

Annual Report 2016

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Foreword

It's an exciting time and a time of ongoing change for education in Ireland. In 2016, this was reflected in the wide range of the NCCA's work and the scale of its curriculum and assessment activities from the early years to the end of post-primary education.

Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is being implemented in settings and schools all around the country. NCCA has been assisting with its introduction, in particular contributing to the in-career development of those working in early childhood settings so that they feel well equipped to work with the Framework.

Twenty years on from the last major review of the primary curriculum NCCA is looking at how best to structure learning in primary schools. In 2016, a major consultation on the structure of the primary curriculum and the school time allocated to different areas was launched, providing an opportunity for all involved to reflect on existing strengths and on learning from developments like *Aistear*, from research on how children learn and from international experiences as well as current needs. During 2016 an extensive consultation on ERB and ethics in the curriculum was also completed. By the end of the year, these two consultations had attracted the highest level of response in consultations conducted over the almost 30 years of the NCCA's existence. The work on a new Primary Languages Curriculum and on Primary Mathematics also advanced in 2016.

Significant developments in the curriculum at junior cycle have been underway since 2014 and during 2016 review activity on an extensive scale was needed to develop the full range of subjects, short courses and other specifications and guidelines involved. There were nine junior cycle subject and short course specifications completed in 2016. The importance of enhancing student wellbeing is recognised by schools and this is reflected in the new junior cycle. Guidelines for schools on managing the curriculum area of Wellbeing were completed in 2016. Work on senior cycle physical education was completed and work progressed on a range of other Leaving Certificate subject curriculum reviews.

The scale of the NCCA's work on research, consultation, deliberation and discussion, and networking in 2016 is notable – research on pre-school to primary schools transition, mathematics, Gaeilge, and computer science and coding; upwards of 15 separate consultations conducted; over 73 meetings of our committees and other structures; and each area of work being progressed through networking activity with the education partners.

Work on this scale only happens through the commitment of the Council and its staff. The list of meetings presented later in this report shows that there were many development groups and boards active during 2016. Council members and the members of subject development groups and boards give their time and effort on a voluntary basis. Their interest and commitment to curriculum development is key to the successful delivery of NCCA's important work. We are extremely fortunate in NCCA to have a staff team whose specialist expertise, enthusiasm, and willingness to "go the extra mile" ensured the delivery of a challenging work programme within tight deadlines.

Anne Looney, the Chief Executive of the NCCA, was appointed Interim Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority in July and was subsequently appointed Executive Dean of the Institute of Education in Dublin City University. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge her outstanding contribution as Chief Executive of the NCCA since 2001. Her visionary leadership of the NCCA team and in the wider Education sector and her passionate commitment to the best quality education for all students, grounded in strong research evidence, have placed curriculum and assessment developments at the heart of education policy over her 15 years as CEO. Council wishes her well in her new role. John Hammond took over as Acting Chief Executive in August with Majella O' Shea acting up in the Deputy Chief Executive role. I thank John and Majella for providing continuity and sustaining the high quality and momentum of the NCCA's work. Their willingness to step into these roles during this period was greatly appreciated by the Council.

As Chairperson, I want to pay tribute to the significant time given, and commitment of, Council members and their willingness to engage with a wide variety of complex and contentious areas and issues. I want to acknowledge the particular support of the Deputy Chairpersons, Michael Redmond and Declan Kelleher. It is the nature of our work that it involves significant engagement with the Minister for Education and Skills and officials of his Department and I thank them for their support for our work.

Brigid McManus

Chairperson

Introduction

When you examine the work of the NCCA in early years, primary and post-primary education across 2016, some key features and underpinnings should come into focus. The work is centred on developments that will have an impact in the classroom, early childhood setting and school as these are viewed as the major site of change in education; the teacher/practitioner's interaction with the learner as the most important exchange in education. It follows that practitioners, teachers and school management are seen as the principal agents in the ongoing changes taking place, and that the voices of learners and parents are also seen as essential voices in discussion of change. In its totality, the NCCA's work is based on the pursuit of change aimed at improving the quality and range of the educational experience for *all* children and young people.

Elsewhere in this Annual Report, you'll find a summary of our work in curriculum and assessment in 2016. Specific details of the outcomes we set for ourselves and the progress we made in that context comprises the main body of the report. In general terms, the work was characterised by the increasing use of curriculum frameworks that aim to describe the outcomes of learning at particular stages of children's and young people's education. In developing curriculum documents there's also a strong focus on being clear about the purposes of the curriculum at different stages of learning and about the nature and content of the learning itself. In 2016, we've continued to introduce greater diversity in curriculum components – for example, short courses, individualised learning programmes for learners with additional/special educational needs, and a new programme in Wellbeing, all at junior cycle. There's increasing variety too in approaches to assessment, reporting and certification.

Taken as a whole, curriculum developments in 2016 reflect a continuing need, in constantly changing times, to keep the curriculum under review – to modernise it, improve it and meet emerging challenges with a view to improving the educational experience of all learners.

