

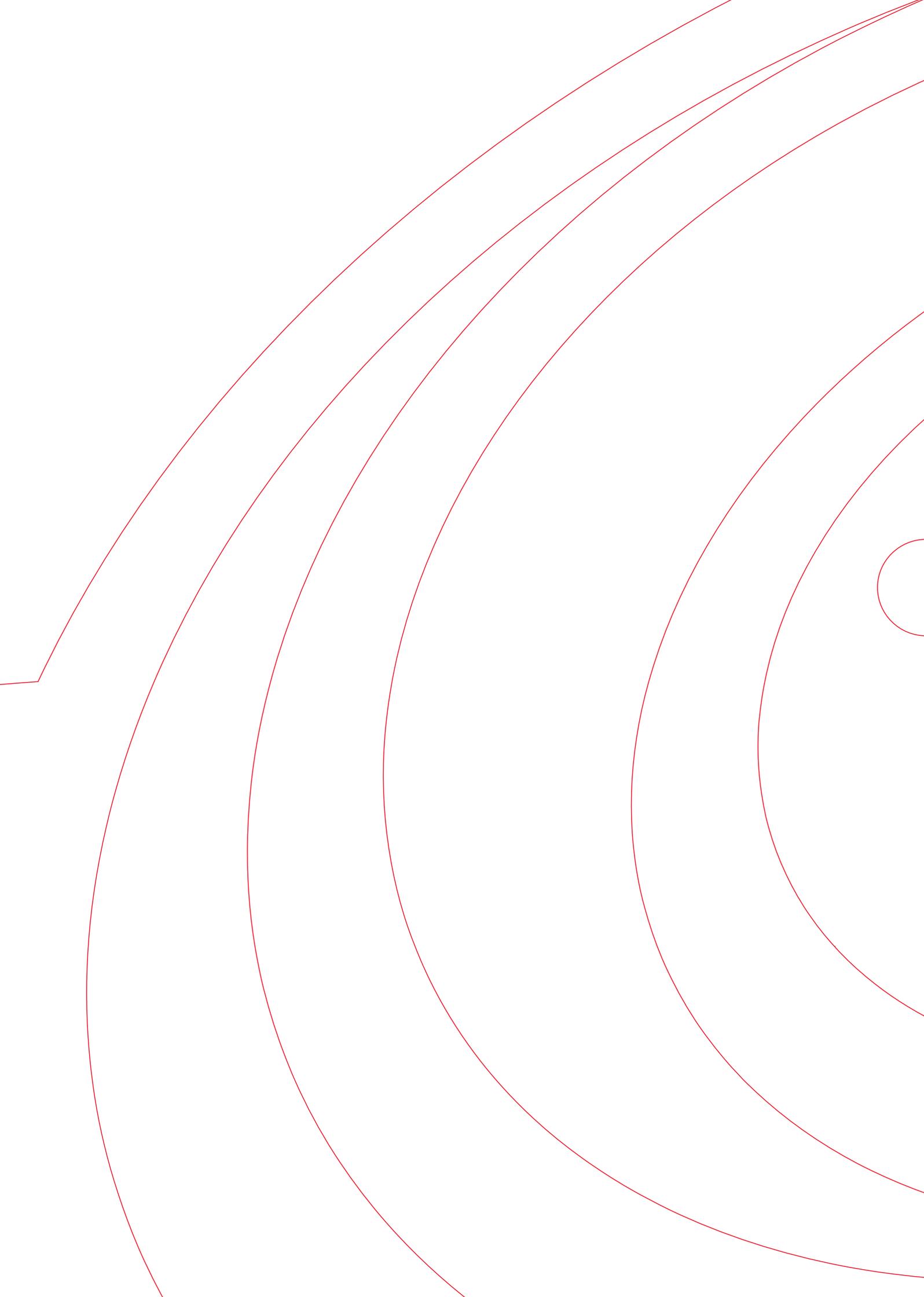


NCCA

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

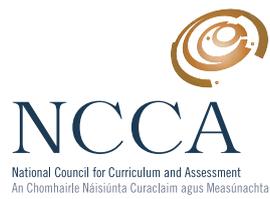
2003

ANNUAL REPORT



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ANNUAL REPORT
2003



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National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Annual Report: 2003

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Foreword

January 2004

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment continued to consolidate its role in Irish Education in 2003. Two key areas of review were initiated – the review of the Primary School Curriculum and the review of the senior cycle of post-primary education. Both establish the pattern of rolling review to which the Council is committed. The review of languages in the post-primary curriculum represents a further feature of the NCCA review process – an attempt to address issues across the curriculum, rather than in single subjects, and to place curriculum and assessment decisions and choices in the context of broader national and educational policies. These approaches to review ensure that curriculum and assessment remain dynamic and responsive aspects of Irish education.

The work of the Council in early childhood education continues to develop in partnership with other agencies working in this field. It is of note that this is a recent area of work for the NCCA, and one in which it is quickly establishing itself as having expertise in and commitment to the work. The alliances and partnerships across the early childhood sector have been vital to our work in 2003, and will continue to be a key component of the NCCA's work in this area in 2004.

2003 was marked by a number of projects that took the NCCA directly to schools and classrooms – something of a new departure for how the Council engages with practitioners. The consultations on special education, the review of the Primary School Curriculum, the consultations on the directions for the development of senior cycle – all of these projects featured and continue to include direct engagement with teachers and principals, and in the case of the latter, with parents and students. The teacher networks on Assessment for Learning are based on working directly with teachers. These are welcome developments. They ensure that the dynamics of curriculum and assessment reform are informed by the real challenges of change faced by schools and teachers.

