



**NCCA**

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

2003-2005

# STRATEGIC PLAN





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2003-2005



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# National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Strategic Plan: 2003-2005

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## Foreword

As Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment it gives me great pleasure to present the Strategic Plan for 2003-2005, the first such plan by the Council as a statutory body. The plan sets out the strategic goals for the Council and positions its work in the context of the overall development of the education system for the coming years. The plan sees the Council making significant contributions in a number of key areas that fall within its remit. All of the actions to be undertaken will be informed by the vision and mission of the Council which reflect the high expectations held by those served by the education system and the many purposes served by education as a whole, and particularly by schooling.

The NCCA works through partnership; the representative nature of the Council is reflected in the enabling and supporting structures of the organisation. Working in this manner requires a commitment to ongoing consultation and engagement with the education sector, with researchers and academics, with international networks and agencies. This ensures that Council's work is rooted in best practice and informed by the latest thinking and ideas about education and learning in Ireland and internationally. In this way we can be sure that the advice formulated and agreed at the Council table can contribute, as the mission statement suggests, to the development of a world-class education system that meets the needs of individuals, their families and communities now, and into the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine O'Brien".

Dr. Catherine O' Brien

Chairperson



## Introduction

The preparation and completion of any strategic plan poses a number of challenges for any organisation. For an organisation working in the field of education the challenges are made even greater by the ever-shifting social, cultural and economic environments to which education must respond and the increasing expectations placed on education in general and schools in particular. The complexity of the educational environment is matched by the complexity of schools and early education settings and by the complex lives of children and young people in contemporary society. Add to this new perspectives on teaching as a profession, the impact of information and communication technologies on the processes of teaching and learning and a new impetus to inclusive classrooms and it becomes clear that the business of strategic planning in education is not just about the production of a plan. It also requires the development of a set of planning and evaluation tools for an agency working in a complex and ever-changing environment.

The members of Council and staff who contributed to this developmental work over a number of months are owed a debt of gratitude for the time and consideration they gave to the processes of reflection and drafting. The contributions of those who commented on drafts and provided feedback and guidance are greatly appreciated. Leadership for the development of the strategic plan was provided by Margaret O' Donnell, Director, Curriculum and Assessment who guided and supported the work from its inception to completion. I wish to thank Margaret for leading this work, and for leading her colleagues in the planning process.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Looney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Anne Looney

Chief Executive

## Vision Statement

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will play a key role in shaping a world-class education system that meets the needs of all learners, supports their participation in communities and in society, and contributes to the development of the knowledge society in Ireland.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is to provide the Minister for Education and Science with advice on curriculum and assessment that promotes the development of Ireland's education system, in the interest of continually improving the educational experiences and lives of learners.

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## High-level objectives

### *High-level objective 1*

To conduct ongoing review of curriculum and assessment that will contribute to improved educational experiences for learners and the continued development of the education system.

### *High-level objective 2*

To engage with and provide support and guidance for ongoing change and development in curriculum and assessment in schools and other educational settings.

### *High-level objective 3*

To advance equality in education through developments and processes that contribute to improved equality of access, participation and outcomes for all learners.

### *High-level objective 4*

To engage in, commission, and review relevant research so that our work is informed by best practice in relation to curriculum, assessment and learning, and by emerging understandings and experiences of educational change.

### *High-level objective 5*

To develop structures and processes to enhance corporate capacity and effectiveness of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

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# 1. The Organisation

This section presents the statutory remit of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and sets out its functions and guiding principles.

## The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was established in November 1987 as a successor to the Curriculum and Examinations Board and was reconstituted as a statutory body in July 2001.

The brief of the statutory Council as outlined in the Education Act (1998), is to advise the Minister for Education and Science on matters relating to

*...the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools and the assessment procedures employed in schools and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. (41.1 a,b)*

The Council is responsible for the development and determination of its advice to the Minister for Education and Science.

The Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister. It has a total of twenty-five members, all of whom are appointed for a three-year term. The members represent teachers, school managers, parents, business and trade unions, and other educational interests. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission, and one nominee of the Minister. The Minister appoints the Chairperson; the current Chairperson is Dr. Catherine O'Brien.

