



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

NCCA Open Data Policy



Development and approval of policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this Open Data Policy is to establish the standards and practices the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will use in making data publicly available, in particular data associated with NCCA research.

About the NCCA

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is a statutory body of the Department of Education. The Council advises the Minister for Education on:

- curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools
- assessment procedures used in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum.

NCCA develops its advice through Research, Deliberations, Consultation and Networks, as shown in Figure 1.

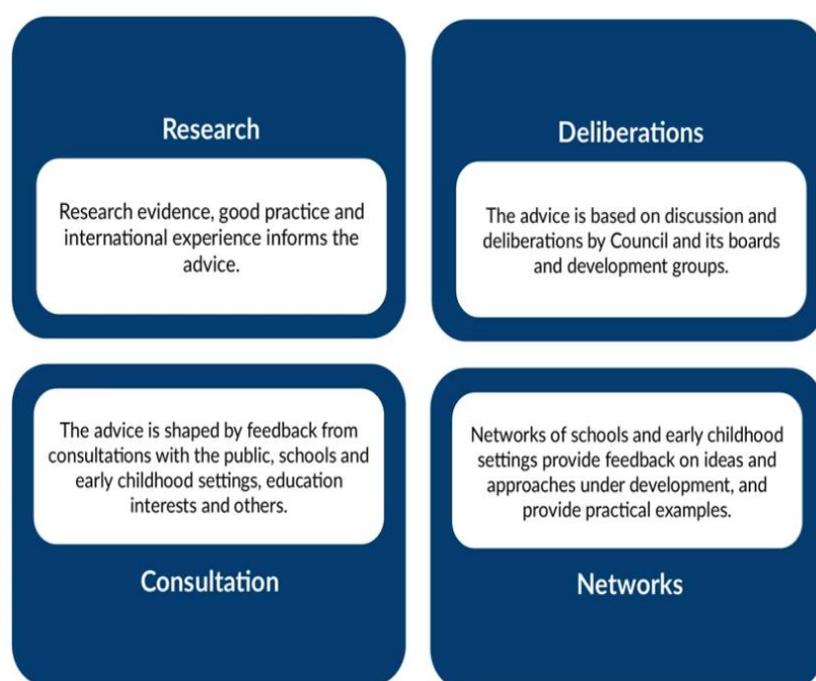


Figure 1: How NCCA develops advice

The Open Data Directive

The Open Data and the Re-Use of Public Sector Information Directive (2019) supersedes the Re-use of Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive. The objective of the Open Data Directive is to strengthen the EU's data-economy by increasing the amount of publicly held and publicly funded data available for re-use. In Ireland, this Directive became a statutory instrument on July 17th, 2021 (S.I. No. 376 of 2021).

The Directive introduces an obligation for public bodies to publish raw data by design and by default, unless access is restricted or excluded. Access can be restricted or excluded in respect of copyright, intellectual property, protection of personal data, Freedom of Information or if otherwise prohibited by law.

The goal behind the Open Data Directive, led by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, is to build open, transparent and accountable public governance in Ireland. Open Data is also a key component of the Public Service Reform programme, the ICT Strategy and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

NCCA and the Open Data Directive

NCCA's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 centres on 3 strategic goals: Curriculum and Assessment, Engagement and Collaboration, and Knowledge and Research. The Open Data Directive is relevant to all three goals, particularly those goals whose associated actions involve research from internal and external sources. Of particular relevance to establishing revised practices under the Open Data Directive are the five actions to achieve the goal of Knowledge and Research. One of these actions for example is to: "Disseminate, nationally and internationally, the outcomes and findings of research from internal and external sources to stimulate and inform debate." NCCA's Research Strategy, in its commitment to being open, transparent and accountable, is strongly aligned to the Open Data Directive. The principles which underpin all research in NCCA are Integrity, Inclusivity, Influence, Impact and Accessibility.

Our Open Data Practices

With a focus on the remit of NCCA, and the actions emanating from the Strategic Plan, NCCA will implement the Open Data Directive through its Open Data Policy. This will be done in a consistent and open manner, subject to compliance with other policies such as our Data Protection Policy. NCCA will create an Open Data Catalogue, which will serve as a data repository published under the open data policy. The catalogue will be available through data.gov.ie, the public sector Open Data Portal. The catalogue will comprise mainly research datasets, though all data identified as open data will be included. For example, datasets associated with:

- commissioned field research
- longitudinal studies
- feedback from consultations
- engagement with school networks.

NCCA will explore technical ways to ensure the practice of making data openly available meets the standards expected by the Open Data Directive and is consistent with the principles of our Research Strategy. This approach also attends to data protection requirements. This may include the use of third-party providers or simply using appropriate pages within NCCA's website, www.ncca.ie.

The open data policy is grounded in 4 practices: Identification, Publication, Access, Relevance.

1. Identification

It is important NCCA determines which research should be published under the Open Data Directive. The term research covers research conducted by NCCA as, for example, part of a consultation, or in collaboration with partners, or awarded by tender on behalf of NCCA. It is noted that almost all of this work is publicly funded and so falls within the scope of the new Open Data Directive.

