



NCCA

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

Annual Report 2022

Approved

C: 15.06.23: 4c
June 2023

Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	8
1. Overview of the work of the NCCA 2022.....	10
2. Progress on NCCA work in 2022.....	16
Strategic Goal 1 - Curriculum and Assessment.....	16
Strategic Goal 2 - Engagement and Collaboration.....	20
Strategic Goal 3 - Knowledge and Research	25
Strategic Enabler 1 – People and Organisational Culture	28
Strategic Enabler 2 – Governance.....	29
Strategic Enabler 3 – Information and Communications Technology.....	32
Strategic Enabler 4 – Communication	34
3. ABOUT THE NCCA.....	37
Vision.....	37
Mission.....	37
Governance	37
Council Responsibilities.....	38
Council Structure	40
Gender Balance in the Council membership.....	43
Green Procurement and Energy Efficiency.....	43
Equality and Human Rights	44
Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021.....	44
Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies	45
Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)	45
Governance Committee (GovC).....	46
Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses	46
Key Personnel Changes.....	49
Disclosures Required by Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).....	49
Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown.....	50

Legal Costs and Settlements	50
Consultancy Costs	50
Professional fees and consultancy	51
Hospitality Expenditure.....	51
Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	51
Child Protection	52
Staff.....	53
Boards and Development Groups.....	56
Finance	56
Appendix 1: NCCA meetings 2022	58
Appendix 2: NCCA presentations (selection) 2022.....	60
Appendix 3: Report on protected disclosures	62
Appendix 4: Statement of Internal Control	63
Scope of Responsibility	63
Purpose of the System of Internal Control	63
The NCCA and system of Internal Control	63
Audit and Risk Committee	64
Internal Control	65
Risk and Control framework	66
Ongoing Monitoring and Review	67
Salaries and Wages.....	67
Procurement	68
Review of Effectiveness	68
Internal Control Issues.....	68

Foreword

2022 saw Ireland's welcome emergence from the COVID pandemic which, for the previous two years, had a profound impact on all our lives, including those of young people in early childhood settings and schools. The emergence saw the NCCA staff and Council members being able, once again, to work together in person while, at the same time, identifying and retaining good online practices that served the organisation well during 2020 and 2021.

In addition to marking the beginning of the post-COVID period, the first quarter of 2022 saw the completion of the then Council's term of office and the appointment of a new Council by Minister Norma Foley, TD, in March for a four-year term until February 2026. Shortly after its appointment, the Minister extended the Council's membership to include, for the first time in its almost 40-year history, a student nominee. While child/student voice has been of great importance in NCCA's work for many years, this policy decision has further strengthened and cemented second-level students as an education partner in NCCA's development of curriculum and assessment advice.

Early into its term, the new Council published the *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* in which it set out an ambitious and exciting high-level roadmap designed 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. That strategy combined creativity and innovation with realism and pragmatism, while also being sufficiently agile to allow for change over its lifetime.

Four key areas of activity—research, networks, consultation, and deliberation—have remained at the heart of how NCCA develops its advice for the Minister. This, in turn, has enabled that advice to be evidence-informed, iterative and responsive with children/students and practitioners /teachers at the heart of the Council's curriculum and assessment decisions. Such decisions aim to continue to promote high standards of quality, equity and inclusion in education. This Annual Report for 2022 captures the extent of the work accomplished by the Council, its sub-committees, Development Groups and Boards, and the NCCA staff. As can be seen in the pages that follow, the work was of a significant scale and complexity. Some of the key areas included:

- the completion of phase 1 of the process to update Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- the finalisation of the Primary Curriculum Framework, the first framework of its kind for primary education in Ireland
- the publication of the first report from the new longitudinal study on the introduction and implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle
- the publication of the Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report which was the culmination of an extensive and expansive four-year review of senior cycle education.

We also initiated key strands of work on foot of priorities set out by the Minister in her response to the Council's Advisory Report, and we commenced key areas of research to underpin the redevelopment of the primary curriculum and the updating of Aistear. In addition, we continued to provide a wide range of practical, online supports for teaching, learning and assessing, including

examples of pedagogy in early childhood and primary education; student work and assessment items for junior cycle subjects; resources for reporting to parents; and we contributed to assessment arrangements for Leaving Certificate examinations for the 2022/2023 school year.

This Annual Report also sets out NCCA's corporate governance work. Like curriculum and assessment, this work continued to be wide-ranging and demanding during 2022. This year and through the support of the Institute of Public Administration, we completed an external review of the Council. The recommendations in the review report have provided much food for thought and helpful signposts for how the Council might continue to improve its governance and effectiveness. We also developed a new action plan in response to findings from the 2020 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey (CSEES) and we prepared the Council's first Open Data Policy in support of the new Regulations on Open Data and the re-use of Public Sector Information (2021). In addition, Corporate Services staff oversaw the effective management of day-to-day responsibilities in the areas of finance, human resources, procurement, customer service, health and safety, and Freedom of Information. Staff wellbeing remained a key priority throughout the year as staff were supported in their return, on a part-time basis, to NCCA's offices. Their experience of remote working helped to shape the organisation's development of a draft policy on blended working to be piloted in 2023. Finally, the Statement on Internal Control and the Financial Statement for 2022 were also developed and are included as appendices in this report.

The varied and demanding programme of work was made possible by the commitment, dedication and hard work of many people. This included the members of the Council itself—both former and present members; the representatives on the Boards for Early Childhood and Primary, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle; and those who contributed to NCCA's many development groups.

Partnership and consultation is a cornerstone of the work and, as such, the 2022 achievements were also made possible by the involvement of many stakeholders within the wider education system and in civic society. I'd also like to thank those in the Department of Education with whom the NCCA worked during the year—the Minister for Education, Norma Foley, TD., the Department's Management Team led by the Secretary General, Ms Bernie McNally, and colleagues in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit for the interest, input, co-operation, support and resourcing that enabled the Council to continue to deliver on its challenging and broad-ranging agenda.

Finally, but also importantly, the NCCA staff played a central role in progressing such a varied and ambitious work programme. Their expertise, enthusiasm and drive have been critical in ensuring the successful delivery on the Council's commitments.

As the new Chairperson since mid-December 2022, I want to thank Prof Mary O'Sullivan, Chairperson until February 28 and then Interim Chairperson until June 30, and Ms Emer Egan, Interim Chairperson until December 11, 2022, for the leadership they provided to the Council. I also want to record my thanks to the two Deputy Chairs, Dr Michael Redmond and Mr Joe McKeown, and members of our Audit and Risk Committee and Governance Committee for their work, advice and support since my appointment. ~~in December 2022.~~ The two sub-committees have continued to play a very central role in ensuring that the organisation strives for and achieves high standards in its financial management and corporate governance. I also want to acknowledge the work of Joe, Michael and Dr Finn Ó Murchú in providing significant leadership as Chairs to the Boards for Early Childhood and Primary, the Board for Senior Cycle and the Board for Junior Cycle, respectively.

As Chairperson, I look forward to working with the Council, the Chief Executive and the NCCA staff in 2023 as we continue to make progress on the many ambitious priorities set out in the *Strategic Plan 2022-2025* and in support of current and future national objectives.



Seán Ó Foghlú
Chairperson

Introduction

2022 certainly was a different year, in a positive way, compared to 2021. February saw our offices in Dublin and Portlaoise reopening on a fulltime basis and us being able to meet again in person with the members of our Council, Boards, and Development Groups. While the online environment served us well during the worst of the pandemic when we couldn't meet face-to-face, it was great to return to having in-depth discussions with the many education partners and wider stakeholders with whom we work, as well as the important, informal conversations on the fringes of meetings.

