

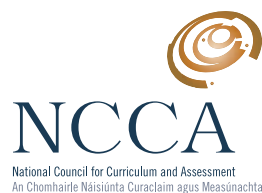
2005

ANNUAL REPORT

The background of the page is a light gray color, overlaid with several thin, flowing, yellow lines that create a sense of movement and organic shape. These lines vary in thickness and curvature, some forming large loops and others as more delicate, sweeping arcs. The overall effect is modern and artistic.

ANNUAL REPORT

2005



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National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Annual Report 2005

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Foreword

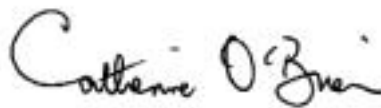
I am pleased to present the 2005 annual report of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the final report on progress in meeting the high-level objectives set out in the Strategic Plan 2003-2006.

The vision statement of the Council articulated in the plan is ambitious: to play a key role in shaping a world-class education system that meets the needs of all learners, supports their participation in communities and in society, and contributes to the development of the knowledge society in Ireland. The five high-level objectives for 2003-2006 were equally ambitious and the outputs identified for the three years were both wide-ranging and extensive. I am pleased to report that almost all of the expected outputs were delivered, and that where work is ongoing, or where new outputs displaced original targets, the complex environment in which the NCCA operates was the critical factor in any modification of the planned outputs.

In this report, the research activities of the NCCA are highlighted. Since establishment on a statutory basis in 2001, we have given increasing attention, and assigned an increasing proportion of our resources to research – both in-house, and commissioned. The qualitative study of young children in a range of early learning settings uses an innovative research methodology and is generating considerable interest among researchers generally, as well as those with an interest in early childhood education. The work being conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute to capture the student experience of the junior cycle of post-primary education has generated some important findings and has been the subject of much comment from those working in policy planning, and from the general public. The review of international trends in post-primary mathematics education has also been the focus of public and media attention. We were pleased that we were able to draw, in this work, on Irish researchers working abroad collaborating with their home-based colleagues. In all of our research work, we are acutely conscious that the completion of the study is only part of the process. Using the findings to inform our work, to contribute to that world-class education system to which we aspire, is often the more significant challenge, and one which is ongoing.

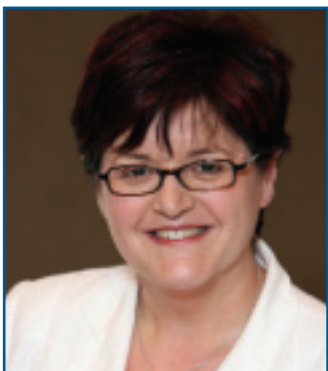
Significant too over the past number of years have been the joint conferences with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland (CCEA) where we have shared and developed our educational and research targets for education on this island. There has been mutual benefit for all, concerned while the joint project on exceptionally able students currently in progress augurs well for the future.

The term of office of this Council ends early in 2006. I want to pay particular thanks to the staff of the NCCA, under the direction of the CEO Anne Looney and the Deputy Chief Executives John Hammond and Sarah FitzPatrick, for the way in which they have handled and driven all NCCA work in such a dedicated and professional manner over this period. They have all worked unstintingly in the pursuit of the work and strategic plan set out for these years. As Chairperson, I have been fortunate to work with so many dedicated Council members representing all the partners in education. My sincere thanks also go to the two Deputy Chairpersons, Tom Gilmore and Ferdia Kelly, whose unstinting loyalty to the education sphere has guided me without fail over these past years. It is my sincere hope that the NCCA and Council will continue to serve education in this country with continued dedication, ability and eagerness in the years ahead.



Dr. Catherine O' Brien

Chairperson



Introduction

2005 was marked by a number of high-profile achievements for the Council. The completion of the first phase of the Primary Curriculum Review and the dissemination of the findings to all primary teachers re-focused the attention of those who believed that the development of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum was complete. The speedy response to the issues identified was notable. The challenges faced in planning for English were identified in the review report, possible solutions considered, the Additional Support Materials developed and sent to all teachers – all within a six month period. This represents no mean achievement for the staff of the NCCA and the committees and working groups that support work in progress. It signals a new dynamic for our work, and creates new expectations of a more responsive policy cycle in education. In looking forward to 2006-2008 it is clear that one of the challenges will be to continue meet these new expectations.

The completion of the advice on the reforms of senior cycle is also noteworthy, and certainly the aspect of the work of the Council that generated the most public interest and media comment. The response of the Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D. in July, and her support for the curriculum and assessment reforms proposed, signalled a new phase of work for the NCCA, which was well underway by the end of 2005.

Finally, I want to mention *info@ncca*, the new bulletin for teachers that hit primary and post-primary school staff rooms – in Irish and English – in September 2005. A replacement for the former corporate bulletin *Comhairle*, the new publication is focused firmly on the teacher as the curriculum developer and change agent. The second issue will arrive in schools early in 2006.

None of this work, nor any of the achievements recorded in the Annual Report, would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the staff under the leadership of John Hammond and Sarah FitzPatrick.

I also want to pay tribute to the members of Council whose enthusiasm and support for the unique partnership that underpins the work of the NCCA never

flagged during their three year term of office. This was due in no small part to the skill and diplomacy of the chairperson, Dr. Catherine O'Brien who, despite her own busy academic schedule, was unfailing in her support for the staff and the work of the Council.

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

Dr. Anne Looney

Chief Executive

1. The role of the NCCA

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

- 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.

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

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

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

2. Council membership

The Council is a representative structure, the membership of which is determined by the Minister for Education and Science. There are twenty-five members in all. The members come from the various bodies that represent teachers, school managers, parents, employers, trade unions and interests in education. Other members include representatives of the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission and nominees of the Minister. The membership Council for the period covered by this annual report is as follows:

Dr. Catherine O'Brien	Chairperson
Mr. Tom Gilmore	Deputy-Chairperson
Mr. Ferdia Kelly	Deputy-Chairperson
Sr. Catherine Prendergast	Minister's Nominee
Ms. Eilís Humphreys	Joint Managerial Body
Mr. John McKay (to 30 June)	Irish Vocational Education Association
Mr. Paddy Murchan	Catholic Primary Schools Managers Association
Dr. Kenneth Milne	Church of Ireland Board of Education
Ms. Antoinette Buggle	National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education
Mr. John White	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Mr. Michael Freeley	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Mr. John MacGabhann	Teachers' Union of Ireland
Mr. Sean Daly	Teachers' Union of Ireland
Ms. Catherine Byrne	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Ms. Sheila Nunan	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Dr. Eugene Wall	Irish Federation of University Teachers

Mr. Frank Turpin	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
Mr. Oliver Donohoe	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Tomás Ó Séaghdha, Uas. (to 3 March)	Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools
Ms. Mary Mullarkey	
Ms. Fionnuala Kilfeather	National Parents Council, Primary
Ms. Marian Lyon	National Parents Council, Post-Primary
Mr. Heino Schonfeld	The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
Seosamh Mac Donncha, Uas.	Foras na Gaeilge
Mr. Aidan Farrell	State Examinations Commission
Ms. Doreen McMorris	Department of Education and Science

3. The work of the Council

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

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

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

4. Staff

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

The staff members of the NCCA in 2005 were as follows:

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

Directors, Curriculum and Assessment

Bill Lynch
Peter Johnson
Hilary Roche
Arlene Forster
Majella O'Shea
Margaret O'Donnell³

Administration

Paul Brady, Assistant Principal
Tom Fagan, Higher Executive Officer
Jackie O'Brien, Executive Officer
Deirdre Mitchell, Clerical Officer (to 8 April)
Morgan Lockhart, Clerical Officer
Jason Keogh, Clerical Officer
Edward Canavan, Clerical Officer
Arlene Foy, Clerical Officer (from 7 April)
John Connors, Services Officer (from 19th January)
Maureen Whyte, Services Officer (from 23rd February)
Christine Ryan, Resources Co-ordinator

¹ Ms. Fallon-Byrne is on secondment as Director of the National Council for Partnership and Performance (NCPPE).