The work could not be achieved without the advice and support we get from those who participate in our representative development groups and the teachers and schools we network with. We also want to thank the staff of the NCCA for their creativity, enthusiasm and boundless commitment in 2016, and the members of the Council for their direction and support.

Anne Looney, CEO

John Hammond, Acting CEO from 1st August

About the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

The NCCA is a statutory Council and its brief is to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education and for primary and post-primary schools. This section of the Annual Report provides some background information on the Council, its current membership, organisational structures and financing.

Vision

Our Strategic Plan for 2015-2018 sets out the vision for the NCCA:

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

Mission

The Council's approach to its work is summarised in its mission:

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

Composition

The Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills. The 25 members come from organisations representing teachers, school managers, parents, employers, trade unions and interests in education. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the State Examinations Commission and a nominee from each of the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The members of the Council in 2016 were as follows:

Chairperson	Ms Brigid McManus
Vice Chairperson - Irish National Teachers' Organisation	Mr Declan Kelleher
Vice Chairperson - Joint Managerial Body	Dr Michael Redmond
Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	Ms Áine O Sullivan
Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	Mr Philip Irwin
Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland	Máire Ní Chiarba. Uas.
Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	Ms Maria Spring
Church of Ireland Board of Education	Ms Rosemary Eager
Department of Education and Skills	Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha. Uas. (to 24 September) Ms Suzanne Dillon (from 25 September)
Education and Training Boards, Ireland	Mr David Leahy
Foras na Gaeilge	Dr Pádraig Ó Duibhir
Irish Business and Employers Confederation	Dr Kevin Marshall
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Dr Rose Malone
Irish Federation of University Teachers	Mr Michael Delargey
Irish National Teachers' Organisation	Dr Deirbhile NicCraith
Irish National Teachers' Organisation	Ms Emma Dineen
Joint Managerial Body – Ordinary member	Ms Marie Therese Kilmartin
National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	Mr John Gearty (to 29 April)

	Ms Patricia Harrington (from 14 September)
National Parents Council, Primary	Ms Áine Lynch
National Parents Council, Post-Primary	Mr Don Myers
Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	Mr Clive Byrne
Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	Avril McMonagle
State Examinations Commission	Bríd Uí Riordán. Uas.
Teachers' Union of Ireland	Mr David Duffy
Teachers' Union of Ireland	Ms Joanne Irwin

The members' attendance at Council meetings and the expenses paid to them in 2016 are set out in Appendices one and two.

Staff

The NCCA has a full-time executive staff led by the Chief Executive Dr. Anne Looney. Dr. Looney was granted leave of absence from 1 August, 2016 to act as Interim Chief Executive of the Higher Education Authority. John Hammond was appointed Acting Chief Executive for the duration of her absence.

The staff in 2016 was as follows:

Chief Executive: Dr. Anne Looney (to 31 July)

Acting Chief Executive: John Hammond (from 1 August)

Deputy Chief Executives: John Hammond (to 31 July), Arlene Forster (from 1 March)

Acting Deputy Chief Executive: Majella O'Shea (from 1 August)

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment:

Norman Emerson

Arlene Forster (to 28 February)

John Halbert

Majella O'Shea (to 31 July)

Barry Slattery (from 1 March)

Patrick Sullivan

Corporate Services:

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal

Aine Armstrong-Farrell, Higher Executive Officer

Maura Dee, Higher Executive Officer

Morgan Lockhart, Executive Officer

Ann Young, Executive Officer

Ursula Corcoran, Clerical Officer

Deirdre Dunne, Clerical Officer

Bernie Gallagher, Clerical Officer

John Connors, Clerical Officer.

Education Officers:

Nora Ní Bheaglaíoch (to 31 August)

Fred Boss

Iain Burns (from 1 September)

Elaine Byrne (from 1 September)

Tracy Curran

Lara Dabbagh (from 1 September)

Colm O Cadhain

Evelyn O'Connor

Dr Mary Daly

Derek Grant (from 1 September)

Ger Halbert

Denise Kelly

Rachel Linney

John Moriarty

Deirdre Murphy

Ben Murray

Neasa Ní Chuaig (from 1 September)

Elaine Ní Neachtain

Aoife Rush

Ger O'Sullivan (from 1 September)

Barry Slattery

Dr Anna Walshe

Project Officers:

Dr Jones Irwin

Jacinta Regan

Aistear Co-ordinator:

Sandra O'Neill (from 1 September)

Boards and Development Groups

The Council progresses its work through a range of Boards and Development Groups drawn from the organisations represented on the Council and other agencies as appropriate. In 2016, the Council convened 73 meetings of these groups. A list of the meetings held in 2016 is in appendix three.

Finance

The Council's total income for 2016 was €4,815,747. Core funding of €4,684,061 was received from the exchequer, through the DES.

