anniversary of the Primary School Curriculum (2024); the 100th anniversary of the Leaving Certificate (2024); and the 10th anniversary of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2025). In addition, NCCA will mark its 40th anniversary in 2024. Together, these provide opportunities to reflect, as an organisation

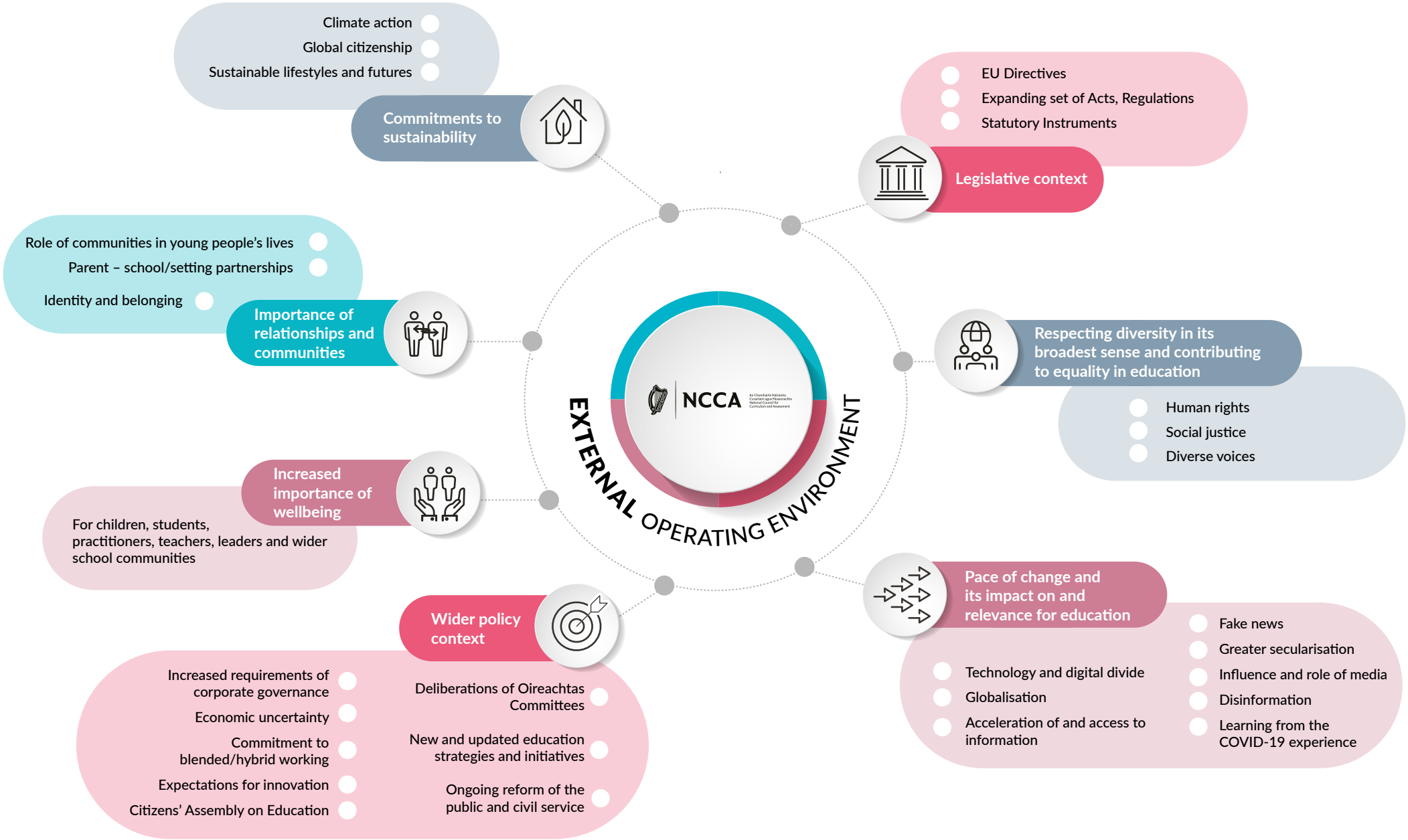
within the education system, on the successes and impact of curriculum and assessment developments while keeping a forward-looking perspective on how we can build on and further improve experiences for all young people from early childhood to the end of post-primary education.