² Dr. FitzPatrick, Director, Curriculum and Assessment holds this post on a temporary assignment in place of Lucy Fallon-Byrne

³ Ms O'Donnell holds this post on a temporary assignment in place of Dr. FitzPatrick

Education Officers

Cathal de Paor
Emer O'Connor
Hal O'Neill
John Halbert
Sean Bracken (to 9 September)
Anne Moloney
Mary O'Leary
Margaret Maxwell (from 1 February)
Eibhlín Ní Scannláin (from 7 April)
Dr. Pat Naughton (from 1 September)

Project Officers (from 1st June)

Silvia Bertoni, Italian (to 31 October)
Ursula Zimmermann, Japanese
Patricia Leavey, Publications

The following Education Officers were retained by the NCCA on a part-time or occasional basis:

Early Childhood and Primary Education

Regina Murphy, Arts Education: Music
Paul Brennan, Arts Education: Drama, Assessment
Gwendoline Baker, Early Childhood Education
Frances Murphy, Physical Education
Anne Bermingham, Primary Curriculum Review
Karin Bacon, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): Geography
Geraldine O'Connor, Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): History

Post-Primary Education	Frank Mc Gourty, Agricultural Science
	Noel O' Neill, Construction Studies/Architectural Technology
	Sr. Enda Mc Mullen, Art
	John Lucey, Biology
	Celine McGuinness, Business
	Dr. Jim McCarthy, Chemistry
	Brian Farley, Classical Subjects
	Pat Younger, Economics
	Pat Lynch, Engineering
	Dr. Muiris Ó Laoire, Gaeilge
	Diarmaid Ó Murchú, Gaeilge
	John Mulcahy, Geography
	Vivian Cassells, Guidance
	John Dredge, History
	Colette Brophy, Home Economics
	Susan Dennison, Junior Certificate School Programme
	Tom Nelson, Leaving Certificate Applied
	Peter Tiernan, Mathematics
	John McCarthy, Modern Languages
	Seán Mac Liam, Music
	Michael Halton, Physics & Chemistry (combined)
	Annette Honan, Religious Education, Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE), and Interculturalism
	Geraldine Horgan, Science
	Brid Kennedy, Special Educational Needs
	Ger Halbert, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
	Cahil Doherty, Technical Graphics/Technical Drawing
	Paddy Keays, Technology

5. Finance

The NCCA is funded by the exchequer through the Department of Education and Science (DES). Its allocation for the financial year 2005 was €4.079m.

The funds allocated to the NCCA cover

- staff salaries
- costs related to the secondment and commissioning of specialist staff to support the work of the Council

- professional development
- publications including proofing, design, photography, printing and translation
- research
- costs of the meetings of Council and its sub-committees, 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.

The DES directly funded Education Officer posts for ICT (2) and Modern Languages, Primary. The DES also transferred €163,809 to the Council to cover the salaries and operational costs of three Project Officers redeployed to NCCA from the former Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ).

Additional grants and fees received

In December, 2005 the DES made an additional grant of €270,000 accounted for by advance payments of:

- €50,000 towards the cost of the appointment of Education Officers for Senior Cycle Education (Science) and Education for Children in Detention Schools and High Support and Special Care Units.
- €220,000 for the dissemination of guidelines for teachers of students with General Learning Disabilities.

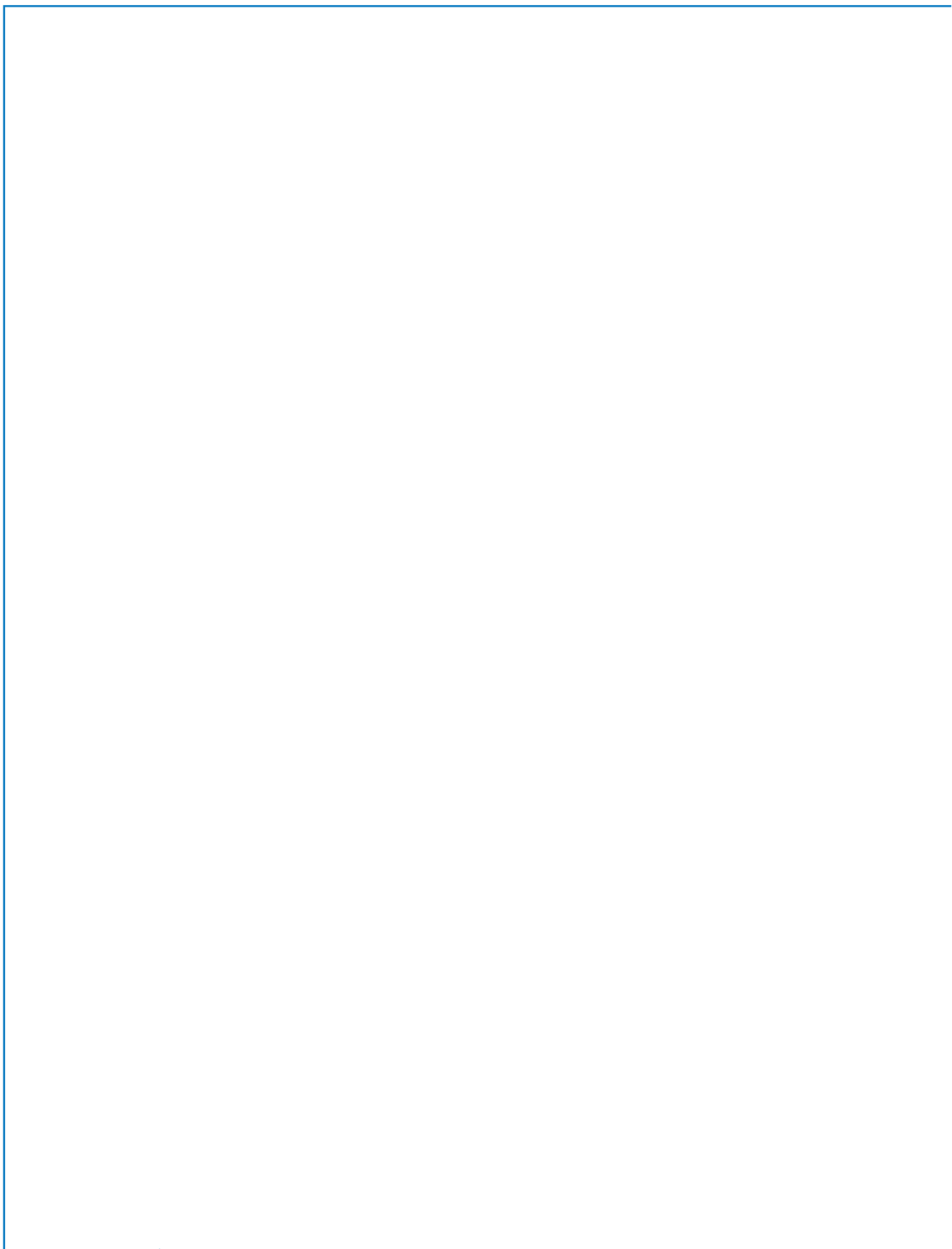
A grant of €48,000 was made available by Foras na Gaeilge to fund the appointment of an Education Officer for Gaeilge.

The North South Co-operation Unit, DES, provided a grant of €19,000 in part funding of a joint conference with CCEA (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Northern Ireland).

Development Co-operation Ireland provided a grant of €18,259 for a project on mapping opportunities for development education in senior cycle.

The Council received €50,000 from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to a proposal to build local capacity to support intercultural education in primary schools.

A detailed financial statement is provided in the Appendix.



6. Supporting high-level objectives 2005

High-level objective 1

TO CONDUCT ONGOING REVIEW OF CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR LEARNERS AND THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

Early Childhood Education

Framework for Early Learning

In Spring 2005, the NCCA concluded its consultation with the early childhood sector on the development of the Framework for Early Learning as presented in its consultative document, *Towards a Framework for Early Learning (2004)*.

In analysing the information gathered through the consultation, the NCCA identified implications for the development of the Framework, as well as implications for the wider early childhood sector. The NCCA presented the findings from the consultation together with these implications in *Towards a Framework for Early Learning: Final Consultation Report* which can be downloaded from the NCCA website.

Informed by the consultation findings, the NCCA initiated three strands of work in developing the Framework.

- **Components of the Framework**
The NCCA developed a detailed plan of work for the completion of the various components of the Framework. Work on the themes was progressed. The aims within the Framework's themes (Well-being, Identity and belonging, Communication, and Exploring and thinking) were developed using goals and learning experiences. Collectively, the themes will present the content of children's early learning and development and provide adults with ideas for activities and interactions to enrich and progress their work with children.
- **Portraiture study**
Drawing on the findings from the consultation, the NCCA designed a portraiture study to support its work in developing the *Framework for Early Learning*. Portraiture involves recording and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of participants in particular settings.

The portraiture study will be completed by Autumn 2006.



- **Short papers**

The NCCA identified three short papers to be developed to outline the theory and research which inform the *Framework for Early Learning*:

- Children's early learning and development: what the research says
- Care and education: how these are understood and presented within the Framework
- Supporting children's early learning and development through the assessment process.