2022 was a particularly busy year on many fronts for NCCA. We welcomed ten new colleagues to the organisation with nine of these coming into new positions to support the Council's expanded work programme. For the first time in the history of the organisation and indeed the Irish education system, we are redeveloping the curriculum for eleven years of a young person's educational journey. This brings exciting, once-in-a-generation opportunities, as well as challenges, to further improve young people's experience of curriculum and assessment with regard for inclusion, quality, relevance and progression. Solid, evidence-informed foundations for this work continued to be laid during our work in 2022.

Much was achieved across the organisation and the infographics on pages 10 to 15 present highlights under the headings of Early Childhood, Primary, Post-primary, Cross-sectoral and Corporate Services. Of particular note was the publication of the Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report in March. This report recorded and presented the wide range of perspectives gathered during NCCA's four-year review of senior cycle. Responding to the report on March 29, the Minister set out her vision for a redeveloped senior cycle and in doing this, she requested the NCCA to prioritise a number of areas which formed the basis for our curriculum and assessment work in senior cycle for the remainder of the year. This included work on two new subjects; the programme statements for Transition Year, LCVP and LCA; the initiation of research on assessment and on the technical form of the curriculum; and preparatory work on SEN modules for students currently studying Junior Cycle L1 and L2 Learning Programmes.

In the case of early childhood, 2022 saw the completion of the first phase of work to update Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. This included an innovative consultation with babies, toddlers and young children. Our work in primary education included the finalisation of Ireland's first curriculum framework for primary schools. This drew on the findings from a two-year, multi-stranded consultation and an extensive research base. In addition, the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum was completed and presented to the Minister for her consideration.

Research continued to play a key role in helping to shape the Council's curriculum and assessment advice for the Minister. This included the publication of the first interim report from the longitudinal study on the introduction and implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle; the third report from the Children's School Lives longitudinal study; a detailed analysis of extensive literature on the four curriculum themes used in Aistear; and research in areas such as Traveller Culture and History, Education for Sustainable Development, Sign Language, Digital Technology, and the generation of text lists.

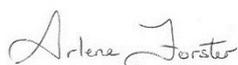
The country's move into the post-COVID context enabled NCCA, once again, to work directly and closely with children/students, practitioners/teachers, managers/school leaders, parents, and wider school communities to tease out curriculum and assessment ideas, to gather examples of teaching, learning and assessing, and of student work, and to consult on curriculum developments underway.

Sincere thanks to the many schools and early childhood settings which expressed interest in contributing to our work and which welcomed us and generously shared time, experience and thinking with us. Your voices and perspectives matter.

Good corporate governance is an essential aspect of the Council's work—it underpins everything NCCA does. This Annual Report sets out the scope and scale of NCCA's corporate governance work in 2022. Our collective experience of remote working during COVID enabled us to take what had worked well for us in that situation into our thinking and planning for a blended working scenario. This resulted in the development, through extensive staff consultation, of our first blended working policy for piloting in 2023. The advent of ten new staff during the year generated significant recruitment work and the development of induction and mentoring supports. The expansion of our curriculum and assessment work necessitated the establishment of new development groups and brought a significant increase in our consultative activity all of which was supported by the Corporate Services Team. Alongside this, day-to-day operations continued apace in areas such as finance, external reporting, human resources, customer service, the maintenance of offices, and health and safety. The Statement on Internal Control and the Financial Statement for 2022 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.

The Annual Report for 2022 is the first report associated with the Council's Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. The work undertaken by staff throughout the year was guided by this plan and by the Council's overall strategic direction and the members' ongoing support. In addition, the members of the representative boards and development groups, and the expert/advisory groups provided further support to the Executive across the many projects and areas of work. I also want to acknowledge the support from officials in the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; the many researchers at home and abroad with whom we worked; and the wide range of stakeholders who interacted with us. This support greatly contributed to the thinking, discussions and deliberations which helped shape curriculum and assessment advice in 2022.

Finally and importantly, sincere thanks to my colleagues, the staff of the NCCA. Curriculum and assessment development, underpinned by good corporate governance, places myriad demands on staff. In response, colleagues across the organisation brought specialist knowledge and expertise, high levels of energy and creativity, resilience and leadership, and immense commitment to their respective roles and work. All of this continued to be underpinned by a deep desire to provide high-quality advice on curriculum and assessment so that, together as an education system, we might achieve even better outcomes for our young people from early childhood to senior cycle.



Arlene Forster
Chief Executive

Overview of NCCA work in 2022



Early Childhood
Primary
Junior Cycle
Senior Cycle
Corporate Services



NCCA

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

Early Childhood



01

Aistear

- We completed Phase 1 of the consultation on updating *Aistear*.
- We consulted with babies, toddlers and young children, and published research to support the updating of *Aistear*.



04

Creativity and the arts

- We contributed to the inter-agency steering group overseeing the development of the arts.



02

National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative (NSAI)

- We continued to support the NSAI by progressing materials for continuing professional development and resources for parents in a variety of languages.



05

Citizen Participation Early Years Working Group

- We contributed to a working group, led by DCEDIY's Hub na nÓg team, to develop guidance materials for early years educators and other adult decision-makers consulting with children from birth to 5 years.



03

Aistear *Síolta* Practice Guide

- We continued to update resources across all 6 pillars of practice on the website, with a particular focus on birth to 3 year olds.
- We continued the series of 'Bite-sized CPD'.

Primary



01

Finalisation of the Primary Curriculum Framework

- We completed Phase two on the consultation on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.
- We reported on the consultation on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.
- We finalised the *Primary Curriculum Framework*.



02

Advisory Panel (Primary)

- We worked with the Advisory Panel (Primary) and stakeholders to develop the Supporting Systemwide Curriculum Change document.



03

Leading Out Seminars

- We hosted Leading Out seminar 6 – Pathways for Change – and 7 – Agency – involving a range of stakeholder organisations.



04

Children's School Lives study

- In collaboration with University College Dublin, we published Report 4 – Transitions – of the Children's School Lives Study in August 2022.



05

Preparation for Teaching and Learning

- In collaboration with NCSE, PDST, the Inspectorate and the Department of Education we hosted two information webinars to support the guidance.



06

Primary Language Curriculum/ Cúraclam Teanga na Bunscoile

- We published further support materials for teachers on the teaching of Irish in English-medium schools.



07

Schools Forum

- We met with the Schools Forum on 5 occasions in 2022.



08

Primary Mathematics Curriculum

- We completed the consultation on the draft Primary Mathematics.
- We finalised the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum*.



09

The Redeveloped Primary School Curriculum

- We consulted with school communities on the future STEM Education and Arts Education in a redeveloped Primary School Curriculum.
- We hosted an event with Initial Teacher Education providers on the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum.
- We commissioned literature review across the five curriculum areas of a redeveloped Primary School Curriculum.

Junior Cycle

Senior Cycle



01 Research

- Report from Year 1 of the research study on the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle published.
- Report on the early enactment review of JC Gaeilge curriculum specifications (T1 and T2) completed.
- Research to support work on developing text lists completed.
- Consultation report on the Background Paper and Brief for the review of Junior Cycle SPHE published.



