

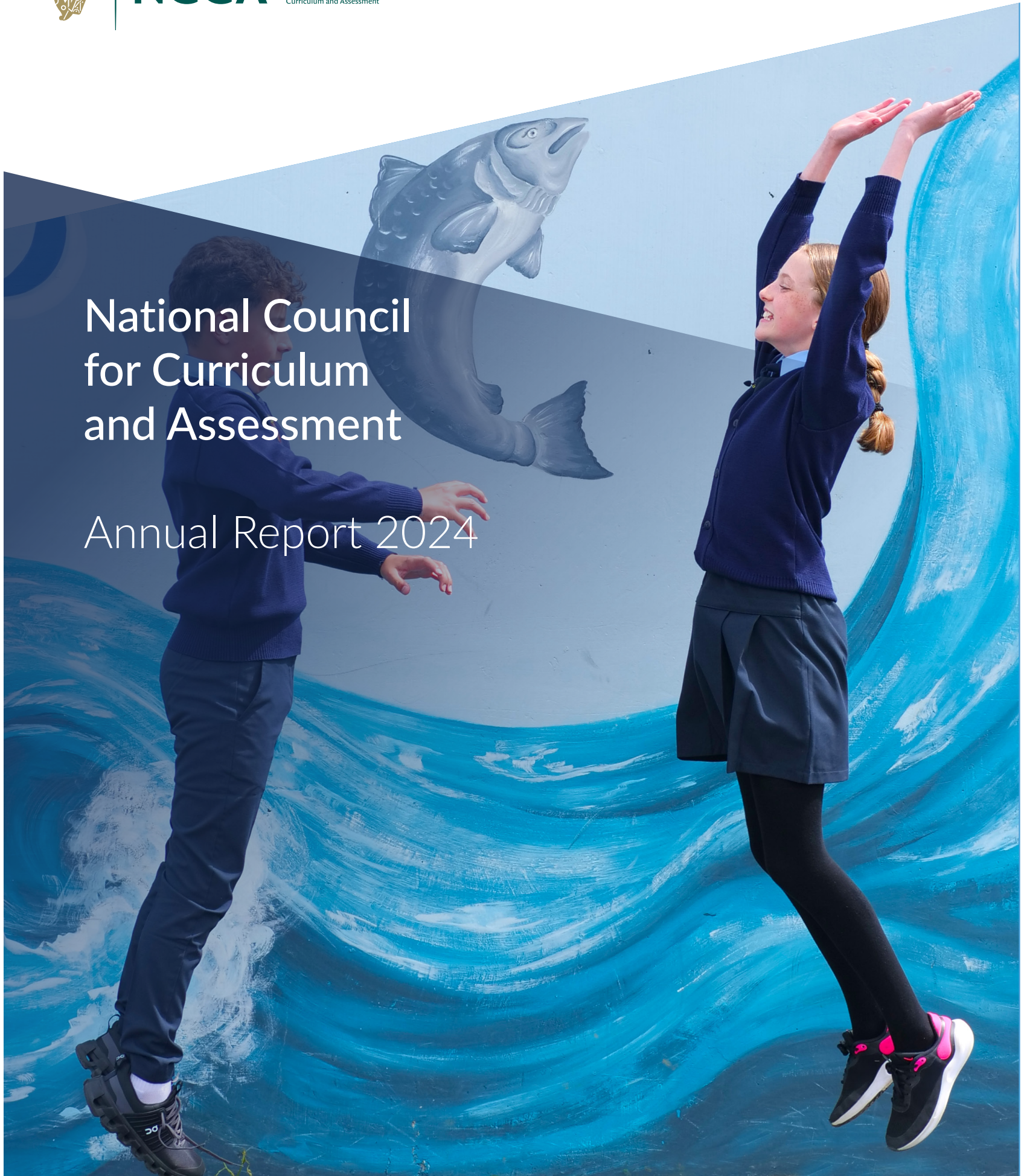


NCCA

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

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Annual Report 2024



Council Members



Seán Ó Foghlú
Chairperson



Teresa Hagan
Nominee of the Minister for Education



Sheila Garrity
Nominee of the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth



Michael Redmond
Joint Managerial Body – Deputy Chairperson



Patricia Gordon
Joint Managerial Body



Máirín Ní Chéileachair
Irish National Teachers Organisation



Joe McKeown
Irish National Teachers Organisation – Deputy Chairperson



Carmel Browne
Irish National Teachers Organisation



Anne McHugh
Education and Training Boards Ireland



Rory D’Arcy
Catholic Primary School Management Association



Finn Ó Murchú
National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education



Joyce Perdue
Church of Ireland Board of Education



Sandra Austin
Irish Federation of University Teachers



Claire McGee
Ibec



Ms Meadhbh Costello
Ibec



Elaine Sheridan
State Examinations Commission



Denis Ring
Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools



Orlaith O’Connor
Department of Education (to Feb 2024)



Mr Martin Whyte
Department of Education (from March 2024)



Deirdre MacDonald
Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland



Ed Byrne
Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland



David Duffy
Teachers’ Union of Ireland



Ms Olive O’Connell
Teachers’ Union of Ireland



Brian Tubbert
Irish Congress of Trade Unions



Muireann Ní Mhoráin, Uas.
Foras na Gaeilge



Mr Rob Walpole
National Parents Council



Ms Carmel O’Shea
National Parents Council



Mr Jack McGinn
Irish Second-Level Students’ Union (from Sept 2024)



Shari Irfan
Irish Second-Level Students’ Union (to June 2024)



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Foreword

2024 marked 40 years since the establishment of the Curriculum and Examinations Board, the precursor of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). 2024 also brought many firsts in NCCA's work. These included the development of a full, new draft primary curriculum, the first in 25 years. In the case of senior cycle redevelopment, we completed the first tranche of subject reviews for the Leaving Certificate Established programme; an updated Transition Year Programme Statement; and, for the first time ever, curriculum provision at Level 1 and Level 2. We also published the updated version of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework which was the first ever framework developed by NCCA. All of this necessitated curriculum development work at a scale not seen previously in the organisation's 40-year history. Across sectors, the work was progressed through major stakeholder engagement and close collaboration with teachers/educators, young people and school leaders, and was informed by rigorous and robust evidence from research and practice.

Corporate governance also saw key milestones during the year, including the establishment of a new office in Portlaoise and the completion of advanced planning for a new Dublin base. 2024 continued to be busy on the recruitment front bringing the staff complement to 71, another first for the organisation. Additional posts on the corporate team enabled the greater prioritisation of areas such as procurement, audit and human resource management.

The tables in this Annual Report provide details on all of the work completed in 2024 with the infographic summarising meetings held, the numbers involved in consultations, and essential corporate activity. This work was only possible



through the commitment of the Council, its many stakeholders and the dedication of the staff. I am very grateful to the Council members and the members of development groups and boards who give their time so generously and share their expertise and experience. Thank you too to the executive of the Council under the leadership of Arlene Forster, for their work in the last year in engaging so widely as part of this and in ensuring that so much has been delivered. I would also like to thank the Department of Education—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 and the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Office. Their support and resourcing enabled the Council to deliver on its wide-ranging agenda.

As Chairperson, I hugely appreciate the support given to me throughout the year by the two Deputy Chairs, Mr Joe McKeown and Dr Michael Redmond. I also want to thank the members of our Audit and Risk Committee and our Governance Committee for their work to ensure high standards in financial and risk management, and in corporate governance. Finally, I want to acknowledge the leadership shown by Joe, Michael and Dr Finn Ó Murchú as Chairs to the Boards for Early Childhood and Primary, the Board for Senior Cycle and the Board for Junior Cycle, respectively.

This report reflects the NCCA’s continuing commitment to lead and sustain developments in curriculum and assessment that are sufficiently far-reaching so that all children and students can benefit from enjoyable, engaging, relevant and appropriately challenging experiences. These experiences enable each of them to flourish and thrive in school and later life. I very much look forward to continuing to work with the Council in supporting the Chief Executive and the staff in the next stage of the important curriculum and assessment work carried out by the NCCA.