Work on the papers will commence in 2006.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
In early childhood and primary education the NCCA will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of a consultative document. 	Complete
- develop a consultative document <i>Towards a Framework for Early Learning</i> to inform the development of a framework to support early learning from birth to six years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with the early childhood sector. 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a framework for early learning. 	Ongoing*

*In response to a request from the early childhood sector, the timeframe for the consultation process based on the consultative document, *Towards a Framework for Early Learning* (2004) was extended to facilitate more extensive participation and engagement.

Focus on Research: The Portraiture Study

As part of its work in developing the Framework for Early Learning the NCCA will carry out a portraiture study in a number of early childhood settings. Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffmann Davis, 1997) described as painting with words, involves recording and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of participants in particular settings. The purpose of the study is to develop portraits of children (babies, toddlers and young children) in early childhood settings. Through listening to the children, talking with them and sharing in their everyday experiences in the settings, the NCCA will gain a greater understanding of these children's experiences in the settings: what the children like doing, where they enjoy spending time, who they enjoy being with, what they would change in the settings, and so forth. This information, will help the NCCA to ensure that the Framework is relevant in the Irish context and in this way, is meaningful and useful to all children and adults in the early childhood sector.

The portraiture study will support the NCCA's development of the Framework for Early Learning in a number of ways. It will help the NCCA to

- represent the voices and experiences of children in the Framework
- check the breadth and depth of the Framework's themes (Well-being, Identity and belonging, Communication and Exploring and thinking)
- develop exemplars of good practices across the early childhood sector which will be included in the Framework
- document good practices by practitioners in planning for, extending and enriching, and assessing children's learning and development.

Two additional outcomes of the study will be a compilation of the children's portraits and a paper which chronicles the process of the study and highlights the important learnings for the NCCA's work in developing the Framework. The NCCA plans to make these latter materials available on its website in autumn/winter 2006.

Active listening

The portraiture study is about listening for the stories of children. To help ensure the children are active and sharing participants in the listening process, the NCCA drew on the RAMPS framework (Mayall, 1994) in designing the study:

- Recognising the many visual and verbal languages that children use to express themselves
- Assigning space for documentation and feedback
- Making time to give children information that is relevant, makes sense to them and focuses on what they want to know so that they can make informed decisions
- Providing choice
- Subscribing to a reflective practice.

Using this framework should help to ensure that the balance of power in communicating and interpreting experiences is tilted in the children's favour. This should support the development of portraits which capture more closely children's actual experiences in the settings.

Methods for gathering and analysing information

Drawing on the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) the NCCA will use a range of imaginative methodologies to capture what children are thinking, experiencing and communicating without relying on spoken and/or written words. These methods include

- observation (by the NCCA)
- photography (of and by the children)
- audio and video-recording (of and by the children)
- child conferencing
- walking tours and mapmaking (with children acting as guides).

Primary Curriculum Review

Final report

Findings from the first phase of the review of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) were published in the *Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1: Final Report* (2005), available on the NCCA website. Findings were also summarised and presented in articles for the newsletters of various organisations including the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and the NCCA's newsletter, *info@ncca*.

Seminar

The NCCA and the DES presented their findings from two studies of the Primary School Curriculum in classrooms in a joint dissemination seminar on May 11th, 2005. The agenda for the day included presentations and discussions on six cross-cutting themes identified from the findings of the NCCA's review of the Primary School Curriculum and the DES evaluation of curriculum implementation:

- Planning
- Methodologies
- Parents
- Differentiation
- Literacy and numeracy
- Assessment

A report on the proceedings of the seminar was published on the NCCA website and circulated to all attendees.

Booklet for schools

A summary of the findings presented at the dissemination seminar was published in *The Primary Curriculum in Schools: Insights from the Curriculum Implementation Evaluation and the Primary Curriculum Review* (2005) which issued to all primary school teachers. This document is available on the NCCA website.

English Curriculum: Additional Support Material

In response to findings from teachers in the Primary Curriculum Review, the NCCA developed additional support material for the English Curriculum. Teachers had highlighted difficulties using the English strands to plan and teach with the English



Curriculum. The English Curriculum: *Additional Support Material* (2005) presented an alternative organisational structure for the English Curriculum which replaced the strands with the strand units. This additional support material is intended to benefit teachers who wish to plan the English Curriculum using oral language, reading and writing. This document issued to all primary school teachers and is available on the NCCA website.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
In early childhood and primary education the NCCA will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the findings of the curriculum review. 	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initiate a review of the Primary School Curriculum in order to identify and meet the needs of teachers and children for additional support and guidelines in using the Primary School Curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of recommendations regarding the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum. 	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a programme for ongoing review of the Primary School Curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of additional guidelines for teachers using the Primary School Curriculum. 	Complete with additional work underway*
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme for ongoing review of the Primary School Curriculum outlined. 	Complete

* Findings from the Primary Curriculum Review highlighted teachers' needs for additional support material on four aspects of their work:

- English Curriculum: the NCCA has responded to teachers' requests for additional support material on the organisation of the English Curriculum.

- Involvement of parents in supporting their child's learning: a project to develop a DVD for parents' on their child's learning with the Primary School Curriculum will be complete in early 2006.
- Teaching methods: this will be the focus of the NCCA's work in 2006.
- Assessment: this is part of the NCCA's strategy for primary assessment described in detail in the next section of this report.

The 'Planet Aqua' project

The NCCA has participated in the Planet Aqua Steering Committee, a joint collaboration between the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and the Department of Education and Science. Planet Aqua is concerned with developing materials on protecting the environment through water education, which support the Primary School Curriculum for Science. The project, which is ongoing, is sponsored by the European Commission and the Discover Science and Engineering Programme (Forfás).

Assessment in primary schools

Advice on standardised testing in compulsory schooling

In July 2004 the Minister for Education and Science requested the NCCA to identify key issues relating to implementing standardised testing of literacy and numeracy in compulsory schooling, and to provide corresponding advice. The advice was presented in a two-part document, *Standardised Testing in Compulsory Schooling*, available on the NCCA website. The first part of the document presented an initial mapping of issues related to the introduction of standardised testing in compulsory schooling, the second discussed international practice and provided advice on short and medium term next steps. The advice issued in April 2005.

The Minister responded to Council's advice on June 29th indicating broad approval for the NCCA's advice on short and medium term next steps.

Assessment guidelines

The advice to the Minister on standardised testing issued with a second document, *Assessment in Primary Schools* (2005). This presented information for schools on developing and implementing a policy on assessment. It is currently available on the NCCA website.



The NCCA is completing work in developing general guidelines for teachers on assessment in primary schools, which when complete, will issue to all schools along with the document on school assessment policy. General guidelines on assessment in specific subject areas are also in development.

National report card templates

The purpose of the report card templates is to facilitate the introduction of common recording and reporting procedures to support schools in meeting their responsibilities to report to parents and guardians set out in the Education Act (1998). As an initial stage of this work, the NCCA began work developing a background paper on procedures for recording and reporting student progress in other jurisdictions. This paper is scheduled for completion in Spring 2006.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
<p>In early childhood and primary education the NCCA will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progress the development of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of an overarching statement on assessment in primary schools. 	Complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of general guidelines for the use of assessment in the Primary School Curriculum. 	Ongoing*
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of guidelines in specific subjects in the Primary School Curriculum. 	Ongoing*

* This work had to be extended to include guidelines on standardised testing.

Languages in the primary school curriculum

Language and literacy in Irish-medium schools

The project on Language and Literacy in Irish-medium schools comprises the following elements:

- Review of literature on the introduction and development of language and literacy in bilingual settings, including all variants of immersion and language maintenance education with particular reference to Irish-medium primary schools
- Language and literacy in Irish-medium schools: Descriptions of practice
 - Consultation document
 - Online survey
 - Invitation for submissions
 - Consultation report

The contract for the literature review has been awarded following a tendering process, and completion is scheduled for Spring 2006.

The NCCA has begun working with six Irish-medium schools (Gaelscoileanna and scoileanna Ghaeltachta) in developing descriptions of practice relating to the introduction of language and literacy in Gaeilge and English. This work will be completed in February 2006.

Modern Languages in Primary Schools

The NCCA initiated two pilot projects on Content in Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Language Awareness during 2005. These pilot projects emerged from the NCCA's *Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages in Primary Schools* (2004). The Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative (MLPSI) is working with the NCCA in supporting these pilot projects.

The report on the pilot projects will be produced in June 2006. This report will contribute to the advice that the NCCA will provide to the Minister for Education and Science in 2007, following the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum, on modern languages in the primary school.