As chairperson, I want to pay tribute to the work of all the members of the Council. Many members of Council also serve on or chair other NCCA committees – to them particular thanks are due. The NCCA – Council and staff – now face the challenge of re-locating to Portarlinton as announced in the budget speech in December, 2003. Sustaining momentum and ensuring the strategic goals are delivered will be challenging for all. I am confident, however, that the challenge will be met.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Catherine O' Brien



Introduction

January 2004

I am pleased to present this Annual Report on the work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in 2003.

As the report shows, the work done on staffing, structures, and procedures since the establishment of the NCCA on a statutory basis in July 2001 has provided the basis for progress in, and completion of, a number of key areas of work. That so much has been achieved is a testament to the commitment of staff, and to the emphasis placed in the organisation on professional development and support for staff in their work.

I wish to acknowledge their work, and their contribution to the preparation of this report. I want to pay particular tribute to the work of the Deputy Chief Executives in leading the work in their respective areas of responsibility. Their work in leading and supporting the many project teams through which the NCCA works has ensured that the outputs presented in this report are not simply completed, but completed to the highest standards.

Such work, and the work ongoing into 2004, ensures that the NCCA can play its part in the development of Irish education and the improvement of the educational experiences of children and young people.

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

Dr. Anne Looney

Chief Executive

1. The role of the NCCA

The NCCA is a statutory Council and its brief is to advise the Minister for Education and Science on matters relating to

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

The functions of the statutory Council, under the terms of the Education Act (1998), can be summarised under twelve headings:

1. To periodically review the curriculum, or any part of the curriculum, for schools and the syllabuses taught and to advise the Minister.
2. To advise the Minister on appropriate methods for the assessment of the effectiveness of the education provided in schools, with particular regard to mechanisms whereby students who have problems achieving their potential may be identified as early as practicable, and assisted.
3. To advise the Minister on strategies which will assist students to make a successful transition from primary school to post-primary school.
4. To periodically advise the Minister on the standards of knowledge and skills which students at various age-levels should attain, and on the mechanisms for assessing the achievement of such standards, having regard to national and international standards and good practice in relation to such assessment.
5. To periodically review the in-service training needs of teachers, including needs arising from the introduction of new curricula, subjects or syllabuses in schools, and to advise the Minister in relation to those needs.

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6. To advise the Minister on the requirements, as regards curriculum and syllabuses, of students with a disability or other special educational needs.
 7. To advise the Minister on strategies which have as their objective the enhancement of the effectiveness in the teaching and use of the Irish language in schools.
 8. To maintain, manage, administer, and invest all the money and assets of the Council.
 9. To promote research and development in education and to conduct or commission such research and development where appropriate to its objects and functions.
 10. To promote equality of access to education generally and to instruction in any particular subjects between male and female students.
 11. To accept gifts of money, land or other property upon such trusts and conditions, if any, as may be specified by the donors.
 12. To do all such acts and things as may be necessary to further the objects of the Council, including such functions in relation to review and reform of the curriculum in schools and the assessment of the outcomes of the education provided in schools as the Minister shall from time to time direct.

2. Council membership

The NCCA Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister for Education and Science. There are twenty-five members in all. The members come from the various bodies that represent teachers, school managers, parents, employers, trade unions, and interests in education. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission, and nominees of the Minister. The membership of a new statutory Council, which met for the first time on 26th March 2003, is as follows:

Dr. Catherine O'Brien	Chairperson
Mr. Tom Gilmore	Vice-Chairperson
Mr. Ferdia Kelly	Vice-Chairperson
Sr. Catherine Prendergast	Minister's Nominee
Ms. Ellis Humphreys	Joint Managerial Body
Mr. John McKay	Irish Vocational Education Association
Mr. Paddy Murchan	Catholic Primary Schools Managers Association
Dr. Kenneth Milne	Church of Ireland Board of Education
Ms. Antoinette Buggle	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
Mr. John White	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Mr. Michael Freeley	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Mr. John MacGabhann	Teachers' Union of Ireland
Mr. Sean Daly	Teachers' Union of Ireland
Ms. Catherine Byrne	Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Ms. Sheila Nunan	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Dr. Eugene Wall	Irish Federation of University Teachers
Mr. Frank Turpin	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Mr. Oliver Donohoe	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Tomás Ó Séaghdha, Uas.	Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools
Ms. Fionnuala Kilfeather	National Parents Council Primary
Mr. Michael O'Regan	National Parents Council Post-Primary (to 22 October)
Ms. Marian Lyon	National Parents Council Post-Primary (from 23 October)
Mr. Heino Schonfeld	The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
Seosamh Mac Donncha, Uas.	Foras na Gaeilge
Mr. Aidan Farrell	State Examinations Commission
Ms. Doreen McMorris	Department of Education and Science

3. The work of the NCCA

The Council of the NCCA is responsible for the development and determination of NCCA policy on the basis of which it advises the Minister for Education and Science. In the process of developing its policy, the Council consults widely with its constituent bodies and with other organisations and agencies with an interest in education.

The Council has the power to put in place such enabling structures as it deems necessary. These specialist committees comprise teacher representatives, representatives of the Inspectorate of Department of Education and Science and the State Examinations Commission, representatives of school managerial bodies, parent and subject associations, further and higher education interests, and business and industry representatives. Committees play a central role in drawing up the syllabus or course for each subject or part of the curriculum.