Mr Seán Ó Foghlú
NCCA Chairperson

Seán Ó Foghlú





Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the 2024 Annual Report of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This year has been marked by significant achievements that reflect the NCCA's role in shaping the educational experiences of children and students in early childhood settings and schools across Ireland. The education sector continues to experience profound changes driven by advances in technology, growing diversity within our school population, the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the evolving needs of society, all of which influence our thinking and decision-making.

The NCCA had many curriculum and assessment achievements in 2024 which are set out in Strategic Goal 1 (pages 18-22). These included:

- completion and publication of the updated Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- consultation on the five draft specifications that make up the fully redeveloped primary curriculum, and a report on the consultation findings
- scoping work on the review and redevelopment of the Assessment in the Primary School Classroom Guidelines
- early enactment reviews of Junior Cycle Phase 4 subjects (Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music, Geography)
- a draft updated curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian)
- early reviews of the Junior Cycle Digital Media Literacy, Coding and Chinese Short Courses
- finalisation of the specifications for the nine Tranche 1 Leaving Certificate subjects
- finalisation of the Programme Statement and curriculum areas for Level 1 and Level 2, the first ever curriculum provision at these levels for the senior cycle stage of education
- completion of the updated Transition Year Programme Statement, a suite of micro modules and an iVET (initial Vocational Education and Training) module
- a new curriculum for Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education
- scoping work on the development of an Irish Sign Language curriculum.

In addition, we developed a range of practical supports for teaching, learning and assessing, including examples of pedagogy in early childhood and primary education; examples of practice in Traveller culture and history; examples of student work within junior cycle subjects; guidelines to support the additional assessment components in the Tranche 1 subjects; and text lists for Junior Cycle Irish and Leaving Certificate English, Spanish and Italian.

This curriculum and assessment work was underpinned by research evidence from a wide range of internal and external sources. The Council continued to draw on the Children's School Lives longitudinal study and the four-year exploration of the introduction and implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle. Strategic collaborations were also instrumental in advancing our work and I want to record my thanks to the many researchers, organisations and networks with which we engaged throughout the year.

Very importantly, the NCCA’s work remains grounded in close interaction with settings and schools. The infographic on pages 16-17 reflects our strong commitment to developing advice which is anchored in the experiences and realities of those who work directly with the curriculum. Much of our work with teachers, children/students, school leaders and parents took place through our continued engagement with the Schools Forum and through many school visits around the country. Sincere thanks to the schools and early childhood settings which expressed interest in working with us and who welcomed us into their classrooms. Your ideas, perspectives and suggestions helped us shape the advice the Council gave to the Minister.

Pages 34-57 highlight our governance work in 2024. The expiry of our office leases in Dublin and Portlaoise necessitated us undertaking two significant office moves. We also continued to review and update our policies, practices and operations in line with best practice and legal/governance requirements. The findings from the 2023 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey gave us reason to be proud alongside pointing to areas for further development in 2025. Advancements in technology are revolutionising communications. Taking account of this, 2024 saw the implementation of our first Communications Action Plan with increased attention to audiences, communication formats, and media training for management staff. In addition, 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 achievements outlined in this report are a testament to the dedication and passion of the NCCA staff. Their expertise and commitment over the past year, and their drive to make a positive difference to the educational experiences of children and students, has been instrumental in achieving the many strategic objectives for 2024.

The Council, the representative boards and development groups, and the advisory groups supported 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. This greatly contributed to the thinking, discussions and deliberations which helped shape NCCA’s curriculum and assessment advice in 2024. All of this is, ultimately, for the benefit of children and students and wider Irish society.

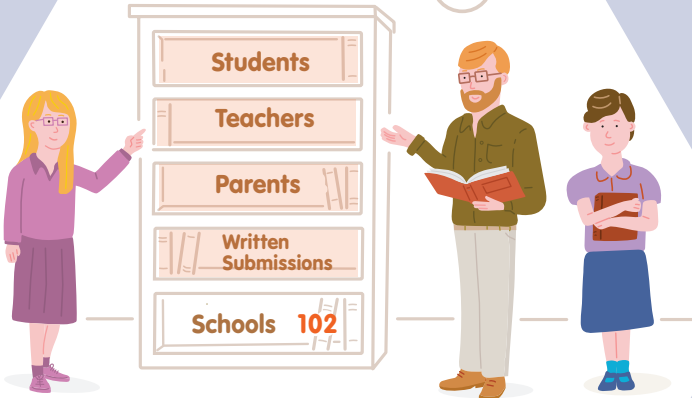
Arlene Forster
Chief Executive

Arlene Forster

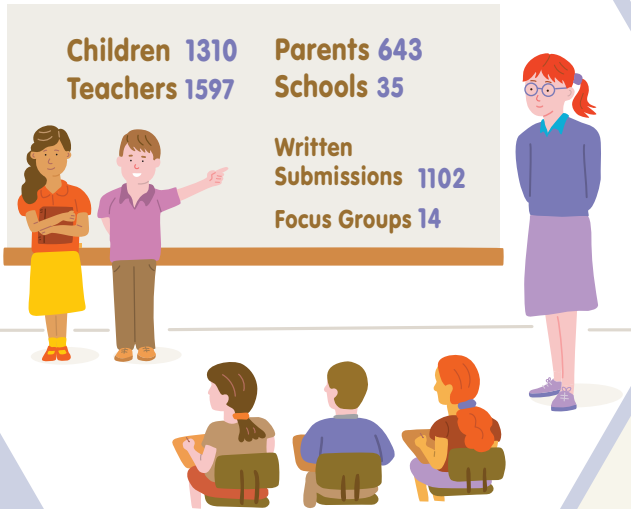


NCCA Curriculum and Assessment Development Process 2024

7439 Consultations



Consultations: Primary



Consultations: Post-Primary

Research / Longitudinal Studies



University of Limerick
Exploring the Introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle

University College Dublin
Children's School Lives

Dublin City University
Review of the Implementation of Junior Cycle Irish Specifications (T1 & T2)

Early Childhood and Primary, Junior and Senior cycle Boards 65

Early Childhood and Primary Development Groups 109

Post-Primary Development Groups 433

Total: 607

Members of NCCA structures contributing to our curriculum and assessment work



Meetings of Council and its structures

Council 10 Audit and Risk Committee 6 Governance Committee 3

Total of Meetings Council & Sub-Committees 19

Early Childhood and Primary, Junior and Senior Cycle Boards 19

Early Childhood and Primary Development Groups 33

Post-Primary Development Groups 118

Total meetings 170

Research Publications



44
Stakeholder Consultations in advance of subject development groups

- New staff inducted 14
- Number of meetings booked 204
- Invoices paid (approx. 137 per month) 1,645
- School grants 97
- Commissions processed 110
- Purchase Orders 466
- External audit of C&AG 40 days

Corporate Services

2. Progress on NCCA work in 2024

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 action	Outputs
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.	G1.1.1 Phase 2 of Updating Aistear consultation report completed G1.1.2 Phase 2 consultation report with babies, toddlers and young children completed G1.1.3 Updated Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework completed G1.1.4 Initial set of support materials on the updated Aistear framework completed
SG1.2 Strengthen and actively support the National Síolta Aistear Initiative, with particular reference to the online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.	G1.2.1 Work of the NSAI Interim CPD Oversight Group supported G1.2.2 Work of the Interim NSAI Resource Development Sub-Group supported G1.2.3 Transfer of materials from the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide to Better Start progressed
SG1.3 Finalise the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i> and redevelop the curriculum for primary and special schools ensuring its continued support for high quality teaching, learning and assessment experiences and outcomes.	G1.3.1 Draft specification for Wellbeing completed for consultation G1.3.2 Draft specification for Social and Environmental Education completed for consultation G1.3.3 Draft specification for Language, including Modern Foreign Languages, completed for consultation G1.3.4 Draft specification for Arts Education completed for consultation G1.3.5 Draft specification for Science, Technology and Engineering Education completed for consultation G1.3.6 Consultation on the draft primary curriculum specifications completed G1.3.7 Communications plan, including website development, to support consultation on the five draft curriculum specifications developed and implemented G1.3.8 Report on the consultation on the draft primary curriculum specifications published