English as an additional language in Irish primary schools

The draft teacher guidelines for English as an additional language in Irish primary schools are now available on the NCCA website. They are currently being redrafted following consultation with teachers who worked with them in their classrooms and feedback from courses organised by the INTO in July 2005.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Background papers on ICT in curriculum and assessment

At the request of Council, three background papers were prepared on the role of ICT in curriculum and assessment in Ireland and in other jurisdictions. The first paper, *ICT in schools – an overview: Part 1, Ireland* was completed in March 2005. It described investment in ICT, access to ICT and the use of ICT to support the curriculum in the Irish context. The second paper, *ICT in schools – an overview: Part 2, International developments* was completed in May 2005. It discussed ICT policies, investment in ICT, access to ICT and the use of ICT to support the curriculum across a number of jurisdictions. The third background paper, *ICT, teaching and learning: what the research tells us* was completed in November 2005. It was based on a review of research on the use of ICT to support teaching and learning internationally. Findings on the effectiveness of ICT in supporting teaching and learning were presented in the paper.

ICT Framework: a structured approach to ICT in curriculum and assessment

The development of the *ICT Framework: A structured approach to ICT in curriculum and assessment* is nearing completion. The Framework identifies the kinds of ICT learning experiences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) from infant classes to the end of junior cycle or compulsory education. The ICT Framework is being developed as a practical tool to support teachers in planning and providing opportunities for students to develop their ICT literacy skills across the curriculum. In 2005, the NCCA worked with a small number of teachers to develop multimedia exemplars illustrating the ICT Framework across the primary and post-primary curriculum. Additional exemplars and planning tools will be developed in 2006.



Literacy and ICT

The NCCA is a partner in this collaborative project with the NCTE and PCSP to support literacy in primary schools using ICT. The two-year project began in September 2005 with initial meetings with participating schools. The project is both developmental (designed to support curriculum development) and research-based (designed to generate data on teachers' experiences using ICT to support literacy in primary schools).

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Initiate and develop projects which are aligned with the Primary School Curriculum and informed by the findings of the Primary Curriculum Review.	• Development of a framework for learning with ICT in the Primary School Curriculum.	Ongoing*
	• Publication of general guidelines for the use of ICT in the Primary School Curriculum.	Complete

* The development of the ICT Framework is nearing completion. This work was extended beyond the two levels of attainment at the completion of primary education, to include a third level of attainment equivalent to the completion of junior cycle education.

Review of Junior Cycle

Course committees in five Junior Certificate subjects (Art, Craft, Design; Environmental and Social Studies; Gaeilge; Geography; Mathematics) were reconvened in 2005 to rebalance their respective syllabuses to a common template and to address issues of overlap and overload. A seminar was held in March 2005 to brief the committee members on the task and to launch this phase of the initiative. Reports for each of the subjects were completed and a composite document compiled. This document, which includes the reports of an earlier phase of the work, will be presented to Council in 2006.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
NCCA will - progress prioritised aspects of the review of junior cycle, including addressing issues of curriculum overload and overlap; broadening the range of assessment approaches in use; and undertaking syllabus revision and development as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development and implementation of a common template for junior cycle syllabuses.• Publication of a handbook providing an overview of the junior cycle curriculum.	Template complete in the case of ten subjects. The template will be applied to other subjects on a phased basis. Ongoing*

* The handbook will be published when the template has been applied to all subjects.



Assessment at Junior Cycle

Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Phase 2 of the initiative was concluded and a report was prepared in October 2005 and published on the NCCA website. The report highlighted feedback offered by teachers on the contribution that AfL can make to more effective reporting to students and parents.

The third phase of the initiative commenced in September 2005. Sharing targets with students is a key element of AfL and the focus of this phase is to provide support for teacher judgements in this regard. To this end a bank of exemplars of student work is being assembled by editorial teams of teachers across a range of subject areas in junior cycle. Each exemplar will be accompanied by teacher commentary with a particular emphasis on advice to students on the steps to take to improve their work.

Assessment in Physical Education Project

NCCA, in cooperation with the Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service, is working with a group of twenty teachers to develop formative assessment approaches suited to a physical education setting. The aim of the pilot is to develop module and lesson planning frameworks with accompanying assessment materials that will be used by the support service in its national programme of professional development in autumn 2006.

Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) – eRAP Project

A joint NCCA/NCTE project to investigate the use of ICT in preparing and presenting the CSPE Report on the Action Project (RAP) for the Junior Certificate examination, commenced in September 2005. This project involves four post-primary schools in the Liberties area of Dublin and an additional three schools in the greater Dublin area. Participating teachers attended professional development days on the use of ICT in CSPE with a particular focus on the use of digital video in capturing the action in the CSPE action project. It is envisaged that students from the participating schools will submit their electronic RAPs for the 2007 Junior Certificate examinations.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
<p>The NCCA will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- progress prioritised aspects of the review of junior cycle, including addressing issues of curriculum overload and overlap; broadening the range of assessment approaches in use; and undertaking syllabus revision and development as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operation of a developmental project with schools on formative 'assessment for learning'.	<p>Complete with additional work underway</p>

* Exemplars of student work will be extended to cover a further range of subjects and contexts.

Focus on Research: The experiences of second-year students

In early 2002, as part of the review of junior cycle, NCCA commissioned the Educational Policy Research Centre of the Economic and Social Research Institute to engage in a longitudinal study of students' experiences of curriculum in the first three years of their post-primary schooling. The research, now in its third year, involves qualitative and quantitative analysis of the responses of over 800 students and of key staff in 12 case study schools. It is one of the largest educational research projects ever undertaken at post-primary level and, as such, has provided a unique insight into students' experience of schooling in their early years of post-primary school.

While the work is ongoing, it has already informed and influenced the junior cycle review and the NCCA's advice on curriculum and assessment matters generally. If, as is expected, the study continues to the end of senior cycle, its outcomes have the potential to profoundly influence educational policy, and in consequence, the education system at post-primary level. Commissioning a study of this scale is evidence of the NCCA's clear commitment to focusing not just on the intended curriculum (in documents), but on the enacted and experienced curriculum (in classrooms and schools).

One of the strengths of a study of this type is the opportunity it provides to trace the different pathways taken by students from their point of entry into post-primary school to their Junior Certificate year and beyond—to explore the ways in which student outcomes are shaped by their experience of school structures and processes, by the type of teaching and learning they encounter and by social class background, gender and ability level.

A report on the first year study, entitled *Moving Up: the experiences of first-year students in post-primary education*, was published in April 2004. At the same time, NCCA published a similarly named booklet for schools and parents, summarising the findings. The booklet was distributed to all post-primary schools, and to parent organisations.

The aims of the second year study were twofold—to capture second year students' experiences of teaching, learning and the curriculum, and to trace the changes in students' attitudes to school and schoolwork over the course of second year.

The second year study highlights the plight of the lower stream students and some of the causes for their growing disengagement from school and from the learning process. Students in the lower streams are more likely to be male and working class, are offered fewer subjects, usually at foundation or ordinary level, and are often excluded from subjects with a practical focus. They experience more didactic teaching, receive less homework and spend less time doing it, and are more likely to feel that the pace of classwork is too slow.

Students in second year have very clear opinions about what makes for effective teaching. The most effective teachers, in their view, are those who explains things well, enjoy teaching their subject, view learning as fun, encourage students to ask questions, praise good work and don't give out. They feel that they learn best in subjects that they like, are good at, and in which there are plenty of practical activities; where the teaching is activity-based and involves discussions and groupwork, not 'teaching from the book'.

The scale and unfinished nature of the study makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions thus far. Second year is a difficult year, challenging to students and teachers alike. It is a fork in the road—where one group of students is becoming increasingly engaged with school and positive about their own capacity as learners—and another group has less positive experiences, feels less valued as learners, and is becoming increasingly disengaged from learning and from the school.

The report on the second year study will again be published in hard copy, a summary posted on the NCCA website and the findings communicated to teachers and parents through *info@ncca*. Analysis of data from the third year cohort, which will complete the junior cycle study, is now well underway.



Senior Cycle Education

Proposals for the Future Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland

The NCCA concluded its review of senior cycle education early in 2005 and presented detailed advice, *Proposals for the Future Development of Senior Cycle Education in Ireland*, to the Minister for Education and Science in April. Following the Minister's response in June requesting the NCCA to proceed with the developments, a plan of work was prepared for the further development of the various components of the advice, beginning with the review of subjects and their assessment, the key skills, and the development of transition units and short courses. The advice is available on the NCCA website.

Work has commenced on the following areas and will continue into 2006 and beyond.