The committees report to the Council, which in turn advises the Minister for Education and Science.

4. Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff under its Chief Executive, Dr. Anne Looney. The full-time staff members are assisted by a number of part-time Education Officers, who are subject specialists appointed on a secondment or commission basis to the NCCA over a period.

The staff members of the NCCA in 2003 were as follows:

Anne Looney, Chief Executive
John Hammond, Deputy Chief Executive
Lucy Fallon-Byrne, Deputy Chief Executive¹
Sarah FitzPatrick, Deputy Chief Executive²

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment

Bill Lynch
Peter Johnson
Hilary Roche
Arlene Forster (from 6th January)
Majella O'Shea (from 1st September)
Margaret O'Donnell (temporary assignment from 8th June)

Administration

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal
Maura Donohoe, Higher Executive Officer (to 13th August)
Tom Fagan, Higher Executive Officer (from 11th August)
Jackie O'Brien, Executive Officer
Deirdre Mitchell, Clerical Officer
Morgan Lockhart, Clerical Officer
Mary Christian, Clerical Officer (to 5th December)
Edward Geoghegan, Clerical Officer (to 27th June)
Jason Keogh, (from 23rd June)
Edward Canavan, (from 1st December)
Christine Ryan, Resources Co-ordinator

¹ Ms. Fallon-Byrne is on secondment as Director of the National Council for Partnership and Performance (NCP).
² Dr. FitzPatrick holds this post on a temporary assignment in place of Lucy Fallon-Byrne

The following Education Officers worked with the Council on a full-time secondment basis:

Cathal de Paor, Curriculum Review, Primary, ICT
Helen Guinan, Special Educational Needs
Sally Keane, Primary Education (to 31st August)
Frances Leahy, Educational Disadvantage (to 31st August)
Emer O'Connor, Special Educational Needs
Margaret O'Donnell, Special Educational Needs (to 7th June)
Majella O'Shea, Interculturalism and the Curriculum (to 31st August)
Hal O'Neill, Junior Cycle
Noel O'Neill, Implementation of Technology Subjects
Bairbre Boylan, Primary (from 24th March)
John Halbert, Senior Cycle (from 24th March)
Sean Bracken, Modern Languages at primary level (from 10th March)
Anne Moloney, ICT Primary (from 31st March)
Mary O'Leary, ICT Post-Primary (from 3rd March)

The NCCA also employed the following Education Officers on a part-time or occasional basis:

Primary Damian Murchan, Assessment
Paul Brennan, Assessment
Ted Motherway, English
Nóirín Ní Nuadháin, Gaeilge
Valerie O'Dowd, Mathematics/Special Educational Needs
Regina Murphy, Music
Frances Murphy, Physical Education
Dónal O'Donoghue, Visual Arts
Geraldine O'Connor, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): History
Mary Burke, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): Geography
Roland Tormey, Interculturalism and the Curriculum
Gerard Quirke, Interculturalism and the Curriculum

Post-Primary Christy Tyrrell, Accounting
Frank Mc Gourty, Agricultural Science
Sr. Enda Mc Mullen, Art
John Lucey, Biology
Áine Nerney, Business
Brian Farrelly, Classical Studies
Dr. Jim McCarthy, Chemistry
Bill Gaughran, Construction Studies
Pat Younger, Economics
Pat Lynch, Engineering
Dr. Muiris Ó Laoire, Irish
John Mulcahy, Geography
Vivian Cassells, Guidance
John Dredge, History
Elizabeth Oldham, Mathematics
John McCarthy, Modern Languages
Seán Mac Liam, Music
Marion Palmer, Physics
Susan Kenny, Physical Science
Annette Honan, Religious Education and Civic, Social and Political Education
Anna Walshe, Science (to 31st August)
Ger Halbert, SPHE
Pat Keays, Technology
Alan Mongey, Technical Drawing and Technology

5. Finance

The NCCA is funded by the exchequer through the Department of Education and Science. Its allocation for the financial year 2003 was €2,870,000. An additional €50,000 was received from the Department of the Environment and Local Government for work on architecture in the curriculum. The funds allocated to the NCCA covers:

- staff salaries
- costs related to the secondment and commissioning of specialist staff to support the work of the Council
- costs of Council and sub-committees, including programme, course, and curriculum committees, 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 attendance by NCCA staff members at external conferences
- IT development and training
- international interaction, including membership fees of international organisations such as CIDREE and AEA
- research
- publications, including proofing, design, photography, printing and translation to Irish
- advertising
- staff development.

A detailed financial statement is provided in the Appendix.

6. Supporting high-level objectives 2003

Each of the following sections relates to one of the five high-level objectives of the Strategic Plan 2003-2005.

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.

Early Childhood Education

A discussion paper, *Towards a Framework for Early Childhood Learning* was completed in 2003. This document will form the basis of consultation with the wider early childhood community, including parents, and will enable the NCCA to begin to develop the framework itself.

The NCCA continued its close links with the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE). It has also furthered its contribution to early childhood education through participation in other networks, such as the Border Counties Childcare Network (BCCN), the OMNA Project Consultative Group, and the steering Committee for the implementation of the “Éist” *Equality and Diversity: an anti-bias approach for the early years sector Project (Pavee Point)*.

Review of the Primary School Curriculum

At the invitation of the DES, the NCCA developed a Primary Curriculum Review Booklet (containing curriculum review and reflection templates for English, mathematics, and visual arts) to be used by teaching staff in all schools during the 2003/2004 year of consolidation and review of teachers’ implementation of the primary curriculum.