The funds allocated to the NCCA cover:

- Staff salaries
- Costs related to commissioning specialist staff to support the work of the Council
- Professional development
- Publications and digital media including proofing, design, photography, printing and translation
- Research
- Costs of the meetings of Council, its Boards and Development Groups including hire of conference facilities and travel and subsistence costs
- Administration costs such as office maintenance and equipment, stationery, postage, telephone, rent, lighting and heating
- Costs related to NCCA conferences and events
- IT maintenance and development
- International interaction including membership fees of international organisations such as CIDREE (Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe) and AEA (Association for Educational Assessment, Europe)
- Advertising.

Financial statements for the year ended 31st December, 2016 will be published on completion of the annual audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

OVERVIEW OF NCCA WORK IN 2016

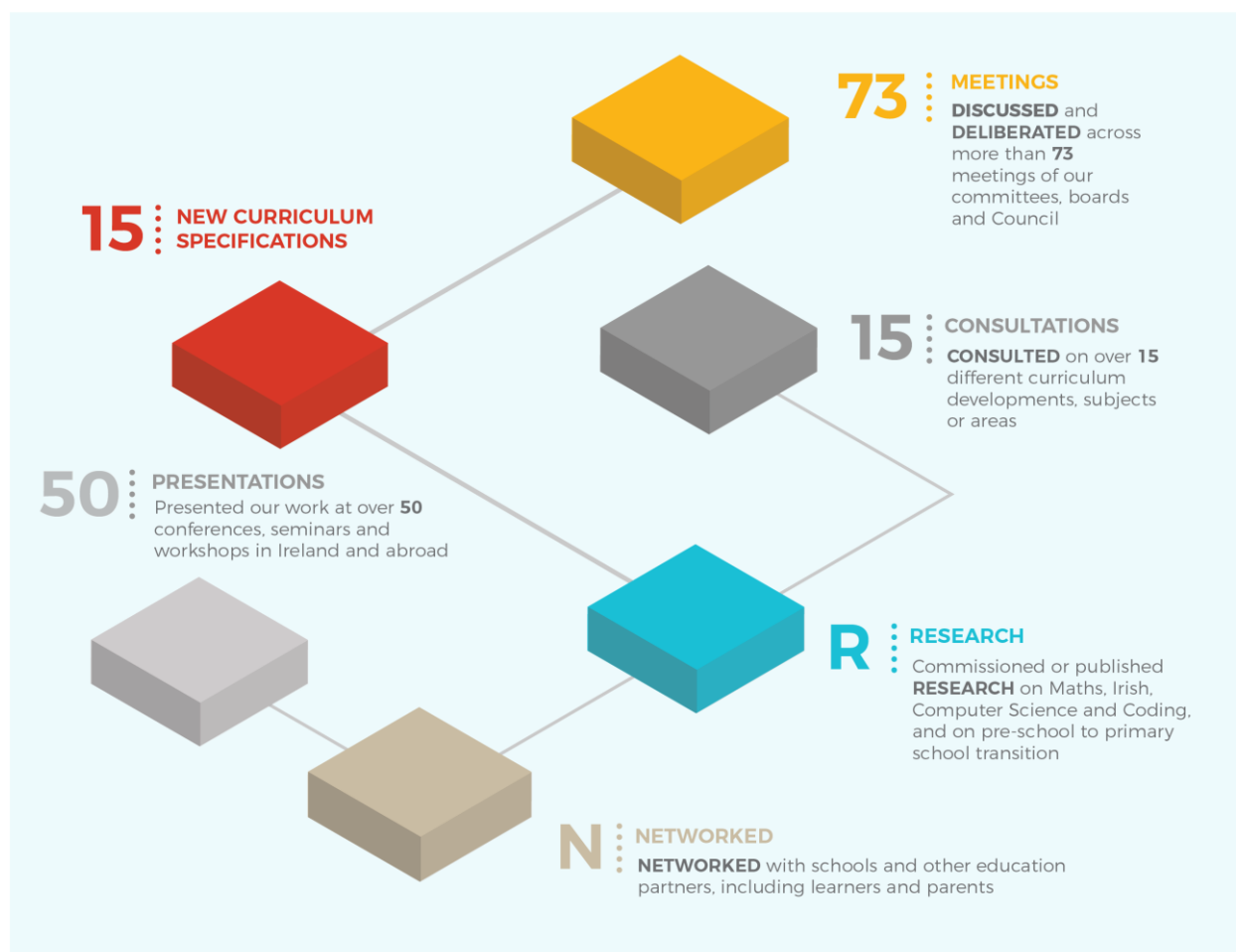
WE WORKED ON...

EC EARLY CHILDHOOD
IMPLEMENTATION

JC JUNIOR CYCLE
CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT

P PRIMARY
CURRICULUM REVIEW

SC SENIOR CYCLE
CURRICULUM REVIEW
AND DEVELOPMENT



EC

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Work in Early Childhood Education **IMPLEMENTATION**



We helped to introduce **Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework** in early childhood education settings, and to train practitioners in its use.

P

PRIMARY

Work on Primary Curriculum **REVIEW**



We started consulting on the **structure of the curriculum and on time allocation** in the curriculum.



We started work on the new Primary **Mathematics** curriculum and continued work on the **Primary Language** Curriculum.



We completed a major consultation on **Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics** in the curriculum.

JC

JUNIOR CYCLE

Work on Junior Cycle **DEVELOPMENT** completed



Learning Programmes customised for individual students with **special needs** were tested with schools.



We completed guidelines on the new curriculum area of **Wellbeing**.



We developed separate specifications for **Irish in Irish-medium schools** and **Irish in English-medium schools** for the first time.



We completed new curriculum specifications for **Science, Business Studies, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Visual Art** and **Philosophy** (short course).



We started new curriculum specifications for **History, Home Economics, Geography** and **Music**.

SC

SENIOR CYCLE

Work on Senior Cycle **DEVELOPMENT** and **REVIEW**



We started developing a **PE APP** for senior cycle students.



We consulted on specifications for **Economics** and **Agricultural Science**.



We completed new curriculum specifications for **PE (Leaving Cert and Senior Cycle)** and **Agricultural Science**.



We began to prepare for a wider **Senior Cycle Review**.

Progress in 2016

This section of the Annual Report for 2016 describes the progress made over the year towards achieving the outcomes set out in the current Strategic Plan. These outcomes are presented under the High-Level goals of the Strategic Plan:

- **Curriculum and Assessment:** To develop innovative curriculum and assessment for engagement, progression, quality, inclusion and continuity across sectors.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Governance and Corporate Services:** To develop NCCA governance and organisational structures, processes, skills, and competences to achieve the vision of the organisation.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes	Progress in 2016
<p>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.</p>	<p>Work on planning the Aistear strand of the <i>National Siolta Aistear Initiative</i> commenced.</p> <p>Using resources from the <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i>, 10 hours of workshops of continuing professional development for early childhood practitioners were drafted.</p> <p>The online <i>Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i>, www.aistearsiolta.ie was updated and maintained.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Updating of the Primary Language Toolkit (Support Material for Teachers and Examples of children's language learning) was ongoing.</p> <p>Work on the Primary Language Curriculum (3rd to 6th classes) commenced.</p> <p>A background paper and brief were published and work commenced on the Primary Mathematics Curriculum (Junior Infants to 2nd classes).</p> <p>An extensive consultation on ERB and Ethics in the curriculum was completed and a report of the consultation was finalised.</p> <p>The GMGY programme materials for senior primary classes were completed. Planning for school support in using the materials commenced.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		Proposals on Structure and Time Allocation in the primary curriculum were developed and published for consultation.
1.3	Post-primary schools are using the <i>Framework for Junior Cycle</i> as the basis for planning and implementing their junior cycle programmes.	<p>Further to publication of the revised Framework for Junior Cycle, engagement with newly-developed and introduced specifications for English, Business Studies and Science continued in post-primary schools, supported by the JCT professional development programme.</p> <p>The specifications for Visual Art, French, German, Italian, and Spanish were completed.</p> <p>Specifications for Gaeilge, one for use in Irish-medium schools, the other for English-medium schools were finalised for consultation.</p> <p>Work on development of background papers and specifications for Geography, History, Home Economics, and Music commenced.</p> <p>A short course in Philosophy was completed.</p> <p>Guidelines for schools on providing for, and managing, the curriculum area of Wellbeing were completed.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		<p>Development of Guidelines for Level 1 Learning Programmes (L1LPs) in collaboration with schools and organisations working in special educational needs commenced.</p> <p>Support materials for teachers and students on Junior Cycle Key Skills were updated.</p>
1.4	Curriculum and assessment reform at senior cycle continues with the completion of new curriculum and assessment specifications	<p>A curriculum framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education was completed.</p> <p>A specification for Leaving Certificate Physical Education was completed.</p> <p>Draft specifications for Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science and Economics were finalised for consultation.</p> <p>Drafting of a specification for Leaving Certificate Applied Mathematics continued with the completion of a custom-made module in Computer-Based Mathematics.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		<p>A specification for Leaving Certificate Politics and Society was published and support materials were prepared for its introduction in schools.</p> <p>Advice on the review of Leaving Certificate Art and revised assessment arrangements for the existing syllabus were completed.</p> <p>Review of Leaving Certificate Classical Studies commenced.</p> <p>A scoping exercise and research on the introduction of a new specification for Leaving Certificate Computer Science was completed.</p> <p>Further support material was developed for the SEC trialling of practical assessment in the Leaving Certificate Science subjects.</p>
1.5	New approaches to assessment and reporting are being introduced and assessment capacity in schools and other settings is being supported.	<p>The Report Card Creator for primary schools was updated and maintained.</p> <p>Education Passport materials were updated in response to feedback from schools.</p> <p>Assessment guidelines for Junior Cycle English, Business Studies and Science were completed and published.</p>

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		<p>Guidelines for the completion of the Assessment Task in Junior Cycle English were published.</p> <p>Assessment guidelines for NCCA short courses were updated.</p> <p>Support material for conducting Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings was updated and published.</p> <p>A conference and a seminar series on assessment, learning and leadership for all stakeholders took place.</p> <p>Development of support materials for ongoing school reporting in junior cycle continued in collaboration with schools.</p> <p>NCCA contributed to the design and format of the new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).</p>
1.6	Curriculum and assessment specifications feature examples of student work that illustrate expectations for learners.	A Quality Assurance Group and QA process continued on Examples of Children's Language Learning for publication in the Primary Language Toolkit.