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	G1.3.9 Finalisation of the specification for Wellbeing progressed G1.3.10 Finalisation of the specification for Social and Environmental Education progressed G1.3.11 Finalisation of the specification for Modern Foreign Languages progressed G1.3.12 Finalisation of the specification for Arts Education progressed G1.3.13 Finalisation of the specification for Science, Technology and Engineering Education progressed
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.	G1.4.1 Scoping work on the review and redevelopment of the Assessment in the Primary School Classroom Guidelines progressed
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.	G1.5.1 Review of the Junior Cycle Digital Media Literacy, Coding and Chinese Short Courses completed G1.5.2 Assessment Tasks for Junior Cycle subjects published G1.5.3 Draft updated curriculum specification for Junior Cycle Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian) completed G1.5.4 Junior Cycle Visual Art assessment guidelines updated G1.5.5 Updating of Junior Cycle L1LPs and L2LPs teacher guidelines commenced G1.5.6 Junior Cycle Level 2 Preparation for Work PLU reviewed and updated for consultation G1.5.7 Review of the early enactment of Junior Cycle Phase 4 subjects (Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music, Geography) completed G1.5.8 Review of the early enactment of Junior Cycle Phase 5 subjects (Applied Technology, Engineering, Graphics, Wood Technology, Religious Education, Jewish Studies and Classics) commenced G1.5.9 Implementation of junior cycle subjects, short courses, L1LPs, and L2LPs supported
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.	G1.7.1 Collaboration with SOLAS and ETBI on developing an iVET TY module completed G1.7.2 Consultation on Level 1 and Level 2 senior cycle Programme Statement, and curriculum areas and modules in Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy completed G1.7.3 Level 1 and Level 2 Senior Cycle curriculum areas and modules in Numeracy, and Communication and Literacy finalised

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	G1.7.4 Programme Statement for Senior Cycle Level 1 and Level 2 programmes completed G1.7.5 Additional Level 1 and Level 2 Senior Cycle curriculum areas and modules commenced G1.7.6 Discussion paper on pathways in senior cycle drafted.
SG1.8 Broaden assessment arrangements and reporting within and at the end of senior cycle to reflect the breadth and depth of students' progress and achievement and to support transition from school and other educational settings.	G1.8.1 Research into the potential use of technology to support certification into the future, such as digital badges, micro-credentials and reporting completed G1.8.2 Research into the assessment of key competencies completed G1.8.3 Development of potential arrangements for reporting students' progress and certification of achievement in L1 and L2 senior cycle modules commenced
SG1.8 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.	G1.9.1 Consultation on updated draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Arabic completed G1.9.2 Consultation on updated draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Classical Languages completed G1.9.3 Consultation on updated draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Physics completed G1.9.4 Consultation on updated draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Biology completed G1.9.5 Consultation on updated draft curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Chemistry completed G1.9.6 Consultation on updated curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Business completed G1.9.7 Consultation on draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies completed G1.9.8 Consultation on draft curriculum specification for Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development completed G1.9.9 TY Programme Statement completed G1.9.10 Report on the consultation on draft curriculum specification for Senior Cycle SPHE completed G1.9.11 Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum specification completed G1.9.12 Brief for the review of LC PE completed G1.9.13 Background paper and brief for the review of LC Accounting completed G1.9.14 Background paper and brief for the review of LC Construction Studies completed G1.9.15 Background paper and brief for the review of LC Engineering completed

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	G1.9.16 Background paper and brief for the review of LC English completed G1.9.17 Background paper and brief for the review of LC Geography completed CG1.9.18 Background paper and brief for the review of LCVP completed G1.9.19 Leaving Certificate Arabic curriculum specification completed G1.9.20 Leaving Certificate Classical Languages curriculum specification completed G1.9.21 Leaving Certificate Physics curriculum specification completed G1.9.22 Leaving Certificate Biology curriculum specification completed G1.9.23 Leaving Certificate Chemistry curriculum specification completed G1.9.24 Leaving Certificate Business curriculum specification completed G1.9.25 Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies curriculum specification completed G1.9.26 Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development curriculum specification completed G1.9.27 Proposal for the reconceptualization of LCA modules and new modules across Senior Cycle developed G1.9.28 Background papers and briefs for the review of LC Tranche 3 subjects completed G1.9.29 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Arabic completed G1.9.30 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Classical Languages completed G1.9.31 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Physics completed G1.9.32 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Biology completed G1.9.33 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Chemistry completed G1.9.34 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Business completed G1.9.35 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Drama, Film and Theatre Studies completed G1.9.36 Guidelines to support the additional assessment component for Leaving Certificate Climate Action and Sustainable Development completed
SG1.10 Strengthen the focus on and promotion of effective pedagogies to support progression in learning for all children and young people.	G1.10.1 Primary Language Toolkit to support the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile extended G1.10.2 Primary Mathematics Toolkit to support the implementation of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum extended

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	<p>G1.10.3 Development of a suite of Transition Year micro-modules completed</p> <p>G1.10.4 Development of guidance to support revised LC Irish text lists completed</p> <p>G1.10.5 Support material for the Transition Year Programme Statement completed</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>G1.11.1 Introduction of revised Leaving Certificate subjects and Leaving Certificate Applied module descriptors supported</p> <p>G1.11.2 Support materials as part of the SPHE/RSE online toolkits published</p> <p>G1.11.3 Review of LC English text lists completed</p> <p>G1.11.4 Review of JC Irish T1 and T2 text lists completed</p> <p>G1.11.5 Review of LC Irish text list completed</p> <p>G1.11.6 Review of LC Italian text list completed</p> <p>G1.11.7 Review of LC Spanish text list completed</p> <p>G1.11.8 Schedule of reviews of senior cycle modules completed</p> <p>G1.11.10 Review of JC English text lists completed (first, second, and third-year lists)</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>G1.12.1 Examples of children's learning with the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum published</p> <p>G1.12.2 Examples of children's learning with the new Primary language Curriculum published tool</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>G1.13.1 Examples of student work for junior cycle curriculum specifications and Wellbeing programmes developed, quality assured and published</p>
SG1.14 Develop and implement a model of cyclical, systematic curriculum review, encompassing all sectors and building on current review and development processes.	<p>G1.14.1 Brief for a CIDREE Yearbook on the theme of 'Conducting curriculum review' developed and disseminated within CIDREE network</p>

Goal 2 – Engagement and Collaboration	
<p>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.</p>	
Strategic plan action	Outputs
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>G2.1.1 Conference as part of the consultation on the draft primary curriculum specifications convened</p> <p>G2.1.2 Leading Out seminar series with education partners in support of the new Primary Curriculum Framework and specifications in development progressed</p> <p>G2.1.3 Engagement with the Schools Forum on the redevelopment of the primary curriculum continued</p> <p>G2.1.4 Engagement with Oide and the NCSE on the development of examples of curriculum change and innovation in primary schools supported</p> <p>G2.1.5 Work continued 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>
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>G2.2.1 Consultation with children in primary and special schools on the draft primary specifications completed</p> <p>G2.2.2 Consultation Report with children in collaboration with HUB na nÓg on the development of the primary curriculum specifications for Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education published.</p> <p>G2.2.3 Processes to strengthen the diversity of child/student voice in curriculum and assessment developed</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>G2.3.2 Work of Department of Education Groups on ICT, Digital Strategy, CLIL, STEM, NTRIS, Migrant Strategy, Literacy and Numeracy, Participation of Children and Young People supported</p> <p>G2.3.3 Work of Department of Education Junior Cycle Steering Group supported</p> <p>G2.3.4 Work of Department of Education ESD Schools Advisory Committee and ESD Steering Committee supported</p>