The NCCA designed and began the initial implementation of a programme for Primary Curriculum Review: Year 1. Four strands of the review were identified, as follows:

- teacher template study

A modified version of the Review and Reflection Template for Teachers (contained in the Primary Curriculum Review Booklet) was developed for the purpose of gathering detailed information regarding teachers' implementation of the curriculum in English, mathematics, and visual arts to date. In collaboration with the Education Research Centre (ERC), the NCCA identified a sample of one hundred and seventy-five schools for participation in this strand.

- collective case study

To further examine the phenomenon of how the Primary School Curriculum is mediated in particular school contexts, an Instrumental Case Study was designed for a purposive sample of six primary schools which represent a diversity of school contexts. Access was negotiated in 2003 and the research design finalised.

- PCSP evaluation (see high-level objective 4).

- literature review

The NCCA has begun to scope relevant information regarding implementation of the Primary School Curriculum from a variety of sources, including published national assessments, independent research studies, and doctoral and masters' theses (including action research projects by practising teachers).

Assessment in Primary Schools

The paper *Assessment in Primary Schools* was developed. The first exploratory project for developing assessment in a specific subject – *Assessment in Visual Arts* – is in its early stages of development.

Gaeilge in Primary Schools

Work has continued on supporting the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) in its design of in-service for the Gaeilge curriculum.

A draft background paper on the introduction of reading in Irish-medium schools was prepared. The paper has been informed by meetings with PCSP cuiditheoirí who have advised on the diversity of current practice in schools and on the needs of schools. The document proposes the development of guidance by the NCCA on the introduction of reading for Irish-medium schools.

Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum

A full-time Education Officer was appointed to work on the development of the Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum. In order to inform the report, interviews and focus group meetings were arranged with

- Project Leaders who work with the support service for the Modern Languages Initiative (Primary)
- teachers from various parts of the country, including those teaching in gaelscoileanna and in Gaeltacht schools
- parents of children who were participating in the initiative and of those who were not participating.

In addition, during the development of the report, the NCCA liaised with those managing the initiative, and with other interested bodies and agencies.

Emerging options contained in the draft *Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum* were discussed by Council at the end of 2003. A final recommendation in respect of this issue is expected early in 2004.

Primary School Curriculum on the web

The NCCA completed its work in making the Primary School Curriculum available on the web, in English and Irish, in a searchable, interactive format.

Review of the Junior Cycle Curriculum

The NCCA is conducting a review of the junior cycle curriculum. Work has continued to progress the main strands of this review:

- addressing overlap and overload
Junior Certificate course committees in Business Studies, English, History, Home Economics and Music were re-convened to restructure the existing syllabuses to a common, model template. The purpose of the restructuring process is to identify areas of overlap and overload. Ultimately, the production and publication of a curriculum overview handbook is envisaged. A report on the restructuring will be completed in Spring 2004.
- assessment
A developmental initiative in assessment for learning commenced. The purpose of the initiative is to provide support and guidance for teachers working in junior cycle in the use of assessment to improve student learning and motivation. The initiative is focused on three areas: providing web-based support and exemplar materials for teachers; establishing small professional development networks of teachers, initially in English and geography, to develop subject-specific assessment materials for use in the classroom; and supporting schools in reporting to parents on the progress of their children in school. A small number of schools in Cork and Sligo are involved in the initiative. Planning for the next phase of the developmental initiative is under way.
- curriculum provision in first year (see high-level objective 3).

Development of Junior Cycle Syllabuses

The Board of Studies for the provision of technology education in the junior cycle prepared a discussion paper on a framework for provision, involving a core and options proposal for the technology subjects. A process of consultation was undertaken and an interim report on the outcome of this consultation was presented to Council.

A revised syllabus for Junior Certificate Science was approved for implementation in schools on an optional basis in September 2003. A draft set of curriculum guidelines for teachers was made available on the NCCA website, to support the delivery of a programme of in-service for teachers of science, which commenced in November 2003.

A new syllabus for junior cycle Physical Education was completed. The syllabus was introduced to schools in September 2003.

Review of Senior Cycle Education

The NCCA is conducting a review of the senior cycle of post-primary education. Following the publication of a major consultative paper, entitled *Developing Senior Cycle Education - Consultative Paper on Issues and Options*, in December 2002, the NCCA prepared a consultation plan for 2003. A series of briefing meetings and seminars was organised in support of the consultative process and written submissions were invited. An online survey was hosted on the NCCA website on a number of themes highlighted in the discussion paper. Bilateral meetings were convened with various education partners. The consultation period was completed in June 2003 and two reports, the *Report on the Consultative Process* and the *Report on the Online Survey* were prepared in August. These formed the basis of the next phase of the review.

Forum on Senior Cycle Education

The findings of the consultation informed the preparation of a foresight publication – *Developing Senior Cycle Education: Directions for Development*. The booklet and an accompanying poster were prepared, presented, and discussed at a Forum on Senior Cycle Education in September. Copies of the booklet and poster were then widely circulated. A virtual forum was established on the NCCA website, where comments and submissions were invited. Individuals or organisations were also invited to make written submissions on the *Directions for Development* before the end of February 2004.

In the latter part of 2003, planning was also under way for a research initiative with a small number of schools aimed at exploring the practical implications of the *Directions for Development* and for the further development of some of the ideas in the document.

The advice from this phase of work is due for completion in Spring 2004.

Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum

A major review of languages in the post-primary curriculum commenced with the publication of a discussion paper by Professor David Little of Trinity College, Dublin. *Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum – a Discussion Paper* was launched at a seminar in November 2003. The seminar was attended by over 50 invited delegates representing a variety of relevant bodies and organisations. The contributors included Professor Little and Mr. Joe Sheils, Head of the Language Policy Division in the Council of Europe. The paper addresses over-arching issues related to language provision, and provides a basis for debate about the situation of language policy, language provision, and language teaching and learning, within schools and within the education system. The seminar commenced a period of discussion of the ideas in the paper.

The discussion period will run until Easter 2004.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The NCCA concluded an initiative to gain improved recognition through the Points System for the Link Modules of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The revisions to the Link Modules, introduced in schools in 2002, provided the rationale for the claim for improved recognition. In 2003, the Universities agreed to increase the points rating for achievement in the Link Modules to bring it in line with the rating awarded by the Institutes of Technology.

Leaving Certificate Subjects

Work in the ongoing review and development of Leaving Certificate subjects and programmes included bringing syllabuses in **Art, Economics, and Physical Science** to the final stages of preparation. A discussion paper exploring the nature and form of potential provision for **Social, Personal and Health Education** at senior cycle was published and was the subject of a consultative process.

A review of Mathematics is in progress. A background paper for the review was presented to Council in March. This identified a number of issues that needed to be addressed in relation to mathematics at both the senior and junior cycles of post-primary education. In addition, guidance for teachers was finalised on the range of topics for which the syllabus revisions in mathematics at Junior Certificate would have an impact at Leaving Certificate level.

A course committee, whose task is to develop a curriculum framework for Guidance at post-primary level, was established and commenced its work. The brief of this committee spans junior and senior cycle.

A Board of Studies for Business Subjects, whose task is to consider the situation of the Leaving Certificate subjects Business, Economics and Accounting, and issues arising regarding their relationship with Junior Certificate Business Studies was established and commenced its work.

Guidelines for teachers in Leaving Certificate Geography, History, and Religious Education were completed.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Two full-time Education Officers for ICT were appointed in 2003. Funding for these posts was provided by the ICT Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Science. They liaised closely with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) during the development of NCCA's work programme for ICT.

The document *Information and Communications Technology in the Primary Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers* was completed and financial support for publication of the document was obtained from the ICT Policy Unit of the DES. A plan for implementing the ICT guidelines was agreed with the NCTE under its Teaching Skills Initiative (TSI).

Initial work began on developing exemplar projects designed to provide practical support for teachers in integrating ICT in specific subject areas of the primary and post-primary curricula.

At post-primary, the ICT Education Officer met with a number of course committees to ensure the natural integration of ICT during (rather than subsequent to) the development of syllabuses and guidelines.

Work began on developing a discussion paper, *Curriculum, Assessment and ICT in the Irish Context* which examines the potential of ICT to support and extend the curriculum development work of the NCCA.

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.

Liaison with the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP)

NCCA Education Officers continue to represent the NCCA in various aspects of the work of the PCSP. The co-ordination of this work is under way.

The NCCA also worked closely with the PCSP Assistant National Coordinators and the School Development Planning Support (SDPS, Primary) Regional Coordinators to develop templates for use by teaching staff in schools during the current year of Consolidation and Review.

The NCCA continued to work closely with the Science Design Team within the PCSP in designing, planning for and implementing the in-service programme. One additional aspect of the NCCA's participation on the Science Team involved developing short and long-term planning templates for science to be used by cuiditheoiri in schools.

Liaison with the Second-Level Support Service (SLSS) and other support services

The NCCA continued its support for the work of the Second Level Support Service through liaison with the national coordinator of the SLSS and the coordinators of the support services for Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Civic, Social and Political Education, Social, Personal and Health Education, and the Junior Certificate School Programme. A number of seminars were held to brief the SLSS on developments in relation to review at junior and senior cycle.

The NCCA monitored implementation of new and revised subjects at junior and senior cycle through membership of steering committees in Leaving Certificate Home Economics, Religious Education, Biology, History, Geography, junior cycle Physical Education, and in Junior Certificate Civic, Social and Political Education, Mathematics and Science.

Liaison with School Development Planning

There was ongoing liaison with the school development planning initiatives for primary and post-primary schools.

Implementing the Technologies

An initiative aimed at developing a comprehensive plan for the implementation of four Leaving Certificate syllabuses in the technology subjects was developed. The plan includes detailed advice on the model, content, and providers of professional development, on requirements for capital resourcing, and on the costs involved.

High-level objective 3

TO ADVANCE EQUALITY IN EDUCATION THROUGH DEVELOPMENTS AND PROCESSES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED EQUALITY OF ACCESS, PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOME FOR ALL LEARNERS.

Review of the Junior Certificate School Programme

The report of a review of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) was completed. This review was supported by research carried out by the Nexus Research Co-Operative and completed in 2003. The review report will provide the basis for actions aimed at improving the effectiveness of the Junior Cycle programme into the future, and is the subject of discussions with the Department of Education and Science, whose Inspectorate conducted a parallel evaluation of the JCSP in schools in 2003.

Working with other agencies

The NCCA continued to work with a number of agencies and initiatives associated with educational disadvantage. These include Area Development Management (ADM), the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), the National Forum on Educational Disadvantage, University College Cork, St. Patrick's College, Dublin and the Combat Poverty Agency.