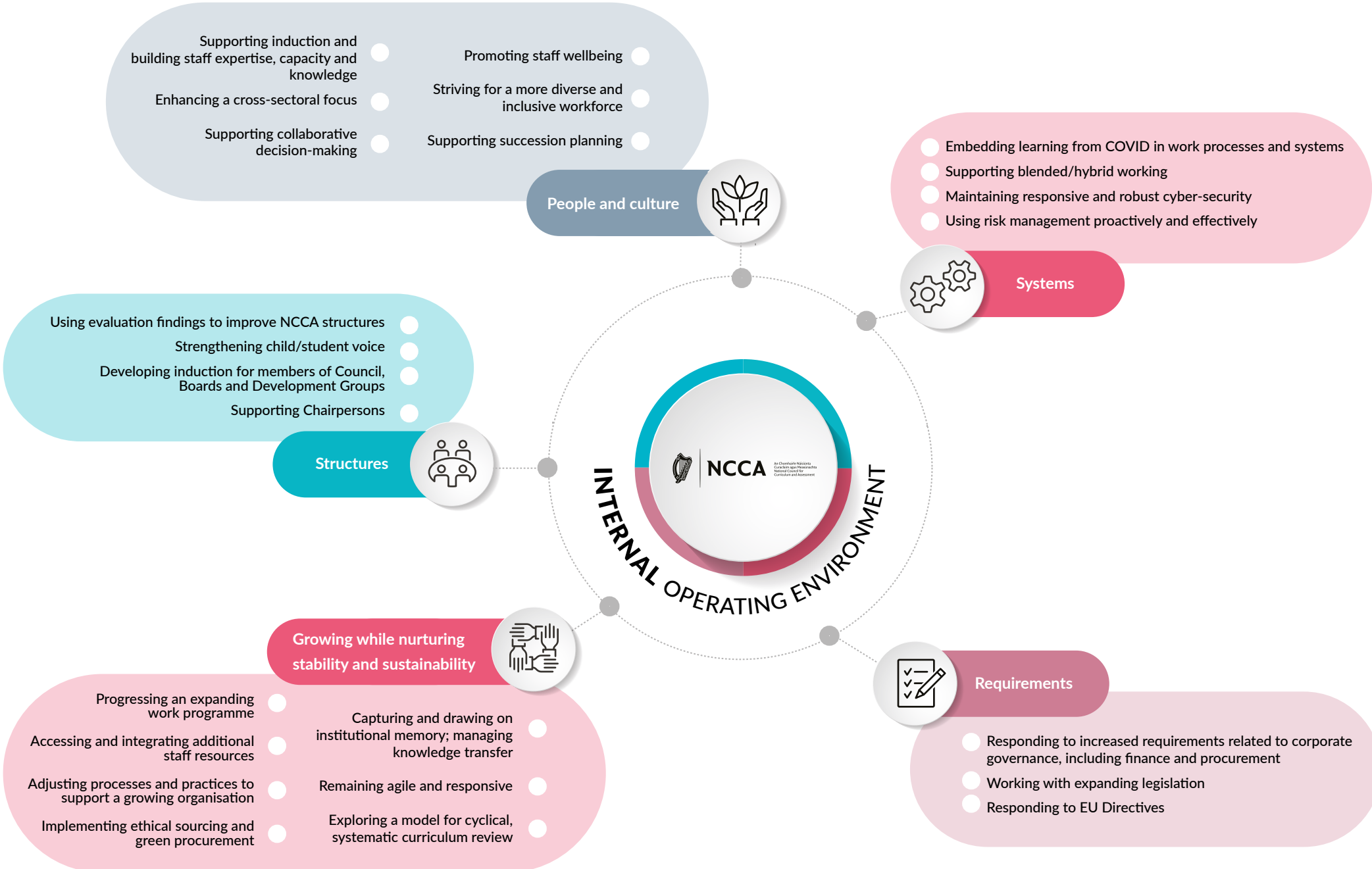
While great care has been taken to develop a strategy for 2022 to 2025 that combines creativity and innovation with realism and pragmatism, any strategy must be sufficiently agile to allow for change over time. This Strategic Plan is, of necessity, a living document and may change as curriculum and assessment developments are progressed, as new opportunities to innovate arise or as new national policy priorities are set. Its implementation is premised on the timely availability of sufficient resources and sustained support from the education partners for the strategic goals and actions presented on pages 16-18.