NCCA will:

- review datasets, with the aim of publishing, where feasible
- establish a comprehensive dataset inventory
- develop an open data roadmap.

2. Publication

Most of NCCA's research is qualitative in nature, rather than quantitative. Making detailed data available to users is important while ensuring compliance with legal obligations, such as data protection and other policies related to data (see Appendix 2). This requires scrutiny of all datasets, to protect the rights of individuals and entities before publication on our Open Data Catalogue. All data that is re-used is subject to requirements of appropriate attribution to NCCA.

All data published on our Open Data Catalogue will be:

- reviewed to ensure compliance with other data policies
- available in open formats, accompanied by sufficient metadata¹ descriptions
- associated with an Open Data Licence.

3. Access

Accessibility is one of the five principles in our Research Strategy. Having access to raw data is of high value to users who wish to view, understand, analyse and re-use the information. It also entails making this open data as accessible as possible, to as many users as possible.

NCCA will endeavour to:

- engage with users at every stage of data sharing processes
- make suitable viewing tools available to technical and non-technical users
- use current data standards, such as DCAT.

¹ See Appendix 2: Definitions of key terms

4. Relevance

An aspect of reviewing datasets for publication will be relevance to the work of NCCA and to the wider community. In time, datasets may become obsolete, out of step with changing legislation or no longer relevant. Creating and maintaining a relevant open data catalogue is an essential practice, requiring periodic reviews.

NCCA will endeavour to:

- ensure datasets and links are relevant and up-to-date
- measure how datasets are used and gauge their impact
- safeguard its data collections.

These practices, and the definitions of key terms, are informed by the Open Data Publication Guidelines (v 1.0) published by the Open Data Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Updating information on the NCCA website

Information on the NCCA website regarding Re-Use of Public Sector Information (PSI) will require updating in line with the Open Data and PSI Directive. This will form part of the ongoing work required through this Open Data policy

Appendix 1: Text for surveys

With the Open Data Directive, NCCA has developed the following text to explain to survey respondents about the use of the information they return considering both GDPR and the Open Data Directive.

Standard text for use in NCCA surveys and consultations – anonymous data collection from the start

The NCCA is committed to protecting your privacy and does not collect personal information about you through this survey. Any personal information which you choose to share with us will be respected in line with the highest standards of security and confidentiality in accordance with GDPR (2016) and the Data Protection Acts (1998 - 2018). Further information on the NCCA's Data Protection Policy can be found [here](#).

NCCA, as a public body operating under the Open Data and Public Service Information Directive (2021), is required to publish publicly funded research. In accordance with the NCCA's Open Data Policy, any data from surveys and consultations that is identified to be published under the Open Data Directive, will be further anonymized and aggregated and only made available after the final report is completed. This is expected to be in [month / year].

Alternative text for use in NCCA surveys and consultations – when survey contains a question where individual/organisation agree to be named in final reports.

NOTE: individual names are NOT made part of open data release.

The NCCA is committed to protecting your privacy and does not collect personal information about you through this survey. Any personal information which you choose to share with us will be respected in line with the highest standards of security and confidentiality in accordance with GDPR (2016) and the Data Protection Acts (1998 - 2018). Further information on the NCCA's Data Protection Policy can be found [here](#).

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Appendix 2: Definitions of key terms

Dataset means a collection of raw, non-manipulated data, published or curated by a single entity. It is usually presented in tabular form with associated metadata, and which is machine readable.

Metadata provides information in addition to the dataset. It helps data consumers to understand better the meaning and structure of data. It can also clarify other issues, such as rights and license terms, the organization that generated the data, data quality, data access methods and the update schedule of datasets.

The **format** of an open dataset refers to the way in which the data is structured and made available for humans and machines.

A **raw dataset** is a structured file format (including geospatial formats) that can be read by a machine, such as spreadsheets, comma delimited files, Extensible Markup Language (XML), or JavaScript Object Notation (JSON). A raw dataset is NOT a report, a flyer, some web applications, a PDF document, or anything that cannot be exported or used by a machine.

Machine Readable Data is data in a format that can be read and processed automatically by a computer or other type of equipment. Note that a portable document format (PDF) is typically not machine readable.

Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) facilitate machine-to-machine communication and the seamless exchange of data, in a flexible and customised manner.

Open Data is data that can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone - subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike.

Data Catalogue Vocabulary (DCAT) enables a publisher to describe datasets and data services in a catalogue using a standard model and vocabulary that facilitates the consumption and aggregation of metadata from multiple catalogues. This can increase the discoverability of datasets and data services.

References

NCCA Research Strategy 2019-2021, available at: <https://ncca.ie/en/publications-and-research/research-strategy/>

NCCA Strategic Plan 2022-2025, available at: <https://ncca.ie/en/about-ncca/corporate-information/strategic-plan/>

NCCA Data Protection Policy, available at: <https://ncca.ie/en/legal-disclaimer-and-data-protection/>

Open Data Publication Handbook, available at: https://data.gov.ie/uploads/page_images/2021-05-11-144708.586537Open-Data-Publication-Guidelines-2021.pdf

Statutory Instrument No. 376/2021 - European Union (Open Data and Re-use of Public Sector Information) Regulations 2021, available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/376/made/en/print>



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