02 Curriculum

- We completed the development of Junior Cycle History Short Course (Level 2) and the consultation on the draft Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum
- We published the revised Junior Cycle Physical Education curriculum.
- We completed the review of Junior Cycle Gaeilge (T1 & T2) We completed an early enactment of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes.
- JC English text lists were revised and published.



03 Examples of student work

- We developed, quality assured and published annotated examples of student work across a wide range of subjects to support the professional development of teachers.



01 Research

- We commissioned research on the impact of changes to the weighting and timing of additional assessment components in senior cycle.
- Report on the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Gaeilge curriculum specifications (T1 and T2) completed.
- We commissioned research on Key Competencies.
- We commenced research into the technical form of curriculum specifications.
- We published Background Papers and Briefs for the review of LC Business, LC Drama, Film and Theatre Studies, LC Climate Action and Sustainable Development, TY Programme Statement, and SC SPHE.



02 Senior Cycle Redevelopment

- We published the Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report.
- We started work on the development of a revised Transition Year Programme Statement, and curriculum specifications for LC Business and SC SPHE.
- We commenced the development of two new subjects, LC Drama, Film and Theatre Studies, and LC Climate Action and Sustainability, and a new SC programme for students currently following L1LPs and L2LPs in junior cycle.
- We worked directly with schools and consulted widely to inform all the curriculum developments outlined above.
- We updated the LCVP Programme Statement.



03 Assessment adjustments

- In collaboration with the SEC and the Department of Education, we contributed to the adjustments made as part of the assessment arrangements.
- for the Leaving Certificate examinations in the 2022/23 school year.

Cross Sectoral



01

Education for Sustainable Development

- We published a report on Education for Sustainable Development: International Curriculum Audit.



02

Traveller Culture and History

- We engaged with the Traveller Community to inform the development of resources to support teaching and learning of Traveller history and culture in the curriculum.



02

Inclusion

- We published guidelines to support teaching and learning in care and detention schools.

Corporate Services



01

Structures

Council and its structures continued their curriculum and assessment work with face to face meetings resuming for many groups post Covid:

- 8 meetings of Council
- 7 meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee
- 4 meetings of the Governance Committee
- 79 meetings of Boards, Development Groups and Advisory Groups.



02

Finance

- Quarterly management accounts were produced and approved by Council.
- Financial statements for 2022 were approved and certified by the OCAG following an external audit.
- The Risk Register was updated and approved by Council and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Audit and Risk Committee.



03

People and Organisational Culture

- Process of developing a People Strategy for NCCA commenced.
- A working group developed a Blended Working Policy for pilot in NCCA.



04

Professional Development

- Staff continued to avail of extensive professional development opportunities.
- Considerable numbers of staff undertook post-graduate research and education studies.



05

Policies approved by Council

- Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement signed with the Department of Education.
- Approved Open Data Policy.
- Updated Council's Terms of Reference.



06

Communications

- The info@ncca newsletter was shared widely to build awareness of NCCA's work and to encourage participation in consultations.

2. Progress on NCCA work in 2022

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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2022
<p>SG1.1 Update <i>Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i> 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</p>	<p>Phase 1 of updating <i>Aistear</i> completed</p>
<p>SG1.2 Strengthen and actively support the National Síolta Aistear Initiative, with particular reference to the online <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i>.</p>	<p>Resources to enhance learning experiences for children aged from birth to six years updated, extended and replaced where necessary</p> <p>New resources for babies and toddlers added to the <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i></p>

<p>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</p>	<p>Phase 2 of the consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework completed</p> <p>Reporting on the consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework completed</p> <p>Advice on the integration of modern languages in a redeveloped primary curriculum finalised</p> <p>Primary Curriculum Framework finalised</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Development of additional reporting templates to support children attending ASD classes completed</p> <p>Development and dissemination of a multi-media resource to support parents interpreting standardised test scores completed</p> <p>Information events and further guidance material to support Preparation for Teaching and Learning in primary schools completed</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>JC English text list revised and published</p> <p>Review of the early enactment of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes completed</p> <p>Consultation on the draft Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum completed</p> <p>Junior Cycle History Short Course (Level 2) completed</p> <p>Implementation of recently revised junior cycle subjects, short courses, L1LPs, and L2LPs supported</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report published</p> <p>Case study of LCVP published</p> <p>Updated LCVP Programme Statement published</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Consultation on the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum for stages 3 and 4 completed and connections between stages 1 and 2 and with Science and Technology identified</p> <p>Reporting on the consultation on the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum for stages 3 and 4 completed</p> <p>Primary Mathematics Curriculum for stages 1 to 4 finalised</p> <p>Consultation on the Background Paper and Brief for redevelopment of Junior Cycle SPHE specification completed and report published</p> <p>Consultation report on the draft Leaving Certificate Arabic curriculum specification completed</p> <p>Consultation report on the draft LC Classical Languages curriculum specifications completed</p> <p>Background Paper and brief for Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies developed, consulted on, and report published</p> <p>Background Paper and brief for Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development developed, consulted on, and report published</p> <p>Background Paper and brief for the review of Leaving Certificate Business developed, consulted on, and report published</p>

	<p>Background Paper and brief for the review of the Transition Year Programme Statement published and consultation commenced</p> <p>Background Paper and brief for the review of Senior Cycle SPHE published and consultation commenced</p> <p>Brief for the development of follow-on senior cycle modules for students following JC L1LPs and L2LPs approved.</p>
<p>SG1.10 Strengthen the focus on and promotion of effective pedagogies to support progression in learning for all children and young people.</p>	<p>Primary Language Toolkit to support the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile extended</p> <p>Dissemination activity including online events to support the use of the Primary Language Toolkit completed.</p>
<p>SG1.11 Develop curriculum and assessment advice that actively promotes and supports inclusive education enabling all children and young people to feel valued, motivated and fulfilled in their experience of learning.</p>	<p>LC English text lists revised and published</p> <p>Introduction of new and recently revised Leaving Certificate subjects and Leaving Certificate Applied module descriptors supported</p> <p>Support materials for children for whom English is an Additional Language enhanced</p> <p>Support materials as part of the SPHE/RSE online toolkits published</p> <p>Updated draft guidelines on the curriculum for young people in detention and care settings published</p> <p>Audit of existing senior cycle programmes, including all subjects and modules, to identify the most effective aspects of programmes and curriculum components completed.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>Examples of children’s learning as part of the Primary Language Toolkit developed, quality-assured and published.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Examples of student work for junior cycle curriculum specifications and Wellbeing programmes developed, quality assured and published.</p>

Strategic Goal 2 - Engagement and Collaboration

We will work with and support teachers, practitioners, children, students 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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2022
<p>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.</p>	<p>Leadership for Learning Seminar held in association with JCT</p> <p><i>Leading Out</i> seminars facilitated in collaboration with stakeholders and actions agreed and progressed</p> <p>NCCA and Advisory Panel (primary) engagements with the <i>From Purpose to Practice</i> paper with school communities and key stakeholders completed</p> <p>Event with the support services and initial teacher educators on the findings of the consultation on the <i>Draft Primary Curriculum Framework</i> convened</p>