Context for our work

The years 2019-2021 saw NCCA's work taking place initially in an environment where the country had returned to relative economic prosperity after a long period of austerity. From a curriculum and assessment perspective, NCCA continued to work with settings and schools, the education partners and wider stakeholders to look closely at early childhood, primary and post-primary with a view to further improving the curriculum to ensure that it remains relevant and responsive to young people's lives and the world in which they live. Once again, we find ourselves in a situation where much remains uncertain about the period ahead, including the true impact of the pandemic on the lives of children and students and on their education, on the wellbeing of citizens, and on the economic and environmental future facing us nationally and globally. History reminds us that challenges abound in the aftermath of such profound events as a global pandemic, but so too do opportunities. That same history also shows the importance of leadership at all levels of society in enabling renewal, growth and development. In the context of such challenges and opportunities, NCCA aims to move forward, with appropriate care and sensitivity, with developments in curriculum and assessment to ensure that young people's experiences in settings and schools enable them to live a full life as young citizens, creating potential for their future lives and employment chances, and to develop as responsible, resilient and compassionate actors for social justice, climate action, sustainability and equality. Through this, NCCA also aspires to contribute meaningfully to addressing challenges faced by Ireland's society, environment and economy and that of the international community, particularly the challenges faced by families and young people.

Some of the main external and internal factors that will likely influence the work of NCCA over the period of this strategy and beyond, are set out on the following pages.


Climate action
Global citizenship
Sustainable lifestyles and futures
Commitments to sustainability
EU Directives
Expanding set of Acts, Regulations
Statutory Instruments
Legislative context
Role of communities in young people's lives
Parent – school/setting partnerships
Identity and belonging
Importance of relationships and communities
NCCA
EXTERNAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT
Respecting diversity in its broadest sense and contributing to equality in education
Human rights
Social justice
Diverse voices
Increased importance of wellbeing
For children, students, practitioners, teachers, leaders and wider school communities
Wider policy context
Increased requirements of corporate governance
Economic uncertainty
Commitment to blended/hybrid working
Expectations for innovation
Citizens' Assembly on Education
Deliberations of Oireachtas Committees
New and updated education strategies and initiatives
Ongoing reform of the public and civil service
Pace of change and its impact on and relevance for education
Technology and digital divide
Globalisation
Acceleration of and access to information
Fake news
Greater secularisation
Influence and role of media
Disinformation
Learning from the COVID-19 experience


Supporting induction and building staff expertise, capacity and knowledge
Enhancing a cross-sectoral focus
Supporting collaborative decision-making
Promoting staff wellbeing
Striving for a more diverse and inclusive workforce
Supporting succession planning
People and culture
Embedding learning from COVID in work processes and systems
Supporting blended/hybrid working
Maintaining responsive and robust cyber-security
Using risk management proactively and effectively
Systems
Using evaluation findings to improve NCCA structures
Strengthening child/student voice
Developing induction for members of Council, Boards and Development Groups
Supporting Chairpersons
Structures
NCCA
INTERNAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT
Growing while nurturing stability and sustainability
Progressing an expanding work programme
Accessing and integrating additional staff resources
Adjusting processes and practices to support a growing organisation
Implementing ethical sourcing and green procurement
Capturing and drawing on institutional memory; managing knowledge transfer
Remaining agile and responsive
Exploring a model for cyclical, systematic curriculum review
Requirements
Responding to increased requirements related to corporate governance, including finance and procurement
Working with expanding legislation
Responding to EU Directives

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Our remit

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was established in 1987 as a successor to the Curriculum and Examinations Board and was reconstituted fourteen years later, in July 2001, as a statutory body. The role of the Council is set out in Section 41.1 (a and b) of the 1998 Education Act, and sees the Council advising the Minister for Education 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.

Our structure

The Council is a representative structure appointed by the Minister for Education. It has 25 members who represent teachers, early childhood practitioners, school managers, parents, business interests, trade unions, Irish language organisations, special education, and other educational interests. Members also include representatives of the Department of Education, the State Examinations Commission, a nominee of the Minister for Education, and of the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The Minister appoints the Chairperson. The Council meets every four-six weeks and approximately seven times per year with additional meetings scheduled as required. As a public sector body, the governance arrangements for the Council, its structures and work are set out in the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016) and the Terms of Reference. This new strategic plan will be overseen by the Council appointed, for the first time in NCCA's history, for a four-year term from March 2022 to February 2026.