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff, led by its Chief Executive, Dr. Anne Looney. The full-time staff members are assisted by a number of part-time Education Officers, who are appointed on a secondment or commission basis to the NCCA. Funding for the NCCA is by way of a grant from the Department of Education and Science. Additional project-specific funding is sourced from a range of organisations and agencies.

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## Functions and Guiding Principles

The work of the NCCA involves five types of activity:

- **planning** curriculum and assessment initiatives, ranging from broad learning frameworks for early childhood to detailed subject specifications for Leaving Certificate syllabuses
- **consulting** with all key partner organisations through the representative nature of the Council itself and through consultative documents, discussion papers, seminars and meetings
- **supporting** the change process in schools through the development of guidelines for teachers, through liaising with the providers of professional development for teachers, and through working directly with schools and other educational settings
- **reviewing** the experiences of the implementation of curriculum and assessment change, together with relevant research, to support the process of curriculum and assessment review and development
- **informing** school authorities, teachers, parents, employers and the general public about developments in curriculum and assessment through publications, public meetings, briefings and the media.

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## In conducting its work, the NCCA is committed to

- pursuing quality and ongoing improvement of the educational experiences of children and young people
- continually and actively promoting equality in the education system
- operating in a consultative and inclusive manner
- engaging with those working in schools and other educational settings
- evaluating the quality and effectiveness of its work
- ongoing engagement with, and analysis of, the social, cultural and economic changes that impact on the educational experiences of children and young people
- the education of children and young people for full participation in the knowledge society
- ensuring that the education system remains a key factor in Ireland's social and economic development
- developing research-informed policy and disseminating research
- developing its organisational capacity in order to ensure quality service delivery.

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## 2. Analysis

As part of the strategic planning process, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment engaged in an environmental analysis which examined the implication of factors at a macro and micro level that will impact on the achievement of the high-level objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan 2003-2005.

### Environmental Analysis: External

**Ireland in the 21st century** Significant changes have taken place in Irish society since the early to mid 1990s. We have experienced a period of profound economic, social, technological, cultural and demographic change, which is reflective of wider global change. These changes have been significant, but the pace of change has proven to be of even greater significance, with many young people emerging from school to an adult world radically different from that of their parents. In such a time of rapid change, there is a need to align educational provision with the demands of societal change.

**Ireland in Europe** The Lisbon Strategy (2000) states that the strategic goal for Europe is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, and to achieve this by making Europe's education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010.

While Ireland has its own rich culture enhanced by the diversity of contemporary society, as a member of the European Union it is committed to an integrated policy framework which has common objectives for education and training systems throughout the membership states. These objectives include increasing the quality of education and training, and facilitating access to education for all.

The year 2004 will mark a significant year in the history of education. Ireland, hosting the European Presidency and adopting the theme Building an Inclusive and Effective Competitive Europe, will report on the Lisbon Strategy and strive to achieve consensus among member states on issues relating to lifelong learning, mobility, basic skills, assessment, e-learning, and professional, vocational, and higher education.

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### The globalised economy

The evidence that our society has changed profoundly is all around us. Ongoing developments in technology, communications, and information processing have rapidly increased global trade and investment. Our world has become smaller and more interconnected in many ways; it is knowledge which forms the basis for economic growth and development. The emergence of a knowledge-based society means an ever-increasing demand for a well-educated and skilled workforce. The learners of today will be the citizens of tomorrow whose skills, talents, knowledge and creativity will hold the key to Ireland's continued success in the 21st century.

The challenge for the education system will be to ensure a balance between the demands of the global market forces and equality of curriculum provision for all. In this sense, educational aims must attend to the needs of the individual, to the needs of society and to the interface between the two. A successful education system will be measured not only by the quality of its individual learners, but by their ability to apply their learning on an ongoing basis to the challenges which life presents to them as individuals, family members, workers, and citizens.

### Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is the essential foundation for active citizenship and employability in the 21st century. It is based on the principle that all citizens should have a level of basic skills to ensure active participation in working life, family life, and all levels of community life. The acquisition of these skills will be necessary for active participation in the knowledge-based economy and society.

Lifelong learning is increasingly seen as an important guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. All European citizens should be provided with real and meaningful opportunities for learning in a seamless manner, from 'cradle to grave' to prepare for the demands of social and economic change and to participate in shaping Europe's future.

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### **Inclusion and cohesion**

The economic development of Ireland during the late 1990s and into the new century has surpassed all expectations, and has given rise to a heightened awareness of the pivotal role education plays in increasing prosperity, and the responsibility education has in promoting social inclusion. While the economic boom enriched educational opportunities for many, there still remains inequality of access, participation and outcome for many students. Barriers arising from difference in socio-economic status, ethnicity, disability, and gender all serve to hinder the development of a fully inclusive and cohesive society. The right of students with special educational needs to be educated alongside their peers will necessitate a flexibility in curriculum provision that reflects the diversity of learning needs, and prepares all students to participate as equals in society.

### **The development of the teaching profession**

It is widely accepted that the quality of Ireland's education system has contributed significantly to economic growth and social development, and will continue to be critical in building Ireland's capacity to have a leading role in the knowledge society. While Ireland has been fortunate in the quality of its teaching force (OECD, 1991) and the teaching profession continues to be held in high regard in Irish society, it faces many challenges in a fast-changing society where education policy is being reshaped to cope with the knowledge society.

In the coming decade, the role of the teacher will evolve further, placing greater emphasis on the role of guide, mentor and mediator, nurturing and supporting learners in the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, promoting self-directed learning as well as the ability to contribute to and lead team-work. Teaching will be the learning profession – teachers will promote learning, and they themselves will need to continually learn and engage in professional development.

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### Changes in the educational landscape

In recent times, education in Ireland has seen the development of an extensive legislative framework, including the Education Act (1998), the Qualifications Education and Training Act (1999), and the Education Welfare Act (2000). Understanding the implications of these new legislative directives and learning how to interface with new agencies and organisations has added to the complexity of educational change for all the partners in education, and will continue to be a significant feature of Irish education for the short to medium term.

### Schools and change

These global and national developments challenge schools to respond to the changing needs of future generations of Ireland's children and young people. The learners in our schools today have been described as inhabitants of the digital age. They live in a world where Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has the capacity to profoundly impact how they live, learn, and work together.

In keeping pace with these developments, schools in the 21st century are challenged to enable their learners to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to become lifelong learners in the knowledge society. The quality and relevance of the learning experience schools provide will increasingly depend on the extent to which they prepare learners to manage successfully the demands of modern society.

Partnerships between teachers, parents, students and school management will be central to the evolving culture of schools which meet the needs of learners in the knowledge society. In so doing, these learning organisations of the future may bear only passing resemblance to the schools of the past.

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## Environmental Analysis: Internal

### Strengths, challenges and opportunities

The achievement of the NCCA's high level objectives and the successful implementation of the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan will be achieved through building on identified strengths within the organisation, taking due account of challenges and opportunities.

#### Strengths

- **Organisational capacity:**  
The professional expertise and the commitment of staff in providing quality advice and guidance on all matters relating to curriculum and assessment for early childhood, primary, and post-primary education continue to contribute significantly to the high profile held by the NCCA.
- **Partnership:**  
The NCCA has a strong tradition of effective collaboration, and its commitment to partnership is the foundation which supports all of its work. This commitment to further developing its engagement with the partners in education and others with an interest in education will strengthen and support the achievement of the strategies proposed in the next section.
- **Culture:**  
The NCCA has an established record of supporting change in education. It is regarded by the education community in Ireland and internationally as an organisation that is responsive to system needs, progressive in its approach, and effective in its operations.

#### Challenges and opportunities

- **Responding to change:**  
The future learning needs and skill requirements of learners are constantly changing. The challenge for the NCCA is to ensure that its work is informed by best practice in relation to curriculum, assessment and learning, and by emerging understandings and experiences of educational, social, cultural, and economic change.