- Transition units are being developed in collaboration with a number of schools and validation procedures are being tested.
- Subjects and short courses have been selected for review and development in the first phase.
- The key skills are being further specified in preparation for embedding in subjects, short courses and transition units.
- Assessment proposals are being developed for the curriculum components.

Social, Personal and Health Education

The NCCA conducted a consultation on a draft curriculum framework for SPHE in the senior cycle. The consultation documents, which were published in hard copy and on the NCCA website, were circulated to schools, health boards, statutory and non-statutory organisations and groups involved in the social, personal and health education of young people. In addition, a number of focus group interviews were conducted with senior cycle students of post-primary schools. A report on the consultation will be presented to Council in February 2006 and published on the NCCA website.

Syllabus work

Irish versions of syllabuses were prepared for LC History and LC Geography. Teacher Guidelines for LC Religious Education were published in hard copy and on the NCCA website. A revised syllabus for LC Economics was completed and revisions to LC Chemical and Physical Science are in the final stages of completion.



The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Engage in a review of senior cycle education based on the <i>discussion paper Developing Senior Cycle Education</i> published in 2002. This review will include extensive and varied consultative processes, a curriculum development dimension, and will give rise to advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the future shape of senior cycle education.	• Dissemination of the senior cycle discussion paper.	Complete
	• Implementation of the consultation process.	Complete
	• Publication of reports on various consultation events and processes.	Complete
	• Hosting of a forum on senior cycle education.	Complete
	• Publication of a foresight paper on directions for development of senior cycle education.	Complete
	• Conducting a research initiative with schools on the practicalities of implementing certain directions for development.	Complete

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Conduct a rolling review of the senior cycle programmes: the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Transition Year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of advice to the Minister for Education and Science on the future shape of senior cycle education. • Development of an implementation plan for the initial phase of change to senior cycle education. • Development of issues papers on the senior cycle programmes. 	<p>Complete</p> <p>An implementation plan was prepared as part of the advice. This will be modified in 2006 to reflect changes to the proposed initial phase.</p> <p>The senior cycle programmes were reviewed as part of the overall review of senior cycle. In the course of this review it was decided that the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme should remain a discrete programme for the moment. This is now the subject of further review, continuing into 2006.</p>

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Undertake reviews in curriculum areas and subjects as appropriate.	Publication of revised syllabuses in	
	• senior cycle Physical Education	Awaiting DES approval
	• LC Art	Awaiting DES approval
	• LC Economics	Revised syllabus complete
	• LC Physics and Chemistry (combined)	Revised syllabus nearing completion
	• LC Physical Education	Awaiting DES approval



Review of Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum

Phase One of the review of languages in post-primary education was concluded with the publication of a report on the NCCA website in April. The focus of Phase One was on discussion of and consultation on a range of issues related to Irish, English and Modern Languages in the curriculum. A wide variety of fora, events and media were employed in the consultations.

The report outlined the range of issues generated by the consultation and set out a number of recommendations for action in Phase Two of the review, including

- contributing to the generation of a policy on languages in education
- the development of a new Irish syllabus for learners whose first language is Irish, and discussion of its implications for other Irish language syllabuses
- planning for a pilot study that would focus on supporting teachers in using the European Languages Portfolio in language teaching at junior cycle.

Work commenced on each of these areas in 2005 and will continue into 2006.



Tionscnamh LIA (Litriocht Idirghníomhach na hArdteistiméireachta)

A joint NCCA/NCTE initiative to develop an interactive website to support teaching and learning the revised literature section of Leaving Certificate Gaeilge syllabus commenced in June 2005. The NCCA has worked with a small number of teachers to develop exemplar material. The LIA website hosting the materials will be developed and launched in 2006.

The post-primary languages initiative

Giro d'Italia, Volume 2, the textbook, was published in September 2005.

Accompanying audio CD and Teachers' notes were completed by December.

Hiragana Kantan with accompanying CD was also published in September 2005.

Work on *Nihongo Kantan* has begun and the book is due for publication in summer 2006.

Workshops, teacher support and school visits were provided for both languages.

Support for Transition Year Japanese was also provided.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Initiate a major review of languages in the post-primary curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of a discussion paper Engagement in a consultative process Publication of a report on the review establishing policy issues and identifying points of action for the future. 	<p>Completed 2004</p> <p>Completed 2004-2005</p> <p>Completed 2005</p>
Enhance, expand and diversify the teaching of languages at post-primary level.	<p>Development and publication of language materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italian Japanese 	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Review of Mathematics in Post-Primary Education

Review documents

The NCCA published a discussion paper *Review of Mathematics in Post-Primary Education*, which identified the major issues for consideration in the review. A consultation questionnaire was prepared to facilitate the submission of responses on the issues raised. A companion paper *International Trends in Post-Primary Mathematics Education* was commissioned following a tender process, and published on the NCCA website in October 2005.

Consultation

A consultation was conducted in November/December 2005 with responses received by post, email and via an online questionnaire. To encourage participation by students, a text messaging service was employed by which comments on mathematics could also be submitted to the NCCA. Consultation documents were disseminated to schools, to third-level colleges and educational institutions, to the education partners and to business and industry groups. A report on the consultation phase, with recommendations for action, will be presented to Council in March 2006 and will be published on the NCCA website.

Focus on Research: International trends in post-primary mathematics education

In the context of the NCCA review of mathematics in post-primary education, an overview of international trends in mathematics education was commissioned so that the issues under consideration in the review could be discussed in the context of developments in mathematics education internationally. The NCCA discussion paper, in setting out the Irish context for the review, noted that internationally there was a move to more context-based mathematics with greater emphasis on a problem-solving approach. The performance of Irish 15-year-old students in mathematics tests in the first two phases of the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) was at the OECD average. In PISA, the focus was on 'mathematical literacy' rather than curriculum-based, but the approach advocated by PISA was one in which context-based mathematics problems required somewhat different skills than those traditionally developed by the content-driven syllabuses in Ireland.

Among the issues that the review of mathematics sought to address were those related to teaching and learning, including teacher professional development, and system and cultural influences in mathematics education. The extent to which these issues arose and were addressed in other countries would be useful in informing the debate here in Ireland. There has also been some debate internationally about the variety of purposes and goals associated with mathematics education, as well as a move in some countries towards 'realistic mathematics education' (RME). A review of international trends in mathematics education was seen as an important companion paper in the consultation to be held towards the end of 2005.

Dr. Paul Conway and Dr. Barry Sloane were commissioned to review international trends in mathematics education in terms of their implications for both curriculum and assessment. As well as taking a general overview of issues in mathematics education, they considered five international initiatives:

- (i) mathematics in context (RME-inspired curriculum materials)
- (ii) 'coaching' as a model for continuing professional development
- (iii) use of ICT in mathematics education

(iv) cognitively guided instruction

(v) the education of mathematics teachers.

These had a common focus on the quality of student learning and were presented using a common framework.

The international paper concentrates on a few key ideas: *new insights on mathematics teaching, new perspectives on learning and their implications for designing powerful learning environments, and conditions for high-quality teacher education in mathematics*. It finds that internationally there is cultural pressure to re-define mathematics education. This pressure, which emanates from a variety of sources, is leading to significant educational reform in a number of countries or regions. There are far-reaching implications for any radical review of mathematics education, including

- mathematics education in tertiary institutions
- primary and post-primary teacher education
- the scope, rigour, practice-related and sustained nature of teacher professional development
- the design of assessment and examinations in mathematics
- teaching and learning resources
- assumptions underpinning 'everyday' and 'official' conceptions of mathematics education.

The paper concludes that reforming mathematics education will need to go beyond school-level capacity for change and adopt a system-level approach, given the scale of the task involved.

The international paper was published on the NCCA website in November 2005 and was circulated in conjunction with the NCCA discussion paper to individuals, groups and institutions as part of the consultation. Aspects of the paper's findings were included in discussions held with post-primary mathematics teachers and third-level lecturers.

Review of Classical Subjects in the Post-Primary Curriculum

The Board of Studies for the Classics met three times in 2005. Working groups of the board completed an audit of the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses in Latin, Greek and Classical Studies. A survey of classics provision in schools, conducted in April-June 2005, received 271 responses from school principals and classics teachers. A report on the survey was published on the NCCA website.

An invitational seminar on the classical subjects was held on 5th October 2005. The seminar, entitled *'Has the Past a Future? – The Classics in Post-Primary Education'*, was attended by 45 teachers, principals and representatives of the education partners. The keynote presenters were Dr. Peter Jones of the University of Newcastle, and Barbara Bell, author of *Minimus*, a Latin course used in UK schools. A report on the seminar was prepared for the Board of Studies.

