



NCCA

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



Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals responding to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

This template is intended to support you (and your colleagues/organisation) in developing a written submission in response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Please e-mail your completed submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Individual submission details

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Date	21 January 2021
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Organisation submission details

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The NCCA will publish written submissions received during the consultation. The submissions will include the author's/contributor's name/organisation. Do you consent to this submission being posted online?

Yes

No

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Please provide some brief background information on your organisation (if applicable).

I hold the Jean Monnet Chair in European Cultural Studies at the University of Limerick, the first such Chair in Ireland with a cultural and educational remit. I have worked with both primary and secondary schools since 2015 in the context of my Jean Monnet module “The European Union: Broadening the Perspective”.

The remainder of the template includes two sections. Section 1 invites your overall comments and observations on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Section 2 is structured to align with the six key messages related to the framework. Each message is summarised as a support for you in working on the submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Section 1

Please outline your overall response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

My overall response to the new Draft Curriculum is positive. I am particularly pleased to see the reintroduction of modern foreign languages in the curriculum and the fostering of active citizenship as well as Social and Environmental Education given prominence. Not being involved in primary education myself (except in smaller collaborative projects as part of a Jean Monnet Module) I do not feel qualified to comment on the details of the curriculum. I will limit myself to one general comment on the missing European dimension in the draft curriculum framework.

The Framework claims to prepare children for “tomorrow’s world” (2) and to take account of the many changes in all our lives since the last curriculum was written in 1999. However, one particular change which has happened more recently appears to be ignored completely, this is the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit. Although the State, both economically and politically, is continuously expanding its direct links both with the European Union and other EU member states since 2016, and the EU is expanding substantially the opportunities for direct links in the area of education via a multiplicity of ERASMUS+ programmes which also include primary schools (now considerably expanded in the area of Teacher Education; see *ERASMUS Programme Guide 2022*, pp. 99-112, 265-273), the draft curriculum takes no account of these obvious trends towards greater integration. In fact the word Europe/European is conspicuous by its absence in the whole text. The competency of “Being an active citizen”, the text states, “develops children’s capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels, and fosters their ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world.” (p. 8) There is of course nothing wrong with these worthwhile overall aims, but it is striking that the world outside Ireland appears to be treated equally as elements of the “global level”, as if another EU member state, such as France or Germany, had the same relationship with Ireland as China or Singapore. This does nothing to enable children, even at this young age, to grasp the basics of European citizenship which they themselves can see evidence of with their own eyes on the cover of the maroon passports they hold in their hands when going on holidays (which we all hope we will be able to do again soon). No distinction is made between EU languages and other languages. Neither do I see in the draft curriculum any reference to programmes such as *Blue Star* or the *Big Friendly Guide to the EU* (UCC). It has always been problematic that the European dimension in Irish education is left to EU bodies or the European Movement rather than being consciously and deliberately embedded in the State’s curricula. It seems that this trend is set to continue for the next decades if the curriculum framework in its present form should determine Irish primary education.

That Ireland’s membership and increasing integration in the European Union should not count among the priorities for ‘tomorrow’s children’ in the very year the country is marking its 50 years of EU membership, is surprising and, were it deliberate, to me not only as an educator committed to European Studies but also as a fellow EU citizen

somewhat disconcerting. The European Union as the most successful peace project in the history of the continent will only survive if citizens want it. Nobody wishes to indoctrinate children but they should at the very least be given the opportunity, from the earliest possibility onwards, to consider why Ireland has been a committed member of the EU for half a century. I hope the omission is just an oversight.

Section 2

Agency and flexibility in schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be for every child.
- Recognise teachers' and principals' agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum in their individual school context.
- Give more flexibility to schools in terms of planning and timetabling to identify and respond to priorities and opportunities.
- Connect with different school contexts in the education system.
- Give greater opportunities for flexibility and choice for children's learning.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to agency and flexibility in schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Provide a clear vision for children’s learning across the eight years of primary school.
- Link with learning experiences provided through the themes of the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and connect with the subjects, key skills and statements of learning in the *Framework for Junior Cycle*.
- Support educational transitions by connecting with what and how children learn at home, in preschool and post-primary school.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Emerging priorities for children’s learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Embed seven key competencies across children’s learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes. The Learning Outcomes and the Key Competencies are broad in nature to describe this wider understanding of learning.
- Have increased emphasis on some existing areas such as PE and SPHE (Wellbeing) and digital learning, and have new aspects such as Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, and a broader Arts Education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to emerging priorities for children’s learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be broad and balanced in purpose and content.
- Be structured in five broad curriculum areas;
 - Language
 - Mathematics, Science and Technology Education
 - Wellbeing
 - Social and Environmental Education
 - Arts Education.

(In addition to the five areas above, the Patron’s Programme is developed by a school’s patron with the aim of contributing to the child’s holistic development particularly from the religious and/or ethical perspective and in the process, underpins and supports the characteristic spirit of the school. These areas connect to the themes of *Aistear* and to the subject-based work in Junior Cycle.)

- Provide for an integrated learning experience, with curriculum areas in Stages 1 and 2 (junior Infants – second Class) and more subject-based learning in Stages 3 and 4 (third class – sixth class).
- Use broad learning outcomes to describe the expected learning and development for children.
- Incorporate the new *Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to changing how the curriculum is structured and presented. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Conceptualise assessment as an essential and critical part of teaching and learning.
- Highlight the importance of teachers’ professional judgement in supporting progression in children’s learning.
- Encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences.
- Recognise the significance of quality relationships and their impact on children’s learning.
- Recognise the role and influence of parents and families in children’s education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to the challenges and changing needs and priorities.

The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:

- Enhanced enjoyment of learning for children.
- Increased use of active methodologies for teaching and learning.
- Improved attainment levels in reading, mathematics and science as evidenced in national and international assessments.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Address curriculum overload at primary level.
- Take stock of strategies, initiatives and programmes and clarify priorities for children's learning.
- Link with *Aistear* and *the Framework for Junior Cycle*.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to challenges and changing needs and priorities. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Covid-19

Since the publication of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, Covid-19 has presented a big challenge for schools. Please give your views on the implications of schools' experience of the pandemic for the finalisation of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*.

Data Protection

The NCCA fully respects your right to privacy. Any personal information which you volunteer to the NCCA will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts. If you require further information related to data protection please visit www.ncca.ie/en/privacy-statement or you can contact the NCCA's Data Protection Officer at dpo@ncca.ie.

Thank you for your submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie