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# 01

## Introduction

This Strategic Plan builds on the increased alignment of curriculum developments across sectors in Council's work to date and supports the further development and articulation of a shared vision for learning and development from birth through the period of post-primary education. This alignment is important in how we work to prepare curriculum and assessment advice, but it is also important in how we work with other stakeholders in the education system.

Reaching towards our vision of Leading innovation in education for learning, living and working in a changing world involves many layers of innovation, engagement, challenge and learning. These are reflected in the themes identified, which cut across the five strategic goals and the four sectors of the Council's remit: early childhood, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle. The themes are described as cross-cutting because they reflect a shift from 'sectoral' to more 'systemic' ideas in the Council's work, and in education developments generally. The themes are: dispositions and skills; voice of learners; autonomy and support for practitioners and teachers; learning and teaching; inclusion; and progressions and transitions. In and of themselves, the six themes overlap and intersect. They are not exhaustive; however, they are particularly significant in contextualising and introducing the actions outlined for each strategic goal.

While great care has been taken to develop a strategy that combines creativity and realism, any strategy agreed upon must be flexible and allow for change over time. The Strategic Plan is therefore a live document and may change as developments are progressed, new opportunities to innovate arise or new national policy priorities are set. Its implementation is premised on the availability of sufficient resources, and significant new areas of work such as the developments at junior cycle will require extensive resourcing.

Key to implementing our strategy is the expertise, dedicated work and commitment of the staff of the NCCA and the members of our boards and development groups. I appreciate their contribution to the work of the Council over the lifetime of the previous plan and I look forward to working with them in implementing this plan and in innovating for an exciting future for all learners in our schools and settings.

The current Council was appointed and commenced its work in July 2015 and will continue until December 2018 and this strategic plan sets out the work of the Council within that timeframe. Ongoing progress will be monitored and reported through general updates to the Council, through published annual reports and through an annual output statement.



**Brigid McManus**  
Chair

# 02

## Context

### The Organisation

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 Skills 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 on matters relating to curriculum and assessment. The Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills. It has 25 members, all of whom are appointed for a three-year term. The members represent teachers, school managers, parents, business interests, trade unions, and other educational interests. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Skills, the State Examinations Commission, a nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills and of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Minister appoints the Chairperson.

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff, led by the Chief Executive. Funding for the NCCA is by way of a grant from the Department of Education and Skills. The current Council was appointed and commenced its work in July 2015 and will continue until December 31st 2018. This strategic plan sets out the work of the Council for that timeframe.

### External environment

Over the period of its last strategic plan 2012-2015, the NCCA conducted its work in a very challenging social and economic environment. Alongside its partners in education, the NCCA worked within close financial strictures with the aim of contributing to the future life and employment chances of children and young people, to supporting social cohesion and to advancing Ireland's global competitiveness through the quality of its education system. Now, as Ireland shows signs of emerging from austerity, the challenge is to continue to lead developments in curriculum and assessment that can contribute meaningfully to addressing the challenges faced by Ireland's society and economy, particularly the challenges faced by families, young people and children.

An overview of the main environmental factors and their likely influence on the NCCA are presented in brief below.

#### Educational change and other kinds of change

Change in society and in education is such a constant that every Strategic Plan is implemented in times of change. The challenge of gaining buy-in for ongoing educational change in schools and of communicating and working through the key aspects of the changes involved with teachers will remain an essential part of the work of the NCCA. In recent times, while a consensus has emerged from educational research about the value of change focused on learning and teaching in improving learning progress and achievement among students, the openness to and enthusiastic engagement with change has been tempered by austerity and by concerns about the scale and the resourcing of educational change. For an organisation based on representative structures and partnership, advancing changes in curriculum and assessment in the education system and schools, and encouraging and supporting positive dispositions towards these changes, while at the same time recognising contestation as an intrinsic dimension of the process, will continue to be a major challenge.

Encouraging debate at an early stage about the nature and scope of proposed changes, and the effective communication of key messages about them, both play an important role in supporting change.

In coming years, the challenge of change may also be assisted by improvements in the economic environment as Ireland emerges from years of austerity, especially where improvements lead to higher levels of investment in education. In looking forward, the importance of the plan looking beyond the term of the Council, building-in attention to longer-term change scenarios, underpinning ongoing evaluation and review of what's being implemented in this context, and being mindful of the impact of educational change on schools as entities, teachers as professionals, and pupils/students as learners cannot be over-emphasised.

#### Inclusive education

Also relevant to the environment in which the NCCA's work takes place is that, at a broader level, Irish society is changing with the quest for pluralism, interculturalism and inclusion to the fore as an increasing population becomes ever more diverse in nature. The importance of maintaining a focus on inclusion and equality in education cannot be over-emphasised in this context. While, in recent years, issues of inclusion in education have tended to be associated with the area of special educational needs, any analysis of the external environment reminds us that equally important issues related to social class, rural/urban communities, the Gaeltacht minority, and students from migrant backgrounds as well as those with special educational needs prevail in Irish society. Education has an important role to play in contributing to addressing these issues through, for example, universal design of curricula where diverse curriculum pathways for all are a feature of curriculum provision.

#### National priorities

NCCA progresses a wide range of work over the period of its Strategic Plan, from early childhood education through to senior cycle, but there are also national priorities in education that receive particular attention. In the coming years, supporting the literacy and numeracy strategy, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, reform of the junior cycle, initiatives related to the transition from post primary to higher education and the development of the STEM subjects will continue to be priorities. A new phase of development for the primary curriculum is another case in point. Discussions in other national fora and about other national strategies can also give rise to priorities for education, recent work related to the 20 Year Strategy for Gaeilge and debate about modern languages and enterprise being examples of these.

Supporting these priorities requires close, ongoing liaison with the Department of Education and Skills, the State Examinations Commission, the Higher Education Authority, COGG and other relevant departments and agencies to ensure strong alignment between NCCA's work in the development of curriculum and assessment advice and the priorities in question. NCCA plays a role both in identifying and responding to national priorities but it is also important that in discussing its programme of work other issues and priorities continue to arise and be considered.

Curriculum development and implementation, of its nature, happens over an extended timeframe that goes well beyond the term of a Council or the period of a Strategic Plan. The importance of futures thinking and foresight in establishing priorities is noteworthy. Discussions of strategic planning increasingly need to look beyond the term of the Council involved and draw attention to longer-term change scenarios. In advocating and encouraging change in education ongoing evaluation and review of what's being implemented and attention to the impact of educational change on schools as entities, teachers as professionals, and pupils/students as learners is also ever-important.



### Concern for the wellbeing of children and young people

As continual, lifelong education comes closer to being a reality for all, attention turns to the whole person, the whole learner, and a focus on wellbeing usually follows. The period of the NCCA's last strategic plan was characterised by repeated concerns about the physical and mental health of children and young people, with considerable public anxiety in evidence about the quality of the lives of children. Their education should ensure that they have the dispositions, knowledge and skills to cope with success and failure, to build healthy habits of body and mind, and to form and sustain relationships. The period of this strategic plan should see greater clarity emerging about the meaning of wellbeing and how it is best provided for in the curriculum and in schools.

### Improvements in and the demand for technology

The role of information technology in supporting innovation in curriculum, assessment, reporting and communication is of increasing significance for the work of the Council. It is no exaggeration to say that IT is emerging as a highly significant interface between the real world and the world of education and that the importance and influence of IT is reflected in the 'perception' by parents and others of what amounts to a good education. Technology is changing how young people interact with knowledge and how teachers seek and access professional support.

More specifically, developments in technology have created a number of opportunities for the NCCA and how it interacts with stakeholders, including teachers. The NCCA has already developed its website to connect with stakeholders and to engage teachers and practitioners in the development of curriculum and assessment. CurriculumOnline, developed and introduced over the period of the last strategic plan, aims at being an essential source and resource for teachers, parents and students as they encounter the curriculum and curriculum change. NCCA's ground-breaking and growing use of social media continues to be successful in supporting engagement with the education and the wider public.

But while acknowledging the need for NCCA to continue to engage, over the period of this strategic plan, with developments in IT that enhance the ways in which children and young people gain and use knowledge, and how teachers are supported in their work, some notes of caution should be struck. Access to IT remains an issue in education and in society and much remains to be fully understood about the learning benefits of increasing levels of engagement with IT. Over-reliance on the potential of IT, online supports and online communications as the primary vehicle of educational change should be avoided.

### Public service reform

The *Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016* and the *Civil Service Renewal Plan, 2014* sets the context for the NCCA's focus on delivering improved outcomes. These reforms call on NCCA to free up resources by making existing processes more cost effective and efficient, and to make maximum use of digitalisation and open data to deliver services and information in innovative ways. The reform programmes also call for greater openness, transparency and accountability to strengthen trust in government and public services, and to enhance public governance.



## Internal environment

### Continuing and improving

Reviewing the last strategic plan, it's clear that it's as relevant today as it was three years ago and that the strategic goals set out in 2012 have set the NCCA on paths of curriculum and assessment development that will continue into the next three years and beyond. Aistear continues to make a significant impact in early childhood and the ongoing development of the Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide will further support its access to all practitioners. Curriculum development for the junior primary classes which began with language, continues with a focus on maths and in ERB and Ethics and work is underway on a language curriculum for the senior primary classes. At the same time, Council's work focuses on developing an overarching framework for the primary curriculum. *The Framework for Junior Cycle* is shaping ongoing developments at junior cycle and sets out a programme of development that will stretch beyond 2018. This in turn will have implications for developments at senior cycle.

Increasingly, the work of the NCCA takes place with cognisance of cross-sectoral features in mind and with particular attention to issues of transition between the sectors. This is reflected in this Strategic Plan including, for the first time, a section identifying a number of cross-cutting themes that have become a feature of our work. Another growing feature of the NCCA's work is the attention given to supporting teachers and schools in thinking through and introducing changed curricula. Exemplification of different kinds – of student work, of teaching approaches, of assessment tasks, of student and teacher reflection on learning are featuring in support material to an ever-greater extent with the aim of narrowing the potential gap that can emerge between the *envisaged* and the *realised* curriculum.