The outcome of the working groups, the survey and the invitational seminar have informed the Board in its preparation of recommendations to Council on the future development of the classical subjects in post-primary schools. The Board will present its recommendations in 2006.

Review of Guidance in the Post-Primary Curriculum

Work commenced on the preparation of a draft curriculum for guidance. The curriculum framework covers both post-primary junior and senior cycle, and focuses on the three inter-related areas of personal guidance, educational guidance and career guidance.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
In post-primary education the NCCA will - undertake reviews in curriculum areas and subjects as appropriate.	• Production of a review report on mathematics education	Consultation complete Report on consultation to be presented to Council in February 2006
	• Production of review report on the classical subjects	Report to be presented to Council in March 2006
	• Development of curriculum framework for Guidance (junior and senior cycle)	Draft framework complete



High-level objective 2

TO ENGAGE WITH AND PROVIDE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR ONGOING CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.

Liaison with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)

NCCA continued its collaboration with the NQAI and FETAC in supporting the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications. This collaboration took the form of participation on a number of consultative and working groups concerned with different aspects of implementation. In 2005, these included placing the legacy school awards on the Framework, the setting of standards for new awards (particularly at levels 1 and 2 of the Framework) and the exploration of credit frameworks and systems. In addition, NCCA participated in consultations related to the draft European Qualifications Framework.

In September 2005, direct collaboration between the NCCA and NQAI resulted in the publication of the second issue of *Faisnéis*, the bulletin which updates the school sector on developments in the area of qualifications.

Liaison with the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE)

The NCCA continued to work closely with the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE). The NCCA provided feedback to the CECDE at various stages of its work in developing the National Quality Framework. The NCCA also contributed to the work of the CECDE through membership of its Consultative Committee which met three times during 2005. The CECDE shared its extensive research into how children learn and develop with the NCCA in supporting the Council's work in planning for the development of the short paper, *Children's early learning and development: What the research says*.

Liaisons with other early childhood agencies/organisations

The NCCA also furthered its contribution to early childhood education through continued membership of the Quality Advisory Group of the Border Counties Childcare Network, and through membership of the consultative group to the Community Playgroups Initiative Project (co-funded and co-managed by the Katherine Howard Foundation and IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation).

Working with other sectors of the education system

The NCCA has continued to provide presentations to colleges of education, universities, parents, the inspectorate and the support services on new initiatives being developed in the area of curriculum and assessment at early childhood, primary and post-primary levels. These presentations serve to support pre-service and in-service programmes through the provision of up-to-date outlines on the initiatives being developed.

Among the presentations made in 2005 were the following:

Group	Theme/Area
Hospital teachers	Developments in Special Education
Post-primary teachers, Church of Ireland College, Rathmines	Developments in Special Education
Marino Institute of Education	Developments in Special Education
Inspectorate, DES	ICT in primary and post-primary schools
Parents' Associations (PAVSCC, COMPASS)	Review of Mathematics
Parents at NPC-Primary national and regional seminars	Primary School Curriculum
Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service	Assessment for Learning
Primary Curriculum Support Programme	Primary Curriculum Review; Assessment in primary school; Developments in Special Education
Post-primary students, South-East	Senior Cycle consultation

Group	Theme/Area
Graduate students, Mary Immaculate College of Education	The work of the NCCA
Graduate Students, UCD	Intercultural Education in the post-primary school; The role of ICT in Curriculum and Assessment.
NESF, Early Childhood Care and Education Team	The Framework for Early Learning
Irish Preschool Playgroups Association	The Framework for Early Learning
Border Counties Childcare Network	The Framework for Early Learning

In addition to these presentations or workshops, a number of staff presented papers or gave keynote addresses at conferences and seminars, both in Ireland and abroad. Some examples are presented below:

In January, John Hammond presented a paper on *New Directions for Upper Secondary Education and the Leaving Certificate in the Republic of Ireland* at a Public Policy Seminar organised by Queen Mary College of the University of London. The subject of the seminar was the Tomlinson Report into 14-19 Reform in the UK.

Mary O'Leary presented the NCCA's work on ICT in curriculum and assessment to the Computer Education Society of Ireland (CESI) Conference at Coláiste de h-Íde, Tallaght on February 12th, 2005.

In April, Bill Lynch presented on *Developments in science education in Ireland* at the 2nd National PISA symposium, sponsored by the DES, in Dublin. The presentation, which focussed mainly on the changed approach in Junior Certificate Science, also addressed developments in science at primary and senior cycle.

Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick presented a paper entitled *Taking stock: Ireland's primary curriculum review - national experiences, international trends* at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) from April 11th - 15th in Montreal, Canada. The theme of the AERA 2005 annual meeting was *Demography and Democracy in the Era of Accountability*.

Hal O'Neill presented two NCCA case-studies at the *Leadership for Change* conference which was jointly hosted by Microsoft and Leadership Development for schools in Killiney, Dublin. The first presentation related to the NCCA initiative in Assessment for Learning and the second focussed on the first phase of the NCCA's Primary Curriculum Review.

John Hammond presented the NCCA's work in the area of *Pupil Assessment in Citizenship Education* at a seminar organised by the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE). The seminar took place at the National Foundation for Educational Research in Slough, England in June 2005.

The NCCA early childhood team presented two papers at the EECERA (European Early Childhood Education Research Association) Annual Conference, co-hosted by IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation and St. Patricks College of Education in Dublin in early September. In keeping with the conference theme *Young Children as Citizens: Identity, Belonging and Participation*, Dr. Sarah Fitzpatrick and Arlene Forster presented on the subject of representing the child's voice in the development of the Framework for Early Learning. Cathal De Paor and Margaret Maxwell presented on the theme *Identity and Belonging* in the Intercultural Guidelines for primary schools and in the development of the Framework for Early Learning.

John Halbert presented a workshop entitled *Assessment for Learning in Physical Education* at the National Forum of the National Coaching and Training Centre in the University of Limerick on September 2nd. The workshop sought to explore the major issues in relation to the adoption of a more interactive approach to formative assessment in physical education

Majella O'Shea presented on the development and dissemination of the guidelines for schools *Intercultural Education in the Primary School* at the *Human Dimension Conference* in Warsaw on Thursday 29th September. The conference was organised by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR).

Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick presented the NCCA's Early Childhood and Primary work in listening for the student's voice, at the first CIDREE seminar on *Student Voice* which was organised and hosted by the NCCA on September 30th. In November, John Halbert presented an update on the ongoing work associated with the CIDREE project being led by NCCA, *Including the student voice in curriculum review and development*, to the General Assembly of CIDREE in Italy.

Dr. Anne Looney delivered the opening keynote address at the annual conference of the Association for Educational Assessment (AEA) – Europe, hosted by the NCCA in Dublin in early November. Her speech focused on issues related to assessment and accountability in Irish education.

Dr. Anne Looney also presented on senior cycle reforms at both the Annual Conference of Independent Schools and the Annual Conference of CEO's of Vocational Education Committees.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Support ongoing change and development in curriculum and assessment in schools and other educational institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of presentations to a variety of educational organisations and at conferences on the work of the NCCA. 	Complete and ongoing

High-level objective 3

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

Curriculum Provision for Children Detention Schools and High Support and Special Care Units

In October 2004, the Government endorsed a proposal from the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to examine the scope for rationalising and restructuring the delivery of the State's services in accordance with the Children Act, 2001.

As part of its response to ensuing developments in this area, the Department of Education and Science is in the process of developing an Education Strategy for children in detention and in special/high support care. This strategy will address education policy, structures, staffing and resources. The NCCA has been requested to contribute to the development of the strategy by advising on curriculum provision in the children detention schools and the special schools attached to special care and high support units. In 2005, the NCCA's work in this area involved gathering information through liaison with the schools and units involved about current practice and curriculum provision. This fed into an initial report to the DES, outlining a proposal for the NCCA to conduct further work and development in this area.

This was a new area of work, not referenced in the strategic plan but in line with the high level objective.

Intercultural education

In May 2005, guidelines for primary schools, *Intercultural Education in the Primary School*, were published (in Irish and English) in hard copy and on the NCCA website. The publication was launched by the Minister for Education and Science.

Copies of the guidelines have been sent to schools, one copy for every teacher, and to teacher training colleges, libraries and other organisations.

Guidelines for post-primary schools have now been completed and will be published and disseminated in 2006.