	Materials to support reporting in primary schools completed.
<p>SG2.2 Ensure diverse voices and the experiences of children, young people and communities are part of discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.</p>	<p>Consultation with children on the proposals in the <i>Draft Primary Curriculum Framework</i> completed</p> <p>Consultation with school communities, including parents, on the proposals in the <i>Draft Primary Curriculum Framework</i> completed</p> <p>Consultation with babies, toddlers and young children as part of Phase 1 of updating <i>Aistear</i> completed</p> <p>Support provided for collaborative projects with various stakeholders and partners in embedding child/student voice practice at classroom and whole school level</p> <p>Models and processes to strengthen the diversity of child/student voice in curriculum and assessment developed and in use</p> <p>Work with early childhood settings and schools to gather examples of practice in Traveller culture and history progressed.</p>
<p>SG2.3 Liaise and collaborate with a range of organisations and government departments to align developments and support a coherent approach to curriculum enactment.</p>	<p>Initial scoping exercise, in partnership with SOLAS, of potential for the development of pathways from school into education and training settings, and the world of work completed</p> <p>Partner organisations kept informed on curriculum and assessment developments and approaches to implementation</p> <p>Work of the Early Years Education Policy Unit and Early Years Inspectorate supported</p>

Work of the DoE/DECDIY National Síolta Aistear Initiative Steering Group and its structures supported

Through partnership with DCEDIY, contribution made to the development of a national approach to support transitions as children move from preschool to primary school

Collaborations in place with organisations, including IPPN and CSL, to liaise with school leadership on the redevelopment of the primary curriculum

Work with education partners and other key stakeholders on advancing conditions for enabling curriculum change at primary level progressed

Work of DoE Primary Curriculum Steering Committee and the Primary Language Technical Working Group supported

Work of DE Advisory Group for State Examinations supported

Work of DoE Steering or Strategy Groups on ICT, Digital Strategy, CLIL, STEM, Literacy and Numeracy supported

Work of DoE ESD Advisory Committee supported

Work of DoE Advisory Committee for the Gaeltacht Education Policy, and the Steering Committee for Irish-medium education outside Gaeltacht areas supported

Work of DoE Advisory Committee for Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht areas supported

Work progressed through meetings of Joint Standing Groups, including SEC/NCCA and SOLAS/NCCA

Meetings with the Teaching Council convened

Meetings with organisations supporting Catholic Education convened

Work of the ERC National Advisory Committees on PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA and on National Assessments supported

Work of Irish Aid and Worldwide Global Schools development education grants committees supported

Ongoing engagement maintained with:

- An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta
- Better Start
- Education Support Centres in Ireland
- ETB Directors of Schools
- Junior Cycle for Teachers
- National Council for Guidance in Education
- National Council for Special Education
- Professional Development Service for Teachers
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

SG2.4 Support and participate in research, curriculum and assessment initiatives, nationally and internationally, through strategic collaborations with other agencies, organisations and networks.

CIDREE Expert Meetings, Conference and General Assembly attended

Education Policy Advisers Network meetings attended

Continued engagement with CCEA

Continued collaboration with the International Education Assessment Network (IEAN), including position paper on 'Learner voice in assessment' completed

Erasmus Plus Project, Computational Thinking in Mathematical Thinking (CTMT) meetings attended

	<p>Erasmus Plus Project, Looking to Understand Inclusion: Understanding the use of images by educators for social inclusion across the education, community and museum sector, meetings attended.</p>
<p>SG2.5 Support the capacity of schools and settings to develop, introduce and enact change in curriculum and assessment.</p>	<p>Examples of SPHE/RSE teaching and learning in primary, special, and post-primary schools published</p> <p>Ongoing support for the work of the Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science in Practice Group</p> <p>Work with schools and stakeholders on the early enactment review of Leaving Certificate Computer Science and Physical Education commenced</p> <p>Groups to support actions arising from the outcomes of the Senior Cycle Review convened</p> <p>Senior Cycle Advisory Panel convened</p> <p>Examples of practice supporting young people in detention and care settings published</p> <p>Engagement with the Schools Forum on the key directions for primary curriculum change progressed</p> <p>Work with schools to consult on the draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum completed.</p>

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 research 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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes

Progress in 2022

SG3.1 Use research evidence, including findings from longitudinal research and consultation processes, to inform curriculum and assessment developments.

Literature review to support the updating of Aistear completed

Suite of research papers to inform the development of curriculum specifications for a redeveloped Primary School Curriculum advanced

Suite of research papers on Digital Technology and the key competency of 'Being a Digital Learner' completed

International curriculum audit to explore the development of a curriculum in Irish Sign Language (ISL) for early childhood settings, primary, special and post-primary schools progressed

Reports 4 of Children's School Lives study published

Engagement with the Advisory Panel (primary) on the review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum progressed

Composite Reports on the Leading Out Seminar Series finalised

Research on the cognate processes of Pedagogy, Integration and Assessment as part of a redeveloped primary curriculum progressed

	<p>Report from Year 1 of the research study on the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle published</p> <p>Report on the consultation on the draft Leaving Certificate Gaeilge curriculum specifications (T1 and T2) completed</p> <p>Report on the early enactment review of JC Gaeilge curriculum specifications (T1 and T2) completed</p> <p>Report on Traveller Culture and History to support learning and teaching of the curriculum completed</p> <p>Report on Education for Sustainable Development: International Curriculum Audit published</p> <p>Report on research to support work on developing text lists completed</p> <p>Research on the impact of changes to the weighting and timing of additional assessment components in senior cycle commissioned.</p>
<p>SG3.2 Publish and implement the Research Strategy 2022–2025.</p>	<p>Research Strategy 2023-2026, including Ethical Statement, progressed.</p>
<p>SG3.3 Disseminate, nationally and internationally, the outcomes and findings of research we generate to stimulate and inform debate.</p>	<p>NCCA research outputs, including consultation reports, audits and literature reviews published and disseminated through multi-media summaries, events, social media, newsletters and other professional publications.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Online library facilities for staff established</p> <p>NCCA style guide and referencing protocol developed</p> <p>NCCA Research Day and Research Spotlight held</p> <p>Research Bulletin published</p>

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.

Phase 3 of the Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX) supported through the Research Alive Consortium

Strategic Enabler 1 – People and Organisational Culture

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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2022
<p>SE1.1 Develop 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.</p>	<p>Scope for a review of the organisation's structure to support achievement of the Council's strategic goals and to inform the People Strategy and Workforce Planning agreed</p> <p>People Strategy for NCCA outlined and development work continued</p> <p>Comfortable and efficient workspaces and offices continued to be provided with facilities effectively managed</p> <p>Leases reviewed based on changing organisational needs and work commenced to identify new premises.</p>
<p>SE1.2 Implement blended working arrangements which build on the COVID experience, support NCCA's strategic goals and reflect national policies and guidelines.</p>	<p>Draft blended working model developed in line with national guidelines and legislation and informed by staff consultation, and pilot commenced.</p>
<p>SE1.3 Continue to foster a culture of learning and development, facilitated by Performance Management Development (PMD), which encourages and supports staff to develop and share their competencies, knowledge and expertise from induction onwards</p>	<p>Performance Management and Development (PMD) cycle for 2022 completed</p> <p>Staff knowledge and understanding of curriculum and assessment, governance and corporate affairs continued to be developed through training, studies, research and other forms of professional development.</p>

SE1.4 Support and promote wellbeing in NCCA, including employee wellbeing, through continued reflection and engagement.	Wellbeing focus was a key part of discussions and staff consultation when developing Blended Working Policy.
SE1.5 Build on the findings of 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.	Action Plan continued to be implemented in response to findings in Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey 2020 (CSEES).
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.	Induction programme for new staff completed Mentoring programme in place for new staff with training provided for mentors.

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).