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	<p>G2.3.5 Work of Department of Education Advisory Committee for the Gaeltacht Education Policy, and the Steering Committee for Irish-medium education outside Gaeltacht areas supported</p> <p>G2.3.6 Work of Department of Education Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum and the Programme Delivery Group supported</p> <p>G2.3.7 Work of the Department of Education Senior Cycle Redevelopment Implementation Group supported</p> <p>G2.3.8 Work progressed through meetings of Joint Standing Groups, including SEC/NCCA and SOLAS/NCCA</p> <p>G2.3.9 Meetings with the Teaching Council convened</p> <p>G2.3.10 Work of the ERC National Advisory Committees on PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA and on National Assessments supported</p> <p>G2.3.11 Work of Irish Aid and WorldWise Global Schools development education grants committees supported</p> <p>G2.3.12 Ongoing engagement maintained with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta• Arts Council• Better Start• Educate Together• Education Support Centres in Ireland• ETB Directors of Schools and FET• Irish Primary Principals' Network• National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals• National Council for Special Education• Oide• Quality and Qualifications Ireland <p>G2.3.13 Work of Primary Education Forum and Department of Education supported</p>
SG2.4 Support and participate in research, curriculum and assessment initiatives, nationally and internationally, through strategic collaborations with other agencies, organisations and networks.	<p>G2.4.1 Actions as per T-REX contract in collaboration with the Teaching Council and Department of Education progressed</p> <p>G2.4.2 Contributions made to SCoTENS committee, initiatives and annual conference</p> <p>G2.4.3 Collaborations with Primary Advisory Panel to contribute to a range of research events and publications towards promoting NCCA developments at primary e.g. ICSEI 2024, Education Matters, ESAI 2024, etc.</p> <p>G2.4.4 CIDREE 2024 membership maintained. CNC meeting hosted in Dublin, and participation continued in CIDREE activities, yearbook and conference on theme of e-testing and computer-based assessment</p>

Strategic plan action	Outputs
	<p>G2.4.5 Collaborations with IEAN Network, including publications in the area of learner voice and AI in the area of assessment</p> <p>G2.4.6 CIDREE project on Artificial Intelligence in curriculum initiated</p> <p>G2.4.7 CIDREE Expert Meetings, Conference and General Assembly attended</p> <p>G2.4.8 Continued engagement with CCEA on curriculum and assessment matters</p> <p>G2.4.9 Representation of Irish Government on Governing Body of the Observatory for History Teaching in Europe (Council of Europe)</p> <p>G2.4.10 Engage with colleagues in curriculum bodies in other jurisdictions to further inform discussions on LC Irish models and to further examine use of frameworks like CEFR in upper secondary education</p>
SG2.5 Support the capacity of schools and settings to develop, introduce and enact change in curriculum and assessment.	<p>G2.5.1 Examples of practice in Traveller culture and history from early childhood settings, primary and post primary schools gathered</p> <p>G2.5.2 Collaboration with Oide and the NCSE, and the Changemaker School Network, on gathering examples of curriculum change in primary schools progressed</p> <p>G2.5.3 Work with individual school networks to consult on the draft primary curriculum specifications completed</p> <p>G2.5.4 Engagement with the Schools Forum on the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum progressed</p> <p>G2.5.5 Ongoing support for the work of the Junior Cycle Physical Education Network</p>

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 action	Outputs
SG3.1 Use research evidence, including findings from longitudinal research and consultation processes, to inform curriculum and assessment developments.	G3.1.1 Research on the feasibility of developing a platform to support preparation, teaching, learning, assessment and reporting for the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum completed
	G3.1.3 Post-doctoral funded research on secondary data from CSL study initiated
	G3.1.4 Engagement with the Advisory Panel (Primary) on the redevelopment of the primary curriculum progressed
	G3.1.5 Commissioned research to support the development of supports on the key concepts in an updated Aistear initiated
	G3.1.6 Engagement with the Advisory Panel on the redevelopment of senior cycle progressed
	G3.1.7 Third interim report from the research study on the implementation and impact of the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle published
	G3.1.8 First interim report from the research study and follow-on review of Junior Cycle Irish T1 and T2 drafted
	G3.1.9 Research on student voice in relation to text lists published
	G3.1.10 Research into models of provision and frameworks, such as CEFR, used to inform development of curricula for native languages to inform work on Leaving Certificate (LC) Irish completed
	G3.1.11 Papers setting out perspectives on the use of CEFR to inform work on LC Irish progressed
	G3.1.12 Paper on the role of texts, including literature in supporting language learning and teaching of Irish completed
	G3.1.13 Early outline of discussion paper on potential models of provision for LC Irish developed
	G3.1.14 Engagement with the Advisory Panel (Post-primary) in the redevelopment of senior cycle progressed
	G3.3.1 Children's School Lives Reports 7 (Wellbeing) and 8a and 8b (Equalities) published
SG3.3 Disseminate, nationally and internationally, the outcomes and findings of research we generate to stimulate and inform debate.	G3.3.2 Curriculum and assessment work presented at conferences for critique

Strategic plan action	Outputs
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.	G3.4.1 Strategy for retention of key records or archiving of same across all accommodation moves G3.4.2 Research events held for staff



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 action	Outputs
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.	E1.1.1 Work on a People Strategy to commence following the implementation of changes arising from the organisational review and the recruitment of a full HR team with implementation supported
SE1.2 Implement blended working arrangements which build on the COVID experience, support NCCA’s strategic goals and reflect national policies and guidelines.	E1.2.1 Blended working policy paused during various accommodation moves in 2024 across 2 different locations
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.	E1.3.1 Scoping work undertaken to mark NCCA’s 40th anniversary E1.3.2 Staff professional development supported E1.3.3 Disability Awareness session provided for all staff – disability awareness training roll-out to commence E1.3.4 Irish language courses and Irish language upskilling offered to all staff
SE1.4 Support and promote positive wellbeing in NCCA, including employee wellbeing, through continued reflection and engagement.	E1.4.1 Formation of new Wellbeing Group supported E1.4.2 Development of workplan by Wellbeing group progressed E1.4.4 New premises secured in Dublin with office fit-out underway and in Portlaoise with staff moved into Portlaoise offices in September 2024, providing more suitable working environments across both locations
SE1.5 Build on the findings of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey 2023 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.	E1.5.1 Results from 2023 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey (CSEES) evaluated E1.5.2 CSEES Action Plan to include scoping out of suitability of wellbeing tools, initiated

Strategic plan action	Outputs
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.	E1.6.1 Climate Action Leadership Training completed by Senior Management Team

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 <i>Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies</i> (2016).	
Strategic plan action	Outputs
SE2.1 Support the work of Council, Audit and Risk Committee, Governance Committee and other structures.	E2.1.1 Curriculum and assessment advisory role of the Council supported E2.1.2 Curriculum and assessment work supported and overseen by the Board for Early Childhood and Primary, Board for Junior Cycle and Board for Senior Cycle E2.1.3 Work of Audit and Risk Committee supported E2.1.4 Work of Governance Committee supported
SE2.2 Review the effectiveness of organisational and enabling structures and implement findings.	E2.2.1 New posts arising out of organisational review integrated into organisational structure and processes E2.2.2 Posts arising from the organisational review filled through appropriate recruitment processes E2.2.3 Application for recruitment licence commenced
SE2.3 Maintain and further develop the Corporate Governance Framework and associated policies.	E2.3.1 Governance Framework and policies supported and overseen by Governance Committee E2.3.2 Scoping work for records management project commenced
SE2.4 Maintain appropriate risk management policies and procedures in line with the risk appetite of Council.	E2.4.1 NCCA Risk Registers maintained, reviewed and updated
SE2.5 Maintain and further develop robust financial systems and internal controls, producing audited Financial Statements to the deadlines and standards required.	E2.5.1 Financial Statements produced on time to fulfil governance obligations E2.5.2 Requirements of Prompt Payment Acts met E2.5.3 Requirements of Revenue Commissioners and others met