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff, led by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). There is a clear division between the roles and responsibilities of the Council Chairperson and the CEO. The Chairperson leads the work of the Council in determining the strategic priorities and direction for the organisation and the CEO leads the executive staff and their work with Council's enabling structures—Boards and Development Groups—to operationalise these priorities (see Figure 1). The organisation is funded through a grant from the Department of Education.

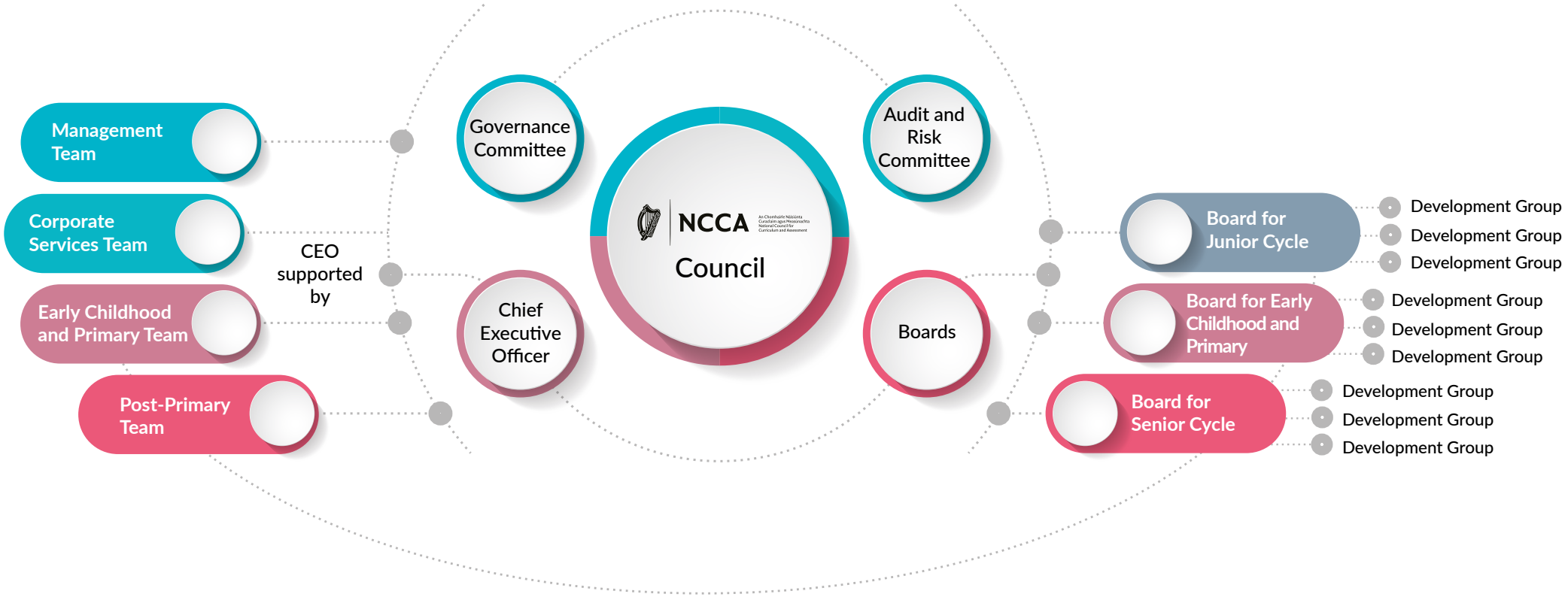


Figure 1: NCCA's structure

Key achievements through the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan

While much of the 2019-2021 period, the focus of NCCA's last strategic plan, came to be dominated by the global pandemic caused by the Coronavirus, there were many key achievements in the Council's curriculum and assessment work. In addition, the organisation made significant contributions to government departments' work in responding to the pandemic—supporting reporting to parents, revising assessment arrangements, providing guidance for teaching and learning, and contributing to the HSE's School Support Teams through re-assignment. Table 1 captures key curriculum and assessment achievements which now provide the basis for NCCA's work for the next four years.