The period of the last strategic plan saw some contestation in the implementation of new developments at junior cycle, but also across other areas of curriculum development. While there is a strong emphasis on collaboration, consensus and engagement in all of the work processes of the Council and its structures, perhaps greater emphasis can be placed on building understanding and consensus from the earliest stages of the developments. In addition, a continuing focus on engaging with other organisations throughout the development process will help to prepare for and support change in the system. Regular and ongoing reflection and evaluation also assist in improving our development processes and how we communicate with our stakeholders.

### Knowledge and expertise

Our key resource in achieving our vision through the strategic goals set out in this statement is our staff. The organisation employs a mix of fulltime, permanent staff and contracted or seconded staff. This creates flexibility and allows new specialist skills to be brought to achieving the strategic goals in a way that has the maximum impact on innovating in education in Ireland. On the other hand staff mobility can lead to gaps in curriculum areas which can sometimes impact on timelines. As a number of new curriculum areas are due for review and development over the life of this plan, recruiting new staff with the range of curriculum areas required will be a challenge for the organisation.

The organisation is conscious of continuously building knowledge and expertise through its recruitment and selection processes and by supporting staff through diverse continuous professional development opportunities, including Masters programmes and PhDs.





### Composition and structures

Following an extensive strategic review of the organisation and its processes in 2011, changes were made a number of changes were made to the Council structures. The lifetime of development groups is now aligned to the Council's term of office and to the level of development activity in particular curriculum areas. Where possible, one development group works on the same curriculum area at junior and senior cycle, thus providing continuity of approach and reducing the number of groups in place at any one time.

### Systems to support development and collaboration

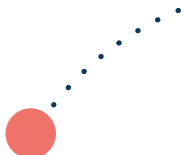
A focus of the last strategic plan was on supporting sharing and collaboration across sectors (early childhood and primary, junior cycle and senior cycle) both in our work internally and in our engagement with partners in education. The development of internal cloud-based systems and the further development of web spaces for use by teachers, schools and the public, such as [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie), [www.juniorcycle.ie](http://www.juniorcycle.ie) and [www.action.ncca.ie](http://www.action.ncca.ie) have supported this increased engagement and collaboration and will continue to do so over the lifetime of this plan.

### Work planning

As major curriculum reforms at primary and junior cycle progress and gather momentum, the volume of work that the Council is processing will increase significantly over the lifetime of this plan. Combined with ongoing work in all sectors, this can lead to potential overload and stresses in the work of the Council and its executive. Effective scheduling and pacing of the developments, taking account of evidence gathering, consultations, work with schools and others collaborative processes, will be crucial to the achievement of the strategic objectives. This will be done through annual work planning and monitoring.

### Governance

Recent times has seen an increased emphasis on the governance agenda for public sector bodies. The NCCA complies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and has developed a Corporate Governance Framework to provide guidance for the Council and its executive. A new *Code of Practice on Corporate Governance*, which will have implications for the work of all public bodies, is currently in preparation. A Risk Register to identify, assess and manage potential risks is also in place. The Council's Audit Committee oversees the risk analysis and internal





# 03

## Planning for 2015–2018



## Vision

Leading innovation in education for learning, living and working in a changing world.

## Mission

The Mission of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is to:

- ★ advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment from early childhood to the end of second level
- ★ engage with learners, teachers, practitioners, parents and others to support innovation in schools and other educational settings
- ★ undertake, use and share research as a basis for advice and debate on education

## Strategic goals

The 2015-2018 Strategic Plan sets out important actions in Council's work across five strategic goals:

### 1. Curriculum and Assessment

*To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors*

### 2. Engagement and Networks

*To work with schools and other educational settings, teachers, practitioners, learners and others to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation*

### 3. Knowledge and Research

*To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings*

### 4. Communications and Profile

*To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA to improve the profile of the organisation and its capacity to engage with others in leading and supporting educational change*

### 5. Governance and Corporate Affairs

*To develop NCCA governance and organisational structures, processes, skills and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation*



## Themes in the work of the NCCA

In the course of developing this plan, several themes were identified which cut across these five goals and the four sectors within Council's remit - early childhood, primary, junior cycle and senior cycle. The themes are described as cross-cutting because they reflect a shift from 'sectoral' to more 'systemic' ideas in Council's work, and in education developments generally. This Strategic Plan builds on the increased alignment of curriculum developments across sectors in Council's work to-date and supports further developing and articulating a shared vision for learning and development from birth through post-primary education. The following six cross-cutting themes are evident in Council's programme of work for learners from birth through to the end of second-level:

- ★ Dispositions and Skills
- ★ Voice of Learners
- ★ Autonomy and Support for Practitioners and Teachers
- ★ Learning and Teaching
- ★ Inclusion
- ★ Progression and Transitions

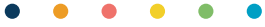
These six themes overlap and intersect. They are not exhaustive; however, they are particularly significant in contextualising and introducing the actions outlined for each strategic goal. Each theme is briefly discussed below with reference to planned actions across sectors in this Strategic Plan 2015-2018.

### Dispositions and Skills

In this Strategic Plan, curriculum and assessment developments are guided not just by a focus on what learners will know, but also a concern for what learners will *know how to do*. The importance of supporting young children to develop positive dispositions—habits of mind and of action (Aistear 2009) is reflected in the development of a new framework for primary education. Likewise, the Key Skills of junior and senior cycles, which focus on supporting learners to create new knowledge and to develop competences to deal with and navigate their way through their world, are embedded in new curriculum specifications for junior and senior cycles and also inform the Primary Developments.

### Voice of Learners

Representing and responding to the voice of learners is increasingly important in curriculum development processes in all sectors and at all points of transition. Building on work to represent the 'voice' of babies, toddlers and young children in Aistear, materials in the *Aistear Síolta Practice Guide* reflect the needs and preferences of young children, e.g., in action planning tools, photo galleries and videos. Likewise, initiatives in recent years to gather the views of primary school children on aspects of their experience informs the development of materials for engagement and consultation on a new framework for the Primary Curriculum. Following from previous consultation with young people on proposals for a new junior cycle (in collaboration with the OMCYA and Dáil na nÓg), the 'Learner Voice' initiative, a collaboration with Trinity College Dublin and the NAPD, focuses on gathering the perspectives of learners on developments in junior cycle. Students are consulted as experts on their own experience of learning and their insights are valued in the process of curriculum co-construction. At senior cycle, consultations with students on background papers builds on Council's previous success and ensures that specifications are informed by the voice of learners.



### Autonomy and Support for Practitioners and Teachers

Greater autonomy and support for early childhood practitioners and teachers is evident in the development of new curriculum specifications and the growth of online curriculum toolkits. Learning outcomes, which are learner-focused, replace curriculum objectives which at times over-prescribed learning in terms of teacher practice. Online toolkits, the 'new guidelines', use video and photo-galleries to present examples of learners' work to support teacher judgment, and a range of material supports teacher practice. The trend toward learner curriculum specifications is evident in the development of a new framework for primary education and in the development of subject specifications at primary, junior and senior cycle.

### Learning and Teaching

An increased emphasis on learner-led and learner-centred learning is visible in curriculum developments across sectors. Online toolkits support practitioners and teachers to reflect on tacit ideas about teaching and learning and to describe these in terms of particular roles and responsibilities for practitioners/teachers and learners. Council's work to support teaching and learning continues to be shaped by factors concerning the implementation of educational policy and engagement with support services continues (e.g., Better Start, PDST, JCT). Work with networks are increasingly focused on understanding how early years settings/schools balance clear policy directions with local initiative and autonomy.

### Inclusion

The theme of inclusion, evident in Council's work across its strategic goals, is concerned with the right and entitlement of learners to participate in education, the role and responsibilities of schools and others to *support all* learners, and the role of education more generally in providing access to *life chances* to ensure that all young people have the relevant education and qualifications to support their full participation in society. The development of Progression Continua at primary and Learning Programmes at Levels 1 and 2 of the NFQ are important actions to support inclusion in the first strategic goal. The development of curriculum, assessment, and support material more generally aims to represent the diversity of needs and cultures across our classrooms, schools and society, e.g., in examples of learner's work, videos and photo-galleries. Knowledge and research continue to inform our understanding of diversity and the role of schools in responding to the particular needs of learners, e.g., with SEN or EAL. Council continues to engage with, and contribute to, the work of agencies and organisations with responsibility for creating a more inclusive education system and a more inclusive society, e.g., NCSE, SESS, Irish language organisations, the SIRIUS network, Pavee Point, and the NDA. Greater inclusivity is also reflected in Council's structures and processes, i.e., committees and consultations.



### Progression and Transitions

The development of a new, online curriculum specification [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie) was a key feature of Council's 2012-2015 Strategic Plan. In the current plan, the curriculum online site is populated with new curriculum specifications which have a similar structure at primary and junior cycle; thus increasing curriculum continuity and cohesion for learners from primary through second-level. Building on the success of materials for reporting and transfer from 6th class to first year, Council's work focuses on managing children's earlier transition - from pre-school to primary. As the junior cycle developments are introduced in schools, continuity with senior cycle becomes an important focus while the transition from senior cycle to higher education is being addressed through NCCA's participation in the Transitions Initiative. Following publication of the *Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019*, the transition from junior and senior cycle to further education will become a focus of attention in the period of this strategic plan.



# 04

## Achieving the Strategic Goals

# 1.0 Curriculum and assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors.

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

## 1.1

The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide and other support materials are increasingly used in the early childhood sector and materials are developed to support the transition from pre-school to primary.

### To achieve this we will

develop and publish the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide online at [www.aistearsiolta.ie](http://www.aistearsiolta.ie)

by **2015**

develop and publish materials to support transition from pre-school to primary

by **2017**

## 1.2

In primary schools, new curricula are introduced for language (English and Gaeilge), mathematics, and education about religious beliefs and ethics for junior primary classes and work has begun to develop an overarching new Primary Curriculum Framework.