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**Resources** Resourcing of the education system as a whole continues to be the subject of considerable contestation. A well-resourced education system is more flexible and responds more readily to change. The capacity of the NCCA to contribute in a defining way to ongoing educational change is also closely related to the resources available to it. In this context it is essential that the available resources be used to good effect in priority areas.

**Collaboration** The critical role played by the professional development of teachers in shaping classroom practice is widely recognised. In developing changes in curriculum and assessment, the NCCA will continue to work closely with those who plan, support, and engage in professional development activities. Such engagement can ensure a strong relationship between curriculum and assessment as envisaged, and curriculum and assessment as experienced in schools and other educational settings.

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## 3. Strategic Plan

### High-level objectives, strategies and outputs

In pursuit of its vision and mission statements, and given the findings of its environmental analysis, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has identified five high-level objectives to give focus to its work for the years 2003-2005. These high-level objectives and their associated strategies and outputs have been designed to ensure that all aspects of the NCCA's remit are being addressed effectively. Each of the NCCA's key activities (planning, consulting, supporting, reviewing and informing) is represented within these high-level objectives. They also provide a framework against which the overall performance of the organisation can be judged. At the end of each year, the NCCA will publish an Annual Report on progress in relation to the framework of high-level objectives. Evidence of progress will be presented in respect of the specific projects and activities in each Annual Report.

## High-level objective 1

To conduct ongoing review of curriculum and assessment that will contribute to improved educational experiences for learners and the continued development of the education system.

Strategies	Outputs
<p>In early childhood and primary education the NCCA will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a consultative document <i>Towards a Framework for Early Learning</i> to inform the development of a framework to support early learning from birth to six years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of a consultative document.</li> <li>Consultation with the early childhood sector.</li> <li>Development of a framework to support early learning.</li> <li>Publication of materials for curriculum review.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate a review of the Primary School Curriculum in order to identify and meet the needs of teachers and children for additional support and guidance in using the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of the findings of the curriculum review.</li> <li>Development of recommendations regarding the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum.</li> <li>Development of additional guidance for teachers using the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a programme for ongoing review of the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme for ongoing review of the Primary School Curriculum outlined.</li> </ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress the development of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of an overarching statement on assessment in primary schools.</li> <li>• Publication of general guidance for the use of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> <li>• Development of guidance for the use of assessment in specific subjects in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate and develop projects which are aligned with the Primary School Curriculum and informed by the findings of the Primary Curriculum Review project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a report on the feasibility of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> <li>• Publication of guidance on literacy in Irish-medium primary schools.</li> <li>• Publication of general guidance for the use of ICT in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> <li>• Development of a framework for learning with ICT in the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>
<p>In post-primary education the NCCA will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress prioritised aspects of the review of junior cycle, including addressing issues of curriculum overload and overlap; broadening the range of assessment approaches in use; and undertaking syllabus revision and development as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of a common template for junior cycle syllabuses.</li> <li>• Publication of a handbook providing an overview of the junior cycle curriculum.</li> <li>• Operation of a developmental project with schools on formative ‘assessment for learning’.</li> </ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinate developments at junior cycle with emerging ideas and developments in associated areas such as the implementation of the revised primary curriculum, the review of senior cycle education, and the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of a paper positioning junior cycle developments in the wider educational context.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in a review of senior cycle education based on the discussion paper <i>Developing Senior Cycle Education</i> published in 2002. This review will include extensive and varied consultative processes, a curriculum development dimension, and will give rise to advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the future shape of senior cycle education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of the senior cycle discussion paper.</li> <li>• Implementation of the consultative process.</li> <li>• Publication of reports on various consultation events and processes.</li> <li>• Hosting of a forum on senior cycle education.</li> <li>• Publication of a foresight paper on directions for the development of senior cycle education.</li> <li>• Conducting a research initiative with schools on the practicalities of implementing certain directions for development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a rolling review of the senior cycle programmes – the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Transition Year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the future shape of senior cycle education.</li> </ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a rolling review of the senior cycle programmes – the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Transition Year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an implementation plan for the initial phase of change to senior cycle education.</li> <li>• Development of issues papers on the senior cycle programmes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake reviews in curriculum areas and subjects as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of revised syllabuses in Junior Certificate Science, Junior Certificate Technical Graphics, junior cycle Physical Education, senior cycle Physical Education, Leaving Certificate Art, Economics, Physics and Chemistry (combined) and Physical Education.</li> <li>• Production of review reports on the technology subjects at junior cycle, mathematics education, the business subjects, the classical subjects.</li> <li>• Development of curriculum frameworks for Guidance (junior and senior cycle) and for SPHE (senior cycle).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate a major review of languages (including Irish, English, and Modern Languages) in the post-primary curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning, publication and dissemination of a discussion paper on languages in the post-primary curriculum.</li> <li>• Engagement in a consultative process.</li> <li>• Publication of a report on the review, establishing policy issues and identifying action points for the future.</li> </ul>