Table 1: Key achievements

Early Childhood and Primary	• Re-designed and enhanced online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide • Expanded provision for continuing professional development through the National Síolta Aistear Initiative • Updating of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* underway • New *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* and an online toolkit • Coding in Primary Schools Initiative • *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* • *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* with support materials • Three reports from the *Children's School Lives* longitudinal study
Post-Primary	• Annotated examples of student work and assessment tasks across subjects • Early enactment reviews of five junior cycle specifications • Review of the optional nature of history in the *Framework for Junior Cycle* • Multi-dimensional study initiated on the introduction and implementation of the *Framework for Junior Cycle* • Level 2 Learning Programmes reviewed and revised • Senior Cycle Review completed and Advisory Report issued to the Minister • One Leaving Certificate specification, one Junior Certificate specification and four Leaving Certificate Applied module descriptors reviewed and updated • Four new Leaving Certificate specifications developed • Eight draft Leaving Certificate specifications developed
Cross-sectoral	• Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education in primary and post-primary schools; online toolkits developed • Work supporting child/student voice • Work supporting Traveller Culture and History in the curriculum • Work supporting young people in detention and care settings • Work supporting Education for Sustainable Development • Consultation formats and tools enhanced
Governance and Corporate Affairs	• Compliance with requirements in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016, including areas of finance, procurement, audit and risk management • Range of governance policies reviewed and updated; new polices developed • Child Safeguarding Statement, guidelines and processes • Staff wellbeing and development promoted and supported • Government of Ireland branding and visual identity implemented • Research Strategy implemented • Enhanced external communications supporting work • Technology-enabled improvements in work processes, practices and collaboration opportunities

Vision, mission and principles

Our vision

Our vision is to lead and sustain developments in curriculum and assessment that are sufficiently far-reaching so that all children and students can experience and benefit from enjoyable, engaging, relevant and appropriately challenging experiences to support learning, living in, contributing to, caring for, and working in a changing world.

Our mission

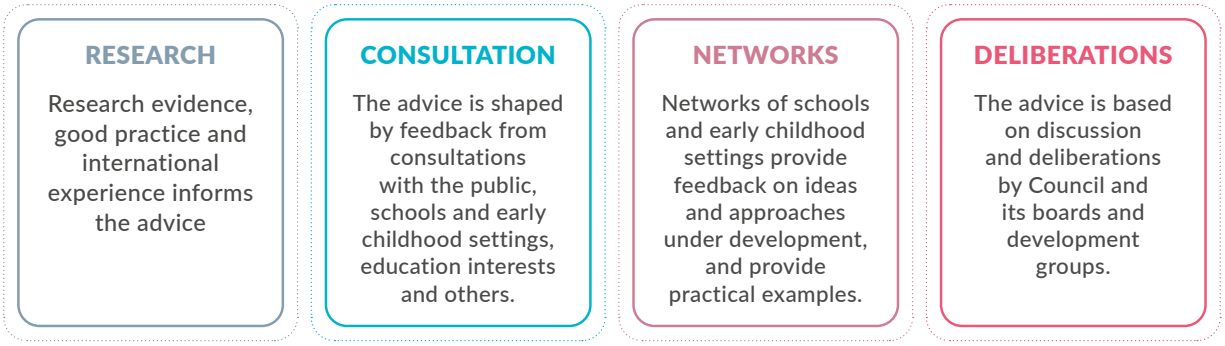
Our mission is to advise the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to senior cycle in post-primary school by

- working in partnership with children, students, teachers, practitioners, parents, school leaders, managers, and others
- generating, using and sharing research as a basis for advice, discussion and debate on teaching, learning and assessment
- collaborating with education partners and wider stakeholders to create conditions to support the successful enactment of curriculum and assessment developments
- having close regard for inclusion, quality, relevance and progression in young people's experience of curriculum and assessment.[2]

Our principles

The Council's advice on curriculum and assessment is developed through four interconnected areas of activity—research, networks, consultations and deliberations (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Development process



The overall process of formulating advice for the Minister is evidence-informed, iterative and responsive with children/students and practitioners/teachers at the heart of the Council's curriculum and assessment decisions.

[2] The NCCA's remit is set out in Article 41 of the Education Act 1998 – Education Act, 1998, Section 41 (irishstatutebook.ie).

The development of the advice is underpinned by the eight principles in Table 2. Threaded through these principles are the values of respect, equality, professionalism and integrity that are central to NCCA's work on curriculum and assessment.