Work has commenced on an initiative to support capacity building in the education system in the area of intercultural education. This project will be based on *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Schools* and will support the development of local initiatives through the education centre network, led by Limerick Education Centre. To this end, the NCCA proposes working with the education centre network to build on existing local expertise, to connect that expertise and experience with the guidelines and to allow for the sharing of good practice in local networks. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has contributed to the funding of this project.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Develop guidelines to promote and support the embedding of intercultural education in teaching and learning approaches based in the revised primary curriculum, and post-primary junior and senior cycle curricula.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production of guidelines both for primary and post-primary schools.	<p>Guidelines for primary schools completed, launched and disseminated to all schools in May 2005.</p> <p>Guidelines for post-primary schools completed and will be published and disseminated early in 2006.</p>

Parents

Work commenced on the development of a DVD on *The What the Why and How of Children's Learning in Primary Schools* to support parents in engaging with their children's learning throughout their primary years. The development of the DVD was informed by the NCCA's previous work in this area, by current curriculum research and review, and by listening to the voices of parents through consultation with a broad spectrum of parent groups.

Completion of the DVD is scheduled for January 2006 with a proposed launch and dissemination to all parents in early Spring, 2006.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Develop guidance materials for parents of primary school children which provide information about the curriculum and demonstrate how parents can support the work of the school in implementing the Primary School Curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production and publication of guidelines for parents of primary school children.	Filming of DVD completed in December 2005 Dissemination scheduled for March 2006

Special Education

Redrafting of primary documents - *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities* (Severe and Profound) is complete. Guidelines in the areas of *Moderate and Mild* are nearing completion. New guideline material for teachers of students with *mild general learning disabilities* at junior cycle level has been developed in additional areas of the curriculum.

A framework proposal to guide the development of guidelines to support teachers of exceptionally able students has been approved. Work on development of the guidelines will commence in January 2006 in conjunction with CCEA in Northern Ireland.

The NCCA developed a proposal for a curriculum framework for students with general learning disabilities at junior cycle level. A particular issue highlighted in the proposal is the need for appropriate programmes of study with access to certification for such students. Work in 2006 will continue to develop meaningful and relevant educational programmes at junior cycle to meet the diversity of learning needs presented by these students.

Equality

Draft *Equality Proofing Guidelines*, to ensure that equality is furthered in all aspects of NCCA work, were developed and presented to the NCCA staff. The guidelines were redrafted in light of feedback received and will serve as a guide to all staff as they plan, consult and develop their work in any given area.

Further professional development is planned to increase staff awareness in relation to how different equality perspectives impact on the work of the organisation.

High-level objective 4

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

Three research projects have been highlighted through the report in the 'Focus on Research' items. Two others are reported below.

Computer Assisted Design

The NCCA in collaboration with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) undertook an investigation of 3D parametric modeling software to inform issues relating to the implementation of the CAD element of the new and revised Leaving Certificate technology subjects, in particular Design and Communication Graphics. This project was directed by a steering committee with representatives from DES, NCCA, NCTE and SEC.

School based research was undertaken in fifteen post-primary schools on the use of 3D parametric modeling software by researchers from the University of Limerick and NUI Maynooth. The findings of the project, along with implications and recommendations, will be outlined in the steering committee report, *Investigation of 3D Parametric CAD Software for Technology Education* (Feb 2006).

Senior Cycle Curriculum and Assessment

Dr. Carol McGuinness of Queens University Belfast was commissioned to provide an overview of international practice in the embedding of key skills in the senior cycle curriculum. Dr. Ian Colwill, formerly of QCA in London, was commissioned to provide an analysis of additional assessment components in A-level examinations. Both pieces of research will be used to inform the NCCA programme of work at senior cycle in 2006.

High-level objective 5

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

Corporate Governance

A Code of Practice for the Governance of the NCCA was approved by Council. A confidential register of statements of interests of Council members was established in accordance with the Code. The membership also signed a confidentiality declaration in relation to the non-disclosure to any third party of details of the proceedings and discussions at Council meetings relating to work still in progress or under discussion.

A risk assessment report was completed for consideration by the audit committee. Revised thresholds for authorising payments and signing cheques were approved by Council and procedures for the approval of monthly financial statements were introduced.

Revised Budgetary Process

Detailed project codes were introduced as part of further streamlining of the NCCA budgetary and financial management processes. This has allowed for accurate budget planning, monitoring and evaluation of resources associated with each project in line with the annual plan of work. Monthly monitoring and re-focusing of the budget has continued.

Audit

The Comptroller and Auditor General completed audits of the NCCA accounts for the years 2001 to 2004 inclusive.

Strategic Plan

The NCCA commenced work on its second Strategic Plan which will outline the vision, mission, and high-level objectives framework within which the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment will work in the years 2006-2008.

Annual Report

The Annual Report for 2004 was published.

Asset register

A full register of assets in the NCCA offices was completed during the year. This will facilitate efficient distribution of furniture and equipment and also rolling replacement of equipment as the need arises.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Adhere to legislative requirements in relation to corporate governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirements of corporate governance met.• Development of annual programme of work.• Publication of annual reports and their submission to the Minister for Education and Science.	<p>Code of practice approved</p> <p>Confidential register of statements of interests of Council members established</p> <p>Revised budgetary processes introduced</p> <p>Annual programme of work approved</p> <p>Annual report 2004 published</p> <p>Asset Register complete and updated</p>

Resource room

Information Services booklets detailing national and international education resources were developed in both electronic and print formats and distributed to both part-time and full time members of staff. A current awareness bulletin was established and regularly circulated by email to all staff members.

Info@ncca.ie

The first issue of a newsletter for teachers, *info@ncca, supporting teaching and learning* was published in September 2005. The publication's objective is to communicate with teachers in the classroom, informing practice and encouraging dialogue. It is distributed to all schools in print format and is also available on the NCCA website in electronic format. Both formats are produced in Irish and English versions.

Customer Service Charter

The NCCA Customer Service Charter was drafted.

Staff Handbook

Work was completed on a staff handbook comprising all NCCA workplace policies. Appointments were made to posts of Safety Officer and Fire Officer Health under the health and safety policy.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Ensure that procedures are in place to improve the quality of its internal and external communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improvement of communication network and service delivery.	Information services enhanced under rolling review Newsletter for teachers published
Devise and implement a set of positive workplace principles and foster a sense of well-being and shared purpose among staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adoption of agreed positive workplace principles and engender practices based on these.	Customer Service Charter complete Staff handbook complete

Professional Development

The NCCA organised and/or participated in a number of key professional development events and activities in 2005. These included staff completing ICT training through attendance at the BETT technology show in London, through participation in a workshop on the potential of Apple products to support curriculum and assessment, and through participation in database training using Microsoft Access. An Education Officers' Conference for part-time and full-time professional staff on the theme of *Leading for change: Improving the experiences of learners* was organised. Other professional development completed by staff focused on the areas of finance and accounting, assessment, special education, science and mathematics, Gaelic, modern languages, early childhood education, senior cycle education and performance appraisal. All administrative and professional staff undertook training/professional development in the context of their roles and responsibilities in the organisation. A number of members of staff were funded to attend or complete post-graduate studies in education, and public relations and event management.

Staff participated in study visits, including one organised by the Boston College on the theme of *Cultural Diversity* in Education and an Arion Study Visit to Finland on the theme of *Regional School Cooperation at Upper Secondary Level*.

The NCCA provided an induction programme to all new staff appointed in 2005.

Full-time staff maintained individual training/professional development records for 2005, and used a professional development request form to identify PD needs and to request appropriate support in addressing these needs. Initial work was completed in drafting an *Organisational Training Plan* for 2006.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Develop a culture of continuous professional learning and development across the organisation and obtain accreditation through <i>Excellence Through People</i> , Ireland's national standard for human resource development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of an induction process and ongoing professional development of staff. 	<p>Induction process introduced</p> <p>Ongoing professional development in place</p> <p>Individual training/professional development records in place</p>

NCCA Website

The NCCA corporate website www.ncca.ie has been redeveloped in accordance with required standards of accessibility (WAI level 2). It is available in both English and Irish.

The website provides information about the role and remit of the organisation and its work on curriculum and assessment for Early Childhood, Primary and Post-primary education, including new initiatives, reviews and publications.

Training has been organised for all staff in the use of the *Content Management System (CMS)* and in writing for the web in order to ensure that any material prepared for the site is developed and presented to the highest standards.

The NCCA has also developed www.curriculumonline.ie. This site houses all approved curriculum and syllabus documents and teacher guidelines. The uploading of curriculum materials to the site is ongoing.

The strategies and outputs (2003-2005) relating to this area are set out below.