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2022
SE2.1 Support the work of Council, Audit and Risk Committee, Governance Committee and other structures.	Curriculum and assessment work supported and overseen by the Board for Early Childhood and Primary, Board for Junior Cycle and Board for Senior Cycle Training and CPD provided to meet identified needs Administrative and logistical support provided to structures, including organisation of events.

<p>SE2.2 Review the effectiveness of organisational and enabling structures and implement findings.</p>	<p>Initial set of recommendations in the IPA 2021/2022 external review of Council implemented.</p>
<p>SE2.3 Maintain and further develop the Corporate Governance Framework and associated policies.</p>	<p>Policies under the Corporate Governance Framework monitored and reviewed</p> <p>Building on Energy Audit findings, a site energy policy developed and measures implemented.</p>
<p>SE2.4 Maintain appropriate risk management policies and procedures in line with the risk appetite of Council.</p>	<p>Business Continuity Plan monitored.</p> <p>Risk registers reviewed and updated, and used across the organisation to monitor and respond to risks on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>SE2.5 Maintain and further develop robust financial systems and internal controls, producing audited Financial Statements to the deadlines and standards required.</p>	<p>Financial management systems and procedures monitored and reviewed</p> <p>Relevant accounting standards maintained in line with government guidelines and best practice accountancy advice</p> <p>Documentation for internal and external audit provided to support the programme of work set out by the Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>Processes further developed to support implementation of Fixed Assets Policy tracking of assets and green procurement compliance</p> <p>Financial Statements and Tax Returns filed by deadlines specified.</p>
<p>SE2.6 Adhere to public procurement guidelines and promote the use of environmental and social considerations in public procurement.</p>	<p>Continued compliance with public procurement guidelines</p>

SE2.7 Meet all legal and statutory requirements relevant to the organisation.

Work to ensure ongoing compliance with data protection legislation completed

Compliance continued with the requirements of good governance and, in particular, with the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

Reporting requirements of the Department of Education and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform fully met

Annual report 2021 published on time

Compliance with Health and Safety legislation maintained and processes reviewed and updated to reflect changing work practices post-pandemic

Compliance with the Children First Act maintained; Garda vetting processes through the Department of Education reviewed and updated.

SE2.8 Maintain and further develop customer service, both internal and external, to meet the needs of those who interact with us and the general public.

Customer Service Action Plan implemented and monitored with supporting processes developed

Improved phone system implemented to support blended working.

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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes	Progress in 2022
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Social media strategy and the use of social media platforms further developed to share key messages about the work of NCCA</p> <p>Telephony and broadband across NCCA's offices maintained and supported in line with service level agreements; improvements in functionality applied to support internal and external communication</p> <p>ICT environment (hardware/software) and infrastructure maintained and improved in response to organisational needs</p> <p>Internal SharePoint ecosystem redesigned and upgraded</p> <p>Emerging developments in ICT resources monitored and used, as appropriate, to support a blended working model</p> <p>Power Bi dashboards developed to support operational activities</p> <p>Cybersecurity processes and practices reviewed and refined based on best practice and national guidelines.</p>
<p>SE3.3 Develop staff confidence and competence in using digital technologies</p>	<p>Suitable CPD identified for staff to enhance ICT capabilities and competences.</p>

SE3.4 NCCA websites are updated and maintained in response to system need, customer feedback, statistics on web usage, legal requirements, and emerging developments in online and social media.

ncca.ie maintained and supported in line with its service level agreement with a re-design of home-sector pages

curriculumonline.ie maintained and supported in line with its service level agreement with a refresh of core templates on website pages

Aistear Síolta Practice Guide website (www.aistearsiolta.ie) maintained in response to software upgrades and user feedback

Primary planning tool upgraded to a high availability hosting server

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.

Strategic Plan Outcomes

Progress in 2022

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.

Internal communications among staff, stakeholders and NCCA structures and committees further developed

Training provided for staff involved in communicating with media personnel

Wide engagement by practitioners, teachers, school leaders, parents, children, young people and the general public with curriculum and assessment review and redevelopment across sectors encouraged

Range of media and platforms used to share NCCA’s curriculum and assessment work and to encourage interest and participation

Information videos on NCCA’s role and structure published online

Information leaflet to advance the profile, identity and understanding of NCCA’s work published

Education correspondents from national media outlets briefed on curriculum and assessment developments.

SE4.2 Capitalise on developments in digital technologies and in digital and print media to extend and enhance internal and external communications.

Social media platforms further developed to share NCCA’s curriculum and assessment work

	<p>Websites improved to provide up-to-date information on NCCA's curriculum and assessment work</p> <p>Image banks providing photos for curriculum and assessment materials and websites updated.</p>
SE4.3 Further develop staff expertise in the area of communication, including working with the media.	Public relations services procured, as appropriate, to assist and advise staff on external communications on curriculum and assessment change.
SE4.4 Continue to develop policy, systems and processes for providing open access to relevant data and for monitoring the effectiveness of this	Open Data policy developed and implementation, on pilot basis, progressed.
SE4.5 Gather and use internal and external feedback to inform and enhance effective communication approaches and strategies.	<p>NCCA templates and documents modified in response to internal and external feedback</p> <p>Design, content and timing of the info@ncca e-communication reviewed in response to internal and external feedback.</p>

3. About the NCCA

The NCCA is a statutory Council and its brief is to advise the Minister for Education 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 2022- 2025 sets out that 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.

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

Governance

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (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 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 consultative documents.
- approval of policy directions and strategies.
- approval of strategic plans and annual plans of work.
- approval of annual reports.
- approval of quarterly management accounts and annual financial statements.
- approval of any significant change in accounting policies or practice.
- approval of the annual Statement on Internal Control.
- approval of the annual Governance Statement and Board Members' Report.
- approval of the award of contracts to the value of €50,000 or more.
- approval of risk management policies.
- approval of the terms of reference and appointments to any sub committees of Council e.g. the Audit and Risk Committee.
- approval for the establishment of Boards and Development Groups.
- approval of the appointment of Chairpersons to Boards including the Boards for Early Childhood and Primary, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle.
- approval of the co-option of members to Boards.

- approval to extend the term of a Board, Development Group or sub-committee, in case issues arise which require a meeting in the transition period to the appointment of a new Council.
- approval of Standing Orders.

Standing items considered by the Council include:

- declaration of interests
- reports from the CEO
- reports from sub-committees of Council
- risk management.

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

(ARC). Internal Audit operates independently of the Executive¹ in terms of its audit work and has rights of access to the Chief Executive and the ARC. It operates within the budget agreed with the ARC, which in turn forms part of the budget of the NCCA. The ARC sets the budget for Internal Audit, 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 financial statements for 2022 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. The Council considers that the financial statements of the NCCA give a fair and true view of the financial performance and the financial position of the NCCA at 31 December 2022.

Council Structure

The Council consists of a Chairperson, two Deputy Chairpersons and 23 ordinary members, all of whom are appointed by the Minister for Education on the basis of nominations received from teachers' unions, management bodies, parents and industry and other organisations.

On 6 April, 2022 the Minister for Education Norma Foley T.D. announced the appointment of a new Council for a four year term until 28 February 2026. The term of the previous Council ended on 28 February 2022. The Council usually meets seven times per annum. Eight meetings were held in 2022. The first meeting of 2022 was held online but as the country emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic response, the other seven meetings were all in person meetings.

¹ The term 'Executive' is used in the report to refer to NCCA's fulltime staff.