Equality

An Equality Team comprising members of the executive was established. The work of the team focused on matters of equality within the NCCA as an organisation and, more broadly, on equality issues associated with the brief of the NCCA in education. The team identified key elements of an equality proofing process and developed guidance to ensure that all aspects of the work of the NCCA actively promote and mainstream equality. Work on the development of equality-proofing guidelines was initiated.

Special Education

Following the launch of the *Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (Severe and Profound, Moderate, and Mild General Learning Disabilities) in 2002, an extensive consultation process took place during 2003.

The purpose of this process was to elicit responses to the structure, content, and resource implications of the draft guidelines through consultation with parents, teachers, members of management, and others working in the area of special education.

In collaboration with the Association of Teachers and Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI), the NCCA completed a series of nationwide briefing meetings on the draft guidelines. A response form was distributed with the guidelines and also published on the NCCA website. The NCCA designed and completed an implementation study of the draft guidelines in a sample of schools. It liaised with the Inspectorate in the design of a template for use by inspectors in commenting on schools' existing practices in supporting the education of students with general learning disabilities. It sought written submissions on the guidelines from relevant organisations. The process of collating and analysing the information gleaned through these various strands is under way.

Work on revising the draft guidelines was initiated and further developmental work on the post-primary materials continued. An Education Officer was appointed at the end of 2003 on a part-time basis to contribute to this work.

Work commenced on the development of a new curriculum framework which will provide adolescents with general learning disabilities, aged 12-16, with a broad, balanced set of learning experiences, as well as opportunities to develop personal, independent and living skills during the final years of compulsory education.

The NCCA has also created links with the newly established Special Education Support Service.

Interculturalism

In the context of indigenous ethnic groups in Irish society and the significant increase in immigration by non-national ethnic groups in recent years, the NCCA continued an initiative in the area of Interculturalism and the Curriculum.

The purpose of the initiative is to

- research and examine ways in which the existing curriculum at both primary and post-primary level can best be mediated to reflect the emergence of an expanding multicultural society
- examine ways in which the area of early childhood education can best incorporate intercultural education
- develop guidelines for schools and teachers on how best to mediate the curriculum for a multicultural society
- provide initial advice on how to implement these guidelines.

Guidelines were completed for primary schools and teachers on Intercultural Education and the Primary School Curriculum and are being prepared for publication. Work is now under way on similar guidelines for post-primary schools.

National Framework of Qualifications

During the year of its launch, the NCCA continued to engage with the development of the National Framework of Qualifications from the perspective of school qualifications such as the Junior and Leaving Certificates. The NCCA, having gained the agreement of the Department of Education and Science, made a submission to the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) on placing school awards on the National Framework of Qualifications. This provided the basis for the NQAI's determination of where the school awards were placed on the framework.

Following the launch of the framework, the NCCA has continued its liaison with the NQAI, and more recently with the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), aimed at progressing measures in relation to those elements – access, transfer and progression – which will contribute to the successful implementation of the framework in the interest of learners.

High-level objective 4

TO ENGAGE IN, COMMISSION, AND REVIEW RELEVANT RESEARCH SO THAT THE WORK OF THE NCCA IS INFORMED BY BEST PRACTICE IN RELATION TO CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT, AND LEARNING, AND BY EMERGING UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE.

Evaluation of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP)

To explore the interface between teachers' perceptions and understandings of the Primary School Curriculum, their implementation of the curriculum with children, and their participation in the curriculum support programme at primary level, the NCCA has co-funded the evaluation of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme being conducted by Trinity College Dublin. The In-Career Development Unit of the Department of Education and Science is the main funder of the project. The NCCA continues to advise the research team through participation on the PCSP Evaluation Steering Committee.

The curriculum in the first year of post-primary education

The NCCA commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to conduct research into curriculum provision and school integration among first year students. The purpose of the research is to support the NCCA's brief to advise on strategies for successful transition from primary to post-primary schools, and to provide research-informed guidance for schools on the organisation of the curriculum in the first year of junior cycle. Phase I and II of the research, a survey of second level school principals and research into models of provision in 10-15 post-primary schools, were completed.

A draft of the report on these phases was completed. Funding was secured from the Gender Equality Unit of the Department of Education and Science for further research with this cohort of students. Accordingly, the next phase of the research, which involves further work with second-year students in the sample schools, will commence in the Spring of 2004.

Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

The NCCA commissioned a survey of principals' and teachers' perspectives on the provision of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). The research, conducted by Nexus Research Cooperative, was completed in March 2003 and a report issued in November 2003.

The Leaving Certificate and the UCAS tariff

A research initiative aimed at accommodating the Leaving Certificate on the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service of the United Kingdom) tariff was concluded. UCAS had been requested by Higher Education institutions in Northern Ireland and in Scotland to extend their tariff to accommodate those Irish students who wish to enter UK colleges and universities. The task of accommodation involved benchmarking the Leaving Certificate against an existing tariff qualification, in this case the GCSE A/AS Levels, by means of a comparative study of the two qualifications. This study was conducted to a purpose-built protocol developed by Dr. Geoff Hayward of the Education Department of the University of Oxford, who also conducted the Irish study. The NCCA hosted a meeting in May where a major part of the study was undertaken. The meeting involved representatives from UCAS, the University of Oxford, universities from Scotland and Northern Ireland, three UK examining boards, the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission and the NCCA. The meeting was successful in laying the basis for a final report and recommendations, which were agreed in December.