Table 2: Principles underpinning the development of advice

Principle	How the principle is reflected in our work
Inclusion and diversity	Our work enables the development of curriculum and assessment that recognises the uniqueness and rights of each young person and the importance of supporting all children/students to reach their potential.
Partnership and collaboration	Using a variety of communication formats, we work in partnership with early childhood settings and schools, and with the wider education sector, national and international, to shape curriculum and assessment developments.
Consultation	We consult widely and use a variety of tools and processes to ensure that the rich diversity of voices, perspectives and views that makes up Irish society, informs our work.
Child/student voice	Our work respects and actively promotes the right of children and students to have their voices heard and included in shaping the curriculum and assessment advice we develop. Our engagement with young people is age- and stage-appropriate and takes account of how they communicate.
Research-informed	We draw heavily on a wide range of research, national and international, to inform our thinking on curriculum and assessment.
Innovation and responsiveness	We value inquiry and are open to new ideas and thinking as we build on the education system's strengths and develop curriculum and assessment advice that is responsive and relevant while being appropriately innovative and ambitious.
Coherence, continuity and progression	We pay attention to curriculum and assessment coherence within and across sectors to support appropriate continuity and progression in a young person's educational journey while respecting the distinct nature and identity of each stage and sector.
Learning organisation	We are committed to improving the educational experience of young people. In support of this, we promote and nurture a culture of learning amongst our staff and within the structures of NCCA.

Strategic goals

NCCA's work over the next four years centres on three strategic goals in the areas of *Curriculum and Assessment*, *Engagement and Collaboration*, and *Knowledge and Research*.

Strategic goal 1: Curriculum and Assessment

We will develop innovative and relevant curriculum and assessment for inclusion, engagement, quality, progression and continuity across sectors and across educational transitions. We will promote and exemplify effective pedagogies to support all young people as engaged and active learners with opportunities for choice and decision-making. We will align pedagogy and assessment with curriculum purposes, and support reporting that demonstrates the range of young people's progress and achievements.

In achieving this strategic goal, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SG1.1	Update ***Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*** ensuring its continued support for high quality learning experiences for children throughout their early childhood years and enabling appropriate coherence with the redeveloped primary curriculum.
SG1.2	Strengthen and actively support the ***National Síolta Aistear Initiative***, with particular reference to the online ***Aistear Síolta Practice Guide***.
SG1.3	Finalise the ***Primary Curriculum Framework*** and redevelop the curriculum for primary and special schools ensuring its continued support for high quality teaching, learning and assessment experiences and outcomes, and enabling appropriate coherence with the updated Aistear framework and the Framework for Junior Cycle.
SG1.4	Review and update pedagogical guidance as well as assessment and reporting arrangements for primary and special schools in light of the redeveloped **primary school curriculum**.
SG1.5	Support post-primary schools in using the ***Framework for Junior Cycle*** as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes, and in implementing developments arising from the review of **senior cycle**.
SG1.6	Informed by research, revisit the ***Framework for Junior Cycle*** and update if and as needed to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
SG1.7	Guided by a clear purpose and vision, redevelop **senior cycle** to provide more varied learning pathways and greater choice and flexibility for progression for all students.
SG1.8	Broaden assessment arrangements and reporting within and at the end of **senior cycle** to reflect the breadth and depth of students' progress and achievement and to support transition from school and other educational settings.
SG1.9	Review and update, as appropriate, existing curriculum and assessment specifications and develop new curriculum and assessment specifications in response to identified needs and policy imperatives, including the areas of education for sustainable development and digital technologies.
SG1.10	Strengthen the focus on and promotion of effective pedagogies and transitions to support progression in learning for all young people.

Number	Action
SG1.11	Develop curriculum and assessment advice that actively promotes and supports inclusive education enabling all young people to progress in their learning and to feel valued, motivated and fulfilled in their experience of learning.
SG1.12	Further develop and enhance quality-assured examples of children's learning that illustrate expectations for learners and contribute to shared understanding of learning progressions at primary level.
SG1.13	Further develop and enhance quality-assured examples of students' work that illustrate expectations for students and contribute to shared understanding of standards across junior cycle.
SG1.14	Develop and implement a model of cyclical, systematic curriculum review, encompassing all sectors and building on current review and development processes.

Strategic goal 2: Engagement and Collaboration

We will work with and support teachers, practitioners, children, students, parents and the partners in education to inform curriculum and assessment development and enactment, build capacity for change, and model ways of working together. Through engagement and collaboration, we will influence, generate and share new knowledge about curriculum, assessment and enactment processes. We will advocate for evidence-informed teaching, learning and assessment practices.