On the 27th April 2022, the Minister for Education announced that she had signed a Statutory Instrument, updating the membership of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to include the President of the Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU).

This brought the membership to 26 members in total.

The table below details the appointment period for members appointed/ reappointed from 1 March 2022 onwards:

Members of Council 2022

Name	Nominating Organisation <i>(where applicable)</i>	Date First Appointed	Date(s) Re-appointed
Prof Mary O'Sullivan Chairperson to 28 February, 2022	Minister for Education	1 May 2019	Interim Chairperson from 1 March, 2022 to 30 June, 2022
Ms Emer Egan Interim Chairperson	Minister for Education	1 July 2022 to 11 December 2022	
Mr Sean Ó Foghlú	Minister for Education	12 December 2022	
Mr Joe McKeown, Deputy Chairperson	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	1 March, 2019	1 March 2022
Dr Michael Redmond, Deputy Chairperson	Joint Managerial Body	1 April, 2015	1 March, 2022
Mr Denis Ring	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	1 March, 2022	
Mr Ed Byrne	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	18 April, 2019	1 March, 2022

Ms Deirdre MacDonald	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	1 March, 2022	
Mr Rory D'Arcy	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	1 March, 2022	
Ms Joyce Perdue	Church of Ireland Board of Education	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Orlaith O'Connor	Department of Education	9 September, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Anne McHugh	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Edel Ní Chorráin, Uas.	Foras na Gaeilge	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Claire McGee	Ibec	1 March, 2019 to 1 December, 2021	1 November, 2022
Mr Brian Tubbert	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Deirdre Murphy	Irish Federation of University Teachers	1 March, 2022	
Ms Carmel Browne	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Máirín Ní Chéileachair	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	1 March, 2022	
Ms Patricia Gordon	Joint Managerial Body	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Dr. Finn Ó Murchú	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022

Ms Claire Downey	National Parents Council, Primary	1 March, 2022	
Ms Martina O'Shea	National Parents Council, Post- Primary	1 March, 2022	
Dr Teresa Hagan	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Dr Sheila Garrity	Nominee of the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability , Integration and Youth	2021	1 March, 2022
Ms Elaine Sheridan	State Examinations Commission	1 December 2021	1 March, 2022
Mr David Duffy	Teachers' Union of Ireland	25 June, 2015	1 March, 2022
Ms Liz Farrell	Teachers' Union of Ireland	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Ms Caitlin Faye Maniti	Irish Second Level Students Union (from 27 April 2022)	9 July 2022	

Gender Balance in the Council membership

As at 31 December 2022, the Council had 17 (65%) female and 9 (35%) male members.

The Board therefore, as at the 31 December, did not meet the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

Green Procurement and Energy Efficiency

The Government's Climate Action Plan 2021 has set a roadmap for taking action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. The Public Sector will lead by example in this transition by reducing emissions by 51% by 2030, including mandating public sector employers to move to 20% home and remote working.

The NCCA, as part of the public sector, has a responsibility to promote green procurement in order to support Ireland's environmental and wider sustainable development objectives.

In this context, the NCCA undertook several initiatives in 2022 to improve energy efficiency:

- Continued to build on findings from a commissioned SI426 Energy Audit carried out by an SEAI approved consultant.
- Reported energy consumption data via the online SEAI Monitoring and Reporting system. The required data was submitted by the target deadlines.
- Substantially amended Travel and Subsistence data collection and processes in order to meet the requirement for all public bodies to report annual data on business travel to SEAI from 2021 onwards as part of the 2021 Climate Action Plan.[
- Specific maintenance of heating and air conditioning systems continued to improve air quality and maximise efficiency.
- Commenced phased replacement of older light fittings with energy efficient models.
- Reduced printing and postage through provision of electronic media.

Equality and Human Rights

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 has established a positive duty on public sector bodies to:

- eliminate discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity and treatment
- protect human rights.

This means that all public bodies in Ireland, including NCCA, have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021

The Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021 provides a statutory framework for the delivery of public services through the Irish language. The primary objective is to increase and improve the quantity and quality of services provided for the public through Irish by public bodies.

The NCCA is committed to meeting its obligations under the Official Languages Acts. The NCCA's Annual Report, Strategic Plan and key policy documents are published simultaneously in both official languages on NCCA's websites. The NCCA continues to

encourage and facilitate staff to avail of the range of supports and in particular to attend Irish training courses. Staff are supported on an ongoing basis to complete the Certificate in Professional Irish (NFQ levels 2 to 6) and the Phone Skills and Customer Service course with Gaelchultúr. The NCCA have a statutory responsibility to ensure that its two main websites can be equally engaged with by users in Irish and in English. Translation of all website content through an application programming interface (API) is available for staff to use on both www.ncca.ie and www.curriculumonline.ie. The introduction of this API system ensures a much more efficient turn-around of translated materials for our website content and ultimately helps to ensure material is available simultaneously for users in Irish and in English. The NCCA is committed to continually enhancing the quantity and quality of documentation and services provided through Irish.

Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies

NCCA also complies with the requirements of Circular 25/2016: Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

The ARC comprises four Council members and one external member . The role of the 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. This annual report will be made available early Q3 2023 on www.ncca.ie.

There were 7 meetings of the ARC in 2022 including a joint meeting of the ARC and Governance Committee. These were all virtual meetings, held online.

The ARC at the start of 2022 comprised Joe McKeown, Chairperson, Geoff Browne, Teresa Hagan, Anne McHugh and Joan O'Connor (independent member). This ARC remained in place when a new Council was appointed from 1st March 2022 to aid the transition. A new ARC was appointed by Council from 12th May 2023. Joe McKeown continued as Chairperson with Teresa Hagan, Rory D'Arcy, Edel Ní Chorráin also appointed*.

*external member role was vacant at 31st December 2022 but was filled early Q2 2023.

Governance Committee (GovC)

The Governance Committee comprises four Council members and one external member. 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 GovC reports to Council after each meeting, and formally in writing annually. This annual report will be made available early Q3 2023 on www.ncca.ie.

The Governance Committee at the start of 2022 comprised Deirbhile Nic Craith (Chairperson), Michael Delargey, Áine Lynch, Áine O'Sullivan and Dermot O'Riordan (external member). This GovC remained in place when a new Council was appointed from 1st March 2022 to aid the transition.

From May 12th, 2022, Council appointed a new GovC, the membership of which is now comprised of Mr. Dermot O'Riordan (Chairperson), Dr Sheila Garrity, Ms Deirdre Mac Donald, Mr Denis Ring and Ms Mairín Ní Chéileachair.

There were 4 meetings of the Governance Committee in 2022 including a joint meeting of the ARC and Governance Committee. These were all virtual meetings, held online.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Council and Committee meetings for 2022 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	No. of ARC Meetings	No. of Governance Committee meetings	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members) ²
Prof. Mary O'Sullivan	5/5			1,134
Ms Emer Egan	2/3			
Mr Sean Ó Foghlú	0/0			
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	2/2		2	171
Dr Michael Redmond	8/8			
Ms Áine O Sullivan	2/2		1	
Mr Ed Byrne	7/8			510
Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.	2/2			221
Mr Fergal Kelly	2/2			
Ms Joyce Perdue	7/8			
Ms Orlaith O'Connor	6/8			
Ms Anne McHugh	7/8	3		1,309

² The expenses indicated all relate to domestic travel and 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.