Gender and achievement

The NCCA commissioned a research study focusing on the 2000/2001 Junior and Leaving Certificate examination results by gender and achievement. The research study was conducted by Professor Jannette Elwood from the Graduate School of Education, Queen's University, Belfast. The results of the study were presented to an invited audience at NCCA in March 2003.

High-level objective 5

TO DEVELOP STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO ENHANCE THE CORPORATE CAPACITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT.

In the course of 2003, the NCCA reviewed and developed some of its internal administration practices and procedures in support of the outputs identified in the strategic plan.

Resource room

The Resources Co-ordinator continued to provide for the educational resource needs of NCCA staff. Among the new innovations were the development of a data bank of education websites, the circulation of an expanded range of material, and subscription to a number of on-line journals.

New corporate identity

The Corporate Affairs Team managed the process of developing a new logo for the organisation which included surveying all members of staff and seeking their perspectives on the organisation, its image, and its role in Irish education. The logo was launched on September 26th 2003 in Dublin Castle at the Forum on Senior Cycle Education.

New accounting procedures

The NCCA implemented new accounting and payment procedures in June 2003, following transfer of this function from the Department of Education and Science. Work also commenced on the drafting of Corporate Governance Guidelines and Internal Audit procedures.

Review of recruitment and workplace procedures

Kabir Consultants were engaged to review NCCA recruitment procedures and related documentation, and to advise on a set of positive workplace principles and a grievance procedure.

Accommodation

The NCCA commissioned a number of 'hot desks' to facilitate flexible and atypical working patterns among our full and part-time Education Officers. Accommodation arrangements for regionally based Education Officers were made in Education Centres in Cork, Sligo, Ennis, and Navan.

Appointment of services officers

The recruitment process for the appointments to two posts of Services Officer was completed in December 2003. The appointees will take up duty early in January 2004.

Development of team structures

The NCCA's internal team structure was further developed to deliver the work programme in 2003 and was reviewed mid-year. Three categories of teams have been established for 2003/2004:

- (a) co-ordinating teams such as the Post-Primary Team
- (b) project teams such as Early Childhood Primary Team
- (c) developmental teams such as the Corporate Affairs Team

The team structure has delivered a more coordinated approach to the work of the NCCA and has further contributed to partnership and sharing of information with staff.

Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter

Work has commenced, through the Corporate Affairs Team, on the development of a Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter.

Professional development

The NCCA organised and/or participated in a number of key professional development events and activities in 2003. These pertained to the areas of administration and public service developments, assessment, early childhood education, ICT, modern languages, and management/ leadership. Administrative and professional staff continued to undertake training/professional development in areas relevant to their specific roles and responsibilities in the organisation. In addition, staff were funded to attend or complete post-graduate studies in education, equality and the Irish language.

The NCCA developed a policy paper on professional development, outlining the importance of supporting the continuing development and training of all staff. An induction framework was drafted to provide a structure for practices and procedures in supporting new members of staff. Exploratory work in the *Excellence through People* human resource scheme was completed.

Strategic Plan

Taking cognisance of both national and international factors which impact on policy and practice and through an analysis of the strengths, challenges and opportunities for the organisation, the NCCA outlined its high-level objectives and strategic direction for the years 2003-2005. The high-level objectives, associated strategies, and outputs identified provide a framework against which the NCCA's overall performance will be presented and reviewed. Progress on specific projects and activities will be included in each year's Annual Report.

International collaboration

The NCCA continued its active participation in the Consortium of Institutions and Directorates for Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) and Association of Educational Assessment, Europe (AEA). Papers were presented by NCCA staff at a UNESCO Conference on Interculturalism in Finland, and the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago. Staff attended EU meetings on modern languages in Graz and Brussels, and meetings on ICT in Italy and Scotland. The NCCA also contributed to an OECD consultative conference on early childhood education and care in Stockholm.

Participation in the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks project run by the National Foundation for Education Research in England is ongoing. The NCCA is also a member of the Joint Curriculum and Qualifications Councils Liaison group for curriculum and qualifications authorities in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland.

A joint meeting of the NCCA with the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland was hosted by CCEA in Armagh to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Appendix

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Financial statements year ended 31 December 2003

Information

Bank Bank of Ireland
Lr. Baggot Street
P.O. Box 3131
Dublin 2

Accountants Crowleys DFK
16/17 College Green
Dublin 2

Web Site www.ncca.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Statement of responsibilities of the Council

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was established as a statutory body on 12 July, 2001 to perform functions assigned to it under the Education Act (1998).

The format of its financial statements require the approval of the Minister for Education and Science and the concurrence of the Minister for Finance and comprises Income and Expenditure Account for Administration and General Expenses together with Balance Sheet.

In preparing those financial statements, the Council is required to

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Council will continue in operation
- disclose and explain any material departures from applicable accounting standards.

The Council is responsible for the keeping of proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time its financial position and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with section 46 of the Education Act (1998). The Council is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

These accounts are subject to audit by the Controller and Auditor General.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Statement of accounting policies

Basis of Preparation The financial statements are prepared under the accruals method of accounting, except as indicated below, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the requirements of the Minister for Finance.

State Grants Income shown in the financial statements under State Grants represents the actual receipts in the year.

Tangible Assets and Depreciation Tangible Assets are stated at their historical cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is charged to the Income and Expenditure Account on a straight line basis, at the rates set out below, so as to write off the assets, adjusted for residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows:

IT Equipment	33.33%
Office Equipment	20%
Office Furniture	10%

Capital Account The Capital Account balance represents the amortised value of income applied for capital expenditure purposes.