### To achieve this we will

develop new online curriculum and assessment specifications and online toolkits for Primary Schools, beginning with the junior primary classes, followed by the senior primary classes:

- Primary Language Curriculum: English and Gaeilge
- Primary ERB and Ethics Curriculum
- Primary Mathematics Curriculum

<b>Junior Primary Classes:</b>	<b>Senior Primary Classes:</b>
--------------------------------	--------------------------------

by <b>2015</b>	by <b>2018</b>
----------------	----------------

by <b>2017</b>	by <b>2019</b>
----------------	----------------

by <b>2018</b>	by <b>2021</b>
----------------	----------------

develop a new Primary Curriculum Framework to include all curriculum areas at primary, beginning with consultation on key ideas for change

ongoing



1.3

Post-primary schools are using the *Framework for Junior Cycle* as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes.

**To achieve this we will**

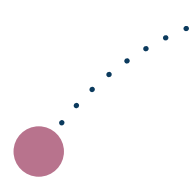
- develop new online curriculum and assessment guidelines for junior cycle .....  
 • English by 2015  
 • Science, Business Studies by 2015  
 • Art Craft Design, Gaeilge, Modern Languages by 2016  
 • Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics and Music by 2017  
 • Technology subjects, Jewish Studies, Religious Education and Classics by 2018  
 .....  
 develop new online curriculum and assessment specification for a junior cycle short course in Philosophy, and as required 2016 ongoing  
 .....  
 review specifications and assessment guidelines for NCCA short courses by 2016  
 .....  
 complete guidelines for schools on providing for and managing the area of Wellbeing in the junior cycle curriculum by 2016  
 .....  
 develop material to support teachers and schools for learning, teaching and assessment in junior cycle by 2017  
 .....  
 further develop Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes by 2015  
 .....  
 align aspects of the Junior Cycle School Programme (JCSP) with new junior cycle curriculum specifications 2015 ongoing  
 .....  
 clarify the role of *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with Mild General Learning Difficulties (Primary and Post-Primary)* in light of primary developments and new junior cycle specifications being introduced by 2016  
 .....

1.4

Curriculum and assessment reform at senior cycle continues with the completion of new curriculum and assessment specifications

**To achieve this we will**

- complete the curriculum framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education (PE) and the specification for Leaving Certificate PE 2015 & 2016  
 .....  
 prepare the curriculum specification for Politics and Society for phased introduction in schools by 2015  
 .....  
 continue to review Leaving Certificate subjects post-implementation, commencing with Gaeilge and Mathematics 2015 ongoing  
 .....  
 develop curriculum specifications for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics, Agricultural Science and Economics by 2016  
 .....  
 monitor the revised specifications for LC Art, LC Engineering Technology and LC Architectural Technology with a view to advising on further review or implementation, as appropriate 2016 & 2017  
 .....  
 commence a review of senior cycle programmes and vocational pathways in senior cycle with a view to recommending areas for development by 2016  
 .....  
 further develop the areas targeted in the review of programmes and vocational pathways at senior cycle 2017 & 2018  
 .....  
 establish a schedule/programme of review for Leaving Certificate subjects by 2016  
 .....



# 1.0

## Curriculum and assessment

To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors.

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

### 1.5

New approaches to assessment and reporting are being introduced and assessment capacity in schools and other settings is being supported.

#### To achieve this we will

- .....
- support the development of assessment knowledge and practice in the system through assessment conferences, papers and other support material **2015 & 2016**
- .....
- further develop the assessment and reporting support material for junior cycle through continued development of the Assessment Toolkit **2015 ongoing**
- .....
- advise on and develop a system for reporting to parents of junior cycle students that is linked to the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) **by 2016**
- .....
- prepare detailed assessment specifications for junior cycle subjects as they are being developed **2015 ongoing**
- .....
- liaise with the State Examinations Commission on the trialling of practical assessment for the Leaving Certificate science subjects **2015 ongoing**
- .....
- support the introduction of a new grading system for Leaving Certificate **by 2015**
- .....
- continue to monitor and further develop, as needed, the Primary Report Card Creator and Primary Reporting Toolkit **2015 ongoing**
- .....

1.6

Curriculum and assessment specifications feature examples of student work that illustrate the expectations for learners.

**To achieve this we will**

further develop and publish annotated examples of children’s learning and development in primary school to support new curriculum specifications for English, Gaeilge, and Mathematics.

2015 ongoing

develop annotated examples of student work for Junior Cycle Science, Business Studies, Gaeilge, Art Craft Design, Modern Languages, Geography, History, Home Economics, Music, Mathematics and short courses

2015 ongoing

develop a quality assurance process for generating and agreeing examples of student work for junior cycle

by 2015

1.7

A strong line of continuity, and a focus on common features and elements, is evident across curriculum and assessment developments at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels.