Edel Ní Chorráin, Uas.	6/8	4		
Ms Claire McGee	2/2			127
Ms Meadhbh Costello	4/6			
Mr Brian Tubbert	6/8			234
Mr Michael Delargey	1/2		1	
Ms Carmel Browne	7/8			578
Mr. Joe McKeown	7/8	7		
Ms Patricia Gordon	8/8			
Dr. Finn Ó Murchú	7/8			3,905
Ms Áine Lynch	2/2		1	
Mr Geoff Browne	1/2	3		
Dr Teresa Hagan	8/8	3		
Dr Sheila Garrity	7/8		2	530
Mr David Duffy	8/8			
Ms Liz Farrell	7/8			917
Ms Caitlin Faye Maniti	3/3			210
Ms Claire Downey	6/6			
Ms Deirdre MacDonald	6/6		1	1,380
Ms Deirdre Murphy	3/6			
Mr Denis Ring	5/6		1	1,939
Ms Elaine Sheridan	6/8			

Ms Máirín Ní Chéileachair	5/6		1	364
Ms Martina O'Shea	3/6			
Mr Rory D'Arcy	5/6	4		1,359
Ms Emer Neville	2/2			
Ms Joan O'Connor (ARC)	-	2		
Mr. Dermot O'Riordan (GovC)	-		4	
Total				14,888

Key Personnel Changes

Changes to the Executive included the appointment on 26 January, 2022 of Ms Jacinta Regan as Director, Curriculum and Assessment. Diarmuid Mooney and Ger O'Sullivan took up Acting Director, Curriculum and Assessment roles from 1 Jan 2022 and 4 April 2022 respectively. Other changes in seconded/contracted staff included the appointment of eleven Education Officers, the largest intake of staff in a single year for NCCA.

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.

Employee Short-Term Benefits Breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are set out below; in the case of NCCA, this refers to salary figures only.

From	To	2022	2021
€60,000	€69,999	1	8
€70,000	€79,999	9	3
€80,000	€89,999	14	13
€90,000	€99,999	14	10
€100,000	€109,999	4	0
€110,000	€119,999	1	0
€120,000	€129,999	0	0
€130,000	€139,999	0	0
€140,000	€149,999	0	0
€150,000	€159,999	1	1

For the purposes of this disclosure, short-term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary, overtime allowances and other payments made on behalf of the employee but **exclude** Employer's PRSI.

Legal Costs and Settlements

In 2022, 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. Legal fees of €19,387 (2021: €11,543) were incurred for general advice in relation to a policy review.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business- as-usual' functions in 2022 and were incurred for general advice.

Professional fees and consultancy

	2022	2021
	€	€
Accountancy and other professional fees	44,833	39,939
External audit fee	14,000	14,000
Internal audit fee	8,303	7,841
Consultancy (commissioned research for curriculum and assessment work)	498,771	516,356
Totals	565,907	578,136

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.).

	2022	2021
	€	€
Internal	9,186	3,014
External	2,106	1,600
Totals	11,292	4,614

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

The Council has policies and procedures in place in priority areas to comply with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Work will continue on aspects of the Code of Practice with the continued development, review and renewal of policies over the coming period.

As the country continued to emerge from alternative ways of working put in place as a pandemic response work continued within NCCA on developing a blended working policy and related IT and cyber security controls and on ensuring staff were working in safe and ergonomically suitable home office environments.

The Governance Committee considered an outline People Strategy for NCCA, work will continue on this into 2023. Terms of Reference were updated for Council and the Governance Committee as were guidelines for outgoing Council members on handling of Council documents and return of devices. A Statement of how Council functions was reviewed for the induction of new Council members and consideration given to the recommendations for the Governance of NCCA Committee within the IPA report following the external review of Council. Induction and IT support was provided to members of the incoming Council and its enabling structures to support the continuity of work. This included training sessions from the IPA on the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and the responsibilities of board members.

A Performance Delivery Agreement is in place between the Department of Education and the NCCA covering governance, operational, funding and reporting relationships. In relation to the Code's provisions that no member of a State Board should serve more than two full terms of appointment on that Board, or should hold appointments to more than two State Boards at the same time, there is a long-standing practice of these provisions not applying to NCCA where organisations nominate a staff member who has direct responsibilities in the areas of curriculum development and curriculum policy in their organisation and, consequently, whose expertise is likely to be of benefit to all concerned in this context.

The Council completed a self-assessment of its effectiveness, including a survey facilitated by an independent organisation in early 2021 and undertook an external review of Council using another independent organisation in late 2021. Council will continue to use the findings to support NCCA structures and curriculum development processes and drew on them during the development of the strategic plan 2022 to 2026.

Child Protection

The NCCA has developed procedures and guidelines for staff on child protection and welfare matters as part of the requirements enacted in 2017 under the Children First Act, 2015. The NCCA Child Safeguarding Statement, available on our website at www.ncca.ie, was reviewed and updated in September 2022. Staff training was completed.

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff led by the Chief Executive Arlene Forster. The staff in 2022 was as follows:

Chief Executive:

Arlene Forster

Deputy Chief Executives:

Barry Slattery

Patrick Sullivan

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:

Jacqueline Fallon

Derek Grant

Diarmuid Mooney (Acting from 1st January 2022)

Ben Murray

Elaine Ní Neachtain

Evelyn O'Connor (Acting)

Ger O'Sullivan (Acting from 4th April 2022)

Jacinta Regan (from 26th January 2022)

Aoife Rush

Corporate Services:

Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Assistant Principal

Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer

Bernard Plunkett, Higher Executive Officer

Ann Young, Higher Executive Officer

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer

Deirdre Dunne, Executive Officer

Alan Cooling, Clerical Officer

Rosaleen Daly, Clerical Officer (until 5th January 2022)

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer

Ger Heffernan, Clerical Officer

Maria Phelan, Clerical Officer (from 4th April 2022)

Education Officers:

John Behan

Paul Behan

Ciara Blennerhassett

Michelle Bolger (from 1st September 2022)

Fred Boss

Rachael Byrne (from 1st September 2022)

Donna Carolan

Frank Chambers (from 1st September 2022)

Tracy Curran

Mella Cusack (from 1st September 2022)

Lara Dabbagh

Mary Daly

Margaret Flood (until 2nd September 2022)

Michelle Geraghty (from 1st September 2022)

Annette Honan

Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald (from 23rd May 2022)

Maria Kelly

Patrick Kelly (from 1st September 2022)

David King

Rachel Linney

Hannagh McGinley

Ciarán Mooney (from 1st September 2022)

Diarmuid Mooney

John Moriarty

Deirdre Ní Fhearghail

Siobhán Ní Threasaigh (from 1st September 2022)

Dónal Ó Buachalla

Gillian O'Connor

Louise O'Reilly (until 4th November 2022)

Ger O'Sullivan

Jacinta Regan (until 25th January 2022)

Tony Riley

Sinéad Ruane

Sharon Skehill (from 1st September 2022)

Sinéad Tuohy

Mary-Elaine Tynan

National Aistear Development Officer:

Lorraine Farrell

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 2022, the Council convened 79 meetings of these groups. A list of the meetings held in 2022 is in Appendix One.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2022 was €6,960,917. Core funding of €6,686,146 was received from the exchequer, through the Department of Education.