In achieving this strategic goal, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SG2.1	Work with partners in education, support services, and further and higher education institutions providing early years educator programmes and initial teacher education to build capacity for curriculum change across the education system.
SG2.2	Ensure diverse voices and the experiences of children, students, parents and communities are a central part of discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.
SG2.3	Liaise and collaborate with a range of organisations and government departments to align developments and support a coherent approach to curriculum enactment.
SG2.4	Support and participate in research, curriculum and assessment initiatives, nationally and internationally, through strategic collaborations with other agencies, organisations and networks.
SG2.5	Support the capacity of schools and settings to develop, introduce and enact change in curriculum and assessment.

Strategic goal 3: Knowledge and Research

We will generate, use and disseminate rigorous and robust research evidence to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in all educational settings. Through research design, we will engage with the diversity of stakeholders in the education system, including children, students, parents, teachers/practitioners and school leaders, in authentic, collaborative and meaningful ways. We will share and use NCCA-generated research and the work of other researchers to stimulate and inform the discourse on matters related to our curriculum and assessment advice. We will contribute to capacity-building in research across the education system.

In achieving this strategic goal, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SG3.1	Use research evidence from a wide range of internal and external sources, including findings from longitudinal research and consultation processes, to inform curriculum and assessment developments.
SG3.2	Publish and implement the Research Strategy 2022–2025.
SG3.3	Disseminate, nationally and internationally, the outcomes and findings of research from internal and external sources to stimulate and inform debate.
SG3.4	Promote access, sharing and interrogation of research findings and new knowledge by staff and members of NCCA structures as an integral part of their work.
SG3.5	Advocate for and support research capacity-building in early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools, furthering the potential for an evidence-based culture for curriculum and assessment innovation and development.

Strategic enablers

Four strategic enablers—*People and organisational culture*, *Governance*, *Information and Communications Technology*, and *Communication*—provide critical support for achieving the three strategic goals over the next four years. Each enabler requires significant investment and plays a central role in fulfilling NCCA's vision and mission.

Strategic enabler 1: People and organisational culture

> **People are the most important drivers of success in the Civil Service. It is incumbent on us to put the right tools and supports in place so that civil servants are empowered to excel individually, in teams, and in the Departments and Offices in which they work.**
>
> **(People Strategy for the Civil Service for 2017 to 2020)**

NCCA's people and organisational culture are central to implementing this strategy. We will provide a vibrant, positive and safe workplace where people can perform to the best of their abilities, working collaboratively and creatively with others in support of our strategic goals.

In supporting the achievement of the three strategic goals, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SE1.1	Develop and implement a People Strategy to reflect and further develop the positive and supportive practices that allow us all to work at our best and contribute to a vibrant and effective workplace.
SE1.2	Implement blended working arrangements which build on the COVID experience, support NCCA's strategic goals and reflect national policies and guidelines.
SE1.3	Continue to foster a culture of learning and development, facilitated by Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), which encourages and supports staff to develop and share their competences, knowledge and expertise from induction onwards.
SE1.4	Support and promote positive wellbeing in NCCA, including employee wellbeing, through continued reflection and engagement.
SE1.5	Build on the findings of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey 2020 to enhance NCCA's positive, inclusive, and supportive workplace culture, in an environment grounded in mutual respect where all feel comfortable and empowered to contribute to and within their workplace.
SE1.6	Develop NCCA's people, including people managers, across the whole of their NCCA career to acquire the leadership and management skills required to sustain NCCA in its work and to share their knowledge with colleagues ensuring continuity.

Strategic enabler 2: Governance

We will develop NCCA governance and organisational structures, processes, skills and competences effectively to support the achievement of the three strategic goals while ensuring compliance with the *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* (2016).

In supporting the achievement of the three strategic goals, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SE2.1	Support the work of Council, Audit and Risk Committee, Governance Committee and other structures.
SE2.2	Review the effectiveness of organisational and enabling structures and implement findings.
SE2.3	Maintain and further develop the Corporate Governance Framework and associated policies.
SE2.4	Maintain appropriate risk management policies and procedures in line with the risk appetite of Council.
SE2.5	Maintain and further develop robust financial systems and internal controls, producing audited Financial Statements to the deadlines and standards required.
SE2.6	Adhere to public procurement guidelines and promote the use of environmental and social considerations in public procurement.
SE2.7	Meet all legal and statutory requirements relevant to the organisation.
SE2.8	Maintain and further develop customer service, both internally and externally, to meet the needs of those who interact with us and the general public.