## High-level objective 2

To engage with and provide support and guidance for ongoing change and development in curriculum and assessment in schools and other educational settings.

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop guidance and support materials to support curriculum and assessment change.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publication of guidance and support materials in Irish and English, disseminated to schools through the Department of Education and Science and readily accessible on the NCCA website.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritise the development of the NCCA website as a support for teachers and schools. This will include the development of support materials designed for interactive use and/or adaptation by teachers using digital media.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased use of the website by teachers, parents, school principals and those working in early childhood settings for information and support on curriculum and assessment issues.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to participate in the management and work of relevant agencies.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective liaison between NCCA and agencies working in support of educational change and development resulting in greater coherence for schools and early childhood settings.</li></ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise closely with the support services working with primary and post-primary schools and teachers, with agencies in the early childhood sector and with providers of pre-service and professional development for the education sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key messages about change and development in curriculum and assessment are embedded in pre-service preparation and in-career support.</li> <li>• Pre-service and professional development focuses on enabling education professionals to respond to and lead change.</li> <li>• Feedback from education professionals informs the ongoing review of curriculum and assessment.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the recently established practice of engaging directly with schools and other educational settings in the process of curriculum and assessment review and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong profile for the NCCA in schools and educational settings and a focus in the work of the NCCA on the challenges of relating curriculum and assessment as designed, to curriculum and assessment as experienced by learners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science and the State Examinations Commission as important sources of information for curriculum and assessment review and development. Engagement with members and management of the Inspectorate will allow for input into identification of themes and areas for review and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review process is responsive to issues identified in the course of evaluation.</li> </ul>

### High-level objective 3

To advance equality in education through developments and processes that contribute to improved equality of access, participation and outcomes for all learners.

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop guidelines on equality proofing for application to the NCCA as an organisation, and in relation to its work in advising on curriculum and assessment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Production and implementation of guidelines on equality-proofing.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assist primary and post-primary schools in addressing the needs of students with special educational needs by developing guidance and resource materials for school management and teachers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Production of an extensive range of guidance and resource materials for teachers of (i) students with general learning disabilities and subsequently for teachers of (ii) exceptionally able students.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop guidelines to promote and support the embedding of intercultural education in teaching and learning approaches based in the revised primary curriculum, and post-primary junior and senior cycle curricula.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Production of guidelines both for primary and post-primary schools.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop guidance relating to the teaching of English as a second language to learners for whom neither Irish nor English is their first language.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Production and publication of guidance.</li></ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of the Junior Certificate School Programme aimed at improving its effectiveness as an educational programme instrumental in the achievement of higher levels and quality of participation in post-primary junior cycle education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of review report and actions based on the findings of the review.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to the development and implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications with a view to ensuring that all learners experience improved access, transfer and progression in gaining school-based qualifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of advice to the Department of Education and Science and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland on the placement of school qualifications on the framework.</li> <li>Engagement with initiatives involving relevant agencies to ensure improved access, transfer, and progression to school qualifications.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop guidance materials for parents of primary school children which provide information about the curriculum and demonstrate how parents can support the work of the school in implementing the Primary School Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production and publication of guidelines for parents of primary school children.</li> </ul>

## High-level objective 4

To engage in, commission, and review relevant research so that our work is informed by best practice in relation to curriculum, assessment and learning, and by emerging understandings and experiences of educational change.