1. Curriculum and Assessment

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		A Quality Assurance Process continued and was further developed for the publication, on an ongoing basis, of examples of student work related to specifications and guidelines for Junior Cycle English, Business Studies, Science, Modern Foreign Languages, Visual Art, L2LPs and L1LPs.
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.	<p>Work on reporting templates to support children's transition from early childhood settings to primary schools commenced. A setting-/school-based initiative to pilot the templates was designed.</p> <p>Across all sectors, support materials continued to be developed for settings/schools to support engagement with students in curriculum review/planning.</p>

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2016
2.1	NCCA networks are working on ideas, material and initiatives to support their own capacity and that of other schools and settings in curriculum development, assessment practice, and broader educational change.	<p>Examples of children's language learning were further developed in collaboration with schools.</p> <p>A template to develop short courses was updated and made available to schools for use in junior cycle.</p> <p>A network established to develop and trial Level 1 Learning Programmes in junior cycle contributed to the development of guidelines for L1LPs.</p>
2.2	NCCA is supporting the work of partner networks engaged in curriculum and assessment development and supporting teaching and learning.	<p>Work with the network of Síolta Aistear Mentors and their parent organisations was initiated as part of the <i>National Síolta Aistear Initiative</i>.</p> <p>Work continued with the Association of Teacher Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI) through the Aistear Tutor Initiative. Summer courses and workshops were facilitated supporting teachers and principals in their work with <i>Aistear</i>. The content of the summer courses was updated.</p> <p>Members of the Junior Cycle Team continued to engage with partner networks, set up by school management bodies, other agencies and</p>

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2016
		<p>teacher education institutions to develop schools' capacity to plan for developing their Junior Cycle programmes.</p> <p>NCCA continued to contribute to the European Commission Policy Network on Key Competencies in School Education (KeyCoNet).</p>
2.3	The voice and experience of learners is built into discussions and consultations on developments in curriculum and assessment.	Across all sectors, child and student voice fora on particular aspects of curriculum and assessment development have been convened in cooperation with schools and the views of children and students have fed into ongoing development work.
2.4	Liaison and collaborative relationships with a number of organisations are improving the understanding and quality of curriculum and assessment developments and implementation.	<p>NCCA continued to work on an ongoing basis with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DES Steering Groups Early Years Education Policy Unit Department of Children and Youth Affairs State Examinations Commission The Teaching Council An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilaíochta Higher Education Authority

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

Strategic Plan Outcomes		Progress in 2016
		NCCA also continued to engage with: Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Special Education Support Service (SESS) National Council for Special Education Quality and Qualifications Ireland Better Start Education Research Centre
2.5	Curriculum and assessment developments north and south of the border have been supported by collaboration between NCCA and CCEA.	NCCA continued to contribute to the review of qualifications in Northern Ireland through participation in the Expert Group.

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
3.1	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed by evidence and research.	<p>Three research papers on the pre-school to primary school transition were completed and published. They focused on policy and practice, an audit of materials and processes, and a literature review related to this point of transition.</p> <p>An audit of primary curriculum policy internationally related to the area of coding and computer science in the curriculum was completed.</p> <p>Two pieces of research on the impact of changes to the Leaving Certificate Oral Irish examination continued their work. Final reports will be published in 2017.</p> <p>A comparative study looking at international experience of the introduction of a Computer Science subject at post-primary level was completed.</p> <p>NCCA continued to publish and consult on numerous background papers related to specific curriculum developments across all sectors.</p>

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
3.2	Curriculum and assessment developments are informed through participation in research networks	<p>In collaboration with the School of Education in Trinity, Research in Early Childhood Education Collaborative (RECEC) and Early Childhood Ireland, NCCA co-hosted a seminar on early learning experiences.</p> <p>The ESRI were commissioned to conduct research on <i>Children's wellbeing and their experiences beginning school (5 years)</i>.</p> <p>The ERC were commissioned to conduct research on the impact of Project Maths on the performance of students in Junior Cycle Mathematics.</p> <p>Work continued with the Teaching Council and the Centre for Effective Services on the theme of teachers as researchers and a planned conference for 2017 in that context.</p> <p>Research reports related to the NCCA's Assessment Research and Development Programme were completed, published online and the subject of a showcase dissemination event. The programme provided grants for teachers to undertake studies and small-scale research with colleagues and schools.</p>

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		A research report on the Collaborative Assessment Alliance, in which NCCA participated, was published.
3.3	The outcomes and findings of research are available, accessible and disseminated to those with an interest in education, policy making and evaluation.	<p>The findings of commissioned research informed the deliberations of NCCA boards and development groups and ongoing work with external organisations and agencies.</p> <p>Research reports were published in a variety of formats and media, using podcasts to provide access to key findings.</p>
3.4	Research findings and new knowledge are shared and interrogated by NCCA staff as an integral part of their work.	<p>NCCA staff attended informal sessions on a range of curriculum and assessment issues, facilitated by national/international speakers with whom pre- and post-conference sessions were organised.</p> <p>NCCA continues to subscribe to membership of the library of Trinity College, and a fortnightly update on all relevant national and international research developments is circulated to all staff.</p>

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		NCCA staff attended and/or presented papers at national and international conferences on educational research and practice. Details of these are presented in Appendix Four.