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 2022 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Appendix 1: NCCA meetings 2022

Group	Total Number of Meetings
Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	7
Primary Mathematics Development Group	7
SPHE/RSE Development Group, Primary	1
Schools Forum	5
Primary Development Group Induction (Language, STEM, SEE, Wellbeing and Arts)	1
An Mheitheal Forbartha do Theanga sa Bhunscolaíocht / Primary Language Development Group	1
Primary STEM Education Development Group	1
Primary Social and Environmental Education Development Group	1
Primary Wellbeing Development Group	5
Primary Arts Development Group	1
Primary Advisory Panel	8
Post-primary	
Board for Junior Cycle	5
Board for Senior Cycle	5
Agricultural Science in Practice Group	4

Leaving Certificate Drama, Theatre and Film Studies Development Group	4
LC Climate Action & Sustainable Development Development Group	4
Leaving Certificate Business Development Group	4
SPHE/RSE Development Group, Junior Cycle	5
SPHE Development Group, Senior Cycle	2
Post-Primary Special Education Development Group	1
Senior Cycle Advisory Panel	2
Transition Year Development Group	1
Cross Sectoral	
Traveller Culture and History Expert Group	3
Children in Detention and Children in Care Advisory Group	1
Total number of Groups	24
Total Number of Meetings	79

Appendix 2: NCCA presentations (selection) 2022

A selection of the presentations and papers delivered, and workshops facilitated by NCCA staff in 2022 are presented in the table below.

Event/Organisation	Theme/Title
Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE)	Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care
The Future of the European Union (University of Limerick, on occasion of 50 th birthday of the European Union)	Europe in Primary and Post-Primary Schools
Business Studies Teachers Association of Ireland Annual Conference	Redeveloping Leaving Certificate Business
Association for Educational Assessment, Europe	New Visions for Assessment in Uncertain Times
SPHE Network	Findings from the 'Review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools' and an overview of to the primary SPHE/RSE toolkit
Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Latin America, UK & Ireland Policymakers' Exchange Meeting	Relationships and Sexuality Education in Ireland
Migrant Teacher Project	NCCA and its curriculum and assessment work
Early Childhood Ireland	Spotlight on Transitions Webinar
DES Schools for Excellence	Supporting the transition from preschool to primary school
Irish Guidance Counsellors Annual Conference	Redevelopment of the Senior Cycle
Looking to Understand Inclusion (Erasmus+ Project)	Inclusion in Irish Education Policy

Looking to Understand Inclusion (Erasmus+ Project)	Updates on inclusion in Irish Education Policy
Deputy Mayor and Education delegation visit to Dublin	The Irish Education system and NCCA's role in curriculum development
INTO Education Conference	Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning (workshop)
Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI)	Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning (presentation)
Trinity College Dublin Masters in Education	Who is the NCCA and what do we do?
INTO Webinar on Classroom Preparation	Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Launch of Getting Started Booklet
Education Training Board of Ireland Annual Conference	An Open door to Excellence: Why Diversity Matters
National Education Psychological Service	Using NCCA's Intercultural Guidelines to promote inclusiveness and equality for Travellers in schools and classrooms in Ireland
Social Science Education Consortium Annual Conference	Developments in Traveller Education

Appendix 3: 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.

Report of NCCA in respect of the Year 2022

Relevant year for Disclosures	Disclosures or Nil Disclosures
2022	Nil Disclosures

Appendix 4: Statement of 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).

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 NCCA and system of Internal Control

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 and Corporate Services staff 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 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 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 of learning, teaching and pupil/student work.

All of these contribute to ensuring that 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 which are 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 mainly funded by the Department of Education. The Council is responsible for approving the annual Plan of Work and budget, and funds are allocated and spent in accordance with the priorities of the Council. The Council's annual financial statements are prepared by the accountancy firm Harney Nolan Business Advisors 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 the NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2022 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements.

Audit and Risk Committee

NCCA has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising four Council members and one external member, with financial and audit expertise. The ARC is independent of the management of the organisation. In particular, the Committee seeks to ensure that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC met 7 times in 2022.

Internal Control

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 2022 and reported to the ARC.

The objective of the review is to provide assurance to the NCCA and its stakeholders of the adequacy and the effectiveness of the NCCA's control framework to the extent to which the Council is compliant with the processes in place for ensuring transparency, regularity, and propriety.

The High-Level Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Controls, 2022 by Crowleys DFK drew attention to many positive features and key strengths of NCCA's internal control environment including the fact that staff members assigned to finance tasks are skilled, competent and experienced.

The audit results indicate that reasonable assurance can be placed on the adequacy and operating effectiveness of controls to mitigate and/or manage financial risks to which the NCCA may be exposed.

The auditors reported no High priority rated findings. They expressed the opinion that normal on-going management supervision, together with the resolution of any findings raised in the report, should ensure that the control risk remains low.

It recommended a number of aspects of control for attention in 2022 following 2 medium and 3 low findings including procedures and/or documentation related to fixed assets and procurement. In addition, some items to be specifically mentioned in the Annual Comprehensive Report to the Minister were identified.

The recommendations of the review in this context are currently being addressed and the matters involved will be resolved during 2023.

In addition, NCCA will resolve any issues identified by the external audit. NCCA management will closely monitor this and oversight of the follow-up on internal and external audit items will be carried out by the ARC which will keep progress to resolution under review.

Internal audit is resourced, as needed, in light of the growth in the activity and overall size of the organisation.

Risk and Control framework

The NCCA operates under a risk management policy which includes a risk appetite statement, the risk management framework, and details of the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to risk. The risk management policy was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and approved by the NCCA council in June 2022. A risk register is in place which identifies the nature of the risks facing the NCCA and these have been identified, evaluated and scored according to their significance. The register is reviewed, and risk management monitored by the chief risk officer, risk owners, management, and the ARC at each of their meeting. Risk management also features on the agenda of each Council meetings. The outcomes of review are used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

In the risk management policy and process, responsibilities are shared across all staff, including the Chief Risk Officer, 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 to assume responsibility for risks and controls within their own area of work.

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 operating budgeting system with an annual budget, set out in the NCCA's annual Plan of Work, which is kept under review by senior management with improvements made as appropriate.
- there are systems in place and under development aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems.
- the systems to safeguard the assets have been updated with a new searchable asset and contracts register and specific responsibilities have been 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.

Salaries and Wages

NCCA staff are paid through the payroll systems run by the National Shared Service Office (NSSO), the Department of Education, and certain Education and Training Boards (ETBs) as follows:

- The Chief Executive, established civil servants and some contracted staff are paid by the Payroll Shared Service Centre (PSSC) which is part of the NSSO.
- Staff seconded from primary and post-primary schools are paid by the DE Primary and Post- primary Teachers' Payroll.
- Staff seconded from ETBs continue to be paid by the relevant ETB.
- NCCA pays directly for commissioned work by subject specialists and others with assistance from a payroll service provider (Smith and Williamson).

Assurance in relation to the associated controls in place is achieved via external and internal audit in NCCA and the associated bodies. An Employee Services Management Agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding and a Data Processing Agreement is in place with the NSSO.

Procurement

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.

I confirm that the NCCA has procedures in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines. A Corporate Procurement Plan was in place for 2018-2021 and a new plan is being developed for the period 2022- 2025.

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 control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the ARC 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 ARC conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2022. The ARC noted the conclusions of internal audit and reported the results of its review to the Council for consideration.

I confirm that the Council conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2022 on (February 9th, 2023). This review was informed by the review undertaken by the ARC.

Internal Control Issues

No weaknesses in internal control were identified in relation to 2022 that require disclosure in the financial statements.



Sean Ó Foghlú

Chairperson



NCCA

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