**To achieve this we will**

continue to use the new curriculum structure for all new specifications at primary and second level

2015 ongoing

begin to develop a new Primary Curriculum Framework informed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Framework for Junior Cycle

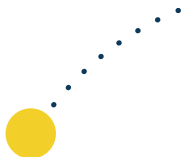
2016 ongoing

develop Support Material for Transitions within and across sectors.

ongoing

conduct a curriculum audit on the integration of education for sustainable development in line with the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014)

by 2017



# 2.0

## Engagement and networks

To work with schools, teachers, practitioners and learners to build capacity for change and to inform curriculum and assessment development and implementation.

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

### 2.1

NCCA networks are working on ideas, material and initiatives to support their own capacity and that of other schools in curriculum development, assessment practice, and broader educational change.

#### To achieve this we will

- work with the Primary Language Network to contribute to the development of the new Primary Language Curriculum and to gather and publish Examples of children’s language learning and development

2015 ongoing
- convene and work with a Primary Maths Network to contribute to the development of the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum and to gather and publish Examples of children’s learning and development in maths

2018 ongoing
- work with Community National Schools through the Goodness Me Goodness You (GMGY) Network to develop the GMGY programme for the Senior Primary Classes (Framework)

by 2016
- work with primary schools to develop the Primary ERB and Ethics Curriculum

2017 ongoing
- work with post-primary schools on aspects of the junior cycle developments such as programme development, assessment and reporting, annotated examples of student work

2015 ongoing
- provide advice and guidance for schools on developing their own short courses for junior cycle

by 2016
- work with schools to trial and further develop Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes

by 2016
- continue to work with schools on the use of ePortfolios

by 2016
- trial collaborative assessment tasks with schools

by 2015
- work with schools to prepare for and facilitate the introduction of the Leaving Certificate subject, Politics and Society

2016 ongoing

## 2.2

NCCA is supporting the work of partner networks engaged in curriculum and assessment development and in supporting teaching and learning.

### To achieve this we will

support the development and activity of partner networks established by other organisations to inform curriculum and assessment developments in early childhood, primary, and junior cycle education. **2015 ongoing**

## 2.3

The voice and experience of learners is built into discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.

### To achieve this we will

- develop materials to support the inclusion of the learner/student voice in curriculum and assessment development across sectors **2015 ongoing**
- incorporate learner/student involvement in NCCA curriculum and assessment development processes **2015 ongoing**
- arrange online consultations alongside consultation events to support junior cycle and senior cycle consultations **2015 ongoing**
- establish a student forum to directly inform curriculum and assessment developments in the NCCA **by 2015**



2.4

Liaison and collaborative relationships with a number of organisations are improving the understanding and quality of curriculum and assessment developments and implementation.

**To achieve this we will**

collaborate with government departments, agencies and organisations linked to specific aspects or areas of the NCCA's work. In particular,

- with the DES on policy, implementation and planning for curriculum and assessment change
- with SEC on assessment and examinations
- with COGG and Foras na Gaeilge on Irish language curricula and Irish-medium/ Gaeltacht schools
- with the Teaching Council on curriculum and assessment change and teacher qualifications
- with the Higher Education Authority on transition from second level to higher education
- with the Early Years Education Policy Unit on early childhood education
- with SOLAS on further education and training
- with the National Parents Councils on the impact of educational change on families and parents
- with the Education Research Centre on PISA and TIMSS
- with Colleges of Education and Institutes of Technology at early childhood, primary and second levels.

collaborate with support teams, services and other organisations to align curriculum and assessment developments with teacher professional development

continue engagement on the transition from second level to higher education through the Transitions Reform Group

2015  
ongoing

by 2015

2015 &  
2016

2.5

Curriculum and assessment developments north and south of the border have been supported by collaboration between NCCA and CCEA.

**To achieve this we will**

engage with CCEA on areas of common interest and collaborate with educational agencies as relevant to the NCCA's work

ongoing

# 3.0

## Knowledge and research

To generate, use and share knowledge and research to support the development of curriculum and assessment advice and practice in schools and other educational settings

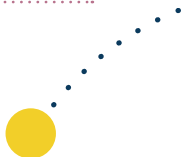
We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

### 3.1

Curriculum and assessment developments are informed by evidence and research.

#### To achieve this we will

- commission and publish (i) an audit of transition materials already available from pre-school to primary in Ireland and (ii) an overview of pre-school/primary transition materials and experiences across jurisdictions by 2016
- complete and jointly publish research with the ESRI on *Children's wellbeing and school experiences (9 years)* to inform the Primary Developments. by 2015
- commission and jointly publish ESRI research on *Children's wellbeing and their experiences beginning school (5 years)* by 2015
- complete and publish background papers to support the development of a new curriculum for ERB and Ethics 2015 ongoing
- commission and publish desktop research on children's language and literacy learning experiences and progression in senior primary classes, including experiences and progression in Gaeilge by 2015
- draft consultation tools to report on and inform the Primary Developments (Mathematics, ERB and Ethics, Primary Curriculum Framework) 2016 ongoing
- publish background papers and consultation reports related to the development of programme, subject and short course specifications in junior and senior cycle by 2016
- publish research on the impact of the Collaborative Assessment Initiative 2016 ongoing
- participate in an international research initiative looking at teacher assessment identities (knowledge, confidence, disposition) by 2015
- evaluate specific aspects and strands of the introduction of the junior cycle developments in schools 2016 ongoing
- commission research to inform curriculum and assessment developments being taken forward by NCCA, commencing with a focus on Learning Outcomes 2015 ongoing



complete research into the impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate Oral Irish Examination introduced in 2012

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing

complete research that examines the impact of Project Maths on the performance of students in mathematics at second level and where they proceed to mathematics studies at third level

.....  
 by **2016**

commission research to inform consideration of the options for the introduction of a Leaving Certificate subject based in Computer Science

.....  
 by **2015**  
 .....