Strategic plan action	Outputs
SE2.6 Adhere to public procurement guidelines and promote the use of environmental and social considerations in public procurement.	E2.6.1 Green Team formed and implementing Climate Action Plan
SE2.7 Meet all legal and statutory requirements relevant to the organisation.	E2.7.1 Annual Report for 2024 produced and published E2.7.2 Data Protection processes maintained, reviewed, and updated as necessary E2.7.3 All mandatory reporting requirements met E2.7.4 Legal advice accessed as required
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.	E2.8.1 Specific strategies developed and implemented to ensure customer service standards maintained during office relocation and accommodation moves E2.8.2 Customer Service further developed to align with Official Languages Act by offering continuous upskilling to colleagues in the Irish Language and by complying with the Act by placing at least 20% of all NCCA advertising in the Irish language in 2024

Strategic Enabler 3 – Information and Communications Technology	
<p>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.</p>	
Strategic plan action	Outputs
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>E3.1.1 Telephony and broadband across NCCA's offices maintained and supported in line with service level agreements</p> <p>E3.1.2 Improvements in functionality applied to support internal and external communication</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>E3.2.1 ICT environment (hardware/software) and infrastructure maintained and improved in response to organisational needs</p> <p>E3.2.2 Emerging developments in ICT resources monitored and used, as appropriate, to support a blended working model</p> <p>E3.2.3 Cybersecurity processes and practices reviewed and refined based on best practice and national guidelines</p> <p>E3.2.4 Digital and semi-automated travel and subsistence systems built and been tested internally</p> <p>E3.2.5 Digital and semi-automated procurement systems been planned for internal users</p>
SE3.3 Develop staff confidence and competence in using digital technologies.	E3.3.1 Suitable CPD identified for and undertaken by staff to enhance ICT capabilities and competences
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.	<p>E3.4.1 Tender process for the maintenance, support and development of the curriculumonline.ie website commenced</p> <p>E3.4.2 NCCA-managed websites were maintained and supported in line with service level agreements</p> <p>E3.4.3 Report Card Creator and templates for end-of-year reporting maintained</p>

Enabler 4: Communication	
<p>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.</p>	
Strategic plan action	Outputs
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.	<p>E4.1.1 Drawing on expertise, as needed, from a communications company, actions from the communications plan implemented</p> <p>E4.1.2 An information guide on curriculum and assessment review processes to advance the understanding of NCCA's work developed</p> <p>E4.1.3 info@ncca newsletter published and shared with subscribers</p> <p>E4.1.4 A short NCCA Year in Review highlights e-communication produced as a companion to the Annual Report for NCCA subscribers</p>
SE4.2 Capitalise on developments in digital technologies and in digital and print media to extend and enhance internal and external communications.	<p>E4.2.1 Social media platforms further developed in response to ongoing review by external monitoring company</p> <p>E4.2.2 A podcast series on the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum initiated</p> <p>E4.2.3 Podcasts/video recordings on key messages from research papers published and promoted</p>

3. About The NCCA

The NCCA is a statutory body, 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 the 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 the 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.

The Council is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. Financial reports and management accounts are generated and

considered by Council on a quarterly basis with the review of the performance of the Plan of Work considered on an annual basis. In 2024, progress with the Plan of Work was reviewed formally by the Council in June and September meetings with a further review at the December meeting through initial discussion on the new 2025 Plan of Work. 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 Youth, with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery 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 enable 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 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 2024 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 on 31 December 2024.

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.

In Spring 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. 10 meetings were held in 2024, 7 of which were in person and 3 took place online.

The table overleaf details the appointment period for current members.

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

Members of Council 2024

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date First Appointed	Date(s) Re-appointed
Mr Sean Ó Foghlú Chairperson	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 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
Mr Martin Whyte	Department of Education	9 February 2024	
Ms Anne McHugh	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Muireann Ní Mhoráin, Uas.	Foras na Gaeilge	18 January 2024	
Ms Claire McGee	Ibec	1 November 2022 to 30 September 2024	
Ms Meadhbh Costello	Ibec	1 December 2024	
Mr Brian Tubbert	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Dr Sandra Austin	Irish Federation of University Teachers	24 April 2023	
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

Members of Council 2023

Name	Nominating Organisation (where applicable)	Date First Appointed	Date(s) Re-appointed
Dr Finn Ó Murchú	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	1 March, 2019	1 March, 2022
Mr Rob Walpole	National Parents Council	1 January 2024 to 17 December 2024	
Ms Carmel O'Shea	National Parents Council	1 January 2024	
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 Olive O' Connell	Teachers' Union of Ireland	1 January 2024	
Mr Shari Irfan	Irish Second Level Students Union	9 July 2023 to 8 July	
Mr Jack McGinn	Irish Second Level Students' Union	9 July 2024	

Gender Balance in the Council membership

As of 31 December 2024, the Council had 15 (60%) female and 10 (40%) male members, with one vacancy. The Council, therefore, as of the 31 December, met 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.

Implementation of the mandate

NCCA has demonstrated good compliance with the 2024 Climate Action Mandate and is proud of its commitment to climate action while working towards June 2025 when NCCA will have a steady state accommodation environment to enable the acceleration of the necessary compliance. To reflect our environmental changes, the NCCA Climate Action Plan has spanned more than one year. We have relocated to a new office location in Portlaoise from September

2024 with a further accommodation relocation due in May 2025; when we arrive at the point where we are permanently resident in new offices, this will enable us to truly deliver on our climate obligations and drive our compliance. In this interim phase, we remain fully committed to delivering, as evidenced by the formation of a Green Team, the signing up to attend Green Teams National Program Accelerating Sustainability in the Workplace training in Q1 2025 and the assigning of the role of Climate and Sustainability champion to a colleague on the Senior Management Team.

Compliance with Circular 1/2020: Procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official air travel

NCCA is fully compliant with Circular 1/2020 including making payments to the Climate Action Fund where appropriate.

Sustainability activities report

Training was provided for all staff on the NCCA's on-line training portal. The Green Team was established, and training organised for all members – green initiatives were part of the annual staff gathering in December 2024. The Senior Management Team undertook a Climate Action leadership training course.

Training and Initiatives

Training was provided for all staff on the NCCA's online training portal. The Green Team was established, and training organised for all members – green initiatives were part of the annual staff gathering in December 2024. The Senior Management Team undertook a Climate Action leadership training course.

Waste Management

As well as waste minimisation, the NCCA has procedures in place to handle day-to-day waste. During ongoing accommodation changes, NCCA staff sorted through a full range of items for disposal and used a range of processes to minimise waste, including use of specialised waste disposal companies, reuse in home office settings, offsite storage and donations to charity or offered to sister state bodies.

Paper Use

All paper used for printed documents is recycled. Any old paper stock not suitable for use was donated to schools for reuse where possible. The transition to paperless processes continued with actions including:

- Development of an online Travel and Subsistence Claims system to be used in lieu of printed forms.
- Scanning of all items received by post for distribution rather than forwarding as hard copy mail.
- Provision of larger monitors or dual monitors to facilitate processing activities instead of printing lists for checking.
- Cancelling receipt of printed copies of Professional and Trade Journals.

Energy Management

An energy audit of our new premises in Portlaoise was organised for early 2025. In addition, the NCCA Climate Action Roadmap 2024 made a commitment to procuring a BER A3 rated building for its new headquarters which was located with easy access to public transport.