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
4.1	Using an effective media strategy, key messages on educational change are widely shared and NCCA responses and contributions are informed and timely.	<p>Videos on aspects of the Primary Developments and the Junior Cycle Developments were published online.</p> <p>Timely responses were made to media enquiries about various developments and a number of staff contributed to radio and television interviews. We continued our policy of responding where possible to requests from local radio.</p> <p>Consultations continued to include online (website), social media (twitter and facebook) hard copy (notice to schools) and face-to-face (bilateral meetings, focus groups) elements. The consultation on ERB and Ethics at Primary level generated the highest participation rate ever for an NCCA consultation.</p> <p>Social media was used effectively to communicate important messages about curriculum developments and consultations and to allow wider engagement in NCCA events.</p>

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		Two editions of info@ncca were published, in Irish and English, in February and November. Each attracted almost 11,000 subscribers.
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. continue	<p>New curriculum specifications and support materials were published online across all sectors. The online interface gives teachers some choices in how they access the material. www.curriculumonline.ie was maintained and is being developed on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Planning commenced for a re-design and re-organisation of the corporate website and its material to take place in 2017. Feedback was gathered from internal and external stakeholders on functionality and usefulness of the website.</p> <p>Analytics related to website and social media communications are included in the CEO Report to each meeting of the Council.</p>

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
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.	<p>Planning commenced with the Consortium of Institutes for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) for NCCA to host the Annual Conference and General Assembly, and edit/publish the CIDREE Yearbook in 2017.</p> <p>NCCA participated in the first summit of the Atlantic Rim Collaborative, which looks at educational developments across the systems of a number of participating jurisdictions including Scotland, Iceland, Ontario, California and Ireland.</p> <p>NCCA memberships were maintained for: Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) British Educational Research Association Institute of Public Administration (IPA) Public Affairs Ireland Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS). In addition, the CEO is a member of the Association of Chief Executives of State Agencies (ACESA) and the Chairperson is a member of the Association of Chairpersons of State Agencies.</p>

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
5.1	Organisation structures and processes are supporting innovative curriculum and assessment development and collaborative work practices.	<p>Structures and processes are in place and agreed for areas of current curriculum and assessment work.</p> <p>New subject development groups are in operation for junior cycle developments.</p> <p>SharePoint was maintained and further developed to facilitate efficient and effective work practices and collaboration.</p> <p>The NCCA IT infrastructure is now fully consolidated leading to greater collaboration and flexibility across devices used by staff. Applications are now almost completely cloud-based.</p>
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.	Six staff members are pursuing post-graduate studies, four at doctoral level, and two at Masters level, in areas relevant to their work.

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		A variety of professional development needs were identified and provided for through on-the-job training, internal professional development events, mentoring, coaching and through courses and conference attendance.
5.3	There is a strong performance culture across the organisation.	<p>NCCA continued to implement Performance Management Development processes with all staff members. These are linked to the achievement of strategic goals.</p> <p>The NCCA Workforce Development Plan was updated to support Public Service Reform and to inform NCCA Human Resources strategy.</p>
5.4	There is a robust financial management system in place.	<p>On the basis of a review of the NCCA financial policies and procedures, revised financial management procedures have been developed, documented and implemented.</p> <p>Financial reports were monitored at regular Management Team meetings.</p> <p>Monthly management accounts were submitted to meetings of the Council.</p>

5. Governance and Corporate Services

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

Strategic plan outcomes		Progress in 2016
		<p>Quarterly Income and Expenditure reports were submitted to DES.</p> <p>Financial statements were reviewed by the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Public service procurement processes were adhered to, with a particular focus on value for money.</p>
5.5	There is full compliance with the governance requirements of state bodies.	<p>The Audit of Financial Statements for 2015 was completed.</p> <p>The Review of Systems of Internal Financial Control was completed.</p> <p>The risk register was updated and approved by Council.</p>
5.6	Customer service standards are developed and improved	All customer services guidelines and policies were adhered to.
5.7	The NCCA has complied with all relevant public sector agreements and development plans.	<p>The NCCA has met all targets outlined in the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013 – 2016 (Haddington Road).</p> <p>The NCCA has complied with the ECF for the period.</p>