Pensions The pension costs charged in the financial statements for the year were nil.

Salaries and Wages Included in the wages and salaries figure are secondment payments. These represent reimbursement of salaries to those on secondment to the Council. Also included are commissions and allowances paid.
The average number of employees during the period was 25.

**National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Income and Expenditure account for year ended
31 December 2003**

	Notes	2003 €	2002 €
Income			
Department of Education and Science	1	2,813,592	2,478,413
Less amount allocated for capital purposes		(78,741)	(65,756)
Release from capital account		<u>39,371</u>	<u>8,764</u>
		2,774,222	2,421,421
Expenditure			
Staff Costs	2	1,744,979	1,286,949
Upkeep and Overheads	3	275,454	275,473
General Expenses	4	41,503	345,290
Education	5	<u>412,286</u>	<u>513,709</u>
		2,774,222	2,421,421
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		-	-

The Statement of Accounting Policies and notes 1-12 form part of these financial statements.

There are no recognised gains or losses, other than those dealt with in this Account.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2003

	Notes	2003 €	2002 €
Fixed Assets	6	125,853	86,483
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank		97,581	-
Prepayments	7	<u>34,802</u>	<u>156,711</u>
		132,383	156,711
Current Liabilities			
Accruals	8	<u>132,383</u>	<u>156,711</u>
		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Current Assets		<u>125,853</u>	<u>86,483</u>
Net Assets			
Financed By:			
Capital Account	9	125,853	86,483
Income and Expenditure Account		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>125,853</u>	<u>86,483</u>

The Statement of Accounting Policies and notes 1-12 form part of these financial statements.

There are no recognised gains or losses, other than those dealt with in this Account.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Notes to the financial statements for the year ended
31 December 2003

	2003	2002
	€	€
1 State Grant		
Grant toward administration	<u>2,813,592</u>	<u>2,478,413</u>
2 Staff Costs		
Salaries and wages	1,391,621	1,069,140
Travel and subsistence	292,354	182,880
Room hire and catering	<u>61,004</u>	<u>34,929</u>
	<u>1,744,947</u>	<u>1,286,949</u>
3 Upkeep and Overheads		
Repairs and maintenance	21,708	11,654
Rent and rates	214,375	255,053
Depreciation	<u>39,371</u>	<u>8,766</u>
	<u>275,454</u>	<u>275,473</u>
4 General Expenses		
Telephone - land line	17,054	21,147
Telephone - mobile calls	7,148	3,451
Postage	53,582	43,850
Courier	2,612	2,965
Accountancy	13,958	4,840
Audit	12,945	0
Bank charges	153	0
Information technology	12,821	5,230
Staff development	39,835	26,015
Recruitment advertising	-	13,548
General advertising	1,337	3,737
Printing and stationery	60,905	126,938
Reference books and documents	8,111	6,912

Subscriptions	6,229	1,645
Light and heat	14,082	8,491
Cleaning	44,545	28,909
Security	2,979	2,846
Storage	11,952	0
Conference expenses	17,361	35,832
International conference expenses	3,101	5,268
Consultation expenses	5,693	0
Hire of office equipment	4,692	0
General office supplies	408	3,666
	<u>341,503</u>	<u>345,290</u>

5 Education

Irish translation	19,952	2,931
Publications proofing	12,140	4,636
Publications design and photography	145,070	333,251
Publications printing	79,440	-
Research fees	155,684	172,891
	<u>412,286</u>	<u>513,709</u>

6	Fixed Assets	Office F&F	Office Equip	IT Equip	Total €
	Cost				
	Opening balance 1 January 2003	42,778	37,724	15,352	95,854
	Additions	<u>12,255</u>	<u>7,168</u>	<u>59,318</u>	<u>78,741</u>
		<u>55,033</u>	<u>44,892</u>	<u>74,670</u>	<u>174,595</u>
	Depreciation				
	Opening balance 1 January	2,080	4,823	2,468	9,371
	Charge for the period	<u>5,503</u>	<u>8,978</u>	<u>24,890</u>	<u>39,371</u>
		<u>7,583</u>	<u>13,801</u>	<u>27,358</u>	<u>48,742</u>
	Net Book Value				
	At 31 December 2003	<u>47,450</u>	<u>31,091</u>	<u>47,312</u>	<u>125,853</u>
	At 31 December 2002	<u>40,698</u>	<u>32,901</u>	<u>12,884</u>	<u>86,483</u>

	2003	2002
	€	€
7 Debtors and Prepayments	-	153,745
Grant receivable	<u>34,802</u>	<u>2,966</u>
Prepayments	<u>34,802</u>	<u>156,711</u>
8 Creditors and Accruals		
Paye/Prsi	-	0
Trade Creditors	27,642	0
Other creditors	1,398	0
Grant repayable	71,911	0
Accruals	<u>31,432</u>	<u>156,711</u>
	<u>132,383</u>	<u>156,711</u>
9 Capital Account		
Balance at 1 January	86,483	86,483
Grant capitalised	<u>78,741</u>	<u> </u>
	165,224	86,483
Less transferred to revenue	<u>(39,371)</u>	-
	<u>125,853</u>	<u>86,483</u>
10 Capital Commitments		
There were no capital commitments at 31st December 2003.		
11 Contingent Liabilities		
No contingent liabilities existed at 31 December 2003.		
12	The financial statements were approved by the Council at its meeting on 11 March, 2004.	