Strategies	Outputs	Status
Prioritise the development of the NCCA website as a support for teachers and schools. This will include the development of support materials designed for interactive use and/or adaptation by teachers using digital material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased use of the website by teachers, parents, school principals, and those working in early childhood settings, for information and support on curriculum and assessment issues. 	<p>Corporate site complete</p> <p><i>Curriculum Online</i> material being uploaded</p> <p>Preparations are in hand for the development of <i>Curriculum in Action</i></p>

7. List of committee meetings 2005

Name of Committee	Number of meetings
Board of Studies Classics	4
Committee on Guidance	4
Council	8
CSPE Committee	1
Early Childhood and Primary Committee	7
Early Childhood Committee	2
ICT Steering Committee	3
Environmental and Social Studies	3
Interculturalism Steering Committee	1
JC Music Committee	3
JC Gaeilge Committee	2
JC Maths Committee	4
JC Art Committee	5
JC Geography Committee	2
JC Science Committee	1
Hebrew Studies Committee	4
Junior Cycle Review Committee	5
Language Committee Primary	4
LC Agricultural Science Committee	1
LC Business Studies Committee	1
LC Economics Committee	1
LC Gaeilge Committee	2
LC Chemical and Physical Science Committee	1
LC Mathematics and Applied Mathematics	1
LC SPHE Committee	4
Religious Education Committee	1
Senior Cycle Committee	5
Special Education Steering Committee	3
Special Education Working Group	1
Total number of committee meetings	84

Appendix

Extracts from the Financial
Statements of NCCA for the year
ended 31 December 2005

Appendix

Extracts from the Financial Statements of NCCA for the year ended 31 December 2005

These statements are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Information

Bank

Bank of Ireland
Lr. Baggot Street
Dublin 2

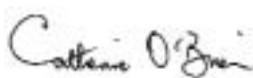
Accountants

Crowleys DFK
16/17 College Green
Dublin 2

Introduction

In accordance with my obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance, I confirm that in respect of the financial year 2005:

- an internal audit committee has been put in place
- the procurement procedures as set out in the Code were complied with
- no asset disposals or access to assets by third parties have taken place
- the NCCA had no capital expenditure proposals
- Government policy on the pay of Chief Executives and all NCCA employees has been complied with
- no directors fees were paid to Council members
- the NCCA has complied with its obligations under tax laws.



Dr. Catherine O'Brien

Chairperson

February 2006

Income and Expenditure account for year ended 31 December 2005

	Notes	2005 €	2004 €
Income			
Department of Education and Science grant and other income	1a 1b	4,629,777	3,572,369
Transfer to/(from) capital account	6	2,045	17,019
		<u>4,631,822</u>	<u>3,589,388</u>
Expenditure			
Staff costs	2	2,100,823	2,259,823
Administration	7	1,687,394	1,279,085
		<u>3,788,217</u>	<u>3,538,908</u>
Surplus for the year		843,606	50,480
Accumulated Surplus at 31 December 2004		122,391	71,911
		<u>965,997</u>	<u>122,391</u>

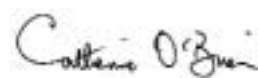
The Council had no gains or losses in the financial year other than those dealt with in the income and expenditure account.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 12 form part of these Financial Statements.

On behalf of the Council



Dr. Anne Looney
Chief Executive



Dr. Catherine O'Brien
Chairperson

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2005


	Notes	2005 €	2004 €
Fixed Assets	3	106,789	108,834
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank		1,116,030	26,398
Debtors	4	68,104	161,915
		<u>1,184,134</u>	<u>188,313</u>
Current Liabilities			
Creditors & Accruals	5	218,138	65,922
Net Current Assets		965,996	122,391
Net Assets		<u>1,072,785</u>	<u>231,225</u>
Financed by:			
Capital Account	6	106,789	108,834
Income and Expenditure Account		965,997	122,391
		<u>1,072,785</u>	<u>231,225</u>

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Notes 1 to 12 form part of these Financial Statements.

On behalf of the Council



Dr. Anne Looney
Chief Executive



Dr. Catherine O' Brien
Chairperson

3 March 2006

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2005

	2005	2004
	€	€
1a Income		
Department of Education and Science grant Included in the above is a grant of €163,809 (€89,420 in 2004) in respect of staff redeployed from Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ), a grant of €50,000 towards the cost of the appointment of Education Officers for Senior Cycle Science and Education for Children in Detention and High Support Care, a grant of €220,000 for the dissemination of guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities, and a grant from the North South Co-operation Unit of €18,968 in part funding of a joint conference with the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland. The 2004 figure also includes a research grant of €90,000 from the Gender and Equality Unit, DES and a publication grant of €16,949 from the ICT Policy Unit, DES.	4,531,777	3,376,000
1b Other Income		
Included in the above is a grant of €48,000 from Foras a Gaeilge to fund the appointment of an Education Officer for Gaeilge and a grant of €50,000 from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to a proposal to build local capacity to support intercultural education in primary schools.	98,420	
2 Staff Costs		
The staff costs of the Council comprises		
Salaries and wages	1,826,818	1,918,842
Travel and subsistence	216,336	285,064
Recruitment advertising	6,192	6,578
Staff development	51,478	49,339
The average number of persons employed by the Council during the period was 34 (32 in 2004).	<u>2,100,823</u>	<u>2,259,823</u>

	Office F&F	Office Equip	IT Equip	Total
3 Fixed Assets				
Cost	€	€	€	€
1 January 2005	57,785	45,606	103,628	207,019
Additions	1,153	28,017	35,887	65,057
As at 31 December 2004	<u>58,938</u>	<u>73,623</u>	<u>139,515</u>	<u>272,076</u>
Depreciation				
Opening balance 1 January 2005	13,362	22,922	61,901	98,185
Charge for the period	5,873	14,725	46,504	67,102
As at 31 December 2004	<u>19,235</u>	<u>37,647</u>	<u>108,405</u>	<u>165,287</u>
Net Book Value				
At 31 December 2005	<u>39,703</u>	<u>35,977</u>	<u>31,109</u>	<u>106,789</u>
At 31 December 2003	<u>44,423</u>	<u>22,684</u>	<u>41,727</u>	<u>108,834</u>

4 Debtors and Prepayments	2005	2004
	€	€
Grant receivable	--	--
Prepayments	68,104	161,915
	<u>68,104</u>	<u>161,915</u>

	2005	2004
5 Creditors and Accruals	€	€
Paye/Prsi	--	--
Trade Creditors	34,976	4,469
Other creditors	1,820	23
Grant repayable	--	--
Accruals	181,343	61,429
	<u>218,139</u>	<u>65,921</u>

	2005	2005	2004	2004
6 Capital Account	€	€	€	€
Balance at 1 January 2005		108,834		125,853
Transfer (to)/from income and expenditure account				
Funds allocated to acquire fixed assets	65,057		32424	
Amortisation in line with depreciation	(67,102)	(2,045)	(49,443)	(17,019)
Balance at 31 December 2004		<u>106,789</u>		<u>108,834</u>

7 Expenditure	2005	2004
Administration Costs	€	€
Rent rates, security and storage	417,595	250,515
Office equipment and repairs and maintenance	68,972	32,168
Telephone, postage, stationery etc	142,832	132,371
Room hire and catering	69,322	19,691
Accountancy and audit	20,032	21,258
Bank charges	171	234
Information technology	81,230	18,048
General advertising	5,055	3,029
Reference books, documents and subscriptions	19,402	10,616
Light and heat	7,315	13,866
Cleaning	34,904	40,950
Conference expenses	14,011	15,451
Special projects including development of guidelines for schools on Intercultural education and the production of an information DVD for parents	254,576	-
Publications	272,471	218,317
Research fees	212,404	453,128
Depreciation	67,102	49,443
	<u>1,687,394</u>	<u>1,279,085</u>

8 Council members' interests

The Council adopted procedures in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Finance in relation to the disclosure of interests by Council members and these procedures have been adhered to in the year. There were no transactions in the year in relation to the Board's activities in which Board members had any beneficial interest.

9 Operating Lease

The Office of Public Works holds a 25 year tenancy agreement from 13 August, 1998 in respect of the lease of NCCA office accommodation at 24 Merrion Square. The annual rent is €235,300 subject to a 5 year rent review.

The Office of Public Works also holds a 4 year tenancy agreement from 31 January, 2002 in respect of the lease of NCCA office accommodation at 24A Merrion Square (The Mews). The annual rent is €68,210.33 subject to a 5 year rent review.

10 Capital Commitments

There were no capital commitments at 31 December 2005.

11 Contingent Liabilities

No contingent liabilities existed at 31 December 2005.

12 Approval of Financial Statements

The financial statements were approved by the Council at its meeting on 9 February, 2006.