Appendix One: Membership and Attendance at Council Meetings 2016

Membership and attendance at Council meetings 2016		Council Meetings							
		4 February	7 April	12 May	23 June	21 – 22 September		10 November	15 December
						21 September	22 September		
Mr Clive Byrne	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	✓		✓	✓				✓
Mr Michael Delargey	Irish Federation of University Teachers	✓		✓				✓	
Ms Suzanne Dillon	Department of Education and Skills					✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Emma Dineen	Irish National Teachers Organisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mr David Duffy	Teachers Union of Ireland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Rosemary Eager	Church of Ireland Board of Education	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mr. John Gearty	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	✓							
Ms Patricia Harrington	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education							✓	✓
Ms Joanne Irwin	Teachers Union of Ireland				✓	✓		✓	✓

Membership and attendance at Council meetings 2016		Council Meetings							
		4 February	7 April	12 May	23 June	21 – 22 September		10 November	15 December
						21 September	22 September		
Mr Philip Irwin	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mr Declan Kelleher	Deputy Chairperson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Marie-Thérèse Kilmartin	Joint Managerial Body	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Mr David Leahy	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	✓	✓					✓	
Ms Áine Lynch	National Parents Council (Primary)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha	Department of Education and Skills	✓	✓	✓					
Ms Brigid McManus	Chairperson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Avril McMonagle	Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	✓		✓				✓	
Dr Rose Malone	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Kevin Marshall	Irish Business and Employers Confederation	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Mr Don Myers	National Parents Council (Post-Primary)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Máire Ní Chiarba	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	

Membership and attendance at Council meetings 2016		Council Meetings							
		4 February	7 April	12 May	23 June	21 – 22 September		10 November	15 December
						21 September	22 September		
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	Irish National Teachers Organisation	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Pádraig Ó Duibhir	Foras na Gaeilge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Áine O’Sullivan	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Michael Redmond	Deputy Chairperson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms Maria Spring	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Bríd Uí Riordáin	State Examinations Commission								

Appendix Two: Expenses paid to Council members in 2016

Expenses paid to NCCA Council members in 2016		€
The figures below include expenses for attendance at meetings of sub-groups of Council.		
Mr Clive Byrne	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills	0
Mr Michael Delargey	Irish Federation of University Teachers	1,489
Ms Suzanne Dillon	Department of Education and Skills	0
Ms Emma Dineen	Irish National Teachers Organisation	0
Mr David Duffy	Teachers Union of Ireland	0
Ms Rosemary Eager	Church of Ireland Board of Education	225
Mr. John Gearty	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	0
Ms Patricia Harrington	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education	1,024
Ms Joanne Irwin	Teachers Union of Ireland	0
Mr Philip Irwin	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	0
Mr Declan Kelleher *	Deputy Chairperson	1967
Ms Marie-Thérèse Kilmartin	Joint Managerial Body	0
Mr David Leahy	Education and Training Boards, Ireland	2,038

Expenses paid to NCCA Council members in 2016		€
The figures below include expenses for attendance at meetings of sub-groups of Council.		
Ms Áine Lynch	National Parents Council (Primary)	0
Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha	Department of Education and Skills	0
Ms Brigid McManus	Chairperson	0
Ms Avril McMonagle	Nominee of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	1,430
Dr Rose Malone *	Irish Congress of Trade Unions	0
Dr Kevin Marshal	Irish Business and Employers Confederation	0
Mr Don Myers	National Parents Council (Post-Primary)	2,893
Máire Ní Chiarba	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	0
Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith	Irish National Teachers Organisation	0
Dr Pádraig Ó Duibhir	Foras na Gaeilge	0
Ms Áine O'Sullivan	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools	330
Dr Michael Redmond	Deputy Chairperson	0
Ms Maria Spring	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	529
Bríd Uí Riordáin	State Examinations Commission	0

Appendix Three: NCCA Meetings 2016

	Total
Early Childhood and Primary	
Board for Early Childhood and Primary	5
Primary Mathematics Development Group	3
Early Childhood and Primary Language Development Group, 3 rd to 6 th Class	1
Early Childhood and Primary Language Advisory Group	1
Junior Cycle	
Board for Junior Cycle	6
An Mheitheal Forbartha don Ghaeilge ag an tSraith Shóisearach	6
Art, Craft Design Development Group	1
Geography Development Group	5
History Development Group	4
Home Economics Development Group	4
Maths Development Group	1
Modern Foreign Languages Development Group	1
Music Development Group	8
Senior Cycle	
Board for Senior Cycle	4
Agricultural Science Development Group	2
Classical Studies Development Group	2
Economics Development Group	2
Physical Education Development Group	6
Cross Sectoral	
Mathematics Development Group	4
Special Education Needs Steering Group	3
Other	
Audit Committee	4
Total number of meetings in 2016	73
Total number of committees/groups	21

Appendix Four: NCCA Presentations (selection) 2016

A selection of the presentations, paper or workshops delivered by NCCA in 2016 organised broadly by strategic goals