The Distillery Building in Smithfield in Dublin, targets LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification and BER A3 rating, ensuring high environmental performance.

I measc na bpríomhghnéithe:

- A green roof sedum system.
- Efficient building management systems to monitor and control air conditioning.
- Double-glazed high-performance curtain walling system.
- Central fresh air supply/extraction system.
- Sustainable materials and design practices.

These measures contribute to the building's energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. A nearby Luas stop ensures that visitors can travel from Heuston Station in minutes. In addition to this travel route for most of our meeting attendees, this also makes it feasible for NCCA staff in Dublin and Portlaoise to easily travel between locations which contributes to business continuity gains and social sustainability

Business Travel

All new accommodation is fully accessible by public transport and NCCA continue to encourage the use of public transport by staff and external members of our wider structures as per our Travel Policy.

Green Procurement

The NCCA, as part of the public sector, promotes and operates by green procurement to support Ireland’s environmental and wider sustainable development objectives. Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a process where public authorities seek to source goods, services

or works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would ordinarily be procured.

The NCCA plays a role in promoting sustainability through Green Public Procurement (GPP). This approach ensures that environmental factors are considered when purchasing goods and services. By prioritising energy-efficient buildings, and eco-friendly products we try to support Ireland’s climate goals. Green procurement also encourages innovation and strengthens the market for sustainable businesses, contributing to a greener economy.

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 Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

NCCA reached out to Values Lab in 2024 to express an interest in their supporting NCCA’s implementation of the Duty on an organisation-wide basis with Senior Management leading it.

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 2003 and 2021. 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 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 courses such as the Certificate in Professional Irish (NFQ levels 2 to 6) and the Phone Skills and Customer Service course with Gaelchultúr. On an informal basis, use of Irish is encouraged among staff with informal events taking place every quarter.

In December 2021, the Official Languages Act was amended, placing new statutory obligations on all public bodies regarding the Irish language. The first of these new obligations came into effect on 10 October 2022 and relates to advertising in the Irish language. Section 10A of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, requires all public bodies to deliver at least 20% of their annual advertising in Irish. In this regard, at least 5% of the annual advertising budget spend must be conducted with Irish language media outlets. In June 2024, NCCA staff attended several online information seminars organised by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, in conjunction with Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga (OCT) in relation to the new statutory requirements. In addition

to this and to comply with provisions 4A and 4B of the amended Act, NCCA appointed a senior official for the purpose of monitoring and reporting on compliance in March 2024.

The NCCA ensures that its two main websites www.ncca.ie and www.curriculumonline.ie can be equally engaged with by users through Irish and English. Translation of all website content through an application programming interface (API) is available for staff to use on both. 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. NCCA maintains an Irish style guide and sectoral terminology glossaries to provide to translators to ensure better consistency and accessibility in translated materials.

The NCCA is committed to meeting its obligations under the Official Languages Acts and to continually enhancing the quantity and quality of the materials and services provided through Irish.

Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies

NCCA 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 of four Council members and one independent member with financial and audit expertise. The role of the ARC is to support the 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.

There were 6 meetings of the ARC in 2024 including a joint session held with the Governance Committee in February 2024. They were all virtual meetings, held online except for the joint meeting which was in person.

From May 12th, 2022, the membership of the Committee comprised Mr. Joe McKeown [Chairperson], Ms Teresa Hagan, Ms Edel Ní Chorráin, Mr Rory D'Arcy. Mr Dave Salter was appointed in May 2023 as the external member to the ARC, since then Mr David Salter has left his role as of 7th of June 2024. The ARC welcomes two new members Patricia Gordon who joined on the 27th of February 2024, in place of Edel Ní Chorráin, and external member Philip Crosby joined on the 25th of October 2024.

Governance Committee (GovC)

The GovC comprises four Council members and one external member. The role of the GovC is to support the Council in meeting legal and statutory requirements, as well as adopting good practice in governance.

From May 12th, 2022, the membership of the Committee comprised Mr. Dermot O’Riordan (Chairperson), Dr Sheila Garrity, Ms Deirdre Mac Donald, Mr Denis Ring and Ms Mairín Ní Chéileachair. Mr Dermot O’Riordan has stood down from his role as Chairperson and Ms Deirdre Mac Donald was appointed to the role of Chairperson from November 2024.

There were 3 meetings of the GovC in 2024 including a joint session held with the ARC in February 2024. All of these were virtual meetings, held online with the exception of the joint meeting which was in person.

Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

A schedule of attendance at the Council and Committee meetings for 2024 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
Mr Sean Ó Foghlú	10/10			
Dr Michael Redmond	9/10			
Mr Joe McKeown	7/10	6/6		
Mr Ed Byrne	9/10			826
Ms Joyce Perdue	10/10			83
Ms Orlaith O’Connor	3/3			
Ms Anne McHugh	7/10			1,174
Mr Jack McGinn	2/3			
Ms Claire McGee	5/9			
Mr Brian Tubbert	8/10			
Ms Carmel Browne	10/10			220
Ms Patricia Gordon	9/10			
Dr Finn Ó Murchú	10/10			7,152
Dr Teresa Hagan	10/10	6/6		
Dr Sheila Garrity	6/10		3/3	636
Mr David Duffy	10/10			549
Ms Muireann Ní Mhoráin	9/9			785
Mr Rob Walpole	6/9			
Ms Deirdre MacDonald	8/10		0/3	2,612
Mr Martin Whyte	8/8			
Mr Denis Ring	9/10		3/3	1,079
Ms Elaine Sheridan	7/10			
Ms Máirín Ní Chéileachair	9/10		3/3	799

Name	No. of Council meetings	No. of ARC Meetings	No. of Governance Committee meetings	Expenses (no fees paid to Council members)
Ms Olive O'Connell	9/9			876
Ms Carmel O'Shea	7/10			81
Mr Rory D'Arcy	10/10	5/6		1,727
Dr. Sandra Austin	7/10			479
Ms. Meadhbh Costello	1/1			41
Mr Shari Irfan	7/7			
Mr. Dermot O'Riordan (GovC)	-		3/3	
Mr Dave Salter (ARC)		4/4		
Mr Philip Crosby (ARC)		1/2		
Total				19,646*

Key Personnel Changes

Corporate Services

- Jordan Briggs, Executive Officer, Administration (3rd January).
- Carmel Birchell, Higher Executive Officer, Procurement Manager.
- Aine O'Mahoney, Clerical Officer, Finance (both 1st July).
- Kenneth Daly, Principal Officer, Head of Governance, Compliance and Corporate Services (17th October).
- Marcio Santana, Clerical Officer, Reception (4th November)

Curriculum and Assessment

- Sinead Tuohy, Acting Director Post-Primary.
- Rachel Linney, Acting Director Post-Primary (both 29th January).
- Donna Carolan, Acting Director Early Childhood & Primary (4th March).
- Nine Education Officers via secondment or contract, across Post-Primary and Early Childhood and Primary throughout the year.

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.

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.





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	2024	2023
€60,000	€69,999	6	6
€70,000	€79,999	5	2
€80,000	€89,999	9	9
€90,000	€99,999	15	13
€100,000	€109,999	13	9
€110,000	€119,999	3	4
€120,000	€129,999	2	0
€130,000	€139,999	0	1
€140,000	€149,999	0	0
€150,000	€159,999	0	0
€160,000	€169,999	0	1
€170,000	€179,999	0	0
€180,000	€189,999	1	0

For the purposes of this disclosure, short-term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary, overtime allowances (nil in 2024) and other payments made on behalf of the employee but **exclude** Employer's PRSI.

Legal Costs and Settlements

In 2024, 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 €188,284 (2023: €49,623) were incurred for advice and assistance with governance and legislative requirements including broad HR matters (MOU's; staff on secondment in acting up arrangements), Freedom of Information and general legal advice.

Consultancy Costs

Consultancy costs include the cost of external advice to management and exclude outsourced 'business-as-usual' functions in 2024 and were incurred for general advice.