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commission research considered central to the achievement of prioritised strategies and outputs, and integrate the findings of such research into the work of curriculum review and development. This type of research will often be undertaken in collaboration with other educational authorities and partners such as, for example, the Department of Education and Science and the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commission, publish and disseminate research on<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– evaluation of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme</li><li>– curriculum provision and school integration in post-primary junior cycle</li><li>– the Junior Certificate School Programme</li><li>– the situation of Civic, Social and Political Education at junior cycle</li><li>– gender and achievement in the certificate examinations</li><li>– the use of ICT software in Leaving Certificate Technology subjects</li><li>– the Irish Leaving Certificate on the UCAS tariff.</li></ul></li></ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake commissioned research in the area of curriculum review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of a review of the potential for teaching and learning about the built environment in the primary and post-primary curriculum.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake research intrinsic to the process of curriculum review and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion, publication and integration of the findings of research initiatives with schools associated with the Primary Curriculum Review (PCR) project and with the post-primary senior cycle review.</li> <li>• Completion and publication of a plan for the implementation of new and revised Leaving Certificate syllabuses in the technology subjects.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in relevant research initiatives and networks at a national and international level to inform ongoing curriculum review and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing participation and involvement in certain research initiatives of the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE), the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA), and the Association for Educational Assessment Europe (AEA).</li> <li>• Ongoing engagement with curriculum and assessment agencies in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>

## High-level objective 5

To develop structures and processes to enhance corporate capacity and effectiveness of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a culture of continuous professional learning and development across the organisation and obtain accreditation through <i>Excellence Through People</i>, Ireland's national standard for human resource development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of an induction process and ongoing professional development of staff.</li> <li>Undertake assessment with a view to being awarded ETP standard.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devise and implement a set of positive workplace principles and foster a sense of well-being and shared purpose among staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption of agreed positive workplace principles and practices based on these.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to improve the quality of its enabling committee structures and its consultation processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of more diverse committee structures and of wider range and reach within consultation processes and events.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further develop its IT environment in line with emerging technologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IT environment improved on a rolling basis.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that procedures are in place to improve the quality of its internal and external communications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement of communication network and service delivery.</li> </ul>

Strategies	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise the use of financial and human resources to provide a quality service, and apply project management strategies with a view to achieving cost savings where possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness of human and financial resources maximised.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the enhancement of its corporate identity as a statutory body, and develop effective and efficient methods of engaging with the education partners in particular, and with the public in general, in order to heighten awareness of its work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of new logo and corporate identity.</li> <li>Publication of <i>Customer Service Charter</i> as required by the public service modernisation programme.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to legislative requirements in relation to corporate governance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirements of corporate governance met.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan for and report annually on its progress.</li> </ul> <p><i>Decentralisation:</i> A Government decision to proceed with a programme of civil service decentralisation was announced as part of the 2004 Budget Statement on the 3rd December 2003. As part of that programme the NCCA is to relocate to Portarlinton, County Laois. The challenge to the NCCA is to respond to this change and ensure that there is no diminution in the quality of the services delivered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of annual programme of work.</li> <li>Publication of annual reports and their submission to the Minister for Education and Science.</li> </ul>

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## 4. Conclusion

This strategic plan sets out a framework within which the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will work in the years 2003-2005 to bring about the innovative changes and adaptations necessary to meet the needs of learners.

The Strategic Plan represents the contributions of members of Council and of the Executive, including full and part-time staff. The collaborative process through which the strategic vision, mission, and high-level objectives have been developed reflects the ongoing commitment of the organisation to working in a creative and collaborative manner. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is committed to continuing this participatory approach in progressing its strategic plan for the years 2003-2005.