Strategic enabler 3: Information and Communications Technology

We will continue to invest in and use Information and Communications Technology to provide an important infrastructure in supporting the implementation of the strategic plan. The virtual environment in which much of our work is advanced requires ongoing maintenance, review and updating to ensure the effective management of data and systems, enabling our people to perform at their best and to achieve NCCA's vision and mission.

In supporting the achievement of the three strategic goals, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SE3.1	Use ICT innovatively to extend and enhance communication and advocacy with the public and to encourage debate and engagement in NCCA's work.
SE3.2	Take advantage of and use new and emerging technologies to support curriculum enactment, improve operational activities and efficiencies, security matters, and to reduce NCCA's carbon footprint.
SE3.3	Develop staff confidence and competence in using digital technologies.
SE3.4	Update and maintain NCCA websites in response to system need, customer feedback, statistics on web usage, legal requirements, and emerging developments in online and social media.

Strategic enabler 4: Communication

Communication, both internally and externally, plays a key role in NCCA's work. We will use clear and timely communications to build and maintain public trust in our work. We will ensure open communication channels within the organisation which contribute to a culture where people are valued, respected, involved in decision-making, and empowered to work to high standards.

In supporting the achievement of the three strategic goals, we will undertake the following actions.

Number	Action
SE4.1	Develop and implement a communications strategy that includes a strong outreach focus and integrates communications across channels in order to connect with audiences and increase public awareness of NCCA's role and how it carries out its work.
SE4.2	Capitalise on developments in digital technologies and in digital and print media to extend and enhance internal and external communications.
SE4.3	Further develop staff expertise in the area of communication, in Irish and English, including working with the media.
SE4.4	Continue to develop policy, systems and processes for providing open access to relevant data and for monitoring the effectiveness of this.
SE4.5	Gather and use internal and external feedback to inform and enhance effective communication approaches and strategies.

Monitoring and evaluating the plan

The implementation of NCCA's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the fulfilment of the vision and mission as part of this will be driven by the three strategic goals, *Curriculum and Assessment*, *Engagement and Collaboration*, and *Knowledge and Research* and supported by the enablers, *People and Organisational Culture*, *Governance*, *Information and Communications Technology*, and *Communication*. Monitoring and evaluating progress will be core to this.

NCCA's work is shaped by a wide range of policy and plans, such as the Programme for Government, the Department of Education Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 and annual Action Plans for Education, as well as evolving national priorities. This often requires NCCA to undertake new, unanticipated pieces of work. Furthermore, the unprecedented events of the last two years coupled with the pace of societal change reinforce the need for education systems to be agile and dynamic in responding to unforeseen challenges. This new strategy has been designed as a living, dynamic document to support Council in responding with agility to developments and issues that may arise in the next four years. This is facilitated through monitoring and evaluation which ensures transparency, provides rich and timely insights into ongoing implementation, contributes to effective decision-making and affords opportunities for more in-depth review (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Monitoring and evaluating the strategy

Monitoring

Internally, the implementation of the Strategic Plan is supported through annual Plans of Work with key outputs and milestones enabling ongoing monitoring of progress across the strategic goals and enablers. The Performance Management and Development System coupled with the emphasis placed on professional development provides further opportunities for monitoring. Progress updates on specific areas of work in the strategy are provided to Council and its sub-committees through reports and presentations. This broad approach to monitoring also helps to identify changing needs and priorities and supports ongoing planning and decision-making. Published Annual Reports detail progress made in a given year in implementing the Strategic Plan. NCCA's Financial Statements form part of these reports. A 2021 external evaluation of Council recommended that Council consider developing its own work plan, as distinct from the annual Plans of Work referenced above. This could further support implementation of the new strategy.

Externally, the annual Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement with the Department of Education together with regular meetings with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit within the Department, provide further opportunities for monitoring and review. The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) conducts audits of receipts and expenditure and governance procedures and practices. Findings from these audits are published in the C&AG's Annual Reports.

Evaluating

Evaluation focuses on assessing both the impact and sustainability of the Strategic Plan. An evaluation will take place midway in the 2022-2025 period and will consider progress to date drawing on the monitoring and reporting work. This evaluation will explore the sustainability of the strategy for the subsequent two years and determine whether adjustments are required.

Reflecting further on the strategy towards the end of 2025 will provide an important opportunity to focus on the impact of NCCA's work across the four years and to consider key factors underpinning the successes and challenges in implementing the strategy. This final reflection, coupled with relevant government strategies and action plans and the broader societal context at the time, will inform the development of the next strategic plan.

NCCA

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