Professional fees and consultancy	2024 (€)	2023 (€)
Accountancy and other professional fees	42,250	41,759
External audit fee	14,000	14,000
Internal audit fee	13,284	9,379
Commissioned research for curriculum and assessment work	367,415	577,223
Totals	436,949	642,361

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.).

	2024 (€)	2023 (€)
Internal	50	100
External	1,875	7,489
Total	1,925	7,589



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.

The NCCA introduced a Blended Working Policy in 2023 which all staff had the opportunity to apply for. As part of this, NCCA continued to ensure related IT and cyber security controls were in place and that staff were working in safe and ergonomically suitable home office environments. One-to-one health and safety assessments carried out by an independent assessor with each staff member availing of blended working, were completed (blended working has been paused during the various accommodation moves across 2024 and into 2025).

An Organisational Review of NCCA was conducted in 2023 by an external consultant. Business cases were submitted to the Department of Education and sanction received for additional appointments, including some designed to enhance the organisational structure of Corporate Services and allow further development of the Governance and compliance functions in particular. Key appointments arising out of the review were a new Principal Officer appointed as Head of Governance, Compliance and Corporate Services in October 2024 with a Procurement Officer appointed in July 2024, along with 2 Executive Officers and 1 Clerical Officer as part of the Corporate Services team.

An Oversight and 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 and its two sub-committees completed a self-assessment in 2023 of its effectiveness. The Council considered the recommendations and put appropriate actions in place during 2024 in response. In December 2024, the Council completed its own self-assessment with the feedback and insights gathered to form actions for implementation by the Council in 2025.

Child Protection

The NCCA has developed procedures and guidelines for staff on child protection and welfare matters as part of requirements and obligations under the Children First Act (2015), Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), the Addendum to Children First (2019), the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements. The NCCA Child Safeguarding Statement, available on our website at www.ncca.ie, was reviewed, updated and approved by the Council in December 2024.

In accordance with NCCA's Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement, in-person Child Protection training was facilitated by Tusla for all staff in the organisation in our Portlaoise office on two separate dates in Spring 2024 (15 March and 11 April).

NCCA has also liaised and engaged with Tusla on current NCCA Child Protection arrangements. This advice informed the annual review of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Statement in 2024 and will continue to inform ongoing work in this area.

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time Executive staff led by the Chief Executive, Arlene Forster. The staff in 2024 was as follows..

Chief Executive	
Arlene Forster	
Deputy Chief Executives	
Barry Slattery	Patrick Sullivan
Head of Governance, Compliance and Corporate Services	
Kenneth Daly (from 17 October 2024)	
Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:	
Ben Murray (Programme Director from 24 January 2024)	
John Behan (Acting)	
Donna Carolan (Acting from 4 March 2024)	
Tracy Curran	
Derek Grant	
Rachel Linney (Acting from 29 January 2024)	
Diarmuid Mooney (Acting)	
Elaine Ní Neachtain	
Evelyn O'Connor (Acting)	
Ger O'Sullivan (Acting)	
Jacinta Regan	
Aoife Rush	
Sinéad Tuohy (Acting from 29 January 2024)	
Corporate Services	
Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Assistant Principal	
Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer	
Carmel Birchall, Higher Executive Officer (from 1 July 2024)	
Sarah Whiteley, Higher Executive Officer (from February until November 2024)	



**Corporate Services (continued)**

Ann Young, Higher Executive Officer

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer (to 5 February 2024)

Jordan Briggs, Executive Officer (from 3 January 2024)

Deirdre Dunne, Executive Officer (to 5 July 2024)

Bernie Gallagher, Executive Officer (from 7 February 2024)

Maria Phelan, Executive Officer (from 3 April 2024)

Alan Cooling, Clerical Officer

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer (to 6 February 2024)

Ger Heffernan, Clerical Officer

Maria Phelan, Clerical Officer (to 2 April 2024)

Áine O'Mahoney, Clerical Officer (from 1 July 2024)

Rachel Quigley, Clerical Officer (1 July 2024 to 1 November 2024)

Education Officers

Aidan Raftery (from 1 September 2024)

Paul Behan

Rachel Biddulph (from 1 September 2024)

Ciara Blennerhassett

Michelle Bolger

Fred Boss

Elisabeth Butler

Rachael Byrne

Donna Carolan (to 3 March 2024)

Frank Chambers

Mella Cusack

Education Officers (continued)

Liam Clohessy

Barry Convey (from 8 January 2024)

Lara Dabbagh

Mary Daly

Niamh Daly (from 16 September 2024)

Deirdre Dennehy

Carol Gardiner (to 31 August 2024)

Michelle Geraghty

Maria Hickey (from 1 September 2024)

Annette Honan

Triona Hourigan (from 1 September 2024)

Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald

Maria Kelly

David King

Rachel Linney (to 28 January 2024)

Angela Martin

Judi Mills (from 1 July 2024)

Ciarán Mooney

John Moriarty

Aoife Mullen

Ronan McGovern

Ursula Ní Dhufaigh

Deirdre Ní Fhearghail

Siobhán Ní Threasaigh

Bairbre Ní Thuairisg (from 4 March 2024)

Dónal Ó Buachalla

Gillian O'Connor



Education Officers (continued)

Louise O'Reilly (from 11 March 2024)

Sinéad Ruane

Sharon Skehill

Sinéad Tuohy (to 28 January 2024)

Mary-Elaine Tynan

David Walsh (1 April 2024 to 31 August 2024)

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 2024, the Council convened 170 meetings. A list of the meetings held in 2024 is in Appendix One.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2024 was €12,574,841. Core funding of €11,940,055 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 31 December 2024 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Appendix 1: NCCA meetings 2024

Group	Total Number of Meetings (brackets indicate number of which were online meetings)
Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	6 (2)
Primary Mathematics Development Group	2 (1)
Primary Language Development Group	4
Primary STEM Education Development Group	9
Primary Social and Environmental Education Development Group	6 (3)
Primary Wellbeing Development Group	4 (1)
Primary Arts Development Group	5
Updating Aistear Development Group	3 (1)
Post-primary	
Board for Junior Cycle	6
Board for Senior Cycle	7 (1)
Leaving Certificate Drama, Theatre and Film Studies Development Group	3
Leaving Certificate Climate Action & Sustainable Development Group	5
Leaving Certificate Business Development Group	4 (1)
Leaving Certificate Arabic Development Group	1
Leaving Certificate Biology Development Group	3
Leaving Certificate Chemistry Development Group	4
Leaving Certificate Physics Development Group	2
SPHE Development Group, Senior Cycle	1
Transition Year Programme Statement Development Group	1 (1)
Post-Primary Special Education Development Group	9
Agricultural Science Development Group	4
Computer Science Development Group	4
DCG Development Group	3
History Development Group	3

Group	Total Number of Meetings (brackets indicate number of which were online meetings)
Post-primary (continued)	
Home Economics Development Group	3
Junior Certificate MFL Development Group	4 (2)
Leaving Certificate Accounting Development Group	7
Leaving Certificate Construction Studies Development Group	8
Leaving Certificate Engineering Development Group	9
Leaving Certificate English Development Group	7
Leaving Certificate Geography Development Group	8
Leaving Certificate PE Development Group	7
LCVP Development Group	7
Maths Development Group	6
Music Development Group	3
Physics and Chemistry Development Group	2
Cross Sectoral	
Traveller Culture and History Expert Group	4
Total number of Groups	38
Total Number of Meetings	170

Appendix 2: NCCA presentations (selection) 2024

A selection of the presentations and papers delivered, and workshops facilitated by NCCA staff in 2024 are presented in the table below.