### 3.2

Curriculum and assessment developments are informed through participation in research networks.

#### To achieve this we will

engage with teachers in a design-based research initiative to develop curriculum support material for the Leaving Certificate science subjects

.....  
 by **2015**

introduce an Assessment Research and Development Programme to fund teachers and schools in conducting small-scale research and developments in the area of assessment

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing

collaborate with the Research in Early Childhood Collaborative (RECC) to explore the contribution of research in early childhood to the Primary Developments.

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing

work with the Research Alive Group (the Teaching Council, the Centre for Effective Services and the NCCA), to support teachers and other education professionals to engage with research/researchers to inform practice

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing  
 .....

### 3.3

The outcomes and findings of research are available, accessible and disseminated to those with an interest in education, policy making and evaluation.

#### To achieve this we will

ensure that overarching boards, development groups, partner organisations and schools networks have access to evidence from research and from schools and settings

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing

publish findings from research (outlined in 3.1) in easily accessible formats including full reports, executive summaries, presentations and podcasts

.....  
**2015**  
 ongoing  
 .....

### 3.4

Research findings and new knowledge are shared and interrogated by NCCA staff as an integral part of their work.

#### To achieve this we will

provide opportunities for NCCA staff to discuss relevant research and evidence from school and setting networks

.....  
 ongoing

invite researchers and external experts to present and discuss relevant areas of research and expertise with NCCA staff

.....  
 ongoing

provide opportunities for staff to write and present conference papers on findings from research and work with schools and other settings

.....  
 ongoing  
 .....



# 4.0

## Communications and profile

To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA to improve the profile of the organisation and its capacity to engage with others in leading and supporting educational change

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

### 4.1

Using an effective media strategy, key messages on educational change are widely shared and NCCA responses and contributions are informed and timely.

#### To achieve this we will

draft a guide to consultation and engagement with stakeholders for the Primary Developments and publish a short video on what's happening at primary.

.....

**2015**  
ongoing

.....

employ a range of media to ensure key messages are communicated to schools and the general public

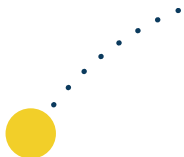
ongoing

.....

continue to use social media to share key messages about the work of NCCA and to engage teachers, practitioners, learners and others

ongoing

.....



4.2

NCCA websites are developed and improved in response to system need, customer feedback, statistics on web usage, and developments in online and social media.

**To achieve this we will**

continue to develop NCCA websites including

- The corporate site: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- Curriculum online: [www.curriculumonline.ie](http://www.curriculumonline.ie)
- Junior Cycle: [www.juniorcycle.ie](http://www.juniorcycle.ie)
- ACTION: <http://action.ncca.ie/>
- Aistear Síolta Practice Guide: [www.aistearsiolta.ie](http://www.aistearsiolta.ie)
- GMGY: [www.gmgy.ie](http://www.gmgy.ie)

.....  
 2015  
 ongoing  
 .....

4.3

The work of the NCCA on curriculum and assessment and on practice in schools is shared with national and international audiences and feedback informs ongoing developments.

**To achieve this we will**

- contribute to a final conference on EUFolio and disseminate findings, through digital media, from the project to schools and the wider public
- have an NCCA presence at relevant national and international events and showcase the NCCA’s work in a strategic way at conferences, seminars, and through publications

.....  
 2015  
 ongoing  
 .....  
 ongoing  
 .....

# 5.0

## Governance and corporate services

To develop the NCCA governance and organisation structures, processes, skills and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation

We will deliver on this goal through the following planned outcomes:

### 5.1

Organisation structures and processes are supporting innovative curriculum and assessment development and collaborative work practices.

#### To achieve this we will

evaluate the effectiveness of Boards, Development Groups and working group structures established under the previous Strategic Plan 2012-2015

.....  
by 2015

put procedures in place for Council itself and for its Boards to review their own operational effectiveness

.....  
2015 ongoing

build collaboration across teams and other structures to improve continuity across sectors and improve workflow.

.....  
ongoing

### 5.2

NCCA staff has developed the knowledge and competences required to develop innovative curriculum and assessment advice and to support its introduction in schools and other settings.

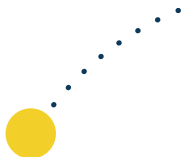
#### To achieve this we will

continue to provide professional development related to competences identified in the performance management process

.....  
ongoing

encourage and support staff to develop their knowledge and competences through higher education studies and research.

.....  
ongoing



5.3

There is a strong performance culture across the organisation.