1. Curriculum and Assessment Development

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

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Annual Conference, Dublin	New Utopias? Children's learning and wellbeing in contemporary education policy
European Commission Peer Learning Activity on European Qualifications Framework, Belfast	School qualifications on the National Framework: Irish case study
Comhdháil Oideachais - Gaeloideachas, Kilkenny	Forbairt na scribhneoireachta I measc daltaí bunscoile sa Ghaeltacht
Irish National Teachers' Organisation Education Conference	Proposals on structure and time allocation in the primary curriculum
OMEP Ireland Conference UCC, Cork	<i>The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i>
Area Based Childhood Mentors, NCI, Dublin	<i>Introduction to the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide</i>
European Early Childhood Research Association (EECERA), Dublin	The transition from preschool to primary school – research, policy and practice
UL Symposium on Nature of Science in Science Education, Limerick	Opening address
ACCS Annual Conference	Schooling 2020
Philosophy Ireland Launch, Dublin	Philosophy in the Primary School Curriculum
SFI Algebra Project In Ireland	Flagway Jamboree inclusive mathematics education

2. Engagement and networks for innovation

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

4. Strategic relationships

To build on existing strategic relationships and develop new ones to support and connect curriculum and assessment development and implementation

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Irish School Heads Association (ISA)/NCCA Network Day	Leading Learning
Irish School Heads Association (ISA) NCCA Network day	Wellbeing in junior cycle
Kerry ETB Physical Education Community of Practice	Wellbeing in junior cycle
International Society for Music Education (ISME) Annual Conference	Update on Junior Cycle Music
Post Primary Music Teachers Association (PPMTA) Annual Conference, Portlaoise	Update on Junior Cycle Music
EC Key Competences Network, Brussels	Key Competences in the Curriculum in Ireland and KeyCoNet
CIDREE Expert Meeting on Informatics and Computer Science	Computer-Based Mathematics in Applied Mathematics
SPHE Network Conference	Future Curriculum Developments and Citizenship Education
CIDREE Expert Meeting on Video-enhanced teacher development, Helsinki	NCCA video production and exemplification of learning, teaching and student work
Association of Teacher/Education Centre Directors (ATECI), Carrick-on-Shannon	Early Childhood and Primary Developments
National Childhood Network – annual conference, Athlone	To Live Out Loud...Explore, play and learn through the arts

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
Early Childhood Ireland Research Seminar	Early Educational Alignment: Reflecting on Context, Curriculum and Pedagogy
Consortium of School Networks (COSN) delegation visiting the DE	Policies developed in Ireland for integrating technology into curriculum; what the Irish government is doing to spark innovation in technology and education
DCU Institute of Education	Formative assessment in Primary PE
Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) Central Executive Committee	Briefing on early childhood and primary work
Marino Institute of Education	Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development
Atlantic Rim Collaboratory Summit, Reykjavik	Briefing on curriculum developments in Ireland
NAPD Conference (Region 5)	Presentation on Assessment and Reporting in Junior Cycle
JCT Annual Conference	Reporting in Junior Cycle
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland	Media Literacy across the curriculum

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

5. Profile and communications

To communicate, present and share the work and achievements of the NCCA to improve the profile of the organisation and engagement with its work

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
15 TH Annual AEA Conference, Tallinn	Assessment of students in a 21 st Century World
European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Annual Conference, Dublin	Implications of Professional Conversation for Policy

Event/Organisation	Theme/ title
European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) Annual Conference, Dublin	Setting the scene: Developing a national tool to support children's transition from preschool to primary school
CIDREE Annual Conference, Edinburgh (With Susan Weir, ERC)	Raising achievement in schools in disadvantaged areas
ESAI Annual Conference, Galway	Opportunities and challenges for a curriculum in ERB and Ethics for the primary classroom
MITE Conference	Collaborative Assessment Alliance and assessment of collaborative problem solving
ECER Annual Conference, Dublin	Collaborative problem solving and online assessment
Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) Annual Conference, Dundee	Developing innovative, high quality assessment that elicits valid data on students collaborative problem solving skills
CIDREE Expert meeting, Utrecht	Experiences with a contemporary curriculum in visual arts and, how it contributes to 21st-century needs and skills
HEA Social Media Team	NCCA's use of Social Media
European Conference of Language Learning, Brighton	The new Primary language Curriculum in Ireland
ECER Annual Conference, Dublin	Opportunities and challenges in the development of a curriculum in ERB & Ethics for Irish primary schools
ECER Annual Conference, Dublin	From syllabus to specification: a journey in Irish science education

Appendix Five: Report on Protected Disclosures

The NCCA has put in place procedures for the making of protected disclosures, which have been developed in line with the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 and agreed by Council. This sets out in detail the process by which protected disclosures can be made and what will happen when a disclosure is made.

The NCCA has a strong commitment to ensuring that its culture and working environment encourage, facilitate and support any employee or anyone associated with the work of the NCCA to “speak up” on any issue that could impinge on the Council’s ability to carry out its roles and responsibilities to the high standard expected.

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act, 2014 requires that an annual report be published in relation to the protected disclosures received by the NCCA. No protected disclosures were received in 2016.