Event/Organisation	Theme/Title
JANUARY	
International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) - (Trinity College, Dublin)	Conceptualisations of teacher and child agency in curriculum development and enactment across Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales
INTO Principals' Forum - (Birr, Co. Offaly)	Highlighted the key messages of the Primary Curriculum Framework and the Primary Mathematics Curriculum.
MARCH	
International Play Conference (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick)	The influence of <i>Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework</i> (NCCA, 2009) on the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i> (DE, 2023) and in the more recently published <i>Primary Mathematics Curriculum</i>
APRIL	
156th Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) Annual Congress - (Millenium Forum, Derry)	Increase awareness of and encourage participation in the current consultation on the five draft primary curriculum specifications.
2024 ESAI conference, Maynooth University	Education for more just societies: the roles of imagination, innovation and collaboration
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB School Leaders' Conference	All Senior Cycle redevelopment work to date and offered an update on upcoming work across the various subject tranches and senior cycle programmes.
Annual conference of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA)	NCCA's work to redevelop the primary curriculum and highlight the current consultation
MAY	
Icelandic Delegation	Presented on the updating of Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and on the online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.
Ukrainian Delegation	Impact of Junior Cycle reform and its resonance with the new 'Curriculum for Wales'; undertaking upper secondary redevelopment
Welsh Delegation	Delegation of educators from Wales on May 14 for the purpose of sharing experiences of curriculum redevelopment. The delegation included teachers, school leaders, third level lecturers and curriculum developers.
Department of Education HEI Forum	A comprehensive update on recent curriculum developments at primary level.

Event/Organisation	Theme/Title
JUNE	
Transformative Education for Sustainable Development National Stakeholder Forum	A stand for Information on the Draft Curriculum for Social and Environmental Education at Senior Cycle
PEPAYS Forum	Presentation providing an overview of the development of the Draft Primary Wellbeing specification and the methodology of the national consultation process.
College Alliance Conference	Presentation on the topic of 'schools to further education pathways' which included an overview of the work to date on the Transition Year iVET Module.
OIDE Annual Conference	Focused on NCCA's current work to redevelop the primary curriculum and Senior Cycle and gave particular attention to key competencies and the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.
Migrant Teacher Bridging Programme - (Marino Institute of Education, Dublin)	Presented and facilitated teacher workshops and discussions on curriculum and assessment across early childhood, primary and post-primary education
AUGUST	
HEIRNET Conference - (University of Stirling, Scotland)	Presentation on the NCCA/UCD collaborative research project, <i>Big Pictures of the Past</i> .
SEPTEMBER	
EECERA Conference - (University of Brighton)	Knowing what matters for babies, toddlers and young children: Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the update of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in Ireland.
Inspectorate Professional Development Event	Promoting student key competencies in a redeveloped Senior Cycle
Joint Managerial Body Conference	Workshop on <i>Supporting students</i> through their transitions.
UDL International Symposium - (Westgrove Hotel, Clane, Co. Kildare)	Presentation on the new <i>Primary Mathematics Curriculum in Ireland: A curriculum for all</i> , & Workshop entitled, <i>Using Visual Thinking Strategies to support UDL's multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression</i>
Slovenian Delegation	Quality Assurance in Education

Event/Organisation	Theme/Title
OCTOBER	
OECD Seminar, Above and Beyond	Workshop on <i>Transitions in Upper Secondary Education</i> .
Post Primary Spanish Teachers Association Conference - (Clayton hotel, Liffey Valley, Dublin)	Overview of the process involved in revising the specification for Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages.
Post Primary Music Teachers Association Conference (Clayton Hotel, Sligo)	Fostering Diversity and Inclusion in the Music Classroom
BSTAI National Conference – (Radisson Blu, Little Island, Cork)	Preparing for Change – Junior Cycle Business
Irish Learning Support Association	Overview of the Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes (L1L2LPs)
NAPD Conference	Panel Discussion - Redevelopment of Senior Cycle
OIDE Professional Development Day	Presentation titled ‘Thinking about curriculum in the redevelopment of Senior Cycle’ focused on curriculum, curriculum design, and curriculum development. Workshop also on ‘The Redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum – Focusing on the Big Picture’ which highlighted the vision, principles, and key messages of the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i> .
CCEA Staff Learning Event on Child/Student Voice	Overview of NCCA’s structures and processes and how the principle on Child/Student Voice in NCCA’s <i>Strategic Plan 2022-2025</i>
SCoTENS Conference	Presentation on a paper entitled ‘Noticing, Nurturing, Responding and Reflecting: Embracing a slow relational pedagogy to support learning and development of babies, toddlers and young children through Aistear’.
NOVEMBER	
Literacy Association of Ireland Annual Conference	The topic of literacy, language and voice in the updated Aistear Framework.
Irish Primary Principals Network Conference	Responding to the future needs of children and society: the big picture focused on the Vision, Principles and Key Competencies of the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum
National Education for Sustainable Development Forum	How Aistear frames an understanding of ESD as caring for oneself, caring for others and caring for the environment
Bright Start International Conference	Embedding the rights of babies, toddlers and young children as foundational in the updated version of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.
Irish National Teachers’ Organisation Education Conference	Sustaining Teachers, Sustaining Education linking teacher wellbeing with the effective integration of sustainability education in Irish primary classrooms

Event/Organisation	Theme/Title
DECEMBER	
PLÉ Members Seminar - (DCU)	Updated Aistear Framework with a high-level overview provided on the rights of babies, toddlers and young children; sustainability; play; diversity, equity and inclusion; slow relational pedagogy; planning and assessing as well as curricular alignment between early years and primary school.
CRN & UCD Child RC Annual Conference 2024	Navigating Current and Emerging Challenges for Children and Young People: Research, Best Practice and Innovations across the Island of Ireland.
European Commission PEER Counselling on Curricular Reforms - (Poland)	Workshop on support for curriculum reform in Poland on designing a new curriculum based on competencies, including the curriculum development and design process to be used.
ChildLinks Journal	NCCA’s curriculum development work in early childhood education, outside primary schools, since 2001 when the NCCA became a statutory body. The article concludes with the recent publication of the updated Aistear Framework

Appendix 3: Report on protected disclosures

The NCCA has procedures for making protected disclosures which have been developed in line with the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 and the subsequent Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act, 2022 and agreed by Council. The NCCA Policy on Protected Disclosures 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 (AMENDMENT) ACT 2022

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2022 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. In addition, this report should contain a statement that NCCA has established internal reporting channels and procedures in accordance with the Act. We hereby confirm that NCCA has done so.

Report of NCCA in respect of the Year 2024

Relevant year for Disclosures	Disclosures or Nil Disclosures
2024	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, works 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, data protection, procurement and risk management. A system of Performance Management Development, linked to line management arrangements, is in place for staff which includes a strong emphasis on and 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, NDP Delivery and Reform, has been in place in the NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2024 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements.

Audit and Risk Committee

NCCA has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising of 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 6 times in 2024.

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 2024 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, 2024 by Crowleys DFK drew attention to many positive features and key strengths of NCCA's internal control environment including oversight and accountability, personnel skill sets and experience, risk management and segregation of duties.

The auditors reported findings across areas including Travel and Subsistence, HR and Fixed Assets which require action from management. The normal on-going management supervision, together with the resolution of any findings



raised in the report, should ensure that the control risk remains low.

The recommendations of the review in this context are currently being addressed and the matters involved will be resolved during 2025. To assist with this, internal audit findings will, as helpful, be included in NCCA's live risk registers and appropriate controls applied to mitigate the risk until such time as the risks can be retired.

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 meetings. Risk management also features on the agenda of each Council meeting. 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
- 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 (S&W).

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. There was no non-compliant procurement in 2024. A Corporate Procurement Plan 2023 to 2026 was approved by Council in 2023.

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 2024. 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 2024 on 21 March. This review was informed by the review undertaken by the ARC.

Internal Control Issues

No weaknesses in internal control were identified in relation to 2024 that require disclosure in the financial statements.

Sean Ó Foghlú

Sean Ó Foghlú
Chairperson





NCCA

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