To achieve this we will

continue to implement the Civil Service Performance Management and Development System incorporating any changes introduced by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2015 ongoing

continue to prepare workforce plans to support Public Service Reform and inform NCCA Human Resources strategy 2015 ongoing

5.4

There is a robust financial management system in place.

To achieve this we will

review, update and document all financial management systems and procedures by 2015

maintain relevant accounting standards in line with government guidelines ongoing

provide all necessary documentation for internal and external audit ongoing

5.5

There is full compliance with the governance requirements of state bodies.

To achieve this we will

Review the code of practice for the governance of the NCCA by 2015

support the work of the audit committee and develop and implement a programme of work for internal audit ongoing

meet all necessary reporting requirements of the Departments of Education and Skills and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform ongoing

adhere to public procurement guidelines ongoing

maintain and update the risk register 2015 ongoing

5.6

Customer service standards are developed and improved

**To achieve this we will**

the customer service charter is reviewed and updated and service delivery is improved

.....  
**2015**  
ongoing  
.....

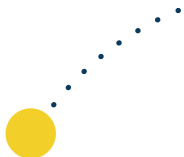
5.7

The NCCA has complied with all relevant public sector agreements and development plans.

**To achieve this we will**

implement necessary measures to comply with the Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-2016 and the Civil Service Renewal Plan, 2014

.....  
**2015**  
ongoing  
.....





## Monitoring and Reporting

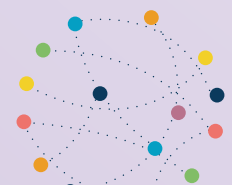
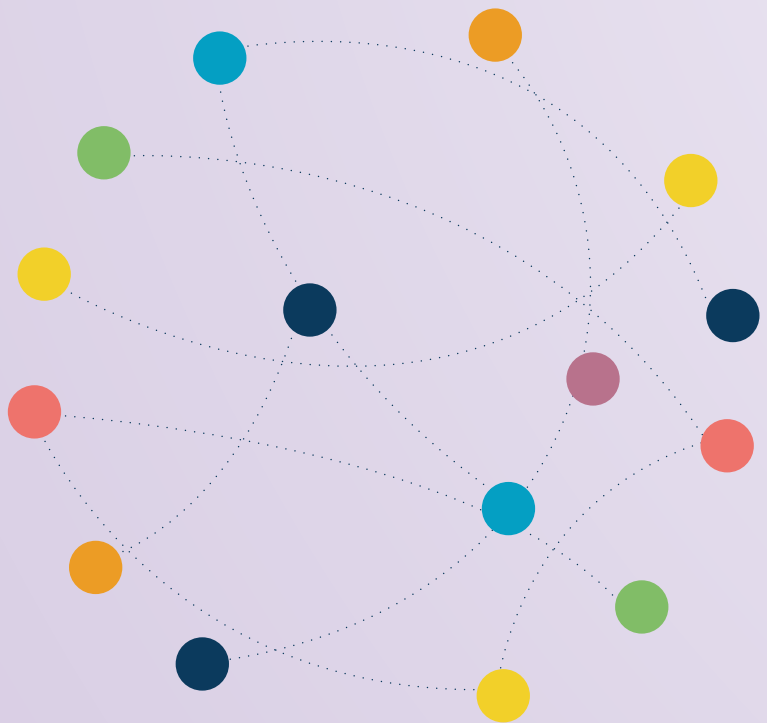
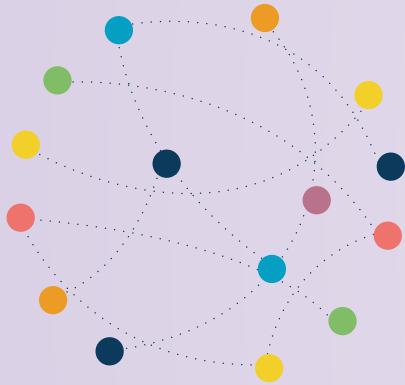
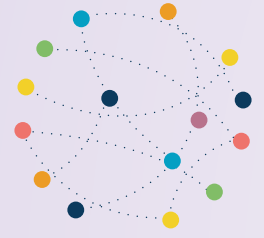
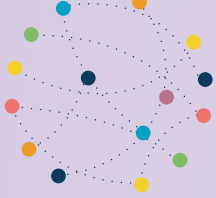
This strategic plan sets out the strategic goals, outcomes and targets that will direct the work of the NCCA over the period of the Council 2015-2018. Ongoing progress will be monitored and reported through general updates to the Council, through published annual reports and through an annual output statement.

The preparation and implementation of an annual business plan and the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) are central to guiding and monitoring progress at organisational and individual level.

Progress reports and presentations on the various areas of work will be presented to Council over the course of the strategy. An Annual Report detailing progress made in implementing the strategy will be published each year.

A Memo of Understanding with the Department of Education and Skills and regular Governance meetings with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, will provide a framework for reporting to the Department and improve clarity with regards to roles and responsibilities. The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General conducts audits of receipts and expenditure and of procedures and practices. The outcomes of these audits are published in the C and AG's Annual Report.





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